



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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DEVLIN: Today is April 29th and I am here in Tblisi, Georgia with Eka Tkeshelashvili. Eka, thanks for joining me.

TKESHELASHVILI: *Thank you.*

DEVLIN: If you wouldn't mind, could you just briefly cover the position you have at the moment with the government and the history of your involvement with policing and security affairs here?

TKESHELASHVILI: *Currently I am the international security advisor of Georgia, so I'm not really directly engaged with the police, though the minister of interior is part of the inter-agency coordination processes that we run through the NSC [National Security Council]—but I'd been the deputy minister of interior for quite some time in my previous career, so to say, so I have two years' experience, almost, being with the police at that time as the deputy minister.*

DEVLIN: And as I understand it, you were deputy minister in 2005?

TKESHELASHVILI: *Yes.*

DEVLIN: So, this was after the current minister, Minister [Vano] Merabishvile, had taken over at the end of 2004?

TKESHELASHVILI: *Yes, I mean, the current minister was already a minister when I became deputy minister.*

DEVLIN: Could you maybe describe the state of the ministry when you were working there in 2005?

TKESHELASHVILI: *Well, it was already in the process in which the first wave of reforms had happened, in a way, so that the major structural reorganization of the ministry was already at place. The patrol police was already reformed at that time. I mean the beginning of the restructurization, so to say, of the process. But at the end of the day, we were very much engaged at that time in the finalization of what would have been the final structure of the ministry, working with the European Union [EU] at the time, what would have been the human resource management mechanism in the ministry—how would the reform in different sections of the police could proceed even better than it was at that time, with better training, integrating all the elements of—including human rights, for example, and then some special skills that the police should be in a position to have.*

The academy was a big focus of that as well. So we were in the process of coming up with the new curriculum for the police academy at that time. Those who knew had in the academy at that time—had a big project with the assistance of the US [United States] government at that time to have a new technical facility for the academy being built, so that it would have had all capacities needed basically for training purposes and for housing purposes of the students as well.

So we established at that time new procedures for getting people recruited in the police transparent but sophisticated entry exams for them, that would include interviews as well, so that people would have had a good trust in the system. So everybody who had been on a merit base and deserved to be in, they would have had a fair chance of getting in the police and getting jobs and being well trained.

DEVLIN: There's a lot there that I'd like to return to, but first, as I understand it, there was a Ministry of Internal Affairs Reform Agency briefly under the first minister, Minister Baramidzei. Once you were at the Ministry, was there such a coordinating body, or was it more ad hoc?

TKESHELASHVILI: *No, not really at the time, because we were already a well-functioning institution. But an institution having an understanding that we had to do much more to be developing more—in that we had no self-satisfaction in what we'd achieved already at that time, a good level of development, and there was nothing to be added to that. So in a way, there was no need of super-big coordinating bodies which usually then take too much time—I mean, if you don't really need to have that much coordination at the time. So it was very much a work in process, individual projects with different organizations, some partner countries that were engaged in different fields of development of the police at the time.*

DEVLIN: One thing you mentioned was that human resources management was an issue. That's a problem we come across in a lot of different countries. Can you talk a little bit about Georgia's situation with that?

TKESHELASHVILI: *Yes. Georgia's situation still encompasses the whole civil service, not only the police, because we had to break with the legacy of the Soviet Union, which was not well-developed: guidelines of what is the career development for a person, and then appraisals of persons, and then getting a management system in which you know how you actually recruit people and then how you manage the people and then have good stimulus for them to develop themselves, and then have good appraisals, who is good and who is not bad, so that you know properly on that. It was pretty much the beginning of the process for us at that time in every other institution as well.*

So we've taken quite a bit of experience from European countries and then from America as well to see how different sections of police operate differently in different countries. I'm not sure as of now whether or not we are fully satisfied that the system that we have now is finalized completely, because throughout the system you always identify what could be the ways of further development. But what is already good, fundamental to the human resource management system, is—again, in our context—a very important beginning of the process which is a fair and well-thought-out recruitment process, because if you don't have a transparent and fair system, how you recruit people, it's very difficult ever to have an expectation that you can really deal well with corruption and fight corruption, and have an expectation that there will be a good motivation and quality of people who get in. Because, otherwise, there's no real respect for the job they do. They know that they've somehow got improperly into the service.

