



FOCUS

ON NOBLE PARTNER 2022

New Friends: What Japan and Sweden joining Noble Partner 2022 means

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Image source: Georgianjournal.ge

Lelo's Grigol Gegelia on the EU's 12 Points, Visas for Russians, and Georgian Dream's Imminent Demise

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW BY EREKLE POLADISHVILI

Autumn is upon us, and the new political season is about to begin. Presumably, it will be a busy few months in parliamentary life, seeing the adopting of dozens of laws to meet the 12-point recommendations set by the EU. But whether the opposition and the ruling party will establish common ground is as yet unclear. GEORGIA TODAY continues interviewing politicians of different political parties to find out if they support negotiations in the parliament or the protest outside of it. This time, we visited Mr Grigol Gegelia, foreign secretary of the "Lelo" party, to discuss critical issues, including the calls for civil disobedience.

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Markets									
As of 29-Aug-2022									
BONDS					STOCKS				
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m		
GRAIL 07/28	83.84 (YTM 7.48%)	-0.7%	+0.0%	Bank of Georgia (BGEO LN)	GBP 20.35	-2.4%	+35.1%		
GEBGG 07/23	101.75 (YTM 4.01%)	+0.7%	+1.2%	Georgia Capital (CGEO LN)	GBP 6.88	+2.1%	+8.9%		
GEOPAP 03/24	94.54 (YTM 10.08%)	+0.3%	+1.0%	TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN)	GBP 17.36	-1.4%	+25.8%		
SILNET 01/27	96.53 (YTM 9.35%)	+0.2%	+0.2%						
TBC 06/24	99.11 (YTM 6.27%)	+0.1%	+0.5%						
COMMODITIES					CURRENCIES				
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m		
Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	105.09	+8.9%	-4.5%	GEL / USD	2.8917	+3.7%	+4.8%		
Gold Spot (US\$/Oz)	1 737.09	+0.0%	-1.6%	GEL / EUR	2.8913	+4.3%	+2.5%		
				GEL / GBP	3.3861	+3.2%	+0.8%		
				GEL / CHF	2.9893	+3.2%	+3.2%		
				GEL / RUB	0.0470	+1.3%	+5.4%		
				GEL / TRY	0.1591	+3.2%	+3.4%		
INDICES									
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m		
FTSE 100	7 427.31	-1.4%	+0.1%	GEL / AZN	1.6875	+2.6%	+3.7%		
FTSE 250	19 169.72	-1.7%	-6.9%	GEL / AMD	0.0071	+2.8%	+4.5%		
DAX	12 892.99	-2.6%	-4.4%	GEL / UAH	0.0787	+3.1%	+4.4%		
DOW JONES	32 098.99	-2.9%	-2.3%	EUR / USD	1.0003	-0.5%	+2.2%		
NASDAQ	12 017.67	-2.9%	-3.0%	GBP / USD	0.8540	+0.5%	+3.9%		
MSCI EM EE	26.76	-2.6%	-9.7%	CHF / USD	0.9682	+0.4%	+1.7%		
MSCI EM	991.65	-0.0%	-0.2%	RUB / USD	61.5836	+2.5%	-1.1%		
SP 500	4 030.61	-2.6%	-2.4%	TRY / USD	18.1820	+0.6%	+1.5%		
MSCI FM	2 206.32	+0.2%	+2.3%	AZN / USD	1.6949	-0.0%	-0.0%		



Former Ambassador of Ukraine to Georgia Releases a Farewell Letter

The former Ambassador of Ukraine to Georgia, Igor Dolgov, has released a farewell letter, where he notes that during his work, the relations between Tbilisi and Kyiv rose to the level of strategic partnership. According to him, Georgia and Ukraine went through the difficult period of the pandemic together and tried to maintain positive dynamics in the direction of trade.

However, the former Ambassador states that the war changed everything and, after February 24, everyone changed.

"Dear compatriots, citizens of Georgia, dear friends!" he wrote. "Today I am flying from Tbilisi to Warsaw, and then to Kyiv."

"My wife and I came to Georgia in 2017. Now it seems to me that it was in another life. Together, we raised Ukrainian-Georgian relations to the level of strategic partnership, we went through the difficult years of the pandemic together, we tried not to lose the dynamics in both trade and contacts.

"The war changed everything. After February 24 of this year, we all changed. And we are grateful for the support that we felt from the first days of the war, for the humanitarian aid, for the fact that Georgia and Georgians opened their doors and their hearts to the Ukrainians fleeing the war and occupation.

"The world supports Ukraine, Ukraine receives unprecedented aid, the circle of isolation around Putin's Russia shrinks. We know and will always remember that today everything depends on the army, the armed forces of Ukraine, and we will never forget that Georgians stand with the Ukrainian guards and they sacrifice their lives for our freedom and yours. Eternal memory to the heroes!

"Thanks to everyone with whom I had the opportunity to work in Georgia during these years. I am sure that our two brotherly nations will do everything to strengthen the relations between Ukraine and Georgia.

"Glory to Ukraine! Glory to Georgia!" Dolgov concluded.

ISW: Putin is Trying to Avoid General Mobilization, As Evidenced by His Decree



Putin signed a decree to increase the number of military personnel from 1.9 million to 2.04 million in 2023.

Russian president Vladimir Putin is still trying to avoid the announcement of general mobilization, as evidenced by a rather modest increase in the number of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in accordance with the decree signed by him, say reports by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW).

The Russian military probably wants to compensate for the damage caused by the invasion of Ukraine and gather forces to continue its "operation" in Ukraine, the reports suggest.

But analysts say the Russian command is unlikely to be able to create enough forces to reach a final number of more than 1.5 million soldiers - contrary to Putin's decree.

In addition, Russia will face challenges in rapidly adding large numbers of new

soldiers: "Russia's training capabilities are likely to have declined since February 24 as the Kremlin has deployed training units to combat operations, and these training units have reportedly suffered casualties."

At the same time, analysts note that Russia can use the autumn conscription in October 2022 (in particular, in the occupied territories of Ukraine) to attract about 130,000 people to replace losses.

Sergeenko Meets Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of People's Republic of China, Discusses Cooperation Between Two Countries



The Deputy Chairman of the Parliament, Davit Sergeenko, held an introductory meeting with the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Chou Tsien.

At the meeting, the parties discussed the issues of cooperation between the two countries and talked about the

