



FOCUS ON THE TOURISM INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS FORUM

Looking ahead for Georgian businesses in a conference, presentations, networking, and discussions of the past, present and future

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Israeli House to Work on Several Projects in Montenegro

After a successful visit to Israel, the Minister of State Administration of Montenegro, Marash Dukaj, visited Georgia. The working visit was dedicated to establishing future relations with Montenegro.

During the visit, Dukaj, together with the former Knesset Vice-Speaker and the head of the Georgia-Israel Parliamentary Friendship Group in the Knesset, Hilik Bar, met with the head of Israeli House - Itsik Moshe.

The founder of the international festival "Batuman Rhapsody", recognized soprano Tamar Iveri, and the winner of the festival Elmina Hasan, also took part in the meeting.

At the meeting between Itsik Moshe and the minister, it was agreed to open an office of Israeli House in Montenegro. The office will be launched in April and the goal of the organization will be to represent the real Israel and lobby for direct connections.

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Markets									
As of 10-Oct-2022									
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m		
BONDS				STOCKS					
GRAIL 07/28	78.15	(YTM 8.99%)	-0.4%	-5.2%	Bank of Georgia (BGEQ LN)	GBP 19.76	+1.1%	-7.0%	
GEBGG 07/23	100.75	(YTM 5.01%)	-0.1%	-0.0%	Georgia Capital (CGEO LN)	GBP 6.20	+2.0%	-9.9%	
GEOPAP 03/24	93.56	(YTM 11.19%)	-0.6%	-0.8%	TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN)	GBP 17.48	+2.9%	-7.1%	
SILNET 01/27	95.11	(YTM 9.79%)	-0.8%	-1.5%					
TBC 06/24	98.65	(YTM 6.60%)	+0.1%	-0.2%					
				CURRENCIES	Price	w/w	m/m		
				GEL / USD	2.7886	-1.1%	-2.8%		
				GEL / EUR	2.7060	-2.3%	-5.2%		
				GEL / GBP	3.0823	-3.5%	-6.3%		
COMMODITIES	Price	w/w	m/m	GEL / CHF	2.7885	-1.9%	-5.7%		
Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	96.19	+8.2%	+3.6%	GEL / RUB	0.0438	-8.2%	-6.4%		
Gold Spot (US\$/Oz)	1 668.61	-1.8%	-2.8%	GEL / TRY	0.1500	-1.1%	-3.7%		
				GEL / AZN	1.6477	-0.9%	-1.7%		
				GEL / AMD	0.0069	-0.7%	-1.7%		
INDICES	Price	w/w	m/m	GEL / UAH	0.0755	-1.4%	-2.3%		
FTSE 100	6 959.31	+0.7%	-5.3%	EUR / USD	1.0307	+1.3%	+3.5%		
FTSE 250	17 125.29	+0.5%	-10.8%	GBP / USD	0.9045	+2.4%	+4.8%		
DAX	12 272.94	+0.5%	-6.2%	CHF / USD	0.9997	+0.7%	+4.0%		
DOW JONES	29 202.88	-1.0%	-9.2%	RUB / USD	63.7592	+7.8%	+5.5%		
NASDAQ	10 542.10	-2.5%	-13.0%	TRY / USD	18.5731	+0.3%	+1.9%		
MSCI EM EE	22.69	-1.6%	-14.4%	AZN / USD	1.6962	+0.0%	+0.1%		
MSCI EM	884.81	+1.0%	-8.8%	AMD / USD	403.3500	-0.4%	-0.2%		
SP 500	3 612.39	-1.8%	-11.2%						
MSCI FM	1 937.56	+0.2%	-10.6%						

Ukraine Latest: Russia Detains Eight over Crimea Bridge Attack, Sustains Losses in Southern Ukraine

BY ANA DUMBADZE

Eight people have been detained over the weekend's attack on the Crimea bridge, and Russia's security forces have named a senior figure from Ukraine as being behind them, according to reports from the state-owned Tass news agency, which quotes a statement from the Federal Security Service (FSB) saying:

"The Federal Security Service, together with the Investigative Committee, established that the organizer of the terrorist attack on the Crimean Bridge was the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ukrainian Defence Ministry, its head Kyrylo Budanov, employees and agents. "Currently, five citizens of Russia, and three citizens of Ukraine and Armenia who participated in the preparation of the crime, have been detained within the frames of the criminal case."

The FSB claims that the explosives which caused a section of the bridge to collapse were sent from Odessa through Bulgaria, Georgia and Armenia. Tass reports that the cargo carrying the explosives was being sent to a non-existent company in Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014.

"Ukrainian citizens Mikhail Tsiurkalo, Denis Kovach, Roman Solomko, Georgian citizens Sandro Inasaridze, a broker named Levan, and Armenian citizen Artur Terchanian participated in the transportation," Russian media reported.

The Georgian Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Aleksandre Darakhvelidze, commented on the accusations of the Russian special services regarding the explosion on the Crimean bridge and said that the Georgian side had nothing to do with the mentioned issue.

"Georgia has nothing to do with the issue. Both transit and non-transit cargoes pass customs control in Georgia.



No suspicious fact was recorded," he said.

The explosion on Crimean bridge was named a "terrorist attack" by Russia. In response, it bombed several Ukrainian cities, including capital Kyiv, on Monday. It was the broadest aerial assault against civilians and critical infrastructure since the early days of Moscow's invasion.

After missiles hit at least 10 Ukrainian cities, President Putin warned in a televised address that "no-one should have any doubt" that Russia will defend itself. He threatened further strikes if Ukraine continued to hit Russian targets.

Russia's attacks killed at least 11 people nationwide and wounded 64 others, the Ukrainian State Emergency Service said, and knocked out power and other key services in multiple cities.

The barrage of strikes, from Lviv in the west to Mykolaiv in the south and Kharkiv in the northeast, slammed into civilian areas and apparently also sought to cripple energy facilities as winter approaches. The explosions blew out the windows

of buildings in central Kyiv, set vehicles ablaze, and sent residents scrambling for shelter at a time when many were heading for school or work.

The attacks demonstrated that Russia still has the ability to strike deep into Ukraine and terrorize civilians, even as Moscow's forces struggle on the battlefield in the eighth month of their invasion. Ukrainian troops have reclaimed more than 1,200 miles of territory in the east and south in recent weeks, and Putin has faced mounting criticism of his army's performance and growing opposition to his call-up of hundreds of thousands of civilians into military service.

Serhai Haidai, Ukraine's governor of Luhansk, posted an update on Telegram on Ukraine's military progress in the occupied Luhansk region:

"The armed forces of Ukraine are moving forward little by little. The Russians are shelling our positions mainly with rocket and barrel artillery. The occupiers are building a multi-layer defense line in Luhansk region- the entire first section

of the front line has been mined by them. Our military has already encountered the first wave of partially mobilized Russians.

Luhansk is one of the regions of occupied Ukraine which the Russian Federation has claimed to have annexed following a widely-derided "referendum".

Meanwhile, Russian troops have been continuing to sustain equipment and personnel losses in Ukraine's south, the Kyiv Independent reported, citing Ukraine's Operational Command.

"Ukraine's Operational Command 'South' reported that they completed over 300 fire missions, targeting and damaging two Russian Gvozdika self-propelled howitzers and an APC," the Kyiv Independent said in a tweet.

THE G7 CONDEMNS RUSSIAN ATTACKS

The leaders of the G7 on Tuesday condemned Russia's most recent missile attacks on cities across Ukraine "in the strongest possible terms" and vowed to stand "firmly" with Kyiv "for as long as it takes".

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky asked the G7 leaders to supply more air defense systems and for an international monitoring mission on the Belarusian border.

Zelensky further pleaded with the leaders in an emergency meeting to establish an aerial shield to thwart Russian strikes that have wreaked havoc on his nation.

"I am asking you to strengthen the overall effort to help financially with the creation of an air shield for Ukraine. Millions of people will be grateful to the Group of Seven for such assistance."

He warned that Russian President Vladimir Putin "still has room for further escalation."

The G7 nations of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States promised to continue providing Ukraine with "financial, humanitarian, military, diplomatic, and legal support... for as long as it takes" in a joint statement issued at the conclusion of the conference.

They reaffirmed the fact that attacks against civilians are war crimes and vowed to "hold President Putin and those responsible to account."

The leaders also denounced recent nuclear posturing and backed Ukraine's effort to regain Russian-annexed territories.

The G7 condemned Russia's "deliberate escalatory steps," including "irresponsible nuclear rhetoric" and "partial mobilization of reservists," which were endangering "global peace and security." "We reaffirm that any use of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons by Russia would be met with severe consequences."

Roughly 30% of Ukraine's energy infrastructure has been hit by Russia since Monday, officials said. As millions in Ukraine are facing blackouts due to the attacks, the government has urged civilians to cut their electricity use and not use domestic appliances such as ovens and washing machines.

PACE Unanimously Adopts Resolution Declaring Russia a Terrorist Regime

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, following an urgent debate on "Further escalation in the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine," has adopted a resolution declaring the Russian Federation a terrorist regime.

According to an Ukrinform correspondent, 99 out of 100 PACE deputies voted in favor of the document and one abstained. In particular, PACE deputies supported an amendment to the draft resolution, which states: "Declare the Russian Federation a terrorist regime."

The Assembly also voted to speed up the creation of a Special International Tribunal to prosecute the crime of aggression against Ukraine and set up a comprehensive international compensation mechanism, including an international register of damage.

In addition, the Assembly supported the amendment to provide Ukraine with the necessary air defense systems. In particular, in view of the escalation of Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Assembly in today's resolution updated its assessments and recommendations, which it has adopted since the beginning of the large-scale aggression.

Therefore, the Assembly called on the member states of the Council of Europe: to reiterate their unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders; to unequivocally condemn the so-called referendums held in the Ukrainian regions

of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson between 23 and 27 September 2022, and to refrain from recognizing any effects of them; to condemn the Russian Federation's attempted annexation of the regions of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson as a violation of international law and a major threat to international peace and security, and to avoid recognizing any effects of it; to be firm and united in exerting a policy of maximum pressure on the Russian Federation to immediately cease its aggression; to support financially the reconstruction of Ukraine and provide necessary air defense systems; to ensure a comprehensive system of accountability for serious violations of international law arising from the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine actively cooperating with the Ukrainian authorities on this issue, and, in this context: - declare the Russian Federation a terrorist regime; - speed up the establishment of a Special (ad hoc) International Tribunal to prosecute the crime of aggression against Ukraine; - establish a system to examine the measures to ensure and secure accountability; - set up a comprehensive international compensation mechanism, including an international register of damage and actively co-operate with the Ukrainian authorities on this issue; - recognize Russian political parties that have previously voted for illegal decisions encroaching on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and other countries, as groups and entities that facilitate terrorism.

