

FOCUS

ON THE WORLD TO COME

David Reynolds Ignatius on the two ongoing wars and the upcoming US elections

PAGE 4



David Reynolds Ignatius. Source: wikiquote

In this week's issue...

Romanian Parliament Supports European Perspective of Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and Western Balkans

POLITICS PAGE 3

30 November – Day of Solidarity with the Victims of Landmines and Other Unexploded Remnants of War in the South Caucasus

POLITICS PAGE 5

EU and Georgia Working Together for Sustainable Rural Development

BUSINESS PAGE 7

Towards a Brighter Tomorrow: India's G20 Presidency and the Dawn of a New Multilateralism

SOCIETY PAGE 9

6 Gold, 1 Silver, 6 Bronze – Georgian Karate Athletes' Success at the XIII European Championship in Antibes

SPORTS PAGE 11

Ukraine Latest: Kremlin Warns of Tensions if Poland Sends Troops to Finnish-Russian Border

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

Any decision by Finland to allow a "concentration" of troops on its border with Russia would be viewed by Moscow as a threat, the Kremlin said on Wednesday, after Poland offered to send military advisers to help Helsinki police the frontier.

The head of the Polish National Security Bureau, Jacek Siewiera, said in a post on social media X late on Tuesday that Poland would send military advisers to its NATO ally Finland, in response to "an official request for allied support in the face of a hybrid attack on the Finnish border."

"A team of military advisers will provide on-site knowledge on border security, also in operational terms," he said.

Finland said on Wednesday it was unaware of the Polish offer. It has closed its entire 1,340 km (833 mile) border with Russia for two weeks in a bid to halt an unusually large flow of asylum seekers that Helsinki says amounts to a "hybrid attack" orchestrated by Moscow, a charge the Kremlin denies.



Finnish border guard officers escort migrants upon arrival at the Raja-Jooseppi border crossing station to Russia in Inari, northern Finland, on November 25, 2023. (Photo by Emmi Korhonen / Lehtikuva / AFP)

Asked about the Polish offer to Finland during a call with reporters, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "This is an absolutely redundant measure to ensure border security, because there is no threat there."

"The Finns must be clearly aware that an increase in the concentration of military units on our borders will pose a threat to us." Any planned deployment would be unprovoked and unjustified, he added. *Continued on page 2*

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

BONDS			COMMODITIES				
	Price	w/w m/m		Price	w/w m/m		
GRAIL 07/28	86.47 (YTM 7.57%)	+0.4%	+1.2%	Crude Oil, Brent (US\$/bbl)	81.68	-0.9%	-9.7%
SILNET 01/27	98.92 (YTM 8.77%)	-	+0.6%	Gold Spot (US\$/OZ)	2 040.97	+2.1%	+1.7%
TBC 06/24	99.43 (YTM 6.81%)	+0.1%	+0.3%				

CURRENCIES			STOCKS				
	Price	w/w m/m		Price	w/w m/m		
GEL / USD	2.7090	+0.2%	+0.4%	Bank of Georgia (BGE LN)	GBP 34.35	-0.7%	+7.8%
GEL / EUR	2.9781	+0.9%	+4.4%	Georgia Capital (CGE LN)	GBP 9.98	-0.4%	+13.2%
GEL / GBP	3.4384	+1.3%	+5.1%	TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN)	GBP 28.10	+1.6%	+7.3%
GEL / CHF	3.0790	+0.6%	+2.9%				
GEL / RUB	0.0305	-0.7%	+6.6%				
GEL / TRY	0.0936	-0.2%	-2.2%				

INDICES			CURRENCIES				
	Price	w/w m/m		Price	w/w m/m		
FTSE 100	7 455.24	-0.4%	+2.2%	GEL / AZN	1.5942	+0.1%	+0.3%
FTSE 250	18 387.00	+0.2%	+9.0%	GEL / AMD	0.0067	-0.3%	+0.6%
DAX	15 992.67	+0.6%	+8.9%	GEL / UAH	0.0745	-0.5%	+0.7%
DOW JONES	35 416.98	+0.9%	+9.3%	EUR / USD	0.9097	-0.7%	-3.9%
NASDAQ	14 281.76	+0.6%	+13.0%	GBP / USD	0.7878	-1.2%	-5.5%
MSCI EM EE	42.65	-1.7%	+11.9%	CHF / USD	0.8780	-0.6%	-2.7%
MSCI EM	985.47	+0.3%	+7.1%	RUB / USD	88.9005	+0.7%	-5.8%
SP 500	4 554.89	+0.4%	+10.6%	TRY / USD	28.9258	+0.5%	+2.6%
MSCI FM	2 165.60	+0.8%	+7.3%	AZN / USD	1.6990	+0.1%	+0.0%
				AMD / USD	401.9800	+0.4%	-3.3%



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ADB is proud to support major projects and policy reforms that will deepen capital markets, transform state-owned enterprises, boost human capital, and enhance climate resilience.

MASATSUGU ASAKAWA
ADB President



ADB to Step Up and Diversify Support for Georgia's Development

Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Masatsugu Asakawa, in a meeting today with Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, said ADB plans to step up its support for Georgia's development as it diversifies its engagement with the Caucasus nation.

"ADB is proud to support major projects and policy reforms that will deepen capital markets, transform state-owned enterprises, boost human capital, and enhance climate resilience," Asakawa said, on an official visit to Georgia this week.

Since Georgia joined ADB in 2007, the bank has supported the government's ambitious water and transport infrastructure programs, including once-in-a-century projects such as the East-West Highway and North-South Road Corridor.

These projects are helping Georgia capitalize on its strategic location and establish itself as a regional transport and trade hub. Mr. Asakawa commended Georgia for its active role in promoting regional cooperation and integration through the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program, a partnership of countries and develop-

ment partners working together to promote sustainable development.

As the bank enters a new phase of engagement with Georgia, ADB is working to advance development across a broader range of areas. These include energy security and independence, and the bank is exploring options with the government around innovative energy storage.

As Asia and the Pacific's climate bank, ADB is also committed to supporting Georgia's transition to a green economy while fostering a more resilient and inclusive society. This aligns with the government's Vision 2030 and its climate strategy and action plans.

On Thursday, Mr. Asakawa joined Mr. Davitashvili and senior officials from countries across central and west Asia in attending the 22nd CAREC Ministerial Conference, which is being held in Tbilisi for the first time. The city will also host ADB's annual meeting in May 2024.

Since Georgia joined ADB, the bank has become one of the country's largest multilateral development partners providing public and private sector loans, grants, and technical assistance of about \$4.7 billion.

Secretary General Meets Deputy Foreign Minister of Georgia

Secretary General of the Council of Europe Marija Pejcinovic Buric, in her meeting with Lasha Darsalia, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, this week, stressed the unwavering commitment of the Council of Europe to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, as well as support to Georgia's European path.

The Secretary General confirmed her intention to keep the member states of the Council of Europe (CoE) abreast of the human rights developments in conflict-affected areas through the bi-annual Consolidated Report on the conflict in Georgia. The latest Consolidated Report, covering the period from April to September 2023, was published this Wednesday.

The CoE will continue to call for access to the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia for the preparation of future consolidated reports, as well as for the monitoring



bodies of the Council of Europe, Pejcinovic Buric said, also reiterating her support to broader reconciliation efforts through Confidence Building Measures on the ground.

"The Council of Europe is strongly committed to supporting Georgia's European path and aspirations," Pejcinovic

Buric stated.

Georgia has been a member state of the Council of Europe since 27 April 1999. The Council of Europe carries out co-operation activities in Georgia based on Action Plans. A new comprehensive Action Plan 2024-2027 will be officially launched in Tbilisi in January 2024.

COP28 Climate Summit Kicks Off in Dubai



Annual global climate talks are beginning Thursday in Dubai with the backdrop of fractured global unity and concern about the influence of the fossil fuel industry as countries face a narrowing window to divert the planet from its disastrous path.

For the UN Climate Change Conference, known this year as COP28, the stakes are high — and so is the controversy, given that the oil-rich United Arab Emirates is serving as host.

Dueling worldviews about the future of fossil fuels came quickly into view Thursday, as COP28 President Sultan Al Jaber — an oil CEO — said he considered the oil and gas industry a partner that can "lead the way" in the energy transi-

tion. Moments later, Simon Stiell, executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, told delegates that it was time to "signal the terminal decline of the fossil fuel era as we know it."

More than 100 world leaders are scheduled to address the gathering Friday and Saturday. The speakers include French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, shows a list released by the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The first Global Stocktake of the implementation of the Paris Agreement will conclude at COP 28. Each stocktake is a two-year process that happens every five years, with the aim of assessing the

world's collective progress towards achieving its climate goals. The first Global Stocktake takes place at the midpoint in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs, including Goal 13 (climate action). It will be preceded by a mandated workshop on the elements of the outcome of the GST in October in the UAE.