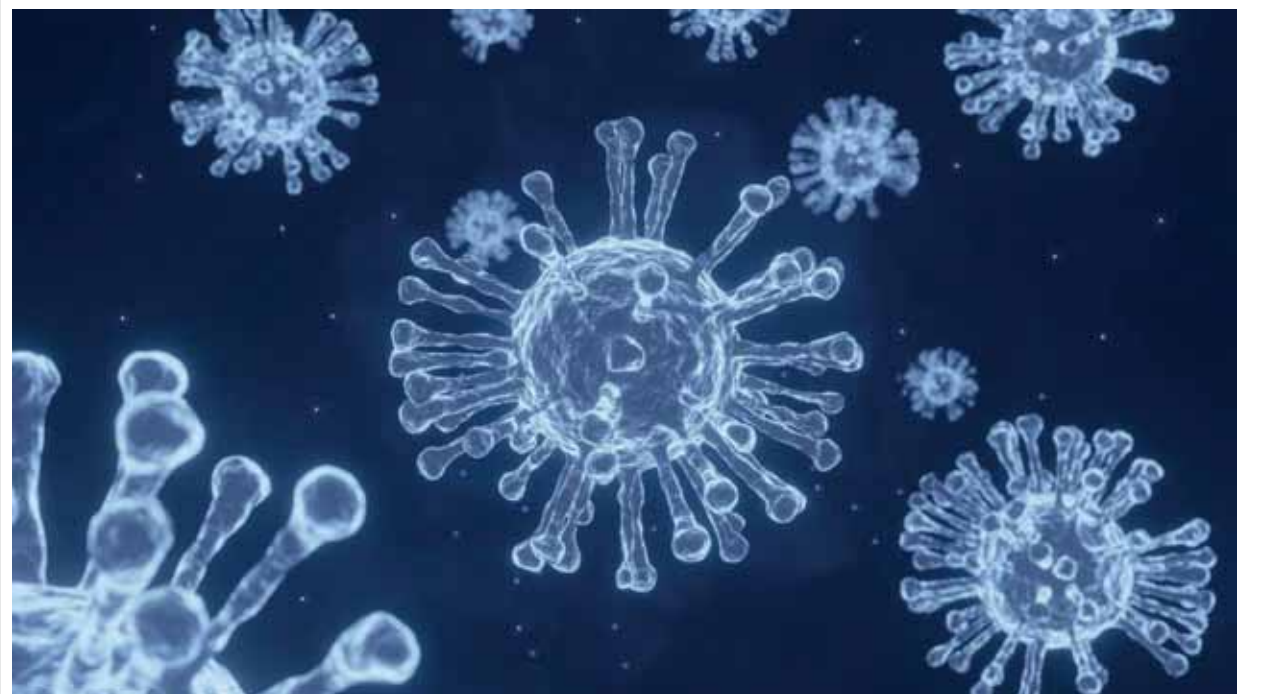
importance of developing a unified approach to respond to the pandemic.

"During the meeting with the Chinese ambassador, the development of a single, integrated form of response to the pandemic was especially emphasized, so that in the future, the countries will be even more protected against the mentioned challenges," said Sergeenko after the meeting.

Georgia Reports 13,737 Coronavirus Cases, 14,486 Recoveries, 3 Deaths in Past Week

Georgia reported 13,737 coronavirus cases, 14,486 recoveries, and 3 deaths August 21- August 28, the official figures show.

A total of 76,704 tests were conducted throughout the country. The test-positivity rate in the past week stands at 17.91%.



Latest Ukraine Updates: US Expected to Announce New Arms Package for Ukraine; IAEA Begins Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant Visit

BY ANA DUMBADZE

Ukkraine's counteroffensive in the south of the country is gathering pace as its forces again strike bridges leading to the occupied city of Kherson in a bid to choke off supply routes for Russia's forces there.

Meanwhile, an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) convoy is said to have left the Ukrainian capital on a mission to the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in south-eastern Ukraine on Wednesday morning.

Europe's largest nuclear power station has become a fighting ground for the conflict, as both sides blame each other for attacks on and around the complex. Fighting around the facility has sparked fears over the heightened risk of a nuclear disaster.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said in his nightly address Tuesday that Ukraine would do what it can to keep the IAEA mission safe, but that Russia was still carrying out "provocations" on areas where the IAEA mission would visit.

Members of the G-7's non-proliferation directors group urged Russia to immediately withdraw from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

The G-7 representatives wrote that they are "profoundly concerned by the serious threat" Russian armed forces pose to the safety and security of the facility.

"These actions significantly raise the risk of a nuclear accident or incident and endanger the population of Ukraine, neighboring states, and the international community," the group wrote.

"The Russian Federation must immediately withdraw its troops from within Ukraine's internationally recognized borders and respect Ukraine's territory and sovereignty," the group added.

"We reaffirm that the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and the electricity that it produces rightly belong to Ukraine and stress that attempts by Russia to disconnect the plant from the Ukrainian power grid would be unacceptable."

UKRAINE COUNTEROFFENSIVE HAS HAD 'SUCCESSSES' IN



Photo by Alexei Alexandrov/AP

SOME AREAS OF THE KHERSON REGION, OFFICIAL SAYS

Ukrainian forces have had "successes" in three areas of the Russian-occupied region of Kherson, a Ukrainian regional official said on Wednesday, according to comments reported by Reuters.

Yuriy Sobolevskyi, the deputy head of Kherson's regional council, told Ukraine's national news broadcaster that Ukrainian troops had enjoyed successes in the Kherson, Beryslav, and Kakhovka districts, but declined to give details.

"Now is the time to support our armed forces... Now is not the time to talk about the specific successes of our lads," he said, echoing the Ukrainian military's insistence on a near-total information blackout about the offensive. Kyiv announced the start of a southern counter-offensive to retake territory two days ago.

Sobolevskyi urged Ukrainians to support their armed forces with "everything they could" as the offensive was using up a vast quantity of resources.

"Right now, drones and ammunition are being used there like expendable material," he said.

Ukrainian forces in the south of the country said they struck key bridges in the Kherson region as their counteroffensive to retake the Russian-occupied city gathers pace.

Ukraine since Monday, Britain's Ministry of Defense confirmed on Wednesday.

"Ukrainian formations have pushed the front line back some distance in places, exploiting relatively thinly held Russian defenses," the ministry said on Twitter, adding that "Russia will likely now attempt to plug the gaps in its line using pre-designated mobile reserve units."

Russia continues to try to generate new reinforcements for its forces in Ukraine, the ministry said in its intelligence report, and could be resorting to using poorly trained troops.

"Volunteer battalions of the new 3rd Army Corps had departed their home base near Moscow by 24 August, highly likely for onward deployment to Ukraine. The operational effectiveness of these units is not known. The 3rd Army Corps is highly likely short of personnel and these troops have had limited training."

"In our operating area, the environment is complex but controlled. The destruction of hostile logistic paths, reserves and control points continues," the operational update from the unit said. It added that Russia's occupying force was "mostly demoralized, but continues to resist."

UKRAINE HAS PUSHED THE FRONT LINE BACK 'SOME DISTANCE IN PLACES,' UK SAYS

Ukrainian armored forces have continued to assault Russia's southern forces on several axes across the south of

Security Council spokesman John Kirby said.

"We have committed more than \$13 billion in security assistance to the Ukrainian armed forces, and we will continue to do that," Kirby said on a conference call with reporters.

"There will be announcements of future security assistance in coming days," he added.

Last week, to mark Ukraine's 31 years of independence from the Soviet Union, Biden announced a US military aid package worth approximately \$3 billion.

The latest arms package, the 19th such installment, is Washington's largest since Russia's full-scale invasion began six months ago.

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL SPEAKS WITH GERMAN DEFENSE MINISTER ABOUT MORE AID FOR UKRAINE

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said he spoke with German Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht on additional ways to support Ukraine.

"Russia continues its aggressive war and winter is coming soon," Stoltenberg warned, adding that Germany has been a strong contributor to Ukraine's security assistance.

"Germany is already doing a lot and we will do more together in NATO," he wrote in a tweet.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION SAYS PUTIN IS WEAPONIZING ENERGY WITH NORD STREAM 1 SHUTDOWN

US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby called Russia's claims that it shut down the Nord Stream 1 pipeline for "maintenance" another attempt to weaponize energy.

Russian gas giant Gazprom halted energy supplies to Europe via the pipeline in a planned "maintenance outage" expected to last until Sept. 3.

"We're pragmatic about this and we know that there's more work to do. So, we're going to look into ways to increase gas stockpiles in Europe or to help bolster other sources of energy," Kirby told reporters on a conference call.

"But, all of this work, quite frankly, is a result of Mr. Putin's decisions to weaponize energy as he has weaponized food, and as he has weaponized information," Kirby added.

The Borjomi and Mestia Fires

BY TEAM GT

The main sources of fire in Borjomi valley have been eliminated, the Ministry of Internal Affairs reported Monday.

The Ministry noted the majority of the fire had been extinguished over the weekend, and work was being carried out on the active centers.

