



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

AN INITIATIVE OF
THE WOODROW WILSON SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
AND THE BOBST CENTER FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

Series: Policing

Interview no.: Q1

Interviewee: Batu Kutelia

Interviewer: Matthew Devlin

Date of Interview: 15 April 2009

Location: Embassy of the Republic of Georgia
Washington, D.C.
USA

Innovations for Successful Societies, Bobst Center for Peace and Justice
Princeton University, 83 Prospect Avenue, Princeton, New Jersey, 08544, USA
www.princeton.edu/successfulsocieties

DEVLIN: I'm here today with His Excellency Batu Kutelia, the Ambassador of the Republic of Georgia to the United States. Mr. Ambassador, thank you for taking the time to speak with us.

KUTELIA: *Thank you.*

DEVLIN: Mr. Ambassador, you've held a wide range of positions across several ministries in the government of Georgia dealing with policing, security and military issues. Could you slowly just run us through your experience in the government, your progression through those positions?

KUTELIA: *By education I am a physicist, but since '96 I had been involved in the diplomatic service working at MFA, the Department for Politico-Military Affairs and dealing with various issues of the security policy. After the Rose Revolution, I was appointed as a Chief of Foreign Intelligence Service. Before that, for a short period, I held the position of Deputy Minister for State Security. Later this agency was dissolved and merged with the Ministry of Interior. I was then Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and later became the First Deputy Minister of Defense. So this was my enrollment. But at every position, the key element in my portfolio was reforming the structure and updating it to the modern standards. Particularly, we had the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) standard in mind to be in line with, kept the western system of organizations as model and we changed and modernized all the legacies that had been inherited from the Soviet past.*

DEVLIN: Great, thank you. That touches on several issues I hope to get into a little more depth in a second, but first you mentioned the Soviet past and the legacy of that system. Could you perhaps elaborate on the environment that existed in Georgia prior to 2003—the public's relation to the police and to other security services?

KUTELIA: *What we inherited was the typical Soviet type of law enforcement system with a very heavy and politicized Ministry of State Security and also Ministry of Internal Affairs. These two organizations were used for, so to say, maintaining balance in the country. They had different influence on different groups. Almost necessarily in every post-Soviet country their relations with each other had been very bad, they were kind of rivals. Besides this, both were heavily loaded with different types of functions including the monitoring of economic activity. It was a total duplication of functions in terms of monitoring the economic activity. Both had their own paramilitary type or militarized units, special forces. Even the Ministry of Interior had special interior troops, which were heavily armed that were totally unnecessary for the interior functions. The most important thing for both systems was law enforcement as a general system—they were extremely corrupt and this corruption was everywhere, starting from the individual policeman in the street to the highest top level of the chain of command. So that was the legacy that we inherited and there was an urgent necessity to change it and to change it in a very short period of time, which was quite a challenging task ahead of us.*

DEVLIN: You mentioned the preexisting rivalry between the Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Could you talk to how you addressed that when you were in the State Security before the amalgamation into the unified ministry?

KUTELIA: *There were a few issues on the agenda to reform the agency. First of all, the most important element was the personnel change. Both of these agencies were extremely big in their size and the number was totally unnecessary for a country like Georgia. So we significantly cut down the staff in the Ministry of Interior as well as in the Ministry of State Security. On the one hand it was an important*

thing to do and it needed to be done in a very short period of time. On the other hand, it was also an issue of concern because it meant immediately letting people with special skills jobless out into the streets. Maybe their skills were not excellent, but at least they had been doing this stuff and processing some information—it was rather dangerous. So we tried to accommodate these two issues in a general personnel management policy as well.

There were some programs for retraining the people, who had willingness to stay. And those who were retrained could stay and take a position. Maybe not the position they had had before, but it was adequate to the new structure of the system. The key decision was made to merge these two agencies together and to remove the remnants of Soviet-type KGB, which was this Ministry of State Security—a very politicized tool for the control of some domestic political environment. For a democratic society it was totally unacceptable to have an entity such as the Ministry of State Security.

