



## POLICY BRIEF

# Russian “Relokanty” in the Caucasus and Central Asia: Cooperation and Tensions between States and Societies

Jeff Sahadeo, Carleton University

February 2024

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have absorbed hundreds of thousands of migrants who left Russia in the two years since its invasion of Ukraine. These Russians, who call themselves “*relokanty*”, have transformed national economies and urban spaces. Inflows of talent and capital have also delivered societal challenges. These range from increased inflation to renewed memories of the negative impacts of Russian and Soviet colonization, as well as fears that these *relokanty* might constitute a new vehicle for Russian influence.

As the war appears to have reached a stalemate in 2024, these Russian migrants must consider short- and long-term strategies for residence. They share knowledge on current relationships with host societies, costs, economic opportunities and political stability as they “shop” for homes. Georgians, Armenians, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz have not yet openly protested Russian migrants, but their welcome is wearing thin as economic growth decelerates and inflation and other indicators that affect daily life worsen. Each government must consider the risks of the issue of Russian migrants becoming politicized in these young national states. Especially if Russia chooses to intervene regionally, these migrants could become a destabilizing element.

Governments in these destination states, even as they tout economic growth, must manage internal tensions while dealing with a wartime Russia offering both carrots and sticks to keep them outside a Western coalition.

## INTRODUCTION: THE SCALE AND THE STAKES

Two years after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, hundreds of thousands of Russian citizens who objected to the conflict, feared mobilisation or sought new opportunities remain outside their home country. As the United States and European Union's doors to these out-migrants stay largely closed, Caucasus and Central Asian countries continue to play host to substantial émigré communities. Russians there live in a state of suspended animation – at once unwilling to return to a wartime Russia and wary of putting down roots in countries they do not see as home.

This inflow of Russians has transformed the host states and societies of Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Each has gained human talent and financial capital. Russian arrivals are clustered in major cities, where they have had a dramatic effect – in Tbilisi's restaurants and Yerevan's boardrooms, in Almaty's parks and the now facial-recognition camera-equipped street corners of Bishkek. Urban dynamism has come at a cost. Housing prices skyrocketed and social services are strained. The waves of Russian "*relokanty*", as they call themselves, offer an uncomfortable reminder of colonial legacies and the continued regional dominance of a powerful northern neighbour. Governments in these destination states, even as they tout economic growth, must manage internal tensions while dealing with a wartime Russia offering both carrots and sticks to keep them outside a Western coalition. Russians and host societies alike face the situation of war in stalemate, where the possibilities of return to a changed Russia appear distant in states where social and political stability are far from given.

## RUSSIAN RELOKANTY: WHERE IS HOME?

The Policy Platform Re: Russia estimates between 817 000 to 922 000 Russians abandoned their country through mid-2023,<sup>i</sup> although the economist Vladislav Inozemstev pegs the number at over one million.<sup>ii</sup> The choices of those leaving – especially those of lesser means – have been constrained. European Union countries, the most desirable potential shelters for many who fled, still refuse to accept most Russian citizens. They link bans to objections to Russian state behaviour and fears of admitting pro-war, pro-regime elements.<sup>iii</sup> As of late 2023, asylum application numbers from Russian citizens hover around 1500 monthly, with recognition rates of 35%.<sup>iv</sup> The United States has no special pathway to accept Russians, even as growing numbers make their way to Mexico and claim asylum at the border.<sup>v</sup> Some wealthier Russian citizens had existing connections in the Gulf States<sup>vi</sup> but for most expediency was the main factor in their initial destination choice. *Relokanty* clustered in nearby states, which were cheaper to get to and did not require a visa. Serbia and Türkiye have hosted tens of thousands of such migrants, but their impact has been greatest in Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Historical connections, familiarity through tourism and existing Russian communities joined ease of travel to make these four states points of arrival. As Eurasian Union countries (EEU), Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan do not require international passports for entry and many Russians may only carry national ID cards.<sup>vii</sup> Georgia allows Russian citizens to stay in the country visa-free for 12 months, which can be renewed by leaving and re-entering the country for one day. As of early 2024, only Kazakhstan has placed new limits on Russian citizens. Those who lack an employment contract or other reason to stay

<sup>i</sup> Russians use the term "*relokanty*" – derived from "*relokatsiia*" [relocation] employed in Russian to signal the movement of enterprises – to distinguish themselves as a category of human mobility, much in the way Westerners employ "expatriates." "*Relokanty*" allows Russians to differ themselves from Georgians, Armenians, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz who come to Russia and are labelled "*migranty*" or "*gastarbeltery*" [guest workers], terms with racialized connotations. Caucasus and Central Asians have their own names for *relokanty* – Georgians might call them "guests" with an ironic tone as do Kyrgyz when they say, "Russian Russians." Some Western observers prefer the term "draft dodgers."

