

FOCUS ON NATO

NATO's new Ukraine Rep. Patrick Turner on Trump's plan, and the NATO door shutting on Georgia **PAGE 5**



Patrick Turner. Source: NATO

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SSSG Investigating Bidzina Ivanishvili Assassination Plot

BY ANA DUMBADZE

The Georgian State Security Service (SSSG) is investigating criminal actions that include preparation for the assassination of Bidzina Ivanishvili, the honorary chairman of the Georgian Dream party, with "the organization and financing of former high-ranking officials of the Georgian government and former employees of law enforcement agencies of Ukraine," – the State Security Service said in a statement Wednesday.

The SSSG says the purpose of the mentioned criminal actions is to overthrow the state government by violent means carried out by destructive forces, against the background of creating disorder and weakening the government.

"The State Security Service is conducting an investigation into the fact of preparing a terrorist act and conspiracy to overthrow the state government, a crime stipulated by the first part of Article 18-323 and the first part of Article 315 of the Civil Code of Georgia.



Bidzina Ivanishvili

"Active investigative and operational search measures are being carried out, within the framework of which specific persons are being

summoned to the investigative body as witnesses for questioning," the SSSG statement reads.

GALT & TAGGART										
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES										
Prepared for Georgia Today Business by										
As of 23-Jul-2024										
Markets					Markets					
BONDS	Price	w/w	m/m	STOCKS	Price	w/w	m/m			
GEORG 04/26	92.43 (YTM 7.46%)	+0.2%	+0.9%	Bank of Georgia (BGEO LN)	GBP 43.55	-4.0%	+21.5%			
GRAB 06/28	88.03 (YTM 7.61%)	-0.0%	-0.2%	Georgia Capital (GCGO LN)	GBP 10.80	-3.2%	+21.3%			
GEBOG 9/12 PERP	97.67 (YTM 9.21%)	-0.0%	-0.0%	TBC Bank Group (TBGG LN)	GBP 28.55	-6.7%	+21.3%			
SILNET 01/27	99.80 (YTM 8.47%)	-0.0%	-0.1%							
TBC 10/775 PERP	100.28 (YTM 8.79%)	+0.1%	+0.3%							
TBC 8/894 PERP	95.71 (YTM 10.98%)	+0.2%	+0.4%	Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	81.01	-3.2%	-5.0%			
TBC 10/1/4 PERP	98.30 (YTM 10.68%)	-0.1%	+0.1%	Gold Spot (US\$/OZ)	2,409.64	-2.4%	+3.8%			
INDICES					CURRENCIES					
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m			
SP 500	5,555.74	-2.0%	+1.7%	USD / GEL	2,7180	+0.0%	-3.2%			
FTSE 250	21,091.49	-0.6%	+3.2%	EUR / GEL	2,9500	+0.4%	-1.8%			
DOW JONES 30	40,358.09	-1.5%	+3.1%	GBP / GEL	3,5097	+0.4%	-1.1%			
Russell 2000	2,243.27	-0.9%	+10.9%	EUR / USD	1,0854	-0.4%	+1.5%			
FTSE 100	8,167.37	+0.0%	-0.9%	GBP / USD	1,2908	-0.5%	+2.1%			



Source: UNDP

Germany and UNDP Help Adapt Kutaisi City Court to Needs of Persons with Disabilities

BY ANA DUMBADZE

The Kutaisi City Court joined the list of Georgia's inclusive public spaces in 2024. Thanks to assistance from the German Government and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the court's premises have been adapted to the needs of wheelchair users and people with visual impairments. The Georgian NGO 'Mariani', one of the leading civic advocates for the rights of persons with disabilities, provided consultancy and practical support for the project.

With up to GEL 350,000 in funding from Germany, the renovations included the installation of platform stairlifts for wheelchairs and tactile paths for the visually impaired. Bathrooms on the basement floor were adapted for persons with mobility and visual impairments, and wheelchair lifts and tactile signs were installed to ensure easy access.

"Germany is proud to support the adaptation of the Kutaisi City Court for persons with disabilities, ensuring access to justice and legal services for all," said H.E. Peter Fischer, Ambassador of Germany to Georgia. "Involving persons with disabilities at every stage of design was crucial. We believe that inclusive public spaces are fundamental to participation in society and welcome ongoing efforts to build an inclusive environment in Georgia."

"Inclusion is the foundation for protecting human rights and upholding the rule of law," noted Nils Christensen, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Georgia. "Justice service sites, such as courts and legal aid centers, should set an example by creating inclusive spaces that foster a sense of belonging, respect, and dignity for everyone."

Despite significant strides towards inclusivity over the past decade, persons with disabilities remain among the most vulnerable social groups in Georgia. National efforts to build an inclusive environment are focused on several key areas. These include adapting public spaces such as Parliament, Public Service Halls, and Legal Aid Centers; developing disability-sensitive legislation and services; and promoting coordination between the public and civic sectors to effectively implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Much of this work is supported by Georgian civil society and international organizations, including the United Nations, the European Union, Germany, Sweden, and the UK Government.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Through the \$1.62 million 'Improving the Rule of Law and Access to Justice for All' project, UNDP and Germany enhance the capacities of rule of law institutions and promote legal empowerment and socio-economic resilience among disadvantaged communities in Georgia. Inclusive access to justice is one of the areas covered by the project.



Source: UNDP

EBRD Procures Municipal Vehicles for Tbilisi



Source: euneighbourseast

BY TEAM GT

THE EBRD'S GREEN CITIES INITIATIVE

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has delivered a new batch of communal vehicles for the Georgian capital Tbilisi.

Tbilisi municipality received a variety of vehicles, including street sweepers, rubbish trucks, and aerial works platforms.

"We're pleased to play a part in upgrading municipal services in the city, while supporting environmental improvements," the EBRD said in a Facebook post. "The new vehicles will significantly cut emissions, air pollution, and reduce the city's road safety risks."

The machinery was provided under the EBRD's Green Cities program, which helps cities to apply a broad approach to identifying and prioritizing environmental challenges, and connecting them with infrastructure investments and policy measures. Tbilisi was among the very first cities to join the EBRD's Green Cities family.

Cities in EBRD regions face a variety of challenges, among them inadequate infrastructure investment, shifting demographics, poor air quality, and a legacy of high energy consumption and carbon intensity. Many of these cities are particularly susceptible to climate change impacts, experiencing heightened heat stress and extreme weather events. Furthermore, solid waste management remains a critical issue, with recycling rates well below EU standards.

To address these issues, the EBRD launched the EBRD Green Cities initiative, aimed at fostering a more sustainable future for urban areas and their inhabitants. This program focuses on three main pillars:

1. Green City Action Plans (GCAPs): These plans assess environmental challenges, prioritize them, and outline strategies for addressing them through policy reforms and sustainable infrastructure investments.

2. Sustainable Infrastructure Investment: The initiative supports and encourages green investments, both

public and private, in critical areas such as water and wastewater management, urban transport, district energy systems, energy-efficient buildings, solid waste management, and other measures to enhance cities' resilience to climate-related shocks.

3. Capacity-Building: EBRD provides technical assistance to city administrators and local stakeholders, ensuring that the infrastructure projects and policy measures outlined in GCAPs are effectively developed, implemented, and monitored.

The overarching goals of EBRD Green Cities are to preserve environmental assets such as air quality, water resources, land, and biodiversity, ensuring their sustainable use; mitigate and adapt to the risks posed by climate change, enhancing cities' resilience, and; ensure that environmental policies and developments contribute to the social and economic well-being of city residents.

Through these initiatives, EBRD aims to promote sustainable urban development across its regions, fostering cities that are healthier, more resilient, and more livable for their populations.

Kvrvishvili Meets with British Airlines, Discusses Opening Direct Flights

BY MARIAM MTIVLISHVILI



Deputy Minister of Economy, Mariam Kvrvishvili met with a number of representatives of British airlines to discuss direct flights to Georgia. The Georgia Airports Association and representatives of the Georgian Embassy in Great Britain also participated in the meetings.

"Our priority is to have direct flights with Great Britain. For this purpose, we are conducting active negotiations with airlines so that they can start direct flights to Georgia. Diversification of markets is a priority of our aviation and tourism policy. The start of direct flights will help attract high-purchasing tourist flows from Britain," Kvrvishvili noted.

Ukraine Latest: Russia Pulls Ships from Sea of Azov, Zelensky Claims Kharkiv Advance "Halted"

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

It's been another big week in the conflict, against the background of which world leaders met for a NATO summit and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky traveled to the UK to attend a European Political Community meeting.

RUSSIA PULLED ALL VESSELS FROM SEA OF AZOV, SAYS UKRAINE

Russia has pulled all its vessels out of the Sea of Azov, a body of water connected to the Black Sea, a spokesperson for the Ukrainian navy said.

"There are no longer any Russian naval vessels in the Sea of Azov," spokesperson Dmytro Pletenchuk said.

Ukraine's successful attacks on targets in Russian-annexed Crimea and elsewhere in the Black Sea have forced the Russian navy to rebase many of its ships elsewhere.

RUSSIA AND CHINA CONCLUDE NAVAL DRILLS

Russian and Chinese ships used joint naval exercises in the South China Sea last week to successfully rehearse several combat drills, Russian state media reports.

Russia's Pacific Fleet was cited as saying that the two navies had carried out about 30 combat exercises, including joint artillery firing at sea, coastal and air targets, and joint search and rescue operations at sea.

The drills, dubbed "Maritime Cooperation 2024," have now concluded. China and Russia declared a "no lim-

its" partnership in 2022, when President Vladimir Putin visited Beijing just days before he sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine.

