



FOCUS ON THE EU

"If Europe and MEPs really want to end polarization, they should grant Georgia candidate status," the Georgian PM stated this week **PAGE 2**

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War Latest: German and British Tanks Arrive in Ukraine

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

The first shipment of German and British tanks have arrived in Ukraine, ahead of an expected spring counter-offensive.

Ukraine's defense ministry said British Challenger 2 tanks had arrived in Ukraine, while Germany's defense ministry said 18 Leopard 2 tanks, ammunition and spare parts had been sent Tuesday.

Germany has faced criticism during the war for an apparent reluctance to send heavy weaponry to Ukraine. It eventually decided to send battle tanks to Kyiv in January, with the US pledging to do likewise. The UK was the first country to pledge tanks to Ukraine early on in the new year.

In other news, Russia's Pacific Fleet fired supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles at a mock target in the Sea of Japan, the Russian defense ministry said Tuesday.

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky arrives at the train station in Trostianets in the Sumy region of Ukraine on Tuesday. Source: Efrem Lukatsky / Associated Press

Prepared for Georgia Today Business by **GALT & TAGGART** CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

MARKETS		As of 27 Mar 2023	
BONDS			
GRAIL 07/28	85.74 (YTM 7.34%)	-0.1%	-2.9%
GEBGG 07/23	100.02 (YTM 5.87%)	+0.4%	-0.2%
GEOPAP 03/24	98.06 (YTM 8.30%)	+0.5%	+0.6%
SILNET 01/27	97.83 (YTM 9.05%)	+0.0%	-0.5%
TBC 06/24	98.27 (YTM 7.25%)	+0.3%	-0.2%
STOCKS			
Bank of Georgia (BGEO LN)	GBP 25.95	+6.4%	-7.5%
Georgia Capital (CGEO LN)	GBP 7.63	+3.0%	-6.8%
TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN)	GBP 22.10	+0.2%	-9.2%
CURRENCIES			
GEL / USD	2,5750	+0.1%	-1.8%
GEL / EUR	2,7808	+0.8%	-0.1%
GEL / GBP	3,1608	+0.1%	-0.1%
GEL / CHF	2,8105	+1.5%	+0.2%
GEL / RUB	0,0335	-0.3%	-4.3%
GEL / TRY	0,1348	-0.4%	-3.0%
GEL / AZN	1,5164	-0.1%	-1.8%
GEL / AMD	0,0066	-	-1.2%
GEL / UAH	0,0697	-	-2.4%
EUR / USD	0,9261	-0.7%	-1.8%
GBP / USD	0,8139	-0.1%	-1.8%
CHF / USD	0,9156	-1.5%	-2.2%
RUB / USD	76,9204	+0.2%	+2.7%
TRY / USD	19,0888	+0.4%	+2.1%
AZN / USD	1,6975	+0.0%	-
AMD / USD	388,5000	+0.0%	-0.6%
COMMODITIES			
Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	78.12	+5.9%	-5.3%
Gold Spot (US\$/OZ)	1,956,67	-1.1%	+7.7%
INDICES			
FTSE 100	7,471,77	+0.9%	-5.8%
FTSE 250	18,529,62	+0.2%	-6.8%
DAX	15,127,68	+1.3%	-1.6%
DOW JONES	32,432,08	+0.6%	-1.4%
NASDAQ	11,768,84	+0.8%	+2.6%
MSCI EM	31,23	+1.4%	-5.6%
MSCI EM	964,01	+2.2%	-0.3%
SP 500	3,977,53	+0.7%	-0.1%
MSCI FM	2,120,78	+2.6%	+0.0%

Georgia on the Way to Fulfilling 12 EU Recommendations



Image source: multinews.ge

COMPILED BY KETEVA
SKHIRTLADZE

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, Annalena Baerbock, paid a two-day official visit to Georgia last week.

"I came to Georgia with a specific message," she noted. "We want to see Georgia in the European Union, we want Georgians to enrich the European Union. We will support you on this path. We are very happy that you have made significant progress, especially in terms of the implementation of the 12 priorities, as well as in terms of the follow-up process. There are 12 priorities to gain candidate status. This is the most important task for all of us. Naturally, it is necessary to work together. In the accession process, the supremacy of the law, and implementation of democratic standards are necessary."

She noted that now the task of politics is to overcome polarization, restore trust and implement reforms with full conviction.

"The Government of Georgia cannot become a member of the European Union without civil society, and civil society cannot become a member of the European Union without the government of Georgia. It is only possible united," Baerbock added.

The President of Georgia discussed the issues related to the European integration of Georgia with Ms Baerbock during her stay.

President Zurabishvili stated at the meeting held in the Orbeliani Palace that the population of Georgia will not understand a second refusal of candidate status, and will consider itself abandoned by Europe.

"That is why I am here, and this is what my government supports. Georgia needs to continue reforms to get the candidate status," Baerbock said.

STEPS MADE TOWARD THOSE 12 POINTS THIS WEEK

"If Europe and MEPs want to end polarization, they should grant Georgia candidate status – this will remove questions and speculations and end their [the opposition's] destructive, radical actions, the extremist opposition will have no real reason to accuse our government," Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili said in his speech at the plenary session of Parliament.

He claimed that the priority set for Georgia to get candidate status is to end polarization, but the question is what the opposition is doing to this end.

The Parliament heard the Foreign

Affairs Minister, Ilya Darchiashvili, answering the questions of the Opposition MPs Teona Akubardia, Tariel Nakaidze, Ana Natsvlishvili, Giorgi Vashadze, Paata Manjgaladze, Khatuna Samnidze, and David Bakradze at the plenary session.

"The geopolitical context that the international community and Georgia encounter today is becoming ever more complex and severe. The international community is still consolidated in support of Ukraine due to the Russian military aggression, which poses the acutest challenges to the common security architecture, and within this situation, our country has to implement all foreign goals and tasks outlined and promised to the Georgian population. Despite these challenges, we are keeping to the steady implementation of the tasks necessary for our successful EU integration," the Minister reported, noting that the EU analytical report on the approximation of the Georgian legislation with the EU laws promulgated in February and the positive assessment provided therein reaffirm that Georgia does deserve EU candidacy.

"I hope the EU will make the respective political decision after the Parliament successfully accomplishes compliance with the EU recommendations. With full responsibility, I declare that the Georgian Government, in close cooperation with the Foreign Ministry and active collaboration with Parliament, takes further steps to ensure the positive positioning of our country in the next report, as it had in the analytical report of the European Commission," Darchiashvili stated.

"We address the compliance with the 12 priorities with the merit-based principle and, when conversing with our European colleagues, we request that the decision be based on the progress achieved by Georgia and the outcomes of the implementation of the EU recommendations that our country manifests in the EU approximation process in general."

Georgian Parliament endorsed the State Concept of Economic Empowerment of Women with 78 votes this week, being among the priorities determined by the Georgia-EU association agenda.

The concept defines the following directions: 1. Equal access to economic resources; 2. Enhancing the gender-sensitive legal framework; 3. Improvement of public sector procurement and employment practices; 4. Improvement of employment practices in the private sector; 5. Recognition, reduction, and distribution of unpaid and care work; 6. Encouraging the formalization of economic activities of women employed in the shadow economy; 7. Struggle with contradictory social norms.

The concept was signed by representatives of the parliamentary majority and members of the opposition political group.

The Committee discussed the Draft Law on Money Laundering and Facilitation of Elimination of Financing of Terrorism, binding the accountable persons to reflect the risks of money laundering and financing of terrorism related to their activity; establishing stricter scopes of restriction of the application of the law on accountable persons; introducing a new record allowing the accountable person to terminate the preventive remedies and notify the Financial Monitoring Service; and determining the authority of the FMS to conduct the operational and strategic analysis.

As FMS Head, Valerian Khasashvili noted, the Draft ensures the consideration of the MONEYVAL recommendations on money laundering and, as a result, increases the rating of estimation of certain recommendations.

Chair of the Committee, Maka Botchorishvili noted that fulfillment of the recommendations is important for Georgia in yet another direction.

"Georgia has submitted the application for accession to the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA) and the fulfillment of MONEYVAL recommendations is set out as a precondition. Hence, the legal amendments can be realized in this direction as well," she said.

Chairman of Georgian Dream, Irakli Kobakhidze, spoke about the fulfillment of the EU's 12 points and noted that it is their obligation to fulfill these points,

adding that two draft laws remain to be adopted, and everything else has been done. Kobakhidze emphasized that all this was done without the participation of the radical opposition, with their unilateral responsibility.

"We will bring this process to the end. Two more draft laws need to be adopted and these will be fulfilled in due time, and the adoption of all relevant laws will be completed by the end of June. There are no political prisoners in Georgia, and therefore this issue is not related to us in any way. What the European Parliament says has no value," Kobakhidze said.

