



FOCUS

ON THE INTERNATIONAL
CENTER OF WAR
AFFECTED WOMEN

Helping women overcome
the challenges and
consequences of war

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Chairperson of the ICWAW, Marika Arevadze

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Niko Pirosmani's Art and Legacy: A Retrospective of the Albertina Museum Exhibition

BY SOFIA BOCHOIDZE

Niko Pirosmani is considered one of the most outstanding representatives of Georgian painters of the 20th century, and his legacy continues to captivate art lovers around the world. In 2018, the Albertina Museum in Vienna hosted the exhibition "NIKO PIROSMANI – A Wonderer Between Worlds," which showcased 29 of his paintings from the collection of the Shalva Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts.

More than 400,000 visitors attended the exhibition, which also presented a specially designed table by the famous Japanese architect Tadao Ando, titled "Table of Pirosmani," dedicated to the memory of the artist. Additionally, the exhibition featured a handmade book by Iliia Zdanevich, published in Paris in 1972 and titled "Pirosmanashvili 1914," which included Pablo Picasso's engraving "Portrait of Pirosmani."

Continued on page 9 Photos: Khatia Jijeishvili, Gela Badianashvili



Prepared for Georgia Today Business by GALT & TAGGART

As of 24 Apr 2023

Markets				CURRENCIES			
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m
BONDS				STOCKS			
GRAIL 07/28	85.67 (YTM 7.40%)	-0.2%	-0.1%	Bank of Georgia (BGEO LN)	GBP 28.40	-0.2%	+12.3%
GEBGG 07/23	100.03 (YTM 5.81%)	+0.0%	+0.0%	Georgia Capital (CGEO LN)	GBP 7.90	+0.8%	+2.6%
GEOCAP 03/24	97.64 (YTM 8.99%)	-0.1%	-0.4%	TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN)	GBP 22.50	+1.8%	+4.2%
SILNET 01/27	98.11 (YTM 8.97%)	+0.0%	+0.3%				
TBC 06/24	98.39 (YTM 7.23%)	+0.1%	+0.1%				
				COMMODITIES			
				Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	82.73	-2.4%	+10.3%
				Gold Spot (US\$/Oz)	1 989.14	-0.3%	+0.6%
				INDICES			
				FTSE 100	7 912.20	+0.4%	+6.8%
				FTSE 250	19 226.94	-0.3%	+6.0%
				DAX	15 863.95	+0.5%	+6.1%
				DOW JONES	33 875.40	-0.3%	+5.1%
				NASDAQ	12 037.20	-1.0%	+1.8%
				MSCI EM EE	36.17	+2.6%	+17.1%
				MSCI EM	977.38	-2.6%	+0.5%
				SP 500	4 137.04	-0.3%	+4.2%
				MSCI FM	2 148.05	+0.5%	+1.9%
				GEL / USD	2,5020	-0.9%	-2.8%
				GEL / EUR	2,7638	+0.2%	-0.3%
				GEL / GBP	3,1170	-1.1%	-1.0%
				GEL / CHF	2,8210	+0.1%	+0.8%
				GEL / RUB	0,0307	-0.3%	-7.8%
				GEL / TRY	0,1288	-0.9%	-4.5%
				GEL / AZN	1,4757	-0.8%	-2.7%
				GEL / AMD	0,0065	-0.7%	-2.2%
				GEL / UAH	0,0678	-0.7%	-2.9%
				EUR / USD	0,9053	-1.1%	-2.6%
				GBP / USD	0,8009	-0.9%	-2.0%
				CHF / USD	0,8877	-1.2%	-3.5%
				RUB / USD	81,4403	-0.6%	+5.4%
				TRY / USD	19,3962	+0.0%	+1.7%
				AZN / USD	1,6968	-	-0.0%
				AMD / USD	386,7100	-0.1%	-6.6%

Speaker: I Believe in Europe, It Is Time for Europe to Believe in Us Too

These turbulent times, which seem to be here to stay, are the right moment for the EU to fulfill the role for which it was created: sustainable regional peace, security, and prosperity. The EU can revitalize its 'soft power,' by standing on the side of truth, morality, and the values that the EU has long embodied, - the Speaker, Shalva Papuashvili addressed his colleagues in Prague at the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments (EUSC). "I believe three things are critical: first, the EU must cooperate with other democracies as a renowned and universal beacon of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The Union has a world to share - democratic values that its founding fathers incorporated in its foundations; benefits that its citizens enjoy and that make the EU a magnetic attraction around the world; and an area of liberty and peace. Other partner democracies, like Georgia, have a world to share too - a dedicated optimist on guard for liberty and peace - the identity of Europe; cultural heritage enriching Europe; and the best Georgian experience of state-building and democratization. "Second, the EU's strength should come



from a trustworthy, evidence-based narrative. You cannot fight disinformation with disinformation. The Union has always been associated with genuine

progressive values and a near-scientific model for development and prosperity," he noted. Papuashvili pointed out that, sadly,

recently they noticed a certain twist with an unfortunate tendency of placing perceptions above hard facts, adding in the current tsunami of disinformation, the

EU's real strength is to advance narratives that are based on facts rather than perceptions.

"Fact-based discourse strengthens democracy, while perception-based narratives skew it. Our institutions of democratic governance, which are modeled on the EU, should champion fact-based decision-making if we want to maintain public trust.

"And third, the promise of EU membership should be coupled with a consistent approach by its institutions, devoid of arbitrary and partisan interests. Membership promise serves as a powerful tool for promoting democracy, strengthening the rule of law, and the respect for fundamental rights in Georgia. Currently, we have been quite successfully implementing the EU's 12 recommendations for the candidate country status. These recommendations, in essence, guide democratic reforms in key areas. What we need now is a clear, verifiable, and institutionalized process for our membership path which has less arbitrary, less partisan political considerations.

"I believe in Europe. So does my freedom-loving nation. It is high time for Europe to believe in itself and in us too," Papuashvili said in closing.



A-Category Taxis Allowed to Drive in Bus Lanes from June 1

A-Category taxis (vehicles no older than ten years), will be permitted to drive in bus lanes from June 1, Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze announced at the municipal government meeting. According to Kaladze, A-Category taxis

previously were allowed only to pick up passengers from the bus lanes, not drive in them.

Taxi drivers will be able to get relevant stickers at municipal service centers in May, which will "indicate that a taxi is authorized to drive in a bus lane," Kaladze said.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan Awards Georgian Rescuers for Earthquake Operation

President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, presented a special award for "Highest Dedication" to the Deputy Head of the Fire and Rescue Department of the Emergency Situations Management Service under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia - Civil Security Colonel, Mamuka Sefiashvili, who led the Georgian rescue team involved in the liquidation and rescue operations of the earthquake that occurred in the Turkish cities of Adiyaman and Antakya.



At a special event organized by the Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Agency (AFAD) which was held at the Presidential Palace in Ankara, the President of Turkey presented a special award and certificates of appreciation to the leaders of the rescue teams of all countries involved in the liquidation and rescue operations after the

earthquake. President Erdogan personally expressed appreciation to the rescuers involved in the rescue operation for their assistance and dedication.

The Georgian rescue team went to Turkey on the first day of the disaster on the decision of the Prime Minister of Georgia. A total of 200 rescuers were involved in the rescue mission in two cities over 18 days.

Parents of Children with Achondroplasia Demand Medicines Be Imported and Funded



Image source: Netgazeti

BY ANA DUMBADZE

Georgian parents of children with Achondroplasia spent a sixth night at the government chancellery Monday-Tuesday.

They plan to stay there until the government imports and finances the necessary medicine [Vosoritide] for their children.

For several months now, parents have been actively protesting and demanding the necessary medicine for children with Achondroplasia. The state has yet to satisfy their request.

Yesterday, April 24, Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili announced that they will not finance the medicine for achondroplasia yet. He claimed that there is no problem of financing the medicine in the country, which costs about GEL 10 million, but the government needs more "medical evidence" before it takes such a step.

"Unfortunately, in recent days we have seen the unrest that has been created regarding the issue of children with achondroplasia, despite the fact that the Minister of Health, his deputy, very authoritative doctors, the representative of the World Health Organization - all made comprehensive comments. However, there are still questions and, unfortunately, irresponsible politicians who are known for their fakeness and hypocrisy, trying to use innocent, helpless children for personal interest and run a political campaign.

"I want to express my full sympathy to the children with Achondroplasia; I want to tell them that the state stands by them and of course we will do everything necessary, but I want to ask them not to allow politicians to use them for personal interests and not to participate in this political campaign willingly or unwillingly", says Garibashvili.

The matter concerns the drug Voxzogo (active ingredient - Vosoritide), which was authorized by the US Food and Drug

Administration (FDA) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) in 2021.

This drug is the first to be used to treat the syndrome and its symptoms. Parents say that it is only effective when taken up until the age of 18.

Achondroplasia is a disorder of bone growth that prevents the changing of cartilage, particularly in the long bones of the arms and legs, to bone. It is characterized by dwarfism, limited range of motion at the elbows, large head size (macrocephaly), small fingers, and normal intelligence. Achondroplasia can cause health complications such as interruption of breathing, obesity, recurrent ear infections, and an exaggerated inward curve of the lumbar spine. More serious problems include a narrowing of the spinal canal that can compress the upper part of the spinal cord and a buildup of fluid in the brain. Some people with Achondroplasia may have delayed motor development early on, but cognition is normal. Achondroplasia is caused by genetic changes in the FGFR3 gene.