RUSSIA'S KHARKIV ADVANCE "HALTED," ZELENSKY SAYS

While speaking at the European Political Community Summit, President Zelensky said Ukraine had "halted Moscow's forces completely" in Kharkiv. The Ukrainian president made the comment while trying to convince leaders to help with Kyiv's air defense capability.

"We have stopped the Russian advance on Kharkiv - period," he said.

"Putin has sacrificed tens of thousands of his citizens, but has achieved nothing significant," he added.

Yet Russian state media this week reported that Russian troops had captured two settlements in Ukraine: The village of Rozivka, in Ukraine's eastern Luhansk region, and Pishchane Nizhne in the northeastern Kharkiv region.

TASS news agency said both villages were captured in one day.

It quoted the Russian defense ministry as saying: "As a result of successful actions, units of the West group of troops liberated the settlements of Rozivka in the Luhansk People's Republic and Pishchane Nizhne in the Kharkiv region, and also occupied more advantageous lines and positions."

Further, Russia's latest attack on civilians in Ukraine struck the office of a Swiss mine-clearing NGO, killing at least three people in city of Kharkiv.

The attack injured six others and damaged the office of Fondation Suisse De Déminage, the local governor said. Rescue operations continued into the night.

Kharkiv has been one of Russia's targets since the early days of the war, but the region became more of a focal point in May when Moscow's forces launched a cross-border incursion.

SIX PEOPLE INJURED IN ATTACKS ON KHERSON

Six people have been injured in a range of attacks on Kherson, Ukrainian officials say.

In a post on Telegram, Ukraine's National Police said Moscow's troops had shelled the southern region with artillery, mortars, tanks and drones.

Two people, a 51-year-old woman and 70-year-old man, suffered "mine explosive injuries," it said.

Two others, aged 56 and 74, were injured in the street when ammunition was dropped from a drone, it added.

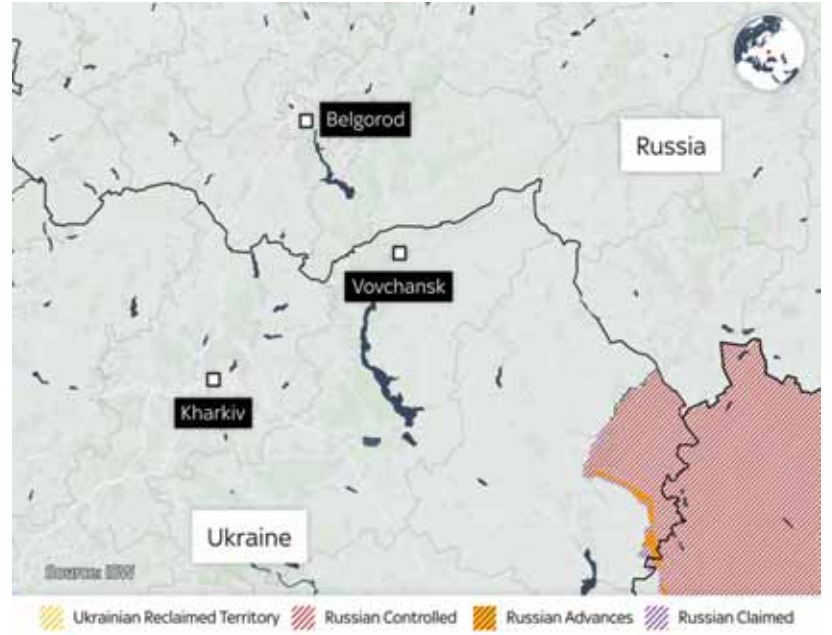
Another two people "came under artillery fire".

RUSSIA PURSUING TACTICAL GAINS DESPITE 'SIGNIFICANT MANPOWER LOSSES', SAYS UKRAINIAN ARMY CHIEF

Ukrainian commander-in-chief Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi says Russia has significantly increased its manpower and materiel commitments to the war in Ukraine since February 2022, and has suffered "significant manpower losses".

Active fighting is ongoing along 977km of the 3,700-km-long frontline, General Syrskyi told The Guardian, adding that Russia's military command continues to pursue tactical gains regardless of the losses involved.

On the other side, Ukrainian forces are attempting to safeguard the lives of Ukrainian troops, he said.



Russian advances in Ukraine. Source: ISW

The US-based think tank monitoring the war, the Institute for the Study of War, said the army chief's statement is "not indicative of a sudden increase in the Russian military's presence in Ukraine and is instead representative of the manpower and materiel disadvantage that Ukrainian forces have faced for over two years".

It added: "Russia's ability to continue gradually expanding the amount of manpower and materiel it has committed to Ukraine faces significant constraints in the medium to long term."

Vladimir Putin's forces have "extensively relied on refurbishing stocks of Soviet-era weapons and military equipment to sustain the tempo of its offensive operations in Ukraine in order to avoid fully mobilising the Russian economy and society to a war-time footing," the ISW said.

"Ukrainian authorities have noted that Russia is currently not producing enough to cover its current equipment losses in Ukraine," it said.

ZELENSKY FACING 'VERY

DIFFICULT' TIME AND RISKS 'POLITICAL SUICIDE,' SAYS KLITSCHKO

Volodymyr Zelensky will face a "very difficult" time over the coming months, the Mayor of Kyiv has warned.

Speaking to Italian news outlet Corriere della Sera, Vitaliy Klitschko said the Ukrainian president will have to make hard decisions that could lead to "political suicide."

He warned that Mr Zelensky may have to launch a referendum in Ukraine if a territorial compromise with Russia is put on the table.

"The coming months will be very difficult for Volodymyr Zelensky," he said.

"Will he have to continue the war with new deaths and destruction, or consider the possibility of a territorial compromise with Putin?"

"Whatever move he makes, our president risks political suicide. Let's be honest, we have to win the war, but the situation is getting more and more difficult. It depends on the help that comes from the allies. It would be a nightmare if we had to fight for two more years."

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Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze

Georgian PM: If Trump Wins, Ukraine War Will end Sooner & Attitude Towards Georgia Will Also Change

BY TEAM GT

If Trump wins, the war in Ukraine will end sooner. Consequently, the region will calm down sooner and the attitude towards Georgia will also change. There will be more justice for Georgia, – the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Kobakhidze, told reporters.

“Of course, we cannot interfere in anyone’s elections, especially in the presi-

dential elections of such a large country, the US. This is not our business. The only thing that can be said is that if Trump wins the elections, the war in Ukraine will end sooner and, accordingly, our region will calm down sooner, which will change the attitude towards Georgia in particular.

“If there is peace in the region, the attitude towards Georgia will change. This is all that can be said about it. The rest is the choice of the American people. The American people should decide who the president of the US will be”, said Kobakhidze.

Varieties of Democracy Index: Georgia among Top 50 Countries, 1st in Europe for Freedom of Peaceful Assembly



Tbilisi. Source: FB

BY ANA DUMBADZE

The Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem), a Sweden-based political science research institute, published a civil liberty index, which ranked Georgia ninth in the world, third in the Eurasian continent, and first in Europe, based on 11-year improvement. The Index examines to what extent state authorities respect and protect the right to peaceful assembly.

Georgia earned 3.5 points on a four-point evaluation system in the ranking and is ahead of a number of NATO and European Union member states, two

states of the Big Seven, as well as the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Latvia, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, South Korea, Singapore and Turkey.

Georgia has improved its position by 49 places since 2012.

In 2012, Georgia was among the three most unfavorable countries in Europe with respect to civil liberties, together with Russia and Belarus.

Civil liberty is understood as liberal liberty, where liberty belongs to an individual. Civil liberty is the absence of violence on the part of state officials and the absence of restrictions on private liberties and political freedoms by the Government.

The 2023 Index showed that Georgia

was ahead of many NATO and European Union member states and developed countries in the ranking of civil liberties, namely, Poland, Hungary, Israel, Singapore, Turkey and all neighboring countries.

V-Dem is a prominent global research project headquartered at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, focusing on democracy assessment and governance indicators.

The project is led by five principal investigators, 19 project managers, 33 regional managers, more than 134 coordinators and about 4,000 experts worldwide.

The organization is one of the research projects on which the World Bank’s Global Governance Indicators are based.

Nika Chartia to Launch New Campaign, ‘EU Explained: Unlocking Europe for You,’ in Collaboration with the European Parliament’s Youth Platform

BY TEAM GT

Nika Chartia, a passionate young Georgian and advocate for European integration, is set to launch an innovative and educational campaign titled ‘EU Explained: Unlocking Europe for You.’ This initiative is developed under the auspices of the European Parliament’s youth platform, together.eu, and aims to demystify the European Union (EU) for young people across the continent.

The campaign addresses a significant knowledge gap regarding the EU’s role and its impact on the lives of its citizens. Despite the EU’s profound influence on various aspects of daily life, many Europeans, particularly youth, lack a comprehensive understanding of how the union functions and its tangible benefits.

Nika Chartia’s project seeks to bridge this gap through accessible, engaging, and informative resources tailored to foster youth participation and awareness.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The ‘EU Explained: Unlocking Europe for You’ campaign will feature a series of activities designed to educate and engage young Europeans:



Nika Chartia

1. Interactive Workshops and Seminars: The campaign will organize workshops and seminars. These sessions will cover key topics such as the history of the EU, its main institutions and their decision-making processes, and the benefits of EU membership. Interactive elements, including quizzes, debates and role-playing exercises (Simulation of the European Council), will ensure that participants are actively engaged and retain the information.