So that's something that played a huge role in the system. Then the training factors into the human resource management, so that it's not only the entry training after the recruitment, so that you are prepared for two or three months as a professional, to start fully your job—but then continuous education for people, so that from time to time different types of training in different themes. Anti-terrorism, there'd be money laundering and different types of crime. So that it's not that generalist way of having just theoretically good training, but a very practical training for people who actually do a differently type of job in the police. So it's very much diverse and not unified. Different sections of police get different training based on the stuff they do in that case. So that's another big component of the human resource management, as much as I see myself, and I think it's viewed in that way by my colleagues as well.

Then the next step that comes in is more of a durable career development for a person. This is something that we're still working on because we are still a young democracy, a country who struggled for past years to get out from the known existent dysfunction—a dysfunctional state's context in a way. So the human resources that we've had were quite restricted. We had people moving in different jobs and then doing different jobs frequently, so it was not a classical career development in the police as well. For some people promotions were much quicker than otherwise would have been expected, because there was basically no pool of ready-at-hand human resource right away for all positions at that time. So it was a very quick development of career path for people at that time in the police, which is settling now, more or less.

Now, I think, it's the proper time already to have a more finalized way of having a career development system placed, like good appraisals for the people, knowing what is the classical way for you to develop your career since you entered the police. It's pretty much defined in fundamentals now when you enter the police, but it can be even more developed then after some time.

DEVLIN: Now in some sense, the end of the career cycle came for Georgia with the massive dismissals that happened.

TKESHELASHVILI: Yes.

DEVLIN: Could you talk a little bit about how that was managed, and because what we encounter is that this is a large pool of people of a certain skill set and a certain set of experience that when not managed well can be problematic, so—

TKESHELASHVILI: *At that time, it was a very quick and right away drastic step that we undertook: basically, quite a lot of people from the police were dismissed at that time from their jobs. They had a choice to stay at that time as another officer, but then they knew that if you would have stayed, and then throughout the individual investigations or inquiries, the facts of corruption and then the ill treatment would have come out; they would have had the precautions on that. So it was more or less a silent deal in a way, as much as I can recall now. I was not with the police at that time myself, and not even with the government, but as much as I remember as a citizen, everybody had this understanding.*

People knew what they were doing throughout decades of their work, I mean being engaged not only in corruption cases, but then in torture cases and ill-treatment of persons. So they knew that their time was over by being part of the system, and they left. It was a deliberate choice not to experiment whether they could have improved or not because—and I do believe myself, now quite firmly—if a person for a continuous period of time is engaged in misbehavior of that type, which is criminal by nature, you can't really bet that this person can improve that much, that you can have a fair expectation that the performance of this person will be fair in the future of the job. So it proved to be the right choice ultimately. We've never had any big disturbances or implication of these people en masse in criminal activities outside of their service, because in the service they were pretty much criminal—engaged in criminal activities as well, by being engaged with organized crime, as well, quite heavily. So they just sort of left.

So socially, and from the criminal point of view, in a country we've had no drastic change of the situation, because they were out in the market and may be ready at hand for some other criminal activities. On the other hand, there was a big public approval of that as well, because largely the public and society was behind

that decision as well. It was not something that needed to be explained that much even to the population, because law enforcement was one of the main parts why people were so unhappy at the time with the government.

DEVLIN: And so then when it comes to recruitment, I imagine the initial challenge would have been that there was a very small pool of people with applicable experience. So how did you real set criteria for hiring people to police or Ministry of Internal Affairs positions?

TKESHELASHVILI: *Well, there were different criteria which got more sophisticated along time, with the type of requirements that we have now for the patrol police, the criminal police, and other sections of the police. But extensive experience in the police was obviously not a requirement at the time, because that would run contrary to the whole context at that time. We were looking at what type of education people have. There were two tests made for them based on general education a person could have had, including some which would reflect just logical thinking as well. And for the criminal police, you have to know the criminal law much more intensely rather than when you enter the patrol police. So it was different entry criteria at the time.*

Then some aspects from administrative law at that time, which was more relevant and continues to be more relevant for patrol police rather than criminal law, and interviews in terms of how people would perform, and through physical exercises as well. I mean their capacity to be in the patrol police, because the patrol police was the biggest one who was right away largely reformed. Then we were inquiring very much into any information that we could get, what this person was doing prior, so that anything that would have been with relation to anything—corruption or anything of bad—bad behavior, so to say. So if there was anything, more or less, with corruption, we would never risk that much for that.