(work, study, etc.) will be required to leave the country for 90 days after a visa-free period of 90 days.<sup>viii</sup> Migrants follow developments in destination states as they “shop” for homes. Websites such as <https://relokatz.com/> and telegram channels allow Russians to evaluate entry requirements, living costs and other features in dozens of potential host countries.<sup>ix</sup>

Russian legislation introduced in April 2023 makes an exodus of citizens fleeing potential or actual military enlistment on the scale of February-March or September-October 2022 unlikely. Draft notices are no longer required to be served in person. This is now done through the electronic portal “Gosuslugi,” which Russians use for everyday services such as paying fines and applying for passports. Even if a draftee is not registered for *Gosuslugi* or on the internet, they will be considered served and forbidden from leaving the country.<sup>x</sup> The Russian government is thus better prepared for any future mobilization and to guard its human capital in the country if it decides to do so.

The pressing question of these *relokanty* has become their fate. Following the two distinct spikes in departures from Russia in 2022 – right after the invasion and then following Putin’s announcement of ‘partial mobilisation’ in September 2022 – small numbers have returned home but most are now considering extended stays abroad. Some fear persecution by the Putin regime – either forced enlistment, prison sentences or more fantastical plans floated by politicians such as Russian duma speaker Viacheslav Volodin, who proposed that Russians abroad deemed to have supported Ukraine should be sent on return to gulag-style prison camps in the Far East.<sup>xi</sup> Putin has designated those who left as “traitors” and “scum.”<sup>xii</sup> Families of those who have departed continue to receive summonses to recruitment centres.<sup>xiii</sup> Some *relokanty* report strained relations with family members and close friends who support the war. At the same time, the Russian government could enact measures to compel a return – including seizing the property of absent IT workers and returning it to the state or giving it to soldiers.

Most Russians see countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia as transit points – hopeful that if they cannot return to their homes in the near to medium-term future, they can eventually make their way to the European Union, North America or elsewhere. One survey of *relokanty* in the Caucasus found only 14% plan to stay in Georgia and 12% in Armenia. Yet, as the war stretches on, *relokanty* confront lives in-between. With families split, savings evaporating and possessions in both Russia and these destination countries, many migrants risk short- or medium-term returns to see loved ones, sell their flats or collect goods. They weigh decisions to move to other countries based on economic opportunity, personal connections or passport/visa issues. The state of vulnerability, of nomadism, affects both them and the hosting countries, for who knows how long?

## Georgia

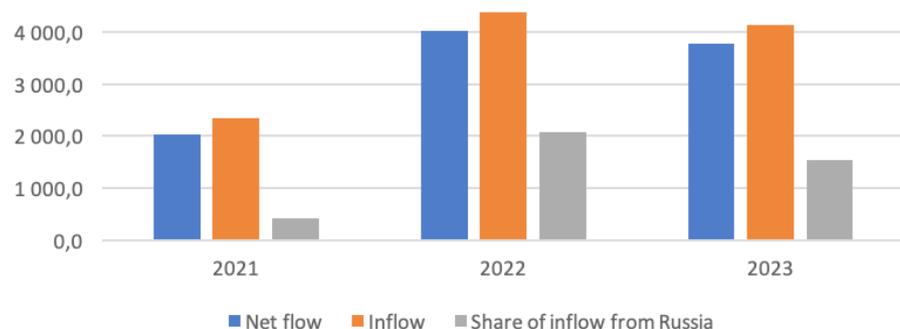
Georgian Dream, the political party which forms the current government, has remained largely silent on the influx of Russian *relokanty*. But it has beaten back efforts to punish Russia, and Russians, for the invasion of Ukraine. Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili has refused to implement sanctions on the Russian government. Chairman Irakli Kobakhidze stated on pro-government Imedi TV that claims of Russians fleeing mobilization posing a threat to national security were “completely absurd.”<sup>xv</sup>

Estimates of Russians staying long-term in Georgia range from 62 000 to 130 000.<sup>xvi</sup> Government officials point to the substantial increase in GDP that has accompanied the influx of Russian migrants and the benefits of Russian capital and investments. The Georgian lari has also risen significantly.<sup>xvii</sup> On 19 May 2023, Georgian Dream agreed to the restoration of direct flights between Moscow and Tbilisi, to the anger of local citizens and opposition politicians.

Russian legislation introduced in April 2023 makes an exodus of citizens fleeing potential or actual military enlistment on the scale of February-March or September-October 2022 unlikely.

