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Konstantin Eggert - Putin's Regime Is Over; Something New Is Starting in Russia

INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

Independent journalist, political analyst and communications consultant, Konstantin Eggert is the former editor-in-chief of the BBC Russian Service Moscow bureau. Radio Free Europe's Georgian Service sat down with him to discuss last week's Prigozhin incident.

"It's very difficult to determine exactly what we saw, but it certainly looked like a real military rebellion against Putin, in spite of the fact that Putin was not directly mentioned," Eggert notes. "It is clear that this undermined and continues to undermine the Putin system. Yet, for some reason, Evgeny Prigozhin decided to stop the advance of his mercenaries and said he wanted to avoid bloodshed, as if he didn't understand that when he was speeding towards Moscow. And the intermediary appears to be Lukashenko, which is both ridiculous and unbelievable."

"What we can say for sure is that this event significantly weakened Putin's grip on his own system."

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Ukraine Latest: Countdown Started on Kremlin Regime, At Least 13 Civilians Dead in 2 Missile Strikes on Ukraine

COMPILED BY ANA DUMBADZE

Belarusian head of state Alexander Lukashenko urged dissenters not to create divisions in his relationship with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin after Minsk stepped in to provide sanctuary to failed insurrectionist and former Kremlin ally Yevgeny Prigozhin. Prigozhin, whose paramilitary group Wagner has played a key role in the war in Ukraine and in furthering Russian military objectives abroad, accepted exile into Belarus as part of an amnesty deal brokered in the wake of his fizzled attempt to turn arms on Moscow over the weekend. The Wagner leader arrived in Belarus on Tuesday.

Ukraine sees an end to the leadership of Russian President Vladimir Putin on the horizon, following recent tensions between Russia's defense officials and frontline-prominent paramilitary troop Wagner.

"I think the countdown has started," Andriy Yermak, close adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, said in a Kyiv briefing, according to the BBC.

PUTIN ADDRESSES RUSSIANS, CALLS WAGNER REBELLION 'CRIMINAL'

Russian President Vladimir Putin has delivered his first televised address since Wagner Group mercenaries instigated a failed mutiny against Russian military leaders over the weekend.

Putin called the rebellion "criminal activity to split and weaken the country, which is now confronting a colossal external threat," meaning the international response to Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

The Russian president said the organizers of the armed insurrection would be "brought to justice," yet he did not



Rescue teams work to find out survivors under the rubble after a Russian missile attack hits Ria restaurant in Kramatorsk, Ukraine, June 27. Narciso Contreras | Anadolu Agency | Getty Images

mention Wagner Group leader Yevgeny Prigozhin by name.

He also offered apparent clemency to the hundreds of Wagner mercenaries who participated in the armed march from the southern city of Rostov to about 200 miles outside Moscow.

The speech did little to clarify what comes next for the Wagner Group or for the Russian military, which was unprepared for the speed and ease with which the rebel convoy traveled through the country on major highways.

In his speech, Putin insisted his troops would have crushed the rebellion if it had proceeded any further.

PLANE LINKED TO WAGNER BOSS PRIGOZHIN LANDS IN BELARUS

A private business jet linked to Wagner Group boss Yevgeny Prigozhin landed

in Belarus on Tuesday, data from flight-tracking website Flightradar24 showed.

The Embraer Legacy 600 aircraft, registration number RA-02795, matches the identification codes of the jet belonging to Prigozhin, according to the US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). It landed early on Tuesday morning near Minsk, having taken off from St. Petersburg shortly after 1 a.m. local time (5 p.m. ET Monday), though it is not yet known who was on board.

Under the deal brokered by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko over the weekend, which brought a halt to Wagner's rebellion against Moscow, Prigozhin has been effectively exiled to Belarus. His exact whereabouts have been unknown since the uprising.

US CONDEMNS LATEST DEADLY RUSSIAN MISSILE ATTACKS

On the frontline, Ukraine has accused Moscow of a missile attack in the eastern city of Kramatorsk, which allegedly struck a pizza restaurant, leaving at least 10 dead.

The US State Department condemned the latest Russian attack on a populated area, calling it another example of the country's "continuing escalation and the sheer brutality of its war of aggression."

"The US unequivocally condemns the targeting of civilians and offers our sincere condolences to those lost in this most recent strike in the city center," said Vedant Patel, principal deputy spokesperson at the State Department. "We are appalled by this, but unfortunately not surprised by Russia's conduct."

Ukrainian authorities arrested a man who allegedly helped Russia direct the missile strike that killed at least 10 people at the restaurant, the Associated

Press reported.

Ukraine's National Police said the Tuesday evening attack wounded 61 other people, and rescuers are still searching the rubble.

The detained man is an employee of the local gas transportation company who allegedly filmed the restaurant for the Russians and informed them about its popularity, the Security Service of Ukraine said in a Telegram post, according to the AP report. It provided no evidence for its claim.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov repeated that Russia doesn't aim at civilian targets, although its air strikes have killed many civilians, the AP reported.

RUSSIAN SHELLING KILLS THREE IN KHARKIV

At least three people were killed in Russia's shelling of Ukraine's eastern Kharkiv region on Wednesday, the regional governor said.

"Unfortunately, as a result of this shelling, three civilians in the village of Vovchanski Khutory were killed near their homes," governor Oleh Synehubov wrote on Telegram. He said the victims were men aged 45, 48 and 57.

LITHUANIA PURCHASES AIR DEFENSE SYSTEMS FOR UKRAINE

Lithuania has acquired two NASAMS air defense systems that will be transferred to Ukraine, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda said on Twitter, in the run-up to a summit of the NATO military alliance over July 11-12.

"Looking forward to more collective decisions on support to Ukraine at the NATO summit in Vilnius," the Lithuanian head of state added.

Ukraine has repeatedly entreated donations of air defense units to protect its skies from Russian missiles, with a focus on the costly US-provided Patriot systems.



Black Sea Water Quality Monitoring Set for Every 10 Days

The National Environment Agency has released a statement outlining monitoring plans for Black Sea water quality.

The Agency states that monitoring of the water quality will be conducted once every ten days at nine designated stations. Upon completion of the research, the Agency will report the findings promptly.

"The research will focus on determining key physicochemical parameters of

seawater, including salinity, biogenic elements and other relevant indicators. Collected samples will be sent to the atmospheric air, water, and soil analysis laboratory of the National Environment Agency. This laboratory adheres to modern requirements and standards. Equipped with highly precise analytical instruments, the laboratory is accredited under ISO 17025. The results obtained from the laboratory will be promptly shared with the public," the statement reads.

State Program for City and Resort Development Launched

The Municipal Development Fund, under the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, has launched a new state program aimed at city and resort development.

To introduce this program, the Foundation organized an open-day event. The initiative for the program comes from the Prime Minister of Georgia, and it will receive one billion GEL from the state budget for its implementation.

The program is set to run for five years, with the first phase focusing on 11 selected locations: Borjomi, Bakuriani, Kutaisi, Tskaltubo, Telavi, Zugdidi, Batumi, Mtskheta, Stephantsminda, Mestia, and Kazbegi.

Within the framework of the program, the historical part of Borjomi and the central park will be renovated; Tskaltubo Central Park and new construction of Cold Lake will be developed; a new boulevard will be built in Zugdidi; the historical area of Kutaisi, the botanical garden, will be renovated, and the Lado Meskhisvili Theater of Kutaisi will be rehabilitated; Batoni Castle and its surrounding area will be developed in Telavi, as well as capital rehabilitation of Telavi's Vazha-Pshavela Drama Theater; and the historical part of Batumi will be renewed

and recreation areas will be developed. The program envisages renovation of historical areas of Kazbegi, Bakuriani and Mestia municipalities and creation of new attraction centers.

During the open day event, the Execu-

tive Director of the Municipal Development Fund, Davit Tabidze, provided information about the program to construction companies, which included details about the program, upcoming tenders, and the procedures involved.



David O'Sullivan: Georgia Doesn't Join Sanctions, But it is Committed to not Allowing its Territory to be Used to Avoid Them

There is an important bilateral agenda between Georgia and the European Union, and we hope that you will be welcomed as a member of the European Union someday, and we must not allow the issue of sanctions to become an irritant or an obstacle to the development of our close bilateral relations. I am happy to say that what we have seen in the last two days confirms that this is absolutely not the case, – said David O'Sullivan, EU Sanctions Envoy, at a press conference in Tbilisi.

