



FOCUS ON PUTIN'S WAR

Hamish De Bretton-Gordon on Putin's war strategy and ultimate path to failure

PAGE 7

Komorebi Bakuriani Resort - Designed for Guests Seeking Harmony, Connection with Nature and a Peaceful Vacation

Komorebi Bakuriani Resort, located at the bottom of Kokhtagora, is a premium class hotel that offers a unique vacation experience. Whether you're a lover of winter sports or simply seeking a peaceful and relaxing escape, the resort has something to offer everyone. The hotel features 77 rooms of different categories, all designed to provide guests with comfort and relaxation.

One of the main attractions of Komorebi Bakuriani Resort is its stunning location. The hotel provides guests with breathtaking views of the surrounding landscape. Whether you are a nature lover or an adventure seeker, the hotel's location offers the perfect setting for a memorable vacation.

Every aspect of the hotel's interior has been thoughtfully designed, from the furnishings to the lighting, to create a welcoming and relaxing environment. The lobby with its elegant decor and cozy seating areas, provides the perfect spot to unwind after a long day. Each room is designed with the highest attention to details and furnished with all the necessary amenities to provide guests with a comfortable and pleasant stay.

Continued on page 10



In this week's issue...

China Agrees in UN Vote that Russia is an "Aggressor"
NEWS PAGE 2

Ukraine Latest - Russia Claims Ukraine Attempted Drone Attack on the Kremlin, Kyiv Denies Involvement
NEWS PAGE 3

Western Isolationism and the Fate of Georgia
POLITICS PAGE 4

More Realism, Less Hypocrisy: Cooperation by Action, Not Posturing by Words. Part 3
POLITICS PAGE 6

Meet the Owners of Lost Ridge Inn, a Booming Sustainable Eco-Business in Kakheti
BUSINESS PAGE 8

Luca Polare Starts Production of Packaged Frozen Croissants
SOCIETY PAGE 10

Daisi - Twilight of a Century
CULTURE PAGE 11

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

As of 02 May 2023

BONDS				STOCKS			
	Price	w/w	m/m		Price	w/w	m/m
GRAIL 07/28	85.66 (YTM 7.42%)	+0.1%	-0.1%	Bank of Georgia (BGEO LN)	GBP 29.35	+3.3%	+6.7%
GEBGG 07/23	100.00 (YTM 5.90%)	+0.0%	-0.1%	Georgia Capital (CGEO LN)	GBP 8.10	+2.1%	+3.2%
GEOPAP 03/24	97.86 (YTM 8.79%)	-0.1%	-0.2%	TBC Bank Group (TBCG LN)	GBP 23.45	+1.7%	+4.7%
SILNET 01/27	98.31 (YTM 8.91%)	+0.2%	+0.5%				
TBC 06/24	98.38 (YTM 7.26%)	+0.0%	+0.1%	CURRENCIES			
				GEL / USD	2.4876	-0.6%	-2.4%
				GEL / EUR	2.7362	-0.3%	-1.0%
				GEL / GBP	3.0994	-0.2%	-1.4%
				GEL / CHF	2.7845	-0.9%	-0.1%
				GEL / RUB	0.0311	+0.6%	-5.2%
				GEL / TRY	0.1276	-0.9%	-6.0%
				GEL / AZN	1.4659	-0.6%	-2.5%
				GEL / AMD	0.0064	-0.5%	-1.8%
				GEL / UAH	0.0674	-0.6%	-2.3%
				EUR / USD	0.9091	-0.3%	-1.5%
				GBP / USD	0.8021	-0.5%	-1.0%
				CHF / USD	0.8932	+0.1%	-2.4%
				RUB / USD	80.1100	-0.9%	+3.1%
				TRY / USD	19.4660	+0.2%	+1.5%
				AZN / USD	1.6970	-	-0.0%
				AMD / USD	386.0200	-0.1%	-0.7%



Source: Mind.ua

China Agrees in UN Vote that Russia is an "Aggressor"

China decided to abandon the practice of "abstention" during this week's UN vote on documents related to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Chinese delegation voted in favor of the General Assembly resolution, which calls Russia an "aggressor," according to data published by the Icelandic mission to the UN.

The document A/77/L.65 "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe" refers to the "unprecedented challenges" facing Europe "following the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and earlier against Georgia."

The resolution also calls for "reparations" for the victims of Russia's military aggression and "prosecution of all those responsible for violations of interna-

tional law."

In addition to China, Kazakhstan and all other post-Soviet republics except Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (which abstained), as well as countries that the Russian authorities call "friendly," voted in favor of the document. These include India, Brazil, and Turkey.

Votes against came from only five countries. In addition to Russia, these are Belarus, DR Congo, Nicaragua, and Syria. A total of 122 countries were in favor.

Russian diplomats tried to get the word aggression removed from the resolution, but failed, said Ukraine's Permanent Representative to the UN, Sergiy Kyslytsya.

As reported, the Chinese Foreign Ministry has named its chosen representative to travel to Ukraine - the ambassador will visit Ukraine and other countries.

MFA of Georgia and MoE of Israel Sign Declaration on Completion of Technical and Economic Feasibility Study for Free Trade Agreement



The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia reports that Iliia Darchishvili, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, and the Minister of Economy and Industry of the State of Israel, Nir Barkat, signed a joint declaration on completion of a technical and economic feasibility study for a free trade agreement between Georgia and the State of Israel.

Before the signing ceremony, the Minister held a meeting with the Minister of Economy and Industry of Israel, seeing the sides discuss current issues on the agenda of bilateral and multilateral cooperation and the great potential of cooperation in the economic area, including bilateral trade, investments and tourism.

Within the framework of the two-day visit, Darchiashvili will meet with his

Israeli counterpart, Eli Cohen, and the President of the State of Israel, Isaac Herzog.

Meetings with the chairman of the Knesset, ministers of economy, tourism and internal affairs are also planned. The Minister of Foreign Affairs will lay a wreath at the Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Centre on behalf of the Georgian people.

Health Minister Urges Parents of Children with Achondroplasia to Continue Talks at Working Table



Georgian Health Minister Zurab Azarashvili on Monday urged the group of protesting parents of children with achondroplasia to continue the discussion over the introduction of treatment methods "at the negotiation table, in a constructive format."

"It is very difficult to carry on the process, seeking to solve the issue, amid noise and tension," he noted, emphasizing that "the Ministry's door is open,"

with parents encouraged to participate in the working group on this specific topic.

He went on to say that the groups have been debating the medicine Vosoritide, used to treat achondroplasia.

"We have never refused to treat this rare disease. Budgets were also never emphasized. Budget problems have never been observed. We expressed our willingness to include parents in the protocol creation group. From our end, there will be no delay or problem," he pointed out.



PM: World Will No Longer Be the Way it Was, No-one Can Find Way Out of This Difficult Situation Alone- We Need Unity

Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili stated at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Budapest that it is an indisputable fact that today the global order is changing and the world will never be the same again.

"No-one can find a way out of this difficult situation alone. We need unity, global cooperation for a new, fairer order. Only by standing together will we be able to

achieve this goal," he pointed out, adding that the strength for unity is in traditional, supreme, eternal, universal values that determine the entire history and culture and everyday life.

"These values can be easily expressed - faith, freedom, peace, dignity, truth, equality, sanctity of the family, respect for parents, ancestors, traditions, love for homeland and people, hope for a better future. All that can be summed up in the postulates

proposed by Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia Ilia II, the wisest and most authoritative person in our country - God, motherland, man.

"The entire history of Georgia is based on these values. Essentially, these values are gathered in one book - the Gospel. Our country was one of the first to recognize Christianity as the state religion, back in the fourth century," stated the Prime Minister.

Ukraine Latest - Russia Claims Ukraine Attempted Drone Attack on the Kremlin, Kyiv Denies Involvement

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

The Kremlin claimed Wednesday that Ukraine had tried to strike the Kremlin with drones overnight but said the attack on the heart of the Russian government was “successfully repulsed.”

Russian President Vladimir Putin was not injured in the purported attack, which was reported by Russian state media agency TASS on Wednesday. The Kremlin provided no evidence to back up the claim of an attempted attack, however.

Ukrainian officials denied any involvement in the alleged attack and said it might suggest Russia is planning a large-scale “terrorist” attack against Ukraine in the coming days.

BLINKEN SAYS US CANNOT VALIDATE ACCUSATION THAT UKRAINE ATTEMPTED TO KILL PUTIN

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday said the US cannot validate Russia's accusation that Ukraine tried to strike the Kremlin in an attempt to assassinate Russian President Vladimir Putin, according to Reuters.

Blinken said he would take anything coming from the Kremlin with a “very large shaker of salt,” according to the report.

He also reiterated the United States' support for Ukraine and said he feels confident that the country will be successful in its effort to retake more of its territory.

Ukraine denied any involvement in the alleged drone attack.

A senior Ukrainian presidential official, Mykhailo Podolyak, said Ukraine had

nothing to do with the drone strike, stating on Twitter that “Ukraine wages an exclusively defensive war and does not attack targets on the territory of the Russian Federation.”

Rather, he said the allegations suggest Russia was planning a large-scale “terrorist” attack against Ukraine in the coming days.

Serhii Nikiforov, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's spokesman, also told the Ukrainian Pravda news outlet that Kyiv was not involved in the incident.