2. Digital Content and Social Media Campaigns: Recognizing the power of digital platforms in reaching young audiences, the campaign will produce a variety of digital content. This will include informational videos, infographics, and social media posts that simplify complex EU topics. A dedicated website and social media channels will serve as hubs for these resources, allowing young people to easily access and share them.

3. Collaborations: To maximize reach and impact, the campaign will collaborate with different (mainly youth organizations across Europe.) These partners will help disseminate information and encourage youth engagement through their networks.

4. Highlighting Georgia’s EU Integration Journey (Specifically designed for Georgian youth): A unique aspect of the campaign will be its focus on Georgia’s relationship with the EU. As a young

Georgian, Nika Chartia will share insights and stories about Georgia’s journey towards European integration, highlighting the mutual benefits and the country’s commitment to the European project.

5. Focus on EU Elections and Countering Far-Right Movements: An essential initiative within the campaign will focus on raising awareness about the importance of participating in EU elections and addressing the rise of far-right parties. By providing educational materials and organizing discussions on democratic values and electoral processes, the campaign aims to empower young voters to make informed choices. Nika Chartia’s involvement in the 2024 European election campaigns, where he actively promoted voter participation among member state citizens was recognized by a thank-you letter from the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola.

The campaign is spearheaded by Nika Chartia in collaboration with together.eu, the European Parliament’s youth platform.

“The primary beneficiaries of the campaign are young Europeans aged 16-30, who will gain a deeper understanding of the EU and its relevance to their lives,” Chartia says. “By empowering these young individuals with knowledge, the campaign will inspire greater civic engagement and a stronger connection to the European project.”



Patrick Turner. Source: DefAero Report

Patrick Turner on Trump's Plan, NATO, and the Door Shutting on Georgia

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

On 17 July, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg revealed the selection of a Senior Representative to head the NATO Representation in Ukraine (NRU). Patrick Turner is set to take up the role in Kyiv in September. His prior experience includes roles as NATO Assistant Secretary General for Operations, Assistant Secretary General for Defense Policy and Planning, and various high-ranking civil service positions in the United Kingdom. Radio Free Europe/RL's Georgian Service spoke to him two days prior to the Sec Gen's announcement.

RECENT EVENTS CAST A RATHER LARGE SHADOW ON THE NATO SUMMIT IN WASHINGTON DC. HOW MUCH OF A HEADACHE IS THAT FOR THE REST OF THE ALLIANCE? AND HOW MUCH RIDES ON ITS EVENTUAL OUTCOME FOR UKRAINE?

I'd say it's true that the American political debate, or crisis, however you might term it, was tactically a bit of a distraction during the summit, but it didn't affect the actual outcomes of the summit. Europe, like the rest of the world, is waiting with more than considerable interest for the election results in November.

On the NATO front, there is recent NATO polling evidence which shows strong support for NATO across the alliance. In the US, and across the political divide in the US, there continues to be strong support for NATO in Congress on both sides of the political aisle. So I am rather confident, and I have certainly been hearing that Jens Stoltenberg, the Secretary General, is confident that, irrespective of the outcome of the US election, there will be good support for NATO. He said in the case of the first Trump presidency, the focus was on defense spending. And President Trump said, and in my view he was right to say, it is not reasonable to expect American

taxpayers to care more about defending Europe than European taxpayers. So if there are a large number of allies who are not meeting their commitments and their obligations, then that's unacceptable. And, indeed, it was unacceptable. So now you have 23 out of 32 allies who have already got to 2%, and the remaining allies have plans to get to 2%. So we're not in all respects where we need to be, but we are much closer. As I can imagine, the demand will go even higher in the case of either a Democrat or a Republican administration next time around.

On support to Ukraine, I'm not going to make a prediction on how things might look here next year, but my experience over the years is that some of the things said on a campaign trail, or quite a few of the things said on a campaign trail, don't necessarily translate into facts and policy. So let's wait and see. So far, support to Ukraine has been pretty unified and much stronger than Putin would ever have counted on. And I count on that continuing to be the case.

WHAT WOULD FORMER PRESIDENT TRUMP "ENDING THE WAR IN 24 HOURS" ENTAIL IF WE WERE INDEED TO SEE TRUMP MAKING A RETURN TO THE PRESIDENCY?

I can't speculate on behalf of somebody



Georgian membership in NATO would be a challenging thing even with the standards met

else as to what that might mean in practice. I can imagine that some of that rhetoric may continue in the coming months. What is super clear now, and has been made as explicit as it could possibly be, is that Russia is not in the mood to negotiate. They made it clear this week during the summit that their strategic intent is to dismember Ukraine, for Ukraine as a separate country to cease to exist. So they were saying as clearly as they could, "if anyone amongst you is dreaming of negotiating, then it's not a dream that we share." And on the Ukrainian side, Ukrainian friends have been saying "we're not going to be engaging in discussions about losing Ukrainian territory or ceding Ukrainian territory."

At the same time, I don't like hypotheticals, but if negotiating with Putin were to mean making it even plainer than now that there is no path to victory, only a path to defeat [for Russia], and saying that more means will be used to achieve that, then I'd be in favor of that kind of negotiation. But I'm not sure whether that is what is meant. But more pressure on Russia, more clarity that there is no way that they're going to achieve their objectives, would only be a good thing.

PUTIN ALSO SAID OF TRUMP'S PROPOSAL THAT "WE DON'T KNOW WHAT IT ENTAILS, BUT AT LEAST WE KNOW HIS INTENTIONS ARE HONEST." DON'T YOU THINK THAT ADDS COLOR TO THE PICTURE?

So far, whenever Russia has said, "we might be interested in talking," or "we have a peace proposal," their proposals mean they get to keep what they've taken. And that's not a peace proposal.

WOULD YOU CONSIDER THAT UNTHINKABLE AND ABSOLUTELY UNACCEPTABLE FOR A FUTURE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION?

I can't see how it is an acceptable outcome. The Friends of Ukraine, NATO allies, the summit this week, has said,

"we will never recognize Russian annexations in Ukraine." Not Crimea, not the Donbas, not territory currently occupied beyond the Donbas. We will never recognize it. And NATO and NATO allies have been in this position before. I think there were over 50 US statements made while the Baltic states were occupied, saying we will never recognize that the Baltic states are part of the Soviet Union, they are independent countries. It may be that we're going to be in that position for many years, and we will never recognize them. So no, I think a path to carving up somebody else's country is not a path that we should be travelling on. And were it our own country, were it the UK, I'm British, or Germany or France or the US, we would not be willing to contemplate that path. But as ever, we will have to see what the future holds.

Ukraine has been amazingly clear and resolute. They've held the line in an extraordinary way against a much larger and more capable adversary. Russia suffered incalculable losses that would be politically impossible to bear in any of our countries. And Ukraine is showing no signs of saying, "we've had enough." I think they've been successful in revamping conscription in Ukraine and making sure that they continue to be able to fight. So I think it is clear that we should continue to support them.

SPEAKING OF CONTINUED SUPPORT TO UKRAINE - A CURIOUS WORD HAS CREPT INTO THE FINAL DECLARATION: "IRREVERSIBLE." HOW IRREVERSIBLE IS THIS?

Personally, I'm not a big believer in attributing too much meaning to precise words. Back in 2008, NATO said plainly that Georgia and Ukraine would become members of NATO, so you could say "well that was pretty irreversible." Yes, it was a clear political intent, but not a great deal has happened since then to give that meaning, and you had the same words used at the Vilnius NATO summit last year when conditions allowed and allies agreed on the membership of Ukraine, though there's still that caveat,



A path to carving up somebody else's country is not a path we should be travelling on

"membership is not happening while the war is happening."

I think that the degree of collective political commitment by allies to support Ukraine, and provide the assurance of support in the longer term, and to engage with Ukraine on making sure that in every way it is ready for membership, has increased. In my view it is, in essence, ready for membership now, but that's not the view of all NATO allies.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, GEORGIA'S ASPIRATIONS ARE NOT EVEN MENTIONED IN THE NATO DECLARATION. IS THE "OPEN DOOR" FINALLY BEING SHUT? WHERE WOULD THAT LEAVE GEORGIA?

Georgia had an invitation, a clear invitation, and made a statement that it intended to join NATO, but when countries change their approach, cease to aspire temporarily, when there are political changes internally which makes aspiration to join NATO uncredible for the allies, then, of course, there are consequences.

NATO is not in the business of pressing or demanding countries to join NATO. NATO is in the business, as we're seeing in Ukraine, of saying "there are standards that have to be met." But Georgian membership in NATO would be a challenging thing even with the standards met, both for the allies and for Georgia itself.

'Gray Operations' as a Contemporary Security Challenge for Georgia: Specific Considerations and Observations. Part 1

ANALYSIS BY VICTOR KIPIANI,
GEOCASE CHAIRMAN

The improvement of Georgia's security system and the search for new approaches and solutions is a continuous process.

And this is not surprising, as our region and the world have been in constant transformation since our regained independence, with regional and global centers of power realigning from time to time, new centers forming, military or political alliances expanding, shrinking or modifying. Additional risks and challenges arise as a result of profound geopolitical, economic and social processes. This, in turn, requires continuous improvement of the national security system and adequate adaptation to changing risks.

As modest as Georgia's role in modern global processes is, the impact of these processes on the present of our country and its development is great. Explaining this relationship will not be difficult if we recall the restructuring of international relations from the seemingly already known foundations to new, as yet unformed, extremely difficult, risky (in some places murky) and untested beginnings. The list of issues to be discussed from this point of view is extensive, but this time we will focus specifically on only a few - not for general extrapolation, but in order to show their natural connection with our country.