Ukraine Latest: China to Send Representatives to Ukraine for Talks, Kyiv Praises 'long and meaningful' Call with Xi

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

After months of apparent reluctance to engage with Kyiv on the same level as Moscow, China said Wednesday that it will send special representatives to Ukraine and hold talks with all parties on resolving the crisis there.

Chinese state media said that President Xi Jinping told his Ukrainian counterpart President Volodymyr Zelensky in a phone call that Beijing will focus on promoting peace talks between Ukraine and Russia, and would make efforts for a cease-fire to be reached as soon as possible.

Commenting on the call, which he described as "long and meaningful," Zelensky said he believed it would "give a powerful impetus to the development of our bilateral relations."

Ukraine has been waiting for an audience with Xi since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and particularly after Xi's recent visit to Moscow in March.

RUSSIA SWITCHING TO DEFENSIVE POSITIONS IN ALL AREAS OF COMBAT EXCEPT BAKHMUT, CLAIMS UKRAINE INTELLIGENCE

Russia has switched to defensive positions in all its areas of combat apart from Bakhmut, according to the Ukrainian head of intelligence Kyrylo Budanov.

In an interview with RBC Ukraine, he said: "They have completely switched to positional defense everywhere. The

only places on the frontline where they are making attempts are in the city of Bakhmut, an attempt to cover the city of Avdiivka from the north, and localized fighting in the city of Marinka. In both Avdiivka and Marinka, the tactics are identical to those in Bakhmut - aiming to wipe the settlement off the face of the earth.

"And against the backdrop of the lack of success elsewhere, they face the problem that even their 'deceived' society needs to see something, some kind of victory. This is the only place where they are somehow succeeding. In addition, there is the fact that Prigozhin once said that he would take Bakhmut. He would be happy to sing about it, but he can't. That is, everything just came together here," Budanov noted.

He added that there was little chance of Vuhledar in the Donbas region, which has been the site of a long-term tank battle, being captured. He added that he didn't think Russians were planning to intensify or launch offensive operations on the frontline.

Key battlefield updates:

- Russian state-owned news agency Tass is reporting that Denis Pushilin, the acting head of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, has said the situation in Bakhmut continues to be tense, but that Wagner Group forces have made some advances.

- Russia's Black Sea Fleet repelled a drone attack on the Crimean port of Sevastopol in the early hours of Monday, the Moscow-installed governor of the city said on via Telegram.

- Ukraine's military has set up posi-

tions on the eastern side of the Dnipro River near Kherson city, the Institute for the Study of War cites Russian military bloggers as saying. Infiltrating the area could be a first step towards trying to dislodge Russians from positions they are using to fire upon Kherson.

- The prime minister of Estonia, Kaja Kallas, visited Volodymyr Zelensky in Ukraine. Kallas said that Ukraine should be admitted to the EU and NATO, and signed a joint declaration on her visit. She said that she supported Ukraine getting more ammunition, arms and training, which was why she proposed the EU move to provide shells to Ukraine.

- The EU foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, expressed confidence on Monday that the bloc would complete a plan within days to buy ammunition for Ukraine after Kyiv expressed frustration at wrangling among EU member states. "Yes, there is still some disagreement. But I am sure everybody will understand that we are in a situation of extreme urgency," Borrell told reporters as he arrived for a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Luxembourg.

HEAVY SHORT-RANGE COMBAT CONTINUES AROUND BAKHMUT, UK SAYS

Heavy short-range combat continues in the western districts of the contested town of Bakhmut in Donetsk, eastern Ukraine, the UK's Ministry of Defense noted Wednesday.

Fighting on the outskirts of the town, especially near the village of Khromove, has been a key development over the last week, the ministry said in an intel-



President Zelensky. Source: Reuters

ligence update on Twitter, as Ukraine seeks to maintain control of its 0506 supply route into the west of Bakhmut. "Ukraine's other resupply options into Bakhmut are likely complicated by muddy conditions on unsurfaced tracks," the ministry noted.

"With the town having now been under attack for over 11 months, the Ukrainian defenses of Bakhmut have now been integrated as one element of a much deeper defensive zone, which includes the town of Chasiv Yar to the west."

Ukraine has refused to abandon the site, which Russia wants to capture as part of its larger war aims to control Luhansk and Donetsk in eastern Ukraine.

UKRAINE MARKS 37TH ANNIVERSARY OF CHERNOBYL DISASTER


Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky commemorated Wednesday the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster that took place in Ukraine 37 years ago.

The International Atomic Energy Agency summed up the accident as occurring after the fourth reactor at the nuclear power plant "went out of control during a test at low-power, leading to an explosion and fire that demolished the reactor building and released large amounts of radiation into the atmosphere."

The initial explosion killed two workers at the plant but several dozen firemen and emergency workers died in the subsequent three months after the explosion from acute radiation sickness and one of cardiac arrest.


The shut down plant was occupied by Russian forces at the start of their invasion of Ukraine last February, although it was then liberated.




On Wednesday, Zelensky said the accident at the plant "left a huge scar on the whole world" and added "we must do everything" to prevent Russia "from using nuclear power facilities to blackmail Ukraine and the world."




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Russia's New Sheriff in Nagorno-Karabakh



Colonel-General Alexander Lentsov in 2022. Source: Russian Ministry of Defense

BY MICHAEL GODWIN

Russia's almost 2,000 soldiers serving in a peacekeeping role in the tenuous Nagorno-Karabakh region are taking steps to quell the recent spat of violence that has rocked the area. The latest move is the incoming of a new commanding officer. According to sources inside the Russian Ministry of Defense, this is Colonel-General Alexander Lentsov.

Lentsov is the fifth commander to have rotated out of the role, coming from a post as advisor to Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu. He served in the Soviet military in Afghanistan, in both the First and Second Chechen Wars, as well as in combat operations in Syria. However, he has not been deployed to Ukraine since 2015.

Interestingly, this change of command comes after an incident between Azerbaijani and Russian troops over the construction of a new border control station

along the Lachin Corridor. The new checkpoint is in an area still considered very tense by all sides involved, as it is the primary road connecting Armenia and the Yerevan-backed Republic of Artsakh. While Russian peacekeepers stayed calm, they reportedly actively discouraged Azerbaijani leaders on the ground from completing the structure.

Despite their attempts, Azerbaijani border guards released a video on social media "delivering" the new territory along the border to President Ilham Aliyev. In response, Armenian and Artsakh officials released statements in outrage. Artsakh Foreign Minister Sergey Ghazaryan even commented that his largely unrecognized government "expects active steps from the Russian side" in response to this transgression by Baku.

All of this comes after a string of clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani troops that left seven killed and an unconfirmed number wounded. Earlier this month, both sides accused the other of provocations that resulted in significant firefights just to the west of the Lachin Corridor. Days prior to this, Azerbaijani

troops were reported to have secured additional positions along heights near the road that leads to the Yerevan-backed capital of Artsakh, Stepanakert.

The additional bloodshed has likely led to Moscow wanting to double down in the region. With its forces bogged down in Ukraine, and awaiting a much anticipated Ukrainian offensive, Kremlin commanders are unwilling to have another problem on their plate. As a result, the appointment of this new commander may signal an attempt by Russia to begin to act more decisively to curtail the recurrent violence.

Already, Armenian and Artsakh authorities have called for just this from Lentsov. Samvel Babayan, politician and former Minister of Defense of Artsakh, asked the incoming general to prove his worth by shutting down the checkpoint. "Now let's see how much they will be able to prevent this circus from continuing," Babayan commented on local television.

While the measures the new commander is willing to go to have yet to be seen, the calls for action are likely to encourage him to take more aggressive steps. Russian forces entered the region in 2020 under their "MC" peacekeeping banner following the 44-day war that ended with a victory for Baku. Since then, both sides have accused the peacekeeping contingent, largely consisting of the 15th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle (Peacekeeping) Brigade, of aiding the other side or being too inactive altogether.

Armenia has widely accused them of being in league with Azerbaijan, allowing them to conduct maneuvers and take more territory. Baku has claimed Russian troops were protecting and aiding Armenian arms shipments into the region to support Artsakh Defense Forces and other armed groups. As such, the peacekeeping command staff have been stuck in a sort of tug-of-war, attempting to avoid the unit in a three-way shootout.

Lentsov is likely a protective measure. Only he and his staff know their orders, but with the invasion in Ukraine stalled and most international analysts claiming the war is entering a critical all-or-nothing phase, Moscow has most probably tasked him to ensure peace whatever the cost. Baku, sensing the blood in the water that is Russian martial weakness from Ukraine, has notably been more proactive in its movements.

Open-source intelligence sources have abounded with reports and satellite images showing Azerbaijani air assets being moved to airfields in the west and south of the country. Additional heavy equipment in the form of artillery and armored vehicles has been recorded moving into the region in advance of potential hostilities. Baku has also stood up staunchly to Iran, a nation that has vowed to act if there is any attempt to change the borders in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Were all this to boil over into another larger, and more deadly, version of the 2020 Karabakh War, Russia would likely be obligated to invest. With active military bases in Armenia, Russia has to

enter, and if Turkey supports, or even enters on the side of Azerbaijan, it does not take advanced geopolitics degrees to see where this takes Moscow. Fighting two resource-intensive wars would shatter the Kremlin, spell the end of Russian President Vladimir Putin's rule, and most likely send Russia back to the 1990s.