Georgian Dream policies have aroused the ire of non-government politicians and activists in the overwhelmingly pro-European country. Opposition proposals have ranged from imposing “entry taxes” on new arrivals to visas, which would be issued contingent on recognition that Russia currently occupies sovereign Georgian territory.<sup>xviii</sup> Georgia’s president Salome Zourabichvili has taken the most vocal position against Russian migration. On 26 October 2023, she appeared on the US current affairs show “60 Minutes” where she stated that Russian *relokanty* “speak the language of the enemy and believe that they are at home.”<sup>xix</sup> Zourabichvili lacks powers to alter government policy; nonetheless, Russian media attacked her remarks, claiming she is plotting politically against the current government. The media repeat Georgian Dream’s line that Russian migrants benefit Georgia’s economy, even as increasing numbers are returning to the homeland, realising that sanctions have not hurt the economy and they are safer in Russia.<sup>xx</sup>

**Chart. 1: Remittances to Georgia (in million USD, 2021–2023)**



Source: based on the [National Bank of Georgia](#) data

Georgia has provided the most fraught host environment for *relokanty*.

Georgia has provided the most fraught host environment for *relokanty*. The streets of the capital, Tbilisi, are replete with anti-Russian graffiti. Seventy-nine percent of Georgians have a “strictly negative attitude” towards these Russian “guests.”<sup>xxi</sup> Few Georgians under 50 willingly speak Russian in their own country. Even as they recognize that many Russians arrived because of political opposition to the Putin regime, most Georgians believe their presence has negatively altered the character of Tbilisi and Batumi, a Black Sea resort city also housing tens of thousands of *relokanty*. One piece of graffiti that might best summarize this attitude is “Good Russian? Go Home.” On an individual level, though, relations are generally cordial – especially for Russians who respect the complicated imperial history of the region. One *relokant* who opened a falafel stand in late 2022 recalled: “I never got as much help as here...I haven’t seen a more welcoming place.”<sup>xxii</sup>

Still, Russian *relokanty* have constructed a parallel society in Georgia. They open their own businesses, not only cafés and restaurants but also bookstores, co-working spaces, boutiques and salons.<sup>xxiii</sup> Service establishments are notable by the predominance of English-language signage, Slavic staff and goods popular with Russians. Some hang Ukrainian flags to denote their political position. Russians who patronize these establishments need not worry about signing pledges that they support Ukraine and the return of Georgia’s occupied territories, a popular trend in Georgian-owned restaurants.

*Relokanty* to this point remain largely bystanders in Georgian society’s economic challenges. An October 2023 poll saw Georgians consider the most critical social problems as unemployment (47%), inflation (45%) and poverty (43%). Migration of Russians to Georgia came in ninth place, at 13%.<sup>xxvi</sup> Eighty-six percent of Georgians support European Union membership, however, and it is possible – and the subject of speculation in the Russian media – that *relokanty* could become political footballs between pro-EU forces and Georgian Dream as elections approach in 2024.

In this country with EU aspirations, dependence on the Russian economy has increased since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.<sup>xxv</sup> Transparency International notes that since the war, “the number of Russian companies has tripled compared to...1995-2021.”<sup>xxvi</sup> Seventy-four percent of companies in Georgia whose owners are legal entities and/or citizens of the Russian Federation have been registered since the war. A sense of economic competition between Russian- and Georgian-owned businesses might emerge as another flashpoint. Georgian Dream is likely already concerned about this possibility.<sup>xxvii</sup> The government has reduced the percentage of residence permits issued to eligible Russians – generally entrepreneurs – from 90% before the invasion to 60% afterwards.<sup>2</sup> Some Russians have been refused entry, or re-entry, to Georgia. These include those of North Caucasus ethnicity or political activists, including LGBTQI+ figures – migrants the Georgian Dream government might not see as welcome.<sup>xxviii</sup> Opposition figures are finding Germany, which has eased conditions for Russians who have been persecuted by Putin’s regime to receive humanitarian visas, a more comfortable destination.<sup>xxix</sup>

## Armenia

Armenia remains a welcoming environment for Russian migrants, even following the turmoil surrounding the Nagorno-Karabakh events of October 2023. Until recently, Russia and Armenia have enjoyed a close relationship. Anywhere from 80 000 to 300 000 Armenians (of a population of 2.8 million) work in Russia.<sup>xxx</sup> Russian is spoken about equally to Armenian in the capital of Yerevan and Armenians throughout the country are able and willing to speak Russian. Armenia’s pre-2022 efforts to develop an IT industry proved attractive to Russian high-skilled workers who left in the invasion’s immediate aftermath. In October 2022, the Russian ambassador to Armenia Sergei Kopyrkin noted the warmth with which Armenians received Russian migrants and the boost they have provided to the economy.<sup>xxxi</sup> *Relokanty* serving as teachers staff increased numbers of Russian-language positions at Armenian schools.