"Fire localization and extinguishing works in Borjomi Municipality were active throughout the night. At the moment, most of the fire has been extinguished and work is being carried out on the still-active centers," the ministry's Monday statement noted. "Employees of various departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, as well as the relevant services of the Ministry of Environment and Agriculture continue to participate in the process of extinguishing the fire. In addition, border police helicopters and a specialized firefighting plane of the Republic of Turkey resumed their work this morning." On Thursday morning, it was noted, "the few

remaining smaller, but active and smoky fire sources are being processed. Roads have been laid with the help of heavy machinery. Route construction to the remaining fire sources is still in progress. Aviation has been actively participating in the localization and liquidation works since morning. Fire localization and liquidation works in Borjomi municipality by the units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were active throughout the night."

A fire broke out in the municipality of Mestia, Georgia's Svaneti region, on Tuesday.

On Thursday it was announced that fire extinguishing works continue on the slope of Lekhziri mountain of Mestia municipality. Representatives of the Emergency Management Service are involved in the process. The burning area is inaccessible to equipment and firefighters need to move in on foot. A helicopter is also involved in the process, and a second is to be brought in.

The deputy state representative in the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region says the fire broke out in the alpine zone and has already been localized, although smoke still remains.

The center of the fire appeared far from settlements, posing no danger to residents. As yet, the cause of both fires is unknown.



Who Knows the Truth about the War?

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

There are two things that liken wars to one another, whether they took place in ancient times or are happening now: they kill innocent people and the sides blatantly lie in their own favor about developments on the battlefield.

The Russian-Ukrainian military conflict continues raging, and the entire world is watching it with action-movie interest, although hardly anybody on this planet knows for sure who is winning and who is losing.

If you listen to the Ukrainian wartime media, you will hear that the heroic Ukrainian people, with their even more heroic militant and sharply PR-conscious president, are to prevail so much that, having kicked the aggressors out of their occupied lands, the war crimes of the ashamed and repentant invaders will be punished as the gleeful world enjoys the bowed-in-embarrassment Russian heads.

If you heed the Russian propaganda machine, you will hear how gutless and stupid the Ukrainians are, and how successfully the invincible Russian armed forces are cleansing the sacred Ukrainian lands from violent fascist influence and an unlawfully armed belligerent bunch of hoodlums and killers.

In compliance with this model of disseminating info, both are righteous in their confrontational action, both are winners, and both will celebrate victory before long. Yes, the irrefutable fact is that both sides need to keep the world misinformed and have it on their side. This is not the mission per se, of course, but it is definitely one of the tools for achieving the ultimate goal. How come? And why does this make sense in our overly transparent contemporary world?

The likely impact of the often unfounded optimism, artificially and deliberately imposed on us readers and listeners, in the war news, is so significant in terms of eventual success that misinforming the public has acquired value. Hence the increasingly obvious predilection of media of the respective sides to tell the



Captured Russian military hardware is displayed in Kyiv. Photo by Jim Huylebroek / NY Times

client what the client wants to hear, using sophisticated modern information technology, plus the on-the-spot worldwide effect of social networks on human hearts and minds.

It is simply incredible that a regular user of information has no way to know the truth about the situation on the front, making it sheer guesswork. Having delved into the sea of information in pursuit of the truth, you have to be a skilled reader between the lines and an owner of a lot of leisure time to be able to come to

some kind of conclusion. Often, though, it is beyond a rank-and-file war watcher's ability to deduce unerringly what the actual developments are. Liars, egregious liars – that's what all of them are!

One might even be driven to the point where the war itself loses its image as the terminator of thousands of human lives, turning all of us into zombies with the crippled imagination of cyber-warfare victims, and this is what gradually acquires a fundamental social role in our lives. The only qualification that one could

give to this kind of situation is informative control over the conflict. This is why there are hundreds of narratives out there about the actual war. All evaluations, even the expert ones, are dubious. None can be trusted, because the style of issuing the info is rife, and leaves a lot to be desired in its genuineness.

It is cruel that we have become so deprived of an opportunity to make fair and relevant judgments. I have never seen so many shrugged shoulders and confused countenances than in the dis-

ussion of this weird war between two blood brothers. The most nerve-wrecking player is social media. Better not comb through it for war news and opinions, because that's exactly where the human imagination tears its bridles and begets blunder in a componential manner, which is beyond a normal person's ability to cope with. So, what's next? Nothing much! Let's just wait for the end of the damn thing, then and only then might we understand something, one way or the other.

Saakashvili's Lawyer: If Gov't Does Not Trust Us, They Can Involve Their Experts in Examination

BY ANA DUMBADZE

If the Penitentiary Service wanted to do an examination, it should have conducted it itself a long time ago. In order not to delay the issue, they can now include their groups in this expert group – be it Samkharauli or other private expertise, whoever they consider necessary, – Mikheil Saakashvili's lawyer, Shalva Khachapuridze, told journalists.

As Khachapuridze noted, the delay of the case is connected with the further deterioration of Saakashvili's health.

"Mikheil Saakashvili has been a prisoner for 10 months. During this time, since the first day, we hear that his condition is serious. In my opinion, if the Penitentiary Service wanted to do so, it should have conducted the examination itself a long time ago. As a lawyer, I respect Mr. Rati [Bregadze] very much, we are fellow citizens, but he knows the term 'prolonging the case' very well. Currently, this only serves to prolong, so to avoid prolonging, we offer a solution. Now they can include their experts in this expert group, be it Samkharauli or any other private expertise, whoever they consider necessary.

"Delaying the case itself is connected with further deterioration of the health of this particular person. In order to act humanely and procedurally and within



the framework of the law, we now propose them to engage in the work of these groups. Whatever type of expertise pleases them, whoever they want and however they want, we are open, and our only request is that the matter should

not be delayed.

"If, after our examination report, any institution appoints a forensic examination, a trick often used by the state can be used here too – when some treatment is carried out from the first examination

to the second examination and the condition improves. We have seen this many times, so if everything is clean, in accordance with the rules of the game and the European Convention on Human Rights, if they have the desire to do so and do

not trust the experts and the expert report that we present, they should be involved in this process," said Khachapuridze.

Speaking about foreign experts, Khachapuridze also noted that "it is insulting to doubt experts of this quality".

"Besides, we will have court friends in this case, one of whom was the lecturer of Mr. Rati Bregadze. There will also be a lawyer of the Strasbourg Court, who has enormous authority in the main court of Strasbourg. To doubt all this is, to say the least, is incomprehensible, although this is the right of the party, which we cannot limit, and on the contrary, we are ready for openness.

"I have not talked to Mikheil Saakashvili, although he always said that they should check him, study his condition. A few months ago, forensic-medical, forensic-psychiatric, chemical and several other examinations were appointed in the Special Investigative Service. These examinations have not been started, and if there was such an interest, this examination should have been conducted. Now all our attention should be shifted to the Ministry of Health," Khachapuridze said.

For the record, foreign medical experts came to Georgia to visit Mikheil Saakashvili and evaluate his health condition, in order to prepare a medical report in this regard.

The foreign medical experts planned a meeting with the representatives of the Empathy Center and the members of Saakashvili's family.

New Friends: What Japan and Sweden Joining Noble Partner 2022 Means



Brigadier General Roalnd Dzneldadze introduces the exercise to service members and guests in Tbilisi. Photo by Georgian Ministry of Defense

BY MICHAEL GODWIN

For the sixth time, Georgia is home to one of the region's largest annual military exercises, Noble Partner. Over 2,400 service members from 21 countries have arrived in the country, along with fleets of armored vehicles. NATO and other partner nation representatives attended a commencement speech by Major General Giorgi Matiashvili, the Commander of the Defense Forces, complete with formations of troops and vehicles.