As such, there is a lot of weight on Lentsov's shoulders. It is a big request to ask a general to keep a powder keg like the South Caucasus off a war footing. To do this, it is likely we will see Russia's peacekeeping troops take a higher profile role in stopping aggression, regardless of which side one wishes to blame. However, there remains one issue: what is the limit?

While there have been no clear 'red lines' set forth by Moscow, the aforementioned stakes could raise that line fairly high. Russian troops, as seen in Ukraine, Syria, and Georgia, are not known for their discretion and calm temperament. With most eyes on the upcoming counteroffensive by Kyiv against Russia, it would be wise to keep one keen eye on Nagorno-Karabakh too.



Azerbaijani construction crews building the checkpoint (center) with the Russian military base nearby (top left). Source: RFE/RL video



Zbigniew Rau: Poland Has Always Unequivocally Supported Aspiration of Georgian Society to Be Independent

Georgia and Georgian society traditionally enjoys great sympathy in Poland. This sympathy was formed during the struggle for the independence of our countries and also during joint resistance against Russian imperialism, whose victim is Ukraine today, and in 2008 it was Georgia, - said Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau, while on his Thursday visit to Georgia. He noted that Poland has always unequivocally supported the aspiration of the Georgian society to have independence, freedom, and peace, as well as the sovereign right to choose a development model, alliance, and integration institution.

"We believe that harmonization, the indivisibility of European security and provision of equal development conditions across Europe should lead to the practical implementation of the open door policy," said Rau.

Kobakhidze: No-one Can Force Government to Take Steps that are Against Interests of our Country

Georgia is independent and sovereign today, like never before. No-one can dictate to the government and force it to take such steps that will be against the interests of our country," said Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairman of Georgian Dream.

He noted that the government acts according to the dictates of the national interests of Georgia and will never allow

compromise at the expense of these interests.

"I would like to thank the founder of Georgian Dream, the creator of the democratic transition of 2012, Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili. All the fundamental achievements related to the democratic and economic development of Georgia during the past 11 years are the result of his values and the principles he established and left for the team," Kobakhidze said.

Stoltenberg: Georgian People Can Count on NATO's Continued Political and Practical Support



You can count on NATO's continued political and practical support - the Georgian people have made clear that they want a democratic, prosperous country, integrated into the Euro-Atlantic region, - NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated at a joint briefing with Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili on Wednesday.

"Georgia is one of NATO's closest partners, and the Allies fully support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity," he noted. "We continue to call on Russia to reverse the recognition of Georgian territories as independent states. Today, in our meeting, we will talk about the NATO-Georgia partnership, and how we can further strengthen our partnership, in particular through the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package."

"I welcome Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. And you can count on NATO's continued political and practical support, Stoltenberg said. "In turn, I count on Georgia to redouble efforts on domestic reforms, and uphold democratic standards. "That is why I welcomed the decision to withdraw the draft law on 'foreign influence,' which was incompatible with Euro-Atlantic values and the protection of fundamental freedoms. "The Georgian people have made clear that they want a democratic, prosperous country, integrated into the Euro-

Atlantic region. NATO will continue to be your partner as you work towards fulfilling these aspirations.

"Today, we will also talk about Russia's war of aggression, and the importance of standing by Ukraine. "Last week, I was in Kyiv. My message to President Zelenskyy was clear. NATO stands with Ukraine. Today, and for as long as it takes. We do not know when the war will end. But we know that Russian aggression is a toxic pattern that must be stopped once and for all. Georgia and the Georgian people understand this very well.

"Ukraine is upholding its right to self-defense under the UN Charter, and we expect all NATO partners to support this aim," Stoltenberg concluded.

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2. Issues with staffing and integration of staff for each country
3. Exporting IP
4. FDI trends
5. Tax incentives
6. GEOAM TechHub Trade Body

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Nicholas Tenzer on Western Support for Ukraine and Georgia's European Fate Should This Wane

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA
TAVBERIDZE FOR RFE/RL

Nicholas Tenzer is a French academic, writer, editor, the current editor of the journal *Le Banquet*, and is the founding president of the Centre d'étude et de réflexion pour l'action politique (CERAP). He was a director of the Aspen Institute from 2010 to 2015. Radio Free Europe's Georgian Service sat down with him to discuss the recent US intelligence leak, the West's commitment to Ukraine, and Georgia's stance on EU alignment.

LET'S START WITH THE RECENT US INTELLIGENCE LEAK – WHAT IMPACT IS IT GOING TO HAVE ON THE WAR?

It won't make any kind of difference, because the strategy has already been decided by the US and allies. The real question here is up to what point the US and allies will continue to help Ukraine. For the moment, in my view, the allies remain halfway in support; they are contemplating, watching it from the outside. Basically, we are, in a way, spectators: of course, we continue to provide Ukraine with a lot of weapons, munitions, but we will only do so up to a certain point. And for me, this is a problem. From this perspective, the leaks don't change anything, especially when they say that it will be very difficult for Ukraine to launch a new massive offensive to retake Crimea and so on - the question here isn't whether Ukraine will be able to do so or not, the question is whether we'll help Ukraine to do so.

It would be wise for the US and the allies not to buy into the Russian narratives about the so-called red lines, especially on Crimea. For 22 years now, Putin has been allowed to win all these wars. And since 2022, he's not been allowed to do that. But having said that, there are also divergences in the West, not only in the wording, but also the implications: first, we said we had to defend Ukraine. Okay, good. Now, we are saying: we have to make Ukraine win. Okay. But you have two differences amongst the allies on what Ukraine's victory actually means. For me, Ukraine's victory entails the following: First, Ukraine must retake all its territories, including Crimea, no special status for Crimea; Second: full punishment for war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and crime of aggression, all four categories; Third: repatriation of all deported Ukrainians, the refugees, especially the children. The fourth thing is, of course, the reparations, Russia paying for damages, a seizure of all the assets, including the central bank assets. And the fifth would be security guarantees for Ukraine. By that I mean, a kind of Article Five + of NATO Treaty.

The second point of divergence is about



The real question here is up to what point the US and allies will continue to help Ukraine



Nicholas Tenzer

the fate of Russia. For me, it's important not only for Ukraine to win the war, but also for Russia to radically lose the war. And I think not only to lose in Ukraine, but also to lose in Georgia, to lose in Belarus, to lose in Syria, in Moldova, etc. And I think that's absolute key point.

THIS TOTAL UKRAINIAN VICTORY AND TOTAL DEFEAT FOR RUSSIA YOU DESCRIBE - DO YOU THINK IT'S REALISTIC AND ACHIEVABLE?

Yes, definitely. Yes. I think it's achievable. I am from the so-called realist school in international relations. Not the pseudo-realists, like Mearscheimer and co, that's fake realism. The realist has to consider what is achievable. And if we consider the immensity of the US military powers, plus, of course, the military prowess of the UK, of the important EU countries, it's achievable. I am not saying that we have to send troops, to capture Moscow. The victory in 2023 will not resemble the victory in 1945. We are not in this kind of scenario. But I do believe that we have certainly the means, if we so want - that is the question.

In realistic terms, it's militarily and politically achievable. What I don't know is whether Mr. Biden or Mr. Macron and Mr. Scholtz really do have the will to do so. I'm not sure they have the full awareness of two things. First of all, the long lasting threat that Putin's Russia or Russia with another guy, even if isn't Putin himself, poses to the old world. The second is the immensity of crimes committed by Putin's Russia for 23 years.



The European fate of Georgia more precisely, will be decided in Ukraine

When it comes to Russia, the crime is the message.

The crime is the purpose. The crime is the DNA of the Russian regime, not saying of Russia itself.

ON THE SECURITY GUARANTEES YOU MENTIONED, UKRAINE HAS BEEN LITERALLY BEGGING FOR THEM AHEAD OF THE UPCOMING NATO SUMMIT. DO YOU THINK IT WILL GET THEM?

What would those look like? It could be NATO membership, a MAP offer. But we have to know that Article Five is not automatically triggered. That's why I said "Article Five plus." We must have a full guarantee that if Ukraine is attacked, again, troops will be sent there to defend it. Then there is the second thing, which isn't necessarily an alternative to NATO, but which is probably the best way right now to offer security guarantees to Ukraine - we could station troops in

Ukraine, NATO troops, from both the US and Europe, could be the UK, Baltic States, Poland etc., permanently stationed in Ukraine.

AND SPEAKING AS A SELF-PROFESSED REALIST, HOW LIKELY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?

Before the end of the war? I'm not confident, but after the war is finished, there will be no other way to seriously tackle the question of a security guarantee for Ukraine. If we don't have troops on Ukrainian soil, NATO troops, how else could we achieve a guarantee of security for Ukraine? I see no other way.

PRESIDENT MACRON'S RECENT VISIT TO CHINA WAS DUBBED BY MANY AS A STRATEGIC BLUNDER. WAS THAT THE CASE?

I think it was indeed a strategic blunder, because he seemed by doing so to be saying the security of Taiwan was not an EU concern. And basically to be wagering between the US and Europe on security. I'm not saying that we cannot disagree with the US: we have a lot of disagreements, trade disagreements, for instance, that's perfectly normal. But when it comes to security against Russia and China - there must be a full unity. China will continue as long as it takes, as we say, to support, probably militarily also, Russia. The fall of Putin's regime will be a disaster for China, because those kinds of dictators always fear democratic contagions, you know. And you see in the making a process of coalition between all the dictatorships, not only with China and Russia, but also with Iran, with maybe up to a certain point North Korea, some Arab states, Gulf states, etc. And there were suspicions that Macron was trying to find a kind of Third Way. It's very dangerous.