Late 2023 has seen a rapid deterioration of the Armenia-Russia relationship. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan seeks to move Armenia closer to the West after Russia’s failure to assist its fellow Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) member in its conflict with Azerbaijan. Pashinyan told the Wall Street Journal in October 2023 that he saw “no advantage” in Russian troop presence in Armenia.<sup>xxxii</sup> Russian media has advocated a change in government in Armenia and anti-Armenian accusations have prompted heated diplomatic exchanges and summonses.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Russian migrants in Armenia remain in the eye of the diplomatic hurricane. Armenian diplomats and government members stress the benefits of Russian migration to the economy and friendly relationships between locals and migrants.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Russian migrants have provided a substantial economic boost to Armenia. Comparing World Bank and IMF data, an expected 4.8% GDP growth in 2022 mushroomed to 12.6%, placing Armenia as a top global performer. Russians transferred 1.75-2.5 billion USD to the country.<sup>xxxv</sup> Estimates of Russians in Armenia vary from 60 000-300 000, but their numbers appear to have decreased.<sup>xxxvi</sup> One local study has noted that the influx of private transfers to Armenia has declined 20% from the first nine months of 2022 to 2023 and the government recorded more exits of Russian citizens than entries.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Russians seek cheaper destinations as food and housing prices in Yerevan remain high; these include Cyprus and Egypt.<sup>xxxviii</sup> The World Bank’s October 2023 forecast predicts Armenian economic growth to be about half of 2022 at 6.6% and to decline thereafter.<sup>xxxix</sup>

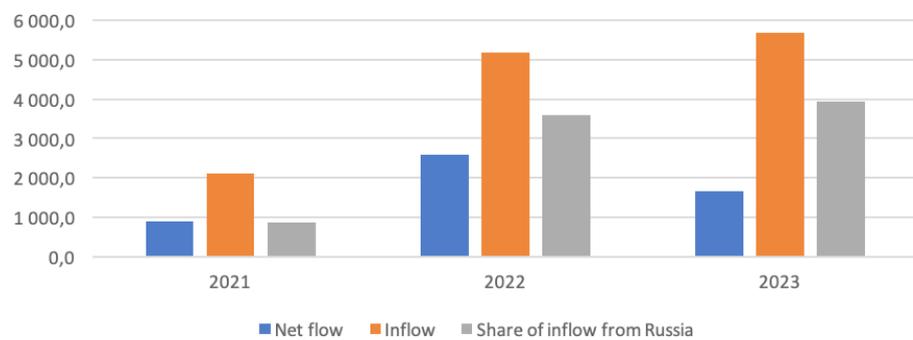
*Relokanty* remain critical to Armenia’s IT sector, its main economic success story before and after its wars with Azerbaijan. Armenia’s reputation in this field attracted substantial

<sup>2</sup> Foreign citizens who purchase real estate worth over \$100,000, invest over \$300,000, or create a business with annual turnover over 50,000 lari are eligible to apply for a residence permit in Georgia.

Russian migrants in Armenia remain in the eye of the diplomatic hurricane.

numbers of Russian IT workers, who compose perhaps even the majority of Russian newcomers – one estimate places their numbers at 30 000-40 000.<sup>XL</sup> Major Russian technology companies, including Miro and Yandex, have opened offices in Armenia.<sup>XLI</sup> The head of one Armenian IT company, Picsart, notes that: “Having so many new Russian colleagues on the ground has expanded the creativity, the mindset, the solutions.”<sup>XLII</sup> The presence of Russian IT workers is helping to globalize the sector. English is now the workplace language, which will expand the types of work employees can do, towards the European Union and North America.

**Chart. 2: Remittances to Armenia (in million USD, 2021-2023)**



Source: based on the [Central Bank of Armenia](#) data

As in Georgia, Russian migrants have founded their own small-scale organizations to help not just Russian migrants, but those from Ukraine as well as Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh.

Russian migrants to Armenia, according to a Zentrum für Osteuropa und internationale Studien study, are characterized by youth, higher education and socially progressive values. Many women came as part of the initial February 2022 wave – more *relokanty* arrived in Armenia then as compared to the September mobilisation.<sup>XLIII</sup> *Relokanty* mobilized quickly after the invasion to assist those subsequently arriving from Russia. Kovcheg [The Ark] provides start-up housing for Russians in Yerevan and Istanbul. It focuses on those who left explicitly in opposition to Putin’s regime.<sup>XLIV</sup> As in Georgia, Russian migrants have founded their own small-scale organizations to help not just Russian migrants, but those from Ukraine as well as Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>XLV</sup>

Armenia’s closer ties to Russia have facilitated far different modes of everyday interactions than in Georgia. New businesses do not need to conceal links to Russia. Volchok, a streetwear shop founded in Moscow, has opened a branch in Yerevan. ArtDocFest, a film festival once held annually in Moscow, opened in November 2022 in Yerevan, attracting homesick Russian *relokanty*.<sup>XLVI</sup> In Yerevan, Armenians who studied or worked in Russia are attracted to new cafés and restaurants that recreate the style of cities they see as more cosmopolitan.