“We have no information about the so-called night attacks on the Kremlin, but as President Zelenskyy has repeatedly stated, Ukraine directs all available forces and means to liberate its own territories, not to attack foreign ones,” he told the news outlet in comments translated by NBC News.

Nikiforov said Russia's description of the incident as a “terrorist” attack was interesting given Russia's repeated attacks against Ukrainian territory over the course of the war.

“A terrorist attack is the destroyed houses in Dnipro and Uman, or a rocket fired at the train station in Kramatorsk and many other tragedies. And what happened in Moscow was obviously an escalation of the situation in light of May 9,” alluding to Russia's upcoming Victory Day parade commemorating the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II.

RUSSIAN STRIKE IN KHERSON REGION KILLS 16 CIVILIANS

Sixteen civilians were killed Wednesday in heavy Russian shelling of Ukraine's Kherson region, according to Reuters.

Ukrainian officials said the Russian missile strike hit a large store, a railway station and residential buildings.

Twelve of the victims were in the city

of Kherson, the southern region's capital, where a large hypermarket came under fire as people were in the store shopping, Reuters reported.

The news agency said explosions also tore through a railway station in the area and that at least two survivors were seen being carried out on stretchers.

Four more people, including three engineers who were trying to repair the power grid that has been damaged in earlier Russian bombardments, were killed in villages outside the main city.

Ukrainian officials said 22 people had also been wounded in Kherson city in “chaotic shelling and strikes on civilian infrastructure facilities.”

Russia did not comment on the attacks in Kherson, one of four Ukrainian regions it said it annexed last September.

HUGE FIRES BURN AT UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN OIL DEPOTS AFTER DRONE ATTACKS

Oil facilities in Ukraine and Russia have been targeted in separate incidents reportedly involving drones this week.

Ukrainian officials said a Russian drone strike on an oil depot in the city of Kropyvnytskyi, in the central Kirovohrad region of Ukraine, had caused a major fire. Andriy Raykovych, the head of the Kirovohrad regional military administration, said Russia had used drones to attack the facility during the night.

“Around three in the morning, 3 Geran-2 [Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones] bombers attacked an oil depot in the regional center at once. There were no casualties,” he said on Telegram, adding that emergency services were on the scene. Ukraine's prosecutor general said that as a result of the drone attack, a “large-scale fire started.”

Meanwhile, it's believed that a major fire that broke out Wednesday at a fuel depot in a village in the southwestern

Russian region of Krasnodar, near the Crimean bridge linking the Russian mainland to the Crimean peninsula annexed by Russia in 2014, was also caused by a drone.

“The fire of a tank with oil products on the territory of the JSC Tamaneftgaz enterprise occurred as a result of the fall of a drone,” TASS reported, citing the emergency services which said a fire had broken out covering almost 1.25 thousand square meters. “Extinguishing is currently ongoing. There are no casualties,” the representative of the emergency services said.

Reuters reported that rail deliveries to Russia's nearby Black Sea port of Taman would be restricted until further notice.

The news agency reported that videos from Taman posted on Russian social media showed flames and black smoke billowing over large tanks emblazoned with red lettering reading “flammable.”

The latest incident comes after Moscow accused Ukraine of setting fire to an oil depot in Sevastopol in Crimea last weekend.

Ukraine's military command did not take direct responsibility for the attack but an official noted that the undermining of Russia's logistics were part of “preparatory” work ahead of its anticipated counteroffensive.

ZELENSKY VISITS FINLAND

In other news, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky made a surprise trip to Finland where he met the country's president as well as other Nordic leaders for a summit on Wednesday.

In a joint news conference with Finland's president, Sauli Niinistö, Mr. Zelensky thanked Finland for its continuous support of “our freedom and territorial integrity and sovereignty.”

Mr. Niinistö and Mr. Zelensky were also expected to meet with the prime

ministers of Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland to “discuss the situation of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine” and “the Nordic countries' continued support for Ukraine,” as well as Ukraine's relationship with the European Union and NATO, according to a statement from the Finnish presidency.

The Ukrainian president has made few overseas trips since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Last month he received a hero's welcome on an official visit to Poland.

US APPROVES \$300 MILLION FOR UKRAINE IN LATEST SECURITY ASSISTANCE PACKAGE

The Biden administration approved a new security assistance package for Ukraine worth \$300 million.

The latest military assistance package, the 37th such tranche, brings U.S. commitment to Ukraine's fight to more than \$36 billion since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The capabilities in the package are:
• Additional ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS

• 155mm Howitzers
• 155mm artillery rounds
• 120mm, 81mm, and 60mm mortar rounds

• Tube-Launched, Optically-Tracked, Wire-Guided, or TOW, missiles
• AT-4 and Carl Gustaf anti-armor weapon systems

• Hydra-70 aircraft rockets
• Small arms and small arms ammunition


• Demolition munitions for obstacle clearing
• Trucks and trailers to transport heavy equipment




• Testing and diagnostic equipment to support vehicle maintenance and repair
• Spare parts and other field equipment

Xeme

EXPLORE OUR BELOVED CITY FROM THE BIRD VIEW

Xeme restaurant is located on the 31st floor in The Biltmore Tbilisi Hotel



The name of the restaurant Xeme speaks for itself, as it means the arctic fork-tailed gull.

THE BILTMORE
Tbilisi

29 Rustaveli Avenue, 0108, Tbilisi, Georgia / T: +995 322 72 72 72 / Info.bhtg@biltmorecollection.com

NDI Poll: Georgian Citizens Remain Steadfast in their Stated Aim of European and Euro-Atlantic Integration

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) and CRRC Georgia have released the results of their latest public opinion research in Georgia, indicating Georgian citizens' unwavering support for political (54%) and economic (52%) cooperation with the European Union (EU).

However, the aspirations of the Georgian people come into contrast with a perception that the government is not doing enough to ensure EU membership.

"It's clear the will of the Georgian public is firmly in the camp of European and Euro-Atlantic integration. The consistency of the public support for EU and NATO membership should encourage political and civic leaders to deliver on the settled will of the Georgian people," said NDI Georgia country director, Alan Gillam. "The government, parliament and political parties need to work together to actively reconnect with the public on their issues of top concern; jobs, poverty and rising prices, if they are to restore public trust in political institutions. To continue democratic progress, the rebuilding of confidence in political parties around public priorities and not narrow political agendas is paramount."

The recent poll indicates a concerning trend of low public confidence in institutions. 64% of Georgians are saying none of the parties represent their interests. Even among those who identify with a particular party, 14% of GD supporters and 36% of opposition supporters say none of the parties represent their interests. Skepticism is the highest among the young demographic - only 15% say there is at least one party representing their views.



The new poll reveals a growing demand for women's political participation, which can be understood as a desire for change in political discourse and agendas. Image source: thejakartapost

Further, Georgians remain skeptical of the parliament's willingness to address their concerns. Half of the population (49%) does not believe parliament is passing legislation on issues that matter to them. Only a third believe that parliament regularly communicates with the public. Lastly, every second Georgian (51%) says they don't trust

any of the Georgian TV channels, which is a significant increase from 20% in 2019.

The new poll reveals a growing demand for women's political participation, which can be understood as a desire for change in political discourse and agendas. There is an increase (from 48% to 56%) in the number of people who

believe that women and men represent their interests equally, and fewer people (16%) say male politicians represent them better than women. Further, more and more people demand 50-50 gender representation in the parliament.

"There is a clear desire from the Georgian public to see more women, not just in politics, but in positions of respon-

sibility within their representative and government structures. Political parties should see this as an opportunity to increase representation in line with the public desire and continue to progress the advancement of women's political participation," said Alan Gillam.

NDI surveys public opinion to help Georgian stakeholders diagnose and address issues of public concern by providing accurate, unbiased and statistically sound data. This poll aims to capture the most relevant information to foster the development of responsive policies and governance.

The new report looks at a nationwide survey conducted between March 17-23, through telephone interviews with a nationwide representative sample of Georgia's adult population, excluding occupied territories. The March poll included 1032 completed interviews. The average margin of error is +/- 2 percent. NDI's survey work is funded by UK aid from the British people. This poll was carried out by CRRC Georgia.

NDI is a non-profit, non-partisan, non-governmental organization that works in partnership around the world to strengthen and safeguard democratic institutions, processes, norms and values to secure a better quality of life for all. NDI envisions a world where democracy and freedom prevail, with dignity for all.

CRRC-Georgia is a non-governmental, non-profit research organization with a mission to promote evidence-based debates on policy issues by providing reliable, up-to-date and accessible data and analysis. More information is available at <http://www.crrc.ge>

Western Isolationism and the Fate of Georgia



Photo by Win McNamee/Getty Images

BY MICHAEL GODWIN

Much of the world, and particularly the collective West, has come out in support of Ukraine's defense against Russia's invasion. Europe, the United States, and the United Kingdom, as well as a host of others, have sent everything from weapons, medical supplies, food, and other forms of support to aid in the preservation of Ukraine's sovereignty. However, some have opposed this stream of support, including those in positions of power.

Groups in the United States and Europe have made their opposition vocal. Far-Left and far-Right alike have come out, demanding that the millions of dollars and euros going to Kyiv be redirected to

domestic projects. Often cited is the lack of accountability when their nation's leaders write immense or "blank" checks to Ukraine, or that the depleted stocks of military hardware sacrifices their own national security in favor for a far-off conflict.

