Abkhazia off-grid energy storage

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BACKGROUND:On February 19th, Enguri Dam in the Zugdidi region of Georgia was shut for an assessment of what critical maintenance needs to be done. The dam and power plant will remain closed for two to four weeks. How much damage inspectors will find is uncertain (Georgian estimates of 30 million Euros and 3-4 months of repairs compare oddly to Russian estimates of US$ 1 billion and 3 years of repairs), but what is clear is that another dangerous moment in regional relations is at hand.

The cost, both of renovations and alternate power during the renovations, is a critical uncertainty as is the amount of time repairs will require. EBRD is fronting the first 30 million Euros for repairs, but no one (not even the Georgian public) is eager to provide substantial capital for a facility that has to manage across hostile borders without clear agreements, and gives away much of its power.

AUTHOR"S BIO:Theresa Sabonis-Helf is Professor of Security Studies at the National War College/National Defense University, and is currently on sabbatical researching electricity politics in Central Asia and the Caucasus. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and an Adjunct Professor in the Science, Technology and International Affairs program at Georgetown University. The opinions represented in this article are solely those of the author, and do not reflect the official position of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

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Solar photovoltaics has tremendous potential to address current gaps in electricity access for resource-challenged settings, such as sub-Saharan Africa. However, a rapid surge in installations and future growth will lead to an increase in waste from panels and batteries, which needs to be tackled urgently. Innovative technical solutions and improved policies and standards are required to address end-of-life challenges for solar photovoltaics in sub-Saharan Africa.

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