The second step we made, enabled the population feel the immediate relief of the corrupt system. We dismissed all of the traffic police, which were extremely corrupt and who had daily interaction with the drivers and with the society in general. There were a lot of question marks, and some of our friends were asking as well, whether releasing all of the traffic police would totally deteriorate the situation on the ground, but just the opposite happened. Society knowing that there were no traffic police became very cautious. They felt this relief, but on the other hand, in terms of not violating rules of the streets, they themselves were taking some measures until new patrol police were introduced. The new patrol police were designed and implemented in absolute correlation with the western standards. This was one of the real success stories that occurred in the shortest period of time possible.

Of course, to achieve these became possible owing to the assistance of our friends, in particular, the United States. The relevant agencies were involved in the training of Georgian patrol police. We established a police academy and huge assistance was provided to us by the United States. All of the policemen, not withstanding what their ranks were, had to take special training and then of course sit for the exams to take this or another position.

Another element, besides the traffic police reform, was the total demilitarization of the law enforcement agencies. We abolished the Ministry of Interior troops, and all the heavy armament and equipment was transferred to the Ministry of Defense. Only special types of units, which are necessary for the police type of special operations, are today operational under the Ministry of Interior.

The third, also a very important element that was of huge concern for our population, was the very corrupt criminal investigative system and almost daily violation of human rights of the detainees or suspects or ordinary citizens. We established a very strong monitoring system over the daily activities of the criminal investigative team of the Ministry of Interior. Besides this, there was special training conducted on interrogation, dealing with the abiding by the procedural law. Also huge investments were made in the special laboratories, which could allow for more successful conduct of investigations and evidence gathering. What was also important, there was a special institution created within the Ministry of Interior Affairs which was taking care of the human rights frequently abused before.

So these three elements provided immediate reform and it was not only just a change by design, but also was a change by concept of operation.

DEVLIN: Sure. You mentioned several very interesting topics there. I'd like to return to this idea of personnel management and the restructuring you mentioned that was central to police reform. How did you manage the dismissal process of these police officers, because as you were saying, they were well trained, they had some specialized skills. This could have been a group of people that was disruptive. What were some of the policies you put in place to deal with this?

KUTELIA: *There were a number of these. First of all, those who had been involved in some kind of misconduct were immediately dismissed and were warned that in case they would continue illegal activities, they would face serious punishment. There were ones who expressed desire to get retraining and then to return back and work in different positions, so this opportunity was given to them. Most of them utilized this possibility; some of them did not because of their incapability to perform at higher standards.*

The biggest challenge in terms of the personnel management was the salary which additionally created huge incentives—thus, salary was increased many fold. There was a special health insurance provided for every police or security officer including the members of their families. The equipment had been changed, radios, cars, and other types of equipment—personal armament. They received more confidence. They got special training on how to interact with the people and get their support as well as the confidence and trust from the society. After this reform, it is interesting to mention that, police enjoyed the highest popularity and public trust showed by public opinion polls.

But one of the biggest challenges was also integrating the security ministry within the Ministry of Interior, because the security ministry has a very specific type of operation and there was heritage that we had inherited as well as those people who had been serving in the Soviet-type of security services. Still, some of them had connections with the previous Soviet-type of KGB systems, so there was suspicion they might have again maintaining these relations. This was one of the biggest challenges. We made a very thorough background check. Also most of these people with the experience of the Soviet system were dismissed but some of them, who were at that time part of the system, they were working as honest officers. They received special exit allowances that allowed them to try possibilities in other private spheres rather than stay with the law enforcement agency. So that was quite a complex problem.

DEVLIN: And who was the deciding body in terms of who would stay and who would be dismissed?