We believe that here it is necessary for us to take into account the role and weight of the great powers in the new system of international relations, as well as their relations in the global and regional context. This special attention to the "constellation of first-order countries" has a simple justification: regardless of the various teachings, schools, conceptions, or practical doctrines of international relations, the nature and content of these relations have been based on one simple and brutal factor, and so it will be for the foreseeable future. This factor is the power of the "High and Mighties," global and supra-regional states, in the world's geopolitical and geo-economic arena, and their influence on processes and outcomes. Though theorists and practitioners sometimes "colored" the various stages of the twentieth century, as well as this century, with charming doctrinal names, even then, the laws of realism, nurtured by the ghost of the Hobbes's world, were behind them. Let us not simplify the conversation on this topic by saying that force is always the determining factor. Of course, this is not always the case, but it is still mostly so. And we must be ready for this - both for an ideology that corresponds to Georgian realism and for the correct and adequate adaptation of national resources to this ideology.

In evaluating the processes taking place around our country, we will rely on a couple of voluntary limitations, or "locks". With their help, we will keep the necessary moderation in our reasoning, as well as in the conclusions attached to realism: what Georgian political thinking, culture of speech, and the way of doing things are so much in need of today. By such limitations, we will avoid that scandalous or sensational mixture of tones, characteristic in many respects of Georgian political and public figures, which so often spills over from Georgian television into our business or personal space.

One such limitation is the conscious rejection of the "we know it all" attitude. In this way, we will get rid of a harmful result, the effect of which is destructive,



Image source: jonesday

separating us from a well-wisher, supporter, ally, resulting in them losing the desire to help us with advice and action; as a result of the self-isolation caused by such "glorification" of the self, in fact, we will gradually face the danger of becoming a "pariah state".

The situation when we do not believe in ourselves, seeing us lose faith in our capabilities, suppressing the national potential developed over centuries, voluntarily withdrawing from the affairs of the country and thus refusing to create a national and state destiny, has virtually the same effect of pushing us into isolation. In being self-bound and depressed, we gradually become incapacitated; by laxity and indifference, we destroy the motivation of the country's well-wishers, supporters and allies to cooperate with us, and induce them to lose their desire for relations. As a result, the country is presented to the world as an uninteresting and useless "actor".

In short, both extremes portend the same future: the country becomes non-functional - in one case due to excessive (and unjustified) ego, and in the other scenario due to the lack of national identity and elementary ambition necessary for a state. It does not matter much for Georgian society in which case the national and state perspective of the country, the guide of its modernization and competitiveness, the possibility of realization of the civilizational choice will be nullified.

A FEW RELEVANT REMINDERS

Speaking about conflicts of the modern type, it is necessary to take into account that:

- Absolute security is virtually unattainable, and promises of it are futile;
- In recent decades, the persuasiveness of international legal norms has declined sharply;
- The weight of international law and, with it, of international organizations, has declined significantly;
- The effectiveness of preventive political and legal mechanisms has clearly come to depend on the goodwill and determination of the "High and Mighties";
- The nuclear component in the balance of international relations has lost its original deterrent and counterbalancing effect;
- A common approach to achieving geopolitical advantage has become the so-called "Salami Aggression" (or 'gradual aggression') - building and formalizing a political outcome on a gradually achieved military advantage;
- The structure and nature of military conflict has changed, and the methods used are so complex that separating its passive and active phases has become

pointless.

Of the above aspects, I would like to consider the last one, as it is directly related to the campaign against Georgia's security from the 1990s to the present day. It is particularly noteworthy here that anti-Georgian and anti-state actions have not always taken the form of open aggression. At the same time, it should be noted that the encroachment on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country is almost continuously carried out by means of the so-called "gray zone operations", i.e. such measures that qualify it as a so-called "low-intensity conflict".

In other words, although the actions of the aggressor do not formally bear the signs of a declaration of war, by their forceful nature they are aimed at reducing the defense capability of the target country, undermining its security and state foundations and limiting the operational space and resources for the fulfillment of national tasks. Thus, in this case, it is not a classic *casus belli*, but rather that the aggressor places the victim under its influence in a form (which includes, inter alia, neutralizing appropriate international support or imposing substantial restrictions on such support) that does not require the engagement of armed forces for the purpose of overt aggression. To put it another way, the purpose of "gray operations" in a "low-intensity" format is to disrupt the state resilience of the target country and deplete its resources. The Center for Strategic and International Security interprets this phenomenon in a much more complex way, noting that such operations are "between routine management and open warfare" and that the initiator of "gray operations" tries to exploit certain advantages in a way that does not "cross the line into open warfare."

To further simplify the issue, this is how an aggressor employs a strategy that seeks to obtain a desired economic, military, diplomatic, and political outcome while avoiding a direct and costly response from the other side. Appropriate influence and pressure may imply limiting the target country's access to a promising market of the aggressor (remember the closure of the Russian market for Georgian products at one time). Also, the aggressor country may take care to maximize diplomatic isolation of the target country from third countries (China's attitude towards Taiwan).

In short, despite the variety of definitions of "gray" and "low-intensity" operations, their conduct is ultimately aimed at the gradual "exhaustion" of the target country, so that the latter is forced to agree to the terms desired by the aggressor

or to pursue a course acceptable to it.

Importantly, an aggressor country may forgo the use of military units and rely wholly or partially on law enforcement or other paramilitary structures to conduct "gray" or "low-intensity" operations. Moreover, certain civilian resources can be used for this purpose. All of this makes it possible to "go along the edge" in conducting a violent campaign, which in turn reduces the possibilities for proper legal qualification and countermeasures under international law.

WHAT ARE WE TO COUNTER WITH? WHAT SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT?

Speaking about the response measures of the Georgian side, we picture three categories of the so-called defensive barrier: one at the national level, the second in coordination with our international partners, and the third, implementation of measures aimed at increasing the geo-economic function and usefulness of the country.

MEASURES NEEDED AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

"Low-intensity" operations usually aim to encroach on the Georgian air, maritime and economic space, and will continue to do so in the future.

With regard to air and water, the implementation of modern surveillance systems remains a priority issue. Here, we are mainly referring to cheap drones and relevant sensors, which are needed for timely detection of intrusion into Georgian air and sea space and development of the necessary response. Of particular importance is the improvement of the Georgian military and industrial complex and the fulfillment of at least basic requirements for effective surveillance. It is also necessary to further improve the capabilities of the Georgian Coast Guard and bring it closer to modern standards.

With regard to the economic ecosystem as the cornerstone of any effective security system, we will reiterate the few suggestions and recommendations that we consider necessary, namely:

In the context of growing economic nationalism in the world, not only is the quantity of investments important, but also their quality. Thus, given the current threats, we believe that it is unacceptable to consider just any investment as desirable for our country: the time has come to learn how to distinguish and select them. For this purpose, we believe it is advisable to check investments, to introduce a mechanism of their so-called "screening" by law. We should also note that many developed economic systems use this method today.

In addition to the above, a large and separate place should be given to the issue of economic security in the national security doctrine of Georgia. This special attention, again, is dictated by the modern and multifaceted understanding of the concept of "security" mentioned in this article. Let us agree that national security is unthinkable without a unified set of economic measures, because no one will consider and talk to a weak, poor country with constant requests for help in this world as worthy partners.

It has to be particularly noted that the economic security dimension should be strengthened in the format of the National Security Council. As one of the possible developments, we do not rule out the separate creation of an Economic Security Council or its institutionalization within the framework of the National Security Council.

Moreover, speaking about the structural approach, we also consider as a possible subject of discussion the introduction of the position of the Minister of Economic Security in the Government of Georgia with the corresponding supervisory scope and functions.

In any case, whether under the auspices of the Economic Security Council or the Minister of Economic Security, one of the fundamental tasks should be the continuous monitoring and analysis of risks and threats to Georgia's economic security, and this process should be objectively reflected in a periodic document on economic threats (similar to the current practice in the European Union), which, along with other necessary issues, will assess short-, medium- and long-term risks to the country's economic security, as well as recommended measures to minimize and manage them.

Along with the doctrinal approach, the feasibility of legislation ensuring economic security (e.g., Georgia's "Law on Economic Security") should equally be discussed. When working on such legislation, inter alia, special attention should be paid to:

- (a) Coordination of the activities of public authorities in times of crisis;
- (b) Rapid change from one global or regional delivery and supply chain to another, and reducing overdependence on any one system;
- (c) Promoting modern innovation in critical sectors. We realize that there is a lot to talk about in this regard and many more key aspects could be mentioned. However, it is also a fact that all of them can be realized only in conditions of normalization of relations within the country.

Today, in the era of the fight against disinformation, the Georgian side should constantly take care of the "hygiene" of the information field, protecting the public consciousness and mind from harmful influences and manipulations. From this perspective, it is critical to ensure the integrity of communications systems, train qualified cybersecurity professionals, and properly protect the Internet and other communications networks.

Continuous coordination and sustained cooperation with our international partners, including utilizing their existing infrastructure and expertise, are critical to strengthening information security. As part of this cooperation, it is desirable to establish joint working groups and plan a unified response to unforeseen events.

From this point of view, the efforts of the Georgian side should be even more focused on the Black Sea factor, which from a security point of view is both a great challenge and a great opportunity.

To be continued in next week's GT.

Defense Sector Review with Mercury Strategic: Revolutionizing Military Command with AI



A Ukrainian soldier watches a drone feed from an underground command center in Bakhmut. Source: Libkos/AP Photo

In the rapidly evolving landscape of modern military operations, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into command, control, and communications (C3) systems is poised to redefine how military leadership operates at both tactical and operational levels. Anyone on social media has likely noticed the uptick in AI-related posts, leading to claims it will overturn all modern aspects of life. More broadly, as global powers continue to funnel investments into AI technologies, the implications for defense strategies and decision-making processes are becoming increasingly evident. AI in C3 is no longer just an innovative tool, but is fast becoming an indispensable element for military leadership, given its potential applications and recent advancements.