DEVLIN: And it's my understanding that while the vast majority of—take the traffic police, for example—were dismissed, there were some who managed to stay on in the new force. So it wasn't a blanket dismissal. I was wondering if you had any experience or any knowledge of how that choice was made, and what criteria, and who made it to keep certain people on despite—.

TKESHELASHVILI: *No, I mean, in that case Shota [Utiashvili] would be the better person to—because I might have my own opinions, but I have to be sure that they do reflect reality at that time. But as I've said for the criminal police, you have to have people who actually know how to investigate crimes—and in that sense, those who had a chance to stay, they were the ones, as much as I can recall, that had no bad reputation at that time. I mean, in such a big system not everybody was a criminal, obviously, and then there were people who were known who were not extorting bribes and then mistreating persons. They had a chance to stay, and then they had time to prove themselves. There were people who didn't prove themselves in a well manner and were then prosecuted for future cases in which, after they've retained their jobs, they still engaged themselves in some improper behavior. But then, I would say, the majority of the ones who stayed at the time, they proved that they had readjusted to the system in such a way so they were in good shape.*

DEVLIN: So because of the functional specificity of groups like the criminal police, as opposed to the drastic cut in traffic police, this was a more drawn-out assessment of these individuals?

TKESHELASHVILI: Yes, logically that was the main reason at that time, because if you right away blankly dismiss the whole criminal police, then it's very hard to substitute that.

DEVLIN: And then in terms of—you've mentioned a couple of times appraisals and promotions. Now if you look at the [Eduard] Shevardnadze-era Ministry, from my understanding, it's not rationalized by any degree. This was very much a personal and decidedly corrupt system. What were the ways in which you attempted to actually structure this promotion ladder within the ministry to give people a sense of career destination?

TKESHELASHVILI: I mean, in the beginning of the process at that time, as much as I remember, we were in the process of—when we were writing those criteria down together with the European Union experts at the time, what would have been the human resource management structure. I'm not really aware where this stands, so that needs to be checked. But in the process meanwhile, we were not really ideally not trying to have some solutions to the situation. So people should have had an understanding that if they would have done a good job, that would have been the only basis for them to get promoted.

So mainly, for the criminal police, for example, the way they've dealt with investigations, with big cases, for example, and then on organized crime, and then how their cases were well substantiated and then ready at hand for the court, and then who had the bigger, better record and all that. They knew who would have had, if possible, financially at the time, either bonuses or the special ranks being accorded to them or promotions in terms of the positions that they had. So we've tried to establish that the whole context everybody knew in the ministry, in different sections of it—that it was not up to anybody as a given person or given boss in a given section to accord better treatment for any given person, but performance. So that everybody knew basically why somebody got a good treatment, because they knew that there was this big case that this guy dealt with, for example, and they they've just investigated a very sophisticated crime, and then they deserved that—big money-laundering cases, for example.

Then the same approach was taken in the prosecutor's office as well, so that the merit-based promotions—. But as I've said, it was in a very restricted timeframe that was all happening, so that we had to take those decisions before some well-structured guidelines or procedures would have been set, because the whole context should be encouraging good performance by people. So that's how it worked.

DEVLIN: And related to this issue of the ability to act decisively and also promotion as pay, so a large part of the story with police reform in Georgia is that suddenly police were actually getting livable wages. How was that achieved? Was that—because I understand there was international assistance particularly for those wage increases.

TKESHELASHVILI: It was in the beginning of the process, when a special fund had been created for additional pay to civil servants of some degree, but not to the whole spectrum of civil servants at that time. But then it's pretty much through the reorganization of our economy right away, because what we managed to achieve is that our economy became legalized, so to say. When we've dealt with organized crime and then the way how, through corruption, people were evading paying taxes at the time but paying some portion of what would have been the taxes to some officials in terms of bribes and all of that... I mean, it had been a

legal source for income for the state budget, but it all was coupled with the economic reforms.

So the way how they tax legislation had changed. How a different system of encouragement of the economy had been installed so that we started to revive. So it was quite soon, already after a year, if I'm not mistaken, when all the additional payments were already abolished for civil servants—it was a year or so, I would say. And there was a special fund for some time which continued for a small amount of civil servants, especially in the judiciary, for example, and other fields in which some additional payments were arranged for some people, but then for a short period of time.