OPPOSITION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 12 RECOMMENDATIONS

The party 'For Georgia' this week called on the ruling team to start the second, real stage of parliamentary work for the implementation of the EU's 12 recommendations in parliament, within the framework of which, with the participation of the opposition, a parliamentary supervisory board for the implementation of the 12 recommendations should be created, and the recommendations of the Venice Commission should be implemented on at least three issues, namely – justice, elections and in the direction of anti-corruption reform.

"The party For Georgia has never been a cause of polarization in the process of implementing the 12 recommendations," representatives claimed in a statement. "Unlike some opposition parties, which conducted a parallel process, we participated in the parliamentary working groups, and presented a concrete plan for the actual implementation of the 12 points, which is directly in line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission."

"It is clear that as a result of the attempted adoption of Russian law, the authorities caused irreparable damage to the country's international reputation."

"The perception in our partners that the Ruling Party has taken deliberate anti-Georgian, anti-national steps, is confirmed."

"In response to this situation, we call on the Government to start the 2nd, real phase of parliamentary work aimed at the substantive implementation of 12 points, leaving no room for political fraud."

"It is crucial: First, we call on both the Ruling Party and Opposition, parliamentary opposition parties, independent MPs to share responsibility and conduct the process jointly."

"It will be possible to implement the first recommendation and reduce polarization. Within the scope of unified

responsibility – to create a Parliamentary Supervisory Board for the implementation of recommendations. This board would be tasked with ensuring the effective implementation of evaluation and monitoring mechanisms proposed by the European Commission. Through collaborative efforts with the Commission, the board would facilitate regular reporting on the progress made towards recommendations.

"Second: In the agenda of the second round, the recommendations of the Venice Commission on at least three issues should be fully taken into account:

1. Justice system – fundamental reform of the High Council of Justice;
2. Electoral reform – unified, full-fledged, including considering all previous recommendations;
3. Reform of the anti-corruption agency – systemic reform of the regulatory framework, equipping agency with investigative function.

"Also, the issue of deoligarchization, according to a systemic approach, not individual."

"Third: To ensure the involvement of public and political entities, the working process should be conducted according to the rules of procedure of the Parliament, through clearly regulated mechanisms. We also appeal to international partners to increase pressure on the authorities to implement the 12 points," the For Georgia statement read.

The members of the Reform Group held a meeting with the PACE Monitoring Committee to deliberate on compliance with the EU recommendations for the EU candidacy for Georgia and the political processes in Georgia.

Chair of the Group, Khatuna Samnidze, noted that the fulfillment of the recommendations is not enough, that Georgia needs to demonstrate to its European partners that the political processes in the country are being conducted in the European way and line with European values.

"We overviewed the political statements, the Russian Law, and the attacks in the Parliament; we underlined that despite such a grave milieu, we are for and appeal to our partners for EU candidacy since it is an opportunity for our country to progress and be safeguarded from Russian aggression," she noted.

Group member Giorgi Vashadze added that the opposition spares no efforts to ensure Georgia receives EU candidacy, though the chances are being reduced.

"Despite the authorities of Georgia applying the mechanism characteristic for Russian disinformation, attacking our European partners and colleagues in Parliament, despite the daily physical reprisals and failure of the government to comply with the EU recommendations, the Georgian people have proved they deserve the EU candidacy," he stated.

CHARLES MICHEL: BY END OF THE YEAR, COUNCIL SHOULD DECIDE ON THE ACCESSION OF MOLDOVA, UKRAINE AND GEORGIA TO THE EU

Charles Michel, President of the European Council visited Moldova and made a statement, noting the European Commission should publish the next report regarding the EU accession process, which concerns the European perspective for Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia, as well as the Western Balkans.

"I intend to raise this issue before the European Council by the end of the year. This means that by the end of the year, the Council must decide on the issue of starting the process of accession negotiations with these countries. This will be a political decision, taking into account the report that the European Commission will prepare. I sincerely hope that a positive decision will be possible by the end of the year," Michel stated.



Image source: nostalg.ge

War Latest: German and British Tanks Arrive in Ukraine

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The combat exercise saw Russia fire Moskit cruise missiles, supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles, at a "mock enemy." It said the target was hit.

Japan's foreign minister said his country would remain watchful of Moscow's military operations.

EU COUNTRIES SEEK LEGAL OPTION TO STOP RUSSIAN LNG IMPORTS

European Union countries agreed to seek a legal option to stop Russian companies sending liquefied natural gas to EU nations by preventing Russian firms from booking infrastructure capacity.

EU energy ministers proposed that new EU gas market rules should include the option for governments to temporarily stop Russian and Belarusian gas exporters from bidding up-front for capacity on the infrastructure needed to deliver LNG into Europe.

The proposal is part of their negotiating position on new EU gas market rules. It must be negotiated with the European Parliament - a process that can take months.

The 27-country European Union has pledged to ditch Russian gas in response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Europe's pipeline imports of gas from Russia have plunged since the invasion, but LNG imports have increased.

ZELENSKY VISITS UKRAINIAN POSITIONS NEAR RUSSIAN BORDER IN SUMY REGION

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky visited positions of the Ukrainian border guards near the border with Russia in

the Sumy region to mark the anniversary of its recapture from Russian troops.

The Sumy region was briefly occupied by Russian forces at the start of the war, but withdrew in early April 2022. In those early few weeks, several towns became the focus of fierce battles.

It is the latest stop in Zelensky's tour of the country. In the past seven days, he has visited the Kherson and Kharkiv regions, as well as Bahkmut in the Donetsk region and Zaporizhzhia.

Addressing a crowd in a square in Okhtyrka, Zelensky promised that the battle-scarred city would be rebuilt.

"We won't let any wound remain on the body of our state," he said.

RUSSIAN FORCES CONTINUE TO SHELL

Russian troops continue to shell. They hit the town of Bilopilnia in the Sumy Oblast on Tuesday morning, damaging a school and an apartment building.

At least two people died and 25 were injured following Russian shelling on the city of Sloviansk in Donetsk.

Administrative office buildings, a high-rise building and seven residences were destroyed by S-300 rockets, Pavlo Kyrylenko, the head of the Donetsk Regional State Administration, said on Telegram, noting that the rescue operation was ongoing.

Intense attacks on the eastern Donetsk town of Avdiivka and the damage they've caused prompted a Ukrainian official to liken the destruction to what you would see in a "post-apocalyptic" movie.

Utility workers were evacuated from Avdiivka, a town just over 50 miles southwest of Bahkmut in eastern Ukraine, as fighting intensified at the weekend.

"Avdiivka is becoming more and more like a site from post-apocalyptic movies ... Therefore, a difficult decision was made to evacuate the rest of our heroes — utility workers who at least tried to keep the city clean and livable," Vitaliy Barabash, head of the Avdiivka City Military Administration, said on Telegram Sunday.

Barabash told any remaining residents to leave the town while they were still able to, saying: "Now I do not ask, I strongly recommend leaving Avdiivka, because Russian rockets and projectiles do not spare anyone or anything, no matter what views you hold," he said.

Ukrainian military officials have already warned that the town could be a "second Bahkmut," where there has been heavy fighting for over seven months.

On Monday, Ukraine's general staff said Russia was concentrating its offensives around Lyman, Bahkmut and Avdiivka and two other settlements, and added that its forces had repelled more than 60 attacks in the past 24 hours along the eastern front.

BELARUS SAYS NATO'S BEHAVIOR HAS PUSHED IT TO HOST RUSSIAN NUKES

Belarus' Foreign Ministry said Tuesday that it had decided to host Russia's tactical nuclear weapons reportedly because of NATO's "coercive measures" and "the build-up of military potential" in neighboring countries.

"Unilateral coercive measures in politics and the economy are accompanied by the build-up of military potential in the territory of neighboring countries — NATO members in close proximity to our border," Belarus' Foreign Ministry



Image source: Picture Alliance | Getty Images

said in a statement reported by Russian news agency Tass.

"Considering these circumstances and the legitimate concerns and risks in the field of national security arising from them, Belarus is taking forced response actions to strengthen its own security and defense capability," the ministry said.

Russia's ally Belarus is seen as something of a bulwark for Moscow against NATO, given that it borders Poland, Lithuania and Latvia — all NATO members — Ukraine to the south, and Russia to the east.

Over the weekend, Russia announced that it would locate tactical nuclear weapons (designed for use on the battlefield rather than mass wholesale destruction) within Belarus, saying President Alexander Lukashenko had made the suggestion to do so.

NATO criticized Russia's nuclear rheto-

ric, calling it "dangerous and irresponsible." "We are continuing to monitor this very, very closely," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters on a conference call. He added that so far, the US has not seen reason to change its own nuclear posture.

UKRAINE AT THE SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY

On the diplomatic front, Ukraine's foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba has taken part in a virtual session at the US-led Summit for Democracy.

"No other nation wants peace more than Ukraine," he said. "But peace at any cost is an illusion. For peace to be a lasting one, it needs to be just. The cessation of Russia's aggression and the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity are essential conditions for peace."

Moscow says it is willing to talk peace but stresses security concerns come first.