In the United States, right-leaning outlets such as Fox News' Tucker Carlson to left leaning Noam Chomsky have both chided the government for its role in supporting Ukrainian defense. Members of Congress from both right and left have blocked bills attempting to curtail Russian oil and gas exports or seizure of oligarch assets. Europe is not alone in this. Several hardline parties in European parliaments have called for Europe to focus inwards and leave their two neighbors to solve their differences by Ukraine ceding territory.

This comes as a gentle rise in "war weariness" threatens to shift attention

from regions that require considerable attention. Ukraine, Georgia, and the South Caucasus at large are all under threat of this trend. In the US, many have claimed this is cloaked in an attempt to pull back from recent foreign engagements and perceived US "imperialism."

Following over 20 years of conflict and combat operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, the US and its NATO allies have been more reluctant than ever to become entangled in another overseas foray. This is compounded by the disastrous exit from Kabul and the overrunning of the country by a terrorist army. US leaders have been far more anti-interventionist, perhaps the most in the 21st century.

Additionally, complaints by both politicians and social organizations have characterized the war as inevitable due to NATO expansionism. These groups argue that the alliance's constant toying with Kyiv about membership, while offering significant training programs and material support prior to the war, forces the Kremlin's hand to invade. This is not to mention the complete silence on the occupation in a fifth of Georgian territory and the routine kidnappings conducted by Russian units along the occupation line.

The threat of Western nations pulling away from their support for Eastern European countries in need of support is dire. Georgia, while strong and growing in its own right, still has a litany of internal and geopolitical problems only the US and EU have the weight to help solve. Simply put, it is a far cry from imperialism for one economic and defense heavyweight to lift up a smaller, comparatively weaker nation and help it secure its national interests.

Contrary to these calls against further involvement in the support for Ukraine, additional support and aid is what will bring the war to an end. Not only this, but it is the defeat of Russian President Vladimir Putin that is the greatest guarantor of security for Europe and the



Photo by Tasos Katopodis/Getty Images

South Caucasus. For Georgia itself, this also means a victory in the fight against corruption.

Activists and watchdogs in Tbilisi have routinely questioned the direction of the ruling party, Georgian Dream. There is little in the way to defend the party, with constant statements that lie perpendicular to European integration and NATO alignment. Their conduct further confirms the pro-Russia allegations, as repeated disrespectful, tasteless, and boorish remarks are leveled at EU and American leadership on an almost daily basis.

The recent sanctions against four of Georgia's top judges shows that there is still interest in righting the path of the nation. But this cannot be the only warning. The United States, along with its European partners, have to take more assertive steps to keep Tbilisi on the Western path.

The potential for Georgia and others to fall into the grasp of the Kremlin and for Ukraine's attempt to regain its land to fail, lies with its Western allies. While it may seem unlikely that these fringe elements will gain traction in Washington or Brussels, these sentiments are

being echoed by social and media figures. With such a wide following, these influencers stand to rally a larger base in favor of the politicians that push for a non-interventionist policy.

Despite this, still many millions of individuals and thousands of organizations continue to provide material and financial support to Ukraine's defenders. Groups such as NAFO (North Atlantic Fellas Organizations) route donations to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense as well as individual units engaged in fighting Russia's invasion. Support for Georgia has not left the mouths of Europe's leaders either.

For Georgia, Ukraine, and others, the friendship and support offered from their Western partners cannot be undermined by the calls of the few. While the US and EU have pledged an immense amount of resources to Ukraine, they have more than enough ability to manage internal issues as well. Support for Georgia and Ukraine simply does not preclude the importance of domestic matters. If Russia is given the opportunity to succeed in its aggressive ambitions, the home-front can become the next front line.

Georgia & Armenia Tech Hub Summit 2023

Keynote Speaker



Speaker



Embassy of the Republic
of Armenia in Georgia

Panelists



Venue Sponsor



Media Sponsors



Date: **May 15, 2023**

9:30 to 2PM including lunch

Location: Tbilisi Marriott Hotel, 13 Rustaveli Avenue

Agenda

1. Choosing between one or both countries, surprising number of Tech companies in both
2. Issues with staffing and integration of staff for each country
3. Exporting IP
4. FDI trends
5. Tax incentives

Delegate Pre-Registration Open

pantsulaia@kleinlawgroupgeorgia.com
cell/whatsapp +995 577 400650

Organizers

The law firms KLEIN & PANTSULAIA and KLEIN & ISKANDARYAN - Pioneering Georgian & Armenian law firms that are the only firms on the market that join forces between an Expat lawyer and Georgian and Armenian lawyers.

KLEIN & PANTSULAIA

KLEIN & ISKANDARYAN

More Realism, Less Hypocrisy: Cooperation by Action, Not Posturing by Words. Part 3

ANALYSIS BY VICTOR KIPIANI,
GEOCASE CHAIRMAN

To win the geopolitical favor of "third countries," some global players have established a new approach to rewarding them with preferential economic gestures or by other similar means. It should be noted that "third countries" are no less successful or flexible in taking advantage of this. Thus, to the newly exalted "realism" is now added a geopolitical handwriting, dictated by an undisguised material interest. Practically, the international system has moved from latent transactionalism to an open phase of mutual exchange. This trend seems to have become irreversible and may become a kind of norm in the medium term, if it is not already. It also poses the following question to be discussed next in this article.

A RETURN TO A POLITICAL ECONOMY?

In this sense, the attempt to establish the so-called Global South as a quasi-autonomous pole in the emerging system (lack of system) of global relations is indicative. We have already discussed this issue in previous articles, but now we will highlight one characteristic feature of this quasi-autonomy - a concrete and understandable economic benefit as a measure of expediency of foreign policy actions.

Reflecting this new trend is the fact that although 141 of the 193 countries in the UN format have condemned Russian aggression in Ukraine, only 33 of them have joined the sanctions against Moscow. To illustrate this even better: roughly the same number of countries supply Ukraine with lethal weapons, while the rest of the world, home to two-thirds of the world's population, refrains from military assistance in one form or another. Stating these numbers is not an attempt to measure the reality with an arithmetic parameter. By no means. These numbers are merely a call to face reality from the perspective of us as a small country.

In the existing situation, even those countries whose responsibilities in the global order are much higher than those of small countries and even of regional leaders do not avoid advantageous moves. They do not consider it unworthy of themselves even when the domestic political system itself or the foreign alliance should not give them any kind of moral right to do so. A good illustration

of this is modern India, which has openly justified its geopolitical line with mercantile economic benefits (India's "Balancing Act") which has manifested itself in an at least threefold increase in the purchase of significantly discounted Russian oil.

All of the above shows that current processes cannot be limited to a "struggle between democracy and autocracy," as it leads only to the narrowness of such explanatory analysis, shortsighted foresight, and consequent errors in policy-making. It is a fact that the modern stage offers us a policy of so-called "non-waste interests," and this reality should be accepted sensibly and calmly. The Georgian approach needs the appropriate capacity to adapt to achieve the task at hand - greater national security, greater economic prosperity.

THE REFUSAL TO CONTRAST BLACK AND WHITE IN POLITICS...

The ideological contrasts that have characterized Western politics for many decades have, if not disappeared, then undergone a serious reassessment. Judging by the signs that have shown up today, one can assume that the approach of moving from "extreme to extreme" has been stress-tested, facilitated by several unsuccessful military campaigns and the claws of the post-Covid economy. And balancing the right choice between an active role in the external arena and domestic needs became the inevitable dilemma.

The search for the right golden mean is hotly debated in Western sources; there are many opinions or recommendations; there are criticisms, sometimes accompanied by radical appeals. But the task of maintaining domestic economic and social stability and development so that it does not lack the necessary resources for its weighty positioning in the system of external relations remains the axis of the problem. In light of the problems accumulated at this stage, this equation (or balance) is not easy to solve. As an example, we again cite the US national security strategy, which, inter alia, does not exclude situational or tactical cooperation with other countries, or even President Macron's statement on the advisability of a "balanced partnership" of France in Africa.

In short, the declared revision of the political line leads to the necessary understanding by the West that (1) other countries may have their own interests and (2) they may not always coincide with the interests of the West. We have already mentioned this rule of excep-

tions on the example of several individual countries, which does not mean that these countries are revisionists or that they have begun to sabotage the West: due to their geographical and geopolitical or historical and cultural specificity, they simply retain their own, necessary handwriting in creating practical policies.

Thus, for sincere communication and real work without hypocrisy in interstate relations (including partner relations), it is necessary at least: (1) to understand clearly what our interests and the interests of the other side are, (2) to be able to identify common priorities in light of the intersection of these interests, and (3) to be able to say frankly what can be achieved together and what cannot.

PUBLIC OPTIMISM AND BEHIND-THE-SCENES PESSIMISM?

The resumption of Russian aggression in Ukraine on February 24 last year is a test of the strength of the connection between the publicly demonstrated huge practical efforts to defeat the aggressor, on the one hand, and the subjects of these efforts, on the other. Today, this strength is assessed in different ways, and it is not only about the position of countries that have not joined Western sanctions or are in a "balancing" mode.