DVV International Georgia Hosts "Adult Learning and Education in the South Caucasus: The Milestones" International Conference

BY SOPHIE HODLER

DVV International Georgia in cooperation with DVV International Armenia and Georgian Adult Education Network hosted the international conference "Adult Learning and Education in the South Caucasus: The Milestones" on September 28 to 29 September. The purpose of the conference was to compile and evaluate DVV International's regional operations.

The past 20 years DVV International has conducted operations in Georgia and Armenia in the South Caucasus. Promoting Lifelong Learning (LLL) and Adult Learning and Education (ALE) at all levels has been the key objective. The main goals of cooperation at the governmental, institutional, and individual levels have been to advocate for sustainable ALE structures, increase national level investment in ALE and LLL, raise awareness of the benefits of ALE and lower participation costs, and build the capacity of ALE institutions and professionals.

14 adult education facilities in Georgia and 5 in Armenia were constructed using the German ALE concept. Each year, they offer multi-component ALE programs to more than 20,000 individuals

in an effort to promote their continued growth, employment, and improved quality of life.

GEORGIA TODAY received exclusive remarks on the international conference from Yana Drahovenko-Kaliukina, Project Manager at DVV International of Ukraine, and Lali Santeladze, Georgia Country Director of DVV International.

"We advocate for adult education across the world, and the conference's theme is crucial there as well. Particularly now, with so many educational services and programs available in Ukraine. Internally displaced people, as an example. Numerous individuals lost their employment as a result of continuous issues, necessitating the acquisition of new skills and expertise. Utilizing the resources of adult education, we aim to assist individuals," Drahovenko-Kaliukina told us.

"Stakeholders from Georgia must provide us with further information about these subjects and how they are arranged here. Adult education is conducted in Georgia and Ukraine in similar methods. We share certain common goals and historical themes, including this particular conflict. We thus have a similar course of action," added the Project Manager of DVV International Ukraine.

Lali Santeladze said that the primary goal of the conference is to explore issues related to adult learning while also fos-

tering an atmosphere where scholars and individuals involved in adult learning can learn from one another and exchange experiences.

"With the exception of Germany, none of the nations represented here have adult learning as a political priority," she stated.

"We want adult learning to become a priority. We need to keep learning and growing since adulthood is where we spend the majority of our time. Adult learning is limited to the public. We don't want it to be limited," Santeladze added.

"We operate on three levels. On the micro level, we have 14 adult learning centers and will open a 15th one the following year, all of which are located in areas where we provide a variety of adult learning packets. On a meso level, we collaborate with businesses and providers of adult education. We provide them financial assistance. On a macro level, we collaborate with the government in an effort to make adult learning a political reality. Therefore, creating possibilities for adult learning will be a top priority for both national and regional governments," said Santeladze.

"It is a joy to be at this genuinely international conference," the German Ambassador to Georgia said as he welcomed participants from several nations.

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MasterChef & Carrefour Collaborate to Create Unique Television Experience



MasterChef, one of the most popular, entertaining, and creative shows on Georgian television, is back with a special new season. In this exciting journey, its trustworthy partner and

general sponsor is once again Carrefour – which is owned and operated by Majid Al Futtaim in Georgia. This will be the 4th MasterChef season sponsored by Carrefour, which itself points at the success of their collaboration. 2022 also marks Carrefour's 10th

year operating within, serving and championing Georgian communities as it continues to provide value through every experience. Back for its 8th season, a new episode of MasterChef will be released every Sunday at 10pm on Georgia's Public

Broadcaster (GPB). This year's season is unique as – for the first time in MasterChef history – participants are fan favourites and returning chefs who were one step away from winning the MasterChef final.

Enabling them to impress the judges throughout the season, Carrefour ensures that every single ingredient is of the highest quality. The leading retailer is known throughout the country as a brand that is distinguished by a wide variety of products and affordable prices, offering customers an incomparable shopping experience.

The partnership highlights Carrefour's

commitment to supporting the growth and prosperity of local communities. Many of the products provided by Carrefour to the MasterChef contestants has been sourced locally and delivered straight from local partner farms.

This is important thanks to MasterChef and Carrefour's joint efforts to diversify outstanding Georgian cuisine whilst promoting a healthy lifestyle. The popular show and leading retailer both have a notable impact on the eating, cooking and shopping habits of Georgians – inspiring them to discover new products and recreate dishes at home.



POLITICS

Jaroslav Kurfürst on Georgia Saving Face in the Western Arena

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

On July 22, Jaroslav Kurfürst, a long-time career diplomat and former ambassador to Belgium, took over the position of deputy director of the Section of the European Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ambassador Kurfürst also works in the academic sphere, where, among other things, he focuses on the geopolitics of the transatlantic space and the geopolitical thinking of Russia.

Radio Free Europe's Georgian Service sat down with Kurfürst to discuss these very topics, and Georgia's place in them.

WHAT DOES THE CZECH EU PRESIDENCY SPELL FOR UKRAINE, MOLDOVA AND GEORGIA FROM THE ENLARGEMENT AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PERSPECTIVE?

I used to be a special envoy for the Eastern Partnership, and we were always telling our friends and partners that asking associated countries, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine to fulfill the EU criteria and standards without providing them with the European perspective was not a tenable strategy. If you really want someone else to observe the rules of the club, you need to open the door of this club; you need to make membership in that club possible for them. That was before the attack of Russia against Ukraine. And what happened since is a revolutionary change. The candidate status has been granted to Ukraine and Moldova and, conditionally, the European perspective very clearly to Georgia. And if Georgia is able to credibly fulfill all the requirements set out by the EU, then it will also get the candidate status. Now the ball is on the side of Ukraine,



Jaroslav Kurfürst. Photo by Vera Luptáková, Czech Radio

Moldova and Georgia. Ukraine got seven conditions, steps needed to be done. In Moldova, it's nine. And in Georgia, 12.

AN EARLIER SPEECH OF YOURS SUGGESTED THAT YOU DOUBT GEORGIA'S CAPABILITY TO DELIVER.

Well, we see systemic problems in Georgia, problems in the democratic debate between the government and the opposition, the polarization of the political scene, so deep that it's prohibiting, passing that kind of huge legislation. There are question marks over the politicization of the justice system. But we are

longtime friends of Georgia, we would love to see Georgia moving towards fulfillment and "catching the train" with candidate status.

WHAT CONSTITUTES CREDIBLE AND NON-CREDIBLE STEPS FORWARD HERE?

You can have the so-called legislator storm, quickly put together a formal legislation, but then you don't implement it. There are small windows of how to escape the implementation. That's something we don't want to see from Georgia. Legislation is not just the declaration, it should change the system towards a

better functioning democracy, towards the rule of law. So, basically, it should not be a formal fulfillment of the conditions, but genuine.

The deadline on that is very much up to the Georgian side, but it won't get candidate status until it credibly fulfills all 12 conditions.

SUPPOSE GEORGIA TURNS THINGS AROUND TOMORROW. ARE YOU SAYING THE EU SKEPTICS WON'T SAY THAT IT'S TOO SOON? BEFORE THE UKRAINE WAR, THE MOST POPULAR EXCUSE FOR REFUSING ENTRY WAS THAT THE EU HAS "ENLARGEMENT FATIGUE." DID THIS FATIGUE DISAPPEAR?

This fatigue is now not a topic anymore. There is a window of opportunity now, but it's very clear that the credibility of the process does not mean that we will just waive the rules of the club, that they should not be respected. An enlargement should reinforce the EU, not weaken it. There will be difficult stumbling blocks on the way, the process might be long, but I believe it will be crowned with memberships.

The window of opportunity is open for these countries. We need to focus on the credibility of the process not only from our partners' side, but also from the EU. We need bigger courage in the EU, and a sort of delivery guarantee for those candidate countries that are ready to contribute to the EU and enlarge the internal market.

OF THE STEPS THAT GEORGIA NEEDS TO MAKE, DEOLIGARCHIZATION HAS ALMOST BECOME A MONTY PYTHON SKETCH, WITH BOTH SIDES POINTING FINGERS AT EACH OTHER. CAN YOU SHED LIGHT ON WHAT THE EU IS

DEMANDING FROM US?

I'll not point fingers, but I think what is meant by deoligarchization is quite clear. What kind of democracy is one where he who has more money buys more media, buys more deputies, buys more influence? This is not about ideas, about benefiting the people, but about benefiting one person, or individuals.

YOU SAID: "FOR RUSSIANS FLEEING THE MASS MOBILIZATION, OUR DOORS ARE CLOSED." IN GEORGIA, THOSE DOORS REMAIN OPEN. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO APPROACHES?

It's up to the Georgian government how to cope with it. I can describe the Czech position. The number one argument for us is that these people are not necessarily democrats. Yesterday, some of them had the Z sticker on their cars. They just don't want to die, it's as simple as that. Second, they can create a diaspora, and if you create a diaspora, then you can create a reason for a "liberation" of the Russian speaking population. We are giving humanitarian visas to those democrats who are escaping the Russian regime. We are open for, let's say, free media, people who are oppressed, but we aren't open for the masses of Russians flocking to Czechia, absolutely not. Some would say, "so you let these people go to the front and shoot Ukrainians?" It's a fair argument. But the reservoir of the mobilized people in Russia is 3 to 5 million people. So if you even open the door for some, it is just a drop in the ocean.

Maybe these people who are unwilling to fight there will go but not be the most motivated soldiers on the front. I say it's better they cross the line on the battlefield than just sit in the car and run away.

That Unstoppable Wacky War

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

Unnanny things are happening in the seemingly peaceful, intellectually balanced and fairly organized world of the 21st century. Take, for instance, the Russian-Western martial clash on the territory of Ukraine, waged with the hands of Russians and Ukrainians. There was talk before about a war in the region, but nobody expected the outbreak so quickly and violently, and now there is likely not one person in the world of eight billion people who can say for sure when and how it might end.

Some experts optimistically persist that nothing will change, and the war will continue raging until it becomes clear that the Ukrainian effort is altering the political system in Russia. Yet, the selfsame experts emphasize pessimistically that they cannot guarantee this as possible any time soon. In the divided world, some think that Ukraine has done a wonderfully professional job, having taught the surprised Russians a couple of great lessons in military art, so much so that they will no longer mock their “little brothers” for weakness.