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And the Winner is...

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

Yes, Ukraine is winning the war...no, Russia is winning it! Which one of these two strictly differing conjectures is most approximate to what we call truth? No self-respecting man or woman in the world would risk their reputation by unequivocally responding to the question right now.

Let's for a second symbolically bisect the world into the believers of Ukraine's victory and the advocates of Russia's success. Wishful thinking clearly characterizes the attitude on both sides. Without any analytical thinking or factual corroboration, Ukraine's fans would insist, foaming at the mouth about it, that Ukraine is confidently striding toward triumph. Conversely, Russia's devotees will kill themselves to prove that Russia is all set to be the champion.

We all know propaganda is a huge part of any war, used to keep up a soldier's courage to give his life for "the right cause". The cynicism of Man has no limits, and within the framework of that egregious sarcasm, where each party has its own forged truth, tens of thousands are dying, and even more are left crippled for the rest of their lives.

Sakartvelo is as divided as the rest of

the world on the issue; only, we have not yet counted the believing heads, either on one side or the other. As a matter of fact, refraining from statistics in this case might make sense, because any attempt to document the numbers might result in a societal conflict within a society already strained and exhausted.

Unbelievably, the maintenance of peace and calm has become utterly dependent on the outcome of the war in Ukraine. This brings with it the eradication of that distressing talk about Georgia opening a second front against Russia by taking advantage of the situation and recapturing its occupied territories. The supporters of Russia's "successful" "Special Military Operation" tirelessly and persistently talk about the perilous possibility of the mentioned second front, and the believers in Ukraine's victory in the war are just as tirelessly and persistently using every opportunity to mock their opponents' preoccupation with the idea of unleashing said front.

It's all seems a tool of that habitual propaganda used by local political rivals to display their versions of truth so as to empower their stand and whet their chance to emerge explicitly victorious from the long-extant precarious circumstances. Politicians are the grandmasters of garbling the narratives of the day. In reality, none can wait to



Image source: business today.in

declaim the triumph-revealing words of Hollywood make: "And the winner is..."

On hearing it, we will relax as never before, so high has the sense of moral and physical exhaustion been from the damned war. Any news about the end of the war, fought for the attrition of

Mankind's nervous system, will allow us to at last re-embark on peaceful cooperation and unhampered development.

The question whether this is possible or not is mind-boggling. Anything would serve well as a finale to this bellicose show (except a nuclear end to the story).

On the other hand, a deterrent nuke fright might be our only chance to prevent the collapse of our multi-thousand-year civilization, which has never been so close to annihilation as it is today. Can we say "Who cares?" No, because Man has not yet reached that level of degradation.

At the Crossroads of Choices: When Too Much Is Confusing and Too Little Is Restricting. Part 4

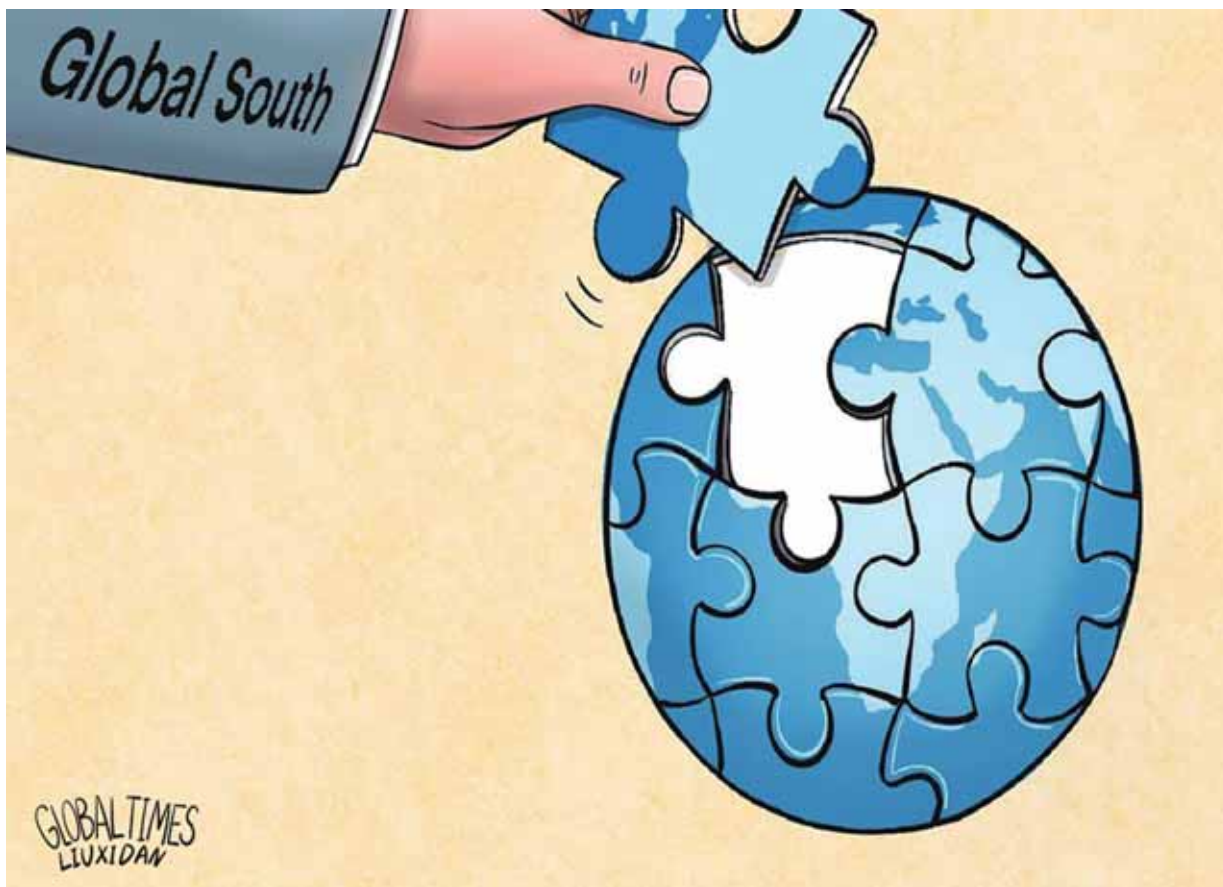


Image by Liu Xidan

BY VICTOR KIPIANI,
CHAIRPERSON OF GEOCASE

This is one of the growing "geographic-geopolitical centers" of recent times, the peculiarity of which was especially clearly manifested against the background of the Russian-Ukrainian war. At present, it is difficult to talk about the future of this seemingly new pole, although its formation and influence on global processes is already felt.

As represented by a number of countries in South America, Asia and the East, the characteristic feature of the Global South is the refusal to take sides in military conflicts. These "countries remain-

ing" outside the countries that have regrouped in one camp or another of the world openly flaunt a kind of Machiavellian line in foreign policy, where "the end justifies the means".

However, objectivity requires noting that in some cases, in terms of sympathy for the conflicting parties or results, this line is not geopolitically "unaffected". For example, the refusal to join Western sanctions against Russia (in order to pursue its national interests) reduces the effectiveness of these sanctions and offers a kind of "lifeline" for the Russian economy. It would take us too far to characterize specific examples, but for the purposes of a general classification, this group of "others" is probably close to the Non-Aligned Movement that developed in the 1970s. Let us repeat: it is close, but it does not fully replicate all

its aspects; moreover, due to the geopolitical reality that is radically different from that time, it is unable to replicate it.

The political handwriting of the Global South is still largely transactional, i.e. it is oriented to obtaining a specific benefit in each specific situation. However, in this "falling out" of the South from the unified context, one should look not only for its intention, but also for the lack of a proper attitude of the big players to the "others" (at least!) in the post-Cold War period. For example, during the abovementioned period, various European problems were repeatedly turned into problems of the world, although one or another problem of the rest of the world rarely became worthy of Europe's due attention.

Let us once again emphasize the impor-

tance of the Global South for world processes. However, we should also note that in terms of consistent, systemic and long-term projection of global influence, it is still too early to speak confidently about the establishment of the Global South as a monolithic pole.

WE: THE GEORGIAN SIDE

In the recent past, we have discussed many times the pursuit of the Georgian geopolitical line in the current realities. This time we will limit ourselves to stating briefly that this line should be as nationally egocentric as possible under the conditions of the priorities defined by the foreign policy framework format. In other words, the driving force behind this egocentrism is: (1) The primacy of interests emanating from the critically important formula for the Georgian state - "more national security, more economic welfare" - over the interests of others - wherever possible; (2) The alignment of security and economic interests derived from the same formula with the interests of others - as much as possible, wherever possible.

Maneuvering and balancing is not alien to Georgia. Historically, our country has tried, with varying success, to do so in order to achieve goals appropriate to the tasks of this or that stage. The direct and correct pursuit of this line will remain a priority in a world in which the order of any configuration for the foreseeable future will depend on: (a) the global balance of power; (b) the ideological content of systems determining the global balance of power; and (c) the factor of geographic location.