General Matiashvili reiterated the mission of the US- and Georgia-led exercises "to increase the readiness and interoperability between Georgia, the USA, regional partners and allied countries to ensure a stable and secure environment in the Black Sea region." This year's military attendees include familiar friends: Georgia, USA, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Greece, Great Britain, Turkey, Slovakia, Norway, Hungary, Lithuania, Azerbaijan, Germany, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Poland, and the Lithuania-Poland-Ukraine Multinational Brigade.

And this year, a pair of newcomers are present for their first time. Japan and Sweden have sent their own detachments to take part in the exercises, marking a maiden voyage for their troops. The arrival of members of the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) and the Swedish Armed Forces marks an interesting chapter, not only for Georgia, but also for these two.

Sweden has historically played both sides: Close ties and economic friendship with Europe and NATO, a policy of tolerance and cohesion with Russia

Georgia, a prized objective for Moscow, is now seeing new faces in its struggle to resist Russian influence in the region

Both nations have unique defense policies, particularly when it relates to NATO and its policies. Sweden has been a close ally of the alliance, becoming a formal invitee in early July and awaiting another invitation to sign the Washington Treaty, after which it will become a NATO Ally, something perpendicular to its historic avoidance of such broad agreements.

Sharing this vision in neutrality, Japan has also shied away from large-scale military foreign entanglements. The country's constitution prohibits them from engaging in warfare, limits the size of its armed forces, and prohibits long-range ballistic missile systems. Imposed by the Allied powers after the Second World War, they formally "renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes."

Despite these shared outlooks on conflict, both nations have seen a surprising shift in foreign policy. Sweden, along with her neighbor Finland, has moved unprecedentedly swiftly to join Europe's premier military alliance - NATO. Japan has also shifted its traditionally passive stance to one of more aggressive defense and reinvested in its military infrastructure, something that had largely atrophied.

Unquestionably, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in late February forced a massive pivot for both countries. Sweden and Japan have had a less-than-optimal relationship with the Kremlin in recent decades. Nonetheless, prior to the first incursion in 2014, and now, the two have moved to a state of militaristic caution as Moscow becomes more erratic.

SWEDEN
The Nordic country has historically

played both sides. Close ties and economic friendship with Europe and NATO, and a policy of tolerance and cohesion with Russia. Moscow's recognition of Georgia's occupied territories worsened Sweden's relations with them, with then-foreign minister Carl Bildt comparing it to actions by Germany in 1939.

The Kremlin-ordered operation in Ukraine in 2014, coupled with continuous airspace violations in its own territory, pushed Stockholm further away. Now, Sweden appears to have made the commitment to assist Europe against Russian aggression. With impending NATO membership a very real possibility, their involvement in Noble Partner signifies a willingness to put proverbial boots on the ground in key territory.

Russia recognizes that Sweden, as well as Finland, becoming a part of NATO presents a unique difficulty in their northern frontier regions. Additionally, the prospect of the Baltic Sea becoming a "NATO Lake" is something they likely had not perceived becoming a real issue.

Japan and Russia never agreed to a formal peace treaty after WWII, and as such they are technically at war

The region hosts some of Russia's most important strategic missile and air assets, as well as Russia's Northern Fleet around the Kola Peninsula.

The commitment of Swedish forces in the South Caucasus shows Russia that the Nordic nation is firm in its stance against them. Georgia, a prized objective for Moscow, is now seeing new faces in its struggle to resist Russian influence in the region. With its grip slipping in the contested Nagorno-Karabakh, the Kremlin is likely seeing its control of the area disappearing.

JAPAN

Historically, Japan's relations with Russia have been strained. Interestingly, they never agreed to a formal peace treaty after the Second World War, and as such the two nations are technically at war. The two had been in negotiations on a peace treaty in order to normalize relations when Moscow pulled out of the talks abruptly. Following Japan joining the international sanctions packages, Russia also refused free travel to a disputed series of islands north of Japan.

The Kuril Islands, an archipelago north of Japan's Hokkaido island, contains four islands that have been contested since the closing of WWII. In addition to a formal peace, the talks had included an agreement about these territories. Russia's withdrawal caused Japan's

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to say "Russia's actions are extremely unreasonable and totally unacceptable."

Japan's traditional neutrality has come into question, with several legislative measures taken to re-envision Article 9 of their constitution. This article, that severely restricts military activities outside of the nation, have been revised, with Japanese troops being deployed to Africa and the Middle East, albeit on peaceful missions. Additionally, the bolstering of its military presence in the north near those contested islands, and a plan to develop over 1,000 missile systems, may signal a change in Tokyo's foreign policy.

The decision to send troops to the South Caucasus may be another step outside their proverbial comfort zone. Japan's coordination with Europe and the United States against Russia may be leverage for use to regain their islands, but also a move to flex their blossoming martial capabilities. As with Sweden, Tokyo has shown its willingness to defy Moscow in its expansionist endeavors.

While Noble Partner is only a two-week exercise, it is a united commitment to Georgia that is strategically important. The expansion of that commitment to new participants shows that the region is not within the grasp of Moscow, despite its overt and covert attempts. The arrival of these new friends is an insight into the larger forces at play, with Georgia in the center. These forces are summed up in the words of US Marine Attaché in Georgia, Colonel James Thompson: "To train, be prepared, and, as steel sharpens steel, together, allied forces learn from Georgians and Georgians learn from allies, and together we're stronger."

Steel sharpens steel, together we're stronger



A member of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) during training exercises in the United States. Photo by the United States Marine Corps

Lelo's Grigol Gegelia on the EU's 12 Points, Visas for Russians, and Georgian Dream's Imminent Demise

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WILL THE "LELO" PARTY JOIN ZURAB GIRCHI JAPARIDZE OF THE "GIRCHI MORE FREEDOM" PARTY IN HIS PROTEST, OR DO YOU PREFER NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE RULING PARTY?

For Lelo, the priority has been and is to see the 12 points implemented and the country regaining its candidate status. That is what moves all our priorities, all our decisions and, indeed, all our actions. So, in the coming season, our priorities will be to pursue all possible routes with the view of actually regaining what Georgia deserves, what the Georgian public deserves and what we've lost because of Georgian Dream's policies. But, of course, all other methods within the law are legitimate, and we are always in close discussions with all our partners about what to do, how to do it, and when to do it.

IS YOUR POSITION A RESULT OF UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS TO CHANGE THE GOVERNMENT WITH PROTESTS?

No, not at all! I think our position is fundamentally guided by the priority of regaining deserved European membership candidate status for Georgia. We will change this government, of course, but that takes time. It will take time to change an autocratic regime with unlimited funds, illegitimate means of fighting with political opponents, a campaign of hatred, fear, and scaremongering, with attacks on the European Parliament and, I must say, attacks also on the idea of what is real. The Georgian Dream party has attacked the idea of the real and pursued a campaign of falsehood to the degree that it has questioned everything and anything. The goodness of the West has been questioned; the idea of the European Union as a peace project has not only been questioned, but attacked outright! It is difficult to fight autocracy, and we must face that. We are in a tough battle.

POLITICAL ANALYST KORNELY KAKACHIA TOLD US IN HIS INTERVIEW THAT FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES ARE LESS LIKELY TO HAPPEN BEFORE 2024. DO YOU SEE ANY OTHER OPTIONS OR DO YOU AGREE WITH HIM?

There is a diversity of views on that. Many people expect the elections to take place in 2024. Others see them coming earlier than that. I don't think that's the most important question of the day. We should be ready to fight every day up until whenever it is. No matter if the elections will be in 2024 or 2023. Indeed, my party is preparing every day, and we are ready to take on GD with our colleagues whenever the elections come up.