In a letter to parties dated July 2023, the Incoming Presidency announced that COP 28 will focus on four paradigm shifts:

- Fast-tracking the energy transition and slashing emissions before 2030;
- Transforming climate finance, by delivering on old promises and setting the framework for a new deal on finance;
- Putting nature, people, lives, and livelihoods at the heart of climate action; and
- Mobilizing for the most inclusive COP ever.

The letter also outlines a three-fold vision to course correct that includes a negotiated outcome, an action agenda, and a call to action.

A letter to parties dated 17 October 2023 provides further details on the Presidency's action agenda, the negotiations, and the GST.

Ukraine Latest: Kremlin Warns of Tensions if Poland Sends Troops to Finnish-Russian Border

Continued from page 1

Finland's Border Guard and the interior ministry both said they were unaware of any plan to bring Polish military advisers to Finland's eastern border.

The Finnish foreign and defense ministries and its defense forces did not immediately reply to requests for comment.

Finnish President Sauli Niinisto held talks with his Polish counterpart Andrzej Duda in Warsaw last week but they did not discuss military cooperation on the Finnish border with Russia, Niinisto's office said in a statement to Reuters.

Finland infuriated Russia earlier this year when it joined NATO, ending decades of military non-alignment, due to the war in Ukraine.

RUSSIA SAYS IT HAS TAKEN CONTROL OF A VILLAGE OUTSIDE BAKHMUT

Russia's defense ministry claimed Wednesday that its forces had taken control of a village on the outskirts of the war-torn town of Bakhmut in Donetsk,

eastern Ukraine.

The ministry said units of its southern group of forces had "liberated" the village of Artemovskoye (called Khromove in Ukrainian) in what Russia calls the Donetsk People's Republic, a self-proclaimed republic and pro-Russian separatist region.

"Units of the Southern Group of Forces, with the support of aviation and artillery fire, improved the situation along the front line and liberated the village of Artemovskoye," the ministry said, according to comments reported by the TASS news agency.

The village had a pre-war population of 1,000 people, Reuters noted, and lies just east of Bakhmut, a town captured by Russian forces earlier this year after months of fighting that left the town largely destroyed.

3,000 ADDITIONAL CHECHEN FIGHTERS TO BE SENT TO UKRAINE, LEADER SAYS

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov said an additional 3,000 Chechen fighters will be sent to fight in Ukraine.

"To solve the tasks set by our Supreme Commander-in-Chief Vladimir Putin, we will not spare any effort or resources," Kadyrov said on Telegram Monday, adding: "This position is shared with me by another three thousand worthy Chechen soldiers who have begun service as part of new units of the Russian Ministry of Defense and the Russian National Guard."

He said two new regiments subordinate to Russia's defense ministry had been created, called "AKHMAT-Russia" and "AKHMAT-Chechnya." Kadyrov said most of the troops have battle experience and "the best equipment and modern weapons."

"In addition, the guys are highly combative and very motivated to achieve results."

Chechen fighters have a fierce reputation — one gained in two wars fought against Russia in the 1990s and early 2000s when the Chechen Republic sought independence from Russia. Times have changed since then, however, and Kadyrov is a Putin loyalist.

Kadyrov said the 3,000 Chechen per-

sonnel were "the best of the best" and described them as "the ones who deserve to be the loyal foot soldiers of our unsurpassed leader Vladimir Putin!"

OTHER KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND BATTLEFIELD UPDATES

Moscow does not have plans to expand its territory any farther in Europe, the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, insisted in response to remarks by the US defense secretary last week that Putin would not stop at Ukraine if he was victorious. The US secretary of defense, Lloyd Austin, said last week: "Putin won't stop if he takes Ukraine. The next thing will be him rolling across the Baltics... and the next thing you know, you and your comrades will be on the frontlines fighting against a Putin that we should have stopped, or Ukraine could have stopped early on."

Ukraine will become a member of NATO subject to reforms after the war, the military alliance's secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, has said. NATO states still agreed that full membership remained impossible in the midst of war, even

while ways to move Ukraine and NATO closer continued, he added. This month Germany and the Netherlands pledged €10bn for Ukraine, Romania added a F16 training center for Ukrainian pilots, and allies including the US and Finland are sending more air defenses and ammunition to protect Ukrainian cities from Russian attacks.

Stoltenberg also said that Sweden's pending NATO membership "will make us all safer" and he called on Turkey and Hungary to complete its ratifications.

The NATO secretary-general said that some of the most intense fighting of the war has taken place in recent weeks in the east of Ukraine. Russian forces have made confirmed advances north-west and south-east of Avdiivka over the weekend, said the US-based Institute for the Study of War.

Exports to Russia from Turkey of civilian goods used by the military such as microchips and telescopic sights are increasing, causing concern to the US and the EU, which seeks to prevent such items entering the country.

Romanian Parliament Supports European Perspective of Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and Western Balkans

BY TEAM GT

The Parliament of Romania, at the November 29 expanded session of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, approved a resolution in support of the European Perspective of Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, and the Western Balkans.

Georgian Foreign Ministry reports that Romania reiterated its support of Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and reconfirmed its commitment to the principles and goals of the strategic partnership declaration signed between the countries in 2022.

The resolution highlights Georgia's role in consolidation for stability, security, and welfare in the Black Sea region and stresses the need for the country's integration into the European space as a "successful tool to stimulate democratic transformation in the Eastern Neighborhood and the Western Balkans."

The document underscores that EU enlargement should be based on the individual efforts of candidate countries to meet the commitments to European values.

"The Romanian Parliament firmly supports the European integration progress of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia and urges for continued support so that Georgia takes further steps on the Euro-



Romania's parliament hall. Photo by: EPA-EFE/ROBERT GHEMENT

pean integration path and receives EU candidate status.

"This spirit is based on the clear pro-European orientation of Georgian citizens and also the expectation that Georgia will continue its efforts for the

comprehensive and sustainable implementation of the European Commission's recommendations," reads the Romanian document.

"In conclusion, the Romanian Parliament pledges readiness to continue

cooperation and support to candidate countries to contribute to their progress on the path of EU accession."

Georgian Foreign Minister Ilia Darchiashvili responded to the resolution's adoption and thanked the Romanian

Parliament for its support.

"Many thanks to the Romanian Parliament for adopting a resolution on the European Perspective of Georgia. We highly appreciate your support for our country, especially at such a decisive moment on the EU accession path," he tweeted.

Georgian Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili also responded on Twitter.

The Speaker thanked Nicolae Ciuca, President of the Romanian Senate, and stressed that Romania's support and solidarity "at this crucial time, holds immense significance."

"I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Nicolae Ciuca and the esteemed members of the Romanian Parliament for their unwavering support in adopting a resolution on the European Perspective of Georgia.

"At this crucial time for our nation's European aspirations, your solidarity holds immense significance. The endorsement from both chambers of the Romanian Parliament is invaluable as we navigate this pivotal phase on our journey towards EU accession," he tweeted.

On Thursday, Peter Stano, Lead Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy at the European Commission, said: "The European future of Georgia and Moldova should not be held hostage by conflict. It is necessary to make every effort to ensure that the people of Georgia benefit from the process of integration into the European Union."

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David Reynolds Ignatius: Ukraine Is Not Ready to be Donald Trump's Sacrificial Lamb to Vladimir Putin

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

David Reynolds Ignatius is an American journalist and novelist. He is an associate editor and columnist for The Washington Post. He has written eleven novels, including *Body of Lies*, which director Ridley Scott adapted into a film. Radio Free Europe/RL's Georgian Service sat down with him to discuss the two ongoing wars and the upcoming US elections.

YOU ARE RETURNING FROM YOUR MIDDLE-EAST TRIP – AND WE JUST SAW WHAT PROBABLY COULD BE BEST DESCRIBED AS AN UNEASY TRUCE. WHAT'S YOUR READING OF THE SITUATION?

I feel a sense of joy when I see the images of these children being held by Hamas, in particular, the two children of a woman named Maayan Zin, because she wrote that she wanted to die in Gaza with them, she was so despairing. To see them released and hugging their mother, you can't help but be moved by that, and the Palestinian prisoners rejoicing with their families and out of prison.

But this is a temporary moment, and after this moment of joy, we go back to the war. This is going to be a very difficult period for Israel in terms of international opinion, which will want the ceasefire to continue as long as possible. I think Israel will have to proceed differently in terms of civilian casualties than it did before.

DOES ISRAEL HAVE ROOM TO MANEUVER?

If Israel retains its goal of the political destruction of Hamas, it's got to get those fighters out of the tunnels. It doesn't have to do it quickly. The driver for quickly is the hostages who remain. So I think that's one reason the Israelis structured this deal as "more for more" – as many hostages as they can recover, as it makes the next phase easier. But what's likely is a siege of Gaza, focused on the fighters, not the people; one that could last three to six months; a siege with a far reduced military contingent. It's going to be really difficult. And there will be many people who say it's time to stop the fighting. And we'll see how Israel reacts.

YOU HAVE WRITTEN EXTENSIVELY ON THE US STANCE ON THIS CONFLICT. IS IT A BATTLE ON TWO FRONTS THAT THE US IS HAVING RIGHT NOW, ONE IN GAZA AND ANOTHER IN UKRAINE?