Against this background, taking into account the trends described in the article, we would like to share with the audience some thoughts in the form of a brief conclusion. We believe that implementing each of these as a practical method of policymaking will be useful in achieving practical rather than theoretical results. To begin with, (1) in the context of the current first world economic war, Georgia faced an equally challenging and historically unique opportunity to significantly increase its attractiveness as an economic hub and, together with the region's "economic like-minded"

countries, to advance the region in the emerging industrial and transport structure of the new world. Related to this same view is a very visible trend, according to which global companies are becoming ideologically relatively "neutral" and looking for friendlier, relatively safe geographies to relocate. The uniqueness of this historical moment for the Georgian side lies in the fact that it is given the opportunity (through joint public-private efforts) to offer the best choice of so-called "friendshoring" ("placement in a friendly environment") to advanced business interests. In this context, Anaklia, the Black Sea cable or sub-regional projects within the middle corridor will flesh out the above proposal; (2) To realize the already mentioned Georgian ego-standard of "more national security, more economic prosperity", the right synergy of Georgia's soft power, preventive secret service and proactive diplomacy is needed. We have more than once mentioned the national significance of each of them as well. This time we will say only a few words about the unprecedentedly growing role of Georgian diplomacy: it must achieve such a standard so that it can politically neutralize actions against the interests of the Georgian state at an early stage, in order to save the remaining resources of the state (military and economic) as much as possible; (3) It is necessary to introduce into both Georgian domestic and foreign political practice (although this division is very tentative today) the prioritization of issues: time and resources should be allocated for primary or secondary tasks. In order to avoid unpredictable and risky results in certain situations, the creation of policies aimed at a substantive result can be based on a step-by-step approach.

It has been very accurately said that the political leaders of the modern era should have two main and basic qualities: calm acceptance of events when they cannot physically change them for the better or influence them, and courage when they are able to take advantageous steps. Based on Georgian realities, let us add one more to these two qualities: a politician also needs the wisdom to know when to act calmly and when to act courageously.

'Green Diamond' - All Attributes of Comfort in One, Ecologically Clean and Green Space

The process of handing over apartments belonging to the owners of blocks A and B of the third stage of the "Green Diamond" residential complex of the "MAQRO Construction" company has already started! The apartments in block A are fully renovated, and in block B are provided in the black frame form. Both units will be put into operation from the end of April.

Some of the residents of the complex already have the keys to their living spaces, and very soon they will begin

a new life in this unique environment, since in Green Diamond, taking into account all elements of comfort, there is everything for them to live in a peaceful environment, in harmony with nature, away from the noisy rhythm of the metropolis. In Green Diamond, one can find outdoor swimming pools, running and walking trails, basketball and children's courts, outdoor fitness areas, a cafe, supermarkets, a pharmacy, bakery and beauty salon, and surface and underground parking.

In a short, in Green Diamond, every-

thing is designed to provide you with all the services one needs in a complex, without needing to leave. The list will soon be enriched with a fitness center, a kindergarten, and, the most important benefit of Green Diamond - 1/3 of the complex is going to be greenery. This is exactly what the Smart Living concept developed by the MAQRO Construction Company envisages - all attributes of comfort in one, ecologically clean and green space.

The residential complex Green Diamond includes three stages and is stretched over a total area of 70,000

square meters. The project, which has no analogs in Georgia, is located in an ecologically clean area of Tbilisi, in Dighomi, near the Olympic facilities. The complex includes a total of 23 residential blocks, with a total of 1686 residential apartments. Currently, the construction and sales process of the third stage is actively underway. Most of the apartments have already been sold, however, in the blocks that will be completed in January, May, and November 2024, interested buyers still have a chance to buy the apartments of their desired size, in either black frame con-

dition or with complete renovation.

As mentioned above, Green Diamond is designed in line with the Smart Living concept and involves combining all the attributes of a modern comfortable life in one space. In addition to living in the complex, MAQRO Construction also provides a good opportunity for interested people to start or expand their businesses. Customers can also purchase commercial space and start their business in the area of the complex, which will give their business guaranteed customers in the form of residents of the complex.

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War in Ukraine and Kazakhstan's Multi-Vector Foreign Policy

ANALYSIS BY EMIL AVDALIANI

The world has become increasingly polarized and divided. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has created ripples across the world, causing heightened threats of the use of nuclear weapons, economic downturns, humanitarian challenges, and lack of trust between the main players on the international field. Diplomacy has taken a backseat in the Ukrainian war, as involved countries utilize hostile means to achieve their national security objectives.

Several countries have tried to offer a diplomatic solution to the international crisis, though with little success so far. China, for example, proposed a twelve-point document offering a framework for a political settlement. It outlined Beijing's support for the UN Charter and the territorial integrity of states, while at the same time condemning unilateral sanctions, and criticizing the expansion of US-led military alliances. While any effort at a diplomatic solution to a war should be welcomed, China's plan is unlikely to gain traction in the West mainly because of the worsening relations between Beijing and Washington,

and also because Ukraine sees the causes of the war from a different perspective.

While the big powers, such as the US, EU, China, Russia, and India, will undoubtedly continue to play a key role in international affairs, there is also an emerging space for so-called middle powers to contribute to the resolution of global crises. Those that have good relations with all sides and are known to be balanced and impartial when it comes to global issues are particularly well-placed to facilitate diplomacy. Kazakhstan is a good case study.

Since its independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has positioned itself as a suitable mediator in international conflicts. For the past several years, the country has hosted negotiations on the Syrian conflict as part of the Astana Process. In 2013, Kazakhstan's commercial capital Almaty hosted two rounds of negotiations on the Iranian nuclear deal. Two decades earlier, in 1992, Kazakhstan proposed to establish the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). Today, CICA has developed into an influential multinational forum, enhancing cooperation between countries to promote peace, security, and stability in Asia. Thanks to its continuous efforts on the international stage, Kazakhstan was elected as a non-permanent member of the



Source: getaboutasia.com

United Nations Security Council for 2017-2018. Last year, Kazakhstan held the VII Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. Pope Francis was among the over 100 delegations from 50 countries.

Ultimately, Kazakhstan, due to its peculiar geographic position, is positioned to play a greater role on international arena. The country pursues a balanced, multi-vector foreign policy, which means it has established good relations with all sides – Russia, Ukraine, China, the EU,

and the United States. Few countries in the world can be considered a reliable partner to all sides, which is why Kazakhstan could play a critical role in stirring the war in Ukraine into a different dimension, should Ukraine and Russia agree to negotiations.

In this context, Kazakhstan has also recently launched the Astana International Forum, which will take place in June this year. In addition to being a tool for rebuilding a culture of multilateralism on a global level, the conference will

reinforce the idea that diplomacy around the war in Ukraine could be brought back. It is envisioned that the forum will bring together high-level government representatives from all over the world, as well as members of international organizations and business circles, to discuss ways to navigate the current global challenges.

This will be a worthy exercise, particularly if representatives of big powers can get together in one room. At the same time, the forum will demonstrate that middle powers like Kazakhstan can facilitate valuable discussions on issues that are top of the international agenda right now.

To be sure, the Astana International Forum is unlikely to resolve the war in Ukraine. Nor does it have such concrete ambitions. Yet the initiative should be welcomed and supported if it can reverse the course back towards diplomacy and building of trust. Few states across the Eurasian continent have such advantages as Kazakhstan with its multi-vector foreign policy does, with a potential to contribute to the resolution of many global crises and facilitate increased international collaboration.

Emil Avdaliani is a professor of international relations at European University and a scholar of silk roads

BUSINESS

Offering New Tourism Products & Rebalancing Socio-economic Life in Georgia

BY ANA DUMBADZE

Since Georgia gained independence, internal migration has increased as a result of labour migration, due to citizens relocating from villages to cities. This process significantly damages the country's socio-economic environment.

To solve this issue and encourage locals to return to their places of residence, improving of socio-economic conditions on the ground is essential. In this process, the expertise and involvement of the country's foreign partners becomes even more valuable.

A tangible example of the contribution from Georgia's western partners is the European Union's work, including its relatively new project "EU4ITD – Catalyzing Economic and Social Life in PIRDP Regions" (CESL).

The PIRDP is a national initiative led by MRDI. It addresses four out of ten regions in Georgia, with support from the EU provided under the programme "EU for Integrated Territorial Development" (EU4ITD).

The project is funded by the EU and German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and is being implemented by GIZ. Its national partner is the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure.

Covering the focal regions of Guria, Imereti, Kakheti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti, the initiative is embedded in the wider national agendas of decentralization, inclusive economic growth, and promotion of social cohesion across the country.

GEORGIA TODAY spoke to representatives of the project to find out more details: Howard Harding – Team Leader of EU4ITD – Catalyzing Economic and Social Life, and George Rajebashvili – Advisor on Tourism and Value Chain Development.

Speaking about the key goals of activities, Mr. Harding noted that the general

approach is to "catalyze" existing but untapped potential in the four PIRDP regions to achieve positive economic and social outcomes.