DEVLIN: On this note of special funds, I have come across this law enforcement development fund. Could you talk a little bit about that?

TKESHELASHVILI: *Well, it's a different—this fund had different sources of income. This fund was specifically created by—for being focused not only on police but on the totality of law enforcement. So that would encompass the prosecutors' office as well as law enforcement in general, the police. It had been dealing with numerous projects with infrastructure. It is not only the salaries and at times some bonuses for good performance for people that could have been arranged, but then we were at the time with no infrastructure, basically, for law enforcement. So equipment for patrol police, equipment for criminologists and equipment for the criminal police, for prosecutors' offices, and proper conditions for their work. That was something that really needed an additional effort at that time. So there was a specific fund created which specifically dealt with those projects at that time.*

DEVLIN: And I've come across references to the—the fund was largely fueled by contributions from private individuals.

TKESHELASHVILI: *It was private individuals mostly at the time, but it varied. I can't really say for sure what was the percentage, private, non-private at the time. But then, in the beginning—I don't know, I have to check on it, I never dealt with this issue myself.*

DEVLIN: And do you have a sense of what the motivation would have been for these—was it a patriotic gesture, or was there something more structured there?

TKESHELASHVILI: *What could have been different, I don't know. I mean, in the prosecutor's office, they will be the ones who will—I mean police were never dealt with this fund as management or anything. There was a special board who dealt with that, so I've never had an encounter with them that much. As much as I remember.*

DEVLIN: And then, since you mentioned that the prosecutor's office—and I know you've had a lot experience across both judicial and police—can you talk about the domestic partners within the Georgian government for police reform outside of the ministry itself?

TKESHELASHVILI: *There were several NGOs [non-governmental organizations] which from time to time were engaged in different sections of the reform. At times it was the legal type of engagement, like the Young Lawyers' Association, for example. Then we've had different organizations, I just can't really recall all the names of them. But then some of them who were working on you know, torture, ill treatment, some of them on the cases of prisons more. Then, law enforcement held a person 48 hours before the person was presented to the judge, so that*

special facilities where the persons are being held—what were the conditions and all of that, and special guidelines for them. So, mostly from the human rights perspective rather than from the structural law enforcement perspective, because we've never had a local counterpart who would have really been engaged in police reform as a police reform in terms of the skills and the capacities of the police as a law enforcement, rather than from a human rights angle only.

DEVLIN: Now in the human rights, was this—was this an advisory role, or was it more of an oversight role that these groups would play?

TKESHELASHVILI: *These groups were more in sort of special facilities where people were detained before they were presented to a judge at the entrance for the day. If a judge decides—so to the prisons. It was oversight as well, because they had a monitoring function, and they could enter it anytime they wish, the facilities, to see the conditions of the people, to have conversations with them. But other than that, it was more of an engagement in a process, so that when we were contemplating or implementing, they set up plans for given fields or a given subject so that, those who wished would be part of it, so that it was more of a collaboration, so to say, a partnership .*

DEVLIN: And one body I've come across is—I believe the public defender's office set it up—was a public council for monitoring of police activity. I think that was in 2005. I was wondering if that's something you've interacted with and had experience of?

TKESHELASHVILI: *At the time, not really, because I was—at that time, no. When I was in the Ministry of Interior, not that much I would say.*

DEVLIN: And so if you were to think of oversight bodies for the police—and I ask this because I think of accountability but sustainability—if the institutions that will make sure these reforms stay in place, where are the centers of that kind of oversight?

TKESHELASHVILI: *I think that needs to be decentralized. We've been thinking at that time as well how the local regional setup can be arranged for that so that local municipalities or they citizens locally can be part of the process. Some councils that would reflect the opinion of the people who are actually in a given municipality, dealing with a given municipalities police rather than some central oversight, which then in itself becomes too much of a bureaucracy and then not really efficient at the end of the day.*

DEVLIN: On the point of decentralization, Georgia's in a position where it has some internal administrative border zones that are potential conflict areas. Could you talk about how that—I'm not sure if it has, but if it has—how does that affect the Ministry's decision or strategy for decentralization, because I imagine those are areas that centralized command also necessarily wants to have a pretty close eye on?