KUTELIA: *There was a special personnel department who was updating all the material, collecting information through the different agencies. But in many cases it was just a simple approach that those who had relations with the Soviet KGB system shouldn't be allowed in the new type of law enforcement agencies.*

DEVLIN: On this issue of bringing Soviet-style security services into the Ministry of Internal Affairs, one thing you've mentioned is depoliticization, the idea that previously, security services had been used by various political groups within Georgia to their own gain. Was there a body or oversight committee of any sort set up to ensure that this was not carried over into the new internal affairs ministry?

KUTELIA: *Yes, that was more of a broad political, let's say, framework of all the reforms. Not only in this sphere, but also in the Ministry of Defense and other agencies, let's say the Foreign Intelligence Agency, etcetera. For this we had a special parliamentary committee, which was called and still exists, a committee of trustees. This committee consists of members of parliament from the ruling party as well as from the opposition party. This commission has a right to interrogate and investigate every case, even top-secret material. They have special clearances for this. Of course they are not allowed to speak about it publicly but they can take any concern in society that might exist and look, in detail, at each of these issues starting from the financial issues and ending with practical implementation or daily operation issues.*

That was the most effective tool, to provide democratic oversight of the reform and the functioning of the security system, including the Ministry of Defense and Foreign Intelligence Services.

DEVLIN: Now one thing that has come up in the past few years, and is indeed going on right now in Georgia, is the issue of how police forces deal with peaceful democratic demonstrations. What kind of priority and what kind of program was set in to make that transition away from a more Soviet-legacy approach?

KUTELIA: *First of all, the key here is the training. In our police academy, all the personnel whoever he/she might be, in any way involved in this type of operation and managing the huge crowds receive special training. As I said, we had a good training program with the US law enforcement agencies but also we invited European police experts who were advising the Ministry of Interior on a daily basis on how to manage—the experts from those countries have quite a good record of managing big crowds. We had a German expert, a British expert and some others as well. Also, what is important is that we set clear rules of engagement for each of the policemen. In this case, the detriment of these rules of engagement was the decision to be minimally involved on the scene of protesting. So we had minimum visibility of the police, not to cause some irritation. But on the other hand, more stress was diverted towards preventing some possible provocations or some possible incidents and accidents. So less visibility but police were working more effectively during those days, and as we can see, no major incidents are happening and police is very adequately—at a low profile but effectively reacting to this.*

DEVLIN: Now depoliticizing police forces is a challenge a lot of countries have to face. What were, in your view, the major obstacles that Georgia overcame or is still dealing with? What were the hardest parts of this process?

KUTELIA: *First of all politicization, in many cases in the police field, was linked to the corruption because police and every other law enforcement agency in the Soviet system and post-Soviet systems, in parallel, had the possibility to oversee any economic activity, any business activity. This was a huge source of income, therefore, fitting in different political interests as well.*

So when the corruption schemes were destroyed, we fought it seriously. When police was not in charge of any economic activities—and that was also major decision, that we remove all the economic or financial type of duties from the agenda of police or security systems—it significantly decreased the temptation to be involved in politics as well.

Then next, also, an important thing was to establish a very clear set of career development programs so that no high official could be appointed because of some political consideration. He had to have a clear career plan in one or another place and then could take a higher position. Of course, during the transition from one position to another he has to take special training courses or seminars in order to fit in his new position. This is a major element that decreases the possibility of politicization.

DEVLIN: In terms of this career planning that you mentioned, how was that implemented given that so much of the police force was dismissed? It would be—I imagine there were a lot of new recruits who didn't have much experience. So was there an educational requirement or a standardized test that people would—

KUTELIA: *My friends in Tbilisi can tell you more about the details but there was a special board, a selection board, and it was really a hard job performed by them. At the time I was not there, but my friend, they were screening each single person, recruited on each single position. This board was doing his psychological portrait and his tests for IQ, etcetera—knowledge, special tests. That was one of the key parameters while recruiting these people.*

DEVLIN: Each individual police officer would be reviewed by the board?