DO YOU EXPECT WE WILL GET EU CANDIDACY STATUS BEFORE 2024?

I can't see that happening with this government, one that attacks the European Union daily and has done its best to



isolate Georgia entirely from the civilized and global community. I can't see that happening because this government will not reform anything. Reforms for this government, we've got to understand, are suicidal. They can't think of deoligarchization because they are united around the oligarch – Bidzina Ivanishvili. They will not reform the justice system. They will not reform any of the particular directions because the moment they reform anything, they will formalize their defeat, which has already happened a few times before. Georgian Dream has found additional corridors to grab power that don't belong to it. So, the moment you reform this country, the Georgian Dream ends, so they will not reform Georgia at all.

Georgian Dream will not reform any of the 12 directions because the moment they do, they will formalize their defeat

THE EU ONCE AGAIN ASKED YOU TO WORK WITH THE PARTY THAT THE EU ITSELF BLAMES FOR BREAKING PROMISES AND FAILING ON REFORMS. ISN'T THIS REQUEST DISHONORING FOR YOU?

It's not dishonoring at all. We understand the position of our Western partners. Of course, they are seeking institutional stability and inclusion. But we don't think that request applies to the commissions and working groups created by the Georgian Dream. There are other forms of inclusion; there are different ways and means of working together among the political groups, committees of the parliament of Georgia, as well as the plenary session of the parliament of Georgia. They are appropriate and legitimate institutional means of working together; that is where we will participate. We don't think that anybody has asked us to work with these very dubious working groups, with a very low level of inclusion, and who set very strange preconditions, for example, that Mr Ivanishvili is not an oligarch and that the clan is not a problem in the judicial system. We hear these sorts of preconditions proposed by the Georgian Dream that make it impossible for us to participate.

We are working on our own positive agenda in each of the 12 critical directions set out by the European Commission. In September, we will introduce our agenda of reforms to the parliament. I'm very sure that the Georgian people and our Western partners will be able to see who is offering what, what sort of quality, what political substance and, indeed, what is best for our country.

YOU CRITICIZE THE GD PARTY FOR ITS POLICY TOWARD RUSSIAN VISITORS. WHAT WOULD THE LELO PARTY DO IF IT WERE IN GOVERNMENT?

Well, we'd first introduce a visa regime for the citizens of Russia and Belarus. We would also introduce mechanisms of control on not only who enters the country from these two states and how many people enter Georgia, but also on the ownership of private property as well as businesses, because for Georgia, as a small nation, but as a small nation threatened by Russia continuously, this is a matter of national security. Yet, we currently have a very big anomaly: Georgia is the only country in the world to have a visa-free regime for the citizens of Russia for three hundred and sixty days per year, despite being the only state in the world who fought a war with Russia in 2008, despite experiencing the nineties, despite experiencing the occupation, and despite being continuously occupied by them. I think it's a moral, political and very serious national security question. I must also say that I'm very much against any form of discrimination against any ethnicity or sexual group, or even national group. That's not acceptable for us, but at the same time, we want to see the moral, historical and political dimension of the question raised and to have a visa regime installed which will, of course, still enable Russians to enter Georgia to pursue their interest here as a tourist or whatever it might be, but that will be controlled by the Georgian state. We, as a people and as a nation, must know who's enter-

The beginning of the end is on for GD, because the Georgian people will not forgive anyone for the loss of the European perspective

ing the country, for how long, and for what purpose.

YOU CALL MR BIDZINA IVANISHVILI AN OLIGARCH, BUT YOU HAVE YET TO MAKE OUR WESTERN PARTNERS BELIEVE IT, AND THEY'VE NOT SANCTIONED HIM.

I think they believe it. If you look at the media coverage internationally, Ivanishvili is consistently named an oligarch. If we look at the resolution of the European Parliament, he is very clearly depicted as an oligarch. He has not been sanctioned in a full sense yet, although we might see some recent events as a precursor to that. I think everybody knows that Ivanishvili is an oligarch, and he's described as one and spoken of as one. What is missing is the sanctions. They will come, but they will come from different institutions other than the Georgian opposition.

IS THIS THE END OF IVANISHVILI'S POLITICAL LIFE?

Oh, yes, indeed! The beginning of the end is on, because the Georgian people will not forgive anyone for the loss of the European perspective. Georgian Dream will radicalize further. They will try to be even more intimidating and more autocratic, but that is the best sign of their sure end, which is coming.

We, as a people and as a nation, must know who's entering the country, for how long, and for what purpose

Nagorno-Karabakh's Next Episode

BY MICHAEL GODWIN

Almost two years since a war that shook South Caucasian relations, Armenia and Azerbaijan are again making changes to the region. Despite both sides reporting violations of the ceasefire that brought combat to an end in November of 2020, diplomacy has largely prevailed. The key trade route running through the border town of Lachin (Berdzor) is at the center of the next chapter in the region's most tenuous relationship.

However, the means with which this town and its thoroughfare came to center stage was not without its violent scenes. Russian peacekeepers, deployed as a part of the peace agreement in 2020, have had a dubious part in keeping the two from coming back to armed conflict again. With the Azerbaijani military on the move, Armenian civilians moving in the opposite direction, and a new road and Russian military base under construction, the region is facing a new chapter.

The new road, aptly referred to commonly as the Stepanakert-Goris route, has only recently been completed. "That temporary section of the new route connecting Artsakh to Armenia is completely asphalted," spokesperson to the minister of territorial administration and infrastructure of Artsakh Viktoria Petrosyan said. Additionally, she said it is in use and Russian peacekeepers are already carrying out their duties along the road.



Another war could lead to the collapse of either nation and a crisis in Europe



An Azerbaijani soldier takes a photo on top of a tower in Nagorno-Karabakh. Source: AFP Photo

According to the stipulations of the ceasefire in 2020, this new road is to bypass certain areas of Azerbaijani-controlled Nagorno-Karabakh. One key area that was to be relinquished is the key passageway of Lachin. Since the war, the town was the only proper route into the region, making commerce and trade complicated, despite the deployment of peacekeepers at the crossing.

The plan was for the new road system to be built within three years of the signing of the ceasefire. While neither side was specified, Azerbaijan, the builder and backer for the project, sent construction crews to begin the project. Upon completion, Russia had agreed to relocate its peacekeeping contingent according to the new road and crossing point, tasked with the same stability mission.

However, prior to the completion of the project, Azerbaijani forces made a move that caught both Russian troops and Armenian forces deployed near the region by surprise. In early August, video and images of Azerbaijani soldiers seizing hilltops by force in the region began to surface. The Azerbaijani Ministry of Defense even released a video showing one of their drones striking an Armenian



The Russian peacekeepers have lost much of the trust they had from the Armenian populace

artillery base. Casualties were reported.

According to the Ministry of Defense, the strikes were "an anti-terrorist operation against illegal Armenian armed groups in the territory of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeeping contingent is temporarily stationed." Following these attacks, Azerbaijani forces were seen moving into Lachin and neighboring towns in armored convoys, with the new road projects still incomplete.

"Today, on August 26, we - Azerbaijanis - returned to the city of Lachin and took control over Zabukh and Sus villages," Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev posted on social media.

These statements, along with the forceful measures taken, are unlikely to be the conclusion to the conflict the region needs. The Russian peacekeepers have lost much of the trust they had from the Armenian populace, causing many to resort to fleeing their homes and surrendering territory. Azerbaijan has continued to seek more ground in the Armenian-controlled parts of Nagorno-Karabakh, constantly keeping pressure on Yerevan's troops.