The integration of AI in military operations is not a novel concept. The roots of AI in defense can be traced back to the Cold War era, when rudimentary AI systems were developed to enhance strategic decision-making and improve weapons systems. In more recent conflicts, such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, AI technologies were employed for surveillance, target acquisition, and predictive analysis. These early implementations laid the groundwork for the sophisticated AI systems seen today in the Ukrainian conflict,

where advanced algorithms and machine learning models are being utilized to gain a strategic edge.

AI possesses the extraordinary capability to process vast amounts of data in real-time, granting military commanders an unprecedented level of situational awareness on the battlefield. This is especially crucial at both tactical and operational levels, where split-second decisions can alter the course of engagements. During the conflict in Ukraine, commanders have harnessed AI-driven real-time information systems to monitor enemy movements, anticipate threats, and deploy resources with remarkable precision.

AI algorithms can analyze satellite imagery, drone feeds, and ground sensor data to detect patterns and anomalies, providing commanders with actionable intelligence. More recently, AI has been employed to enhance target acquisition, including the use of first-person-view (FPV) drones, which have become ubiquitous as both offensive and defensive weapons. These drones, as well as others, have become essential to any commander's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) toolkit.

The ability of AI to sift through complex data streams allows commanders to rapidly identify critical information, such as enemy positions, troop movements, and logistical vulnerabilities. This capability not only bolsters the safety

and effectiveness of military operations but also facilitates proactive decision-making that can preempt enemy actions. Additionally, the data pool can incorporate lessons learned from friendly and allied forces, thereby reducing the likelihood of repeat errors.

AI-powered decision support systems (DSS) are increasingly becoming integral to military command structures. These systems can analyze historical data, simulate scenarios, and recommend optimal courses of action based on predefined parameters and real-time inputs.

In the Ukrainian conflict, AI-driven DSS have been tested and used to predict potential avenues of attack and suggest countermeasures. By integrating AI with command centers at the brigade and below levels, military leaders can receive automated recommendations that consider multiple variables, including terrain conditions, weather patterns, and enemy capabilities, both past and present.

Such systems not only streamline decision-making processes, but also reduce the cognitive load on commanders, allowing them to focus on strategic planning and mission execution. By leveraging AI, military organizations can achieve greater agility and responsiveness in highly dynamic operational environments.

AI facilitates network-centric warfare by connecting disparate systems and enabling seamless communication between units and command centers. This new interconnectedness enhances command agility by ensuring that decision-makers have access to real-time data and intelligence from across the battlefield.

In Ukraine, commanders have employed AI-driven C3 systems to coordinate multi-domain operations, such as combined arms maneuvers and joint airstrikes. AI facilitates communication interoperability between air, land, and sea forces, enabling synchronized actions that exploit enemy vulnerabilities.

By integrating AI into C3 frameworks, military leaders can orchestrate complex operations with vastly enhanced precision and effectiveness. This interconnectedness fosters a cohesive operational environment where information flows freely, enabling rapid adaptation to changing circumstances and mission requirements.

However, the advantages of AI-integrated battlefield management and C3



A soldier from the 110th Territorial Defense Brigade controls a drone for surveillance. Photo by Alex Chan Tsz Yuk / SOPA Images/Sipa USA

do not come without obstacles. The deployment of AI in military operations is fraught with ethical and practical challenges. Increased network signatures on the battlefield, cybersecurity concerns, and physical equipment requirements must all be considered. These vulnerabilities must be weighed against the benefits, particularly in command, control, and communications.

While AI promises to revolutionize military operations by enhancing situational awareness and automating decision-making processes, there are significant concerns. One major issue critics highlight is the potential for AI systems to make autonomous decisions without human oversight, raising questions about accountability and the risk of unintended consequences. Additionally, algorithmic biases in AI systems can lead to flawed decision-making, potentially causing harm to civilians and friendly forces.

These concerns have incentivized international collaboration. The global community has closely observed Ukraine's use of AI in its military strategy, with many allied nations providing support and collaboration. NATO, for instance, has shared AI research and resources to bolster Ukraine's defense capabilities. Conversely, Russia, with its resources limited by sanctions and embargoes, has sought assistance from countries like China and Iran to develop similar systems.

As evidenced by the conflict in Ukraine,

AI-powered C3 systems are already shaping how commanders gather intelligence, plan operations, and execute missions in real-time. The ability to process and analyze vast amounts of data quickly gives military leaders a decisive advantage on the battlefield, enabling them to anticipate threats, exploit opportunities, and achieve mission objectives with greater efficiency and precision, while reducing the threat to civilians and non-military infrastructure.

Looking ahead, continued advancements in AI technology will likely see further integration into defense systems, including the development of autonomous systems capable of independent decision-making. However, the ethical and strategic implications of AI in warfare remain subjects of ongoing debate, necessitating careful consideration of its impact on international security and military ethics.

AI in C3 represents not just a technological advancement, but a paradigm shift in military strategy and operations. By harnessing the power of AI, military forces can enhance their capabilities, mitigate risks, and maintain strategic superiority in an increasingly complex and contested global environment.

Defense Sector Review is an analysis of the regional and relevant security and defense issues by the team at Mercury Strategic Services, a defense consulting, training, and advisory company based in Tbilisi, Georgia and at www.mercstrat.com.

BUSINESS

Empowering the Future: Vocational Training for Georgia's Youth

BY SOPHIE TCHITCHINADZE
AND TEIKO KANDELAKI
FOR UNDP GEORGIA

It's the 21st century! Everyone should have at least some understanding of technology. After all, we live in a digital age, - says Elene Letodiani, 16, from highland Tsageri, a successful graduate of the digital technology course now available at her public school.

Elene and many other young people in Georgia's rural regions are taking advantage of a new educational model that directly brings training courses from vocational colleges to their schools.

In a world driven by skills and technology, access to quality education can lift people out of poverty and pave the way to success. Conversely, its absence deepens societal inequalities, preventing some from reaching their full potential.

In Georgia, where unemployment averages 14% and exceeds 20% in some regions, public and private employers often cite a lack of professional skills as a major hiring obstacle (Source: EU/



Gonio Public School. Photo: UNDP/Nino Zedginidze

UNDP. 2022). Youth unemployment is particularly high, ranging from 28 to 50% for people aged 15 to 29 (Source: GEO-STAT). Additionally, 34% of Georgian youth are classified as NEET (not engaged in employment, education, or training) and only 5% of Georgian secondary school graduates choose to enter vocational education.

School-based vocational training integrated into secondary school curricula can effectively address these gaps, providing young people with the skills needed for their future careers. Furthermore, such educational programs enhance links between schools and vocational colleges, increasing the social role of educational institutions. This builds a

knowledge ecosystem where schools supply eager-to-learn students, and colleges are better able to offer vocational training that is tailor-made for the local labor market.

UNDP and Switzerland have been working for nearly a decade to help Georgia's educational system rethink outdated approaches to vocational training and introduce a thriving educational model which prepares youth for economic activity by bringing together colleges, schools, youth, and local employers.

"With skilled labor still in short supply in Georgia, this school-based vocational training narrows the gap between education and jobs, benefiting both young people and their future employers," says Barbara Böni, Regional Director of Cooperation South Caucasus, Embassy of Switzerland in Georgia.

"We help young people take quality vocational training while still at school, and so get a taste of a career that allows them to better shape their future professional path," says Douglas Webb, UNDP Resident Representative in Georgia.

In 2017, the pilot stage of this transformative program covered four public colleges and six schools in four regions:

Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kakheti, and Mtskheta-Mtianeti. After the pilot's success, Georgia's Ministry of Education and Science expanded the program to 259 schools and 32 public and private colleges nationwide, benefiting up to 10,000 students in the 8th and 9th grades.

In 2022, the program continued in partnership with the Vocational Skills Agency, aiming to transform regional vocational colleges into skills hubs that offer rural schools vocational training and other support. Six vocational colleges and ten public schools were selected for this initiative, covering the Ajara Autonomous Republic and the regions of Imereti, Guria, Kakheti, and Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti.

MIRACLE WORKERS FOR AJARA'S MIRACLE ECONOMY

Georgia's Autonomous Republic of Ajara is an example of rapid development and impressive economic growth. Its dazzling coastline, sea trade routes, subtropical terrains, stunning highlands, and vibrant cities and villages create a fascinating tapestry of economic opportunities.

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Majid Al Futtaim Retail Extends Retail Graduate Program to Empower Young Talent Across 8 Countries

BY TEAM GT

For the second year in a row, Majid Al Futtaim Retail is rolling out the 18-month program to welcome graduates from different universities across eight countries. Last year, the program welcomed 71 candidates from six markets. This year, the program will be expanded to invite more candidates across eight countries, with women constituting 50 percent of the enrolled students. Following its success, the program aims to nurture young talent and develop future leaders in the retail industry.

Majid Al Futtaim Retail, which owns the exclusive rights to operate Carrefour in Georgia, has officially launched the second edition of its Retail Gradu-

ate Program, welcoming applications until August 31 2024 with the expectation to onboard candidates on October 1, 2024. Building on the success of the inaugural edition, which welcomed 71 candidates from six countries, the program expands its reach this year to empower more candidates from eight countries. These countries include Lebanon, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, in addition to the existing countries of Egypt, Georgia, Kenya, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates.