I think so. I was in Ukraine, coming home, the day that Hamas broke through the fence in Israel. The idea in Ukraine was to gain enough on the battlefield during the counteroffensive that the Chinese



I've been more impressed with European resoluteness than American



David Reynolds Ignatius. Source: wikipedia

got nervous and the Russians had to listen to their Chinese friends. And then you had negotiations set for spring that now seem very unlikely. On my trip to Ukraine in early October, I heard, for the first time, a real debate among young Ukrainians about how much the country can handle. I had a sense of commitment as always, from Ukrainians, but also of exhaustion. We need a strong Ukraine that's in Europe, that defers the reacquisition of its stolen territories until the time when it's stronger. As always, I think Ukrainians have to lead that conversation: it's their decision to make.

HOW DO THESE TWO LARGE WARS, IN GAZA AND UKRAINE, AFFECT ONE ANOTHER?

Our national security process is good at concentrating on one thing, but not so good at concentrating on two. Since Gaza became the overwhelming subject, there has been less focus on Ukraine. We have a new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Milley had developed quite a close relationship with General Zaluzhny, and it will take a while for his successor to develop something similar. Zaluzhny, in his own extraordinary essay in *The Economist*, essentially admitted we're at a stalemate, and it struck me as a very interesting message. I thought the primary audience was probably Zelensky, his own president, and the domestic audience. What he was saying was we have to step up, though there are limits to how much you can do so, given the American constraints, or we have to think about an alternative, longer term strategy.

THE US AS THE WORLD'S POLICEMAN- DOES THE WORLD NEED ONE? AND IF IT DOES, HOW GOOD IS THE US AT THE JOB?

I don't think the world needs a policeman so much as a collection of police

that together form a coherent rule enforcement system. In the US, we have more than 50 different police forces. But I think when the United States tries to be this single superpower, it gets in trouble and creates resentment. It makes mistakes. The period of the Iraq War is a classic example where the US did something that, in retrospect, was just incredibly stupid. Other countries warned us that we were being a dumb policeman, we were chasing the wrong criminal. But we did it anyway.

RUSSIANS VERY OFTEN POINT FINGERS AND SAY, IF THE US COULD DO THAT, WHY CAN'T WE BE ALLOWED TO DO THIS?

Yes. I think the Russians are making a mistake, probably as consequential as the Iraq war, that will leave them weakened, as much as the Iraq war left the US so, probably even more so. It's a misuse of "police powers" to do it. The world needs police but not a policeman. I think there is a diminished will, among some Americans, among Trump supporters, for America to play a strong role as an international keeper of order. People say, "there are people who are ungrateful, it cost us too much. Let's worry about things at home." But I don't think they are anything close to the majority. The aid package for Ukraine will end up being passed; the majority of Republicans still want to support Ukraine. They're intimidated by these loud, Trump Republicans, but I don't think to the point that they'll abandon Ukraine. So to Europeans who worry that America might be reverting to a NEO isolationist, anti-globalist "America first" country, my answer would be no, I don't think that's happening.

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION YOUR MUCH-TALKED ABOUT COLUMN WHERE YOU SAY THAT PRESIDENT BIDEN SHOULDN'T RUN AGAIN, IF NOT BIDEN,

THEN WHO? AND WHAT WOULD IT BRING UKRAINE?

Biden has been the leader who, on the one hand was determined to support Ukraine, on the other hand was determined not to get into a war with Russia. And there is an argument that he was so worried about the second part that he didn't do as well as he should have on the first.

Biden seems to be sailing towards re-nomination, even though it looks more and more like he might lose if he does. The first of Biden's problems is that he's old. People worry he couldn't last out a second term, and he doesn't have a plausible successor in Kamala Harris. If people saw somebody as vice president who they could easily imagine as Commander in Chief, I think the problems for Biden would be fewer. If Biden gets in trouble, as the convention approaches, either because he's even more unpopular, or let's say, has a health problem, the Democratic party rules allow for the candidate to be chosen by "super empowered delegates," without a primary system. So you could essentially have a group of wise men and women decide that we're on a suicidal path for the party in the country and it needs to be changed, and they have a way to do it, though these super-delegate rules were written fairly recently and haven't been tested.

Although Biden's not getting any younger, he has been behaving very vigorously. His policies in dealing with the wars in Gaza and Ukraine have been good; he continues to manage a good foreign policy process; the US economy is amazingly resilient, managing the impossible soft landing that no economist thought was possible, with inflation that, certainly not in the economic area. But his is a surprisingly good record. The Biden paradox is, why does something that's basically so good feel so bad?

WHAT WOULD A REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE MEAN FOR UKRAINE, CONSIDERING THE SELECTION THAT IS AVAILABLE?

They say if Trump or a Trump candidate won, they'd make a deal with Russia and end the war quickly, giving Russia pretty much what it wanted. But this implies that Ukraine itself isn't a factor. And I don't think Ukraine is ready to be Donald Trump's sacrificial lamb to Vladimir Putin.

But I strongly suspect Trump won't be the nominee. The next strongest candidate right now seems to be Nikki Haley. And Haley is an internationalist, probably closest to the traditional hawkish Republican for national security, and if she was the candidate, or if she was vice president, I think that would be a factor for continuation of the Biden policy, maybe even escalating support for Ukraine. There are a lot of problems ahead for Putin, and the expectation that things would change radically if the Republicans won, I'm less convinced than some are.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE US STOPS PROVIDING UKRAINE MILITARY SUPPORT?

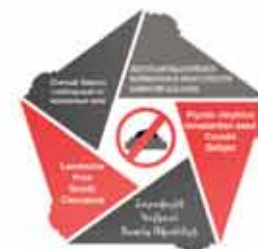
If the US stopped providing military support entirely, that would be significant. I'd be hard for any coalition of countries to make up for that. I think Trump would get so much resistance from Republicans. It could happen and it would have disastrous effects, but I don't think even with a Trump as president scenario, it's all that likely.

BACK IN 2014, WHEN PUTIN ANNEXED CRIMEA, YOU WROTE: "PUTIN'S GAMBIT WILL FAIL OVER TIME, IF EUROPE AND THE US REMAIN RESOLUTE AND PATIENT." HOW BIG AN IF HAS THIS PROVED TO BE?

Patience is not the United States' strongest quality. When we're in a fight, so long as it doesn't become politicized, our military is very resolute. Look at the fight against ISIS. I traveled to Syria five or six times and to Iraq twice, and Raqqa looks worse than anything in Gaza City. We took apart that adversary, we were resolute. People get tired. They want results, and generals trying to give them results do the wrong thing. So, when people say, "Oh, you Americans are impatient, you don't have the staying power, you're fickle" – let's look at the Cold War. America sacrificed a generation over almost 50 years to prevail in a conflict that it felt went to the core of its values and interests. And the world is immensely better for it. Like World War Two, think of all the countries that were battered, and America did come to the rescue. When I go for a walk in Warsaw, I'm reminded that the United States isn't quite as fickle, unreliable, as we sometimes think.

That said, I've been more impressed with European resoluteness than American. One of the great things that's happened is that the Ukraine war tapped idealism and commitment in Europe, and determination to be a good ally for Ukraine and its struggle. Even with the concerns about German staying power, the Germans are still committed, they're still supplying weapons, they're going to build weapons in Ukraine. Something has changed in Europe, and I find it encouraging and hopefully, we have a world in which the US is a little less of the world's policeman. And Europe is a little more. And maybe that's where we're heading.

Regional Campaign Landmine Free South Caucasus



30 NOVEMBER - DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE VICTIMS OF LANDMINES AND OTHER UNEXPLODED REMNANTS OF WAR IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS



Maximiliaan van Lange

Working for a landmine Free South Caucasus by 2030

The South Caucasus remains one of the areas most infected with contamination by landmines and other unexploded remnants of war in the world.

Decades of indiscriminate use of landmines by Soviet forces to protect their bases and facilities, as well as borders, and the military residue left by those Soviet forces when they left the region in the early 1990s, pileup on astonishingly large and widespread use of landmines by combatants in the many conflicts that have riddled the South Caucasus in the last thirty-five years.

Apart from the thousands of casualties caused directly or indirectly by landmines and other unexploded ordnance over the last three and a half decades, including several hundred in the last year, this contamination negatively impacts whole communities across the region, affecting their economic well-being, and exposing them to the constant threat of risk and danger. The residents of this landmine-plagued region are often tragically overlooked by the international community and forgotten by local authorities. Their suffering, and the dire consequences entire communities face from the threat of landmines, are often met with widespread indifference. Victims, their families, and their communities are in desperate need of recognition and assistance.

Last year, the Regional Campaign "Landmine Free South Caucasus", declared 30th November as a *Day of Solidarity with the victims of landmines and other unexploded remnants of war in the South Caucasus*. The day is not just a memorial, but a call to humanitarian action. Thousands of people have been killed or injured across the region over the last three decades. The impact of the tragedies on families and communities is high, and the mechanism to alleviate the suffering, very weak. This is not yesterday's problem. Last year once again saw hundreds killed or injured. The impact on communities is huge and affects tens of thousands of innocent

people. In 2022/2023 the campaign focused its work to awareness of the impact of landmines and other remnants of war on individuals and communities across the region.