This makes the propensity for renewed fighting all the more realistic. One particular avenue is a connecting bridge of territory between Azerbaijan proper and its satellite region of Nakhchivan to the southwest. While a trade corridor is planned, the opportunity for Armenia to use this as leverage is too much for Baku to allow.

To prevent future hostilities, a proper and effective mediation force should be in place. With Russia and Turkey having a vested interest in the region and obvi-

ous biases, a European-centric force similar to that in Kosovo's KFOR would work to greater effect. Rotating elements from NATO, sans Turkey, and NATO's allies would be able to connect more warmly with authorities in Baku and Yerevan.

Both Azerbaijan and Armenia have strong ties to the European community. Along with economic, political, and social leverage, a European task force has the ability to bring both to the peace table. Russia, already preoccupied with events in Ukraine and having a marred image on the world stage, does not possess the capacity to ensure stability in Nagorno Karabakh.

As the contested region moves into its next chapter, more attention must be paid to its long term future. Another war could lead to the collapse of either nation and a crisis in Europe. Already being shunned, Russia's peacekeeping force has outlived its effective 'shelf life' and could use a more effective replacement.

While EU figures like Charles Michel, the President of the European Council, and members of the OSCE Minsk Group have worked hard for peace, more is needed. Europeans have proven their ability to establish peace while remaining firm. As a friend politically and militarily to both sides, Europe and NATO offer a unique set of capabilities to begin the long-term building of bridges between a people torn apart for decades.



Along with economic, political, and social leverage, a European task force can bring both to the peace table

BUSINESS

Georgian Team from Kutaisi Claims Victory in the Creative Spark Big Idea Challenge 2022

In April-July 2022, the British Council collaborated with London Metropolitan University (UK) to organize the largest video pitch competition, Creative Spark Big Idea Challenge, as part of the British Council's Creative Spark Higher Education Enterprise Program. The competition aimed to promote the development of students', graduates' and young entrepreneurs' business ideas by awarding the winners to assist them with the implementation of their pitched idea.

The Creative Spark Big Idea Challenge is designed as a 60-second video pitching competition to teach the basics of entrepreneurship and how to develop an idea from concept to reality. The platform also helps young entrepreneurs to raise their profile and improve their career prospects. Among 250 start-up ideas from 70 institutions in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine, BOOKI, a team of undergrads from Kutaisi, Georgia, as named the Grand Champion and the winner of the monetary prize and personalized mentoring support. BOOKI also won people's hearts in the previous stage of the competition at the People's Choice Award on Facebook. Made up of four members, Erekle

Beridze, Anano Shavardashvili, Giorgi Abesadze, and Valer Gurgenchashvili, BOOKI's winning idea aims to create an easy-to-use online platform for second-hand booksellers and buyers of all ages. Through interactive delivery service functions, the team of four beneficiaries of the British Council's Creative Spark program plan to create a comfortable online shopping environment, thus helping customers to save time and resources.

To meet the creators of BOOKI and for detailed information on the project, you may visit <https://creativespark-bigidea.uk/vote-for-idea-25/>

The winning idea under the 'Social Impact' category of the Big Idea Challenge will come to life and meet customers by the end of the year.

ABOUT CREATIVE SPARK

The British Council's Creative Spark Higher Education Enterprise program started in 2018 and is in its final year. Creative Spark aims to develop enterprise skills and the creative economy across seven countries in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan), South Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia) and Ukraine through sharing the UK



experience and expertise in the creative economy which quite fairly is considered most advanced in Europe. The program's primary beneficiaries are university students, graduates and young entrepreneurs.

"We believe this initiative significantly supports the development of the creative economy because young creative entrepreneurs acquire new skills which make them competitive in local and

international markets. Moreover, the program supports the establishment and development of the British-Georgian University/institutional partnerships," British Council's representative states.

Interview with First Georgian Cruelty-Free Shoe Brand 'Ninimo Shoes'



duction. We are forever thankful to the U.S.A. for this opportunity. This country delightfully accepted Ninimo Shoes as a fashion brand and me as a sustainable designer. We have not even thought of any other country with higher standards, so doing business in the U.S.A. was the highest risk and challenge we were willing to take! There is no significant achievement without big dreams. Moving a company to another country is quite long and challenging. Still, we are lucky to be in this process, thanks to you and our customers, who made us believe that cruelty-free and ethical fashion is something we can share as a society. Hopefully, we will be more careful in businesses and care more about our environment."



Ninimo Shoes is a company with high social responsibility. The brand constantly offers its customers comfortable, sophisticated, and fashionable shoes. In addition, Ninimo Shoes is continuously involved in charity activities held in

Georgia. The company does not use animal skin in its products.

Nini Mosulishvili, a designer of the brand, is a professional who always talks about the impact of cruelty-free fashion and how it affects our daily life. She is famous for her commitment to eco-friendly clothing and shoes. Her initia-

tive for producing sustainable shoes positively impacts people and the planet. The fact once again emphasizes the advantage of the brand. Ninimo shoes is a pioneer in ethical fashion in Georgia. Magazine Georgia talked to the founder of the brand Nini Mosulishvili and learned more about the upcoming news and

updates of the brand.

Ninimo Shoes will move 40%-50% of production and management to the U.S.A.

Nini Mosulishvili- "We have been working and waiting to move to the U.S.A. for two years. Everything is in process, and we hope that in spring 2023, we will be ready to launch our U.S. pro-

Geostat: GDP Growth Rate in Georgia Amounted to 10.3% in January-July 2022

The estimated real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate in July 2022 amounted to 9.7% YoY and 10.3% in January-July of 2022 YoY, reports the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat).

Geostat says in July 2022 the estimated real growth compared to the same period of the previous year was observed in the following activities: Transportation and storage, Construction, Information and communication, Mining and quarrying, Trade. A decline was registered in Manufacturing.



WHO Regional Director for Europe, Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge: Actions We Need to Take on Public Health Emergencies

BY WHO REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR EUROPE, DR HANS HENRI P. KLUGE

Control, elimination, eradication. Three ACTIONS that underpin my remarks today, on three different public health emergencies of international concern, each requiring its own distinct response strategy and aims.

First, control – specifically in the context of COVID-19.

In a matter of weeks, the European Region is projected to reach 250 million confirmed COVID-19 cases since the pandemic began two-and-a-half years ago. We have made great strides in addressing the pandemic. But the virus is still circulating widely, still putting people in hospital, still causing too many preventable deaths – some 3,000 in the past week alone, about a third of the global recorded total. The virus is also still evolving to evade our countermeasures. With autumn and winter approaching, we anticipate a surge in cases – with or without a resurgence of seasonal influenza in Europe.

Our recently launched COVID-19 autumn and winter strategy is comprehensive, spelling out what needs to be done by countries to control both SARS-CoV-2 as well as other respiratory viruses.

The strategy outlines how we can combine what we know works, with the better use of new tools and tactics to reduce the impact of the diseases. With a stronger focus on community level surveillance, case detection and care, the strategy emphasizes the need for early detection, and primary care access to oral antivirals for vulnerable patients. This means continuing to stabilize transmission, without the need for blanket measures. The strategy also addresses persistent issues such as health providers' own mental health and burnout – all under a single response framework.

The strategy also focuses on what we know has saved countless lives, and can save more.



Statement by WHO Regional Director for Europe, Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge

Vaccination roll-out continues to progress in most countries, including in lower- and middle-income countries. Yet millions remain unvaccinated in many parts of our Region; we must find better ways to reach them. While doing so, we need to prioritize giving a second booster shot to the most vulnerable, including older adults, immunocompromised individuals and those with underlying medical conditions.

We're also urging countries to administer influenza vaccine along with COVID-19 vaccine, whenever feasible.