And of course there are some out there who are stubbornly convinced that the possibility of Russia losing this war is zilch. From the publicly accessible information, a conclusion is extremely hard to make. Yes, the Ukrainians are advancing. This is what we read and see in the media, but it is difficult to say how firm



or fragile those slow sporadic steps are, or if they are stable at all. As such, premature celebrations seem to be clearly precarious.

The war will certainly end someday, but how? Will there be a winner and a loser? I personally doubt it. All of us, just all of us, the whole world, will lose in the end, especially if those out-

rageous nuke-talks come true. Thinking that the victory of either side will make the world a better place is mistaken philosophy. The best way out might be by weighing the situation in subtle details and coming up with the fairest possible deal to keep both sides from losing face (and do this ASAP!). Otherwise, we'll be facing nukes as part of

our shortened lifetime.

Most of the actively functional political scientists, and of course the working politicians themselves, want to develop the notion that the use of the nuclear capabilities by this generation of Mankind is impossible, because the reasonable model of thinking in the world today is based on the famous idea of perpetual

deterrence. Mistake! The current Russian-Western (don't call it Russo-Ukrainian for God's sake!) clash is a pure prerequisite for turning the world into a much worse place to live, based on our impotence to take the bull by the horns and effectively handle the most complicated impasse the world has ever seen, with the sides of the conflict as stubborn as mules, digging in their heels so that they might never be able to pull them out of the frozen muck.

This war is not like any other in history. All parallels are flimsy and irrelevant. This is a very specific war with a perfunctorily deliberated past, present and future. That is why it has to be handled in a very specific way, taking into consideration its deep roots, reasons and ramifications. Most of the stories told about the conflict seem to be done hastily and with little justice. Any biased prediction of the finale of this tragedy might turn out erroneous, so let's not hurry. The promotional encouragements thrown in randomly and with artificially worked-up enthusiasm might do a disservice to the possibility of ending the conflict soon and in everybody's favor.

Where a certain Western mouthpiece announces that Ukraine is emerging victorious, the Kremlin promoter is deafening us through its own megaphone that Russia will never give up. Neither is 100% believable, and they know it well, although they both make their share of propaganda with as much zeal and speed as they can muster. Meanwhile, lives are being wasted, and there is no way to stop it at this time.

Daria Dugina: Innocent Victim or Legitimate Target?



Honor guard members stand next to a coffin during a memorial service for Darya Dugina. Source: REUTERS/Maxim Shemetov

BY MICHAEL GODWIN

Despite attempts by international organizations, the maelstrom of war often claims the lives of anyone who gets involved. Aside from combatants, this includes civilians, aid workers, journalists, and political figures. Most modern armies abstain from targeting these groups outright.

While both Russia and to a lesser extent Ukraine have both been accused of wrongdoings in this area, one recent example shows an interesting facet of the war. The daughter of prominent Russian propagandist and political strategist Alexander Dugin, Daria Dugina, has made her own waves as a pro-Putin influencer, activist-journalist, and political operative. Writing first for Russian state-owned media outlet RT and later editor for notorious misinformation outlet United World International, owned by Wagner mercenary head Yevgeny Prigozhin, she has not been shy in her support of the “special military operation” in Ukraine.

On the evening of August 20, the Toyota Land Cruiser she was driving home in after the “Traditions” Russian culture and arts festival, exploded, killing her

instantly. The subsequent investigation, headed by the Russian Federal Security Service, or infamous FSB, determined Ukraine was the culprit behind the attack. Their analysis of the lead-up to the attack pointed to a pair of Ukrainian nationals that had covertly entered and exited Russia.

The FSB stated that a woman had entered Russia from Estonia, lived in the same apartment building as Daria, and even attended the “Traditions” festival where Alexander was set to speak. Another male accomplice, also of Ukrainian nationality, assisted with forged documents, logistics, and even gave bomb-making supplies to the female assassin. According to the FSB, the woman tailed Daria to and during her activities at the festival, attached a magnetic bomb to her car, and followed her home before remotely detonating the explosive.

While none of the official FSB narrative can be independently confirmed, as any other investigation is illegal, it sheds light on an interesting part of Ukraine's special services. United States intelligence sources leaked to the New York Times that they believed Kyiv was indeed behind the attack. Additionally, after the attack, the spokesman for the Chief Directorate of Intelligence of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine told The

Washington Post that “I can say that the process of internal destruction of the 'Rusky Mir,' or 'the Russian world,' has begun,” and said that “the Russian world will eat and devour itself from the inside.”

This introduces an interesting issue for Ukraine. If they were indeed behind the bombing, this could be seen as crossing a line between fighting Russia's force for sovereignty and national survival, and state-sponsored assassinations of non-military individuals. The ramifications of the latter could be stinging, and frame the West as supporters of such activity by proxy, thus justifying much of the Kremlin's narrative before and during the war.

On one hand, the attack could be seen as a massive overreach of Ukrainian offensive capability. The assassination of a non-military public figure is unlikely to win additional foreign support and have no tangible effect on the liberation of Ukrainian territory from Russian troops. As a result, this could become an unnecessary escalation of the situation with Moscow, similar to the bombing of the Crimean Bridge more recently. Since Dugina is a civilian, unaffiliated with the Russian Armed Forces, her assassination would typically be outside the Law of Armed Conflict, and illegal. The only exceptions to this would be if her or her father were of some special status and taking some effective part in the conflict. It's widely accepted that civilians are protected from attack, but under the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), “civilians are protected against attack, unless and for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities.”

What constitutes “direct part” is somewhat complicated. The ICRC continues by saying that the following criteria must all be met in order for a civilian to be a legitimate target:

- The act must be likely to adversely affect the military operations or military capacity of a party to an armed conflict or, alternatively, to inflict death, injury, or destruction on persons or objects protected against direct attack (threshold of harm);
- There must be a direct causal link

between the act and the harm likely to result either from that act, or from a coordinated military operation of which that act constitutes an integral part (direct causation); and

- The act must be specifically designed to directly cause the required threshold of harm in support of a party to the conflict and to the detriment of another (belligerent nexus).

However, Dugina has been described merely as a media figure and journalist, though at times a biased one and by Western sources as one rife with misinformation and propaganda. As seen in past conflicts, the ability of the media has been used to assist in committing atrocities. According to the “Final Report to the Prosecutor by the Committee Established to Review the NATO Bombing Campaign Against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia,” the media can be either a target or protected.

The above report states in paragraph 47 that “whether the media constitutes a legitimate target group is a debatable issue. If the media is used to incite crimes, as in Rwanda, then it is a legitimate target. If it is merely disseminating propaganda to generate support for the war effort, it is not a legitimate target.” The ICRC agrees with this sentiment by outlining that “journalists are protected only as long as they do not take a direct part in the hostilities. News media, even when used for propaganda purposes, enjoy

immunity from attacks, except when they are used for military purposes or to incite war crimes, genocide, or acts of violence.”

So the question is whether Dugina, or her father if he was the intended target, was within that legitimate target definition. Both she and her father were described as vehemently pro-Kremlin and pro-Russian Imperialist, and both were sanctioned by America and other nations. Despite this, they could not have been seen as directly involved in hostilities or taking part to spread atrocities, according to any evidence available.

On the other hand, Ukraine could easily say that her use of hateful and anti-Ukrainian propaganda served to bolster public trust in the war. It may also have made her a viable target, as the effects of her or her father's removal would effect a win in the information war. However, others in the legal realm would be justified in saying that hatred and disinformation may not constitute a government-sanctioned assassination.

As a country fighting for its very survival, it's difficult for one to blame Kyiv. Even if their tactics and methods to achieve the upper hand are somewhat questionable, some might surmise that it is reasonable in such dire circumstances. While it will likely be the victor in this war that decides if this case will be pursued in the international courts, it could open a legal precedent in future actions by both sides.



Russian investigators sift through the vehicle pieces looking for clues after the bombing attack on Daria Dugina. Source: Reuters

Modern Security Dilemma: Georgian Polyhedron. Part I

ANALYSIS BY VICTOR KIPIANI,
CHAIRMAN OF GEOCASE

Here, as in our previous articles, we will refrain from talking affirmatively and continue our communication with readers in the form of discussion, especially considering the specificity of the topic. This time around, however, we are going to open our discussion in a different way, without offering a long introduction and, instead, making a few propositions that accompanied the process of our reasoning when working on this piece:

- Absolute security is impossible in the contemporary world, while the promise to ensure it is empty;

- The convincing power of the norm of international law has sharply decreased in the past few decades;

- The authority of international law and, with it, international organizations, have seriously diminished;

- The effectiveness of preventive political and legal mechanisms has apparently become dependent on the good will and desire of world powers;

- The nuclear component has lost its initial checking and balancing effect in international relations;

- The nature and structure of military conflict have changed; it has become useless to distinguish its passive and active phases from each other due of complexity of the applied methods;

The so-called salami strategy, whereby a political result is built on a military advantage gained step by step and legalized, has become a common practice in achieving a geopolitical advantage.

A deeper study and analysis of the operational code of conduct based on the above principles is a means (if not superior, at least not inferior to international law documentation) to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Georgian security in the modern security context in a better, more realistic way. If we agree to such an approach, then the most realistic method of managing the Georgian security system needs to be developed.

SECURITY DILEMMA: INTRODUCTION (TO BE CONTINUED)

Originality in understanding the current system of Georgian security has become trendy. We do not want to follow that trend, but also realize that we cannot fully ignore it in this article.

In any case, the extraordinariness of the current situation requires similarly extraordinary reasoning and liberation from the established, useless clichés. For example, the Georgian environment is largely dominated by a debate about the formal status of the country's security. This is understandable and logical, but hot discussions about the formal side overshadow the main determinant of the country's security – its functional connotation and its need by the outer world. We have discussed this very critical facet of Georgia's foreign policy

many times. In particular, several projects of the Georgian leadership of the 1990s, set to outlie the “practical function” and “particular benefit” of the country, will serve as a good and needed reminder that the development of nation state has no prospects if someone else does not benefit from your creation, and vice versa, you do not benefit from someone else's creation. Only projects that are built on such converging interest can become critical prerequisites for the internal stability of Georgia and needed by the outer world. The new realities require a renewal of the political-doctrinal line of the 1990s.

Besides, a security dilemma is indeed the “dilemma,” because no country such as Georgia can ensure full and unconditional security by means of full militarization alone, or by making concessions alone. Even more, the disturbance of the needed balance in either of the cases and a plunge into radicalism may be counter-effective and further encourage and embolden external aggression. Therefore, an additional complexity in the nation-state security dilemma, from the viewpoint of Georgian interests, especially in the light of the difficult region, is its correct prognostication: prevention of external actions directed against stability and peace in the country, with maximally adequate and balanced measures, in such a manner that will spare the political leadership from accusations of being either “excessively aggressive” or “conspicuously conceding.”