“I am in Tbilisi with British and American colleagues. As a general context, following Russia's illegal, full-scale and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, the international community has imposed sanctions designed to undermine Russia's ability to wage this war, to deprive the Russian government of revenue to wage this war, to impose a heavy economic price on Russia for this brutal and unprovoked war. We are paying special attention to the issue of possible circumvention of sanctions, and we are paying special attention to the 38 products that are used on the battlefield and that the

Ukrainians have observed on the battlefield. These products make Russia's weapons more lethal, smarter and more deadly. We are particularly concerned about any circumvention of the sanctions imposed on these products,” O'Sullivan noted.

He claimed that while Georgia does not join the sanctions against Russia, they do understand the specific situation in which Georgia is economically and geographically.

“Georgia, of course, does not implement sanctions, and we are perhaps disappointed that this is not the case for a country that aspires to be a member of the European Union. We would like a high degree of compliance in foreign policy as well. But we also understand the specific situation which Georgia is in economically, geographically, and in terms of close contacts with Russia. So, we understand that they are not going to implement our sanctions, but I have to say that what we have seen in the last two days has convinced us that the Georgian authorities are very serious about not allowing their country to be a platform for sanction cir-



David O'Sullivan: Georgia Doesn't Join Sanctions, But Is Committed to Not Allowing its Territory to Be Used to Avoid Them

cumvention. They have implemented important measures to control the export of the most sensitive 38 possible products from Georgia. The same applies to financial sanctions, where they are being vigilant, and we sincerely admire the

measures they have taken.

“I want to make it clear that we are here in a period of partnership and cooperation, especially on the part of the European Union. We have an important bilateral agenda between Georgia and

the European Union, and we hope it will be welcomed as a member of the European Union someday, and we must not allow the issue of sanctions to become an irritant or an obstacle to the development of our close bilateral relations. I'm happy to say that what we've seen in the last two days proves that this is absolutely not the case,” said O'Sullivan.

“I would be happy to say that there is not a single case of circumvention of sanctions anywhere. What I can say is that the measures that have been taken here [in Georgia] are a very strong guarantee that there will be no circumvention [of sanctions].

“For the reasons I have already mentioned, Georgia does not join our sanctions, does not implement our sanctions. However, what we have seen in the last two days is that Georgia is very serious about its commitment not to allow its territory to be used as a cover for sanctions, whether it is trade in goods, specifically 38 military goods, or financial services,” he added.

He concluded that the visit to Tbilisi was fruitful and they are leaving the country with positive impressions.

O'Brien: We're Working With Several of Russia's Neighbors, as Russia Wants to Use Georgian Territory to Fund their War Machine



We are working with several of Russia's neighbors because we know that the Russians want to use the territory of Georgia to fund and secure their war machine, – the head of the US State Department's Sanctions Coordination Office, Ambassador James O'Brien, said at a press conference in Tbilisi. “Therefore, we are working with Russia's neighbors and Russia's largest trading partners to prevent this from happening. What we have seen in several of these countries is an attempt to tighten their policies so that Russia is less able to use their territories for military purposes. We see this in the public statements of Turkey, in Kazakhstan, and also in the good, very extensive work by the government agencies of Georgia,” said O'Brien.



Georgia Qualifies for U21 Championship Quarter-finals

The Georgian National Under-21 football team, led by Ramaz Svanidze, faced the Netherlands in the final group stage match of the UEFA 2023 Under 21 European Championship. The game ended in a 1-1 draw.

With this result, Georgia's U21 team has secured its place in the quarter-finals of the tournament. Georgia leads the group with 5 points.

Georgia and Romania are co-hosting the 2023 UEFA European Under-21 Championship.

POLITICS

Actual Political Analysis or Only Guesswork?

OP-ED BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

The world is becoming smaller and smaller on an everyday basis. And the 21st century is bringing about an ever-increasing number of weird things even beyond the full-scale war right in the middle of our good old Europe, among them the triviality of sex alterations; the radical reconsideration of all human values and achievements; shootings of unsuspecting pedestrians in broad daylight; comprehensive digitalization of our lives; the urge to take trips up to space and down to ocean depths; the vigorous advent of artificial intelligence; the almost irreversible renewal of the arms race; accelerated proliferation of artificial reproductive ways and means; compression of information into gradually lessening alphanumeric containers; growth of genetically modified food production, and more.

To complete the list, a genuinely truthful and reliable political analysis is, based on factual happenings and produced by the best minds of today's world, being overwhelmingly substituted by sheer guesswork by the selfsame political-analytical celebs, including in our own little Sakartvelo. The impression is that nobody actually knows anything about the cur-



Image by Brett Kaufman / ALAMY, GETTY, ISTOCK

rent developments in the world. We are all sucked into an insurmountable electronic informational avalanche, able to make only affordable guesses, be we the

reading rank-and-file, or the preposterously self-confident producers of political-analyses. After all, both the sellers and the buyers of political commentary use

the same exact news sources to keep themselves in the swim of worldwide matters. None of them have access to what is really taking place because the information that is only in the hands of powers that be is not available to us the regular public.

Take, for instance, the recent short-lived coup d'état in Russia. There are as many 'expert' comments on the weird rebellion as there are volunteers to make those comments, sometimes very unlikely and, often, awfully removed from what we still call the truth. As a matter of fact, one will never know the reliable veracity about facts like this unless one is sitting snugly right under Putin's desk in the Kremlin, stealthily listening to what those upcoming premediated surreptitious steps of his government are set to surprise the world with, or, for that matter, unless one is riding in the notorious military chieftain Prigozhin's heavily armored truck's backseat, eavesdropping on his discourse with his faithful action-movie-star-like lieutenants.

All this practically means that most of us are deeply sunk in darkness, eagerly awaiting concrete developments so as to finally understand what means what and what to expect from whom. On top of that, an overall universal tiredness is felt: tiredness from the grinding and re-grinding of the same facts; tiredness from doubting the genuineness of the informa-

tion fed to us on an hourly basis; tiredness from the unthoughtful accidental comments coming from even the most serious of political story-tellers; tiredness from expecting the finale of major events, especially the war in Ukraine; and, lastly, tiredness of our own incapability to discern between authentic political analysis and trivial guesswork.

The global ideological arena, openly and arrogantly, but not very truthfully dominated by the international mass-media, is literally infested with thousands of presumptuous remarks, statements and observations by all sorts of professional journalists, amateur bloggers and experienced political analysts about the failed coup d'état in Russia and its pivotal figure, businessman-turned-into-warlord Yevgeny Prigozhin and his trained military bunch, who momentarily evaporated from the battlefields of Ukraine to find themselves somewhere in close vicinity to Moscow. What is this, the Shakespearian 'much ado about nothing'? Or the folkloric 'time will tell'? The thing is that we simply don't know. Nobody does, even those who think they do. I have never seen the world and its regular describers at such a huge loss as this. What does it mean, then? Could this be the expectant mother-nature ready to give birth to something totally different from what we have always known as 'our civilization'? Possibly!

David Bramlette on Ukraine's Armed Forces and Lessons Yet to Be Learned



INTERVIEW BY VAZHA TAVBERIDZE

David Bramlette is a former US Army Ranger and Green Beret who commanded a team in Ukraine's Foreign Legion for 10 months last year. He currently works for the Romulus T. Weatherman Foundation, an NGO that leads operations in Ukraine to identify, recover, and repatriate Americans killed in action.

In an interview from Kyiv recently with RFE/RL Georgian Service's Vazha Tavberidze, Bramlette says the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a classic case of "good versus evil," gives high marks to the Ukrainian military but isn't impressed with their Russian counterparts, and chides the West for overrating Russian forces. Bramlette also says he likes the chances of the Ukrainian military as it now begins a long-anticipated counter-offensive, explaining that Ukraine's fighting capabilities are on an upward trajectory while Russia's military is heading in the opposite direction.

AS AN ARMY RANGER, YOU FOUGHT IN IRAQ AND IN AFGHANISTAN. AND THEN YOU CAME BACK TO FIGHT FOR UKRAINE. SO WHY DO YOU THINK THIS WAR IS YOUR WAR?