WHEN MACRON SAYS: "BEING ALLIES DOESN'T MEAN BEING VASSALS" WHAT DOES THE MACRON-LED STRATEGIC AUTONOMY ENTAIL AND HOW REALISTIC IS IT?

EU strategic autonomy isn't a new concept, Macron certainly didn't invent it - it was already used back in 2010s, well before he came to power. And it's basically a polysemous concept. You have different kinds of meanings. Let's take an example: Back in 2013, President Obama finally abandoned the very idea of having US red lines in Syria, because the Assad regime crossed that line - used chemical weapons, but Obama decided not to take action. The UK followed suit. France wanted to act - then President Francois Hollande said, "we are ready to go and we are ready to strike," but, unfortunately, France was alone. And France alone cannot take action in Syria.

So, basically, strategic autonomy could be a very useful concept from this point of view, if the US doesn't take action, whether it's in Syria or in Ukraine, we must have the means. And on that Macron has a good point. That's good. But if strategic autonomy means that vis-a-vis the great revisionist powers, namely Russia and China, we try to take a different standpoint, that will be a very dangerous division of the allies. There cannot be strategic autonomy when it comes to the relationship with those kinds of powers. We must be very clear on that. And for instance, when it comes to Russia and China, the question is not to be aligned, but to have very candid, direct, and daily discussions with the US, but also with Canada, with Japan,



It's important not only for Ukraine to win the war, but also for Russia to radically lose the war, and not just in Ukraine, Georgia too

with all our allies, to try to find a common ground.

ALL THIS TALK ABOUT VASSALAGE, AUTONOMY, AND SO ON REPRESENTS AN AGE-OLD DILEMMA FOR GEORGIA: THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY, THE COUNTRY HAD TO NAVIGATE BETWEEN AND AROUND THE SUPERPOWERS TO SURVIVE. WHERE DOES GEORGIA STAND NOW, AS THE GOVERNMENT SHOWS SIGNS OF GROWING RESENTMENT TOWARDS THE US AND THE WEST IN GENERAL?

Growing resentment could be an understatement, I would say. The real issue, in my view, is does the government have a true willingness to do everything necessary to join the EU? Or has it discreetly, without saying anything, abandoned all ideas to join the EU? You know, I've visited Georgia many, many times. I know that the Georgian people, at least the people in Tbilisi and in big cities, are in favor of the EU, NATO; they are in favor of democracy. And the problem is, does the government today support this claim? And I would say that basically, the fate of Georgia, or rather, the European fate of Georgia more precisely, will be decided in Ukraine. If Ukraine wins this war, and if Russia is fully defeated in Ukraine, etc., then certainly, I think the paths towards the EU and towards NATO will be greatly facilitated. But if we consider, for instance, let's say unlikely and disastrous scenarios, in which you have a kind of victory for Russia, which is the full defeat of Ukraine, if Moscow still is able to retain some parts of the territories in Ukraine, then the anti-EU stances in Georgia, but also in other countries, will grow, they won't be dissuaded. Because Russia will still be there.

THE NARRATIVE PEDDLED BY THE GOVERNMENT IS THAT THEY DON'T WANT TO BE DICTATED TO BY WASHINGTON OR BRUSSELS. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO THAT?

EU membership is basically about compliance with common norms, it's not a question of alignment. It's not a question of vassalage. It's a question of compliance: does the Georgian government want to join the EU? Are they willing to comply with those principles - human rights, rule of law, freedom of press, freedom of speech, which are the very DNA of the EU? The question here is: Do you want to join the club, and the club has some rules, or not? If you don't like those rules, okay, goodbye.

More Realism, Less Hypocrisy: Cooperation by Action, Not Posturing by Words. Part 2

ANALYSIS BY VICTOR KIPIANI,
GEOCASE CHAIRMAN

In terms of the ongoing war in Ukraine, Europe is faced with a choice between the 1975 Helsinki Act and New Yalta. There is not much to choose from, although the complexity of the process was openly discussed at the Munich Security Conference in February 2022. And February 24 of the same year showed that the containment measures of the West, in particular of the United States, were not enough to prevent a reoccurrence of "Yalta" in Europe.

Along with pointing out the ineffectiveness of Western security policy with regard to the post-Soviet space, it is now openly discussed to what extent has the West's stereotypical approach caused the vulnerability of Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova. The question also has arisen, to what extent have Western partners delayed in finding effective alternatives to existing approaches to security and implementing them in a timely manner. Is it possible to restructure global relations in such a way that the phenomenon of spheres of influence becomes a thing of the past?

In our view, spheres of influence have been, are and will be a concomitant phenomenon of international politics for the foreseeable future. Some of the existing spheres will remain, some will be modified, and some may be completely replaced. One of the most important determinants of the end of the war in Ukraine will be the definition of spheres of influence, this time already in the area along the borders of the Russian Federation. In academic circles, there is more talk about this today; Politicians and government officials directly involved in the process are making much more cautious predictions.

It should also be noted that a sphere of influence is a place or location within which one major actor consolidates its advantage, both through geographic proximity and through an overt demonstration of power. The establishment of

such an advantage is facilitated by the fear or reluctance of the other major actor or actors to accept the challenge and intervene. This reluctance is often motivated by the high risks or costs associated with interference.

Speaking about the fate of countries that found themselves in a peculiar geopolitical vacuum after the collapse of the USSR, we also think it necessary to point out some circumstances, which may be unpleasant to hear about, regarding the redistribution of spheres of influence. Thus, we will try to explain, at least partially, the geopolitical vacuum resulting from the lack of courageous action and certain stereotypes on the part of the West regarding the post-Soviet space. We can say that the result of the same stereotypes is the "comfort zone" in which the Western world voluntarily exists for several decades after the formal collapse of the USSR.

It is also telling that since the end of the Cold War, many statements by the United States and the collective West about the unacceptability of spheres of influence are examples of the pointless narcissism we have already discussed. Moreover, according to individual sources, what some today call Russia's "backyard" (and hence sphere of influence), along with Russian expansionist policies, was also driven by Western tolerance (and, in some episodes, direct concessions). It should also be noted that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, one of the Western narratives was to recognize the Russian Federation as the sole legal successor to the Soviet Union. This would not have been a problem were it not for the fact that this same recognition was accompanied by a so-called element of "conditional sovereignty" of neighboring countries, which, again, implied Russia's dominant role over these countries.

It is a fact that, given the realities of the current stage, only statements or half-measures - to maintain in one form or another the comfort zone mentioned - will not fit the time and the current processes. Thus, a result-oriented, practical policy that fits current requirements and reality is inevitable. Any other

approach would be like repeating well-known "what if" reasons from the past.

One more thing: the structuring of the modern security system does not a priori require a special formal declaration by one major actor of its influence in one or another sphere and a formal renunciation of influence by another actor. For example, one political consequence of the war in Ukraine may be that the country remains outside the U.S. declared sphere of influence, which does not preclude the continuity of assistance in military and security capacity building. This approach of delegating primary responsibility for one's own defense will serve as an equally effective counterweight to weakening or even nullifying the sphere of influence of an unfriendly country. As a variety of so-called experimental systems of security, this option is also worth evaluating in order to raise the bar for our country's national security.

And since we are talking about defining or revising spheres of influence, including in terms of a possible renewal of geopolitical boundaries in Eastern Europe, it is equally relevant to ask what might lead to the decision to change/revise the status quo. Especially when we agree that the best way to achieve real results in today's environment is not through useless ideological clichés, but by finding a pragmatic intersection of interests. In this regard, one of the key factors will be the correct identification of existing or potential threats, as well as the possession of auxiliary means of their management (balancing). We would like to say a few words on this as well.

BALANCING THE THREAT

Undoubtedly, alliances as well as other kinds of ally and partnership relationships are in many ways a response to existing and future threats. It is also clear that the threat to a small country can come mainly from an aggressive neighbor. Therefore, the desire of a small country to find a support, a partner, a reliable guarantor of its national security is understandable. It should also be noted that balancing (and in some cases roughly



Image source: allaboutlean

eradicating) a threat - real or imagined - is not only the concern of a small country. This task applies equally to a large country - especially when an event or process may be seen by it as contrary to its own security interests. A frequently cited example to illustrate this is the well-known wave of NATO expansion in Eastern Europe, which the Russian Federation saw as an alleged violation of an agreement reached with the West (even today mutually exclusive assessments around such an "agreement" do not cease) and as an act of encroachment on the Russian sphere of influence (it should be noted that although a minority, some Western scholars consider this assessment not unreasonable).

In the context of the war in Ukraine, the decision by Sweden and Finland to change the status quo and apply for membership in the North Atlantic Alliance, which amounts to a reassessment of the emerging threats and an attempt to balance them, is also telling. Linked to the same geopolitical and military opinion is Israel's line of regional policy in the Middle East, based on the Abraham Accords, as well as several situational-tactical alliances in the Indian and Pacific Ocean basins (AUKUS, Quad). These and other examples of threat assessment and management measures

in specific geographic regions serve to unify the following objectives: balancing threats based on the nature of spheres of influence, managing the security environment, and preventing further military escalation.