"The project started in February 2022 and will last until September 2025," he tells us. "It is aimed at regional development. We're working with our national partner, the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, to identify and finance projects which would encourage people to move back to the regions. In this way, we hope to decrease integral migration to the big cities – Tbilisi and Batumi."

"Our activities cover two main areas: Firstly, we finance 'regional' and 'integrated' project ideas put forward by individual municipalities to improve socio-economic conditions in their communities," he notes. "Due to their regional aspect, initiatives should result in impacts felt outside a single municipality, while their 'integrated' nature implies that they involve multiple sections of the community (e.g. civil society) and concern more than one sector (e.g. address both the economy and society)."

"In addition, we are looking into the gaps in the regional value chains – allocating funds to fill such gaps should lead to increased income generation. One such gap has been identified in the wine value chain in Kakheti, a region famous

for its winemaking, where we are partnering with a laboratory to make wine testing services available in the region (rather than only being accessible in the Tbilisi). At the same time, in West Georgia, we are looking at the value chain for tea."

George Rajebashvili, Advisor on Tourism and Value Chain Development, tells us about one of the exciting initiatives being implemented within the project "The Oda House Route".

"The Oda is a traditional wooden house which is common in western Georgia" he says. "Due to the moisture and abundant rainfall by the influence from the Black Sea, Oda houses were raised from the ground and stood on wooden or stone 'legs.'"

Prior to construction, the owner of the house usually would choose the best orientation and balcony view since Georgians spent a large part of the day on the balcony. In good weather, they even slept there at night. Open balconies and wide windows on all sides of the buildings demonstrate the desire to be in touch with nature.

"From a construction point of view, the uniqueness of the Oda house lies in the capacity to be easily transformed," Rajebashvili notes. "They have always been considered as 'movable property' since one can easily disassemble, relocate it,



and reconstruct again."

Another characteristic feature is the decorated wooden balconies of the Oda; ornamentation on balcony columns and arches typically depicts flowers, leaves, in mountain regions was common also wild animals and grapes.

"Our project, titled 'Oda House Route,' is aimed at realizing the potential of traditional Oda houses in western Georgia: The activity aims to meet potential/unmet demand in remote areas, thereby increasing local income generation," he says, and "includes the renovation of Oda houses and their utilization for commercial activities.

"project EU4ITD – Catalyzing Economic and Social Life in PIRDP regions specifically mentions the preservation of Oda houses," he tells us, "This is a relatively new concept, aims to keep alive these traditional houses. Sadly, those houses are often damaged, dismantled or abandoned, so we decided to do our best to preserve and save them, as they represent cultural and historical value for Georgia. Moreover, they can be very interesting for tourism development. They can be used for various activities, and we've seen one of the project beneficiaries using his Oda for wine tasting, another for tea tasting, or conducting workshops, etc."

"We decided to create a network of Oda houses – Oda House Route. Several such houses are already successfully operating, and we hope that the number will reach 20 within a year. After that, they will be promoted on social media,

and a special website will be created for their popularization. As such, the number of visitors to Oda houses, guesthouses or other facilities arranged there is expected to increase."

"Travel companies and tourists are always looking for new, unusual products, and I believe these traditional Georgian houses will strongly attract and impress them. Our project aims to contribute to the economic activities of locals and also support tourism development in the country."

Notably, the concept of Oda House Route was also present at the ITB Berlin 2023, one of the biggest tourism exhibitions, the host country of which was Georgia.

"Among many other agencies and companies from Georgia, GIZ also participated at the ITB Berlin the project prepared a short film about Oda houses to popularize them. The first three members of the Oda houses network also attended the exhibition and showcased their products and workshops to the guests, which helped make Georgia look even more exciting in the eyes of potential foreign travellers. This project initially serves the development of ecotourism in Georgia, and we're happy to see that this goal is being implemented successfully by our team," Rajebashvili concludes.

This article was created with the assistance of the European Union and the German Government. Its contents are the sole responsibility of GIZ and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union and the German Government.



GAA Holding – The International Success Story of a 30-Year-Old Georgian Company

BY ARCHIL GELASHVILI
FOR ENTREPRENEUR

The first steps in starting an independent business and building free economic relations in Georgia date back to the 1990s. This was a significant period for Georgia, when the commercialization of various industries began. After the dissolution of the USSR, the social, political, and economic environment was uncertain in Georgia. The country was facing numerous challenges, and everyone was hoping for the best.

From today's standpoint, it is evident why there aren't many companies in Georgia with a long history of doing business: Simply because many could not withstand the test of time. Some businesses changed industries, and some even left the country altogether in search of luck abroad. Despite this, though, there are success stories in Georgia that, without exaggeration, can be taught in the best business schools around the world; success stories made by hard-working and dedicated entrepreneurs who helped to shape the industries we have today.

Entrepreneur would like to share with you a story about a successful business, GAA Holding, which since 1992 has been steadily expanding its operations in Georgia. The local and international experience helped them to introduce completely innovative ways of doing business and applying the highest standards to the operations.

GAA Holding is represented on the Georgian market in several strategic business divisions, among them business consulting, marketing services, advertising services, media communication, printing, and production; new and used cars business, global trading and shipping; and the import of digital and renewable energy products.

For 30 years, all GAA Holding business units have led the market in their segment, and all this has been achieved primarily by providing the best customer service and coming up with creative solutions promptly.

Obviously, behind every successful company with a rather long history stand people who share a common vision, values, and principles. Although they are moving towards one goal, reaching it would be impossible without the founder of GAA Holding, a professional with many years of experience, Gia Alikhanashvili, whose personal story of success goes beyond Georgian borders and includes the whole region and the post-Soviet countries.

Gia Alikhanashvili made a name for himself by implementing innovative projects and successfully investing in businesses. He is actively involved in creating opportunities for his Holding as well as other business operating on the Georgian market. As a business expert, he assisted in the implementation of a number of exciting projects in various fields, which is why he is positioned as one of the most successful independent businessmen in the region.

Entrepreneur talked to GAA Holding founder and CEO Gia Alikhanashvili about his entrepreneurial journey, the history of GAA holding, and its current and future projects.

MR. ALIKHANASHVILI, PLEASE TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF. WHAT WAS YOUR PATH TO STARTING A BUSINESS, AND WHAT CHALLENGES DID YOU HAVE TO OVERCOME ALONG THE WAY?

I was born and raised in Tbilisi. I have studied at all educational institutions that existed in Soviet Georgia at that time - from kindergarten to school, training centers, and technical institutes.

I started working early on. My father passed away when I was young, and I took the responsibility of providing for

my family. I worked at various places and once even had four jobs at the same time, but I juggled it all and was always on time thanks to my pride and joy - a soviet made car named "Zhiguli".

In 1984, I started working as a video engineer on the first channel of state television. With about 3,000 people working in television, I gained a lot of good friends and acquaintances. Those years shaped my vision and helped me to form the core of the Holding as we have it now. I can proudly say that 30 years ago, we were the first to start creating an advertising agency, which is now representing an international group McCann Worldwide, specializing in marketing communications on the Georgian and Armenian markets.

Undoubtedly, there were many obstacles and challenges along the way which we had to overcome, but today, GAA Holding is a member of the American Chamber of Commerce - AMCHAM and the Advertising Communications Association ACAG, where we try to contribute to a common goal and serve individual companies, as well as the Georgian economy. We are confident that the Holding continues to develop and find its niche in the international market.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all our employees on the 30th anniversary of GAA Holding and wish them a continuous journey of success and pride. I would also like to thank all our clients and suppliers for their cooperation and wish them a successful 2023.

30 YEARS OF SUCCESSFUL OPERATION ON THE GEORGIAN MARKET IS QUITE IMPRESSIVE IN ITSELF. WHAT IS YOUR, AS A GAA HOLDING FOUNDER, SECRET TO SUCCESS?

Becoming successful and maintaining that success did not come easy. There were times when just surviving the market volatilities was deemed a success.

Our story began a little earlier, but as soon as it became possible to legally register the business, we opened a small office, registered the name, and started officially operating - all that in 1992. Since then, we have shown up and worked every day; at times, we have worked 24 hours a day, and I will always be grateful to the people who stood by me, some of whom continue to work alongside me to this day.

Life and business are very much like riding a bicycle. If you don't keep your balance, you will definitely fall off. Well, we tried not to fall and maintained political neutrality at all times, which is vital in the Georgian business environment.

We managed to retain and increase our client base. Our friends, who know and remember how we started our business from scratch 30 years ago, are confident that GAA Holding (gaaholding.com) is still managed by a team of professionals and always successfully implements the given projects.

Today, we have open and transparent relations with all our clients and suppliers, just like 30 years ago. We value our longstanding relationship and expect our partnerships to last many more years to come.

I think it is a great achievement for the industry as well as Georgia's business environment for companies like us to come this far, cooperate, learn, and help to develop the market we have now.