First off, I think this is probably the most righteous war of my generation, this is good versus evil. I was sitting in grad school at Johns Hopkins in my last semester, and we were talking about whether Russia would invade conventionally. And I'll be honest, I didn't think they were going to do it. I didn't think they could be that dumb. I served in a Ranger Regiment and the 10th Special Forces Group, where our motto is De Oppresso Liber, which stands for "to free the oppressed." What a Green Beret does is to enable a partner force to resist an invasion or to overthrow a corrupt authoritarian government. And when this kicked off, I was like - I have the knowledge, I have the skills, I have the

ability to help. I took a leave of absence from school and came on over. And it's a totally different war than anything I've experienced before. My worst day in Iraq or Afghanistan, the worst possible day, when we felt like things were totally out of control - that doesn't even compare to a normal day here. I think there's a lot of lessons that need to be learned.

WHAT ARE THOSE LESSONS?

Green Berets, especially special operations leaders, need to become very, very comfortable with being uncomfortable and not having communications with the guys who are out in the field. From March until October, when I would send a four-man reconnaissance element out, I wouldn't know that they were okay until they came back.

SO YOU NEED TO RELY ON YOUR MEN'S DECISION-MAKING ON BASICALLY EVERY LEVEL.

Yeah. The American military has had a very hard time empowering Junior NCOs and even junior officers. They need to learn to trust their guys. And part of that comes from focusing on the basics, basic soldiering. I went down to Fort Bragg and talked to the officers going through the Green Beret course. And the things I harped on the most was basics, basics, basics. I asked all of them, when's the last time any of you went out in the woods and dug a fighting position? None of them raised their hands. They'd never done it. When was the last time you went out in the woods and had a battle drill? Years ago, if they went through Ranger School. So, those are some of the lessons. I think there are a lot of hang-ups from the global war on terror, where everybody wants to be a cool guy, seek up close quarters battle, because it's fun and it's cool. But you're not going to do that out here [in Ukraine]. I mean, if you go into a building, when there's artillery and tanks around, you're pretty likely to get blown out. And there are a lot of really hard lessons - Ukrainians have learned those lessons now.

UKRAINIANS HAVE LEARNED THOSE LESSONS THROUGH SHEER PRACTICE. WHEN I INTERVIEW WESTERN COMMANDERS, ONE LINE I HEAR REPEATED IS THAT UKRAINE TODAY HAS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL, WELL-TRAINED AND EFFECTIVE ARMIES IN THE WORLD. CONSIDERING YOU FOUGHT ALONGSIDE THEM FOR 10 MONTHS, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I wouldn't say that's a fair assessment. That sounds like a talking point that somebody wrote up and they're repeating. It's more complicated than that. You have professional Ukrainian army units, who have been working together since 2015, served out in the Donbass together, and then you have units that are new brigades that are newly formed and full of volunteers. And so you have a huge discrepancy in the level of experience and training. I stopped combat operations December 1, so I don't know what result all that Western training that's been going on has brought, but I can promise you it is huge. It's something that's kind of hard to quantify and measure, but I guarantee you, the guys who are doing that training are seeing massive improvements.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UKRAINIAN SOLDIERS?

I would say they are pretty damn effective. You don't have to be super proficient to be effective. Let's take the example of the Kraken detachment. We worked with them in the spring, at the time, not super proficient, but they were effective. And that's what matters. I'm sure those guys have become more proficient over time. I would say what makes the Ukrainians so effective on the battlefield is that they're so motivated. These guys are retaking the towns they grew up in, the homes they grew up in, the place where they had their first kiss.

AND HOW EFFECTIVE WERE THE RUSSIANS YOU FOUGHT

AGAINST FOR TEN MONTHS?

I can only talk about my experience, but from what I saw, they were not proficient at all. I think we in the West still overestimate the capabilities of the Russian military. Look at trajectory of the Russian military - it's either flat, or it's going down, because they're taking so many casualties. So in a Russian unit, you have to have a lot of line units, line battalions, and then you have a training battalion essentially, who are like the CADRE - they're the most experienced guys and they are the ones being sent to the front and sent to the meat grinder. So not only have you lost your most experienced fighting units, you've also lost the people who are supposed to be training the fighting units. And so the trajectory is down and Ukrainian trajectory is shooting up. And soon they'll be getting F-16s.

YOU WERE THERE WHEN UKRAINE LAUNCHED ITS COUNTEROFFENSIVE LAST YEAR. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT THE CURRENT ONE TO ACHIEVE?

I'm bullish on Ukraine, obviously. I think Ukraine will each achieve a lot. I'm not going to speculate on where they're going to do their counteroffensive, or how they're going to do it. But from what I've seen of the Russians, and from what I've seen of the Ukrainians, I think it's going to go really well. And when I was talking about trajectories, I think Russia is flat or getting worse, and if they're getting worse, then it's in Ukraine's interest to wait until the perfect moment to attack. That shows a high degree of professionalism. I think the general staff, Zaluzhny and so on, are pretty good at what they do.

WHAT DO YOU THINK UKRAINE NEEDS TO MAKE THIS COUNTEROFFENSIVE A SUCCESS?

We've not given them enough tanks to accomplish the mission. I think what the US has been banking on is that Ukraine can do more with less. And we have this combined arms ideology that,

you know, if you can effectively use tanks, artillery, air support, infantry support, and use them all together, you have a synergistic effect. And that's all well and good, but you have to keep in mind that the Ukrainian military has gone from 196,000 people in uniform pre February 24, 2022, to 700,000 people in uniform today. And that's not counting all the guys who are in reserve. And if we look at the number of Ukrainians who have been trained by Western militaries, it needs to be way more. So I would say tanks and artillery are the biggest things and long range missiles and props to the Brits for taking the lead on that. France needs to step up to the plate and deliver those missiles as soon as possible. And then there is the TAURUS missile from Germany. Prior to HIMARS showing up last year, we were taking artillery and mortar fire all the time. HIMARS started showing up and over the course of that month, I would say we noticed a 50% decrease in the amount of artillery being fired at us because the Russian supply depots were getting blown out. And so when you introduce a longer range missile, you're pushing those supply hubs back and you're increasing the survivability of the Ukrainian units, especially the newly formed brigades, who don't have a ton of training. And whatever we can do to increase the survivability of those guys, I think it's going to end this war way quicker.

IN YOUR FIRST ANSWER, YOU SAID "THIS IS THE MOST RIGHTEOUS WAR I HAVE EVER FOUGHT". YOU'VE FOUGHT IN TWO OTHER WARS, WHY DO YOU THINK OF THEM BEING IN SOME WAY LESS RIGHTEOUS?

Yeah, Iraq and Afghanistan, I have sort of bittersweet or mixed feelings about them because they were also some of the best times in my life. But, you know, I didn't agree with the way we went about those wars, especially Afghanistan. I was a Green Beret, that would have been a perfect operation with purely Green Berets, with just close air support. When you start introducing conventional armed military forces, the US Army, Marines, or you take a kid who's 18 years old, and you put a rifle in his and send him through basic training, and then expect him to go and do counterinsurgency - He doesn't have the maturity to handle it, so that's why I have mixed feelings about it. You know, I'm very passionate about freeing the oppressed. And that's what the Green Berets do. And I think it would have been a prime opportunity for the Green Berets to take control. And Iraq, well, the fact I don't have a good answer for you should tell you pretty much everything you need to know about it. And compared to Ukraine, Ukraine is a European country that has a democratically elected government. I'm sitting in Kyiv right now, and it's like being in New York City or Washington DC or just a regular American city, and it's righteous, because when Russia invaded, it felt like, August, September 1939, like if we don't stop this thing here, it could get way worse, because if you look at it in hindsight, if you look at the trajectory of what Russia has done since the fall of the Soviet Union, with Transnistria, Chechnya, Georgia, 2014s Crimea and Donbas, the dawning of the MH 17. You have all the polonium and novichok poisonings, you have Czech ammo depots blowing up like they're out of control. And I compare them to a rabid dog. And if you look at that trajectory - if we don't stop them here, the next stop on that trajectory is a NATO country.