Majid Al Futtaim Retail aims to enroll candidates across various countries, with a special focus on providing opportunities for women. This expansion reinforces Majid Al Futtaim Retail's commitment to empowering young talent and developing future leaders in retail.

The 18-month program offers recent graduates an opportunity to gain hands-

on experience across the dynamic retail industry. Through three six-month rotations, participants will explore various operational areas, including in-store operations, e-commerce, merchandise functions, and customer service. This structured approach, which provides a strong foundation for future career development within the company, reflects Majid Al Futtaim Retail's commitment to both its colleagues and the local communities in which it operates.

Commenting on the launch, Jerome Akel, Carrefour Georgia Country Manager, stated: "The Retail Graduate Program embodies our commitment to nurturing future retail leaders – a reflection of our core value, 'Together We Make Every Moment Count.' By providing graduates with hands-on experience and mentorship, we empower them to drive innovation and deliver exceptional



კარფორი
Carrefour

customer experiences. We are excited to welcome a new generation of talent who will shape the future of retail."

He added: "At Majid Al Futtaim Retail, we embrace the power of diversity and collaboration. By creating a culture of continuous learning, we leverage our collective strengths, shared purpose, and diverse perspectives to drive innovation and excellence in customer experience. As we continue to bring our iconic brand

experiences to over 770 thousand customers daily, we always look forward to nurturing young minds, creating opportunities, and unleashing their potential with our proud history of success and ever propelling growth."

Interested candidates are invited to submit their applications before August 31, 2024 by visiting: careers.majidalfuttaim.com/go/Graduate-and-Internship-Programmes/3197801/.

Empowering the Future: Vocational Training for Georgia's Youth

Continued from page 7

Vocational education is in high demand, with several colleges across the region offering courses in fields like hospitality, IT, electricity, car mechanics, fashion design, agriculture, construction, and other popular trades. For the 2023-2024 academic year, Black Sea College in Batumi received ten times more applications than it could accommodate. However, these competitive education centers are mainly located in cities like Batumi and Kobuleti, which limits access to vocational training for those in rural areas.

UNDP and Switzerland, in partnership with Georgia's Vocational Skills Agency, are working to bridge this gap by bringing vocational courses to rural schools.

"Ajara is a special region thanks to its thriving tourism and hospitality businesses. Many households have family ventures such as guesthouses, hotels or restaurants. After completing relevant vocational courses, their children can join these family enterprises as trained professionals. Vocational education benefits are obvious. Employers line up to hire our graduates," says Nata Partenadze, Vocational Training Program Coordinator at Black Sea College in Batumi.

Through UNDP and Switzerland's support, Black Sea College connected with the public school in the seaside village of Gonio. Similarly, New Wave College in Kobuleti teamed up with the public school in the agricultural village of Mukhaestate.

"I want to be a barista. But I also enjoyed



Tsageri Public School. Photo: UNDP/Nino Zedginidze

training in hospitality services. Both courses are extremely useful and great fun," says Dima Makharadze, 16, from the Gonio Public School.

Dima's classmates share his enthusiasm and determination. Emily Goradze, 16, says that she loved every minute of the training and was fascinated by the barista and service professions.

"My friends from other schools got excited when I told them about the training. They would be keen to join if vocational courses are included in their school curriculum," notes Emily.

Roland Davitadze, 16, from the Mukhaestate Public School, believes vocational education is the first step toward entrepreneurship.

"My goal is to master the hospitality profession and then use this knowledge to start a business," Roland shares.

Since September 2023, up to 120 high school students from Gonio and Mukhaestate have enrolled in the vocational training courses offered by top regional educational centers. Each student, with their own dreams and aspirations, received mentorship and skills to shape their future. Both schools benefited from guidance and practical assistance from the colleges, ensuring the quality and sustainability of the training program.

BUILDING SKILLS FOR TOURISM IN TSAGERI

Nestled in the Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti region, Tsageri is a gem of Georgia's highlands, distinguished by its stunning views and rich history. With tourism as a key development priority, the municipality is focused on building hospitality infrastructure, promoting sightseeing places, and preparing qualified personnel for employment at tourist sites.

With support from UNDP and Switzerland, the Vocational Skills Agency connected Tsageri Public School #1 with Erkvani College in Ambrolauri, a regional skills hub offering vocational courses in various professions. Through this partnership, over 50 high school students learned graphic design, hospitality, and

tour guiding directly at their school.

"The tour guide course was incredible! It helped us better understand our region and its history, and share this knowledge with others," says Lizi Saginadze, 16.

"Students and their parents were impressed with the learning experience. After three months of training, the students could guide tours like professionals. To celebrate, the course concluded with a grand excursion to famous cultural monuments," says Lamzira Kopaliani, teacher of the Tour Guide Program.

Many students are eager to continue their education, requesting additional vocational courses, such as fashion design and business skills, to enrich their school classes.

REVITALIZING TKIBULI: NEW SKILLS FOR A NEW ERA

"Working with the soil is an incredible experience, especially when you know the theory and understand what you're doing! We learned new skills, like planting, watering, and soil testing. I was proud to work in a greenhouse and grow plants," says Liza Tskipurishvili, 16, from Satsire Public School.

Liza's home municipality, Tkibuli, has been known for coal mining for over 150 years. Mines sustained the local economy, but also threatened human lives and health, causing widespread environmental damage. With the demand for coal decreasing, mines dwindling, and new opportunities emerging across the country, the 'miners' city' is striving to find its

place in Georgia's growing economy and offer reliable career prospects to the younger generation. Diversified vocational training focused on agriculture, construction, and technology can help the region overcome its mining past and open doors to new development areas.

"Culinary is my favorite vocation. I am considering a career in this field and will continue my studies in college. Woodworking and gemstone carving would also be quite interesting. These trades are in high demand in our region," notes Luka Kashbadze, 17.

The Satsire Public School is one of ten rural schools across Georgia supported by UNDP, Switzerland, and the Vocational Skills Agency to connect with regional colleges and integrate vocational training into their curricula. More than 40 high school students have already benefitted, opening pathways to careers and prosperity for young Georgians.

UNDP and Switzerland will continue supporting the selected schools through the end of the 2024-2025 school year to maintain vocational classes for new student cohorts. In the long run, the schools will be assisted in accrediting this new vocational training through the upcoming school authorization process, transferring responsibility for costs and quality supervision to the Ministry of Education and Science.

To find out more about the UNDP's work in Georgia, visit www.undp.org/georgia



Liza Tskipurishvili, Tkibuli
Photo: UNDP/Nino Zedginidze



Elene Letodiani, Tsageri
Photo: UNDP/Nino Zedginidze

Connecting the Past and Future: The Role of Bridges in Georgian Culture



Nutsubidze Bridges, 2024. Photo by the author

BY IVAN NECHAEV

The recent announcement of the reconstruction of the Nutsubidze Bridges in Tbilisi has sparked renewed interest in the cultural and historical significance of bridges in Georgian society. These modern infrastructural projects are not just about improving connectivity, but also about preserving and enhancing a heritage that spans centuries. As we delve into the multifaceted role of bridges in Georgia, we uncover a narrative rich with historical intrigue, communal effort, and symbolic meaning.

ROYAL PRIVILEGE AND LOCAL RESPONSIBILITY: KING VAKHTANG VI'S LEGACY

According to the law book of King Vakhtang VI, the exclusive right to construct bridges over large rivers was reserved for the king. This royal prerogative underscored the strategic and symbolic importance of bridges in Georgia. The law explicitly stated, "Only the king and not noblemen have

the right to build bridges on large waters. In the same way, noblemen cannot wear royal garments unless given or ordered to do so by the king." This regulation reinforced the central authority of the monarchy, ensuring that major infrastructural projects, which were vital for trade, military movements, and administrative control, remained under the king's jurisdiction.

Local noblemen, designated as governors of these bridges, managed their maintenance and day-to-day operations. However, their role was strictly supervisory, and they required the king's permission to undertake any significant construction. Conversely, over smaller rivers and in areas of lesser strategic, political, cultural, or commercial significance, both noblemen and commoners were permitted to build simple crossing structures. This system of divided responsibilities highlights the hierarchical and centralized governance model of medieval Georgia.

BRIDGING LEGENDS: THE TALE OF THE OLD WOMAN'S BRIDGE

Georgian folklore often celebrates communal efforts in bridge construction, attributing significant achievements to

local heroes and benefactors. A notable example is the tale of the single-span bridge on the River Korena, a tributary of the Tskaltsitela in the village of Tcholevi. According to legend, an old woman, moved by the plight of travelers during the rainy season, collected alms and commissioned the construction of a stone bridge. This bridge, named the "Old Woman's Bridge," symbolizes communal spirit and the importance of collective effort in overcoming natural obstacles.

The construction of the Old Woman's Bridge is described in detail, with its rocky supports, flat arch, and carefully arranged rectangular stones. Built in the 17th century and later widened, this bridge stands as a testament to local ingenuity and the enduring legacy of communal contributions to infrastructure.

MEDIEVAL LITERATURE: BRIDGES AS SYMBOLS OF CHARITY

The construction and maintenance of bridges were esteemed tasks in medieval Georgian society, often immortalized in literary works. Shota Rustaveli's epic poem "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" highlights this esteem through the char-

acter Avtandil, who bequeaths his wealth for public works, including bridges. This literary reference underscores the high regard for bridge-building as an act of nobility and charity, reflecting the broader cultural values of the time.