HOW WOULD YOU ASSESS THE 30-YEAR DEVELOPMENT OF GAA HOLDING? IT COMBINES SEVERAL BUSINESS DIVISIONS. WHAT ARE THEY, AND WHAT TYPE OF PRODUCT/SERVICE DO YOU OFFER CUSTOMERS?

The development and growth rate of any business depends on investments, especially local ones. You can imagine how many multinational companies we have negotiated with over the past 30 years to enter the Georgian market. Rest assured, every investor cautiously evaluates the economic indicators and political status



quo before investing in new markets, especially in small countries, where political and economic processes are closely intertwined, and even more with Georgia having a history of nearly continual political or economic disruptions.

In these circumstances, we and KEDI TV managed to partner with the American advertising agency McCann Worldwide to serve the Georgian and Armenian markets for the first time in our country. At that time, we established a client base and experienced team ready to take up any challenges. Since 1998, this partnership has brought us immense changes. Our company grew rapidly by working with other multinational clients, like two more agencies of the McCann Worldwide group - media agency "UM Georgia" and event and production agency "Momentum Georgia," which have been added to our advertising group.

In addition to the above, we helped establish several local companies currently working as our suppliers. This year, we have combined some of our businesses and created a new portal - Advertising.ge based on a single window principle; the client receives full advertising and communication services or chooses the specific agency based on their interest. As I mentioned, this service is available in all regions, and manufacturers exporting their products can use it as well.

The second division is Senaauto.ge, which we started in 2006, and today we continue to work with major brands like Cadillac, Honda, JAC Motors, CMC Motors, Subaru, SsangYong, ENOC, and Kuba/RKS. This company operates as an agency and fulfills orders for any vehicle services.

The past three years have been extremely challenging for the automotive industry. Many manufacturers faced operational and supply chain issues. Consequently, this business is struggling to stay afloat, and GAA Holding is fully committed to keeping it stable.

The commercial division of JAC Motors proved to be quite successful, and now, together with the German car-maker Volkswagen, it produces two types of passenger cars - one that runs on gasoline and one fully electric.

We have been keeping up with time and implementing the latest trends in the industry by creating new brand Ecodrive.ge, which is a corporate social responsibility project of GAA Holding and works as an online store. The product range varies from Honda and JAC Motors electric cars to solar products and solar panels supplied by Senaauto brands.

Since 2004, GAA Holding has owned popular radio station STARFM 93.9, and in 2015 we added lifestyle channel "Starvision" (STV), a News and TV broadcasting service www.starvision.ge, to the group. Recently we integrated both into the Starvision.ge and created a comprehensive multimedia platform. On this portal, you can watch live any TV channel, listen to our radio, and read the news. In the near future, we plan to turn this

startup into a mobile application, thus making it more attractive and accessible for our customers in Georgia and abroad.

GAA Holding successfully cooperates with government institutions and participates in various tenders. Since our inception, many projects of different companies have been implemented, and a lot of interesting ideas have been realized.

In 2023, we formed a procurement and shipping company - Gaatrad.org, which will combine the existing trade and logistics divisions in GAA Holding, as we anticipate managing worldwide orders. A unique selling proposition for this division would be the ability to order and deliver any product to any part of the world.

We plan to use our extensive experience in this field and open a logistics center with our company representatives worldwide. We have been represented in the free economic zone of Dubai for over ten years now, as well as in China, India, Great Britain, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, the United States of America, Canada, Brazil, Taiwan, Japan, and post-Soviet countries.

HOW HAS THE ORGANIZATION TRANSFORMED CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES DURING ITS 30-YEAR HISTORY, AND HOW HAS THIS AFFECTED THE HOLDING'S CORPORATE CULTURE?

For the past 30 years, the country has been through both political and economic turmoils. And obviously, the pandemic had a devastating impact on the market, so we had to start all over again. However, we also learned a thing or two during that time, and now with a completely different mindset, fully digitalized and more flexible with our choices, we continue to serve our clients and manage our brands.

GAA Holding has transformed its brand image and undergone significant restructuring to meet the latest digital requirements. Working remotely opened up many opportunities for us; we are no longer limited to the four countries' markets we used to work for; we now offer our services worldwide.

Even though we have always been focused on attracting young people, the search intensified this year. As we face a labor shortage in nearly every industry, we would like to have on board students who are taught and allowed to test their abilities in various fields of work.

Today, we have over 250 employees working in GAA Holding. Should our projects expand, we would look into growing our team too. We have excellent long-term plans for the future.

WHAT ARE THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE YOU HAVE GAINED FROM 30 YEARS OF INDEPENDENT WORK? BASED ON YOUR EXTENSIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL EXPERIENCE, HOW WOULD YOU ASSESS THE LOCAL MARKET?

Thirty years of experience with local companies, as well as a partnership with international companies, have taught us a lot. We acquired many professional skills that are unique to this market, and we are ready to use these skills and knowledge while working with government institutions and contributing to the development of local businesses.

The Georgian market does not exist independently from the rest of the world: It develops with the region and progresses the way all developing markets do. Of course, we are moving forward, but the question is how swiftly and dynamically it all happens. What matters is how macroeconomic indicators change over a certain period of time and how the market responds to them.

We are driven by a clear vision. We would like to be pioneers in implementing the latest innovations and technological advances within our projects. We had cases when a particular project was deemed too innovative or did not fit the market demand, so we had to postpone it, but as the famous saying goes, if you aren't making mistakes, you're not doing anything.

My and my team's main achievement is that there is a decent and stable advertising market in Georgia. We are proud to have overcome shifts in the market and the partial monopoly that might occur from time to time. But as a pure monopoly is practically impossible in this industry, we are confident things will go well for us.

I would like to emphasize the importance of high sales turnover for the growth of medium-sized businesses. One of the proven methods to increase sales turnover is "promotional campaigns," which is little seen today. The legal framework should be modified to facilitate such events and "sales promotions." We are ready to assist and participate in these processes.

BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCE, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE ENTREPRENEURS WHO ARE JUST STARTING OUT, OR WHO ARE ALREADY TOP-LEVEL MANAGERS?

I would advise young entrepreneurs to choose a business or field they want to master and become proficient in early on. Changing professions or companies often is not efficient in the long run. Consider studying a field of interest here or abroad, and definitely come back home. With the current labor shortage, Georgia can use your knowledge and experience for good! Otherwise, the country will not be able to develop like other European and other Western countries, where so many of our fellow citizens live. I strongly advise them to try and return to take advantage of Georgia's business opportunities and implement their entrepreneurial ideas here - on the Georgian market.

Pfizer Holds Two-Day Conference with Georgian and Foreign Experts



BY EREKLE POLADISHVILI

On March 24, the world premier biopharmaceutical company Pfizer held a press conference titled "No patients behind. Modern treatment for oncology patients in Georgia". The event, which The American Hospital Tbilisi hosted, was a continuation of a two-day conference dedicated to the burden of cancer and the steps necessary for diagnosis improvement and the development of innovative treatment methods.

"The two days were a contribution of Pfizer to the development of regional dialogue between experts, and to increas-



Dilyara Kaidarova



Zarinna Kozhakhmetova

ing medical education," Zarinna Kozhakhmetova, Country Medical Director in Caucasus and Central Asia at Pfizer said. "It is very important for the public to know that kidney cancer is currently one of the most significant challenges and issues in health, and Pfizer is making a lot of effort to help Georgian cancer patients gain better access to innovative treatment."

Top healthcare experts described the state of oncology in Georgia during the conference. According to the statistics they presented, more than 13,000 new cancer cases were detected in Georgia in 2020. Experts highlighted the problem of the rapid spread of kidney cancer, of which more than 400,000 new cases are diagnosed worldwide yearly.

"I want to draw the attention of our patients to early detection and to where high-level treatment can be provided and, of course, to the implementation of new protocols for cancer treatment in all our countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus," MD Dilyara Kaidarova, Professor and the Ambassador for American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) in

Central Asia and the Caucasus noted. The experts highlighted that medicines alone are not enough. A holistic approach is needed, combining well-advanced screening and medical facilities, access to innovative therapy, continuous skills development by doctors, and raising the awareness of the general public.

"Foreign experts and specialists who visited our clinic are in close partnership with various international oncological associations," Deputy CMO and Head of the Urology Department at AHT, Davit Nikoleishvili Ph.D. said. "Thanks to their advice and guidance, we can adopt the best international practices to improve patient care quality. By raising awareness about oncological diseases in patients, we help patients understand that cancer is not a death sentence, and diagnosing it at the early stage, if appropriate treatment is provided, can save many lives."

Oncological diseases remain a global challenge for humanity and still occupy a leading position in mortality, decreased quality of life, and disruption to workforce ability worldwide.

The Pre-Acceleration of EFES Georgia's Entrepreneurship Program Has Begun

On March 23, EFES Georgia and Impact Hub Tbilisi launched a pre-acceleration program which aims to promote sustainable entrepreneurship and strengthen startups, companies, and individuals in this direction.