Bramlette requests that if readers know of any KIA or VIA Americans, please contact him on Twitter. <http://weathermanfoundation.org> <https://twitter.com/bambabase>

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Agenda

- 1) surprising number of tech companies in both
- 2) issues with staffing and integration of staff for each country
- 3) exporting Intellectual Property
- 4) FDI trends
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Konstantin Eggert - Putin's Regime Is Over; Something New Is Starting in Russia

Continued from page 1

It significantly weakened his ability to prosecute the war. It created chaos among the millions of Russian civil servants on whose shoulders this regime stands. And this will have repercussions, even if tomorrow Prigozhin resumes what he was doing and forgets about the resignation of Gerasimov and Shoigu. I think that Putin's regime, as we knew it, is over, and something new is starting in Russia. Perhaps it will be worse than it used to be, although it's difficult to imagine something worse, especially if you're Ukrainian. But I don't think we can presume anymore that Putin is in full control of the country, and that he is really the master of his fate."

WHY WOULD PRIGOZHIN DO WHAT HE DID?

At this moment, we don't know. But the mere fact that at least on the surface of it, it was Lukashenko who stopped the advance on Moscow means that, in the eyes of the Russian bureaucracy, Putin is no longer tops: He depends on Lukashenko to communicate with Prigozhin. And this means that Putin, who was saying in the morning that Prigozhin was a traitor, is now negotiating with the traitor through an intermediary who is supposed to be his junior partner.

There's no way to explain it, other than to say that Putin was really afraid and here really needed a way out. And Prigozhin was also afraid, because although 25,000 well trained fighters could force its way into Moscow, it would not be enough to hold the city and to command full control of the country. I do suppose that all this means that both sides understood: for now, it is best to pretend that they have come to an agreement. But this elevates Prigozhin to the level of Putin. And this, of course, hits Putin very hard.

We're dealing with a new political reality. And it doesn't matter, in these circumstances, whether the rest of the country, the citizens, really understood what happened or not; a lot of them will continue to remain passive. That said, a lot of them, especially in the south of Russia, were very much disturbed by what happened.

It is clear that those who Putin relied on to run Russia, the local FSB, directors, policemen, heads of state corporations, people like that, they now know that Putin is no longer in full control. So it's not the end of the story.

Whatever happens, Putin has shortened his stay in the Kremlin

CAN PUTIN SLEEP AT NIGHT, KNOWING THAT PRIGOZHIN IS OUT THERE? AS LONG AS HE BREATHES, AS LONG AS HE IS ALIVE, CAN PUTIN AFFORD TO SLEEP?

Everything you've seen so far is like a better version of a Tom Clancy novel. I cannot imagine how Putin sleeps, whether he will continue to sleep or whether he will resign, or whether Prigozhin will be eliminated. I think that Prigozhin understands that his chances of survival are probably not that high. But I suppose that an important element of all that we'll be seeing is what is happening with the war. I suppose that somehow it all has to do with the aggression against Ukraine. I think that we'll see what noise comes from the Kremlin and we'll see what the decision is regarding the war. Ukrainians definitely have a chance as long as there is chaos. Whatever remains of the Russian leadership wants to show that there is no chaos anymore. But there is, of course.

YOU SAY CRACKS ARE SHOWING IN PUTIN'S SYSTEM. THE RUSSIANS WERE TOLERATING PUTIN FOR SO LONG BECAUSE OF THE PREMISE THAT HE BROUGHT STABILITY. NOW, BUILDINGS ARE BURNING NOT IN UKRAINE, BUT IN ROSTOV AND VORONEZH - WHAT WILL IT DO TO PUTIN'S "STABILOCRACY"?

The situation in Russia, as far as Russian society is concerned, is very simple. The majority of society was dormant. We didn't see a lot of Prigozhin demonstrations. We also didn't see any anti-Prigozhin demonstrations, or anyone demonstrating in Moscow for Putin. It is a society that will probably agree that "okay, thank God the bloodshed was averted. So we'll try and go back to normal." "Narod Bezmolvstvuet" - the peo-



Konstantine Eggert. Source: elmostrador

ple are silent, is the final line of Alexander Pushkin's, to my mind most important play called Boris Godunov, which is about the time of Troubles in

Russia, in the early 17th century.

I think that the fact that the people are silent is not relevant to the power struggle that will continue. This is no longer the regime we knew. Lots of people will be looking at Putin now from a different angle. And we'll be trying to understand what happened, as this stability, at least as far as significant decision makers in the country, is gone. And you will not be able to get it back. Because if this was a huge play staged by Putin, which I think is unlikely, then how can you trust the person that can play such tricks on you? If it wasn't, then it's clear that Putin had to basically scramble and save himself. In both cases, I think we'll see more

Russia is a society where citizens are in the minority

This elevates Prigozhin to the level of Putin. And this, of course, hits Putin very hard

cracks inside the Russian system. Whatever happens, Putin shortened his stay in the Kremlin, that is if he will stay in the Kremlin at all.

WHATEVER PRIGOZHIN'S REAL MOTIVATIONS MIGHT BE, IT BOILS DOWN TO RUSSIANS KILLING OTHER RUSSIANS BECAUSE THEY DISAGREE ABOUT HOW TO BETTER KILL UKRAINIANS. WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT RUSSIA?

Well, it just adds to the picture, that of very significant moral crisis inside society. A moral crisis that I'm afraid may lead to society never being able to rise again and do something good about its own country. What's happened definitely shows us the depths of the moral crisis that Russian society is undergoing. It is not for Putin, it is not against Putin, "it is okay to kill others, as long as it basically doesn't touch me too much." It is okay for armed gangs to capture the cities and then for them to retreat. It is a society where citizens are in the minority. And this means that whoever is in the Kremlin will be able to basically present society with any choice he or she chooses. And there is a very high chance that society will just accept it. It is an issue of a society that basically agrees to any order coming from above. Some gladly, some grudgingly, some actually want to isolate themselves from reality and did it pretty successfully until recently. So any change that may come in such circumstances will definitely come from intra-elite struggles, rather than some kind of popular democratic revolution. And this, to me, is probably the perspective we will be facing in the coming weeks and months.

TRAGIC, ISN'T IT.
It is.



Chiatura Miners Stop Protesting, Salaries to Increase by 11.9%

With the involvement of the Trade Union, an agreement was reached between the miners from Chiatura and their employer. The special regime has been canceled and the Chiatura mine will resume its work from the first of July instead of the first of August, the Trade Unions Confederation reports.

According to them, an agreement has already been signed.

Miners held protests in Tbilisi and Chiatura for more than two weeks.

They demanded the fulfillment of 14-point demands from "Georgian Manganeze". Their demands included an increase in salary, the right to use vacations, control of safety at the workplace at the highest level, and improved insurance conditions. Some of the miners went on hunger strike for several days in Chiatura, and some in Tbilisi, near the Parliament. A few people even resorted to extremism and sewed their mouths and eyes shut. After a 13-day hunger strike, the miners have now stopped protesting.

Georgian President Vetoes Election Code Amendments

The President of Georgia, Salome Zurbishvili, vetoed the amendments adopted in the "Election Code", which change the procedure for electing the CEC chairman and members.

The administration of the President states that with the changes, the selection and presentation of candidates will be done by the Chairman of the Parliament, and the election will be made by the majority of the Parliament, which means it will be a one-party decision.

The President proposes to Parliament that the Chairperson and members of the CEC be elected with no less than 90 votes, as happened in the case of the Public Defender.

"According to the current edition, an independent and non-partisan official, the President of Georgia announces the competition and creates a candidate selection commission. The President presents the selected candidates to the Parliament.



According to the changes, the creation of the commission, the selection and presentation of candidates will be done by the Chairman of the Parliament, and the election will be done by a simple majority of the Parliament, which means a one-party decision.

Electing the chairman and members

with 76 votes instead of 100 eliminates the need for consensus-based decisions and increases the risk of polarization.

The veto serves the purpose of maintaining this consensus.

"This is necessary to maintain and strengthen trust in the elections and election administration," the statement reads.