KUTELIA: *Yes, by the board—the file is collected and then a decision is made whether they are appointed or not.*

DEVLIN: One thing we touched on was the question of brutality and internal monitoring in the police. Could you talk about some of those monitoring mechanisms? You mentioned the criminal investigation section in particular. What kinds of bodies or offices were set up to ensure that?

KUTELIA: *There is a special body, which is called the Internal Inspection, and what their daily routine is I cannot tell you because I was not involved in this, but you can get more information in Tbilisi. However, what I see as a citizen, then there were a huge number of criminal cases when the police officers or other officials had been arrested because they were doing some illegal activities. Unfortunately, most of these people who have been arrested were former police who were again re-recruited. So that was also kind of a good indicator in terms of the personnel management.*

DEVLIN: I'd like to come back to this moment when the Ministry of State Security was folded into the Ministry of Internal Affairs. As with, when you approached it in the State Security, how did you balance between the two? Was there a sense that the internal affairs and state security would have to take staff cuts equally or was it really the State Security that lost it?

KUTELIA: *No, that was done in a more kind of pragmatic way. We designed a new organizational structure in the Ministry of Interior according to the requirements for Georgia—with particular structure and job description. Then these people, based on their merit, knowledge and capabilities, were distributed. So it was not a mechanical merger or proportional decrease. It was just setting up a new system but filling it with the people who were serving in a different field. As I said, there was a lot of duplication so there were many people with the same skills or the same knowledge. Then there was kind of an empty structure created and then filled by the personnel.*

- DEVLIN: Once the new structure had been staffed was there an effort to address any continuing tension between former state security and former internal affairs?
- KUTELIA: *As I said, there was a rivalry between these two agencies, but basically this rivalry was because the heads of these agencies had quite different spheres of influence. But once this was not policy from the top down, then these became normal professional people and they didn't have much problem to integrate with each other, in general. Of course, there might have been some minor incidents.*
- DEVLIN: Then once the new combined ministry was formed, in terms of promotion, was it entirely from scratch again—you started at the beginning or could someone transfer their rank, their level, within the former one into this new one?
- KUTELIA: *There was some rank structure established, as on a chart, and those people maybe not the same chart, but there is some kind of equality. And because of their background, because of knowledge or because of their file on what they have done before, they maintain their ranks. It would be rather discouraging for them if let's say, a professional in mid-age with a career is sent to the beginning of his career steps. That's why there was a special mechanism on how they transfer and maintain relatively the same ranking.*
- DEVLIN: Tied into this idea of integrating the two services was the demilitarization in the restructuring. You mentioned the internal troops, which is quite unique to the Soviet system. It is really more of a, as I understand it, a military unit.
- KUTELIA: Yes.
- DEVLIN: Could you talk a bit about that unit and how that presented a challenge to the police service that Georgia wanted post-2003?
- KUTELIA: *This was a tool again for gaining influence while there was a law enforcement like Ministry of Defense—Ministry of State Security had their own armored and militarized structure, and Minister of Interior. The Ministry of Interior was quite big in size countrywide and they had quite a big military structure. Their main function was, an idea was designed to use it in case—it is a Soviet kind of legacy—to use it in case some disorders happen within the country. But no democratic country can tolerate when the armed forces with armored vehicles or tanks are used against their own population. It was totally inadequate and they were dismissed and then transferred to the Ministry of Defense, which is the place for the heavy armed military units.*
- DEVLIN: In terms of demilitarization, the situation in Georgia with the conflict areas around Abkhazia and South Ossetia, just by virtue of their location, that police forces have in the past and may find themselves in a military type of situation, a military level of conflict—how is that reconciled in Georgia? How have you tried to keep policing to the police and military-style operations to the military?
- KUTELIA: *This is also quite well distributed between different agencies in the doctrines, Doctrines Office Agency. We have, of course, police. Within the police there are border guards. They have a special portfolio and special area of operation, and there are maximum possible scenarios where they can be involved, where border police can be involved if there is a minor border violation. If this violation becomes bigger, such that they cannot resist, then by law the Ministry of Defense has the possibility to provide adequate support. So these are the special gradings and type of size and incident. Let's say, if police are countered by*

armored vehicles—of course they cannot counter it. Then there are special units that can be and will be involved to counter them. Then if the size and scope of this attack is larger, then it is more of a military confrontation and then here comes the place for the military to be involved. It is quite clearly distributed by the doctrines and by the law.