Overall, the Regional Campaign Landmine Free South Caucasus objective is to mobilise support for a landmine free South Caucasus by 2030. However, there are serious challenges ahead for achieving this objective, and they are political as much as technical.

Some satisfaction can be taken in the work done to eradicate the problem in the last decade.

In Georgia, a lot of work has been done and most contaminated areas have been cleared, although problems remain in some specific areas, and especially in the separatist territories outside of Tbilisi's jurisdiction.

In Azerbaijan, particularly after the changed situation on the ground following the 2020 Karabakh War, the authorities face an acute situation. Hundreds of thousands of landmines hinder the process of returning displaced persons to their place of origin as is their right under international humanitarian law. In Armenia, the problem is somewhere in between, with the problem being mainly in border areas. No country in the South Caucasus can say that it has solved the problem completely.

As we mark the Day of solidarity with the victims of landmines and other remnants of war in the South Caucasus, we call for resolute action to eradicate the problem of landmines and other unexploded remnants of war from the South Caucasus once and for all. This will require the political will of the three governments, and the support of the international community.

The Regional Campaign "Landmine Free South Caucasus" is advocating for a regional approach towards the solution of this problem. With the prospect of a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and with South Caucasus regional co-operation all of a sudden becoming the flavour of the month, it

is now possible to think of such a regional approach. This is also necessary. Landmine issues need to be taken out of the political domain and be approached mainly as a humanitarian issue. This will enable governments to co-operate on what was until recently a highly sensitive issue. A regional approach will make it easier to mobilise international resources for the effort. Huge resources are needed, and none of the three countries is in a position to do this alone. Eventually, a regional approach should also lead to the three countries together adopting the provisions of the Ottawa Convention. Adopted in 1997, the international agreement prohibits the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of these landmines. It also mandates the destruction of stockpiles, the clearance of mined areas, and assistance to victims of landmines.

This is the way for the future, and work must start immediately.

This "Day of Solidarity" is more than a day of remembrance; it's a day of awareness-raising and action. It provides all stakeholders the opportunity to reaffirm the commitment to achieve a landmine free South Caucasus by 2030, despite the daunting challenges.

Maximiliaan van Lange is Chief of Staff at LINKS Europe and Senior Research Associate at commonspace.eu. He coordinates regional advocacy campaigns, notably the 'Landmine Free South Caucasus' campaign to eradicate landmines in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. He is also the editor of the South Caucasus Landmine Observer newsletter.



Speakers and panelists at the event "Towards a landmine Free South Caucasus by 2030" held in Geneva on 19 June 2023

About the regional campaign Landmine Free South Caucasus

The regional campaign, Landmine Free South Caucasus was launched in October 2018 after a meeting in Tbilisi of stakeholders from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and representatives of international governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Campaign activities were held across the region in 2019, 2021, 2022, and 2023 aimed at highlighting the heavy cost that the South Caucasus region pays as a result of heavy contamination by landmines and other unexploded

remnants of war. The campaign has over the last five years engaged with different constituencies in all the three countries. At a policy level, it engages with governments, state demining agencies and relevant official bodies in discussions on issues related to landmines, and their eradication across the region; the campaign also engages with opinion shapers, to increase awareness both amongst decision-makers and the general public of the problem of landmines in the region. And last but not least, the campaign engages with segments of society to educate about the risk of landmines, and also mobilise public will towards their eradication. Particular

ly successful have been education events held with school children.

The regional campaign Landmine Free South Caucasus is co-ordinated by LINKS Europe working with partners from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and beyond, with the support of the European Union.

The regional campaign 'Landmine Free South Caucasus' is supported by the European Union



The New Economic "Autarchy": on a Few Fundamental Global Trends and Important Expectations. Part 1

ANALYSIS BY VICTOR KIPIANI,
GEOCASE CHAIRMAN

The end of the Cold War not only heralded an idyll in international relations, but also promised maximum access to the accumulated economic benefits worldwide through various alliances, pacts or initiatives. It is indicative that Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History*, which proclaimed the almost eternal, unconditional and irreversible "Good has triumphed over evil," has become a kind of quintessence of the "Golden Era" attitude of the developed and developing world.

Fukuyama's understanding of international politics was supposed to manifest itself in the global economic picture. And although globalism in the economy does not always equal the global economy, but here too the full irreversibility of cosmopolitanism, universalism or internationalism was expected.

REALIGNMENT TO A NEW ORDER: FROM OPENNESS TO CLOSURE?

Accordingly, the idea of economic globalization in global geospace became a kind of mantra, and the opposite view was seen as "turning our backs on the world" and declared the object of an attack on total obstruction. The only exception in the "mainstream" was the creation of large trading blocs, which ultimately, again, contributed to the global economic texture. At first glance, this process in some places had the character of de-globalization, but only at first glance, as, in reality and in practice, its final result was the global universalization of the rules of the game in the world economy.

Thus, the very notion of "globalization" has turned into a synonym for economic welfare, while the practical forms and mechanisms of obtaining and redistributing this welfare have become the only topic of discussion. The economic drive towards globalization and the belief in the inevitability of this trend continued until several large-scale shocks rocked much of the world and the existing order.

FORCED REVERSAL

Over the past couple of decades, the world economy has suffered a number of blows. Each of them was unique in its individual nature and different scale.

Despite this abundance and diversity, among the major, so to speak, "systemically transformative" processes were and remain the financial crisis of 2008-2009, the COVID pandemic and post-pandemic processes, and the ongoing war resulting from Russia's re-invasion of Ukraine. The latter posed a special challenge to Europe, which had to respond to two issues fundamental to it: importing cheap energy from Russia and exporting advanced technology to China. Both issues have a very expensive "price tag," so it is no coincidence that, according to a poll conducted by the European Council on Foreign Relations think tank, 62% of Europeans would be in favor of neutrality in the event of a conflict over Taiwan.

Military operations in the Middle East are also developing dramatically, although at the time of writing this article, it is too early to draw definite conclusions.

In the given situation and in response to the shocks mentioned above, the natural reaction would be a greater diversification of economic linkages, even if this led to the need for additional costs or complex logistical solutions. In fact, a significant number of countries have chosen a different path, which we will discuss in more detail later. Here, we will only briefly note that this choice has linked the economy even more closely to geopolitics and security. We think that this link will remain relevant, at least for the foreseeable future.

Of particular note is that along with



Image source: izmogugla

external, so-called exogenous developments, the larger economic picture is influenced by political changes within specific national systems. We will have a relatively extensive discussion about these changes and the vision and approaches that have emerged from them.

One thing is clear: the idyll and universalization of economic relations predicted for an indefinite period after the end of the Cold War has not stood the test of challenges. As a result, "managing the process according to plan" has also failed, which, along with a number of other disturbing symptoms, has manifested itself as:

(a) Increasing economic inequalities within countries;

(b) Deepening inequalities between the economic capacities of different countries or regions;

(c) The transformation of economic means into an instrument of pressure, which is known in the modern literature as the phenomenon of weaponization.

As a result, the harmonization of common rules of behaviour is hampered, in some places national economic systems go into a "defensive" mode, and global actors do not hesitate to justify basic policy decisions in the economy by selfish considerations.

THE NEW INDUSTRIAL POLICY: WHO IS ACTING HOW?

There is a growing tendency in the policies of players with significant influence on the global economy to look after themselves at the expense of the interests of others. At such times, we cannot call the practical measures or legislative initiatives anything other than a significant slowdown in the globalization of the economic structure and, in some cases, a revision of the results achieved in this regard or a demonstration of national-economic egoism motivated by the idea of self-sufficiency.

In the face of growing challenges in the world, a number of major countries have openly declared economic restructuring dictated by national security considerations. Such restructuring has three main objectives, which are equally prioritized, and thus a new industrial policy can only be measured by the implementation of all three together, namely:

(1) sufficient resource potential of the economy during crises and the resilience of the production base in stand-alone or isolated mode for a significant period of time;

(2) at the very least, to significantly reduce, if not paralyse, the potential for competing economies in times of global upheaval using the tools of modern economic warfare;

- and, as a result of the realization of both of the above objectives:

(3) in the medium or long term, gaining such an advantage on the geo-economic plane that will create a solid precondition for the realization of the desired geopolitical interests.

The fact is that the so-called new industrial policy is determined by economic actors of such caliber, which, more than others, have the task of consistently and responsibly participating in the world economy, maintaining the necessary balance between developed and developing countries creating fair and equal conditions necessary for development based on the imperative of global order and stability, but in stark contrast, in recent years we have witnessed the deepening of trends that seek to artificially stimulate the domestic market through overt protectionism, to reduce the coordination necessary to manage existing global threats, to destroy the reasonable standards of interconnectedness and interdependence necessary to tame the main ally of extremism and radicalism - poverty.