TKESHELASHVILI: *We've already did quite a bit of decentralization, in terms of giving much more power to the heads of the local police in the regions than ever has been the case, and the same goes with the prosecutor's office. So it's been a parallel action: the many issues in which they are pretty much autonomous, including their financial means as well and in many other ways. This already happened. Other than that with the occupied zones now, it's something that we know, that they—we know what the boundaries of those regions are.*

So there's not really conflict historically with the original setup of Georgia, so that it is really not a problem in getting a decentralized way of operation being arranged generally in the rest of the country. Other than that, I mean, the Ministry's capacity of being in overall coordination of the whole system will always be an important factor for a small country like Georgia—because we are not that big [a country], in which you [could] have almost fully autonomous regions in such a way that they don't really care what happens in another because they are like small states themselves. It's a different state in a tiny country like Georgia. So regional decentralization gives you the possibility of well-thought-out capacity regionally, how you manage with the funds that you have, how you better take the interest of the local population in such a way, whether it is the specifics of the crimes that you might encounter in a given region.

But at the same time, one is talking about regional oversight. It could be, again, engagement of the local public with the local police so that they know what the process is all about, and then they are part of it somehow and backing it up. So that could be much more effective than central oversight by any agency in our context.

DEVLIN: Another major departure from the Shevardnadze era was the revitalization of the General Inspection Office within the Ministry so that—that question of internal oversight. Do you have any experience with that in your time there, or any opinions that—?

TKESHELASHVILI: *I think that it was operating very well at the time already when I came in, so that functionally it was already very well set up. It was a very autonomous entity within the Ministry, directly accountable to the minister only, so that no other department, heads of department or deputy ministers, including myself, had any influence over this entity apart from the minister. Any complaint from any source—and we had a special hotline set up at the time for just anybody, citizens, to complain on anything they would wish—was very, very much scrutinized by the General Inspector's Office. So when any issue came up that deserved special attention, they would inquire even more deeply, and then all this material would have gone to the minister.*

Then there were special procedures as set up under the law, what would happen in those circumstances. The persons engaged in any case scenario had their own rights that they could have defended. It's not a totalitarian system so that whatever General Inspector decides, that ends for you. It's a process in which you have a chance to make your own explanations. You can be interviewed orally, and then you defend yourself. It's that process in terms of arbitration: what went wrong or not with the case that's being investigated.

DEVLIN: And now, another development that I believe happened while you were still deputy minister was the establishment of the neighborhood police; that was in 2005, and as I understand, that's a distinctly community policing body.

TKESHELASHVILI: Yes.

DEVLIN: Could you—could you talk about the decision or why that was necessary? Why Georgia thought that they should have a dedicated unit?

TKESHELASHVILI: *Yes, because, for us as for any police, prevention is ultimately much more important rather than reaction to something when it happens. So with the type of community policing that one can have in different regions of the country,*

including different parts of the city, you want interaction with people in a way. So that you are there as the one who explains what are the provisions of the law, who's just there, who knows the local people, and then they do trust the guy who appears with them frequently in different activities and just there in the neighborhood. It's not a policeman of which anybody can be scared so that you don't want to get in to trouble, but a person who you can ask for advice and then trust.

Different ages are better to start up all these relationships of these types, so that they've tried to be very much engaged with young population in the schools, and outside of schools in neighborhood as well. That was the main reason, that police be as close as possible to the public rather than a scare factor who's getting in the place when something goes wrong. You don't want not to get into the attention of the police—partially, it's like that in every other country as much as one can tell. You don't really want to have an interaction with the police, but, you know...

DEVLIN: Now, Georgia has had several bilateral and multilateral assistance arrangements with external actors. What we find is that usually countries' priorities and the priorities of international assistance programs don't necessarily always match—or in terms of sequencing, at least, they don't. Countries may identify something as necessary at the moment, and other actors sometimes come with pet projects, if you will, like community policing, when that's not the most central thing that has to—. Could you talk about how Georgia has managed its external relations on this?