The collective Western involvement in the Russia-Ukraine war, in the form and scale that we see today, is widely believed to fall into the same category. In particular, according to a certain Western political-academic line, Western support for Kiev serves to counterbalance future threats that might emerge as a result of an undesirable war scenario in Ukraine or the spillover of hostilities outside of Ukraine (and hence the expansion of Russia's sphere of influence). The cost of mitigating and containing additional threats, both direct and indirect, arising in the event of such a development would be much higher. Thus, existing threats vs. future threats and current costs vs. future costs already require rational optimization and management by introducing appropriate forms.

We think that Official Tbilisi should take all of this into consideration in order to communicate with its partners on national security issues in a meaningful and timely manner.

To be continued.

Benefits of Global Net-Zero Transition Can Be 5 Times the Cost in Developing Asia



Plant Based Treaty-Georgia and Vegan Georgia with a message to fight climate change through diet, April 22. Photo by Виталий Мальшев/Paper Kartuli

A global net-zero approach could save about 350,000 lives a year in Asia and the Pacific by 2030, thanks to reduced air pollution. It could also create 1.5 million additional jobs in the energy sector by 2050.

Global efforts to achieve net-zero

greenhouse gas emissions can yield substantial economic and social benefits. For developing Asia, these benefits could be 5 times the costs of mitigation, according to a new report from the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The benefits—including avoided economic losses from climate change, as

well as improved health thanks to cleaner air—are achievable through targeted policy reforms, according to the Asian Development Outlook Thematic Report: Asia in the Global Transition to Net Zero, released April 27.

In a scenario where the world works together immediately to reduce warm-

ing to well below 2°C, in line with the Paris Agreement, the costs to the region would be about 1% of gross domestic product (GDP) annually, before even accounting for climate or air quality benefits.

"To make climate policy pay off, we need to adopt economically efficient approaches, such as carbon pricing," said ADB Chief Economist Albert Park. "This report shows that an efficient transition to achieve the Paris Agreement goals can yield benefits that are as high as five times the costs. The world needs to work together to achieve our climate targets and ensure sustainable growth and prosperity that leaves no one behind."

Asia and the Pacific is at the forefront of the battle against climate change. The region accounts for 70% of the global population at risk from rising sea levels. At the same time, it contributed nearly half of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2019. Meeting Asia and the Pacific's economic and development goals while avoiding catastrophic climate risk cannot be done without transforming the region's growth patterns, according to the report.

This transformation requires rapidly replacing coal and other fossil fuels with renewable energy sources, enhanc-

ing energy efficiency, and conserving "carbon sinks," such as forests. As a consequence, a global net-zero approach could save about 350,000 lives a year in Asia and the Pacific by 2030 thanks to reduced air pollution. It could also create 1.5 million additional jobs in the energy sector by 2050.

In a scenario of nearly 4°C of mean global warming by 2100, damage from climate change will rise over time to create a 24% loss in developing Asia's GDP by the end of the century, the report says.

The report recommends that policy makers focus on three main areas: carbon pricing and subsidy reforms for fossil fuels and land use, regulations and incentives to mobilize finance and promote cleaner energy, and social protection and employment support to ensure fairness.

The report is part of ADO, ADB's flagship economic publication. ADO April 2023 was released on 4 April and includes economic analysis and insights for 46 economies in Asia and the Pacific.

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region.

THE ISET ECONOMIST

A BLOG ABOUT ECONOMICS AND THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

www.iset-pi.ge/blog

The ISET Policy Institute (ISET-PI, www.iset-pi.ge) is an independent think-tank associated with the International School of Economics at TSU (ISET). Our blog carries economic analysis of current events and policies in Georgia and the South Caucasus region ranging from agriculture, to economic growth, energy, labor markets and the nexus of economics, culture and religion. Thought-provoking and fun to read, our blog posts are written by international faculty teaching at ISET and recent graduates representing the new generation of Georgian, Azerbaijani and Armenian economists.

ISET Economist | Georgia's European Future and Prospects for Your Well-Being

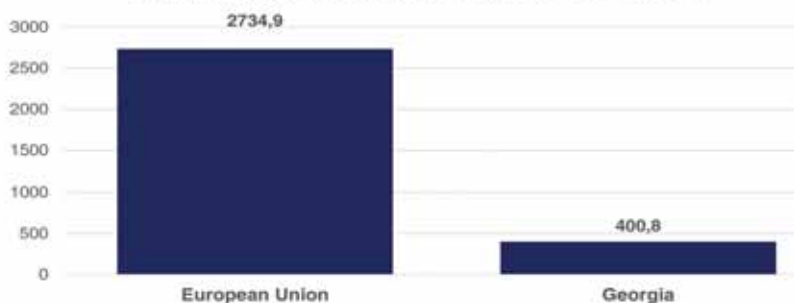
BY TAMAR SULUKHIA, ELENE TSKHOMELIDZE, MERY JULAKIDZE, GIORGI PAPAUA

Georgia's relevant indicators would be today if the country had developed with the same pace as the 2004 EU enlargement countries.

We provide subject analysis below. In terms of various socioeconomic indicators of the population, there is a vast gap between the European Union and Georgia, and EU integration will offer the conditions to the country to close this gap quickly and effectively. The analysis of seven important socioeconomic indicators for the period 2004-2021 demonstrates that the countries of the 2004 EU enlargement significantly and swiftly

Under the Georgian Constitution, the country's strategic objective is to join the European Union. The vast majority of citizens agree with and support this objective. The European future is not only the country's historical strategic choice, but also the hope for the prosperity and

AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME OF EMPLOYEES (USD), 2019



Source: ILOSTAT

well-being of the country's population and the promise of a better future for future generations.

The scholarly literature and statistics suggest that countries that join the European Union economically progress as a result of convergence with the EU's robust economic, regulatory, and institutional system and that the quality of life in these new member states substantially improves. Currently, there is a large gap between the socio-economic well-being of the Georgian population and that of the European Union, and this indicates the opportunity that will open to the Georgian population as a result of its integration with the EU.

What specific economic and social benefits Georgians can anticipate from the European future? To respond to this question, we did the following:

1. Compared several socioeconomic indicators of the EU (27 countries) to those of Georgia;

2. Examined the socioeconomic development dynamics of the ten countries that joined the EU in 2004 to determine if they were able to converge with the EU and enhance the well-being of their populations. These 10 countries are Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Then, we compared their dynamics with Georgia's accomplishments in the same period;

3. Lastly, based on the tendencies of the ten countries that joined the European Union in 2004, we modeled what

improved the well-being of their populations in terms of decreased unemployment, decreased poverty, increased average pension, decreased traffic-related death rate, decreased CO2 emissions into the atmosphere, and improvement of air quality. Compared to these countries, Georgia has made relatively insignificant progress. According to the comparison model, if Georgia were to develop at the same rate as the integration with European space, standards, and achievements brought to the countries of the 2004 enlargement, the unemployment rate would be 1.8 times lower than it is today, three times fewer citizens would be living below the poverty line, monthly pensions would be higher, households would be able to spend twice as much on recreation and culture, twice as few people would die annually in traffic accidents, CO2 emissions into the atmosphere would be reduced by two times, the concentration of PM2.5 in the air would be reduced by 40%, and mortality caused by air pollution would be reduced by 40%.

1. COMPARISON OF SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS FOR WELL-BEING IN GEORGIA AND THE EU

1.1. As of 2021, GDP per capita in the EU was approximately 665% higher than in Georgia.

According to 2019 data, the average monthly income in EU is 2,734 Euros, which is 582% higher than the average

monthly income in Georgia (400 USD equivalent).

According to 2021 data, the unemployment rate in Georgia is three times higher than in Georgia.

The share of youth in Georgia who neither study nor work is double that of the EU.

According to data from 2020, the average monthly pension in EU countries is 1201 Euros, which is nearly 18 times greater than the pension in Georgia (64 euros).

In the disciplines of education and healthcare, the average monthly salary in the European Union is overwhelmingly higher than in Georgia. According to Eurostat 2018 and Geostat 2021 data, the average EU salary in the education sector is 12 times that of Georgia's, while the average EU salary in the healthcare sector is 8 times that of Georgia's.

According to data from 2020, the average life expectancy in the European Union is 80.5 years, which is 8 years longer than the average life expectancy in Georgia.

COMPARISON OF GEORGIA'S DATA WITH THAT OF THE 2004 EU ENLARGEMENT COUNTRIES AND MODELING OF THE GROWTH OF GEORGIAN SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS

Unemployment Index

In 2004, the EU enlargement countries and Georgia had unemployment rates that were quite similar. However, the 10 EU entrant countries have had a noticeably favorable trend since 2004, with the unemployment rate having been reduced by half by 2021, while in Georgia, unemployment decreased by only 3%.

According to a model based on the tendencies of selected European Union countries, the number of unemployed in Georgia would have significantly decreased - by 85,567 between 2004 and 2021.

Proportion of population below the poverty line (% USD 3.65 per day, PPP, 2017).

In 2004, up to 3% of the population in the 10 EU enlargement countries lived below the poverty line of \$3.65 per day, compared to 33% in Georgia. By 2019, this figure in selected EU countries decreased to 0.5%, while in Georgia this figure decreased only to 18%.

Using a model based on the trajectory of the EU 2004 enlargement countries, the percentage of Georgians living below the poverty line would have reduced from 18.5% in 2004 to 6% in 2019, which is a three times better outcome compared to the current status.