How long this vibrancy can endure is uncertain. Russian IT workers remain tentative as to their future. Many employed by Russian companies worry that the Russian government might end the practice of remote working at any time.<sup>XLVII</sup> Russians who operate businesses in Yerevan are not committing for the long haul: “Our planning horizon is about a month” stated one restaurant owner.<sup>XLVIII</sup> One US embassy diplomat in Yerevan has noted an increase in late 2023 in Russians seeking entry to the United States directly, or through travelling to Mexico to claim asylum at the US-Mexico border.

*Relokanty* use their experience, temporary or not, to broaden their views of Russia’s relationship to its southern neighbours. Guzel Yusupova, an anthropologist who herself left Russia in early 2022, recounts Russians claiming their stay in Armenia as making them aware of their chauvinism towards “Blacks” [chernye], as Armenians and other southern

peoples are known.<sup>XLIX</sup> But most rationalize a lack of desire to adapt to their new environment and learn the language. *Relokanty* consider their presence as a gift to an Armenia undergoing intense suffering. They bring capital, talent, patronize local businesses and give Yerevan a global feel.<sup>L</sup> However, many Russian migrants from lower social strata struggle, as do local Armenians, with rising costs of living. They settle in the food delivery industry, delivering groceries or restaurant meals on bikes, scooters or motorcycles.<sup>L1</sup>

Unknown is how the Russian government might see these migrants as a potential tool of foreign policy, especially as diplomatic relations deteriorate. Russia has substantial leverage over Armenia, supplying basic goods, energy resources and a labour market. To this point Russia has avoided such a temptation.

### Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan shares the second-largest land border in the world (7664 km) with Russia and has witnessed significant in-migration. In December 2022, the Kazakh migration service reported that 2.9 million Russians had crossed the border over the year, including almost a million in the immediate aftermath of the September mobilisation. Those who remain in the country in late 2023 number, according to most estimates, range from 150 000-300 000.<sup>LII</sup> The numbers are less notable in a country with 3 million Russians among its population of 19.6 million, but the flow has had important political and societal effects.

Kazakhstan's government walks a fine line in dealing with its Russian counterpart. Although, like Armenia, the country belongs to the EEU and the CSTO, Kazakhs are acutely aware that its significant Russian minority in the northern borderland regions might be a pretext for Russian expansion. The Kazakh government keeps a close watch on potential separatism in the North, charging several Russians with separatist activities and criminalizing Russian passports.<sup>LIII</sup>

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev refused to recognize Russia's annexation of Ukrainian territories based on September 2022 referenda, irritating the Kremlin.<sup>LIV</sup> Tokayev's stance solidified popular support behind him, as someone leading the country independently – less than two years after he needed Russian troops to suppress a domestic insurrection.<sup>LV</sup> Moscow, in need of allies, has tread diplomatically. President Putin visited Kazakhstan in November 2023 for talks on energy, natural resource cooperation and other outstanding issues between the two countries.<sup>LVI</sup> The visit followed one by French President Emmanuel Macron. Unlike Georgia, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan is extremely rich in natural resources, with a real GDP ranking among the highest in the post-Soviet space.<sup>LVII</sup> The country has tools to conduct a multivector foreign policy.

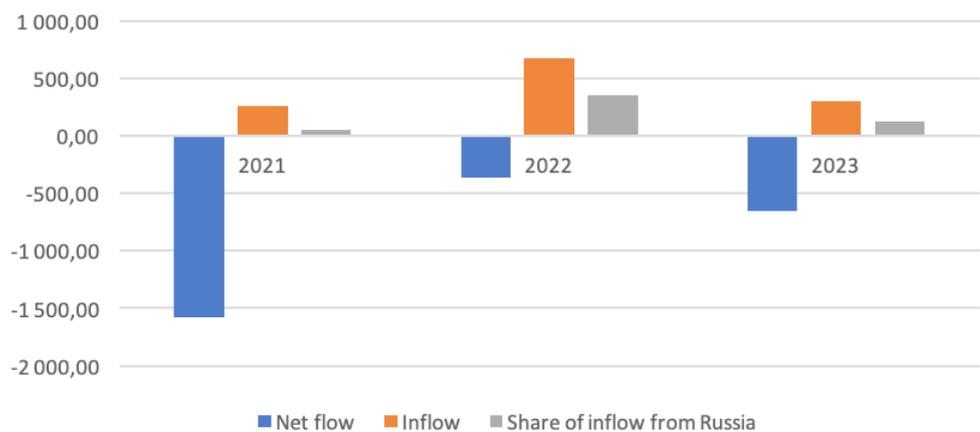
President Tokayev has urged Kazakhs to welcome fleeing Russians, stating: "We must take care of them and ensure their safety. This is a political and humanitarian issue." Kazakhstan has received a different palette of Russian migrants than the Caucasus. More have arrived from Eurasian regions of the country (Tatarstan, Tuva, Buryatia) – including significant numbers of non-ethnic Russians.<sup>LVIII</sup> The ease of border crossings has led many Russians in Siberia to establish themselves close to the border, where friends and family can easily visit.<sup>LIX</sup>