Here, indeed, the most important task is for the indestructible unity to rise before the flouting of international law in the Russian neighborhood and, with a unified standard, unwavering will and result-oriented actions, facilitate the full (rather than half) payment of one big "debt" - the removal of countries caught in a geopolitical and security vacuum, from that vacuum.

And as for the aggressor, its main intention is to find and methodically deepen the cracks in the unity directed at it; for it is testing the strength of generations accustomed to comfort after the Cold War, who consider peace and stability in Europe an eternal given; by devaluing human life, it is trying to embarrass the European "burgher," nurtured by "consumerism," and to disarm his will; Having failed to achieve quick success on the battlefield, it switches to another tactic - the protracted, gradual escalation of military conflict, and in this way, again by devaluing human life, tries to make the necessary changes in the rival's psychological mindset. At the same time, under the autocracy of its own internal political system, the small influence of public opinion (if it exists at all) does not create any obstacles for the aggressor

to pursue an expansionist policy. Time, according to its own calculation, is working for it and it will try to prolong the conflict as long as possible precisely for the purpose of a gradual and final disintegration of the said unity.

Solving the above problem is not easy, of course. First of all, one must believe that one can and will do it, and that solving the problem in half, or postponing it, or stretching it out over a long period of time will make the task much more difficult. Accordingly, the realization of publicly proclaimed goals requires a political attitude grown on realism. Certain fluctuations in the mobilization of necessary attitudes occur periodically. Several such examples can be found in the lines of the Euro-Atlantic Union, where attitudes toward threats are sometimes explained by differences in their perception and evaluation. This, in turn, is determined by geographical remoteness from the source of the threat, as well as historical ties with it and the intensity of trade and economic contacts (influenced by political economy?). Moreover, even in the mentioned context, recently we have been hearing about such "special cases" that require a separate special consideration. For example, in the ranks of Republicans in the United States there are such attitudes towards the war in Ukraine (whether at the level of the House of Representatives or in the context of the presidential election of 2024) that often does not coincide with the course proclaimed by the occupants of the White House - Democrats. Just recall the statement of one of the possible candidates of the Republican Party, Ron DeSantis, who reduced the Russian-Ukrainian war to the category of a "territorial dispute".

The near future will show whether the system can adapt in time, finally get rid of hypocrisy and properly readjust to the management of existing threats. After all, this, in addition to the future of international security, is related to the national security of our country, its adequate setting up and appropriate adaptation to current processes.

'NOTES FOR GEORGIA'

The resumption of Russian aggression in Ukraine definitively put an end not only to the post-1945 system of global security, but also to its variety, the post-Cold War structure. The international order has turned into a "disorderly order" at worst, and a hybrid order at best. One symptom of this hybridity is the attempt to create security blocs along regional lines (so-called "regional networking"). Probably a peculiar echo of the same

trend is the increasing number of countries pursuing a policy of "balancing" - avoiding a clear stand on one side with regard to military conflict at the expense of greater coordination at the regional level. The same trend explains the willingness of a major global actor such as the United States to work not only with traditional allies, but also with amorphous "middle powers" to achieve short- and medium-term goals.

In the current situation, Official Tbilisi's agenda for this stage should consider: (1) The final rejection of the stereotype of seeing the world through an idealistic prism, (2) Searching for unconventional ways of solving Georgia's "more security" issue in the emerging global "alternative order" together with the civilized world, (3) Identifying experimental models in coordination with allies and partners and considering practical aspects on an accelerated basis.

At the same time - to put an end to idealism - the Georgian side should bear in mind that any hegemon will always be true to its nature; that a "big country" cannot be "ordinary" a priori, since this is the opposite of its global hegemonic influence and essence. Therefore, the right combination of healthy interests, coexistence with the dominant powers without hypocrisy and useless posturing, being in acceptable "influences" is one of the prerequisites of our development.

Speaking of hegemony, let us note one caveat to better understand the essence of hegemony: while "hegemony" refers to the reputational influence caused by soft power on its part and the understandable attraction to it, "imperialism" refers to the imposition of one's own influence on others by force. This is a fundamental difference that the Georgian side should keep in mind, which it should take into account, sensibly and rationally.

Regarding the region, we believe that Georgia's foreign policy should leave all possible and result-oriented doors open. In the South Caucasus, the main focus should be on achieving "stability through trade". We believe that such flexibility and pragmatism will make it easier for our country's allies and partners to better penetrate, engage and consolidate in the region: a region where the concept of "spheres of influence" is still relevant and will remain so for the foreseeable future.

In short, the time has come for Georgian ultra-realistic, unsentimental policy. Under such a policy, an action free of ideological clichés should be measured only by economically understandable benefits and by relations acceptable in terms of security.

The Thirst for National Identity

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

One of the most commonly used definitions of globalization is that modern-day trade, technology and education have turned our planet into an unbelievably interlinked, interactive and interdependent place, which seems to be increasingly smaller and simpler now than it used to be. The concomitant new tendency of shared experience and human commonality is oriented on diminishing the sense of ethnic individualism, conducive to the eventual disappearance of not only national identity but the extant state borders too. At the same time, the desire to maintain national identity remains one of the most crucial characteristic features of our time. This is an apparent discrepancy, creating a clearly noticeable contradiction between promoters of globalization and advocates of national

distinctiveness.

The notion of national identity and the belief in national sovereignty are losing their once-pivotal meaning to peoples and states, giving way to the concept of one big unified world with amalgamated cultures and ways of life. Sakartvelo is a land of the people who are eager to keep up their national identity and who find it painful to play deaf and blind to those lovely national features, manners, attitudes, beliefs, faith and model of behavior that constitute its ethnic and cultural uniqueness.

The best and the biggest corroboration of this statement was the massive rally of April 30 in Tbilisi, dedicated to Georgia's peaceful, steady and unperturbed development, based on the general acceptance of commonly established international rules of play, but also on purely national interests and indigenous economic and ideological decisions.

Both the speakers and listeners deeply believed that maintenance of national identity harbors enough power to

strengthen peace and enhance the Georgian people's physical security, give impetus to improved handling of governmental affairs, make possible sustainable economic progress, stimulate the belief that loving each other is more helpful and productive than hatred and animosity, makes living more secure and the future much better guaranteed, within which strong national self-image and mutual understanding is sooner possible than not.

It was felt that the participants in the manifestation highly appreciated the sense of belonging which has always been, and still is, one of the most influential tools of survival in the daily life of this nation, which has become somewhat controversial today.

The Georgians usually think that the feeling of vivid national identity is not only a morally valuable and dramatic source for a high-quality and pleasurable life, but also a commanding tool in the nation's international life, within which the win-win national position is to be

likable, especially in expectation of the country's incipient Euro-Atlantic integration. On the other hand, this kind of discourse might seem a little irrelevant when the age of nationalism has already come to an end, and the nations of the world precipitously tend to integrate into new various types of military, political or economic alliances, call it new empires if you wish, with modern democratic and liberal veneer. Yet, at the same time, there is something very sweet and lovely in being identified as a scion of a certain specific descent. This is exactly what the average Georgian is not prepared to give up in terms of their national distinctiveness, which adds a certain amount of gratifying eccentricity to life.

Just as agreeable is the tolerant cosmopolitan multicultural international community, within which overall survival purposes are better served than within an isolated national nutshell. For a relevant instance, the former Soviet family of nations, now often described as an

Evil Empire, was a specific historical attempt to integrate nations into one sociopolitical conglomerate, allowing its nations to remain ethnic in form but socialist in content.

The golden median between globalist benefits and national delight is the model suggested by Thomas Freedman, who put his unique notion succinctly in the title of one of his famous books 'Lexus and the Olive Tree', meaning that simultaneous enjoyment of modern ways of living and maintenance of the roots would work most optimally in modern Man's complicated and technologically overwhelmed life.

In a word, the national-identity mindset and the ethnic-traditional way of thinking should not be an obstacle on the way to improving and embellishing our integrated and intertwined contemporary world, one which treats us the humans to a whole gamut of threats and boring trivialities unless we try on our own to make life as good and interesting as we possibly can.

Hamish De Bretton-Gordon - Putin Has Operated Like Hitler in WW2, and He May Well Have a Similar End

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA
TAVBERIDZE FOR RFE/RL

British Army Colonel Hamish Stephen de Bretton-Gordon is a military analyst who formerly commanded NATO and UK chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear reaction troops.

He spoke recently with RFE/RL's Georgian Service about whether Russian President Vladimir Putin's nuclear threats have "backfired," a devastating mobilization that targets Russia's most vulnerable communities, and argues that Russia's "irrelevance" is inevitable once the Ukraine war is over.

IN A RECENT PIECE, YOU ARGUED THAT PUTIN KNOWS THAT HIS ONLY HOPE TO WIN IN UKRAINE IS A TOTAL MILITARIZATION OF THE COUNTRY. WHAT DOES A RUSSIAN VICTORY LOOK LIKE HERE?

The special military operation that was started in February last year, where Putin said it was to prevent NATO moving further eastwards and also to reclaim Ukraine for Russia - If that is what Putin is still trying to achieve, then he has no chance of victory or stopping the expansion of NATO. Indeed, his actions have had exactly the opposite effect. Only two weeks ago, Finland, with the most powerful army in Europe, joined NATO. It also gave Putin another 832 miles of border to worry about. Putin galvanized the whole of NATO, if not the Western world, to support Ukraine to throw the Russians out of the country. So I don't think there is any chance of Putin gaining a victory from what he was trying to achieve in February last year.