In short, the preliminary conclusion is that it is extremely difficult to find a truly reliable and effective response formula to challenges that exist in the conditions of (dis)order existing in the world. Separate periods of time and separate individual-pragmatic solutions are, however, determined by the coincidence of a given moment and circumstance. To illustrate the evolution of security and transformation of static, so-called status-quo patterns, it is suffice to bring examples of the recent decisions taken by Finland and Sweden to reject their non-aligned status, frequented debates in Austria about its post-World War II status, revision of the neutral status, the “historical” decision taken by Switzerland to join the sanctions imposed on Russia, and the readiness of separate political circles in Denmark to join common defense initiatives of the European Union, etc.

Thus, it is not surprising that the above-mentioned dilemma is becoming even more problematic in the Georgian reality, containing as it does numerous unanswered questions for both itself and the country's partners, as well as in terms of the effectiveness of regional security systems. We believe that to avoid further ambiguity in the issue, the Georgian state must increase efforts to better explain the existing threats and challenges to its citizens, and, at the same time, to seek, based on a common national consensus, effective means of responding to them.

ALTERNATIVES AND DIVERSITY OF CHOICE (?)

From moving along a linear trajectory

towards consideration of possible alternatives – this is one of the options to consider the progression of Georgian security for harmonizing the country's interests and international obligations. Furthermore, when considering alternatives, we deem their combination, supplementation, alternation and replacement equally acceptable, as long as it is done in such a manner as to contribute to the creation of maximally possible conditions for the key Georgian imperative – our security in the current transactional international (dis)order. Repeating what we have said in previous publications, to assess the current threats, we view a regular stress-test as a necessary requirement for the Georgian reality to timely identify national risks in a fast-changing and unpredictable world, so as to plan the adequate political, military or organizational response.

According to the current version of the country's constitution, the integration into Euro-Atlantic structures is the key course of the internal and external policy of the country. In recent times, expectations for membership of the Alliance have been discussed with new vigor, especially before and after each NATO summit. Nothing is unusual in that, but the ambiguity of membership prospects and of reciprocal steps from partner countries have been the usual practice for years now. We cannot assess the entry in the declaration of the recent summit about the membership of Georgia on the condition of an “individual membership plan” as a step forward. Even more, with this entry, a step was taken not forwards, but somewhere “sideways,” and “ambiguously”, considering that the archaism and inadequacy of “individual membership plan” is nowhere near to certainty. In reality, this entry looks more like an attempt to legitimize the country's stay in the “waiting room.”

The renewed aggression of Russia against Ukraine has become a qualitatively new test for the effectiveness of the Alliance. The period of more than six months since the start of the war has enabled NATO to rediscover itself. However, a question that existed for Official Tbilisi long before the war in Ukraine has become more topical: how do members of the Alliance see the policy of enlargement towards Eastern Europe (the so-called bordering countries)? How effective, and not declarative, could it be in practice? The main answer to these and other questions probably lies in the outcome of the war in Ukraine, not only in its military-political component, but also its geopolitical component. We think that the end of the war, by drawing a new dividing line in Europe, will become a new watershed between key geopolitical powers. In such a case, a question is which side of the divide we will find ourselves on? How high will the degree of “cohabitation” be between the various geopolitical powers on either side of the aforementioned divide? Will the Georgian state be able and have a real possibility to ensure that, before documenting an overall European outcome of the war in Ukraine, a decision about Georgia will not be taken without the involve-



Image source: iderepublica.pl

ment of Georgia when drawing the new dividing line? At present, we can imagine answers to these and other questions in the form of assumptions and reservations, without categorical formulations.

It is also worth to note that discussions about multilateral alliances miss Article 42(7) of the Treaty of the European Union, which was enacted in 2009 and envisages aid and assistance among EU member states in the field of defense. This point is especially topical assuming that maximum support to the accession of Ukraine into the EU, in lieu of its NATO membership, may become one of the conditions for the formal end of the war in Ukraine. Consequently, such an option is noteworthy for Georgia, too: The acceleration of integration of so-called bordering states (Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova) into the EU as a “compensation” for non-enlargement of the North Atlantic Alliance. This is, clearly, one of formulas to fill the geopolitical void existing in the post-Soviet space. Naturally, this is an assumption too, which is difficult to discuss extensively yet.

And still, since such assumption has been voiced, and it has some prospects, we would like to briefly talk about the essence of the mechanism envisaged in the abovementioned provision, especially when this very particular aspect of the EU security, is actually not discussed in Georgia and the main focus of attention is the topic of NATO.

Although Article 42(7) of the Treaty says that if a Member State is victim to armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance, the relevant mechanism is thought to be flawed. In particular, there are no clearly set formal procedures of activating mutual assistance available; the wording of the article is rather weak, as it reflects a compromise between countries of different political-military activity (from neutral countries to the countries where militarism is dominant in the foreign political course), work on the article was carried out in the light of Article 5 of NATO founding treaty, etc. It is also worth noting that Article 42(7) of the EU was applied in practice only once, when a well-known terrorist attack was carried out against the capital of France.

In short, the quasi-collective security of the European Union is rather an attempt of intention than a basis for the establishment of a comprehensive and truly effective system. Its further improvement requires corresponding legislative technique as well as practice. Nevertheless, as an EU aspirant country, and to better understand that multifaceted security system, Georgia needs to constantly analyze and monitor aspects of common EU defense and security poli-

cies and research ways of “adjusting” them to national interests.

Actually, the entire Cold War era was distinguished for largely multilateral security alliances. This practice will be maintained in the foreseeable future, and NATO is sufficient proof of that. At the same time, particular attention is paid to so called mini alliances, alliances of countries on a regional-thematic basis, which are built on the understanding of common threats by the parties. Such mini alliances are outlined in different parts for the world, be it Eastern Europe, Middle East, India and the Pacific, or others.

Therefore, cooperation for the improvement of communication in political-consultative or defense areas based on regionality, may boost or facilitate the Georgian security system, especially in light of the NATO issue. After all, a less risky and more predictable neighborhood is as important as proper diverse contacts on the international arena. Furthermore, along with the main course enshrined in the constitution of the country, the regionalization of Georgian security will have an additional, complementary effect.

When mulling over any alliance on regional-thematic basis, it is necessary, for its healthiness and effectiveness, to consider a number of important circumstances. In particular, Georgia, and other participants in such a potential alliance, must clearly understand the common threat they face. A disregard of any interpretation will directly affect the timeliness and effectiveness of measures to be activated by the relevant security mechanisms. We would add here that for joint measures to be brought into play (of particular importance in this regard is to determine those circumstances (casus foederis) that bring into play common defense measures), strictly formalistic-legal documentation of obligations of the parties is of secondary importance. Of higher importance is to have an equal understanding of common threat, while a joint measure could be based on legal norms as well as a political declaration or statement, the so-called de facto obligations. As a result, the link between a common threat and measures to be undertaken should be strong enough to practically exclude avoidance of or delay in undertaking the measures. No less important is the geographic area and duration of the security system of such an alliance, though these are details, whereas the key is a true demonstration of the political will and readiness of members of the alliance to deter and eliminate the threat.

To be continued in next week's GT.

UN General Assembly Elects Georgia as a Member of the Human Rights Council

BY SOPHIE HODLER

Georgia was chosen, along with thirteen other nations, by the UN General Assembly, on October 11, to serve on the UN Human Rights Council for the years

2023–2025.

The 47 states that comprise the council are chosen from regional groups in accordance with the geographical principle, and its members are in charge of advancing and defending human rights all over the world.

For the term spanning the years 2016–2018, Georgia was initially chosen as a member of the UN's intergovernmental

body in 2015.

Along with Georgia, candidates for the Council were also presented by Algeria, Morocco, South Africa, Sudan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, South Korea, Vietnam, Romania, Chile, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Belgium, and Germany. Except for Afghanistan and Venezuela, all of the nations that had filed their

candidacy were elected.

“Honored that Georgia has been elected with 178 votes to the UN Human Rights Council for the term 2023–2025,” the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Iliia Darchiashvili tweeted in response to the decision.

He underlined, “Grateful to UN Member states for their support. Look forward to working with all stakeholders

to reaffirm our commitment and contribute to global efforts to protect and promote human rights.”

Sabine Machl, the UN Resident Coordinator in Georgia, congratulated Georgia on being elected to the Council. She also emphasized that it is an “excellent opportunity to contribute to the protection of human rights globally by setting an example domestically.”

Ambassador Akira on 30 Years of Shared Values and What Georgia Needs to Do Next

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW BY
EREKLE POLADISHVILI

It is regrettable that the relationship between Georgia and Japan, both in themselves ancient countries, started just 30 years ago. But, since then, The Land of the Rising Sun and The Land of Wine have become very good friends, despite their cultural and religious differences, as what unites us is our values. These two countries stand together and symbolize how strong value-based relations can be, even when thousands of miles away from each other. And what has been achieved over 30 years needs to be preserved and improved, with both seeking to complete the bridge-building in economic, as well as cultural terms. GEORGIA TODAY, as an observant of the process, met H.E. Mr. Imamura Akira, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Georgia, to ask him to sum up the development of relations over the course of 30 years and to share his opinion with us on the current challenges Georgia faces.

30 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS ARE BEING CELEBRATED THIS YEAR. COULD YOU SUM THEM UP AND, MORE SPECIFICALLY, TELL US ABOUT THE ACHIEVEMENTS MADE SINCE YOUR APPOINTMENT?

Japan and Georgia have been developing very good relations in many areas, in politics, economics, and cultural ties. Its strength over 30 years has always been shared values of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and freedom. That's why we've strongly supported Georgia's nation-building, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. We're one of the leading countries supporting Georgia's reconstruction efforts after the 2008 war. We're very pleased to see the development and progress Georgia has made over the course



of 30 years. And we're very proud of our achievements. I came to Georgia at the end of 2020. It was in the middle of lockdown, so, naturally, my focus was to help Georgia mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on society and the economy. We implemented several projects providing medical equipment and training to medical personnel. We also offered a soft loan to small and medium size businesses that suffered most during this difficult time.

As we moved into 2022, we organized more cultural events to celebrate our shared anniversary: An exhibition, a Sakura tree planting, Tea Ceremony, events in the sphere of music, literature, even a Sushi exhibition and Anime film show. We're going to continue this towards the end of this year.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine prompted our countries to coordinate our policies closely, so in April, we organized a foreign ministers' meetings. In May, our parliamentary vice minister visited Tbilisi. In August, in commemoration of the 30th anniversary, our prime ministers and foreign ministers exchanged letters. In his letter, our Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida, offered to take the potential of cooperation between Georgia and Japan even further.