MONTHLY TOURISM UPDATE

May 2023

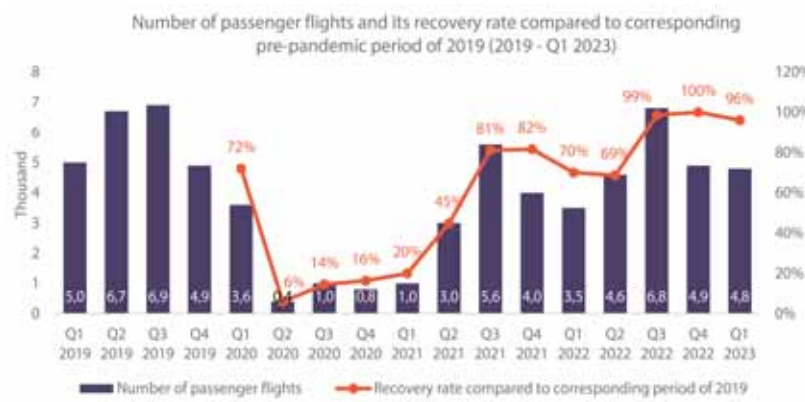
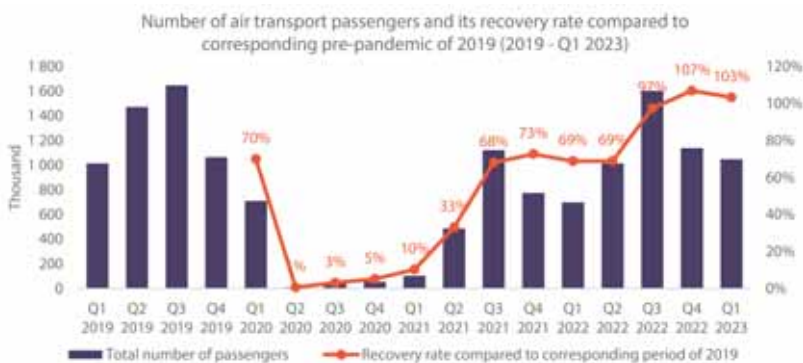
Georgia

Air Transport Statistics for Georgia (Q1 of 2023)



Research

www.pmcresearch.org



In Q1 of 2023, 1.048 million passengers were transported by airline companies in Georgia, which is 49.9% higher compared to Q1 of 2022 and 3.3% higher compared to the corresponding pre-pandemic (Q1 of 2019) figure.

According to the Georgian Civil Aviation Agency, the number of passengers traveling to and from Georgian international airports was highest at Tbilisi (713,600), followed by Kutaisi (253,100) and Batumi (77,100), similar to the previous periods. However, despite significant YoY growth, the number of passengers did not recover to pre-pandemic

recorded a decline in Q1 of 2023 compared to Q1 of 2022.

PASSENGER FLIGHTS IN GEORGIAN AIRPORTS

The recovery rate of the number of passenger flights in Georgia was gradual and the seasonality of the recovery was also visible. In particular, after the easing of pandemic-related restrictions in Q3 of 2021, the number of flights recovered significantly, followed by a decline and further recovery in Q3 of 2022. In Q1 of 2023, the number of passenger flights almost recovered to the pre-pandemic number and reached 4.8 thousand

lower compared to the schedule for the winter season of 2018-2019.

In the summer season of 2023 (26

airports, which is slightly higher compared to the winter season of 2022-2023.

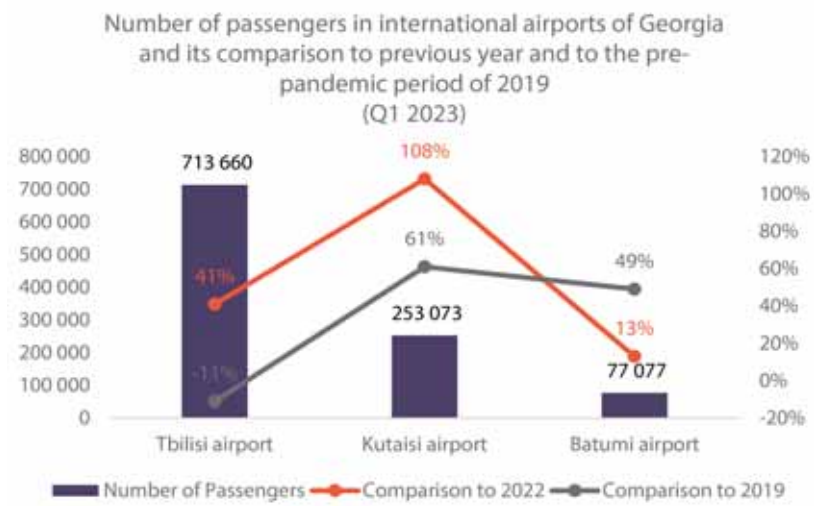
The total number of routes is scheduled

Season	Airlines	Countries	Directions	Average weekly flights
Winter Season 2018-2019 ¹	38	32	73	415
Summer Season 2019 ²	41	37	94	590
Winter Season 2022-2023 ³	41	31	61	390
Summer Season 2023 ⁴	43	31	88	555

March - 28 October 2023), 43 airline companies are scheduled to provide regular flights to and from Georgian

to reach 88, which is 44.3% higher compared to the previous season, and 6.4% lower compared to the schedule for the

Region	Hotel		3*, 4*, 5*		Guesthouse	
	2023 May/ 2023 Apr	2022 May/ 2022 May	2023 May/ 2023 Apr	2022 May/ 2022 May	2023 May/ 2023 Apr	2022 May/ 2022 May
Kakheti	9.6%	5.3%	-1.2%	0.8%	16.4%	7.3%
Imereti	3.4%	4.8%	6.1%	1.7%	0.9%	7.8%
Guria	36.7%	23.2%	51.7%	26.7%	0.0%	13.2%
Kvemo Kartli	0.0%	10.0%	0.0%	10.0%	-	-
Adjara	22.4%	19.6%	21.3%	10.2%	23.5%	45.7%
Racha	0.0%	4.2%	-	-	0.0%	4.2%
Shida Kartli	13.5%	23.7%	8.0%	7.8%	17.4%	52.2%
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	13.9%	16.9%	12.8%	22.4%	14.9%	11.7%
Samtskhe-Javakheti	8.8%	14.5%	-4.2%	5.7%	17.5%	23.9%
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	16.2%	20.4%	14.1%	17.2%	18.9%	24.8%
Tbilisi	7.4%	-2.8%	5.8%	-3.4%	23.7%	10.3%
Overall Price % Change	12.0%	6.6%	9.4%	2.8%	20.1%	19.4%

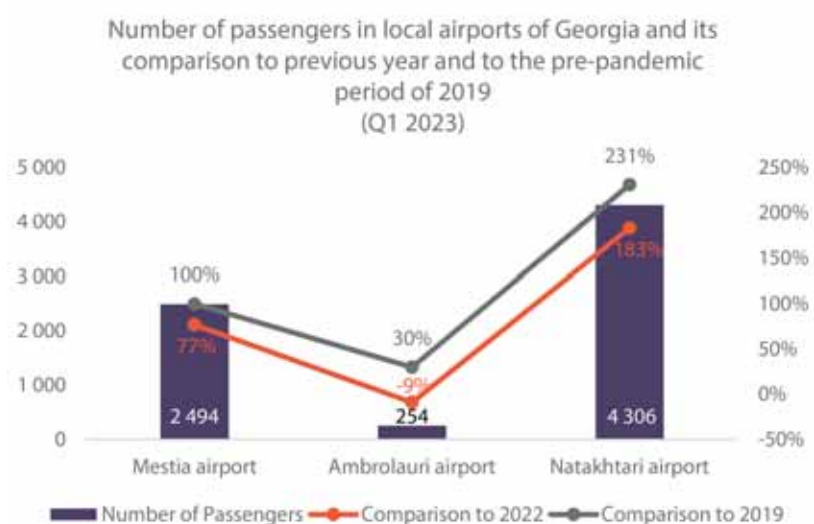


levels for Tbilisi Airport (-11% compared to Q1 2019), while for Kutaisi and Batumi airports, the passenger numbers exceeded pre-pandemic numbers significantly.

The number of passengers traveling to and from domestic airports in Georgia exceeded the pre-pandemic (Q1 2019) volumes overall, however, the number of passengers using Ambrolauri Airport

flights, which is 37.1% higher compared to Q1 of 2022.

Notably, throughout the winter season (30 October 2022 - 25 March 2023), according to the schedule, regular flights to and from Georgian airports were provided by 41 airlines on 61 routes. In the same period, the average number of flights per week was 390, which is 6%



summer season of 2019.