WHAT COULD HE PERCEIVABLY SELL AS A VICTIM?

I'm not very sure what victory he can claim, because his army has been decimated. It will take him years and years to rebuild it. Allegedly, he's lost 2000 tanks. That is a massive force. The British government and the US government, who I tend to believe, say the casualties are over 220,000 dead or wounded, young



Russians, predominantly men. This is a huge, huge cost. Some commentators seem to think that the Ukrainians will come to the negotiation table and negotiate Crimea. But I don't think so. I think President Zelensky has been very clear that for him, victory is Russian troops pushed out to the boundaries of 2014, which would mean out of Donbas and out of Crimea. What Putin can claim victory for, I just don't know.

PUTIN PROBABLY REALIZES THIS, SO WHAT IS HE AIMING FOR NOW?

When they have so clearly set out an objective for victory but have spilled so much blood of their young people, giving in or trying to sue for peace now would be an even worse defeat. I think Putin and his generals are in the vain hope that they can eke out some sort of victory. There is also the nuclear question here. I think Putin's nuclear threats have backfired, again, because the idea of threatening a nuclear attack was to keep NATO out. And clearly that has not happened. Quite the opposite. So the nuclear threat to me is completely hol-

low. In fact, I don't believe he can use even his tactical nuclear weapons, because they're either out of range, or I'm pretty certain that NATO would prevent them being fired with some of the sophisticated weaponry that it has its disposal. My greatest concern at the moment, actually, is the nuclear power stations in Ukraine which could be attacked to create a nuclear accident and a contamination hazard across Europe.

YOU WRITE THAT THE ONLY WAY PUTIN CAN WIN IN UKRAINE IS TO PROLONG THE WAR BY FEEDING THE MEAT GRINDER UNTIL THE UKRAINIANS RUN OUT OF BULLETS.

The longer this goes on, the more Putin will feel it's for the better. Because, next year, there are elections in the US and UK and other Western countries. Our politicians are very sensitive about how much this is costing, and they're naturally interested in getting re-elected in their own countries. So if the war is still going on in 12 months' time, and there's been no progress, then you could see

that some countries might still start to waver. And perhaps that's what Putin is hoping for.

The meat grinder is almost medieval, it's certainly First World War, the amount of manpower that Russia is throwing into it. I've had credible information that the Russians are identifying the kind of young men that won't be missed, whose loss will go unnoticed - homeless, of low intelligence, or suffering from drug addiction. And they are throwing these young men at the front. In Bakhmut, the casualty rates are unbelievable, astronomically high, I find it amazing that the mothers of Russia are not causing more of a stir. I don't think these young men come from the elites in Moscow, or St. Petersburg. They're probably from far in the east where people are less able to complain about these things. And, of course, we know that in Russia, if anybody complains, they tend to get put down.

THIS "RAGTAG 4 MILLION ARMY" THAT YOU MENTION - THERE IS A CREEPING SUSPICION THAT IT WOULD ALSO HEAVILY "FAVOR" NOT RUSSIANS, BUT THE MYRIAD OF ETHNIC MINORITIES THAT RUSSIA HAS, AS WELL AS ITS SATELLITES, SUCH AS ABKHAZIA AND SOUTH OSSETIA, WHICH HAVE BEEN UNDER PRESSURE TO SEND FIGHTERS. SO WHAT DOES IT SPELL FOR THOSE PEOPLE?

Yes, in Russia, the ethnic minorities, as it were, are being used as cannon fodder. It's kind of an own goal, it's an own genocide that Russia is creating, at the cost of people from the Far East who have less of a voice in Russia, who are probably less educated - Russia is using them to try and prolong this war, to use up Ukrainian bullets. It is a shocking state, which is why myself and others are calling on NATO to do everything it can to ensure that Ukraine prevails as quickly as possible so we can get to peace and stop this absolutely unbelievable bloodshed.

4 MILLION IS AN INTIMIDATING FIGURE. BUT WHAT DOES IT ACTUALLY TRANSLATE

TO ON THE BATTLEFIELD?

Simply, more dead bodies, the meat grinder, as we call it, because an infantry soldier with a rifle is no match for the modern Western weaponry that Ukraine has at its disposal, the tanks, the armored vehicles, etc.

Russia is claiming it will put the most modern tank, the E 14, on the battlefield, though in very small numbers. But there is a difference between a Russian tank and a Western tank, a lot of it in the protection they have. Having spent many years in Challenger tanks and the British army, I know these tanks are very strongly armored and could take many, many hits from a T 72, or even a T80. A T 80, or even a T 14, because they're lightly armored, will be taken out very easily by the Leopard tanks and the Challenger 2 tanks, but they can't take out a Western tank in turn. So going back to your question about the manpower, I think it is just suicide, it is genocide, because there is no way that these young men are going to be able to survive. It's a circus shooting gallery, it is unimaginable that it is being allowed to happen.

WE HAVE SEEN MANY LEADERS, RANGING ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE ROMAN EMPIRE, WHICH PUTIN ALLEGEDLY FINDS FASCINATING, TO THE MORE RECENT, SOVIET MOLD EMBODIED BY STALIN. WHAT WOULD PUTIN'S LEADERSHIP LEGEND LOOK LIKE?

From what we read, he sees himself very much as a Peter the Great of the modern era, being able to expand Russian influence across the rest of Europe. And, undoubtedly, he's been focused on how Stalin ruled Russia in the second world war - with an absolute iron grip. So it is this sort of totalitarian, autocratic dictatorship, which is ruled with a rod of iron and fear. He is now 70, he's in the last part of his life, and probably feels he must achieve something like the past great Russian leaders. And at the moment, it's all going wrong. So he will, presumably, try and do everything he can to eke out some sort of victory, but I'm not quite sure how he can do that. He's operated very much like Hitler in the Second World War. And he may well have a similar end.

New Foreign Policy Preferences in the South Caucasus

ANALYSIS BY EMIL AVDALIANI

Pace in the South Caucasus remains as remote as ever despite the recent efforts made by the US government to bring together the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers in Washington. The diplomatic attempt follows heavy fighting which took place in April between Armenia and Azerbaijan and led to a number of deaths. The escalation is the first instance since the EU deployed its civilian mission to the border between the two countries and the biggest one since September 2022 when Azerbaijan inflicted extensive damage on the cities deep in the Armenian territory.

The EU urged Baku and Yerevan to de-escalate the situation, but the violence underscored the shortcomings of the Western approach to the crisis and allows Moscow to spin the narrative that peace in the region would remain elusive until Yerevan and Baku toe the Russian line. The Kremlin also took advantage of the occasion to demonstrate that Moscow remains in control of the process by announcing that Baku and Yerevan would also conduct discussions in Moscow in the near future.

Armenia is in a difficult situation. It lost the war in 2020, signed an unfavorable ceasefire agreement with Azerbaijan, and has been withstanding Baku's asser-

tive moves in the border areas, which has resulted in occasional fighting and casualties on both sides.

Yerevan's troubles are exacerbated by the fact that Russia, its security benefactor, now has considerably tighter connections with Azerbaijan. Since Russia's second invasion of Ukraine, the two have maintained effective relations, and signed an extensive cooperation agreement in February 2022. For the moment, the foundation for strong bilateral ties seems solid. Russia needs Azerbaijan as a land route (International North-South Transport Corridor) to access Iran, with whom Moscow has had extensive security and political relations since the war in Ukraine began. Russia cannot also openly criticize Azerbaijan since the latter has strategic relations with Turkey, which occupies a special place in Moscow's efforts to divide the Western unity from within.

Moreover, there appears to be a genuine antipathy in Moscow for the Armenian political leadership. Since the current prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan, came to power as a result of the peaceful 2018 revolution, relations between the two countries alternated between cooperation and occasional tensions. For instance, Pashinyan declined to sign a joint statement during the CSTO meeting in Yerevan due to a lack of empathy for Armenia's position at a time when it was under pressure from non-CSTO member Azerbaijan. Later on, Yerevan refused to engage in the CSTO military



In Moscow's thinking, whatever happens in bilateral ties, Armenia will have no choice but to again follow Russia's lead. Source: civilnet.am

training, while allowing Brussels to send a civilian mission into Armenia.

For Armenia, Russia's sometimes overtly anti-Armenian stance reflects a broader stagnation in Moscow's position across Eurasia. Indeed, the invasion in Ukraine was only a catalyst of much broader problems for Moscow which in reality began long before 2022. The way Russia-led multilateral institutions have approached Armenia's problems feed into Yerevan's dissatisfaction. For example, the CSTO has repeatedly ignored Yerevan's appeals for assistance. Moscow is undoubtedly behind this ambiguity,

but other members of the military alliance are likewise somewhat less interested in Armenia's position. It could even be argued that non-member Azerbaijan has far more partners in the CSTO than Armenia.

Moreover, the EU regards Azerbaijan as a critical energy resource in its efforts to diversify away from geopolitically risky reliance on Russia. Azerbaijan, like Georgia, is an important stop on the Middle Corridor, which connects the Black Sea to Central Asia and then to China. The Middle Corridor is likely to play a significantly larger role in an era

when the Russian route has been losing its traditional relevance.