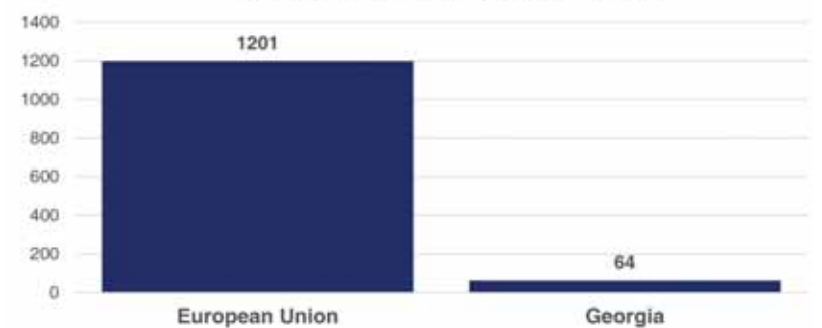
Average monthly pension

During 2014-2020, the average pension of the population above the statutory pensionable age in the 10 countries that joined the EU in 2004 increased by 20%. Despite the fact that pensions in Georgia have increased by 34% in GEL over the past few years, the average pension calculated in Euros has not increased.

Fatalities caused by road traffic accidents

In 2004, the 10 EU entrant countries and Georgia's average figures on road traffic fatalities per 100,000 population were similar. Following their entry to EU, these ten countries adopted high

AVERAGE MONTHLY PENSION (EUR), 2020



Source: EuroStat, GeoStat

European standards of road safety, and road accident-related death rates fell by a factor of two or more, whereas Georgia's accomplishment has been limited. According to World Health Organization data, 496 people died in road traffic accidents in Georgia in 2019. According to a model based on the tendencies of selected EU countries from 2004 to 2019, the number of deaths in Georgia in 2019 would be 236 fewer, meaning that 236 people could have been saved.

Household expenditures on recreation and culture (percentage of total expenditures)

Expenditure by households on recreation and culture is an important indicator of well-being. In the ten countries of the 2004 EU enlargement, households spent approximately 8% of their monthly income on leisure and culture in 2021. In Georgia, this figure was only 1.2%. According to a model based on the tendencies of the EU 2004 enlargement countries for the period 2017-2021, the proportion of family expenditures on recreation and culture in Georgia would have been double and increased to 2.5%.

CO2 emissions (kg per PPP\$ of GDP)

In 2004, CO2 emissions per capita in the 10 EU enlargement countries were double those of Georgia. By 2019, these European countries have reduced this significantly - by 65%, and after Georgia's insignificant reduction by 8%, the figures of these countries and Georgia became identical. According to a model that uses the 2004-2019 tendencies of EU 2004 enlargement countries, Georgia's CO2 emission rate would have dropped two-fold - to 0.7 kg per capita in 2019.

Air quality - average PM 2.5 exposure

Fine particle concentration (PM 2.5) is an additional indicator of air quality. Like CO2 emissions, Georgia had the lowest rate among the ten selected countries in 2004. Between 2004 and 2020, fine particle emissions in the EU 2004 enlargement countries decreased by 33%, while the level of air pollution in Georgia has increased by 11%, reaching 17.3 g/m3. According to a model based on

the tendencies of selected EU countries, the concentration of PM2.5 in the air would decrease to 10.5 g/m3, which would represent a 40% improvement.

The annual PM2.5 standard imposed by the World Health Organization (WHO) is 5 g/m3. In Georgia, the corresponding European Union standard has been adopted, which is less restrictive than WHO requirements. According to the EU standard, the annual permissible level for PM2.5 is equal to 20 g/m3.

Ambient air pollution attributable death rate (per 100 000 population)

According to data from 2019, the death rate due to air pollution (per 100,000 population) in Georgia is three times higher than in 27 European countries and in 10 countries that joined the EU in 2004. In 2019 in Georgia 3,449 individuals died as a result of air pollution.

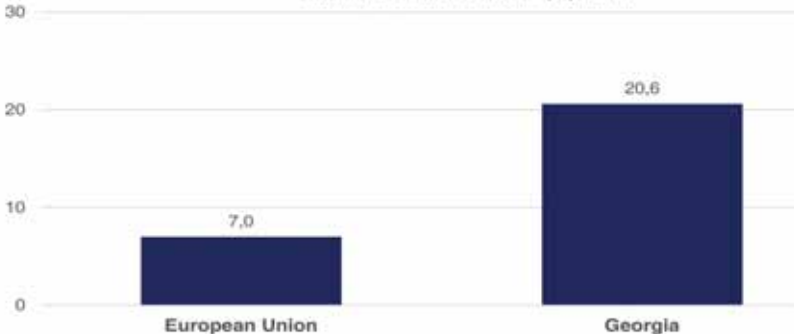
Prevalence of tobacco use (percentage of the population aged 15 and older)

In 2005, the share of smokers in Georgia's population was lower than in the countries that joined the EU in 2004. By 2020, due to the fact that the percentage of smokers in Georgia hardly decreased while it decreased by 15% in the subject countries, by 2020 Georgia's share of smoker population became higher than that of those countries. In 2020, the total number of smokers in Georgia was 937,638. According to the model based on the tendencies of 2004 EU enlargement countries, this number would decrease by 124 thousand between 2005 and 2020.

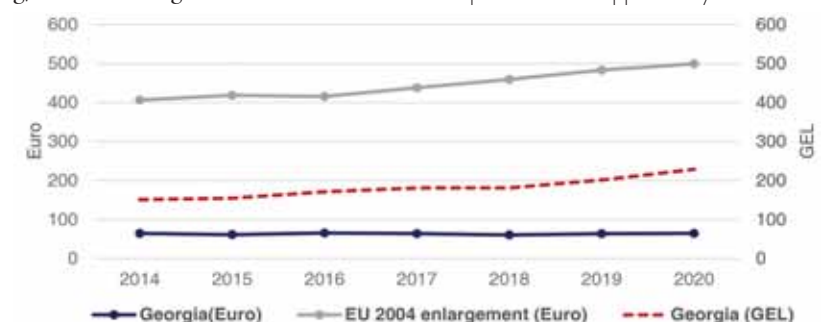
In summary, as the comparison and modeling of the selected socioeconomic characteristics indicates, Georgia has an opportunity to improve the well-being of its population by integrating with European high standards and the EU's legal, institutional, and regulatory framework. This, among others, will result in a reduction in unemployment and poverty, an increase in average pay and pension, and a healthier living environment, thereby enhancing living conditions and life expectancy.

This publication is supported by Sweden.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (%), 2021



Source: World Development Indicators, World Bank, GeoStat.



Source: GeoStat, EuroStat.

International Center of War Affected Women - ICWAW

BY MARIAM MTIVLISHVILI

The International Center of War Affected Women (ICWAW) was created for people who are facing problems caused by war. The center helps women develop and find the help they need. To find out more about it, GEORGIA TODAY spoke to chairperson of the ICWAW - Marika Arevadze.

"The International Center of War Affected Women (ICWAW) was created on the basis of the Alliance of the Georgian-Ukrainian Commonwealth. The Center began to help only Ukrainian women who suffered from the war, but the problem of the war affected not only Ukraine, before that there was Georgia. Delving into the problem of war victims, the problem turned out to be wider, and now our goal is to support Georgian, Ukrainian, Armenian, Azerbaijani and other women affected by the war in our region," she tells us.

WHO ARE YOUR BENEFICIARIES?

The direct beneficiaries are women affected by war, regardless of their current legal status, as well as women who are still under the influence of the consequences of the war, including those from regions under occupation or creeping occupation, even if the beneficiary does not necessarily have the status of an IDP or refugee.

WHAT IS THE MAIN GOAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF WAR AFFECTED WOMEN (ICWAW)?

War has dire consequences for everyone, including women. These people lose both their family members and their source of income, as a result of which they face moral and economic problems. Our goal is to create a unified space with the involvement of beneficiaries, where war-affected women will be supported



Chairperson of the ICWAW - Marika Arevadze

to develop various skills. In addition, we try to find help solving the problems they have. At this stage, we have several ongoing projects, one of which is aimed at teaching Georgian language to Ukrainian women affected by the war. Within the framework of other projects, we teach women ceramics, sewing, and help them learn a new profession so that they

can create a source of income with their new skills.

HOW DO YOU FIND BENEFICIARIES?

We not only communicate directly with the beneficiaries, but also with organizations working in this direction in the region, and find beneficiaries this way.

Since this is a non-governmental organization, we communicate with foundations, make agreements, and start implementing projects.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FUTURE PLANS.

Our future plan is to create a space where we can get information directly from

women about their problems and help them overcome these challenges. Although a long time has passed since the wars in Abkhazia, Tskhinvali and 2008, people still feel the negative consequences of them. That is why meetings are planned in the regions to understand their problems and help them to solve them.

Niko Pirosmanni's Art and Legacy: A Retrospective of the Albertina Museum Exhibition



Continued from page 1

The main goal of the exhibition was to introduce Niko Pirosmanni's work and the Georgian cultural heritage to the general public. It was organized by the National Museum of Georgia, the Albertina Museum, and the Infinitart Foundation, with the support of the Min-

istry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport of Georgia. The project partners and biggest contributors were TS Foundation (Tamaz Somkhishvili Foundation), Bank of Georgia, Julius Baer, and Lady Angela Nevill, without whose support Niko Pirosmanni's works would not have been able to travel beyond his home country's borders.