CAN GEORGIA AND JAPAN EXPAND THE SCALE OF ECONOMIC RELATIONS? ARE

THERE ANY OBSTACLES?

For 30 years, most of our economic relations were led by donor-recipient ties, and our business-to-business cooperation lagged behind, although we've seen very strong car trade and investment decisions by Japanese energy giants like TEPCO regarding Georgia. The task for the Georgian and Japanese governments is to promote these positive tendencies.

In my first year here in Georgia, we strengthened the legal framework for promoting and protecting investment by signing two treaties, the Investment Treaty and the Taxation Treaty, with Georgian government ministers. This year, our priority is to provide information to Japanese businesses, especially from the Georgian government, about what opportunities and challenges there are for Japanese companies interested in doing business in Georgia. In Japan, Japanese companies are a little bit concerned about the impact of the war in Ukraine, thinking that it may spill over into Georgia. We're planning to hold a Japan Business Forum at the end of October - beginning of November here in Tbilisi, with the participation of Japanese companies. We're hoping that through this forum, Japanese companies will receive objective information and come to better understand the advantages of doing business in Georgia.

THE INCREASING POLARIZATION HAS BECOME A VITAL ISSUE FOR GEORGIA. WHAT WOULD BE YOUR ADVICE FOR THE POLITICAL PARTIES, MEDIA AND SOCIETY?

I think Georgia has to seriously address this huge question of polarization, promote constructive dialogue between different political parties, build consensus, and learn to make compromises. This is the essence of the democratic process in any democracy. My advice is to stop criticizing persons or personalities and focus on the debate on policies. You have to very much respect each other in the political debate. In Japan, we have an 'honorific form' in our language and, almost without exception, when Japanese politicians debate with each other, they use this honorific form. This is a sign of your respect towards your counterpart.

My second piece of advice is to have independent media. In Georgia's case, I would say that Georgian media is a little too politicized, and independence has to be straightened out; otherwise, this politicized media exacerbates the current polarization in politics even further. Media independence is necessary for people to receive unbiased information, not one-sided, but different opinions, so that they can make a judgment themselves.

THE ACCUSATION IS THAT THE US IS INTERESTED IN DRAGGING GEORGIA INTO THE WAR. WHAT'S YOUR OPINION AS AN AMBASSADOR OF A COUNTRY WHICH HAS A CLOSE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE US?

Well, I would like to refer you to the ambassadors of the United States and the European Union on this issue. I fully support their position. I don't think the US or the EU were trying to bring Georgia into the war or open a second front. I think these are just false allegations based on ungrounded assumptions; it may even create the false impression that Georgia

is not serious or even weaker in its commitments toward Euro-Atlantic integration. But I think the people's choice has already been made towards its Euro-Atlantic aspiration, which I very much support. Some may say, while criticizing the West, that Georgia cannot become a member of the European Union, and it should better stick to its traditions. This is totally ungrounded. Look at Japan. Japan demonstrated that we could achieve mature democracy while preserving our unique traditions and culture. I think these two are not incompatible, and sometimes mutually complement each other. So, if Japan was able to do it, why not Georgia?

BESIDES POLITICAL POLARIZATION, ATTACKS ON GEORGIAN MEDIA ARE ALSO PROBLEMATIC. WHAT WOULD YOUR ADVICE BE?

I think the safety of journalists in Georgia is under question right now. It's an essential part of democracy; it's closely linked to media freedom. If journalists are not safe, there will be no freedom of media at all. So, when we heard about this July 5th incident, when many journalists were attacked, we were shocked and condemned the perpetrators. We called for those responsible to be held accountable. We're very much concerned that this situation is continuing - the threat towards journalists in Georgia is too often heard. We want to contribute to the betterment of the environment for the journalists, for them to be safer and protected legally, and we have contributed to a fund called the "Global Media Defense Fund" administered by UNESCO. This was created to help NGOs in member countries to promote this kind of better environment for journalists' safety and advocate for the importance of the safety of journalists. So, if there are any interested NGOs in Georgia, I would encourage them to submit a proposal for projects to promote this important protection of journalists in Georgia even further.

BUSINESS



Darchiashvili: Our Efforts are Aimed at Increasing Country's Economic Opportunities through Economic Diplomacy

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Iliia Darchiashvili noted this week that the economic processes in Georgia have significantly intensified, and the positive results achieved by the country are part of "intensive efforts of the government's economic team, including diplomatic missions of Georgia."

At the opening ceremony of the first session of the Discussions organized by the analytical center "Geocase," the Bank of Georgia and the media platform Komersant, Darchiashvili spoke about the activities of the Ministry and Georgian diplomatic missions in the area of economic diplomacy. As the Foreign Minister noted, economic diplomacy includes such strategic directions as promotion of bilateral economic cooperation, integration with the world's leading markets, support of Georgia's export opportunities, attraction of foreign investments, promotion of Georgia

as a transport and logistics hub and a special tourist destination, operation of direct flights.

The Minister also informed the participants of the discussion about the Ministry's future priorities of economic diplomacy, which are related to the country's transit opportunities and investment environment.

The first discussion of the Economic Forum was held on 10 October, within the framework of the joint project of the Bank of Georgia, the analytical center Geocase and the media platform Komersant. The main topic of the discussion was Economic Diplomacy, in which the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Iliia Darchiashvili, the Chairman of the Analytical Center Geocase Victor Kipiani and the Chairman of the Supervisory Board of "Tbilisi Dry Port" Jemal Inaishvili participated. The discussion was moderated by Giorgi Abashishvili, Geocase economic director, managing partner of Komersant.

Anti-Corruption Movement Claims 81,000 Liters of Russian-Sanctioned Oil Products Entered Georgia

BY SOPHIE HODLER

The Anti-Corruption Movement reports that 81,000 liters of gasoline crossed the border into Georgia from Russia by land and railroad at the Gardabani Customs checkpoint.

The paperwork makes it quite apparent who was involved: Rosneft, a state-sanctioned oil behemoth, SPG Trading, the business that is transporting the package, and San Petroleum Georgia, the consignee.

It is significant that Petrocas Energy Group, which is on the list of entities the Ukrainian government has sanctioned, is the owner of the cargo-receiving business San Petroleum Georgia. Georgian tycoon Ivane Nakaidze and Russian-sanctioned billionaire Davit Yakobashvili officially controlled the Petrocas Energy Group.

The Anti-Corruption Movement states, "At the beginning of June of this year, it came to light that Ivane Nakaidze, CEO of Petrocas Energy Group, had acquired 49% of the company from Russian state oil company Rosneft, though the specifics of the financial transaction were not made public and the sum of money paid to Rosneft was kept a secret."

The movement, asserts once more that the agreement was fabricated, and that its intention was to facilitate trade by circumventing the embargo on Russian oil products.

This can involve committing a crime, to which the state structures should



Anti-Corruption Movement Claims 81,000 Liters of Russian-Sanctioned Oil Products Enter Georgia Source: Droa

respond in a suitable manner.

"Following the media's public dissemination of information about the importation of oil products subject to sanctions via sea transport by tankers, it appears that the criminal organization supported by the oligarchic clan started to do the same. In hopes that this information would not be reported they began to import oil via alternate routes, including rail transport," highlighted the movement.

The movement alleges that the mentioned scheme is patronized by the head of the Security Service of Georgia, Grigol Luluashvili, and is executed by the Dep-

uty Head of the Revenue Service, Vladimir Khundadze.

"It is inconceivable that while the state has a declared policy that shares the Western sanctions against Russia and must formally ensure its effectiveness, that sanctioned Russian state companies are bypassing the sanctions," underlined the movement.

Although the movement plans to submit tangible proof to the Michael McFaul International Sanctions Group and the recognized organizations of the European Union, it does not anticipate receiving a reaction from the Ministry of Finance.

The Upcoming Tourism International Business Forum



Aya Travel, Bassam Jaafar, is an honorary member of the Global Council for Business and Trade. Mr. Bassam was doing business in Ukraine and Kazakhstan when he first visited Georgia three years ago as a tourist. On his second trip here, he realized he had finally found the place he'd been dreaming about, and decided to share his experience with the Georgian business sector, beginning by funding a travel agency. Even though the Covid-19 Pandemic created a lot of obstacles, he didn't give up and overcame the challenges. Now, he is ready to present his new project, Aya Estate, at the Tourism International Business Forum alongside his Business partner and friend, Dr. Fawad Qasim Wasil, who has his own story of discovering Georgia.

10 years ago, Dr. Fawad Qasim Wasil came to Georgia as a Med student and, just like Mr. Bassam, he felt somehow connected to the country, going on to learn Georgian. He got his medical degree, but soon realized his true passion: Real estate. Starting out as a broker, within three years he had gained enough experience to give being a developer on the Ortachala project a try. Later, he continued working on different projects as an investor. Over the last five years, Dr. Fawad has worked solely on bringing foreign direct investments to Georgia, over \$260 million! In parallel, he has worked with many big development companies as well as with many international real estate businesses.

Georgia was able to unite these two men, and they realized that they could do a lot more for the country with their collaboration. For the past six months, Mr. Bassam Jaafar and Dr. Fawad Qasim Wasil have been working toward November's Tourism International Business Forum, which will bring together experts and practitioners from a wide range of industries of tourism, investment, and real estate. The audience will include international delegations of leaders, CEOs, and top managers from all around



the world.

As a part of this forum, they have also invited 50 international bloggers to tour Georgia and promote it as a desirable destination for vacations and trips.

The Tourism International Business Forum will be made up of a conference, presentations, networking, and discussions of past, present, and future plans.

Mr. Bassam Jaafar and Dr. Fawad Qasim Wasil's \$43 million project, Aya Estate, will launch at the forum. In their personal 2-3 year forecast, they are expecting \$115 million in investment. They have also teased a plan for a 5-star international brand hotel coming to Georgia and opening their first-ever establishment in this location.

BY KESARIA KATCHARAVA

Travel, and their business partner.

The forum will present Aya Estate, which seeks as its goal to bring more investments to Georgia.

Behind this event are two stories of foreign businessmen who found Georgia in different ways, but both made it their mission to help the country prosper.

Owner and Director of Pro Vision and

On November 5, the Tourism International Business Forum is to be held in Tbilisi, organized by Pro Vision, founder of Aya

IFC, ADB Invest in Georgia's First Green Bond to Boost Climate Finance

BY TEAM GT

Tbilisi, Georgia, October 12, 2022—To promote climate finance and capital market development in Georgia, IFC has stepped in as an anchor investor in the country's first green bond with a subscription of \$20 million in the \$80 million issuance. This is the largest domestic corporate bond placement in Georgia to date. Further, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) invested \$4 million in the green bond.