LEGAL MANDATES: THE MAINTENANCE OF GEORGIAN BRIDGES

King Vakhtang VI's compilation of Georgian state laws in the early 18th century, known as The Book of Law, includes detailed provisions for the maintenance of existing bridges. This legal framework assigned specific families and communities the responsibility of bridge upkeep. For instance, the care of the bridge in the village of Karsani was entrusted to the Zumbuladze family, while the maintenance of nearby bridges was delegated to the villagers of Doesi and Kvakhvrel. Similarly, the Gedevanishvili family of Mtskheta was responsible for the Bridge of the Magi in the late Middle Ages.

These responsibilities were not merely honorary; those tasked with bridge maintenance were exempt from certain taxes, reflecting the practical and economic importance of their duties. The allocation of funds that would otherwise be

paid as taxes to the local nobleman or king underscores the prioritization of infrastructure maintenance in medieval Georgian society.

LEGENDS OF MAINTENANCE: THE CHOLABURI BRIDGE

Local legends further illuminate the significance of bridge maintenance in Georgian culture. One such legend, documented by A. Merkvadze, tells of jugs filled with Georgian tetris (coins) buried within the abutments of the Cholaburi Bridge. This hidden cache was intended to fund repairs in case of damage, but its exact location was kept secret to prevent vandalism by those seeking the treasure. This tale reflects the practical measures taken to ensure the longevity of bridges and the community's vested interest in their preservation.

ARCHITECTURAL MARVELS: FROM VARDZIA TO THE BRIDGE OF PEACE

Georgian bridges are celebrated not only for their historical and cultural significance, but also for their architectural brilliance. The Vardzia Cave Bridge, part of the 12th-century Vardzia monastic complex, showcases medieval Georgian engineering that harmonizes with the natural landscape. In contrast, the modern Bridge of Peace in Tbilisi, designed by Michele De Lucchi, symbolizes Georgia's embrace of contemporary design while honoring its historical roots. These structures demonstrate the country's ability to blend tradition with innovation, reflecting its evolving identity.

Bridges in Georgian culture are more than functional structures; they are symbols of connection, unity, and progress. From royal decrees and communal efforts to literary tributes and legal frameworks, bridges encapsulate the essence of Georgian resilience and ingenuity. The reconstruction of the Nutsubidze bridges is a testament to Georgia's ongoing commitment to preserving its cultural heritage while addressing modern infrastructural needs. These projects are not merely about physical connectivity, but also about bridging the past with the future, ensuring that the rich legacy of Georgian bridges continues to inspire and unite.

Sparring Partners

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

Etseri, my home village in Svaneti for the last 13-odd years, has a new arrival in its commercial section: The opening of a branch of international brand SPAR this week.

Our friend and neighbor Lasha Kantisliani is the force behind this bold initiative. A few years ago, he swapped some land with another villager to get the piece he wanted, which is at the start of the main road going up through the village, right on the road from Zugdidi to Ushguli. The deal also required him to build a cabin for the other party, which he did. When we asked him what he was building on his new piece, he said it would be a bakery. But somewhere along the way, this grew into the arrival of SPAR. I went down to interview Lasha soon after the opening.

"I built this with my own hands, along with my brother and others," he said. "Every part of it is our own work." No small endeavor, I can attest, having participated in some building of my own here. Foundation, walls, interior, roof, ceiling, drainage outside, finishing inside,

plumbing, electricity, signage... then the installation of company shelving, stocking with goods, video cameras... interviews, selection and training of staff... connecting with SPAR's computerized financial system. Lasha's own training in the company's culture, in Tbilisi. He is rather stressed out and lacking sleep at the moment, not having been able to imagine how difficult this all would be. But it's happening.

Location, location, location: The three main ingredients for the success of a business. In this, Lasha's shop is ideal. Here, where Etseri's main bus stop is, local people wait for transport down towards Zugdidi or up to Mestia. All this transport can stop here in any case, whether there are passengers to join it or not. All the local villagers can buy here as well, if they don't feel like walking up to us; prices are quite reasonable. As for comparison with our own shop, there are a couple of main differences: The aforementioned location (we're 1km above); selling of alcoholic drinks; and a much larger selection of food products, which are the great majority of what SPAR sells. I hope those drinks won't come back to be a problem for the village; time will tell. And you can't buy anything on credit either: It's all

cash or card sales.

We don't see SPAR as a competitor to us; on the contrary, we're delighted with what Lasha has achieved. He wants life here to be made more comfortable for everyone, but recognizes that this won't happen on its own: We must make it happen! He is employing local staff in two shifts for a 16-hour daily opening time, and providing a vital service for the village and surroundings.

Before I ever arrived in Svaneti, 25 years ago this month, Etseri's heyday had come and gone. Any existing shops had vanished; infrastructure had fallen apart; the road was pathetic, and risks of armed robbery were high in the power vacuum. The very landlines for fixed-location home telephone calls (remember them?) had been stolen for their valuable wires. So people who are old enough to remember those relatively prosperous and stable days look back on them, even though the system was communist, with a certain amount of nostalgia. Or they hear about it from their parents, and have to try to imagine how successful everything was and the terror and misery of losing it all.

Given all of what was here and was lost, we desperately hope that this endeavor will succeed. It represents the return of infrastructure support from Tbilisi, a



Lasha Kantisliani. Photo by the author

hallmark of the late Soviet period, for all its attendant faults. We, too, cheer Lasha on, wish him success and wish more new businesses to come here. A petrol station? Restaurant(s)? Other shops and services? The sky's the limit, if we let it, and make it, be. SPAR on!

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 over 2000 members, at www.facebook.com/groups/SvanetiRenaissance/. He and his wife also run their own guest house in Etseri: www.facebook.com/hammer.house.svaneti

A New Museum of Caucasian Treasures Emerging in Georgia

BLOG BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

There are many truly agreeable things going on in Sakartvelo that our public may unfortunately not be aware of. One example that

I recently saw totally blew my mind: There is a big old estate in Okrokana, above Tbilisi, which is literally packed full of astounding antiques and an astonishing variety of exhibits that belong in the faraway past. Kakhaber (Kakha) Kakabadze, 51, one of the dwellers of that impressive domain, has been diligently collecting and storing with care a mountain of valuable pieces of our history—more than enough to launch and run several museums to the delight of our people, especially the young, who truly need to every once in a while concentrate on the motherland's past rather than spending hours, even days and weeks, with their noses ceaselessly stuck in their cellphones in search for goodness knows what, wasting their valuable time and losing a chance to receive their due education. Indeed, in that Okrokana goldmine, in that one-man antique show, our past is sitting at our fingertips and waiting for good men and women to delve into. It truly deserves to be turned into a museum, allowing access to the thousands of interested visitors that are sure to want to come and enjoy, enhance their knowledge of history, and have fun by throwing themselves into this fancy world of antiquity.

But there is a funny issue with the whole thing. Those thousands of endlessly priceless pieces, including old artifacts, clothes, books, carpets, caricatures, paintings, household utensils, musical instruments, weaponry, pottery and crockery, and what not, have never



Kakha Kakabadze. Photo by the author

been catalogued. And Kakha Kakabadze, a genuine antique-guru, has a reason for this: Time has always hung heavy on his hands, because in the last quarter of a century, he has been extensively traveling the world, and, of course, within the boundaries of his own Georgia, so as to acquire all that he has brought home. Yet he now finds he can no longer accommodate the huge number of museum pieces which we saw there with our own eyes.

We, a small initiative group (call it an Action Team if you wish) came to have a look, and didn't want to leave. It was

simply fascinating. The place definitely has to be given to the public. Otherwise, people, especially passionate museumgoers, will lose a perfect chance to better understand the Caucasus in general, and Sakartvelo in particular.

Kakha Kakabadze also happens to be a talented poet. His magnanimously radiated poems are likely what helped him to create the fairy-tale environment in his parents' old manor all by himself. On top of that, his quick mind and skillful hands are capable of working with wood and metal with surprising dexterity. Kakabadze is a typical loner, one who



knows exactly what he wants and what he wants to pursue. The ever-growing Action Team that we have put together is enthused to appreciate his perseverance and professional lore of the antique, and to help him turn the amassed treasure into an emerging historical institution, calling it, for instance, the Georgia-Caucasus Museum. Specifying the name of the future museum by labelling it either "ethnographic" or "historical," or even "folk-arts," will be conducive to limiting its profile, because the profile it potentially has goes beyond just one direction of museum business. The main concept of the museum might help to solve the problem: In our minds, the museum, if the Intelligent Designer has a plan for it to come about, is going to be a museum with live action—with a fire burning in the exotic fireplace, national food being cooked in the presence of the visitors, a potter shaping up clay artifacts, young men and women walking around in national dress, and more.

The Action Team has to create a clear



concept for its future action, starting by taking a detailed stock of the exhibits and creating a dedicated computer file with all possible information that can help to organize the fortune into a computerized log-book. Kakabadze knows literally by-heart every little piece of his fantastic realm, but that's not enough: The Team will have to fund some volunteering professionals who can help complete the job.

There should also be a special documentary created that features this curious place in the life of this nation. As a matter of fact, the famous Georgian cinematographer and pedagogue Grigol (Grisha) Chigogidze, and his student and assistant Kato Chavchanidze, have already started shooting one. The Kakabadze "house of antiquity" has been visited by many prominences, including academicians of the field, but all have so far ended with big words and no deeds. Understandably, nothing can fly without material support, but starting with what we are doing makes a good beginning, and it might possibly make a good ending too.

Art Gene Fest – Georgian Folklore Gaining Popularity

BY SHELBI R. ANKIEWICZ

For 21 years, the Art Gene Fest has targeted younger audiences to introduce them to traditional Georgian culture handed down from generation to generation. According to festival representatives, the playing field between folklore and modern music has become smaller in recent years, as people become more interested in traditional tunes.