DEVLIN: Of course some of these situations can unfold fairly quickly or unexpectedly. I was wondering, during the conflict last August 2008, were there police units that were involved in that whether consciously or just reactively?

KUTELIA: *Yes, that's a very interesting question because let's take a conflict zone. Let's ask the question whether it is an internal issue or it is an external issue, whether it is a police task or of the Ministry of Defense. Then we have to analyze what is the situation there. We have there a heavily armed separatist regime. We have there additional foreign troops deployed with the heavy armament, artillery, Air Force, of course—police cannot and will never be capable to cope with potential threat coming from the heavily armed separatist, unlawful regimes. So therefore, to counter these types of activities on our territory, when part of territory is occupied, it is the job of the Ministry of Defense.*

On the ground there were some arrangements before the August war. There was a Georgian peacekeeping battalion involved somehow to maintain, together with international observers, the peace and security there. But once the situation went beyond the local conflict and there was a large-scale invasion as we saw, then we were obliged by our law and by international law as well—this is Article 51 UN Charter when every country has right of self-defense. Then the armed forces were involved.

But the police as well have its own task during this type of operation. Because when you are countering a military invasion, there are areas where society needs assistance when there is looting and police have to maintain the order. The military are not trained for this. So there is a good combination for both of them. Right now we are writing a new security concept and new military doctrine, which encompasses all different tasks all together, interoperability of different agencies in one and the same theater of operation. And we do see that it's necessary and this is one of the lessons learned from the August war. Let's say that our troops had been trained besides the military operations to conduct some kind of a stabilization operation like they were doing in Iraq, in Kosovo—having interaction with the society and minimizing the possibility of other side effects of military activities, as I said, lootings or killing, helping people, search and rescue. This is the combination of multiple tasks.

DEVLIN: And within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as I understand it, there was some debate over whether there should be a change from military ranks, whether they should still have the same names and ranks as the old Soviet system or it should move towards a more civilian nomenclature. Could you talk about that debate, what is important there and how Georgia has dealt with it?

KUTELIA: *You mean in the Ministry of Defense or Ministry of—.*

DEVLIN: The police, Internal Affairs.

KUTELIA: *That is also part of the element. In the Soviet system, in the police or security, or military system, everybody had a military rank. But the democratic concept of civilian control of the armed forces and security system predisposes two*

elements, the civilian and the military components. This was also core of the reform that, let's say, Ministry of Interior or Ministry of Defense, are civilian ministries where particular jobs were only civilian, including the post of the minister—minister, deputy minister, heads of the major departments—most of the departments are civilians. This is a civilian position. And there are positions, which may require ranking, police or military ranking.

At the Ministry of Defense it is easier to accomplish because there is the ministry and there is the joint staff. So there is a clear separation and this is the civilian oversight of the military. In the police structure, the division is not that clear but having a civilian minister, deputy minister, and also heads of departments, helps to create this system of checks and balances.

DEVLIN: And on the level of individuals, you yourself have moved from the policing security sector to the closely related defense sector. What is the responsibility for government servants when they move from one to the other because there will still, I would assume, be these ties back to the old ministry? How does one approach that new set of responsibilities?