Even the summation of just a few such steps in this brief format indicates the occurrence of the essential features of the new industrial policy and, consequently, the coming (irreversibly?) of the era of the emergence of "autarchic protectionism" in the economy, with all its consequences.

For example, the stated purpose of the United States Inflation Reduction Act legislative initiative is to encourage green technology through subsidies and tax credits, whereas the purpose of the CHIPS and Science legislation is to encourage semiconductor manufacturing in the United States. The real motive behind this and many other initiatives and programs is to reduce the United States' dependence on Asian markets, especially China, to gain a better position in the new geopolitical redistribu-

tion. Several large-scale projects launched by Beijing, be it the China 2025 Strategy or the Dual Circulation Policy, have the same spirit, the overall effect of which is to promote domestic consumption growth and increase concentration on the Chinese market itself. India has also followed this pattern by launching the Make in India project, the main essence of which is again to protect local production through official protectionist measures.

Although on other grounds, but under the slogan - "Everything for the front" - Russia has not fallen behind the trend of self-locking its own economy, and at this stage almost a third of the country's budget expenditure will be used for "national defence". For greater clarity: six per cent of Gross National Product will be spent on the needs of the war, that is, more than twice as much as was spent before the renewed aggression in Ukraine. In addition to direct military spending, more than nine per cent goes to 'national security'. This increase in spending, along with social and infrastructure issues, is very much in line with economic isolationism and protectionism.

These are just a few illustrative examples, and the list can easily be extended with examples of the economies of the mentioned and other countries. Each of them is characterized by concern for its own needs at the level of public policy, and this without taking into account the relevance of proper reciprocity and common interests in international economic relations. Obviously, along with the risks of predictable development of the economic structure, this does not bode well for the overall security structure in a global sense.

And in general, even if we leave aside security and foreign policy, even in the "narrow" economic sense, the direct tangible negative consequences of such neo-isolationism, the same economic autarchy, are:

(1) maximum withdrawal from international economic linkages has a high probability of reducing the competitiveness of local advanced companies, the so-called national champions, together with the national economy;

(2) politics is breaking into the allocation of resources and the creation of

supply chains, with the result that political and security needs subordinate sound economic laws;

(3) a timely and technocratic response to challenges in the economy can fall prey to insinuations among politicians;

(4) there is an increased likelihood of contentious cases, whether between countries or between trading blocs or regional alliances. A prime example of this is the high-profile dispute between Airbus and Boeing, which has had an unfavorable impact on trade relations between the United States and the European Union.

The private sector has not lagged behind the open protectionism officially declared by various countries. For example, the well-established terms "frandshoring" or "re-shoring" actually refer to the relocation of production from vulnerable geographic regions and unfriendly countries to relatively safe or low-risk jurisdictions. This process, of course, results in a shrinking global supply network with the ultimate goal of preventing and quickly recovering from unwanted, long-term or unpredictable supply and delivery disruptions.

THE IMPACT OF THE PROCESS ON DEVELOPING SYSTEMS...

...is particularly important and noteworthy for us, as it is associated with many topical lessons for the Georgian economy. The trend mentioned in this article most notably negatively affects developing (i.e. emerging) economies, fuelled by geopolitical instability in addition to economic factors.

A number of developing countries have benefited specifically from the "era of globalization" that have been left behind (temporarily). First of all, this benefit has manifested itself in the redirection of trade and finance to these countries, which has been underpinned by:

(a) cheap local labor in the respective economies, and

(b) relatively easy and low-cost supply and delivery.

As a result of these very practical economic circumstances, the flow of direct investment into the developing world has been further enhanced by the "offshoring" of Western corporations or the transfer of business operations to developing countries.

A related result of the same process was that developing economic systems now obtained financial resources through direct investment (and not only loan capital) to invest in Western funds or securities. Moreover, such systems have gained additional benefits:

(a) instruments to hedge (i.e. manage) export and import risks;

(b) emergence of their own "national champions" - flagship companies;

(c) expansion of the market for national products;

(d) creation, in some cases, of a sufficiently resilient local stock market;

(e) access to advanced technologies, and

(e) even the creation of its own middle class, which is so important for the political and socio-economic sustainability of a country.

It is clear that the intensified "two-way street" between the developed and developing world (needless to say, Georgia has been left out of this process) has significantly increased the degree of interconnectedness and interdependence for globalization.

Thus, it is clear that the significant weakening of the globalization-internationalization-interconnectedness of economic systems at the end of the last century and the beginning of this one has proved to be quite harmful for the developing economic world as well. This damage will increase with the deepening process of de-globalization and the rise of economic nationalism. Therefore, this situation requires a timely and adequate systemic reorganization from an emerging economy.

To be continued in next week's GT.

EU and Georgia Working Together for Sustainable Rural Development

In pursuit of EU membership, Georgia is advancing its institutional reforms, with agriculture and rural development playing an important role in this transformative journey. The Government of Georgia convened the Rural Development Conference to enhance policy reforms and foster coordination, bringing together national stakeholders, international partners, and rural development experts from EU Member States.

Georgia's Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture hosted this high-level forum with funding from the European Union and in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Otar Shamugia, Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, and Catalin Gherman, Deputy Head of the Cooperation Section at the Delegation of the European Union to

Georgia, opened a discussion by highlighting the indispensable role of rural development in driving Georgia's regions forward, improving the well-being of its people, and facilitating a seamless transition to a greener economy.

"Georgia has made significant strides in the last decade through rural development programs, institutional reforms, and the adoption of European approaches. As we draw closer to the European Union, our objective is to build on these achievements, working with partners to set rural development priorities and design interventions aligning with the EU Common Agricultural Policy," noted Minister Shamugia.

"Sustainable and green rural development will improve the lives of over 40% of Georgians living outside major cities, fostering opportunities for entrepreneurship, education, and environmental protection," Catalin Gherman noted. "With



Image source: UNDP

support from the European Union, Georgia made notable progress in institutional reforms aimed at aligning its rural development frameworks with the EU Common Agricultural Policy. We remain committed to working with the government, civil society, the private sector, and communities on this developmental journey. One of the most important components in this context is the EU's LEADER program—a bottom-up initiative designed to bolster the growth of rural areas by implementing projects that directly address local needs. We look forward to the forthcoming implementation of the established mechanism in Georgia, facilitating state financing for rural development projects spurred by LEADER initiatives."

The Rural Development Conference featured insightful panel discussions involving Georgian and European officials, practitioners, and experts.

Key topics included policy frameworks for sustainable rural development and agriculture, harmonisation of Georgian policies with the EU Common Agricultural Policy, the transition to a greener economy in line with the EU's Green Deal, digital solutions for monitoring and control systems, and funding mechanisms available for EU membership candidate countries.

Experts from Austria, Italy, Latvia, Serbia, and North Macedonia shared their countries' experiences implementing the EU's Common Agricultural Policy and the Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance in Rural Development (IPARD).

Summarizing the conference outcomes, Douglas Webb, UNDP Resident Representative a.i. in Georgia, underscored its significance as a step toward equitable

rural development. "Georgia has every opportunity to foster vibrant rural economies that benefit the people and contribute to the country's prosperity. Our goal is to empower rural communities by ensuring sustained attention from decision-makers, that engages the private sector and civil society, and harnesses best practices from European countries."

More information on the Rural Development Conference is available on the website <https://ruralconference.ge>

The EU and UNDP support for rural development in Georgia draws on the EUR 234.5 million EU-funded European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD) implemented since 2013. More information is available on the website: <https://eu4georgia.eu/enpard>



Image source: UNDP

ASB Georgia Offers Business Start-up Trainings to 60 Women in the Regions



ASB Georgia, with the cooperation of its partner organization, conducted business start-up trainings for 60 women, who were introduced to the basic skills and tools used in creating business startups, marketing strategies and financial planning.

During the trainings, participants were taught how to develop their business ideas and write successful business proposals to participate in the second phase of the competition and become

grant winners. The aim of the project is to stimulate vulnerable women to start up or enhance their business activities, and strengthen their capabilities to generate additional and stable income.

Under the framework of EU funded PASS (Provide Access to Support for Survivors of gender based and domestic violence) project, the training was conducted in the target regions of the project: Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti Zemo Imereti, and Kakheti.



Our Sepulchral Issues

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

Georgian parliament recently deliberated on a proposal for a new law concerning the prospect of creating cremation services in our Christian orthodox country. Speaking more specifically, the proposal is to introduce an addition to the existing law on permits and licenses in the following wording: 'Issuing of a license for interring human remains and the activity thereof.'

The bill has a very emotional background. It was put forward by Khatuna Samnidze, one of the leading oppositional deputies, whose mother is said to have asked the family members before she passed away after a long, irremediable disease, to cremate her remains and scatter them into the Black Sea in Batumi. The first part of the lady's will was honorably fulfilled by her loving children, and the second was substituted by interring the ashes in their late father's burial place. One can hardly find a reason, more upright, sensitive and humanely justifiable, for building a legislative document and putting it before one's fellow parliamentarians for consideration. Another thing is whether the bill has a chance to be signed into a law or not. Let's take a brief look at the issue.