The festival runs over two weekends this year, from July 19-21 and July 26-28. Art Gene not only promotes Georgian culture through song, but also through culinary displays, art, choreography, and other activities. The event organizer, Solomon Gogashvili, said the festival covers everything in and around Georgia, and is designed to present folklore music during the day, and modern Georgian artists at night, so younger people are interested and come out for the concerts. The variety of modern music is large, encompassing reggae, electronic, and more, giving it drive, but Gogashvili explains how, after the first weekend of the festival, they have noticed more people showing up for the folk music.

"The first act we used as 'bait,' because we knew folk music doesn't have as many listeners as modern," Gogashvili tells GEORGIA TODAY. "That's why we have folklore during the day and during the evening switch to modern music, but we're seeing a growing balance in interest for both."

The festival was founded in 2003, when

the creators realized there was a gap in the attention given to traditional Georgian culture. Gogashvili told us how, during the 90s, there wasn't anything like it—music and exhibitions highlighting Georgia 'in an open space and under the open sky.' He said the fest originally started as a family ensemble, then grew in scale, hitting a peak in 2007 and 2008.

According to Gogashvili, the festival's name is a play on words as a way to combine people and the arts.

"The 'Art Gene' name was decided by the founders 21 years ago. Georgians are in their genetics artistic people, and our ethnic music is really genius," Gogashvili tells us. "That's why we decided on the name 'Art Gene.'"

The festival occurs near different historical monuments throughout Georgia each year, where not many large-scale events are held. In Tbilisi, it is held at the Ethnography Museum, an open-air territory above the Vake district near Turtle Lake, which presents old houses from 14 ethnographic zones of Georgia.

The museum's goal is to provide information about Georgian folk culture through tours and sights. It takes up 52 hectares of land and boasts more than 8000 artifacts from around the country. Gogashvili said the museum doesn't receive much traction or have many live events, so they decided it would be a good spot to hold the festival.

During its first weekend in Tbilisi this year, solo performer Vladimer Chaladze performed at Art Gene with his band 'Chveneburebi'. He said he joined the band in 2003, and their core focus is creating and singing family music. He says there is a need to share the Geor-

gian culture and keep people entertained.

"The responsibility is very high, especially when there are many listeners," Chaladze claims. "We seek to please them with our music. We have our compositions, but also try to give them new experiences."

Various performers, both folk and modern, are performing at this year's festival. Guests from regions of Georgia including Samegrelo, Mskheta, Svaneti, Samachablo, Adjara, Racha, Guria, and many more, are giving folk performances during the day. Then, in the evening, popular Georgian artists such as 'Reggaeon', 'Sukhishvili', 'Nino Katamadze', 'Insight', and others will take to the stage.

The last night in Tbilisi will end on July 28, with the Georgian band '33A', famously known for their songs 'Galaktioni' and 'Dromale'.

Gogashvili said Art Gene calls their tours 'regional expeditions,' seeing them traveling to different corners of the country. This year, the festival started in Zestafoni, Tskhratkharo village, on July 14, before coming to Tbilisi for two weekends. It will conclude in Dmanisi, at Pantiani Lake, on August 3, where it has ended for the last few years. The first and last cities are free entry, but the main event that is held in different places each year is ticketed.

Even though the festival is held just once a year, Gogashvili explains how Art Gene carried out year-round activities, expeditions, and filming.

"The festival is international and open to Georgians and tourists alike, so everyone can learn and experience the country's growing folklore culture," he says.



Performances on the main stage at Art Gene Festival. Source: FB



The band 'Chveneburebi' performing at Art Gene Fest. Source: FB

Noriko Ogawa's Enchanting Performance Captivates Tbilisi Conservatoire

BY IVAN NECHAEV

The esteemed Japanese pianist Noriko Ogawa delivered an unforgettable concert at Tbilisi Conservatoire as a part of the IPM (International Piano Masters) Festival, captivating an audience that filled the recital hall to the brim. This free event drew music enthusiasts from all walks of life, eager to experience Ogawa's masterful interpretations of an eclectic program.

A HOMAGE TO ENGLISH HERITAGE

Ogawa began her recital with a poignant nod to her life in London, performing pieces by Edward Elgar and Benjamin Britten. Her rendition of Elgar's work resonated with grandeur and subtle nostalgia. Ogawa's nuanced touch brought out the melancholic yet hopeful spirit of Elgar's composition, painting a vivid picture of the English countryside. Britten's 'Night Piece' followed, enveloping the audience in its introspective and ethereal ambiance. Ogawa's delicate balance of introspection and subtle complexity highlighted her technical mastery, sustaining a captivating tension throughout the piece.

A SYMPHONY OF COLOR AND LIGHT

Claude Debussy's 'Feux d'Artifice' (Fireworks) showcased Ogawa's ability to paint with sound. Her interpretation was a mesmerizing display of rapid, cascading passages that sparkled with clarity and precision. Ogawa's dynamic control created a vivid palette of colors, making the music come alive as if the audience were witnessing a fireworks display.

A DANCE OF ELEGANCE AND PRECISION

Ogawa's performance of Maurice Ravel's 'Sonatine' was a masterclass in elegance and precision. The first movement, with its delicate clarity, was executed with refined phrasing and an elegant touch. Ogawa's playful yet sophisticated interpretation of the second movement and her dazzling precision in the final movement underscored her technical agility and rhythmic vitality.

A FIERY FINALE

The concert concluded with Fryderyk Chopin's Scherzo No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 31. Ogawa's performance was a passionate and virtuosic tour de force. Her powerful interpretation of the opening chords immediately drew the audience into Chopin's intense emotional world. The lyrical middle section, played with



Photo by the author

a tender, singing tone, showcased her deep emotional conveyance. The final passages, executed with dazzling speed and precision, brought the concert to a thrilling and triumphant close.

A LASTING IMPRESSION

Noriko Ogawa's performance at Tbilisi

Conservatoire was a celebration of musical artistry. Her carefully curated program, spanning different eras and styles, highlighted her versatility and deep musicality. Each piece was delivered with technical brilliance and interpretative depth, leaving a lasting impression on the audience. The enthusiastic response underscored

the cultural significance of her visit and the universal appeal of her extraordinary talent. For Tbilisi's music lovers, Noriko Ogawa's recital was a night to remember, reaffirming her status as one of the leading pianists of her generation and bringing a touch of international musical brilliance to the heart of Georgia.



Photo by the author

BY IVAN NECHAEV

On the evening of July 20, Drunken Poets Syndicate hosted the presentation of 'Postindustrial Boys,' a collaboration between poet and playwright Irakli Kakabadze (alias Antonin Marto) and musician and composer Gogi Dzodzuashvili. The event attracted a diverse audience, eager to witness the interplay of literature and music.

THE POETIC GENESIS

Postindustrial Boys originates from 1999, when Kakabadze, writing as Antonin Marto, created a poetic composition in Phoenix, Arizona. His verses, characterized by live drive, parodic naivety, and social commentary, explore

the post-industrial human experience, reflecting modern alienation and a desire to reconnect with nature. Kakabadze employs an eight-syllable structure in both English and Georgian, maintaining simplicity and clarity while adding depth through light rhymes and irony.

MUSICAL ALCHEMY

Gogi Dzodzuashvili's musical composition, inspired by Kakabadze's text, introduces soft, electronic vibrations. This collaboration enhances the poem's social critique by providing an auditory experience that allows listeners to engage with its themes on a deeper level. The work showcases the potential of Georgian modern art to reach a global stage, with the album, available on various musical platforms, exemplifying the innovative potential of cross-disciplinary collaborations.

'Postindustrial Boys' Presentation: A Night of Poetic Synergy and Musical Innovation

A CELEBRATION OF ARTISTIC SYNERGY

The event took place in the setting of Drunken Poets Syndicate, a venue that reflects the bohemian spirit and historical richness of Tbilisi's cultural scene. Attendees engaged directly with Kakabadze and Dzodzuashvili, who provided insights into their creative process and the themes underlying their work. The bilingual nature of the text Postindustrial Boys & Stanford Journal, materialized in SABA Publishing, was emphasized, highlighting its accessibility and inclusiveness. By maintaining the simple structure in both languages, Kakabadze ensured that the poem's messages could resonate with a wider audience, facilitating cross-cultural dialogue.

REFLECTIONS ON GEORGIAN MODERN ART AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

The case of Postindustrial Boys illustrates the potential of Georgian modern art to engage with global audiences. The evening was a testament to the power of collaborative creativity. The combination of Kakabadze's poetry and Dzodzuashvili's electronic soundscapes creates an artistic expression that is reflective and forward-looking. As the event concluded, attendees left with signed copies of the book, reflecting on an evening that transcended the ordinary. Irakli Kakabadze's body of work is a testament to the power of literature as a tool for social change. His distinctive style, characterized by its realism, intertextuality, and engagement with social issues, makes his writing both impactful

and thought-provoking. Through his novels, plays, poetry, and essays, Kakabadze not only chronicles the struggles of contemporary Georgia but also offers a vision of hope and resilience in the face of adversity. His contributions to Georgian literature and his commitment to activism have earned him a significant place in the cultural landscape of his country.

The event highlighted the innovative spirit of Kakabadze and Dzodzuashvili, whose work continues to push the boundaries of artistic expression. The evening served as a reminder of the enduring power of art to provoke thought and inspire change. In the landscape of



Georgian art, Postindustrial Boys stands as a testament to creative collaboration and cultural dialogue, suggesting a future where literature and music intersect to create profound impacts.



Photo by the author



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