KUTELIA: *In the first years of the reformation process the daily routine and mechanics of changing the old system to the new one, were almost the same. We instantly started these reforms at every agency. So while moving from one agency to another, of course, we had the understanding of what processes were going on there, what were the demands and what were the particular items of the agenda. We had very close consultations with the predecessors having in mind the challenges that each of these agencies had. So largely there was not a big difference in terms of the concept. Of course the content was different, but for the content there were professional people who were doing it. In our case ministers and deputy ministers are not the career positions but the political positions. So you are directing the policy, but the executives are the professional ones. By the time I was coming or my colleagues were coming to the new agency, all of the people were remaining at the same place and continuing their daily routine.*

DEVLIN: When you look at the process of demilitarization in Georgia, what are the main obstacles that you foresaw and perhaps some that you didn't see, because just by virtue of its geostrategic position Georgia has some distinctly military concerns that it has to—. What were the real difficulties in balancing demilitarization?

KUTELIA: *It was not difficult at all. A sober-minded analysis clearly indicated to us, that it is senseless to have two or three different armies with different doctrines and different chains of command. It is better to have one well trained to the western standard, well fitted to the mission type of army, bigger and better equipped and positioned. It would improve the flexibility, and it would improve the operational effectiveness. So it was easy to do. It was a matter of the political decision.*

The previous government, quite corrupt one, did not have this political will. Otherwise it was not hard at all. It was quite well perceived by society as well.

DEVLIN: Again on this militarization and the conflict areas in Georgia, a lot of countries when they undertake some of the reforms that Georgia has done, they face this problem of working with non-state security groups. I know throughout the decade of the 1990s, there were certain non-state groups in Georgia that could nevertheless exercise violence. What was the relationship? How did that relationship, or was there a relationship between the Georgian police post-2003 when you were involved and groups like that and how was that managed?

- KUTELIA:** *Fortunately in 2003, these types of groups that you just mentioned were nonexistent. Some of these groups were absorbed in law enforcement agencies because of their corrupt interest, but they were immediately dismissed. The decision was made and it was clear that there is no necessity at all to have any type of other security arrangements or groups other than those defined by law.*
- DEVLIN:** One thing you've mentioned is the foreign assistance that Georgia received from states like the US. Could you talk about some of the drawbacks of a situation like that? Have the international assistance programs—for example, they're often very expensive, a lot of the programs that the international community would like to see states implement, that's one concern we hear often. So what would be your evaluation of international assistance to Georgia?
- KUTELIA:** *Any type of assistance should be directed and aiming to some particular result. In our case there was a willingness to support Georgia's democratic state, to have proper and adequate law enforcement system, but we designed and provided the vision we were heading for. So it was easy for our partner then to provide assistance because we knew what was the deliverable. In many cases it was not that expensive comparing to what results were achieved, it was very cost efficient.*
- DEVLIN:** Again on this question of costs and outside support. There were two investment resource instruments, the Georgian Army Development Fund and the Law Enforcement Development Fund which as I understand it were there to support reforms in both the defense and law enforcement sectors. Could you elaborate on what those were and why they were set up, how they were administered?
- KUTELIA:** *Yes. In 2003 when we came to power, the state budget was zero. There was not a single penny in the state budget because of the previous corrupt government. The society was requesting immediate kinds of deliverable results in terms of the security environment, criminal environment. So there was a necessity to do something urgently and anything you do requires some financial support. We decided to temporarily set up a fund that would be supported by Georgian compatriots abroad, or somebody who would donate for the reform of armed forces or law enforcement agencies—but it was a temporary arrangement. Once the economy started functioning properly and there was money available in the budget, these funds were abolished. Due to the diminution of corruption and improvement of the revenue collecting agencies' daily work, we received enough resources to spend from the centralized budget—and this, rather than some type of funds, is the most transparent and the most acceptable way of financing any institution, especially law enforcement.*
- DEVLIN:** On that note of transparency, I have come across the suggestion that the Georgian government, in running these funds, was not transparent as to how they were being expended and where the revenue was coming from. What were the dynamics behind the decision to—?
- KUTELIA:** *This was the temporary arrangement based on individual donations. In the situation where police were fighting the criminal gangs who were themselves racketeering the businessmen, clearly, those businessmen were not willing to disclose their names. It was a legitimate concern of theirs and of course we could not sacrifice lives of people for the sake of transparency. This temporary arrangement was not institutionalized as those who donated, also had their pre-conditions and quite legitimate demands.*
-