The program received applications from some 60 startups, of which 9 teams were selected based on applications and interviews. The selected teams focus on various aspects, among them the circular economy, green entrepreneurship, sustainable development, social impact, environmental protection, and energy efficiency. Over the next 12 weeks, they will work on developing their startup or company.

The selected participants are:

- Aremare - an eco-educational, recreational, demonstration space that promotes an eco-friendly lifestyle and energy-efficient construction and regenerative farming approaches.
- AI Farmer - an automated greenhouse management system that combines qualified agronomists' knowledge, modern technologies, and artificial intelligence.
- Green Gift - a waste collection system with an effective logistic scheme and production of secondary, eco-friendly products from recycled waste.
- Preshfood - a mobile application that enables users to purchase surplus food from their favorite cafes, pastry shops, or stores at discounted prices.
- Khibli - a recycling enterprise that serves for the recycling and composting

of fruit and vegetable waste.

- DAMSI Block - an energy-efficient and eco-friendly building material that significantly reduces construction costs.
- Da Vinci Green Systems - dynamic systems for greenhouses that allow consumers to get 2 times more harvest with 4 times less investment.
- Ecomap - a digital ecosystem of a circular economy.
- With us - a travel application that connects drivers and passengers on the same route.

"The EFES Georgia entrepreneurship program aims to support the development of Georgia's innovative ecosystem, and the circular economy," says Nikoloz Khundzakishvili, Corporate Affairs Director at EFES Georgia. "The acceleration process for the nine chosen teams will start on April 3, during which they will work on developing their startups. This will be a 12-week project and will serve as a kind of training, with field specialists involved in the process. Our aim is to prepare startups to be ready for the next stage: financing. Developing an innovative ecosystem is not only the responsibility of the government but also businesses, and EFES Georgia is committed to being a part of this process. Involvement in this initiative is one of our top priorities."

The pre-accelerator program will be held in a hybrid format (online and offline meetings) and will last 12 weeks (April-June 2023). Participants will deepen their knowledge in several directions, including product development and validation, customer segmentation, value proposi-



tion, marketing, branding, advertising, sales, impact measurement, MVP - technical product creation, business model and finance, pitch deck, and finding funding sources.

After completing the program, the startups/companies will have established a business model, financial plan, communication strategy, product prototype or technical plan for its implementation, pitch deck, and an investment proposal to seek funding sources. At the end of the program, a demo day will be held,

where the participating teams will present the results of their three months of work.

EFES Georgia, Impact Hub Tbilisi, and Startup Büro are the organizers of the pre-accelerator program.

ABOUT EFES GEORGIA:

EFES Georgia is the representative company of EFES Breweries International (EBI) in Georgia and produces Natakhtari beer, lemonade, and other local or licensed brands on the Georgian market.

EFES Georgia is the leader of the Georgian beer and lemonade market. The company has been in export markets since 2006. Currently, its beer and lemonade are exported to 23 countries.

The aim of the EFES Georgia's Entrepreneurship Program is to support Georgian visionaries and entrepreneurs for the sustainable development of the country. EFES Georgia is runs various environmental projects, including wastewater treatment, plastic reduction, and energy efficiency.

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Re-Tile Everything

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

Re-Tile Everything. And I mean everything. The entire universe, if you want to. Using a single tile, you can now do this an infinite number of ways.

Yes, the big mathematics news of the week is the discovery of the hitherto elusive “einstein”, or monotile (so THAT’S what the great Albert’s surname means!), which can tile the plane (2 dimensions) aperiodically, in other words, in ways which never repeat themselves.

Another great, Roger Penrose, spent decades on the search, narrowing it down to pairs of tiles (for example, “kites” and “darts”) which can tile aperiodically. But never did he, or anyone until now, find that single tile which would do the job. Its very existence was an open question. Its finder? One David Smith, 64, of East Yorkshire, UK, a “shape hobbyist,” as he calls himself.

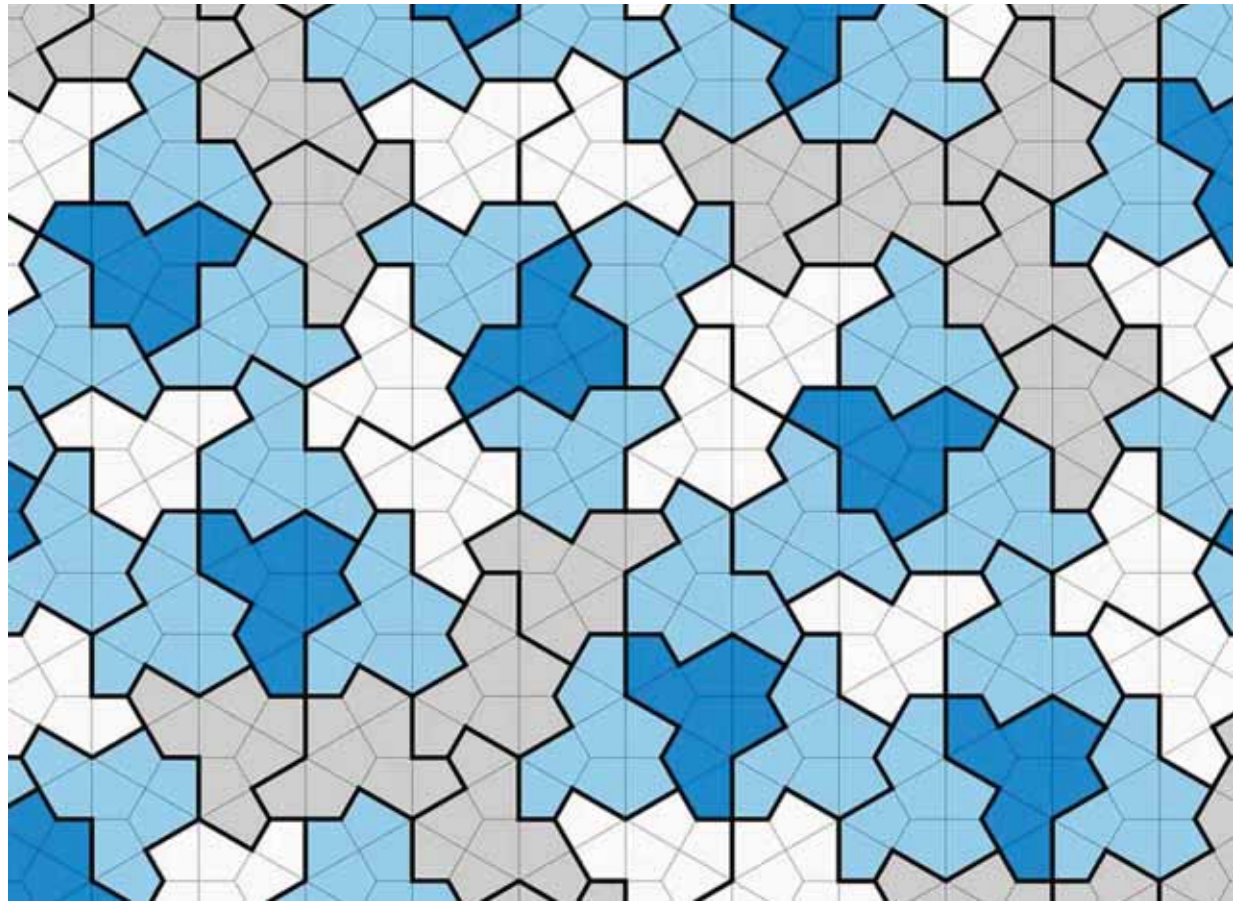
I dabbled some years ago, trying a shape which was half a square (diagonally cut) joined to an equilateral triangle. Nope, it seems. If I had found a shape which seemed to tile aperiodically, how would I even prove it rigorously? I don’t have the mathematical education to do that. Anyway, now the thing has been found. Its simplest version is made of 8 identical sixth parts of a hexagon, and has 13 sides, as in the illustration. A rather technical preprint article on the find, yet to be peer reviewed, but getting plenty of attention, is here: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2303.10798>

This is so much more interesting as a

bathroom tile than, say, squares, triangles or hexagons (the only regular shapes which can tile the plane regularly). Simply because it allows infinite tiling variations to each one of us. Also, because this is a purely mathematical object, there’s no way to copyright it, just as there isn’t with, say, a square.

It’s early days yet, but I expect this shape to revolutionize the world of tessellation, or tiling, in general. Wallpaper, physical and computer. The aforementioned bathroom tiles, or ones for the kitchen or elsewhere. Floors. Yes, there’s an awkwardness at the edges which you don’t have with squares, because here you have to cut off pieces to make a straight edge, or live with an irregular one. Small price, I think. Textiles: clothing, curtains and drapes, tablecloths, carpets. It might be a craze which comes and goes, getting its 15 minutes of fame, or it might linger for years, decades, being infinite in possibilities. The tile itself is also, I must add, only one of a large set of such tiles, oh yes!