Bice Curiger, Curator of the Exhibition, noted, "I visited Tbilisi in 1988 for the first time, and even now I remember the feeling when I discovered the paintings of this artist in the art museum. After I went back home, I brought a book about Pirosmanni, and his world became very close to mine. I am happy that after so many years, the Vienna Albertina Museum can host the masterpieces of this artist."

The exhibition showcased some of Pirosmanni's most famous paintings, including "Roe Deer Drinking from a Stream," "Camel and Merchant," "Actress Margarita," "The Train of Kakheti," "Firewood Merchant Boy," "Russian-Japanese War," "Black Boar," and "Giraffe." These works offer a glimpse into the self-taught artist's poetic and sincere art, which reflects the shape, style, and interior aesthetics of Georgia.

Pirosmanni's paintings depict an amazing animal world and pictures from Georgia. His paintings of old Georgian faces are considered heroes of the avant-garde. For visitors who are used to meeting big artists, Pirosmanni's art unexpectedly surprises them, and they follow his paintings with inner rhythm and interest.

The handmade book by Ilia Zdanevich offers a historical insight into Pirosmanni's

life, and the engraving by Pablo Picasso adds an extra layer of artistic significance to the exhibition. Additionally, Tadao Ando's specially designed table, inspired by "Actress Margarita" and the legend of the million roses, was exhibited for the first time. The table was decorated with blue roses and was a beautiful tribute to the memory of the artist.

Artist David Kakabadze described Niko Pirosmanni's work for the first time in 1913, I was astonished by this unusual painter. I dreamed that his works of wisdom would always inspire me and teach me. I know no other painter who felt

Georgia as Niko did. I think, in discovering his work, my life has become richer and happier. When enjoying Pirosmanni's works, I feel renewed by the power of the land and the influence of the scent of Niko's oil cloth."

The "NIKO PIROSMANNI - A Wanderer Between Worlds" exhibition at the Albertina Museum in Vienna offered a unique opportunity to appreciate the art and legacy of Niko Pirosmanni. It showcased some of his most famous paintings and provided a glimpse into his life and artistic processes. The exhibition was a beautiful tribute to the artist's memory and introduced his work and Georgian cultural heritage to a wider audience.



All for the Children

BY TONY HANMER

I was glad to have the opportunity to attend a recent UNICEF event in Tbilisi, on April 20. The acronym stands for United Nations International Children's Fund, with the "E" originally meaning "emergency" when it was founded in 1946 to provide developmental and humanitarian aid to the world's children.

The Tbilisi event was the presentation of UNICEF's and GeoStat's latest Child Welfare Survey in Georgia, an important indicator of how the country is doing in relation to its younger citizens.

Its presenters were: Dr. Ghassan Khalil, UNICEF Representative in Georgia, just before he departs this role; Mikheil Sarjveladze, Chairperson of the Human Rights and Civil Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia; Niko Tatulashvili, Prime Minister's Advisor for Human Rights; Tamila Barkalaia, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia; and Gogita Todradze, Executive Director of the National Sta-

tistics Office of Georgia.

Also notably present were Pamela Dale, UNICEF Regional Advisor on Social Policy, on her first visit to Georgia; Maya Kurtsikidze, UNICEF Georgia Communication Specialist; and Sofia Chaava, UNICEF Georgia Communication Officer.

This statement accompanied the presentation: "The purpose of the Child Welfare Survey was to measure children's welfare in several core domains, including access to education, healthcare and social assistance, nutrition during school hours, safety at home, functional difficulties and stigma associated with disability.

"There is a growing consensus among child rights advocates and practitioners that monetary measures of poverty are not sufficient for capturing the deprivations that children experience. A new measure called the Child Material and Social Deprivation Index was developed that examines 16 necessities, at either the child or household level. A child is considered to be deprived if, due to lack of financial resources, the family cannot provide them with at least three of the 16 necessities.

"UNICEF is supporting the Government to monitor child welfare in Georgia, through systematically conducting

high-quality studies to assess the situation and recommend solutions to the challenges."

One of the presentation's themes was that, although Covid-19 has adversely affected many things in Georgia, as well as throughout the world, much progress has been made both in surveying the country and in making steps towards implementing positive change in the lives of children. Issues from the survey were raised, such as the urgent need for nutritional lunches as part of school everywhere, in order to improve children's learning; better integration of physically and mentally challenged children into school, as well as improving their lives at home; better, effective but less psychologically and physically harmful methods of disciplining children; and equal access to schooling, medical care and other positive aspects of life here for all children.

I also wondered about the mountainous regions of the country in particular, because these are the areas I have come to know best: furthest away from the big cities, with potentially the least resources and greatest disparities in infrastructure and resources. I remember how taking a thermometer to one of the schools I



Pamela Dale, UNICEF Regional Advisor on Social Policy. Photo by Tony Hanmer/GT

taught at in Upper Svaneti earned me the ire of one of my school's directors (+3 degrees C was the lowest classroom temperature I found). The only firewood we had available to use then was very green, which meant all smoke, little fire, and less heat. This has apparently improved much since I was teaching, some 10 years ago. I would now probably not see a need to protest the unbreathable atmosphere by moving my little classes directly into the staff room... where they became both much more active and warmer. During my years, another very visible improvement was the introduction of minivan-buses: Etseri school had some children about 7 km away who used to have to either stay with nearer relatives during the school week or to walk that insane distance.

"Even though it's my first time here [in Georgia], I've been working with the team for three years, and I've seen some amazing achievements when it comes to child welfare, child benefits in particular," Pamela Dale told GEORGIA TODAY. "We've been working closely on things like the micro-simulation of child poverty, that contributed to the government's decision to have a one-time universal child benefit to offset the impacts of Covid-19. We've been supporting a lot of the research that's being undertaken by GeoStat, and it's fantastic to see that. I've been impressed in person to see the commitment to collecting data and using it for policy-making. I'll continue to follow things closely, and I do want to make one additional plug. One case that we often use in reflecting on Georgia in the regional experience is the work on the reform of child disability assessment, on support to children with disabilities. It's an area that nobody has done perfectly yet, but the work

that's been done on the reform of disability assessment is really a game-changer. I do want to point that out in particular." "During my four and a half years in Georgia, I have enjoyed delivering, with the wonderful team of the UNICEF Georgia Country Office, for every child, every life, all the time," Dr. Ghassan Khalil told GEORGIA TODAY. "I am so grateful to the government, to the parliament, to our civil society partners, to everyone who has supported us in UNICEF, to be able to deliver. And one thing I would like to mention: the Court of the Rights of the Child in Georgia, a wonderful tool to improve the life of every child here."

The full Report can be found here, for those who are interested: <https://www.unicef.org/georgia/reports/child-well-being-georgia-2023>

It is a vital topic in this country and everywhere. One unanimous opinion of all those presenting the Report was that, in the geographic region in the last few years, Georgia is doing best in seeing child welfare documented and improved on. For this we can be most glad. While there is still much to be done, as maybe there always will be, we are making significant progress in improving children's lives. Congratulations to UNICEF Georgia, GeoStat and the parents and patrons of children everywhere here.

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



Dr. Ghassan Khalil, UNICEF Representative in Georgia. Photo by Tony Hanmer/GT

Ugly Marks by Warped Minds and Dirty Hands

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

The famous noun is 'graffiti' and its verbal derivative is 'to graffiti,' which means to illicitly deface a clean and good-looking place by scribbling, scratching or spraying writing or a drawing on a wall or other available surface in a public place.

Lately, the entire city of Tbilisi is being covered with graffiti. There is a solid cohort of young people out there who seem to want to energetically and purposefully graffiti the whole town, doing this illegally and ferociously. Why? They are probably sick, to say the least; spending time, money and energy on turning our beautiful capital into an abominably ugly place to live.

This strange and vicious new enterprise is illegal, but there seems no effective way to stop it, as the ill-minded and ill-handed perpetrators seem to be so dexterously camouflaged that the poor authorities are almost never able to catch them red-handed. There must be certain inner psychological disturbances that motivate this ilk of humans who get up in the wee hours, arm themselves with spray paints and ladders and make sev-

eral rounds of the town to leave the unmasked-for filthy and almost irremovable traces on the exterior of the city buildings anywhere their pathological psyche makes a decision to venture the kink.

There are interested people all over the world who have researched the strange penchant. Most of them say it is not a crime, but they also know that they are prevaricating when they say so. As a matter of fact, graffiti might figure as an action of criminal category if treated fairly and judiciously, because it tends to damage somebody else's property. On top of that it takes time, money and energy to erase the unwelcome slogans, obscenities, stupid doodles and tasteless paintings. The worst part of the whole shebang is that it is the product of a strongly set-in mindset which is like a serious ailment, as ignored by law in this country as it is in the rest of the world.

As the research has it, this happens because the taggers are not abusing anybody either physically or mentally, hence they enjoy a certain amount of mawkish sympathy or irrelevant tolerance on the part of the society they are living and tagging in. The sympathizers would argue that taggers are not heard enough, suffering from the sense of not belonging; they don't have anywhere to use

their energy, having no access to extra-curricular activities; they feel bad due to monotony and solitude; they are angry with those peers who are more successful. One of the suggested explanations for tagging is the love of expression and the desire to be identified and noticed. Often, the motivation is based on political sentiments no matter how fleeting they might be. Sometimes, their imagination crosses admissible moral borders to let the 'hero' go for some victimless misdemeanor within the inequitable culture they are compelled to exist in.