Significantly, in the summer season of 2023, the average number of weekly flights according to the schedule will reach 555, which is 42.3% higher compared to the winter season of 2022-2023 and 5.9% lower compared to the number of flights scheduled for the summer season of 2019.

HOTEL PRICE INDEX IN GEORGIA

In May 2023, in Georgia, the hotel price index increased by 12.0% compared to April 2023. The 3-star, 4-star, and 5-star hotel price index increased by 9.4%, while for guesthouses, the price index increased by 20.1%. The monthly HPI was the highest in Guria (36.7%) and Adjara (22.4%), lowest in Racha and Kvemo Kartli (0.0%).

In May 2023, compared to May 2022, hotel prices in Georgia increased by 6.6%. The prices of 3*, 4*, 5* hotels increased by 2.8% and the prices of guesthouses increased by 19.4%. The yearly HPI was the highest in Shida Kartli (23.7%) and lowest in Tbilisi (-2.8%).

THE AVERAGE HOTEL PRICES IN GEORGIA

In Georgia, the average cost of a room in a 3-star hotel was 166 GEL per night in May 2023, while the average cost of a room in a 4-star hotel in Georgia was 270 GEL per night and the average cost of a room in a guesthouse was 124 GEL per night.

The average cost of a room in a 5-star hotel in Georgia in May 2023 was 409 GEL per night. In Guria, the average price was 584 GEL, followed by Tbilisi - 515 GEL, Kakheti - 354 GEL, and Adjara - 369 GEL.

BASIC ECONOMIC INDICATORS IN GEORGIA

Footnotes:
1 Note that the flight schedules are published by the Georgian Civil Aviation Agency twice a year for Winter and Summer Seasons. The flight schedule for the winter season of 2018-2019 is provided here.
2 The flight schedule for the summer season of 2019 is provided here.
3 The flight schedule for the winter season of 2022-2023 is provided here.
4 The flight schedules for the summer season of 2023 are provided here.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	I 2022	II 2022	III 2022	IV 2022	2022	I 2023
GDP in current prices for Accommodation and Food Service Activities (mln)	1054.1	1437.5	1800.0	2223.0	1204.5	1783.6	360.9*	536.2*	831.1*	646.2*	2374.5*	-
Number of International Travelers (thousand persons)	6720.0	7902.5	8679.5	9357.9	1747.1	1881.3	576.5	1049.4	2266.7	1534.3	5426.9	1208.5
Number of Tourists (thousand persons)	3297.3	4069.4	4756.8	5080.5	1087.0	1577.5	456.0	749.3	2082.6	948.8	3652.9	845.3
Revenue from International Travel (mln USD)	2110.7	2704.3	3222.1	3268.7	541.7	1244.9	393.7	748.8	1374.7	999.5	3516.6	795.4
The Expenditures of Georgian Travelers Abroad (mln USD)	386.3	463.6	524.7	657.2	180.5	184.7	72.2*	103.5*	118.6*	114.3*	408.6*	-
Foreign Direct Investment In Hotels and Restaurants Sector (mln USD)	118.1	111.4	106.0	119.3	-247.2	-7.4	10.6*	6.9*	16.1*	-2.0*	31.5*	4.3*

Liberty Supports Lingwing's Georgian Language Course

Liberty for Education, Education for Liberty

TRANSLATED BY MARIAM
MTIVLISHVILI

With the support of Liberty, the online platform Lingwing created a Georgian language learning course, which is already being used by several thousand people.

A memorandum of cooperation was recently signed between Liberty and the leading online platform for learning foreign languages - Lingwing, and with the support of Liberty, Lingwing created a basic course for learning the Georgian language. With the mentioned platform, it is possible to learn Georgian from English and Ukrainian. The goal of the project is to help Georgian immigrants and their family members learn the Georgian language easily. The training course also provides for the study of the Georgian language for Ukrainians living in Georgia. Anyone can learn the Georgian language at no cost until the end of the year.

A1-2 and A1-3 study courses were added to the mentioned platform this week, which implies an even more difficult level of study.

"The priority of Liberty's corporate responsibility is education and the promotion of all projects related to the promotion of the native language. The goal of the project is to help Georgian immigrants and their family members, as well as people interested in the Georgian language, learn the Georgian language from English and Ukrainian completely free of charge, and most importantly, easily and independently, online or with a mobile application. The A1-2 and A1-3



study courses, which involve a thorough study of the Georgian language, have recently been added to this platform. We are proud that the future generation, which is growing up in emigration today, will be able to learn and strengthen the Georgian language," - Tamar Zakariadze,

head of Liberty's corporate responsibility department, said.

See the project in detail: <https://bit.ly/43hb2VH>

ABOUT LIBERTY:

Liberty is one of the largest commercial

banks in the country, serving more than 1.7 million individuals and more than 50,000 small and medium-sized businesses. The bank's assets amount to 3 billion GEL and more than 4500 employees are employed. Liberty is represented throughout the country with the widest

network - more than 360 service centers, 632 ATMs, self-service and POS terminals in all regions and municipalities of Georgia. In addition to the developed infrastructure, modern digital services and remote services are available for both individuals and legal entities.

Georgia Introduces Amendments to Gambling Law to Regulate Online Gaming

BY MG LAW OFFICE

The Government of Georgia recently submitted a legislative package to the Parliament of Georgia with the aim of implementing new regulations for the organization of gambling and winning games through an online format. The legislative package encompasses amendments to various legislative acts, including but not limited to the following acts: The Law of Georgia on Lotteries, Gambling and Winning Games (the Law on Gambling), the Law of Georgia on Licenses and Permits, the Law of Georgia on License and Permit Fees, and the Law of Georgia on Gambling Business Fees (the Legislative Package). The proposed amendments seek to introduce a separate permit system, enabling effective control and oversight of the industry.

The Legislative Package underwent an accelerated parliamentary process, with the first and second hearings held in December 2022. Subsequently, on 10 February 2023, the final hearing took place, and the package was sent to the President of Georgia for signature and publication.

DEFINING SYSTEMIC-ELECTRONIC GAMES AND PERSONS AFFECTED

The Legislative Package introduced a novel definition for "organizing gambling and/or winning games in a systemic-electronic form." This definition covers games conducted through the internet, telephone, and specially designed electronic platforms. The Legislative Package also includes provisions regarding



"Persons Addicted to Gambling" and "Restricted Persons," explicitly considering those addicted to systemic-electronic games as well.

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS

Under the amendments, obtaining permits for organizing systemic-electronic gambling is mandatory. Separate permits are required for organizing casinos, totalizators, and slot saloons in a systemic-electronic form. The Legislative Package states that a permit for a systemic-electronic casino can be issued either with or without an existing permit for a land-based casino, and the

same applies to slot saloons and totalizators, thus, a permit for slot saloons and a permit for totalizators can be issued either with or without an existing permit for a land-based slot saloon and an existing permit for a land-based totalizator. Additionally, the Legislative Package specifies that each permit for a slot saloon, totalizator, or casino can only cover a single website under a unique internet domain.

RESTRICTIONS ON LAND-BASED ESTABLISHMENTS

To comply with the new regulations, land-based gambling establishments, such as slot saloons and casinos, are

prohibited from hosting computers or electronic devices for participation in systemic-electronic games. This provision aims to emphasize the requirement for a separate permit for systemic-electronic games.

FINES AND FEES

The Legislative Package outlined the fines imposed for violations related to the permits for the gambling games in a systemic-electronic form. Persons found in violation of permit requirements under the Law on Gambling face a fine of GEL7,000, while those failing to meet permit fee deadlines may be fined GEL20,000. The Legislative Package also

introduced annual fees and quarterly gambling business fees, varying based on the type of game and whether the person already holds permit for land-based gambling game. In particular, the Legislative Package established following annual fees:

- (1) permit for organizing casino in a systemic-electronic form - GEL5,000,000;
- (2) permit for organizing casino in a systemic-electronic form on the basis of the permit for organizing casino (land based) - GEL100,000;
- (3) permit for organizing slot saloon in a systemic-electronic form - GEL1,000,000;
- (4) permit for organizing slot saloon in a systemic-electronic form on the basis of the permit for organizing slot saloon (land based) - GEL100,000; and
- (5) permit for organizing totalizator in a systemic-electronic form - GEL100,000.