But individuals should continue to understand the situation they are in, and take common-sense steps to protect themselves too – like wearing masks indoors in crowded places and on public transportation, ventilating spaces well, and regular handwashing. These are not new messages – but remain critical to personal safety. As requirements have been lifted, the choice to use these simple but effective measures is with each of us.

The second action I want to emphasize today is towards elimination – in the context of the monkeypox outbreak, with

the European Region recording more than 22,000 confirmed cases across 43 countries and areas – representing more than a third of the global tally.

There are encouraging early signs, as evidenced in France, Germany, Portugal, Spain, the UK, and other countries, that the outbreak may be slowing. To move towards elimination in our Region, we need to urgently step up our efforts.

Yet we believe we CAN eliminate sustained human-to-human transmission of monkeypox in the Region if we commit to doing so and put the needed resources towards that end.

That's why this week we've launched two comprehensive policy briefs: One outlining the policy objectives and steps needed for the control and eventual elimination of monkeypox, the other specifically on the use of monkeypox vaccines.

These briefs provide a clear roadmap for governments and policymakers to mount an effective outbreak response. They also provide a clear message on what we believe our ultimate aim is: To first control, and ultimately achieve –

and sustain – elimination of monkeypox infection in the European Region.

All countries – whether they currently have cases or not – need to implement a set of combined interventions towards this end.

We don't say this often enough, but monkeypox can cause agonizing pain to those who have it, including those with sores in their mouth or genital and anal areas. The disease can also lead to life-threatening complications, and it can, in rare cases, cause scarring. The anguish experienced by many patients cannot be underestimated – it can be a truly horrible time. We highlight that support to both the physical and mental health of patients during the entire course of the disease, and after it, remains of critical importance.

Most importantly, with monkeypox, we really must target our response. The current outbreak emerged among men who have sex with men, often through sex with anonymous or multiple partners. That's where the outbreak remains centered. And that's where we must concentrate our prevention and response

efforts – with the active collaboration and participation of the community itself, fostering an environment free of stigma and discrimination against this long-marginalized population. Here at WHO/Europe we have actively engaged with LGBTIQ+ activists and organizations, including the organizers of Pride events – ensuring that they receive the best information and advice possible to further disseminate to the community, including at mass gatherings which may serve as a backdrop for sexual activity.

Similar community outreach and partnership efforts by some governments, for example in Portugal, have also resulted in high awareness of monkeypox, prompting individuals to take precautions and modify their behaviour, resulting in better health outcomes and helping curb the outbreak.

The third action for today is eradication – this, in the context of polio, a disease that crippled many children in our region in the past. As we look forward to celebrating the 20th year of polio-free status in the European Region we are reminded that the momentous progress made towards global eradication is very fragile.

In the past years, vaccine-derived polio viruses have been detected in Israel, Tajikistan, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. Given our interconnected world, the polio virus detected recently in New York, in the US is genetically linked to the viruses detected in Israel and the UK. Despite overall high immunization coverage, the poliovirus has found its way to susceptible individuals in under-vaccinated communities.

This is a wake-up call for us all. It is our shared responsibility to eradicate polio globally. Everyone who is not vaccinated, or whose children have missed their scheduled vaccinations, should seek vaccination as soon as possible. Polio vaccines are proven to be very effective and very safe.

Polio, monkeypox, COVID-19 – all of these have demonstrated repeatedly that a disease threat anywhere can quickly become a disease threat everywhere – a lesson we would indeed be foolish to ignore, all the more in the world of today.

Cities in Europe Are Unique - New WHO Report Shows They Can Be the Healthiest in the World, Tbilisi Included

COMPILED BY TEAM GT

There are fewer mega cities in the WHO European Region than in other areas of the world – more than 70% of people in that Region are living in smaller cities of less than half a million inhabitants. That gives Europe a unique opportunity to make city life healthier, says a new report prepared by the WHO European Office for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases in collaboration with Gehl design agency.

The report “Urban design for health: inspiration for the use of urban design to promote physical activity and healthy diets in the WHO European Region” was launched on 31 August during the opening session of the 11th conference of HEPA Europe on health-enhancing physical activity in Nice, France.

A HEALTHY CHOICE SHOULD BE THE EASIEST CHOICE

Smaller cities can use more urban design

tools and health interventions to improve the well-being of their populations. The new report looks at innovative and effective ways to promote physical activity and healthy diets in urban settings.

There is a strong relationship between urban environments and non-communicable diseases, which are a major cause of death and disability around the world.

Providing access to healthy foods and active lifestyles has profound effects on the physical, mental, and social well-being of communities around the world.

Rather than simply educating people about the ‘right’ food choice and benefits of physical activity, cities can implement strategies to make those choices the easiest ones, proposes the WHO report.

TOOLS FOR HEALTHIER CITIES

“If we want to make cities a better environment that helps people to live healthier lives, first we need to understand the people's needs. This will give us insights to integrate healthier habits into everyday lives effectively,” said Dr Kremlin Wickramasinghe, a.i. Head of the WHO European Office for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases.

“Gathering data and building connections with local communities is essential for healthier urban planning.”

The WHO report presents several innovative tools which facilitate this aim in different ways:

- collect data on how people move around in a city
- identify local food infrastructures that can improve food security
- estimate the economic benefits of healthier policies
- tools for engaging various types of stakeholders, including citizens
- analyze data for healthier urban planning

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES FROM CITIES

Many cities have already implemented actions related to urban transport and mobility, as well as access to urban nature and green spaces. The new report highlights some of the positive examples.

CORK, IRELAND

This city is introducing more playful elements into its street architecture by developing ten new parklets with entertainment equipment and seating.



LISBON, PORTUGAL

The city promotes healthy food behavior by putting local produce at the heart of its public space project, while teaching children how to grow vegetables and the importance of a healthy diet.

CHEREPOVETS, THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Providing special pathways to access the water in both summer and winter. By connecting blue and green spaces in the city centre, this intervention aims to promote mental health for city dwellers of all ages and groups.

TBILISI, GEORGIA

The city is transforming its streets to make them pedestrian oriented. The new street design is meant to address the main challenges of Tbilisi: air quality, physical inactivity, and mental health.

Several events have been organized to promote public awareness of the damage due to emissions from traffic. One was to close down the Adam Mitskevichi Street (pilot area) for a few days, to familiarize citizens with a different perception of use of the street. From the first hours that the street was dedicated to the public, children arrived with music and started dancing, and some people enjoyed cycling and skateboarding. For the Citym this was a driver for pushing the idea forward. Currently, drawings are being prepared to permanently refurbish Mitskevichi Street.

The tools and examples in the report highlight the types of actions that policy makers and urban planners can use for inspiration to rethink and improve their cities.

See the report here: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/361995>

The Tower Speaks. Part 3

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

Fifteen-year-old Khalina of Seti, the future town of Mestia, has been dreaming of a Svan watchtower with only two top “eye” windows on each side, which to her resembles a warrior’s helmet. A face appears there, and it begins talking to her; the conversation seems to last for ages.

—You are telling me so much! I don’t know what to do with it all, especially as you forbid me to share it with my people.

—Only for now. I ask you to write it all down (you do know how to write, I have seen this too). Its time will come, even as ours—that of mountains, ice or snow creatures and towers who are aware and can communicate—fades. Soon you will be alone as physical beings who can talk. This must be.

—WHY? I envisioned a whole lifetime of friendship with you and others! Is it ordained that you draw back?

—Yes. Our thoughts will not disappear, nor will we as thinking beings. We will commune only with each other. I will still have my far-reaching or small-seeing spies, the birds, rodents and insects which inhabit me and greatly extend my vision. Through them I can see as distant a landscape as they can roam, or as tiny as they can perceive among my stone roots and hidden parts. My life will never become tiresome or isolated. As for your kind... there are other things set aside for you to do, as the world arrives with unstoppable force in future generations. You will have both to change and not to lose your identity as the people of Svaneti. We will pass into legend; you will advance to your destiny, dimly remembering us. We must decrease so that you can increase.