The bond issuer is Georgian Renewable Power Operations (GRPO), an affiliate of Georgia Capital, a leading investment management company in the country. The landmark transaction and the investment is expected to help mitigate climate change by avoiding around 170,000 tons of CO2 emissions annually, equivalent to greenhouse gases from over 33,000 vehicles.

The aim is to boost private sector-led renewable energy generation and energy independence in a country where over 30% of demand is met by imports and gas-fired thermal plants, and where electricity consumption is increasing.

With the war in Ukraine disrupting

financial markets and access to finance, local capital markets can play a key role in mobilizing investors and providing alternative financing sources. While Georgia's corporate bond market is still emerging, the project is expected to catalyze further issuances of green bonds and other sustainable finance instruments. That will spur capital market development in the country, critical amid the volatility and uncertainty caused by the war, and its impact on energy security.

Zurab Gordeziani, Chief Executive Officer of GRPO, said: "The transaction will contribute to the development of the Georgian capital market through being the first green secured bond issuance on the Georgian capital market and the largest corporate transaction. The issuance was met with considerable interest from investors, including international financial institutions. GRPO expresses its gratitude to IFC for acting as an anchor investor in this transaction."

IFC and ADB's investments will also help set a precedent, encouraging alignment with good governance, environmental and social standards to develop more renewable energy projects in Georgia.

"With the first green bonds issuance in Georgia, IFC's timely funding will help boost renewable energy develop-



This initiative will support the further development of Georgia's local capital market through its first domestic green bond and the largest in the country. Photo: Qartli Wind Power Plant, GRPO

ment in the country. Given that Georgia's corporate bond market is still nascent, we are confident IFC's support will help deepen the nation's debt capital market, creating jobs, improving energy security, and driving sustainable economic growth," said Ivana Fernandes Duarte, IFC's Regional Manager for the South Caucasus.

The project complements ongoing World Bank efforts to support Georgia's capital and fixed income markets development, as well as the country's role as

a regional power exchange hub.

ADB will administer a \$4 million subscription to the bond through Leading Asia's Private Infrastructure Fund (LEAP).

"ADB's assistance will support the further development of Georgia's local capital market through the first domestic green note and largest bond to be listed in the country," said ADB Private Sector Operations Department Senior Investment Specialist David Urbaneja-Furelos. "This investment builds on our

track record as an anchor investor in Georgia's past green bonds and shows how our involvement in these and other debt instruments can help our members to meet their climate goals."

"I am delighted to announce that GRPO successfully issued an \$80 million green bond. The transaction met with considerable interest from investors, being able to access capital even during the current unprecedented times. We are thankful to ADB for playing a key role as one of the strategic investors in the note," said Georgia Capital Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Irakli Gilauri.

ABOUT GEORGIAN RENEWABLE POWER OPERATIONS

Georgian Renewable Power Operations (GRPO), which is a part of the Georgian Renewable Power Holding (GRPH), is one of the leading renewable energy platforms in Georgia. The company owns and operates 71 MW installed capacity of commissioned renewable energy assets, including 4 hydro power plants and the only wind farm in Georgia. GRPO's ultimate sole owner is Georgia Capital PLC, the largest investment management company in Georgia, listed on the premium segment of the London Stock Exchange. For more information, visit: www.grpc.ge.

NASA Space Apps Challenge 2022 Held in Georgia with the Support of Beeline

Beeline is the traditional supporter of the local competition of the world's largest international hackathon – the NASA Space Apps Challenge. Hackathon 2022 brought together 100 participants and 19 innovative ideas.

The Georgian edition of the largest hackathon on the planet ended on October 2, and the event was hosted by Kutaisi International University (KIU).

After two days of intensive work, the teams presented their ideas and project prototypes to the jury. The team TON 618 took first place, winning 5000 GEL and the opportunity to present the project at the NASA Space Apps Challenge global competition.

The winning project facilitates the process of searching for information in NASA databases. The application uses artificial intelligence to help scientists, researchers, students and all interested people find specific information in a large database faster and easier.

The second place went to the IGN team, which told us about NASA's unprecedented project, "The journey of the Parker Solar Probe from the Earth to the Sun" in the most understandable form for a young audience - in a comic book.

Special prizes of Kutaisi International University and Edison went to teams Space T-Rex and How Dare You.

NASA Space Apps is an annual hackathon that is held simultaneously in 300 different cities around the world and attracts thousands of participants. The goal of the project is for the young participants of the hackathon to work together on real NASA data and find innovative solutions to the most pressing problems of the planet and space in a limited time (48 hours).

As well as working on their own projects as a team, the participants had the opportunity to attend workshops led by the country's leading specialists on such



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topics as: data science, prototyping, UI/UX design, data visualization, storytelling, and astrophotography.

In addition to data directly from NASA, hackathon participants use data from space research centers in Australia, Canada, Brazil, Europe, Japan, Argentina, Mexico, India, Bahrain, Paraguay and South Africa.

"Within the framework of corporate social responsibility and digital strategy, Beeline actively supports the development of innovations in the country and

the formation of an ecosystem, opportunities for young people to gain valuable knowledge and experience," said Nini Rekhviashvili, Public Relations Manager at Beeline. "The Nasa Space Apps Challenge serves exactly these goals. That is why we are traditionally project partners in Georgia and are proud of the success of both the hackathon and the winners."

The NASA Space Apps Challenge Tbilisi & Kutaisi 2022 was organized by Startup Bureau, while the hackathon was

hosted by Technopark of Georgia and Kutaisi International University.

"Organizing the NASA Space Apps Challenge, the world's largest hackathon in Georgia, always fills us with interest and enthusiasm to identify and bring talent-newcomers to the global stage," noted Guri Koiava, Co-Founder at Startup Bureau. "Thanks to everyone - participants, volunteers, space agencies, partners and NASA enthusiasts. Space-tech in Georgia is in the process of strengthening! This year's event was special in

terms of the strength of the participants and the fact that Kutaisi, another big city in Georgia, was involved in the NASA hackathon."

As part of its digital strategy and corporate social responsibility, Beeline continues supporting Nasa Space Apps Challenge and the development of innovation in Georgia. The company's goal is to promote the emergence of new opportunities for young people, to inspire them to come up with creative ideas and to give them motivation to step up.

Chinese Companies Are Reshaping Georgia's Geography

ANALYSIS BY EMIL AVDALIANI

On September 21, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili in New York, during the United Nations General Assembly, and stressed the importance of the Middle Corridor (or Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, "TITR"), which runs directly through Georgia, for regional transit (Fmprc.gov, September 21).

Due to the war in Ukraine, the connectivity patterns in Eurasia are changing rapidly. The Russian route that linked the European Union with China is now of limited use. This has pushed EU member states and China to seek alternative corridors. The Middle Corridor, which stretches from the Black Sea to Central Asia via the South Caucasus, is the shortest route between western China and the EU. Georgia plays a critical role in this regard, owing to its existing infrastructure and geographic location.

Recently, Georgia has taken part in numerous intergovernmental meetings aimed at boosting the corridor's potential. The TITR's development was the subject of a quadrilateral statement signed by Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Kazakhstan on March 31 (ITV, March 31). In May 2022, together with Kazakhstan and Turkey, Georgia discussed the Middle Corridor in a meeting held in Ankara. Later that month, transit company Georgian Railway announced that it was collaborating with companies from Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan to establish a new shipping route between the Georgian port of Poti and the Romanian port of Constanta. Apart from this, the Georgian leadership



has also been active with a series of visits to the Central Asian republics in recent months (Civil.ge, July 19).

Yet, despite this promising geopolitical setting, Georgia is also notorious for its geographic impenetrability. Ravines, gorges and nearly impassable mountains have served as a reliable defense but also as a major hindrance to the country's transit ambitions. In truth, building infrastructure that defies geography requires large investments and, most of all, knowledge and experience.

In this regard, Chinese companies are reshaping Georgia's geography, putting Tbilisi in a better position for various Eurasian trade routes. In 2019, the Chinese company China Railway 23rd Bureau Group (China Railway) announced that it will build the new 22.7-kilometer-long Kvesheti-Kobi project in Georgia. The total cost of the project is estimated at 1.2 billion Lari (\$428.6 million). China Railway will build only 13 kilometers of the road,

which is part of the International North-South Transport Corridor (Agenda, August 19, 2019).

The Chinese are also taking the lead in upgrading the Khulo-Zarzma road, which will represent the shortest route between the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Adjara regions. The rehabilitated section will start from Khulo and end at Zarzma village in Adigeni via the Goderdzi Pass. The upgraded road will reduce travel time from Batumi to Akhaltsikhe by 90 minutes (Bm.ge, June 10, 2020).

The modernization of the Chumateleti-Khevi section of the international E60 highway is being carried out by the Georgian branch of the China State Construction Engineering Corporation. The portion of this segment crosses through the municipalities of Khashuri and Kharagauli. The road starts in the village of Khashuri in Chumateleti and ends near Khevi village in Kharagauli municipality, where it connects to the next F2 portion

of the section (Eib.org, October 18, 2018).

Another big project is the construction of a 13-kilometer four-lane cement-concrete road, 27 bridges and 18 tunnels on the Ubisa-Shorapani section of E60. The lengths of these tunnels vary from 300 to 1,600 meters, and 13 of the 27 bridges are located in the direction of Tbilisi-Argveta and the other 14 in the reverse direction (Bm.ge, September 13).

Rehabilitation work has also begun on 25.5 kilometers of the Zhinvali-Barisakho-Shatili highway. This section has not been rehabilitated for 40 years, and the road is badly damaged, which has hindered transit (Procurement.gov.ge, May 18, 2017).

Furthermore, the Bakurtsikhe-Tsnori Bypass project envisages the construction of a 16.6-kilometer-long two-lane asphalt-concrete paved road, six bridges and two traffic junctions (overpasses). The bypass road will be part of one of the main roads in Kakheti region (Tbilisi-Bakurtsikhe-Lagodekhi), which passes through a densely populated area and is characterized by a high intensity of transit traffic.

It is becoming quite clear that Chinese companies are dramatically reshaping Georgia's landscape. Funding for these projects mostly comes from international donors, but the number of Chinese companies directly involved in the projects has raised some questions. This domination of Chinese companies in Georgia's infrastructure market has caused indignation among some EU member states' ambassadors in Georgia, as well as among Georgian construction companies (Radio Tavisupleba, December 6, 2020; Bm.ge, December 11, 2020).