EFFECTIVE DATE AND COMPLIANCE

The proposed amendments will come into force on 1 June 2024. Thus, entities involved in systemic-electronic games must ensure compliance with the new regulatory framework before 1 June 2024. The Legislative Package further mandated the Government and Ministry of Finance of Georgia, and local municipalities to develop subordinate legislative packages related to the amendments by the same date.

The Legislative Package represents a significant step towards regulating online gaming activities in the country. By implementing a separate permit system, the Government of Georgia aims to exercise effective control over the industry. As the Legislative Package has already been approved, industry participants must prepare for compliance with the new regulations by June 2024.

Hundreds of People Celebrated Georgia's Sustainable Energy Day in Tbilisi as Hosted by the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia with the Support of the EU&KfW



was taken by Public School #169 of Tbilisi, while third place was claimed by the Public School #106. Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure Mzia Giorgobiani and Deputy Minister of Finance Ekaterine Guntsadze presented the winners with certificates.

"We are carrying out the project as part of Georgia's Energy Sector Reform Program," Mikautadze explained. "Our objective is to instill proper habits, as children often pass on their knowledge to their parents and inspire them to make energy-efficient choices. Through the 'Make Your School More Energy Efficient' competition, we aimed to provide the younger generation with more information, recognizing them as the future of our nation. We intend to organize similar competitions and activities for schoolchildren in various regions of Georgia as well."

During Georgia's Sustainable Energy Day on June 23, 14 companies presented their energy-efficient and renewable technologies at booths in Dedaena Park. Products and services displayed within the exhibition covered solar panels, e-mobility, EE stoves, briquettes, consulting services and granting opportunities.

Kids' educational zones provided entertainment and fun activities for children that piqued their curiosity and fostered knowledge of sustainability, engaging them in interactive exhibits that highlighted the advantages of energy conservation, and promoted awareness of renewable energy sources.

An energy-efficient transport exhibition was also held in the garden, where interested persons had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the characteristics of energy-efficient, green vehicles and get information about their advantages.

It was agreed by all participants that the event showed useful energy efficiency solutions and acted as a forum for education, awareness-raising, and inspiration for creating a more sustainable future.

GOPA-Intec, supporting the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MoESD), and CENN, an organization dedicated to public environmental education, were leading this initiative, helping the young participants to raise their awareness about ecological matters and green solutions through practical trainings.



authorities, the private sector, international institutions and donor organizations, school students, teachers, and other interested individuals united to explore everything on offer at the Energy Day event.

Attendees were welcomed by Romeo Mikautadze, First Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia; Borko Raicevic, Senior Energy Efficiency Expert at the Energy Community Secretariat; Mzia Giorgobiani, Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia; and Ekaterine Guntsadze, Deputy Minister of Finance of Georgia, who recognized the importance of building an energy-efficient, sustainable economy, and thanked the companies and individuals involved in the process of raising awareness of "green solutions."

One of the most exciting and important parts of the event was an award ceremony for the "Make Your School More Energy Efficient" competition, as part of which, three winning Tbilisi schools were awarded by the GESRP project with certificates and cash vouchers to purchase energy-efficient technologies for their school buildings. The pupils of these three schools won by drawing up and implementing the most diverse and creative activities during their in-school energy efficiency awareness campaigns.

Romeo Mikautadze awarded "Dea" school, the winner of the competition, mentioning in his speech that the campaign was among the most outstanding projects in raising awareness of green solutions, which is important from a young age.

The second place in the competition

BY ANA DUMBADZE

The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MoESD), with the support of the European Union (EU) and KfW development bank, and in partnership with the German independent energy consulting company GOPA intec, hosted a large-scale public event, "Georgia's Sustainable Energy Day" as part of the Georgian Energy Sector Reform Project (GESRP) on June 23 in Tbilisi's Dedaena Park. The event was supported by CENN and Tbilisi City Hall.

At the core of the event is the EU's commitment to promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy in the European neighborhood where the Energy Community, with Georgia as a contracting party, has in place a goal to achieve a climate-neutral economy by 2050.

Key elements supporting this include the European Green Deal, which aims to transform European economies in alignment with the Paris Agreement and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development. The Green Deal strives to establish a sustainable economy within the EU and the Energy Community by harnessing climate and environmental challenges as opportunities. It also emphasizes a just and inclusive transition for all stakeholders.

Furthermore, the implementation of new legislations and regulations plays a vital role in helping the neighborhood countries reach their energy and climate targets. These measures focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing the utilization of renewable energy sources, and improving energy efficiency. Additionally, they aim to empower consumers, enhance energy security, foster innovation, and establish fully integrated and competitive energy markets within the EU and the Energy Community.

As part of this direction, the Sustainable Energy Event sought to encourage Georgia's development towards these goals of a green economy, promoting energy efficiency, and raising public awareness of alternative and renewable energy. The event offered an exhibition of energy-efficient technologies, educational seminars and a plethora of entertainment programs.

Representatives of different state



Hilton Garden Inn Tbilisi Riverview Is about to Open its Doors in the Georgian Capital



The brand-new Hilton Garden Inn Tbilisi Riverview will welcome its first guests from beginning of July. Close to the city's top attractions, historic sites, and entertainment areas the hotel overlooks Mtkvari River and is situated less than three kilometers from Narikala Fortress, Sulfur Baths, and

Holy Trinity Cathedral of Tbilisi. In addition, theatres, museums, shops and the city's natural wonders are within easy reach, including the Leghvtakhevi Waterfall and National Botanic Garden. Situated in the city's historic area, with breathtaking panoramic views overlooking the old town, this 160-guest-room hotel will offer enhanced food and bev-

verage options, modern and contemporary design, and exceptional service. Each guest room and suite boasts the brand's signature bedding, featuring fresh, white duvets and crisp linens; a spacious and clutter-free work desk with an ergonomic desk chair; and an in-room "hospitality center" with a mini fridge, and coffee making facilities. Guests will be treated to a range of amenities and services including complimentary wi-fi, 24-hour business center, 24/7 fitness center, 24/7 self-service laundry room. The hotel is pet friendly and ready to welcome guests with their beloved four-legged travel companions.

Hilton Garden Inn Tbilisi Riverview will feature a variety of onsite dining options, including Together & Co. All-day dining restaurant Together & Co will serve breakfast, lunch and dinner, while the hotel's on-site bar will also be at guests' disposal with a great choice of delicious beverages and cocktails. Together & Co will also act as a social hub, bringing people together to socialise and unwind in a warm, inviting space that echoes Hilton Garden Inn's elevated yet approachable style. Additionally, guests have access to The Shop, a 24-hour, grab-and-go retail space, offering an upscale mix of healthy, fresh foods, gour-



met snack items, artisanal food offerings, beverages and a self-serve specialty coffee bar.

For business meetings, conferences and events, the hotel features three meeting rooms with all the necessary conferencing equipment for professional meetings.

"This new property offers guests convenient and inviting accommodations, whether travelling for business or leisure," said Karoly Lakatos, general man-

ager, Hilton Garden Inn Tbilisi Riverview. "Our Team Members are looking forward to welcoming guests in the near future with our world-renowned thoughtful service."

Hilton Garden Inn Tbilisi Riverview is located at 17 Ialbuzi Street, Tbilisi, Georgia.

For more information or to make reservations, please visit Hilton Garden Inn Tbilisi Riverview or call (+995) 322 009 977.



A New World

BLOG BY TONY HANMER

The genre of macro photography has been a favorite of mine for decades. Technically, it sits at magnifications on film or sensor of around life-size, that is, 1:1. Larger magnifications take you into photomicrography, smaller ones simply into close-up. My last lens offering macro magnifications was when I was still using film, so, ending in 2008. But I recently took advantage of a friend's visit from Canada to buy and have him bring me a macro lens for my Canon EOS digital camera. I chose the Tamron 90mm, which gets you to 1:1, and am very satisfied.