DEVLIN: I'd like to step back for a second and talk about the broader reform environment that this was happening in. There was, when we see as the—when institutions try and undertake this level of reform and restructuring you often inevitably have personnel who might not have the skills necessary to both carry out their job and undertake the changes. So in your experience, is there any advice you would give other political leaders in terms of sequencing reforms, stuff that should be a priority towards the beginning and other stuff that can wait until later?

KUTELIA: *Actually it is quite a luxury to have the possibility to sequence it and to do it step by step in a calm environment in a classical manner, but reality tends to be totally different. You have a lot of pressing issues in parallel and simultaneously that you have to perform while also conducting the structure of reforms. So the only possibility sometimes is just to test these people on duty, whether they perform or not. There were cases when people were charged with some responsibilities, but they could not perform and then, they were sent to other positions. Not because they were bad people, but they did not have enough skills or enough experience. Then we tried to position them in a more proper place. That's the reality. But of course, in classical terms it is better to act in step-by-step sequence.*

One of my friends compared our situation to building a ship in the middle of the sea while sailing and while also learning how to sail, and while somebody is attacking and trying to sink your ship. That's the reality.

DEVLIN: In terms of the reform process, what in your experience, what were the crucial allies in institutions within Georgia and also abroad for what you were trying to do?

KUTELIA: *The most crucial ally is the society and public support. This is the biggest capital one can invest, sometimes even at the expense of losing some popularity, but later, once reforms bear the fruits you will regain your popularity—capital that needs to be spent again—this is the whole essence of reforms and if you are afraid to do so you will never do reforms.*

Besides, When there is public demand to put an end to the illegal criminal activities and you feel on a daily basis, that society is happy that there is no more racketeering of business, there is no more stealing of cars, it encourages you and this is the biggest stimulus, and there are many more examples like this.

From the outside support, these are partners who know you, who are interested in supporting your system to be developed in a democratic way, and also who share their experience because once you start doing something, you should not reinvent the bicycle. It is already invented. There are many countries with the same or a bit different experience, and the best tool is to learn from them and then implement. So the knowledge and experience shared by our friends and colleagues were the most valuable things.

DEVLIN: In terms of enacting these reforms, was there any point where you or your colleagues were unable to proceed with a particular initiative because you met lack of capacity in other parts of the government or political opposition that you had to overcome?

KUTELIA: *We were lucky enough to have our political team and the President himself, with over 80% approval rating, which was more than enough to smoothly conduct the reforms. Of course, in this process, the degree of, and the number of dissatisfied*

people appear, because when you destroy some particular criminal gang, there are families linked to it, which were legally or illegally getting incomes. When you are firing, let's say, 30,000 traffic policemen in one day, these are 30,000 opponents to you. But I think, we very effectively used this political capital to conduct the first round of reforms. Consequently, reforms are a never-ending process you have to constantly reform, because once you stop doing that, then you are behind schedule and you lose the support and you might even get dragged into the problem itself. Still, we are conducting reforms and I hope that will be a constant process.

DEVLIN: Was there ever at any point a collapse or a breakdown in discipline or performance? I ask this because when we talk to a lot of people they say that when internal management systems undergo change, in the beginning there is this breakdown in performance. Was there a dip that Georgia had to come out of initially?

KUTELIA: *Yes, when you change the structure, of course, that system is not functioning until it is reshuffled. So, there were some declines in the security environment or the criminal, also there were some problems within the military units until new system was set up. Breakdowns naturally happen and it is impossible to avoid them, especially when you have a very demanding environment and agenda in parallel doing the reforms—but it was rather short and we tried to make it as short as possible.*

DEVLIN: If you had to, say, write a guidebook for other political leaders attempting to overhaul their security and police forces, what would be the main topics in your experience that may be the main ones you knew you would have to overcome and the ones that you just did not foresee there?