Yet, despite Chinese companies' growing presence in Georgia, relations between Tbilisi and Beijing are mostly dominated

by a negative geopolitical outlook. At one time, the relationship looked to be headed in a promising direction. In 2017, China and Georgia signed a free-trade agreement to remove customs barriers, a move Georgian leaders hoped would boost exports and help develop the Georgian economy (Agenda, May 17, 2017). As a result, several large-scale investment forums were held in Tbilisi for that purpose (Tbilisirs.gov.ge, October 22, 2019).

Fostering closer ties with China was also seen as a vital component of Georgia's quest to balance against Russia's regional influence. Yet, those hopes have not materialized. While trade volume has steadily increased, statistics show that Georgia mostly exports raw materials to China, such as copper and various chemicals. Similarly, concerns over corrupt practices have increased, especially tied to how Chinese companies have been awarded contracts. One illustrative case concerns PowerChina subsidiary SinoHydro winning a €26.3 million (\$26 million) tender for the reconstruction of a 42-kilometer section of the Khulo-Zarzma road (Cbw.ge, August 11, 2020).

Indeed, the proliferation of Chinese companies in Georgia is set to transform the country's transit capabilities. Even so, despite multiple advantages, substantive deepening of Chinese-Georgian relations has yet to materialize. In truth, regional geopolitics remain a major obstacle. Georgia's close ties with the West and Russia's strong position in the South Caucasus preclude significant growth in Chinese-Georgian connections.

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

Israeli House to Work on Several Projects in Montenegro

Continued from page 1

It was also decided to open an Israel-Montenegro Chamber of Business and hold business forums until April; to hold Israeli Week on April 13-20 in 2023 in Montenegro and Albania, along with a business forum, to open an Israeli House and commemorate Holocaust Remembrance Day; and to teach the history of the Holocaust at the university.

Itsik Moshe was officially invited in January and discussion of a cooperation plan in 2023 is under consideration.

At the meeting, Itsik Moshe told the guests, that the history of Holocaust is taught in four universities of the capital of Georgia and more than 200 non-Jewish Georgian students study this subject. This is an expression of the good attitude of Georgia towards Israel and world Jewry. Israeli rooms have also been opened in universities, so young citizens of the friend country can discover the real Israel, which is necessary for successful bilateral relations. In two cities of Georgia, Oni and Tbilisi, Georgian Schindlers' memorials were placed and the Righteous Among the Nations Park was opened. Both of these locations have already become an inseparable part of AEPJ's European Route of Jewish Heritage certified by the Council of Europe.

The Head of Israeli House, who is the Vice President of the European Alliance for Israel (EAI), made an agreement with the Montenegrin minister that a governmental group from Montenegro will become a member of the EAI and will join next year's European delegation to meet the government of Israel. From Georgia, the Head of the Georgia-Israel Friendship Group, Givi Mikanadze will participate.

During the conversation between the Montenegrin minister and renowned soprano Tamar Iveri, it was decided that Montenegro will participate in the next international festival. The Minister invited



the winner of this year's Batumi Festival, Elmina Hasan, to next year's Israeli Week.

Bilateral business visits for joint energy projects are also planned. The Chairman of the National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission of Georgia, Davit Narmania, will visit Montenegro for this purpose.

Within the short visit, the minister of

the Public Administration of Montenegro met with the Mayor of the Capital city, Kakha Kaladze. A memorandum on the twinning of Tbilisi and Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro, will also be signed, an example that connections cover both culture and business. The Republic of Montenegro, a country in south-eastern Europe, borders the Adri-

atic Sea and Croatia to the west, Bosnia and Herzegovina to the north, Serbia to the east, and Albania to the south. The population of the country, with an area of 13,812 km², is 620,079. The capital and largest city of Montenegro is Podgorica, while the old capital Cetinje is the cultural and historical center of the country.

On June 5, 2017, Montenegro became

the 29th member country of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The country is also a member of the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe. Montenegro is one of the founding countries of the Mediterranean Union.

DVV International Georgia Hosts "Adult Learning and Education in the South Caucasus: The Milestones" International Conference

Continued from page 2

He mentioned that DVV International has accomplished a lot of milestones throughout the course of its remarkable 20-year career in the South Caucasus.

"Education is at the heart of everything. It is also a human right. A crucial component of the educational system is sustainable frameworks for ongoing adult education," he noted.

"Regarding education, three principles should be grasped. The first tenet is that the best understanding of education is a holistic one. The second tenet is that education is a public good. The third tenet is that no one should be left behind in their pursuit of education. We Germans believe that public education systems are essential," Fischer highlighted.

In his address, the Ambassador of Germany to Georgia mentioned that the improvement of people's skill sets so they may apply their abilities to occupations is a priority in Georgia and, it is hoped, in other nations as well. With the right skills, people may find decent employment in their nation, contribute to its economic prosperity, and support its steady and peaceful growth, he said.

"On a wider note, I believe we are facing three key challenges that are all connected to education," Fischer emphasized.

The capacity to "defend rules based on international order" was identified as the first problem. "It is being contested most brutally by Russian attacks in Ukraine. The rule of law is what we desire. Instead of using force, rule through negotiation and agreement," said Fischer.

The second issue that was raised was the urgent nature of the environmental and climatic catastrophe, which is why education is necessary.

Fischer recognized the final difficulty. In the era of digitalized education and machine learning algorithms, both as societies and as people, "we are up against a challenge to our sovereignty." "We must ensure that the machine and algorithm digitalization system is under our control. We must educate ourselves and acquire information in order to achieve it," he stated.

"Those are three global challenges we all face and education is a key part of solving them," the Ambassador sent his best wishes for a fruitful conference.

The attendees were also welcomed by Valerian Gobronidze, who also emphasized DVV International's support and contribution to their work in Georgia. He added that a new, unified education and science plan for the years 2022-2030 has been established by the Ministry of Education and Science.

"In order to ensure strategic development of adult education the government will take several steps in the next ten years," stated Gobronidze.

Lali Santeladze, welcomed conference participants and dedicated a special greeting to her Ukrainian colleagues on the conference opening. "I want you to know that our thoughts, feelings, and support are with you. We also wish you a speedy and complete victory," she underlined.

By expressing the delight in seeing a lot of like-minded individuals who sup-



port adult education, who feel that they can support this crucial component of the educational system, and who think that adult education is a key strategy for improving people's quality of life and the economic health of our nations," Santeladze further remarked the necessity of this conference.

Maia Abramovska, Georgia Country Director of DVV International, welcomed attendees to the conference with the words, "We are really delighted to have you here to our conference devoted to the ALE in the South Caucasus milestones."

The invited guests provided a summary of the significant work completed by

DVV International at the conference's opening. Effective ways for coping with adult learning were also examined, along with present and foreseeable difficulties.

The Conference gathered ALE experts, policymakers, decision-makers, and practitioners who concur that adult education must be acknowledged as a public good and that the administrative and financial authority should be strengthened to allow for greater flexibility and freedom in contributions to adult skill development.

Based on the best European practices, including the implementation of targeted holistic AE activities, the conference

participants discussed and offered proposals on how to promote reforms and create a sustainable adult education system in Armenia and Georgia.

The Conference promoted professional discussion among stakeholders and exchanges about the state of the global ALE sector and its potential effects on local possibilities in the South Caucasus.

There were over 80 ALE experts, policymakers, decision-makers, and practitioners in attendance. Participants were from Germany, EU and non-EU countries, as well as the three DVV International regions of the Caucasus and Southeast Europe, Ukraine/Moldova, and Central Asia.

Shangri La Tbilisi 10th Anniversary!



On September 22, 2022, Shangri La Tbilisi celebrated its 10th birthday. The celebration of that anniversary was set with grandeur and glamor, with the square in front of the entertainment complex turning into a real carnival show. Guests were greeted by performers in colorful costumes, while a street orchestra set a wonderful rhythm for the evening, and a fire show in front of the building became a vivid embodiment of the anniversary celebration.

There were many surprises for guests inside Shangri La Tbilisi itself: a photo zone, an exquisite interior decorated with fresh flowers, and a rich buffet in accordance with the best traditions of Georgian hospitality. The star of the evening concert program was the great Nino Katamadze. The guests warmly welcomed the unique vocalist onto the stage of Shangri La Tbilisi and bathed her in a standing ovation. Katamadze's bright, unique, philosophical and very emotional music certainly became a symbol of a new wonderful decade ahead for the Shangri La Tbilisi entertainment complex, which first opened its doors to guests in 2012 and to date remains the most prestigious institution with the highest service standards in Georgia.

Shangri La Tbilisi is an entertainment complex, well known for its high level of service, classic table games, modern slot machines, VIP club and restaurant, where each guest can enjoy a pleasant environment and ideal comfort.

P.S. Look for the opening of the next Shangri La in Batumi next year!



Regrets, Retreats, Reunions

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

We went because we both had to and could. My wife is now no longer teaching English at Etseri School, which is the "could". The "had to" was the funeral for a Georgian friend of ours, murdered before his 60th birthday (apparently by a fellow countryman) overseas.

The funeral was first. Tragedy multiplied by the dead man being his parents' only son, them still being alive, and him not having any children (neither does his unmarried sister). Many questions still unanswered; shock still raw. Witnesses in the hands of police in their country of work but refusing to name the likely suspect, who is still at large. Misplaced sense of honor making them accessories. We hope for answers, pray for peace for the family.

We traveled on from there to Oni, capital of Racha province, where my



wife has relatives, and stayed with them for two nights. In between, they sent us off on an excursion with a man who twice weekly delivers bread to two sets of Georgian border guards, up where

Racha meets North Ossetia. (Apparently they haven't thought of getting freezers to keep a supply for their 10-day tours of duty. Their loss, our gain.)

The weather was not looking promising, mostly cloudy with rain threatening, but of course I had my camera gear with me. Our driver was very accommodating with my requests for photo stops in the oncoming autumn landscape. Racha's wonderfully asphalted roads soon gave in to 4x4-worthy gravel and ruts, but we were expecting this, ready for it.

On the way, we crossed some shallow river intersections with the road, and I took the opportunity to describe to my wife the origin of the word "ford".

The best shots came at our first bread stop. There were a few meters in which I could roam, and 180 degrees or so of allowed coverage, not walking towards or aiming at the Russian border. But all the action was south anyway; and the sky most obligingly gave me gorgeous side-lighting just when I needed it, for a few minutes of magnificent warm-hued forests topped by newly-snowed peaks. Then it went flat again, but I had been ready to shoot, and was thrilled.