TKESHELASHVILI: *It's always a tough job, because it's not like people come and then right away want to assist you, which is a shared view that you both can have that is the best way of to proceed. Because in the beginning of the process, and then in general maybe, there's always a much bigger readiness to assist with experience where the sharing of experiences of other countries, your own personal experience, rather than infrastructure, material help, that can be coming—. In the beginning of the process of transition, it is always equally important, if not more, to have proper conditions of work for the people.*

I remember, in the beginning of the process, it was always a case that we would rather have a combination of two, always, rather than only technical experience or sharing assistance rather than technical assistance, but at the same time something that would bring better equipment to the police, and training combined with equipment which would have been of a modern nature at that time. You always find it's more difficult than technical experience. But technical experience in itself, you always have to negotiate well so that you better understand what is meant, what is proposed to you as a form of assistance. But then at the same time, your counterpart understands what you actually need, because every country differs from each other, and sometimes for some experts it's difficult to understand.

They come to a country, they think that that there is one model that can be easily looked at as a default method in different countries, which never works. Then sometimes there were even more extreme cases when a person, for example, is not able to implement a given model which this person thinks is an excellent model in his own country, and then wants to experiment on that somewhere else because there is possibility of doing that. Unfortunately, this happens as well in the countries which are in the beginning of transitions.

So it takes a lot from the local entities to be well aware, and then professionals, as much as is possible at that time, to have their own understanding what's best for the country, and then somehow well balance that. Otherwise, you can have disastrous developments in different segments. If, for example—I don't know, judiciary, I'm just theoretically speaking—develops under the model of German judiciary, police under the police of France, for example, and then some under the US models. Then at the end of the day, you have systems in which in all parts of the system have to collaborate well with each other, but then they have different systemic approaches to different things and they can't come together well. So, if local counter parties are not really mobilized, and then knowing how they envisage themselves developing in a given field, and while we speak about law enforcement, it's pretty much the system of justice in general in which you have prosecutor's office, police, you have judiciary, you have the penitentiary. So that you have to have a vision for a comprehensive thing if you want to be arranging reforms well in a given field like police.

DEVLIN: Now did you find your international partners were willing to coordinate amongst themselves? Because a lot of time we find this duplication.

TKESHELASHVILI: *I think that they did; I mean, in the beginning they were themselves in some small sort of a competition, but then at the end of the day, they pretty much settled well. I think they had their own boards of coordination, and then we've had some common boards in which the recipient agency together with the board of international agencies would have had meetings. So, yes, they tried not to duplicate each other, because ultimately it was beneficial for them as well not to spend money on the same thing over and over again.*

DEVLIN: Now, any reform—and especially when it comes to agencies of force—requires tremendous political capital expenditure. Where were the main allies for police reform? Where was the center of support for this, the driving support when it came?

TKESHELASHVILI: *You mean internally?*

DEVLIN: Internally, yes, when it came up against the inevitable problems?

TKESHELASHVILI: *I think there were two factors. One was the public itself, because it was just a thirst for change in this country, because people were fed up basically with the way that the state was dysfunctional. How the state was not only dysfunctional, and by that not providing what it has to provide to the citizens, but how state was interfering too much with private life as well. So all those changes were highly expected and demanded by the public, and that's why it has been the main political force that backed up all this reforms. On the other hand, it was the courage and the unified vision that the new government had, because we understood at the time as well—because along the way when you implement reforms of this type, you lose the same political backup that you have from the public, because there will be painful processes. Then when people do actually understand what it means to go through the reforms, when are in favor of the police reform but your cousin loses job in the police, you might be more critical of that—examples like that.*

But we knew that; it was a conscious decision. That's something when we came to the government that we had to do—fields including police—so it was already a vision and courage from the new political force that came in, but at the same time, the public itself demanded that.

DEVLIN: As you said, challenges in a sense will inevitably come up. I was wondering if you could think of what way, in your experiences, the real challenges here, things that Georgia, foreseen or unforeseen, that—

TKESHELASHVILI: *Well, the main challenge was the restricted time for us, and the beginning of the new experience for all of us, because most of us were not governmental people when we came in to the government. We've had experiences in different fields. That's why we've been brought in. But at the same time, we have to work it out for the reform processes in the country and then to do it quickly, because we've been working around the clock for seven days a week basically.*

Then again, when you have all of this international assistance coming in with different stories—what could be the better one, you have to choose, and it's not that easy again to do everything without mistakes, so that after some time we would identify that in a given field we would thought it was a good arrangement, but then we had to change it a bit. For example, what could have been, for example, the training curriculum, who could have been longer or shorter, what could be the subject that could be in.

Then the interaction with the public as well, for example, when the neighborhood police came in—it was again an understanding that we had to make the step at the time in order to reengage again with the public in a good manner, so that at the beginning the new police would not have been lost, and then people would have had an understanding of what we were doing as part of the society. So different examples of that type.