This said, graffiti maniacs seem to be inflicted with a specific addiction rather than being naively infatuated kids against whom zero tolerance needs to be used. Taggers are very different from other people. They definitely have a certain conduct disorder and are inclined to juvenile delinquency and antisocial behavior. Personality disorder is not excluded either, because they usually vandalize thousands of properties, doing this unnoticed and in a very short while. Graffiti lovers and composers, colloquially called taggers, do not very well discern between wrong and right, being uncaring, sarcastic, conceited, impertinent and overly prejudiced people. To draw an even clearer picture, one could say that they are desperately looking for

recognition, getting their anger out to satisfy their antisocial personality. Taggers do not work alone: They have crews to tag together. They even compete with each other, never recognizing the criminal offense they are committing against honest and innocent people by harming their possessions for their personal sat-

isfaction and wellbeing.

All this could be true in this country too, and the only thing that could help is the adoption of a relevant law that would provide for adequate fines, jail time, or at least some community service. No other way to stop these unstoppable scandalous wrongdoers!



Image source: petersbigadventure

Craft Beer, Alazani Hills and Horses – A Stay at Lost Ridge Inn, the Warm, Beating Heart of Kakheti



REVIEW BY KATIE RUTH DAVIES

The Lost Ridge Inn is a two-floor, beautifully converted country house with that perfect blend of modern and old. You'll enter through a covered terrace into the cozy living area with soft seating, tiled floors and a large fireplace. In front of you is the bar area and a friendly face or two to welcome you. Two bedrooms are on the first floor; four others upstairs. Surrounding the house is a lawn garden featuring a summer kitchen, hammocks, and an overall sense of tranquility.

Attached to the house is a brewery, its shiny metal tanks on display through the glass as they quietly work to ferment the Inn's own craft beer, inspired by herbs and fruits of the region and beyond.

THE ACCOMMODATION

The first thing you'll notice on entering your bright room, illuminated by floor-to-ceiling windows, is the warm scent of cedar, the wooden floors and furniture, with the cleanest and most tastefully chosen bedding. Tasteful too are the bathrooms – warm, natural colors, modern fittings, Mediterranean style tiles. Bathrobes, slippers, drinking water, toiletries and a hairdryer are included. The rooms boast central heating and A/C, and, refreshingly, no TV (though there is WiFi).

On your stone-tiled balcony or terrace, over iron railings enveloped in grapevines, you'll have an uninterrupted view of the garden and surrounding countryside – Lost Ridge Inn sits on the top of a hill. The room I was staying in looked over the rolling hills and the medieval Bodbe St. Virgin Mary Temple, currently under renovation, and just up the road, Lost Ridge Inn's corral and the horses we'd be touring on later that day. When we arrived, the horses – chestnut, gray and white males and a foal, were free-roaming and happily chomping away on the sweet grass in the rear garden.

THE FOOD

Without exaggeration, I can say this was the juiciest, tastiest and freshest selection of vegetables and salad greens I have tasted in a very long time – sliced beetroot salad, red cabbage and sour cream, cucumber and tomato salad with sunflower seeds, spicy Mexican beans,

west-style IPA. Our special brews are bottled and aged in our onsite beer cave." They also serve the natural wines Pheasant's Tears and Lurji Bani.

THE LIVING ROOTS HORSE RANCH

The ranch is a minute's walk away from the Inn, also clearly marked from the road. We arrived in the stable yard, where Nika, our guide, introduced us to the newest member of the family – a 2-week old foal, and his mom. The horses, aside from the one female, are all castrated males bought from around Georgia when they are around 6 years old. The Ranch chooses only horses who are familiar to having riders and which have a naturally calm temperament.

There are currently six horses for novice riders and two for those who have more experience. The six are 13 years old or younger, are in excellent form, and have a lovely, patient character, regardless of the rider – from middle-aged mom, to Tik Toking teen, to chatty 9-year-old peppering our lovely guide with non-stop questions as we rode.

After letting my kids brush the horses and help saddle them up, we started out on our absolutely perfect 1-hour simple loop trail, which took us along the ridge for a view of the Alazani Valley and nearby villages, then along another hill for a magical eye-level view of the St Nino (Bodbe) Monastery from the opposite side of the gorge. We started and ended our ride on the new asphalt road, but for the majority of it we were on level dirt tracks, some car-wide, some with just enough space for us and the horses to pass – and the horses were very at ease in all environs, knowing where to go and what to do, having done it hundreds of times before. Nika, who has been riding and caring for horses since the age of four, was an excellent guide, giving us clear and easy to follow instructions in English, and always calmly and confidently ready to help if we got into trouble. He also patiently and enthusiastically answered that chatty 9-year-old's questions, as well as mine, about the stable and the challenges of quality horse-rearing in Georgia – challenges the Living Roots Ranch has clearly overcome.

The Lost Ridge Ranch offers different tours of different lengths for different abilities and tastes across Georgia – it's best to contact them directly before you

THE BREWERY

It pains me on this occasion to say that I'm not a beer drinker (I prefer wine), but it would be a crime not to share a very special feature of this boutique hotel – they brew their own craft beer! I'll let their own words describe it to you better.

"Using pure well water, hops and grains grown in premier beer nations of the world, plus local seasonal ingredients, we craft small-batch ales reflective of the wildness of this Georgian village setting. We experiment with herbs and fruits grown in our own orchard and surrounding area, occasionally we get inspired and gather these in the alpine Tushetian meadows, Alazani lowlands or Gombori Pass.

"While any industrial brewery can churn out unimaginative bland lagers, Lost Ridge offers made-in-Georgia classic styles such as Belgian-inspired ales and Tripels, Saisons and Pacific North-



Lost Ridge Inn



Co-founder John Wurdeman. Source: Lost Ridge Inn

go to discuss what you'd like. From my short experience there, I can say how tranquil and beautiful an experience it was to ride slowly along with my kids in the sunlit Kakheti hills; and how buzzed and blessed I felt afterwards to have had the chance to do so – and my kids felt exactly the same!

THE CAFÉ

The Ranch boasts its own café, and after a rest and wash, we were welcomed into the cozy, warm, wood-and-stone interior for a delicious and filling dinner, accompanied by wine and zesty lemon water. The café is small but in warmer weather opens up on to a garden and terrace with seating for numerous guests and a daytime view of Kakheti that washes over you like a relaxing balm. While my kids played on the swings, I had the chance to take my glass of wine and sit by the fire pit and warm up with other Inn guests.

HOW TO GET THERE

Driving Tbilisi to Signaghi takes around 1 hour 48 minutes and is 108 kilometers east of the capital. Take the S-5 east out of Tbilisi and stay on it for 94.4 km. When you get to Chalaubani, turn right onto the Sh-40 – you'll see a sign for Signaghi and a police station on your right. The next 20 minutes and 15 or so kilometers will see you winding along a well-paved road through quaint villages with terracotta-tiled houses, crumbling stonework, rusty farm equipment and bold signs boasting "Honey" and "Wine." At the sharp left turn toward the St Nino Monastery, you'll see a small hand-painted sign pointing right reading "Lost Ridge Inn." This is a beautiful, newly asphalted road and a joy to drive for the last few minutes of your journey. Lost Ridge Inn is a cream-and-wood house just off the bend of the road past the Ranch, and up a short gravel drive.

WHAT CAN I DO THERE?

Lost Ridge Inn offers various-length horse riding tours, wine and beer tasting, and all those lovely activities that Kakheti first brought to the market – tone bread baking, churchkhela making, cook-

ing masterclasses and more. All of these should be agreed on in advance when you book.

Nearby are numerous hiking opportunities. The Lost Ridge Inn looks down on the Bodbe St. Virgin Mary Temple, a few kilometers walk away through the fields (or reachable in 26 minutes by car via the St Nino Spring Road which loops down into Tsnori and back up again). Less than a kilometer away is the St Nino (Bodbe) Monastery, boasting a cathedral, two churches, a gift shop and vast, well-maintained garden and woodland. Within the mid-size old church is the tomb of St Nino, a Cappadocian woman who brought Christianity to Georgia in the early 300s.

Beyond this monastery is Signaghi, a picturesque town perched on the hilltop, guarding over the spectacular Alazani Valley and the Caucasus Mountains beyond. Signaghi has been serving the international tourist community for decades. Renovated brick and stone, tiled-roof buildings with wooden balconies line cobbled streets. There is a small central park with play areas for children, a museum hosting a selection of works by the internationally renowned primitive painter Pirosmiani, as well as archaeological evidence of age-old settlements in the area. The town has a plethora of restaurants and bars to choose from.

THE TAKEAWAY

I can't recommend Lost Ridge Inn enough. It is ideal for couples looking to get away from the hustle and bustle, for those wanting a comfortable base to explore the Kakheti region, for craft beer connoisseurs, for small families, for those wanting to try horse-riding, and for small groups of friends simply needing to recharge. All will find a warm welcome, delicious and filling food, and professional service in a home-from-home environment.

You can book a room at Lost Ridge Inn online via their website (lostridgeinn.com), at +995 599 795529, or on Booking.com. Check out our interview with the founding team in May's GT Business magazine!

Address	8 Ninoshvili Street, Qedeli Community, Signaghi, Kakheti
Open	Year-round
Road Access	Easy, newly paved road
Accommodation	6 rooms in the house, 2 restored 19th century cottages on the grounds



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I am Georgian and therefore I am European

Zurab Zhvania, Council of Europe, 1999