There is a strong, almost insurmountable predisposition in Sakartvelo that burning a deceased's body is not a good idea, and the only acceptable way to discard a corpse is to bury it. And yet, the traditional entombment of mortals in Georgia demands the usage of vast swathes



Antonis Alakiotis stands in front of a collection of urns inside the crematorium in Ritsona, Greece. He opened the private crematorium in 2018 after a 20-year battle. Photo by Demetrios Ioannou/The World

of countryside, a crazy amount of building material and workforce, as well as the totally incongruent volume of time, money and energy of those still alive who are obligated to take care of their dead.

There is no mention of a prohibition on cremation in the biblical text. Nor do the local ecclesiastical standards or principles contradict the concept, although

the Church is more in favor of interment than cremation, as it has always been so in this culture. Nobody is saying to step totally away from traditional ways of saying farewell to our loved ones: The proposed bill merely seeks to give our people a choice. Choice happens to be a big deal in any modern-day human activity. Choice is one of the greatest

privileges we look for when saying that we want to be a part of the western family of nations. Choice in general is what the ideological infrastructure of the 21st century suggests needs to be held up. So, why should it not be an option for all of us to choose what we want done with our body after our soul has left it? Especially seeing that when a person is

gone, we should be praying for their soul not their body.

Interestingly, the mentioned bill did not fail, but has been shelved for the time being, as the majority (about 60%) of Georgia's population, when asked about their preference in this regard, gave a categorically negative response.

And still, the way the world is developing, plus the power of natural law, will in the near future have us adopt a new, more rational way of life, including the methodology of treating our deceased. Incidentally, in old Soviet times, there were thoughts and suggestions to allow cremation by law and the relevant facility was built in Mukhatgverdi cemetery, just outside Mtskheta, in the 1970s. It never got switched on, though, and is currently used as a warehouse.

Technically, the proposal in parliament intends to regulate the issue of cremation in the country, and, if necessary, to allow the business world to come up with certain relevant initiatives. As it stands, those families who wish to cremate their deceased relatives usually incur solid expenses, because the body has to be transferred to crematoriums in either Russia or Ukraine. The amount fluctuates between 6000 and 10,000 GEL.

Those who suggest our Christian orthodoxy is an obstacle in the way to this rational method of dealing with our dead should know that Greece is no less Orthodox than we are, and yet they have crematoriums there. If Georgia cannot get the convenience overnight because the possibility is not yet around the corner, we should at least have hope that the mentioned legal proposal is being kept in mind for inevitable future deliberation and subsequent adoption.



SSG: Unlawfully Detained Georgian Citizen Released

Georgian citizen Vasiko Kenkadze, unlawfully detained by Russian occupying forces near Balaani village, has been released and is now in the territory controlled by the central government, the State Security Service (SSG) reported Wednesday.

"The Georgian Government raised the issue of Kenkadze's immediate release at the 115th meeting of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM).

"The government kept international partners informed throughout the process. The central government, in cooperation with international partners, remains committed to actively working towards the release of all Georgian citizens unlawfully detained in the occupied territories," the SSG stated.

The SSG emphasizes that responsibility for any destructive actions carried out in the occupied regions of Georgia and along the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) lies with the occupation force.

Class, Home and Summative Models Abolished in Schools – Ministry of Education

BY MARIAM GORKHELASHVILI

At the end of November, the Ministry of Education announced changes to the Georgian national curriculum.

According to the changes: What is meant by student-oriented, in-depth teaching and learning was clearly defined.

The principles, on the basis of which the teaching-learning results and intermediate learning goals are formed, were determined.

The principles, based on which teachers should conduct formative and formative assessment, were specified.

The function and importance of the school curriculum was specified.

The goals of the national curriculum were formulated in a new way (based on the national goals of general education, the framework of qualifications and the competences of the 21st century).

Newly formulated goals for each subject group according to the steps. Private schools were allowed to determine for themselves what subjects they teach (what learning outcomes they define) to achieve these goals.

Methodological recommendations were removed from the national curriculum (the third door, where advice was presented – how annual programs could be planned, was canceled).

Formative assessment components (classroom, homework, summative) and models were abolished. Schools themselves can create an original formative assessment system and principles, according to which the marks written in the



school system will be converted into the 10-point system defined by the national curriculum.

Private schools are allowed to set thresholds for grades and not grades.

If a student has an annual grade point average below 5.0 in any subject in the class, the school is required to offer the student a remedial program prior to the fall exam.

A remedial program, in the form of a remedial and accelerated curriculum, should also be offered by the school to students who are out of school or at high risk of dropping out. The content of the curriculum is determined by the school itself based on the national curriculum.

The school itself can determine the school timetable with appropriate justification, taking into account the needs and interests of the students, as well as the human and financial resources of the school. The hourly grid given in the national curriculum is only a recommendation.

The functions of subject chairs and tutors are no longer described in the

national curriculum. Schools can decide for themselves what functions the members of the school community will perform and what the structure of the school will be.

For foreign nationals enrolled in a foreign language program of a private school, the levels of state language teaching are determined according to the years of teaching (based on the common European language recommendation framework).

In the Georgian sector/school, the restriction for students representing ethnic minorities was removed, which implies the requirement to study the mother tongue in the case of 10 applicants. Therefore, individually, in the case of studying in the Georgian sector, each student will be given the opportunity to learn their native language.

It is worth noting that the rule for agreeing textbooks was also approved, on the basis of which private and public schools can use non-marked textbooks agreed with the Ministry in the educational process.

Towards a Brighter Tomorrow: India's G20 Presidency and the Dawn of a New Multilateralism



OP-ED BY PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA, NARENDRA MODI

Today marks 365 days since India assumed the G20 Presidency. It is a moment to reflect, recommit, and rejuvenate the spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, 'One Earth, One Family, One Future.'

As we undertook this responsibility last year, the global landscape grappled with multifaceted challenges: recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, looming climate threats, financial instability, and debt distress in developing nations, all amid declining multilateralism. In the midst of conflicts and competition, development cooperation suffered, impeding progress.

Assuming the G20 Chair, India sought to offer the world an alternative to the status quo, a shift from a GDP-centric to human-centric progress. India aimed to remind the world of what unites us, rather than what divides us. Finally, the global conversation had to evolve - the interests of the few had to give way to the aspirations of the many. This required a fundamental reform of multilateralism as we knew it.

Inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented,

and decisive—these four words defined our approach as G20 president, and the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration (NDLD), unanimously adopted by all G20 members, is testimony to our commitment to deliver on these principles.

Inclusivity has been at the heart of our presidency. The inclusion of the African Union (AU) as a permanent member of the G20 integrated 55 African nations into the forum, expanding it to encompass 80% of the global population. This proactive stance has fostered a more comprehensive dialogue on global challenges and opportunities.

The first-of-its-kind 'Voice of the Global South Summit,' convened by India in two editions, heralded a new dawn of multilateralism. India mainstreamed the Global South's concerns in international discourse and has ushered in an era where developing countries take their rightful place in shaping the global narrative.

Inclusivity also infused India's domestic approach to G20, making it a People's Presidency that befits that world's largest democracy. Through "Jan Bhagidari" (people's participation) events, G20 reached 1.4 billion citizens, involving all states and Union Territories (UTs) as partners. And on substantive elements, India ensured that international attention was directed to broader develop-



mental aims, aligning with G20's mandate.

At the critical midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, India delivered the G20 2023 Action Plan to Accelerate Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), taking a cross-cutting, action-oriented approach to interconnected issues, including health, education, gender equality and environmental sustainability.

A key area driving this progress is robust Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).

Here, India was decisive in its recommendations, having witnessed the revolutionary impact of digital innovations like Aadhaar, UPI, and Digilocker first-hand. Through G20, we successfully completed the Digital Public Infrastructure Repository, a significant stride in

Given the monumental resources required, G20 emphasized the importance of better, larger, and more effective Multilateral Development Banks. Concurrently, India is taking a leading role in UN reforms, especially in the restructuring of principal organs like the UN



global technological collaboration. This repository, featuring over 50 DPIs from 16 countries, will help the Global South build, adopt, and scale DPI to unlock the power of inclusive growth.

For our One Earth, we introduced ambitious and inclusive aims to create urgent, lasting, and equitable change. The Declaration's 'Green Development Pact' addresses the challenges of choosing between combating hunger and protecting the planet, by outlining a comprehensive roadmap where employment and ecosystems are complementary, consumption is climate conscious, and production is planet-friendly. In tandem, the G20 Declaration calls for an ambitious tripling of global renewable energy capacity by 2030. Coupled with the establishment of the Global Biofuels Alliance and a concerted push for Green Hydrogen, the G20's ambitions to build a cleaner, greener world is undeniable. This has always been India's ethos, and through Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (LiFE), the world can benefit from our age-old sustainable traditions.

Further, the Declaration underscores our commitment to climate justice and equity, urging substantial financial and technological support from the Global North. For the first time, there was a recognition of the quantum jump needed in the magnitude of development financing, moving from billions to trillions of dollars. G20 acknowledged that developing countries require \$5.9 trillion to fulfil their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by 2030.