DEVLIN: So we've covered a range of issues from hiring to broader reform ones. I was wondering, is there something that strikes you that we haven't touched on that people should really know about the story of police reform in Georgia?

TKESHELASHVILI: *I think that one big part of the story, again, is the special context in terms of organized crime that we've had. It was not only the post-Soviet context that we've had to change to make the system functional in a proper, but then really free this country from the organized crime which was part of the system, the political system even. It was a double life that the country had had, a dysfunctional state but then very well functioning organized crime, and people were very much tied into this parallel system of development, and it was very difficult to do anything here, any business, because it was—. As official taxes, I mean, people would know how much they would have paid, who would have had different treatment on anything, and it was especially after the conflicts in the '90s, too much work on surround [...] and everything.*

So for police, for young the police at the time, it was a huge burden to tackle with this issue, and for the prosecutor's office and for the judiciary as well. With the way new legislation had been enacted again at that time, which very much resembles the RICO Act [Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act] and which had been well implemented, and then police had been trained, had been courageous enough at that time, frankly, to deal with those criminals. Because at that time nobody who was tackling with these big guys had a guarantee what would happen with them or with their families, but then this was the new drive, the new motivation in the police, and the new dedication to and respect for their job, for themselves. That helped also because these days, I can really freely say that this country is free from any organized crime. From different crime state they have in all over in different countries, but it's a free country of

any organized crime at this time, and this is a huge part of this story, how throughout the reforms and doing everything at the same time, these guys were dealing with real huge problem at the time with the risk for their lives and security.

DEVLIN: On this question of organized crime, I've heard it kind of described as a carrot-and-stick approach where there is the stick of a zero tolerance policy, but there's also an option of sorts, and again I've had it described as the plea-bargain option, where people would in effect admit to some wrongdoing and revert the corrupt monies back to the state.

TKESHELASHVILI: *But with the plea-bargaining, it was never with the big organized crime guys, because those were the people who were engaged in big corruption cases, money-laundering even or criminal cases mostly, and then mostly with the corruption at the time. Because when investigations went on and then this information came out, and then they knew they were under investigation and they knew themselves the past, what they did actually, plea-bargaining was an efficient way of dealing with the situation. You could have had dragged this process throughout the whole court system, but then if there is a deal, a plea-bargaining deal can be made... It's the same logic why plea-bargaining exists like you have in your own country as well. So that was more with different types of criminals, because at that time the big criminal guys, they were so much influential that plea-bargaining for them was not an option. It was very much a tough process with relation to—and then they were quite violent for quite some time.*

DEVLIN: And my last question on this issue of the violent legacy of the '90s. A lot of states when they reform their police services, especially when they come from political transition, have to deal with non-state forces that can muster violence, basically, and as far as I know, Georgia did have some experience with that. Could you talk a bit about that, and some of the strategies that were—?

TKESHELASHVILI: *Most of them happened already during Shevardnadze's era, for one reason: he had to monopolize power at the time with the groups that were influential, because we've never had a proper army: different paramilitary groups, so to say. He managed somehow to dismantle them and then arrest most of the big guys in those groups, but then still we had remnants of those groups in different parts. For example, in Svaneti there was one guy, Kvitziani, who was a small king there, for example, and then he held the territory with this paramilitary group that he had, and it took almost an armed action at the time to get him arrested. Then his territory too had been free for some time, until now Russians occupied it.*

So after the revolution already, the big paramilitary groups were already dismantled, after the civil wars so it was not the major problem. They all transformed themselves, the remnants into the organized crime groups, dealing with different businesses and then having their own spheres of influence, and not of a paramilitary nature per se, but well-armed criminal groups mostly.

DEVLIN: So they approached these groups, or at least their remnants—was within the zero tolerance crackdown?

TKESHELASHVILI: *Yes, and then the zero tolerance was—we frequently were critiqued by the opposition about this new zero tolerance move, but then exactly this zero tolerance meant zero tolerance to crime of a serious nature, obviously, and all*

armed groups of a criminal nature. They were pretty much—yes, under the more zero tolerance approach, rather than a lenient approach to it.

DEVLIN: Well thanks so much for taking time to talk to me.

TKESHELASHVILI: Thank you.

DEVLIN: I really appreciate it.