Kazakhstan has nonetheless faced pressure from Moscow – backed by bilateral treaty obligations – to return *relokanty* considered dangerous. Evgenia Baltatarova, a journalist and activist from Buryatia, fled Russia in early 2022 as police were opening a criminal case against her for spreading antiwar "fake news." Kazakh authorities learned of these charges when they stopped Baltatarova at a routine document check. They subsequently forbid her from leaving Kazakhstan – a treaty provision between Russia and Kazakhstan requires

The Kazakh government keeps a close watch on potential separatism in the North, charging several Russians with separatist activities and criminalizing Russian passports.

wanted exiles to be prohibited to leave for a third country.<sup>LX</sup> Baltatarova has been granted a reprieve. Kazakhstan is not required to extradite for crimes not in its own criminal code, which include Russia's wartime censorship laws. But Kazakh authorities have not renewed her work permit and refused to extend her residence permit.<sup>LXI</sup> "We are all hostages here," Baltatarova says "Kazakhstan doesn't need us, but, frankly, other countries are not too keen on hosting us either."<sup>LXII</sup> Random document inspections – common in Kazakhstan – will turn up warrants issued by Russia, threatening *relokanty's* status and future. Russians who apply to the Kazakh government for refugee status face a 90% rejection rate.<sup>LXIII</sup>

**Chart. 3: Remittances to Kazakhstan (in billion KZT, 2021–2023)**



SSource: based on the [National Bank of Kazakhstan](#) data

The ideal Kazakh government solution would be for most migrants to quietly leave.

The ideal Kazakh government solution would be for most migrants to quietly leave. Russian *relokanty* provide less economic advantage in this large, wealthy republic and could potentially harm nationalizing efforts. In January 2023, the Kazakh government enacted a law that after a 90-day visa-free stay – allowed for all Russians – migrants without official permission to remain longer, attained primarily through work or study, would be required to exit the country for 90 days before returning (previously they might just cross an international border and immediately return, a practice known as “zeroing”). By the end of 2022, about 36 000 Russian *relokanty* had been granted residence permits for longer-term stays.<sup>LXIV</sup> The Kazakh government has offered little explanation for this law, but there have been concerns of Russians working in the shadow economy. Official registration will make it easier to track them and have them pay taxes.<sup>LXV</sup>

This legislation places Russians without international passports in a particularly difficult situation. Their future (legal) destinations are limited to other EEU countries. Otherwise, they require a third-country humanitarian visa. Some are crossing into Uzbekistan. Uzbek authorities are registering them as legal migrants, but they do not automatically have the option to work.<sup>LXVI</sup> The Migration Committee of Kazakhstan has stated that of the 937 000 Russians who entered Kazakhstan following September 2022, over two-thirds left by January 2023.<sup>LXVII</sup>

Russian migrants who remain have boosted local labour markets. From January to September 2022, Russian companies in Kazakhstan increased by around 4 000, with Almaty as a favoured destination.<sup>LXVIII</sup> *Relokanty* fill labour shortages in northern Kazakhstan. Russian is the common professional language in much of Kazakhstan – in major cities and the north. The Kazakh government supports nationalist movements to elevate the place of the Kazakh language, however, which has produced tension.<sup>LXX</sup> Some Kazakhs see these

new arrivals as unwelcome as Kazakhstan establishes a national, decolonial history.<sup>LXXI</sup> *Relokanty* note a general feeling of comfort in Kazakhstan but suffer loneliness, missing family, partners, friends, home – not knowing if or when they can return without risking prison or military service.<sup>LXXII</sup>

Some antiwar Russian migrants who arrived in Kazakhstan have been surprised to find support for – or indifference towards – Putin’s invasion. A poll carried out by Kazakh non-government organisations in May 2023 revealed that almost 60% are neutral regarding the war, 12.8% support Russia and 21.1% support Ukraine.<sup>LXXIII</sup>

## Kyrgyzstan

Furthest from Russia by land of these four states, Kyrgyzstan nonetheless offers advantages for *relokanty*. Flights from multiple Russian cities are frequent, catering to still-substantial Kyrgyz migrant labour in Russia. Kyrgyzstan has a strong relationship with Russia and is an EEU state. Russian is commonly spoken in cities, and the cost of living is low. Estimates place the number of Russian *relokanty* to Kyrgyzstan between 30 000-60 000 at the end of 2022, though numbers appear to have declined over 2023.<sup>LXXIV</sup>

Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov remarked during the second wave of migration that Russians “can of course come here and work freely” and that “[w]e don’t see any harm and lots of benefits” from this influx.<sup>LXXV</sup> Kyrgyz government officials started the Digital Nomad program to attract Russian IT workers with promises of long-term visas, simplified transition processes and tax benefits. Only about 1000 foreigners had received the status by February 2023.<sup>LXXVI</sup> The Kyrgyz economy grew by 7% in 2022, behind Georgia and Armenia but still impressive and likely somewhat driven by the 2.8 billion USD in transfers from Russia to Kyrgyzstan that year.<sup>LXXVII</sup>

The Kyrgyz government retains its strong reliance on Russia for energy and basic supplies.<sup>LXXVIII</sup> Putin visited Bishkek in October 2023 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Russia’s Kant military base – his first foreign trip since the International Criminal Court issued a warrant for his arrest. He reminded President Japarov in a meeting that Russia remained Kyrgyzstan’s biggest investor. Unmentioned was the high volume of goods entering Kyrgyzstan that have travelled to Russia in violation of international sanctions.<sup>LXXIX</sup> The Kyrgyz parliament exempted Russian citizens from 2023 restrictions on foreign citizens who enter from visa-free countries.<sup>LXXX</sup>

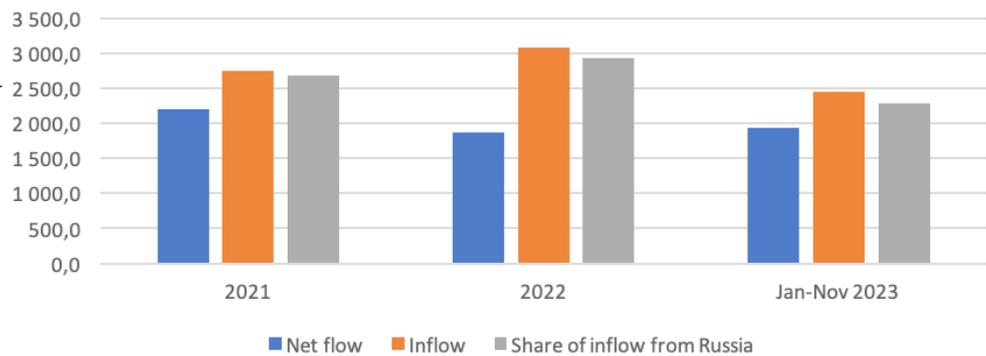
Putin also stated that those who violate Russian laws will be held accountable regardless of their location.<sup>LXXXI</sup> A year after Japarov told Russians that they should have no fear of being extradited, Russian migrants have cause for concern. Over 2023, the Russian government has pressured the Kyrgyz government to track antiwar activists. In June 2023, Kyrgyzstan joined Russia and Kazakhstan in sharing personal data of citizens.<sup>LXXXII</sup> Alyona Krylova, a representative of the For Human Rights NGO in Russia, was arrested in Bishkek in June and remains in detention. Russian left-wing activist and anarchist Lev Skoryakin was abducted from prison in Kyrgyzstan in October 2023 and taken to Russia.<sup>LXXXIII</sup> Kyrgyz activist Kanat Nogoibaev stated: “Civil activists and regular Russian citizens [in Kyrgyzstan] have gone missing and been found in Russian military units. The National Security Committee [of Kyrgyzstan] collaborates with the [Russian] FSB.”<sup>LXXXIV</sup> Kyrgyzstan has restricted the right to peaceful assembly to target antiwar rallies and silenced independent media.<sup>LXXXV</sup>

Russian migrants to Kyrgyzstan nonetheless note the ease of relationships with local Kyrgyz. Many arriving in 2022 recall heartfelt welcomes, including offers of free food and accommodation.<sup>LXXXVI</sup> Kyrgyz themselves have strong links to Russia. Over 1 million Kyrgyz work in the country. Migrant remittances account for about 30% of Kyrgyzstan’s GDP, one of

Kyrgyz government officials started the Digital Nomad program to attract Russian IT workers with promises of long-term visas, simplified transition processes and tax benefits.

the highest rates in the world.<sup>LXXXVII</sup> Many houses in southern Kyrgyzstan hosting Russian migrants were built with funds from Kyrgyz migration to Russia.<sup>LXXXVIII</sup>

**Chart. 4: Remittances to Kyrgyzstan (in million USD, 2021-2023)**



Source: based on the [National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic](#) data