KUTELIA: *Each case is different, so I cannot give you any particular advice for sure, but generally any reform, especially in this field, requires first of all the political will and then resources. Those are the two key elements and the result is imminent. And, most importantly the vision—what is the end state, where you want to take this system—is not to start reform just because of the reform's sake, but having in mind the end goal, the lighthouse where you're heading.*

DEVLIN: What is that lighthouse? What is the future of this reform in Georgia?

KUTELIA: *That is the maximum confidence from the society, thus society feeling confident and comfortable with their law enforcement, without being disturbed in their daily life. This is quite easily measurable. There are tools in sociology, there are public opinion polls, and before we started, that's what we did. We used questioning across our society: what were their concerns, most, least, etcetera. Then we started reforms to tackle those issues.*

DEVLIN: Do you think is there anything particular to reforming the police services that we haven't covered, a major topic that you think is worth recording?

KUTELIA: *One element in Georgian case was also very important: the decentralization of the system. The previous system was very much a centralized pyramid. When there is a corrupt system, the centralized pyramid is the best way to control because the lowest levels of corruption feed higher and higher, and all the money goes to the top of the pyramid.*

When you decentralize, decision-making processes along with responsibility also become decentralized. You avoid any attempt of creating other corrupt schemes. There might be some corruption on the local level, but it becomes easy to neutralize and to save the rest of the system. So, decentralization was one of the key elements of the reform and I think it was quite successful.

DEVLIN: Now I imagine the higher levels of the centralized Ministry of Internal Affairs would have been a bit unwilling, or a bit resistant to that process of decentralization because that is a loss of power at the center.

KUTELIA: Yes.

DEVLIN: Is that something that came about through political leadership or what allowed you to overcome that initial inertia of a pyramid?

KUTELIA: *Again, it is a matter of political will. When a ruling power is willing to use the police or law enforcement as a political tool, they need it centralized. But when you need this tool as a tool for democratic society, just maintaining law and order, you don't need it to be centralized. You need an oversight policy to control them but let them perform their duty. It is a matter of political will and also what type of political system or political team is in power.*

DEVLIN: One problem sometimes with decentralization is that you decentralize power but you also decentralize responsibility. So we're talking about the general inspections that were set up for internal monitoring. How was that internal monitoring extended into the localities after this decentralization?

KUTELIA: *I'm not an expert on how it happened on a daily basis, but there is a separate system that has special tools to measure—these tools are public opinions as well, because when in some remote region the police is not doing something properly, you can immediately get a sense from the people. So that required change and transformation of the working methods of the Inspector-General as well, to have closer relations with individual, low-level policemen, and also with the society, getting this census, comparing, and making analyses. That is why there was also a separate unit created within itself, functioning very successfully. You will meet the head of this unit, the Analytical Unit Department (Information and Analysis Department), Shota Utiashvili. This analytical unit helped largely to maintain a good monitoring system.*

So you have the whole country on the screen and you immediately see if there is a problem of misconduct or improper behavior and then you are pinpointing or targeting this issue. It is much easier to control.

DEVLIN: It would seem in the wake of the events of late 2003, early 2004, what has since been known as the Rose Revolution, the police were identified specifically as a priority of President (Mikheil) Saakashvili. What was the reasoning behind that choice? Why were police singled out?

KUTELIA: *Many reasons. First of all, the police are in the middle of the government's interaction with the rest of the population and society. This is the tool, which can immediately affect the way of life by tackling the criminal, by providing basic human rights, and also by improving the general atmosphere in the country—law and order, once established, is the key, especially for a society which was passing through this chaotic period. Removing unnecessary paramilitary groups,*

corrupt policemen and security officers was the solution that gave an immediate effect.

DEVLIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador. I appreciate your taking the time.

KUTELIA: *You're welcome.*