What we still don’t yet have, though it has not yet been proven impossible, is an aperiodic mono tile which tiles WITHOUT flipping or reflection. I might just dabble some more myself: this tile’s finder is much more like me than the serious mathematicians he enlisted to prove his tile’s aperiodicity. I would also have to do a similar thing if I ever found a suspect. Interestingly, as is sometimes the case between dimensions in mathematics, aperiodic monotiling was already proven in THREE dimensions quite a while before this second find. (In math, one can have as many dimensions as one’s work requires, literally without limit.) In 3D, the tiles are called quasicrystals.



My own tiling finds in 2D, 3D and so on have all been periodic, but at least they have the virtue of being countably infinite in form, as I detail here: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339171407_Infinite_Tiles_of-Regular_rep-tiles This was enough of a find to satisfy and delight me when I made

it more than 20 years ago.

There is, however, more to discover in the worlds of tiling, as I hope to have shown here. Who will make the next cannonball splash?

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

Technologies and Innovation: A Former UN Youth Representative of Georgia Solving the Education Crisis in Afghanistan



Lika Torikashvili delivering a statement on behalf of Georgian youth at the United Nations 73rd General Assembly

BLOG BY LIKA TORIKASHVILI

During my mandate as the Youth Representative of Georgia at the United Nations, I learned about the importance of standing up for all injustices, in our own country, and outside its borders. With that goal in mind, I founded a Georgia-based nonprofit, Network of Former Youth Delegates to the United Nations, which unites like-minded UN Youth Delegates from around the world, and currently operates its programs in Georgia, Bosnia, Indonesia and Afghanistan.

Since the Taliban takeover in August 2021, all girls in Afghanistan have been

banned from getting an education. They are not allowed to attend schools or universities. They are not allowed to have dreams and passions. They are not allowed to fulfill their potential and thrive.

I remember sitting in the classroom at Bennington College reading a short news article about this ban on education. The media did not give enough attention to this education crisis at the time— even today, we don’t hear much about Afghan women and the human rights abuses against them on the news. As I watched, horrified, from the sidelines, I realized it was time to harness the skills I have to fight for the women and girls who are now completely without education in a country that has been dealing with the ravages of war for over two decades. By

connecting with fellow peace activists and UN Youth Delegates of Afghanistan, Hasib Hamdard and Aisha Khurram, I started reaching out to Afghan female students from all over the country. I knew that the goal, to educate women oceans away in a country run by a terrorist organization, was bold, but I also knew it was achievable. Today, that goal has become a reality: My nonprofit’s E-Learning Platform in Afghanistan is a response to the education crisis which is taking place in the aftermath of the Taliban’s takeover.

Our E-Learning platform seeks to provide internet, digital resources, tech hardware, and college courses to Afghan girls who are forced to meet in secret to access this critical education. We have been operating in Afghanistan since

December 2022, enrolling young women from different provinces of Afghanistan back into higher education. Through a partnership with Bennington College and Bard College, we offer students who pass our program college credits that can be transferred or accumulated toward a college degree.

Using an on-the-ground team in Kabul, our E-Learning platform is rapidly expanding operations to girls most affected by the Taliban’s abuses. Through seed funding provided by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), we are growing and reaching more girls who are eager to learn. We currently offer courses in Computer Science, International Human Rights Law, Photojournalism and Management. The goal is to keep building our platform and provide full credit college courses to our students. We also plan to expand our student enrollment to all provinces of Afghanistan.

This E-Learning platform in Afghanistan is my bold assertion that we do not have to sit idly by as women are oppressed and largely forgotten. With education comes human dignity. This project seeks to further the belief that a better world is possible when we empower young people, and especially women, to pursue learning and acquire knowledge that inspires their curiosity. Our courses, rooted in practical knowledge that will someday be used to rebuild Afghanistan, provide the spark for a life-long commitment to learning that we hope to inspire in these girls.

No woman should be banned from getting an education. I am Georgian, but I believe that every young woman, regardless of nationality or religion, must be given a chance for a better life. Women of the world must stand up for Afghan women. I urge Georgian women to join me, and do whatever they can to be of help.”



Torikashvili together with a former United Nations Youth Delegate of Afghanistan and a fellow peace activist, Aisha Khurram, at the UN Transforming Education Summit

"Qvevry" - Innovation and Tradition Collide to Revolutionize Georgian Wine

INTERVIEW BY MICHAEL GODWIN

One of Georgia's longest-lasting contributions to the world has been the lucrative liquid of quality wine. From humble table wine to prized bottles from over a decade ago, there are over 500 grape varieties. The country truly has a bottle for everyone. Even a visit to some of the nation's villages will show that many families still use the ancient methods for their own creations.

However, making the traditional qvevri is a time-consuming and often expensive affair, a fact excessively burdensome for people making wine commercially in large batches. This is where David Mizandari and the Qvevry Research Company come in. His stated goal is: "Protecting cultural heritage with modern technologies and passing it on to the new generation."

David notes the current market of qvevri manufacturing as incorrect, going against the true traditions of Georgian winemaking. He notes that virtually all of the qvevri in the country are lined with beeswax, which takes away the natural properties of the clay. "The wine doesn't come into contact with the clay at all, and here the main function of the qvevri is lost," David tells GEORGIA TODAY, adding that they are also often coated on the outside with cement to reinforce their strength when buried.

"Unfortunately, such qvevris have become standard today," he laments. Because of these poor construction tech-

niques, many winemaking companies either break away from using the traditional methods, or import qvevris from abroad. "In today's qvevri making, the complete cycle, from clay preparation to firing, is broken," David states, adding that half of the qvevri used end up leaking or cracking, destroying the wine and incurring immense repair costs for the winemakers.

But David believes the ancient traditions are not all lost. He has built a 3D printing system specifically for making the prized qvevri. "This new machine combines both a 3D printing mechanism and special tools for creating qvevri, which builds a qvevri with natural Georgian clay, exactly as it was made centuries ago by our ancestors." These versions, he says, have the precise thickness and porosity so as to avoid the unnecessary beeswax and cement.

"The process is standardized," he explains, "we use well-processed Georgian clay." The process, using his one-of-a-kind machine, can create a 1 ton qvevri in only eight hours. By contrast, the current hand-making method can take up to four months to create a similar product, and will still require the aforementioned treatments.

David explains that the research for his creation began in the National Archives of Georgia. "We searched for manuscripts and books about how qvevris were made by our ancestors," he says, noting that GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), a German government development agency, had a study on Georgian clay. "As a result of the analysis and reconciliation of these many materials, we

conducted tests on Georgian clay mixtures for one year, including the refinement of the clay-firing process, which is one of the most difficult components in qvevri production."

"During the research phase, we needed to find a lot of information, and meetings were held with leading ceramicists as well as microbiologists and winemakers."

The work paid off, he says, and "the grapes were fermented in our qvevri by a bio-winemaker and the results were the best and most unique, never seen before." The rest was left up to David and his team. In the end, the final product outperformed the clay-beeswax-cement method. "The wall of the qvevri made of such clay is porous, the wine does not leak into it, it is strong and does not need to be waxed from the inside or cemented from the outside."

"In our qvevri," David proudly explains, "the wine has direct contact with the porous surface of the wall, from which micro- and nano-air bubbles are supplied to the grape juice, which supports the fermentation/micro-oxidation process for months, which is the direct purpose of the qvevri." He states firmly that "in a properly made qvevri, wine 'lives' for months and years, and continues aging naturally."

David says his company, Qvevry, will be entering the market this year with the aim of revolutionizing the winemaking sector and bringing it back to its ancient roots.

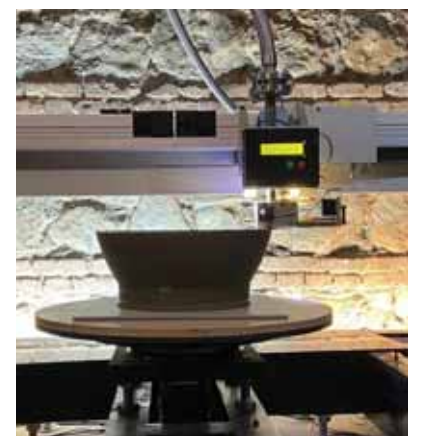
"We already have a long waiting list, and we are also being contacted by winemakers from abroad," he says, explaining that his export qvevri will only be



A printed qvevri. Photo by David Mizandari



Printed qvevri. Photo by David Mizandari



A print in process. Photo by David Mizandari

made of pure Georgia clay. "With such a method, it will be possible to preserve cultural heritage, ensure its sustainability for the next hundreds of years, and pass it on to new generations."

His methods have already won him and his team Georgian Innovation and Technology Agency grants.

David's innovative and sustainable method of preserving the traditional ways of qvevri production and winemaking as a whole seems to have already developed a community of dedicated clientele. Small and large wineries across the country have convinced professional winemakers that this combination of tradition and modern technology is the answer they've been waiting for. Despite a history stretching back to 6,000 BC, and centuries of perfection, a new chapter in Georgian winemaking may be drawing upon the country.



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