As a result, Armenia is gradually realizing that Russia is no longer as trustful an ally as it has been seen for since the 1990s. Much of these troubles are caused not only by Russia's ongoing but increasingly unsuccessful war in Ukraine, but also by wider troubles in Russia's global position. Moreover, one should not discount the changes in Russia's geopolitical worldview. Despite the fact that it has established an alliance-based multilateral institution such as the CSTO, Moscow does not operate according to alliance logic as it happens in the West, i.e. with NATO.

Moscow's foreign policy with its neighbors is based on a transactional approach, and, as one might predict, Azerbaijan is regarded as a considerably more significant actor. For the moment, it has a far more important geographic position than Armenia and possesses greater resources. Azerbaijan also has Turkey, and is therefore able to manoeuvre in foreign policy, seeking alternatives to close ties with Russia. The latter therefore operates from the balance of power perspective, which means that in Moscow's thinking, whatever happens in bilateral ties, Armenia will have no choice but to again follow Russia's lead.

Emil Avdaliani is a professor of international relations at European University in Tbilisi, Georgia, and a scholar of silk roads.

Meet the Owners of Lost Ridge Inn, a Booming Sustainable Eco-Business in Kakheti



La Tabagari, cofounder of Lost Ridge Inn

INTERVIEW BY KATIE RUTH DAVIES,
TRANSLATION BY ANA DUMBADZE

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

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

In last week's newspaper, we shared our impressions of the place after a wonderful stay there. To round-off our visit, GEORGIA TODAY sat down with cofounders John Wurdeman* and Ia Tabagari** to find out more about the business.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO SET UP A RANCH, THEN INN?

JOHN: I've always had a passion for horses since my childhood. My grandfather had horses in Virginia where I grew up. I first came to Kakheti and Tusheti in 1996, and I enjoyed riding horses through the countryside. I bought a small home in Sighnaghi and wanted

to have the experience I had in the mountains close to home. So with a few friends, I bought some Tushetian breed horses and set up a horse ranch in Khornabudji. At this point, we weren't thinking about tourism so much, as tourism hadn't taken off in the region - it was simply to have outdoor experiences for myself and family and friends.

Some years later, Ia and I founded Living Roots as an inbound tourism company, with a focus on quality culinary and wine experiences, blended with outdoor adventure tourism for diversity of experience, which came about because of our shared passion for the outdoors. Ia grew up with horseback riding and had a vision of how that could be an extra enhancement for our guests in between and amongst great gastro experiences. So we moved my horses and added some others to the village of Qedeli, which was in close proximity to Bodbe Monastery and Sighnaghi - two destinations we loved, as did our visitors. Also, it was in close proximity to my winery, Pheasant's Tears, and Pheasant's Tears Restaurant, where we also do a fair amount of entertaining.

Annie Lucas and Doug Grimmes from Seattle, WA, veterans in the Post-Soviet space travel world joined us, bringing deep experience in international travel and a passion for well-crafted beers to our Qedeli enterprise. In Kakheti and Georgia at large, wine is the most celebrated drink, but well-crafted beer highlighting local ingredients has been a welcomed addition to the culinary landscape of Georgia. We developed the Inn and guest rooms to help bring more

people to stay in our village for longer stints, and give them a place to stay that had the same attention to detail we offered in our tours, horse trekking, winery, and restaurants. Over time, we had many guests that wanted to dine or have events onsite, so we developed various kitchens for special events, catering, and that has evolved into a destination farm-to-table dining venue. We've also been developing vegetable gardens and orchards to augment our sourcing of ingredients at our Ranch Café, as well as to supply to other local venues.

WHY KAKHETI?

I was first attracted to Kakheti due to its special melismatic style of polyphonic singing, and its beautiful wine culture. I also adore Tusheti, and Kakheti was the gateway to the Eastern Highlands.

TELL US HOW YOU CAME INTO WINE/BEER/RESTAURANTS/HORSES AND INNS.

By profession, I'm an artist, but I was also very fond of music, especially ethnic singing, and I've cooked since my childhood. My early years in Georgia, I divided my time between collecting folk songs and painting; a decade later, I became curious about how to bring back some rare varieties of grapes and attention to indigenous winemaking methods, and we launched Pheasant's Tears in 2007. One year later, we realized we needed a restaurant to share our wines together with seasonal cuisine that, like our wines, reflected a deep knowledge and respect for traditions, while also constantly experimenting and contributing to the tradition we loved and revered so much - so we opened Pheasant's Tears restaurant in 2008. In Qedeli, we established a homestead that receives guests, and where a full circle of gardening, composting, brewing, cooking and serving takes place, offering high quality fresh seasonal cuisine with the best beers and wine of Georgia.

IA, TELL US ABOUT YOUR TEAM- MANAGERS, CHEFS, STABLEHANDS, ETC.

We are extremely lucky to have a gifted team of amazing horse specialists, cooks, hosts, gardeners, and storytellers. When you visit us, you visit a family, where everyone has their specialty but we all complement and support one another. We also collaborate with other farmers, cheesemakers, restaurants and tour companies, making Lost Ridge a catalyst for a revival of high quality rural tourism in the region at large.

WHAT MAKES LOST RIDGE STAND OUT?

We bought land in an abandoned village, restored several hundred-year-old houses to preserve the traditional style characteristic of Kiziqi architecture, using the experience of local wood craftsmen and natural materials. After brewing, we feed the leftovers to the horses, we take the horse manure to the permaculture garden, where there are fruit trees and vegetables. The grass grows there, with which we feed the horses: It has resulted in such an interesting circular cycle! We've also employed amazing people from the neighboring village, who brought us experience in gardening, cooking, and many other treats of hidden knowledge. We treat our guests to seasonal vegetables and fruits grown in our vegetable garden. Our employees have registered as small entrepreneurs, so the procurement process has been simplified. The morning breakfast boasts village eggs,



Lost Ridge uses food grown in its permaculture garden and supplied from a nearby village

sour cream, fresh cheese, Tone bread (Shotis puri), homemade jams and syrups. We pay special attention to gastronomic issues, the quality of wine and beer. We have a lot to do, but there are also many of us, and we help each other. During the day, the horses need to be taken care of horses or taken out on horse riding tours, meals need to be cooked, we might be working remotely on new projects and new horse riding routes, receiving and transferring guests to the hotel, holding lectures on ecotourism, wine and beer tasting, planning next year's tours...

WHAT ARE YOUR BUSINESS PLANS- ANYTHING NEW?

We're in the process of erecting a historic wooden home from Adjara at Lost Ridge, one that would have been destroyed if we hadn't salvaged it to put in our permaculture food forest. We plan to entertain guests in the gardens, cook meals from local wildy foraged ingredients and the bounty of our gardens, as well as continue to make our own specialties, developing a line of jams, compotes, sauces, and pickles from our gardens. The off-grid wooden home will be a center for both our culinary experiments and a base to share them with our guests, in the garden where they were grown, with a few rooms to stay in as well.

Our permaculture gardens are an ongoing activity that takes time, but will continue to adorn our tables with delicious fruits and veggies while being farmed in a way that causes no damage to the Earth.

In addition to this, we are continuing to develop and expand our horse treks, including options for foraging and combining culinary and outdoor adventures. We even have chefs that double as trained horse guides.

Our ultimate aim is to form an eco-village, get bio-gas, and be solar powered.

We are gradually becoming an agrotourist destination, offering riding lessons and participation in the process of horse care; mountain and nature reserve riding tours and expeditions; wine and gastronomic tours in the area; fire kitchen with ovens, where the complete cooking process takes place; brewery and delicious craft beer; hotel and recreational space; lectures and tasting of grape varieties in the 120-variety Pheasant's Tears vineyard. Most of our offers are seasonal, some are available throughout the year.

Our main "vein" or tour company Living Roots is currently reviving from the

global pandemic, operating its tailor-made experiences, gastronomic, culture, special-interest and adventure journeys across Georgia, offering two-way cultural experiences, exploring the history and traditions in the now, forging intercultural friendships and supporting sustainability.

HOW DOES GEORGIA/ KAKHETI STAND IN TERMS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT? IS THERE ANYTHING THAT COULD BE DONE TO BETTER HELP BUSINESSES LIKE YOURS?

Georgia can become even more attractive if the right goals are set, and plans implemented. That strategic projects are left incomplete is one of the biggest problems. In order to attract foreign tourists and for our own well-being, the most important thing is to establish new and maintain current protected areas, to protect our forests and rivers from harmful projects. The fact that our cultural heritage is being damaged is directly proportional to damage being done to the country's image. There is even a danger that cultural tourism will be limited only to museums and disappear from reality. After overcoming the pandemic, the development of small businesses in tourism is one of the most important links to the recovery of the sector. Green tourism should become our main direction.

*John Wurdeman has lived in Georgia since 1996. He cofounded Pheasant's Tears Winery in Kakheti with Gela Patalishvili in 2007, and in 2010 established Tbilisi's top natural wine bar, Vino Underground. He is among the founders of the country's Natural Wine Association, organizers of the annual natural wine fair Zero Compromise. Wurdeman's other projects include a travel agency called Living Roots, a wine distribution company, a brewery, and several restaurants in Tbilisi and Sighnaghi.