On to our next delivery, this one in the

nearly abandoned village of Gona, which doesn't even have cellphone coverage. This border used to be so well used that the village had all sorts of shops, even one for gold jewelry; now only ruins remain for archeologists to speculate over. We stopped here for lunch in a local lady's yard, buying a bottle of her honey and sharing our k'ubdari (Svan meat pies) in exchange for sour cream mixed with curds. Here, the backdrop was a long mountain with glaciers which reminded me very much of the top of Ushguli, over which Mt Shkhara, Georgia's tallest, looms.

Back down again, noting a couple more nicely named villages on route: Itsa and Sori. String it together and you have: Sori, Itsa Gona... now we just need another Georgian place name which is a verb in English. What can you find on Google Maps, readers? I've come up empty-handed.

We ended up in Ozurgeti, capital town of Guria province, for another reunion, this time with a friend who's been working outside Georgia for nearly five years to clear family debts, a sadly familiar

Georgian story. She's back for a month, having been sorely missed by husband and three sons, now all adults. I picked chestnuts for the first time ever, under a decades-old tree, glad that the spiky outer shells disgorge them before they fall to the ground.

Rather a whirlwind tour, but again, only possible because of shedding the teaching job as we prepare to migrate southeast to Tbilisi for our first ever winter away from Svaneti since moving to our big house 12 years ago. We will enjoy this newfound freedom and take full advantage of it, with more roaming and reportage to come.

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



Gloria Jean's Coffees Serves Highest Quality Coffee in Vibrant Store Atmosphere

Great coffee has been the driving passion for Gloria Jean's Coffees since 1979: From the first store that was opened by Gloria Jean Kvetko in Chicago, Illinois, to the 600+ stores across 40 countries in operation today.

Gloria Jean's Coffees opened the first branch in Tbilisi, in Freedom Square, at a time when investments and trade stopped to a large extent during the pandemic period.

"We implemented all pandemic rules at the highest level. We had our staff trained by experts and ensured that our entire team could serve healthily by having PCR tests done all the time. We brought the world's most delicious coffees to our customers by constantly disinfecting and providing fresh air flow in our store," Lika Leladze, Deputy General Manager of Gloria Jeans Coffees Georgia, told GEORGIA TODAY.

Today, Gloria Jean's Coffees has four branches in Tbilisi- in Freedom Square, Marjanishvili Square, East Point Shopping Mall, and Vake Home Mart Shopping Mall.

To learn more about Gloria Jeans, GEORGIA TODAY sat down with Lika.

TELL US ABOUT THE GLORIA JEAN'S COFFEES GEORGIA. WHAT DO YOU OFFER CUSTOMERS, AND WHAT

MAKES YOUR COFFEE SPECIAL?

Gloria Jean's Coffees is fueled by our passion for great coffee. We are proud to offer our guests new and exciting ways to experience coffee.

What makes Gloria Jean's Coffees flavor so unique is our commitment to providing our guests with the highest quality coffee. Our baristas are award-winning and all our coffees are roasted by our master roaster at our state-of-the-art facility in Sydney, Australia. There are more than 30 varieties of single-source blends, infusions, and flavored whole-bean coffees.

As bean-to-cup coffee experts, we are committed to making quality handcrafted hot and cold beverages, from your favorite Cappuccino and Caffé Latte to the Signature Iced Coffee and Espresso Chiller range.

We are happy to offer our customers the most delicious salads, granola, sandwiches, and cakes, as well as our excellent coffees.

WHAT IS YOUR MISSION?

Gloria Jean's Coffees is committed to building a unified family that consistently serves the highest quality coffee and provides outstanding and personalized service in a vibrant store atmosphere.

Our four values reflect who we are and how we approach everything we do. These are not values that change

from time to time, situation to situation, or person to person, but rather they are the underpinning of our company culture.

By maintaining these core values, regardless of how large a company we become, we can preserve what has always been unique about our brand:

- Partnerships based on integrity and trust
- Commitment to excellence and innovation
- A culture of joy and passion
- Belief in people, building & changing lives

TELL US ABOUT YOUR COMMUNICATION WITH THE CUSTOMER.

We aim to make our customers' day with our customer service and great-tasting coffee; to put a smile on their face and keep them coming back.

Gloria Jean's is a global specialty coffee chain that is committed to positively impacting community groups and building livelihoods. Coffee has the ability to make people pause and interact with each other. Human connection is why we're here, and sometimes we realize it's as simple as two lattes.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

We want to be the most loved and respected coffee company in Georgia,



and we are tireless in our pursuit to serve the highest quality coffee while making each and every one of our guests feel like they are returning home when they step into one of our coffee houses.

We are going to establish new branches all over Georgia. We are working to become the most developed coffee chain in Georgia by opening stores in different

locations in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, and other cities.

At the same time, we are continuing our franchise negotiations. We provide a proven business model and support systems to help establish and run a franchise coffee house with ease. The Franchisee partnership is the perfect answer when you reach that crossroad in your life.



CULTURE

Tbilisi IV International Summit of Crafts and Design – ETHNOFEST is Back

BY TEAM GT

Tbilisi 4th International Summit of Crafts and Design ETHNOFEST 2022 commences in Expo Georgia on October 14th. The festival will run for three days, October 14, 15, and 16, and welcomes craft aficionados, local and foreign visitors.

The summit's goal is to promote craft producers and artists in the craft sector and to encourage their economic viability in both local and global markets. Participants come from six countries: Georgia, Bulgaria, Armenia, Ukraine, Armenia, and the Czech Republic.

Over 150 craft manufacturers, artists, and designers will exhibit artworks and other goods at the exhibition. The festival allows local and international buyers to purchase handicrafts directly from craft manufacturers and learn more about the acquired item through face-to-face dialogue.

ETHNOFEST 2022 is a three-day event that comprises a craft and design expo, training, masterclasses, workshops, an international conference, and craft-themed film screenings.

The summit will also showcase completed projects such as: CRAFTING EUROPE is an EU Creative Europe financed initiative; EU Black Sea Basin projects on Promoting Culture and Heritage Based Tourism; and a USAID Economic Security Program project aiming at the professional development of craft makers.

Training Digital Marketing Skills for SMOs Development and How to Develop Craft Studios to Host Tourists for Masterclasses will be conducted.

The festival will feature masterclasses. Tatulashvili's Ceramic Workshop-Museum will host a wheel-throwing masterclass with ceramic artist Giorgi Tatulashvili of Gori, Georgia. A masterclass on glassmaking will be held by the Czech Republic's Rautis Family Company. Asmart Creative Hub's silk-making masterclass will feature Konul Huseynova of Baku, Azerbaijan. Natalya Akulenko from Mikolaev, Ukraine, will demonstrate a Taurian Postcard Painting Masterclass, while experts from Bulgaria and Ukraine will hold masterclasses on experiential tourism topics.

The 4th International Summit of Crafts and Design ETHNOFEST 2022 in Tbilisi will also feature short films. One of the short films that will be screened is Handmade Culture – the Story of the Tbilisi Workshop, which was produced by Neka Sebiskveradze and directed by Gvantsa Meparishvili from Georgia. The Future is Handmade, produced by Maikel Kuijpers and edited and shot by Noel Schoolderman from the Netherlands, will also be presented at the festival. The Georgian Heritage Crafts Association's Master of Traditional Arms – Teimuraz Jalaghonidze will also be on display. The film Crafting Europe Georgia, produced by studio Melano and commissioned by the Georgian Arts and Culture Center, will be aired.

As part of ETHNOFEST 2022, a contest called the Best Booth will be held to choose winners in several nominations.

GEORGIA TODAY received exclusive remarks on the international summit from Mark McCord, Chief of Party for the USAID Economic Security Program in Georgia, and Maka Dvalishvili, founder of Tbilisi International Summit of Crafts and Design ETHNOFEST.

In a brief interview with us, Mark McCord revealed that ETHNOFEST means a great deal. Prior to the pandemic, ETHNOFEST was gaining popularity for its assistance to artisans around Georgia and the Caucasus, he noted, emphasizing that the festival helps artisans to learn more about worldwide best practices for trade, better business procedures, and making business-to-business relationships to improve sales.

"The fact that ETHNOFEST is returning this year is even more significant," he added.

"It will also serve as a punctuation mark, if you will, of the resurgence of the artisan value chain within the Caucasus. Allowing both internationals and locals alike the opportunity to interact with amazing artisans and those artisans to interact with potential customers," he highlighted.

"For Georgia, ETHNOFEST first and foremost means feasibility; it means increasing the knowledge and capacities of Georgian artists. They are already quite sophisticated, but they can adopt new techniques and expand into new markets. Of course, it will boost Georgian artisans' sale derivatives and provide them with possible market linkages," he continued.

The involvement of USAID sends a "powerful message," McCord told us, a

message that "we support Georgia's creative industry sector, which is a pathway to high-value employment, as well as Georgia's cultural heritage, which is manifested through these artisan products."

McCord noted that USAID feels these craftsmen have "global appeal" and it will do everything possible to boost craftspeople's markets and their capacity to reach buyers all over the world.

"It's not just the right thing to do, but it's also the wise thing to do. To assist craftsmen in increasing their exposure and access to new markets," underlined McCord.

The significance and perks of ETHNOFEST were mentioned by Maka Dvalishvili in a short conversation with GEORGIA TODAY.

"The South Caucasus region's artisans come together for ETHNOFEST. This is a relationship-building platform. The capacity of craftsmen to communicate with other artisans about the latest trends in arts and crafts from their own nation," she stated.

"This year, Eastern European nations including Bulgaria, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine will attend ETHNOFEST with us for the first time," Dvalishvili added.

Dvalishvili said ETHNOFEST fosters two key partnerships between Georgians and foreign ambassadors. First, craftsmen have the capacity to get to know one another's works of art and "forge bonds." It also creates "business connections" and "openings for new markets." "Strengthens and prolongs the ties that exist between nations," she added.

The artisans who participate in the summit will attend a variety of workshops, see short films, and participate in competitions, she commented.

"There are several cultural festivals in Georgia, but none of them are specifically focused on arts and crafts. Summits like ETHNOFEST are extremely uncommon not just for Georgia but also for the South Caucasus; I believe ETHNOFEST is the only one that is currently accessible," she highlighted.

"Craftsmen must expose the history of each product and become masters in client communication," noted Dvalishvili.

The event offers a day devoted to Ukraine when Ukrainian artisans will celebrate their cuisine and culture by making Borscht, said the festival's organizer.

ETHNOFEST is partnered with the European Commission Delegation to Georgia, USAID, and Embassy of the Netherlands. Along with Tbilisi City Hall, Expo Georgia, Czech Center Tbilisi, Tskaltubo Tourism Development Center, Tskaltubo Municipality, and Gori Municipality.



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