There are many different ways of shooting macro images. One which takes much time, and post-processing is called focus stacking. Here, you must use a tripod or other means of fixing your camera in place, and have the subject not be moving at all. Then you take a number of shots, as many as you like or can, with only the point of focus changing, from back to front or vice-versa of the subject. Later, you have your image processing program align and stack these images but use only the in-focus parts of each, and in this way you end up with the whole of the subject in focus. It's much more difficult to achieve such deep focus

by using one shot and a small aperture, as this also gives you a correspondingly slower shutter speed. You can get fanatical with this approach, but it demands much time and care.

My favorite macro technique, however, has always been to shoot hand-held, only a single frame, in manual focus mode, with the lens aperture wide open. This allows a fast shutter speed for the non-tripod approach, and typically gives only a tiny slice of the image sharp focus. Thus, I enter a dreamworld.

In macro, it's the out of focus elements which draw me the most. Water drops or spider webs refract light in fascinating ways which the unaided human eye cannot see, for example. So I typically allow that small in-focus area to give a hint (maybe) of what the subject even is, and then let the rest blur into abstraction. As for heavily dew-laden early morning spider webs... pure magic.

The same approach works for me with flowers or other vegetation. Our garden in Svaneti currently has some magnifi-



cent irises in various color sets, amongst many other species. I get almost inside them, closer than my eye can even focus, and reveal intimate details of their splendor. With other flowers I often get the front edge sharp, blur the rest, and let the brain add what the eye knows is there. I also wait for the irises to dry up, as in this phase of their life cycle I find completely different forms and images from the perfect, whole flowers or their parts.

I have yet to really delve into a combination of a recent favorite subject, rust, and macro technique. This is mostly because my rust shots are all at easy non-macro magnifications, of a flat surface parallel to the camera's image sen-

sor and thus all in focus. If I tried this in macro I would need to use a tripod to get this all-frame sharpness, and frankly I'm a bit lazy to do this so slowly. But who knows, I might discover yet another new world of macro rust and go crazy with it.

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Nino Haratishvili's New Play and Igor Stravinsky on Berlin's Theater Stages



REVIEW BY LILY FÜRSTENOW

Traditional notions of love, duty, and societal expectations are the main topics of Nino Haratishvili's play "Phädra in Flames" that premiered on the second of June 2023 at the Berliner Ensemble. Loosely based on Seneca's classic tragedy Phädra the play attempts to challenge preconceived notions of gender, sexuality, and the complexities of human connections, ultimately showcasing the profound impact of hidden desires on the lives of individuals and the society they inhabit. The emotionally charged performances of the main cast took audiences to explore the depths of human desires and the consequences that come with pursuing forbidden passions. Constanze Becker starring as Phädra, Oliver Kraushaar as Theseus, Lili Epply as the beautiful Persea, Maximilian Diehle as Demophon delivered inspiring performances full of tension and sincerity. The precision of body language and posture was at times more eloquent than words.

Nino Haratishvili's newest play evidently aims to explore the themes of ageing, female fate, disillusionment and Sapphic love in contemporary societies from a female perspective. Although these topics are of utmost urgency and importance the play comes through as rather didactic and predictable, the characters developed by the author are less convincing. Lengthy monologues lacking significant action call for more intensity and dynamics. Nonetheless on the whole more women playwrights and more theatre productions staged by women and focussing on female perspectives are definitely a positive sign in the male dominated theatre domain.

"Phädra in Flammen" was created within the framework of the BE-Dramatiker:innen Fund supported by the Heinz und Heide Dürr Foundation,

stage direction is done by Nanouk Leopold.

Another memorable event of the Berlin summer season has been the premiere of the new stagings of Igor Stravinsky's masterpieces "Petrushka" and "Sacre du Printemps" at the Staatsbalett Berlin. Igor Stravinsky was a renowned Russian composer, widely considered one of the most influential composers of the 20th century. He was known for his innovative approach to music and his collaborations with the Ballets Russes, a ballet company founded by Sergei Diaghilev.

Stravinsky's collaboration with the Ballets Russes began in 1909 with the ballet "The Firebird," which catapulted him to international fame. It was followed by other groundbreaking ballets, including "Petrushka" (1911) and "The Rite of Spring" (1913). These works, with their rhythmic complexities, dissonance, and unconventional use of instruments, challenged traditional musical conventions and pushed the boundaries of composition.

"The Rite of Spring," in particular, caused a sensation and sparked a riot during its premiere due to its avant-garde nature and provocative choreography by Vaslav Nijinsky. Since its premiere, "The Rite of Spring" has been restaged and reimagined by numerous choreographers over the years, each bringing their own interpretations and artistic visions to the work. Pina Bauch interpretation of the piece that premiered in Berlin was met with well-deserved admiration from the public and standing ovations.

A renowned German choreographer and dancer Pina Bausch was known for her groundbreaking works in contemporary dance theater. She was associated with the Tanztheater movement, which blended elements of dance, theater, and performance art. The choreography for "The Rite of Spring" developed by her is characterised for its raw, earthbound, and primal movements. It draws inspiration from Rus-

sian folk dance, pagan rituals, and the concept of ancient sacrificial rites. The dancers' movements often mimic natural elements, such as stomping, leaping, and crawling, reflecting a sense of primordial energy and physicality. Sharp and angular shapes, with twisted torsos, flexed feet, and jutting limbs offer an ecstatic impact. The bodies create asymmetrical positions and dynamic lines that emphasize the tension and angularity of the movements. Group dynamics incorporate intricate and complex formations e.g. circular movement patterns with alignments of bodies con-

stantly diffusing and reuniting. Large ensembles of dancers move together in unison or counterpoint, creating a sense of collective energy and communal rituals. The choreography highlights the dynamics of the group, with synchronized movements, canon-like sequences, and geometric configurations. Pina Bausch's well researched repertoire of gestures, poses, moves is emotionally charged to the extreme. The choreography of "The Rite of Spring" incorporates ritualistic gestures and symbolic actions. These often convey themes of sacrifice, rebirth, and the cycle of life. The unconventional peat-covered stage requires the dancers to go to their physical limits. They have to dance, as Pina Bausch conceived it, for their lives.

The piece is co-produced by the Staatsballett Berlin and the Pina Bausch Foundation.

If "The Rite of Spring" is an orchestral work by Igor Stravinsky, "Petrushka" is one of his ballets. It is from now on part of the repertoire of the Staatsballett Berlin. "Petrushka" originally featured choreography by Michel Fokine, who collaborated with Stravinsky on several ballets for the Ballets Russes.

The current interpretation of "Petrushka" by choreographer Marco Goecke is a beautiful example of the permanent process of renewal of established dance forms that evolve with time to remain relevant for contemporary societies in ever changing cultural contexts. The settings and costumes by Michaela Springer who opted for the overall reduced black and white colour palette was at times a bit problematic since the dancer's lower body-parts were hardly recognisable against the dark background of the settings.

Marco Goecke's choreography for "Petrushka" is full of vibrant expressive

movements, the whole piece is rendered exceptionally rhythmic and pulsating with energies, the portrayal of vivid characters is remarkably contemporary. Stravinsky's music for this ballet inspired by Russian folk-tunes is energetic and colourful. In the restaged version the dancers' movements mimic the wild tempo and joyful spirit of Stravinsky's score. Visual effects enhancing the perception of music through bodily movements and silhouettes are spectacular, elegant and convey the aura of clown-like lightness, tongue-in-cheek humour and mockery of a jester.

The piece tells the tale of three puppets—Petrushka, the Moor, and the Ballerina—brought to life in a Russian fairground. Goecke's choreography captures the individual personalities of the puppets and the dynamics between them. Petrushka, the hapless and love-struck puppet, is characterized by his awkward movements and gestures, conveying his vulnerability and longing. The Moor, a strong and aggressive puppet, displays powerful and athletic movements. The Ballerina, graceful and delicate, embodies elegance and lyricism in her choreography.

In addition to character-driven movements, Goecke's choreography features lively group scenes and ensemble work, bringing the fairground atmosphere to life. The dances of the masqueraders, the waltzing, and the energetic Russian dance sequences contribute to the ballet's overall liveliness.

The combination of Goecke's choreography and Stravinsky's shifting rhythms and evocative melodies creates a vibrant and engaging theatrical experience. Last but not least the protagonist of the Moore has been carefully investigated and revamped, freed from the stigmatising racist and prejudiced interpretation of this character in the original stagings.



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I am Georgian and therefore I am European

Zurab Zhvania, Council of Europe, 1999