Security Council, that will ensure a more equitable global order.

Gender equality took center stage in the Declaration, culminating in the formation of a dedicated Working Group on the Empowerment of Women next year. India's Women's Reservation Bill 2023, reserving one-third of India's Parliament and state legislative assembly seats for women epitomizes our commitment to women-led development.

The New Delhi Declaration embodies a renewed spirit of collaboration across these key priorities, focusing on policy coherence, reliable trade, and ambitious climate action. It is a matter of pride that during our Presidency, G20 achieved 87 outcomes and 118 adopted documents, a marked rise from the past.

During our G20 Presidency, India led deliberations on geopolitical issues and their impact on economic growth and development. Terrorism and the senseless killing of civilians is unacceptable, and we must address it with a policy of zero-tolerance. We must embody humanitarianism over hostility and reiterate that this is not an era of war.

I am delighted that during our Presidency India achieved the extraordinary: it revitalized multilateralism, amplified the voice of the Global South, championed development, and fought for the empowerment of women, everywhere.

As we hand over the G20 Presidency to Brazil, we do so with the conviction that our collective steps for people, planet, peace, and prosperity, will resonate for years to come.



I Clean Up Georgia - The Second Stage of Sadagi's Simultaneous School Clean-up Series

BY THE SADAGI TEAM

The second round of the series of simultaneous clean-ups, conducted jointly by pupils, teachers, partner organizations and the environmental charity Sadagi, took place on November 16-18. This time, the USAID Civic Education Program contributed greatly to the series as a partner.

To our delight, 170 schools expressed their interest to participate in this stage of clean-ups. Due to logistical and financial issues, however, we could select only 39 schools in 11 municipalities of the Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Shida Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions to visit. A total of 1010 students and their teachers took part in the second stage of simultaneous clean-ups. Other interested schools are invited to take part in future cleanups (and we believe the number of applicants will increase significantly!).

In parallel with supporting the organization of the cleanup events, we came up with a name for them- "I Clean Up Georgia". Ivane Khaindrava, a student of the 21st public school of Tbilisi, suggested the motto to us in October. We immediately made trial stickers, which were distributed to the pupils of the 55th public school in Tbilisi. After their approval, we gave these stickers to all participants of the second stage as a thank you.

The children seem to enjoy cleaning up their homeland; the grown-ups, too. We are happy to have adopted 'I Clean Up Georgia' as the name of the simultaneous clean-up events together with pupils and teachers.

Due to the large number of participating schools, we are able to tell you about only a few of the recent teams. We'll start with Khovle in Kaspı municipality. This is Ivane Javakhishvili's birth village and we especially wanted to visit. We had had to postpone from November 16th to November 23rd for logistical reasons, but all the while it was getting colder, so much so, in fact, that we decided to postpone until next year for the pupils' comfort. On the morning of the 23rd, then, we weren't even thinking about the Khovle clean-up. And yet, early in the morning, the pupils of the school themselves called us on their teacher Lali Bakhtadze's phone and begged us to visit them. "We are here, the sun came out, and we want to clean up with you," they said. So we did.

The 30 children and their teacher Lali welcomed us with great enthusiasm to their beautiful school, yard and well equipped basketball hall in an old building. All participants challenged themselves in their work and had a lot of fun too. We had an interesting conversation with them at the picnic held afterwards. The pupils of Khovle demonstrated



excellent character, and it was a great pleasure to visit them.

The village of Mokhisi in the Kareli municipality is the home village of the ancestors of renowned writer Dato Turashvili. His "King of Forests" is popular with the children of Mokhisi. On November 14, they celebrated Astrid Lindgren's 116th birthday. The pupils said they really enjoy the books of this great children's writer, and some of them even had it with them at the cleanup event, as they had been reading on the way to school. Unfortunately, as the Mokhisi school building is damaged, the children have been studying in the school of the neighboring village of Ptsa, half an hour away, for the last two years.

Teacher Ia Lursmanashvili was the organizer of the clean-up with us. She works tirelessly to instill a love of history and citizenship in her students from Mokhisi. The pupils told us they love kings Davit Agmashenebeli and Tamar best from Georgia's historical characters. Vakhtang Gorgasali was also mentioned, as was their respect for Ilia Chavchavadze from the more recent past.

Later, elementary school teacher Maya Grigalashvili joined us. It was clear that the 24 children who had gathered to tidy up the territory of the Mokhisi school love both teachers equally, and work hard to study well in their classes.

Variani, a village in the Gori municipality, is the birthplace of Jacob Gogebashvili, and the school here is named after him. Twenty children took part in the clean-up event, under the guidance of teacher Maia Balakhadze. Maia teaches children the essence of Georgian citizenship and, thus, pride. Together with the pupils from Variani, children from the neighboring Arashenda village joined in the cleaning-up of this historical village of Shida Kartli.

In and around Variani, there are many

beautiful alleys of poplar trees, which are nicely yellowed and made that sunny November day all the more pleasant. The school building is handsome and well-maintained. The only small detail that was not to our liking was the plastic door and window protection tape that vividly impacted the otherwise tidy interior of the school building. It would be good if our builders and repairmen made it a rule to remove these tapes after completing their works and thereby contribute to the aesthetic formation of the pupils. We left Variani with a feeling of joy, however - it was delightful to see the pleasantly tired pupils at the picnic and the surrounds of the school, the playground for children and the water canal they had so carefully cleaned up.

The third public school of Tserovani was founded in 2008. Children studying in this school had become IDPs as a result of the Russian military aggression, their families forced to leave their homes in Akhlagori municipality and settle in new homes in Tserovani. When the children first arrived, it was essentially empty ground surrounding the building. Together, they began to take care of, clean, and decorate the area around the school with plants. Before our campaign, they had already made it a tradition to organize a clean-up event every semester, and to encourage others to participate in such initiatives and so become role models for others.

Old Kanda village is full of interesting stories. Assyrians populate the village, and some of the buildings built by German colonists are still preserved. As we approached the school area, we saw the late autumn nature colored by the creations made by the children: Around the school, 116 years ago, a pine forest and an alley of other trees were planted. These are trimmed at the end of autumn, and from the huge pieces of wood, the children had made beautiful chairs, which were placed in a large circle around a table.

The pupils are diligent in taking care of their village, especially the school yard and its surrounding area. At the entrance to the school, they cleaned the clogged canals using tools, while the junior high school students cleaned the school yard from even the tiniest particles of waste.

The old walls in the schoolyard had been painted by one of the pupils: illustrations showing time-travelers from Old Kanda visiting New Kanda. Inside, the corridors of the school were decorated with interesting hand-made presentations. Our attention was also drawn

to the chemistry and physics laboratories, which showed more evidence of the children's diligent work. The pupils of Kanda have diverse aspirations. At the same time, everyone agrees that every piece of waste we throw into nature takes us one step back from success.

Sashaburo public school, in Dusheti municipality, had a small building, but the hearts of its pupils were huge! The teachers and the children here are warm and friendly. Many of them come to this school every day from neighboring villages Bagi, Chanadiri, Nagliant Kari, Lazviaani, and another Samachablo IDP settlement.

31 students and six teachers were involved in tidying up the beautiful surroundings of Sashaburo school, under the leadership of civics education teacher Shorena Bregvadze. Along with being active in tidying up, the children also presented us with beautiful and cleverly designed posters. It was nice to talk to the teachers here. In addition to their own building, they also take care of the historic school building next to it and are waiting for it to be repaired. We also commemorated the American writer and sculptor Giorgi Papashvili, who was born and grew up in the neighboring Kobiant Kari village.

50 students of the Second Public School of Mtskheta were involved in cleaning up their school grounds and the nearby stadium, under the leadership of civics education teacher Maya Gelashvili. It was a pleasant setting near the Oko Principality Church, which is overlooked by the Monastery of the Cross. Twice as many children than initially planned came out to participate in the clean-up event. Because of this, there weren't enough gloves, but the pupils shared out what they had and worked with one glove each. The children of Mtskheta then showed pleasant courage in expressing their opin-

ions when recording interviews.

When we arrived at School No3 of Akhaltsikhe, the 17 schoolgirls there had already tidied up the school grounds. We saw the pupils and the coordinator Rusudan having a picnic in a nicely painted school canteen. The students of this Armenian-language school in Akhaltsikhe were humble and polite, and said they liked Queen (King) Tamar most among the historic characters of Georgia.

The school of Arali village of Adigeni municipality is situated in a beautiful environment and the yard is decorated with flowers. When we arrived, the hard working and virtuous students and teachers had already finished cleaning and were working in the flower garden. About twenty children were involved in tidying up the school grounds under the leadership of teacher Esther and the school director Maro.

Visiting Didi Smada school in Adigeni municipality was a joy for us, where we were greeted by more than thirty students cleaning up around the beautiful yard under the leadership of their teacher Tinatin. It was a pleasure to talk with these children - to feel their politeness and eagerness to learn and work. The girls' football team from Didi Smada was successful throughout last year in many competitions. The Smada students also warmed our spirits further by telling us of their love of reading books.