Otherwise, in your ascent, there would be war between us.

For this reason, I wish my words to be preserved until their time comes, so that these long ages of our life will not become only fable, but will be rediscovered as part of the long history of your land. We may have more conversations until it is finished, but please begin writing as soon as you are free so to do. This will allow both our conversations, and you as recorder, to live on in a new way.

Khalina awoke, with it all fresh as any talk of moments ago. She lit a candle, then reached under her bed’s floorboards, looking for her secreted quill, paper and ink.

Nothing was left of the parchment and feather but a pile of dust and a few fragments. Moths! She should have known better! Where could she get more, these having been so hard to acquire in the first place?

That night, the edifice appeared to her again in her slumber.

—What can I do, O Tower? It took me months to get that vellum with no one noticing!

—Some of our enemies are tiny and silent but numerous, existing only to consume. They would eat my very foundation stones, if only they could.

I will tell you where to get more parchment: I do not have spies everywhere for nothing! The risk must be yours, but the location I can at least tell. However, this must not be a theft. You must leave something of at least equal value in return for what you take, or you leave an opening for more devourers. Then, I will tell you how to ward them off for additional protection. I cannot be with you when you are awake, only in your dreams; so here are my instructions.

To be concluded in next week’s GT.

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



Mission Director John A. Pennell began his tenure this week as the new leader of USAID/Georgia.

Pennell brings more than 25 years of USAID and international development experience to this role. Most recently he served as the Mission Director for USAID/Libya from 2019 to 2022. Prior to this, he served as USAID’s Deputy

Mission Director for Ukraine and Belarus in 2015-19, helping to oversee the Agency’s largest Mission in the region and its efforts to counter malign influence. He also previously worked in Ukraine from 2000-01.

He takes over leadership of USAID’s foreign assistance to Georgia that totals over \$80 million annually. US foreign assistance through USAID strengthens Georgia’s resilience to malign influence,

New Mission Director Begins Work at USAID/Georgia

consolidates democratic gains through enhanced citizen responsive governance, and enables high-value employment through increased economic growth. Over a period of 30 years, the US government has provided nearly \$6 billion to Georgia.

On the work ahead, Pennell said, “Georgia has been a key partner for the United States since its independence, and I am honored to lead the USAID presence here. This is of course a challenging time for the world, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine compounding other challenges posed by climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. But I look forward to leading an outstanding team of Americans and Georgians at this Mission. Together with our partners in national

and local government, business, and civil society we can find solutions to these challenges that will move Georgia ahead toward Euro-Atlantic integration and other development goals.”

Pennell has also served as the Deputy Mission Director for USAID/East Africa, based in Nairobi, Kenya, where he led efforts to ramp up USAID’s Somalia program. He has also served in other management and technical positions with USAID including in Afghanistan, El Salvador, Indonesia, Iraq, and Uzbekistan.

He is currently a PhD candidate in War and Defense Studies at King’s College-London. He holds a Master’s degree in National Security Strategy from the National War College, a Master’s degree in Political Science from American Uni-

versity, and a Bachelor’s degree in Politics from The Catholic University of America. He speaks Russian and Spanish.

Pennell takes over from Peter Wiebler, who served as Mission Director from 2018 until his departure earlier this year to assume new duties for USAID.

USAID is the world’s premier international development agency and a catalytic actor driving development results. Over 30 years of partnership with Georgia, USAID has supported the country’s transformation into a developing democracy that is increasingly integrated into Western political, security, and economic institutions.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.usaid.gov/georgia>.



Source: civil.ge

“Like an Animal” – Saxon Bosworth’s New Film Reveals the Work of a Georgian Conservationist and the Life of the Caucasian Tur



Georgian conservationist, Nika Kerdikoshvili, who is working in Lagodekhi to protect the Caucasian Tur

ber 2020 with quite a naive intention of making a documentary about the environmental catastrophe. My team and I have been working on this series for around two years now, and in the next few months this documentary will be entered into film festivals, and hopefully be viewable to the general public at the end of the year/start of 2023.”

“Having been educated about Georgia whilst in Central Asia, I began to learn of its rich and diverse environments and biodiversity,” he says. “However, I came here with only one contact, and with no expectation of what I was going to find. Eventually, through a long chain, I connected with Ilia State University and two PhD students who I have now spent the summer working with: Nika Kerdikoshvili, who works with the Caucasian Tur, and Nika Paposhvili, who works with the Velvet Scoter in Tabatskuri (where I am now), a thought-to-be regionally extinct species of duck - a film on his work and story will follow later this year.”

He tells us he had no expectation of what he would film when coming to Georgia, that it is a “principle” of his.

“I do lots of research, but I don’t project

what I anticipate or desire to find; I simply observe. As a single individual working on these projects in Georgia, with limited resources, I feel the only way I can create something of value is to invest my time and brain entirely, which has resulted in me doing expeditions throughout the entire summer, and living in Tabatskuri specifically for more than 6 weeks.”

We ask him about the challenges he faces in his work.

“There are some challenges, mostly economical,” he says. “However, I am unbelievably grateful to be able to fight to continue to do this kind of work, so I won’t dwell on the challenges heavily. I will say that being from one of the flattest places in the UK, high altitudes have a toll on my body, and require constant adaptation. This year, I have really had to understand how to take better care of my body, due to diet, constant travel, altitude, etc.”

The film “Like an Animal” will go on Saxon Bosworth’s YouTube channel, where there is already some of his other work: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCV1Txgul7p-VW9j9C4MH-dCg>

INTERVIEW BY KATIE RUTH DAVIES

This weekend, researcher and film-maker Saxon Bosworth is releasing his new film “Like an Animal” (ცხოველბოთ) the story of Georgian conservationist, Nika Kerdikoshvili, who is working in Lagodekhi to protect the Caucasian Tur. The Tur is a wild goat species living in the Caucasian Mountains, whose numbers have suffered greatly in recent decades due to poaching.

“Nika, who grew up as a hunter, had some dramatic experiences with wildlife in his youth which altered his path, including the killing of a brown bear, the impact of which he discusses in the film,” Saxon tells GEORGIA TODAY. “He went on to trade his rifle for a camera, and uses his mastery of tracking and bushcraft to do crucial conservation work.

“A recent photo he took of a Caucasian Tur fighting off a wolf in the high mountains, the first such photo ever taken, brought him the attention of the BBC and other international media,” he adds.

Film-maker Saxon Bosworth grew up in Cambridgeshire in the UK, and, after graduating in International Business, worked in Paris, France, for two years.

“Losing my job just before Covid pushed me to really evaluate what I was doing with my life,” Saxon tells us. “For years, I’d been running around taking pictures, mostly of sunrises and sunsets, but always with a vision of experimenting with documentary film. During the pandemic, I began researching the Aral Sea, and eventually set off to Uzbekistan in Octo-



A recent photo Nika Kerdikoshvili took of a Caucasian Tur fighting off a wolf in the high mountains, brought him to the attention of the BBC



PUBLISHER & GM
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Photographer:
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Website Manager/Editor:
Katie Ruth Davies

Layout:
Misha Mchedlishvili

Webmaster:
Sergey Gevenov

Circulation Managers:
David Kerdikashvili,
David Djandigava

ADDRESS
1 Melikishvili Str.
Tbilisi, 0179, Georgia

Tel.: +995 32 229 59 19
E: info@georgiatoday.ge
F: GeorgiaToday

ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTION
+995 555 00 14 46
E-mail:
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