**Ia Tabagari graduated from the Faculty of Oriental Studies, then became an ethnologist and realized that, to proceed in tourism, she needed experience in business administration, and so studied marketing, financial management, and event management, combining these with real-life adventure tourism and international training opportunities. She says, "I didn't find myself in tourism by chance... I always wanted to share amazing places, adventures and sensations with others, get to know interesting people, rare dishes and wine, little-known ethno-culture and the natural environment. The main idea in what we do is to live more interestingly, create things together, and coexist with nature."



John Wurdeman, cofounder of Lost Ridge Inn

Address	8 Ninoshvili Street, Qedeli Community, Sighnaghi, Kakheti
Open	Year-round
Road Access	Easy, newly paved road
Accommodation	6 rooms in the house, 2 restored 19th century cottages on the grounds. You can book a room at Lost Ridge Inn online via their website, at + 995 599 795529, or on Booking.com.

Facebook Removes More than 100 Fake Accounts and Pages Related to the Georgian Government's Stratcom

We removed 80 Facebook accounts, 26 Pages, nine Groups and two accounts on Instagram for violating our policy against coordinated inauthentic behavior. This network targeted multiple apps, including Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, originated in Georgia and focused on domestic audiences in that country, – reads the Meta “quarterly adversarial threat report”.

According to the report, the people behind this activity relied on fake accounts to run fictitious personas, manage Groups and Pages, post, comment, and like their own content to make it appear more popular than it was.

“These Pages and Groups purported to be local, independent, pro-government grassroots groups. The network operated around the clock to amplify content in support of the current Georgian gov-



ernment, including resharing posts by the official government Pages and pro-government media reports. They also shared criticisms of the opposition, particularly during the most recent public

protests related to the now-retracted legislative proposal on the so-called “foreign agents” law in Georgia. In fact, this operation responded to protest developments in real time, including

posting in the middle of the night. The individuals behind this network posted memes, text articles, and comments, primarily in Georgian.

“We found this activity as a result of our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region. Although the people behind this operation attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to the Strategic Communications Department of the Government Administration of Georgia.

“Presence on Facebook and Instagram: 80 Facebook accounts, 26 Pages, 9 Groups and 2 Instagram accounts.

“Followers: Around 138,000 accounts followed one or more of these Pages, around 238,000 accounts joined one or more of these Groups and about 400 accounts followed one or more of these Instagram accounts.

“Advertising: About \$33,500 in spending

for ads on Facebook and Instagram, paid for mostly in US dollars,” the report reads.

Facebook has announced that it is fighting information influence operations on its platform, which aim to manipulate public opinion. Facebook considers coordinated inauthentic behavior when multiple pages, groups, and accounts work together to mislead the public about their identity and activities. Facebook removes both fake and real accounts that are involved in inauthentic coordinated operations.

This is not the first time Facebook has removed pages from Georgia due to inauthentic coordinated behavior. In April 2020, Facebook canceled hundreds of pages, groups and personal accounts related to “Espersona” and “National Movement” founded by Koka Kandiashvili. Before that, “Facebook” deleted hundreds of pages related to the “Georgian Dream”.

Lazare Grigoriadis to Remain in Custody



Lazare Grigoriadis, accused of harming the health of police officers and destroying state property during the March 7-9 protests against the ‘Russian Law’ on Rustaveli Avenue in Tbilisi will remain in custody.

The mentioned decision was made by Nato Khujadze, judge of Tbilisi City Court.

The admissibility of evidence was discussed at today’s pre-trial process. At the same time, the preventive measure of imprisonment against Lazare Grigoriadis was reviewed.

The state prosecution demanded that the strictest preventive measures against the detainee be kept in force, while the defense demanded his release for 20,000 GEL bail.

Grigoriadis uses the right to remain silent, however, at today’s session, he stated his position regarding the prevention measure and stated that he did not try to hide.

In parallel with the mentioned process, 3 more persons – Tornike Akofashvili, Giorgi Mikadze and Tariel Dalakishvili’s pre-trial proceedings were ongoing. They are released on bail.

For information, Lazare Grigoriadis, who is accused of harming the health of police officers and destroying state property, was imprisoned on March 31 as a preventive measure.

According to the information of the investigation, on March 7, during the rally on Rustaveli Avenue, the defendant threw Molotov cocktail twice at the employees of the Special Tasks Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who were on duty on April 9 Street.

Also, on March 9, on Chanturia Street, the accused deliberately set fire to a “Toyota Corolla” model car belonging to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which burned on the spot. As a result of this action, the state budget suffered 39,500 GEL property damage.

Lazare Grigoriadis was charged with the second part of Article 353 of the Criminal Code of Georgia (harming the health of a police officer in connection with his official activities) and the second part of Article 187, sub-point “a” (destruction of property by setting fire), which envisages a punishment from 7 to 11 years of imprisonment.

In the case of March 7-8, a total of 6 persons were arrested under the Criminal Code, 5 of them have been released on bail.



Georgia’s Tourism Potential Presented at the int’l Exhibition in Dubai

The National Tourism Administration of Georgia is participating in the tourist exhibition “ATM Dubai 2023” in the United Arab Emirates.

52 tourism companies and hotels are being presented together with the National Tourism Administration at one of the largest tourism exhibitions in the Middle East.

The Department of Tourism and Resorts of Adjara, Imereti Destination Management Organization and Tbilisi City Hall participate in the “ATM Dubai 2023” exhibition.

Tornike Rizhvadze, Chairman of the Government of Adjara, is attending the exhibition.

Mariam Kvrivishvili, Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, spoke about the importance of Georgia’s participation in the

exhibition.

“For the purpose of popularizing Georgia’s tourism potential, Georgia is on display at the international tourism exhibition in Dubai. A lot of people have visited the Georgian stand. I am sure that this exhibition will be another success for our country and the awareness of Georgia will increase in the countries of the Persian Gulf, and this will have a positive impact on the number of tourist visits from the region to our country,” she said.

Within the framework of the ongoing exhibition in Dubai, the National Administration of Tourism, in order to increase tourist flows to Georgia, together with representatives of the private sector, is holding meetings with the largest tourism and airline companies of the Persian Gulf countries. Maia Omiadze, head of the National Tourism Administration of Georgia, is involved in these meetings.

A special stand was organized within the framework of the exhibition, where visitors and representatives of the tourism sector have the opportunity to discover the tourist products of Georgia.

More than 2,000 companies from more than 150 countries are participating in the Dubai International Tourism Exhibition. The exhibition expects more than 34 thousand visitors.



2 Georgian Citizens Illegally Detained by Occupation Forces Released

Chito Akhalkatsi and Gocha Mamagulashvili, who were illegally detained by the Russian occupation forces on April 30 in the occupied territory near the village of Dvani, Kareli municipality, have been freed and are now in the territory controlled by the central government, the State Security Service reports.

“For the immediate release of Akhalkatsi and Mamagulashvili, both the hotline mechanism and all other tools at the

disposal of the central government were actively used.

“Responsibility for all destructive actions carried out in the occupied regions of Georgia and along the occupation line rests with the occupying power.

“The central government, together with international partners, continues to work actively to release all citizens of Georgia who are illegally imprisoned in the occupied territories”, – reads the statement of the Security Council.



Luca Polare Starts Production of Packaged Frozen Croissants

TRANSLATED BY MARIAM
MTIVLISHVILI

Frozen packaged croissants have appeared on the Luca Polare network. In branches, guests have the opportunity to buy a frozen, packaged classic croissant.

"Our croissant received a lot of interest and approval immediately after its appearance," says Tea Tabagari, director. "In our cafes, the boulangerie line is baked on site every morning, and it is a kind of tradition for our guests to enjoy hot delicacies with their morning coffee.

"That's why we decided to offer frozen croissants to our guests, so they can enjoy freshly baked croissants wherever they are, whenever they have the time. At this stage, packaged croissants can be purchased in all our full-format branches. However, we do not rule out that, like our ice cream, we will make this line more extensive and a premium line of croissants will appear in markets."

Luca Polare is a chain of ice cream cafes that offers customers more than 80 types of ice cream, and exclusive coffee. The brand has been operating on the Georgian market for 15 years and currently has 23 branches in five cities across Georgia.



Komorebi Bakuriani Resort - Designed for Guests Seeking Harmony, Connection with Nature and a Peaceful Vacation

Project 'TBC Education' Offering New Opportunities for Students Interested in Modern Technologies

New technologies offer endless possibilities. What humanity kept in myths and fairytales has become a reality today with the help of technology. Humans can fly, and gadgets remind us of those magic mirrors that fairy tale characters talk to. Knowledge of technology is a way to a world of new opportunities.

The modern world, through rapidly developing technologies, offers us many new and interesting professions. Today, it is already possible to work on joint projects with people living in different parts of the world, without having to leave your hometown.

New technologies reduce distances, bring people closer, and create new opportunities even in such well-known fields as medicine, basic sciences, industry, services, etc.

Today, knowledge in technology determines the success of any field.

That is why TBC has kicked off an education program for school students, consisting of various educational activities: workshops, online courses, competitions, hackathons, and more.