Some pupils travel from neighboring villages to study here. This highland village is surrounded by beautiful mountains, and its roads are lined with pine and poplar trees that fight to survive mistletoe and disease. The approach of winter can be felt in high-mountainous Samtskhe - the forested slopes of the mountains are already covered in snow.

We would like to remind our readers that this initiative was started in October on the initiative of Sadagi, the National Teacher Award Team, and leading teacher nominees of the award. We will continue annually with some 5 to 7 rounds. At the first stage of the series, cleanups were held in 11 municipalities of Georgia, with 1027 students from 24 schools and their teachers taking part.

'I Clean-up Georgia' has several sponsors. Procredit Bank Georgia is the Platinum Sponsor; Golden Sponsors are: Diplomat-Georgia and Palitra L; Silver sponsors are Nikora, Financial Bureau and Elite Electronics. The number of sponsors is increasing, which will enable the maximum number of schools to participate in the clean-up events.

The simultaneous clean-up events will continue next year. The next stage will be held in April 2024 and at least two more rounds will follow, with the final scheduled for June 5. We expect the participation of hundreds of schools from all municipalities of Georgia in the final stage. Follow us on facebook.com/sadagi.official.



Open, Closed

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

Following last week's article on taking or making photos, I have more to add about those waiting in my mind's eye. I am seeking them, or have planned them, but they have not yet become images for anyone else to see. And then there are those which I snatched from a split second of time, nice coincidences.

One is a set of bark trunks in a forest. The whole photo is just these trunks, with no space between them, though at the angle I find they might not be all crowded together. It's a somewhat abstract image of black on white, stark. The trunks might all be in focus (if I use a small aperture to increase the depth of field; or if I stack several images from a tripod-mounted point, each with a different focus). Or they might show a narrower focus on one point. If I find this group of birches, I'll probably take many different versions to compare.

Another waiting shot is one I've mentioned before: the tree version of a murmuration of birds, the leaves flying off the tree. This too will be from a tripod to keep the tree trunk still. The camera will take a succession of photos quickly, up to several per second, and then I'll assemble them in a set of layers to show the progress of each leaf through the sky. This one I could also produce as a video, with the frames one after another showing the motion.

At the other end of the scale are images which I was fortunate to grab from something happening before or around me. The best example I have of this rare and tricky delight is shown here. I shot it at a communist demonstration in the 1990s in St Petersburg, Russia, at a war memorial. The thing which makes it for me is the juxtaposition of flags, unmoving metal sculpture and flapping in the breeze. Also the expression of the man holding the real flag. In my mind's eye, as he looks up he's thinking to himself: "Do I really believe this @#%\$&?"

Henri Cartier-Bresson was a master of this kind of image: street photography which pulls the moment from the time-stream and immortalizes it. Now, with billions of photographers around the world shooting on their phones or cameras millions of times a second 24/7, the snatched image has become more commonplace; along with every other kind of photography you can name. The real challenge is to stand out.

Which I don't let bother me. I'm just going to shoot what I want to, what calls out to me for attention, what gives me pleasure. I'm always taking photos now, active in this field since I was 11, which is 45 years ago. And sometimes I even use a camera; if not, just my eye (click) and brain (store).

Recently, some artist friends and I were discussing the two modes of "open" and "closed", which are mutually exclusive, as comedian John Cleese describes in a YouTube video on the subject. Open is playful, uncaring of mistakes, brainstorming, creative. Closed is editing, analyzing,

considering what you've produced. Both are necessary. I realized for the first time that I don't have to bring about the open mode for myself: it's my natural state! On the contrary, I have to work to get to closed (although when I'm processing my photos on my computer I'm definitely in closed mode). My writing, specifically the Svan short stories I have produced in the last couple of years, is now going through editing with the help of another person, an outsider looking in from much further away than I am. More closed, to refine the open.

From the two photographic styles above, the imagined shot is closed until it happens, which makes it open. The grabbed shot is open until it's taken, and then has a closed phase when it's processed (as do all photos).

I suppose the ultimate part of closed for me would be turning my art into money, which is about as far from creative as I can imagine. Likely my wife will be much help in this, as she is much more business-minded than I am. At least I am seeing these two different parts of thinking, and how to reconcile and use them.

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/hanmer.house.svaneti2



SPORTS

6 Gold, 1 Silver, 6 Bronze – Georgian Karate Athletes' Success at the XIII European Championship in Antibes



On November 15-19, the XIII European Karate Championship was held in the city of Antibes, France, organized by the World United Karate Federation (WUKF), in which a 25-member delegation of karatekas from Georgia took part among

3000 athletes from 30 European countries. The Georgian athletes competed successfully at the European Championship, winning a total of 13 medals: 6 gold, 1 silver and 6 bronze.

Luka Khvedeliani, Tato Samkharadze, Chabuka Makharadze and Avto Giunashvili won gold medals in the absolute

weight category of team kumite at the European Championship. In the match, the Georgian national team defeated the teams of Italy, Romania, Denmark and England in all rounds and took the 1st team place convincingly.

In addition to the team first place in kumite, Tato Samkharadze won a gold

medal in the individual kumite among seniors, Tato Samkharadze won a silver medal in the absolute weight category of individual kumite, and Chabuka Makharadze won a bronze medal among seniors in the kata discipline.

At the European Championship, Tamar Tsintsadze won a gold medal for girls (U11) in the individual kumite, Luka Shantadze and Davit Guloyan (U17) also won gold medals in the absolute weight category, Irakli Gongadze won another gold medal in the combat between veterans in the kumite.

Bronze medals were won by Merab Lomadze (U17) in the absolute category of kumite, Davit Guloyani in the absolute category of kumite between 16-17 years, Mate Dzigadze (U17, -55 kg), Ioane Chumbadze (U9, -40 kg) and Theona Abramishvili (U11, -35 kg).

Chabuka Makharadze, Shotokan karate-do four-time world and five-time European champion sportsman, commented:

"Since 2009, I've been successfully participating in European, World Championships and international tournaments organized by the World United Karate Federation (WUKF) and have won medals of all types: gold, silver and bronze. The President of the World United Karate Federation is Liviu Crisan, the owner of

the X knife, who has a great influence and authority in karate today."

The 2023 European Championship was run to very high standards under the organization and rules of WUKF in the city of Antibes, France. A team winning kumite at the championships is considered the most prestigious event, and gives the team a very big advantage.

"At the European Championship in Antibes, we defeated the Italian, Romanian and English national teams in a row in the team committee, which included Luka Khvedeliani, Tato Samkharadze and Avto Giunashvili together with me," Makharadze noted.

"In addition to the team kumite, I successfully participated in the senior category, completing 3 laps with a high score. In the final, the places among the 6 best athletes were divided as follows: Simone Otanavi (Italy) took the 1st place, Slava Martin (Czech Republic) took the 2nd place, and I got the 3rd place with a bronze medal.

"I always try to compete successfully in all championships and represent our country with dignity, which is a great responsibility and also a great motivation. It always makes me happy when I stand on the podium and the flag of Georgia is flying," he concluded, with a grin.



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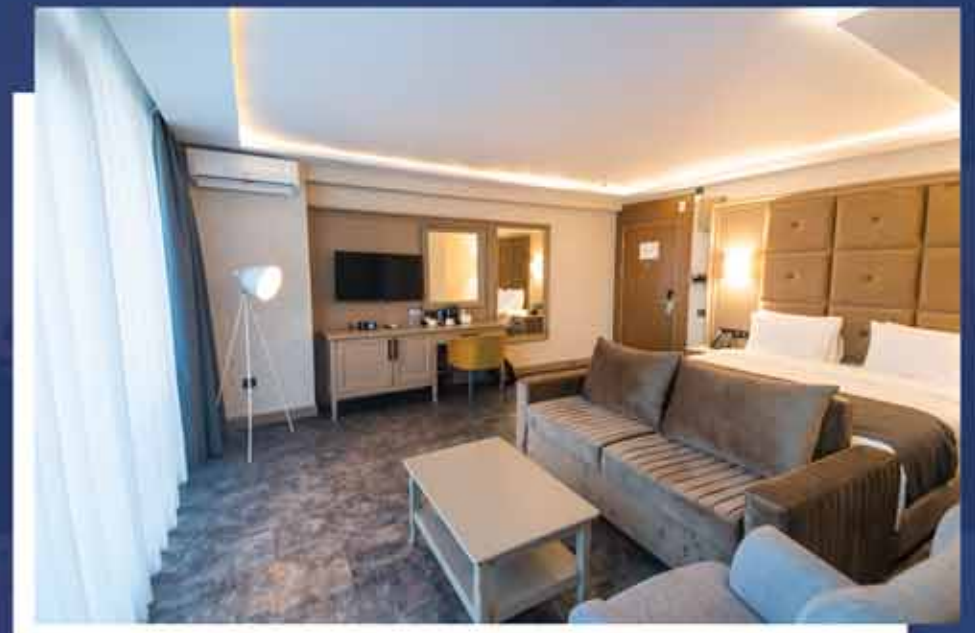
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