In the first stage of the program, TBC offers introductory and training courses

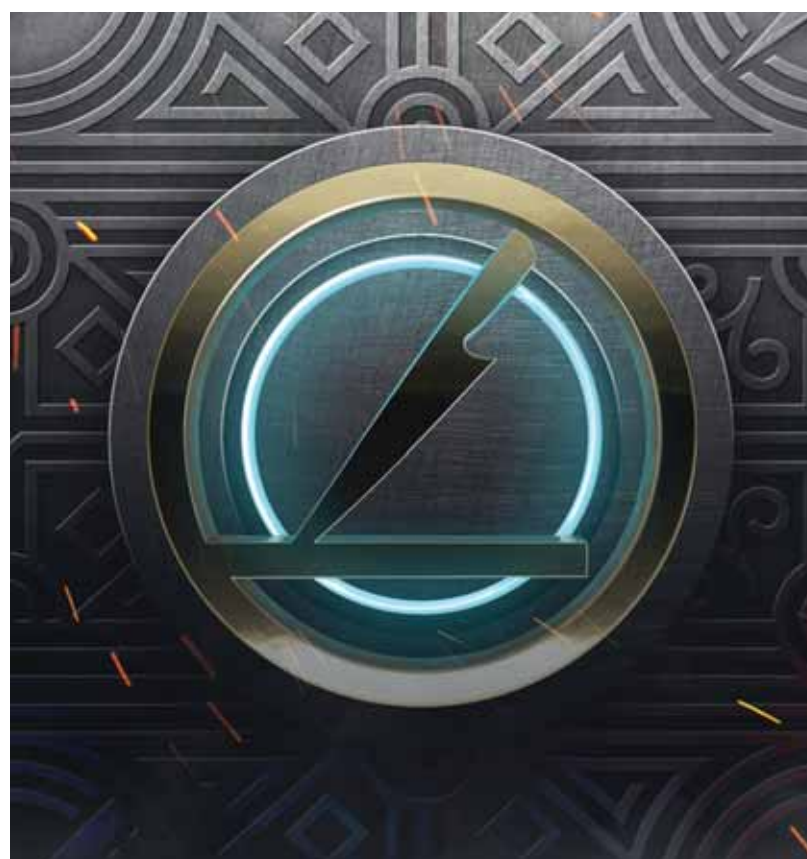
that cover various areas of technology. The number of courses and the diversity of their content will gradually increase. Educational programs are intended for 10th and 11th grade students living in any region of Georgia and are free of charge. To attend the courses, you need Internet access, basic computer/mobile knowledge and a strong desire to learn.

AT THIS STAGE, TBC OFFERS TWO TYPES OF COURSES:

Getting to know the basics of technology - this is a short course consisting of 7 meetings, where students will learn how to create talking programs (chatbots), computer games, applications and other similar technologies. They will learn about media literacy - the issues of properly understanding media messages and defense against threats related to technology.

In addition to the introductory course, TBC offers three training courses where students will acquire specific basic knowledge and create interesting projects.

The educational program was created together with Sandro Asatiani, a technology innovator, lecturer and founder of several startups.



Continued from page 1

For winter sports enthusiasts, the resort is the perfect destination. With rental services available right on the hotel grounds, guests can easily access all the necessary equipment to explore the ski slopes. Just 300 meters away, guests can

find themselves on a mountain ski track of various types. Due to its rental services and easy access to a variety of slopes and trails, guests are sure to have an unforgettable winter getaway.

Komorebi Bakuriani Resort is not only a place to stay but also a destination for dining, with a range of dining options

available to suit every guest's needs. The restaurant's elegant and modern interior provides the perfect atmosphere for a memorable dining experience. Guests can enjoy their meals while taking in the breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains. In addition to the restaurant, the resort also features a bar where guests can enjoy a variety of drinks, from classic cocktails to local Georgian wines.

For families traveling with children, the hotel has designed a special space just for kids. The space is equipped with toys, games, and activities that are both fun and educational. It's not just a playroom, but is also a place where kids can meet new friends and socialize.

Komorebi Bakuriani Resort is excited to announce the upcoming addition of a brand new spa center and conference space. These new facilities will provide guests with even more opportunities to unwind and enjoy their stay in this beautiful mountain resort. The new spa center will offer a range of treatments and services designed to relax the body and mind, all in the soothing atmosphere of pleasant aromas and music.

The conference room is another exciting addition to the resort, providing a venue for trainings, presentations, and various corporate events. With the stunning natural surroundings and peaceful atmosphere of the resort, conference rooms are the perfect setting for any event, providing inspiration and promoting productivity.

Komorebi Bakuriani resort is the perfect destination. Whether you are looking to relax and unwind, or to explore the natural beauty of Bakuriani.

Daisi - Twilight of a Century



BLOG BY TONY HANMER

It was my great privilege recently to attend and photograph for GT the first 2023 showing of Zakaria Paliashvili's second opera, *Daisi* (*Twilight*), at the Tbilisi Opera House. The opera premiered in late 1923, so this is its centenary year, with a planned run of eight evenings in total, all sold out.

Some context: in 1923, V.I. Lenin was

in his last year of life, with Stalin waiting in the wings to unleash his Reign of Terror/Modernization of the Union/Insert Your Version Here. The newly formed Soviet Union was still in chaos. Georgia was dragged into this too: it had declared independence in 1918 after more than a century as a Russian province, been invaded by the Red Army in 1921, and forcibly made a Union Republic in 1922.

Daisi deals, essentially, with a love triangle and impending war. I recognized upon hearing it the source of the music for Georgia's current national anthem:

straight from here.

The stage, choreography (several traditional dances by the Sukhishvili National Georgian Ballet), solo and choir singing are all magnificent. Death appears as a woman veiled in translucent white, foreshadowing the doom of several characters while rose petals fall; I could not stop photographing her. Once war is declared as imminent, the main backdrop changes from a circle with trees winding through it to a massive spearhead pointing down.

It had been quite a few years since I

photographed Georgian dance, and I generally went with a slow shutter speed to show the blur of the dancers in motion, choosing full color. But I switched to black and white for the rest of the performance, which, with its stark backdrops and spotlight characters, is highly dramatic. 480 shots later, I found myself with sev-

eral days' worth of editing. A friend, David Stembridge, was my backup photographer.

I was thrilled by the action and pathos of the whole performance, and could only imagine how the full house of mostly Georgians must be feeling all this in their bones. For us foreigners, subtitles in English were helpfully provided above the stage, really letting us participate in understanding what was going on. I would have been lost without them, as sung Georgian is harder to parse than spoken, just like any other language.

An evening of *Daisi* is worth a shelf of books on Georgian history. Here it comes fully and gloriously alive, and one cannot help but be moved by it. Those readers who have been lucky enough to get a ticket should count themselves fortunate indeed. You will not be disappointed.

DAISI by Zakaria Paliashvili, 1923
Tbilisi's Z. Paliashvili Opera and Ballet State Theatre, April-May 2023, 19:00

Libretto by Valerian Genia
Soloists: Armaz Darashvili (Malkhaz); Vakhtang Jashiashvili (Kiazo); Marika Machitidze (Maro); Irina Aleksidze (Nano); Tamaz Saginadze (Tito); Gocha Datusani (Tsangala)

Chorus and Orchestra of Z. Paliashvili Opera and Ballet State Theatre
Georgian National Ballet Sukhishvili Conductor/Music Director: Revaz Takidze

Director: Gocha Kapanadze
Choreographer: Iliko Sukhishvili Jr.
Artistic Director: Badri Maisuradze

Tony Hanmer has lived in Georgia since 1999, in Svaneti since 2007, and been a weekly writer and photographer for GT since early 2011. He runs the "Svaneti Renaissance" Facebook group, now with nearly 2000 members, at www.facebook.com/groups/SvanetiRenaissance/. He and his wife also run their own guest house in Etseri: www.facebook.com/hanmer.house.svaneti



PUBLISHER & GM
George Sharashidze

COMMERCIAL DEPARTMENT
Commercial Director:
Iva Merabishvili
Marketing Manager:
Natalia Chikvaidze

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT:
Editor-In-Chief:
Katie Ruth Davies

Journalists:
Ana Dumbadze,
Vazha Tavberidze,
Tony Hanmer,
Emil Avdaliani,
Nugzar B. Ruhadze,
Michael Godwin,
Ketevan Skhirtladze,
Mariam Mtiylishvili,
Erekle Poladishvili

Photographer:
Aleksi Serov

Website Editor:
Katie Ruth Davies

Layout:
Misha Mchedlishvili

Webmaster:
Sergey Gevenov

Circulation Managers:
David Kerdikashvili,
David Djandigava

ADDRESS
1 Melikishvili Str.
Tbilisi, 0179, Georgia

Tel.: +995 32 229 59 19
E: info@georgiatoday.ge
F: GeorgiaToday

ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTION
+995 555 00 14 46
E-mail:
marketing@georgiatoday.ge

Reproducing material, photos and advertisements without prior editorial permission is strictly forbidden. The author is responsible for all material. Rights of authors are preserved. The newspaper is registered in Mtatsminda district court.

Reg. # 06/4-309

PODROME GLDANI VARKETILI VERA HIF

NI VARKET

SABURTA



THE REAL ESTATE MARKETPLACE



RENT, SELL OR BUY REAL ESTATE

ORTACHALA SABURTALO VAKE MARJANISHVILI

THE MARJANISHVILI VERA HIPPODROME SABURTALO VAKE



2 444 111 | m2broker@m2.ge | www.m2broker.ge