Bishkek, the main arrival point for *relokanty*, faced similar strains as other Caucasus and Central Asian capitals in 2022. But in Kyrgyzstan, as in other countries, blame for rising apartment prices – which hit students and low-income earners hardest – is diffused. Anger is often directed at local authorities who fail to intervene when landlords eject tenants who can't pay 200-300% increases.<sup>LXXXIX</sup> Kyrgyz support for Russia in the War in Ukraine is also significant among citizens, in a country where Russian TV is a prime source of information. Early in the conflict, some Kyrgyz sported “Z” paraphernalia. In September 2022, the Central Asian Barometer noted that only 14% of Kyrgyz considered Russia responsible for the war, as opposed to 56% who blamed Ukraine or the West.<sup>XC</sup> Hotels display Russian flags prominently. Prices in Bishkek have settled as *relokanty* have moved to different cities. Within Kyrgyzstan, Russians have gone to Lake Issyk-Kul's scenic villages. Many, including Karakol, were built by tsarist-era colonists. Osh, with its cheap cost of living, has proved a popular destination.<sup>XCI</sup>

Sentiment towards *relokanty* remain complicated. Frustration at the “Russian Russians” – as Kyrgyz ironically call new Russian emigres – simmers in private conversation and on social media.<sup>XCII</sup> Kyrgyz mock the term “*relokanty*,” which they see as trying to differentiate Russians in Kyrgyzstan from Kyrgyz in Russia, commonly known as “gastarbeiter” (guest workers) or simply as Blacks. This is mixed with smug satisfaction that, after having been the target of racism when they have worked or travelled in Russia, Kyrgyz can now feel superior to these Russian newcomers, who are far from home.

Russians also debate each other on social media. Some chide fellow *relokanty* for not respecting local sensitivities. Others persist in complaints about their new surroundings, from bad taxi drivers to poor internet. Organizations and telegram channels however most often focus on mutual support. Early *relokanty* opened a centre, Red Roof, in Bishkek to offer communal space for newcomers. Red Roof seeks to inform recently-arrived Russians of Russia's colonial legacy in Kyrgyzstan as well as the state of LGBTQ+ rights, among other issues.<sup>XCIII</sup> As time goes on, mutual assistance has shifted to many Russians who have spent their savings over 2022-2023.

Private companies in Kyrgyzstan offer new pathways for wealthy *relokanty* seeking entry into the EU or other destinations. Kyrgyz passports are now for sale, with fees ranging from \$1500-20 000 dollars (for “rush service”).<sup>XCIV</sup> Russians applying for Kyrgyz passports grew 400% between 2021 and 2022 and a list approved by President Japarov in late 2022

Sentiment towards *relokanty* remain complicated. Frustration at the “Russian Russians” – as Kyrgyz ironically call new Russian emigres – simmers in private conversation and on social media.

includes members of Russia's business and political elites.<sup>xcv</sup> Kyrgyz citizenship offers a more appealing backdoor than longshot asylum claims in the West, abetted by corruption in government.

## CONCLUSIONS, SCENARIOS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Privilege and precarity mark the position of *relokanty* as they search for stability and opportunity in these four host states and beyond in 2024. With the war at an apparent stalemate, Russians must consider short- and long-term scenarios for residence.

In Georgia, *relokanty* must confront what is certain to be a tense election between Georgian Dream and pro-European opposition in the shadow of the European Council decision to grant Georgia EU candidate status in December 2023. At any point in the campaign, likely in Fall 2024, Georgian politicians might mobilize the host population's frustration against *relokanty*. If pro-EU forces win the election, they will be tempted to impose taxes, visa restrictions or other measures against Russians in Georgia, but must be conscious of the Russian government's reaction. A Georgian Dream victory will likely preserve the status quo – but this “status quo” has seen increased numbers of Russians, from political opposition to businessmen and tourists, being denied visas for unknown reasons. Thirty thousand Russians have left Georgia in the last six months of 2023.<sup>xcvi</sup> This tense political environment could result in significant unrest in late 2024 if the election is seen to be manipulated.

In Armenia, the government's search for stability through greater engagement with Western countries remains shaky. The Russian government could enact sanctions or retaliatory measures that might severely damage Armenia's economy, even if the Armenian government is able to avoid a renewed conflict with Azerbaijan. Already, high prices are reducing Russian presence in Armenia – many of these telework for Russian IT companies, so are not tied to any one country or region. Instability and the cost of absorbing more than 100 000 Nagorno-Karabakh refugees will challenge Armenia's politicians, even as Yerevan remains a dynamic city.

Kazakhstan's political situation remains stable, even if it has only been two years since massive unrest forced the government to call on the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) peacekeepers<sup>3</sup>. Russians enjoy good relations with Kazakhs but the 2023 visa reforms mean that without steady employment or student status, remaining in Kazakhstan long-term would require a will to join the unofficial economy.

Both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have nationalist elements that might seek to downgrade the status of Russian language. It's unlikely they will target Russians themselves, unless “Kazakh Russians” in Kazakhstan's north mount a campaign to unite with Russia – an improbable but not impossible scenario if the Kremlin wants to stir up trouble. More worrisome, perhaps, is that any *relokanty* residing in these two countries who protest the war or have warrants against them in Russia for any reason might be returned home, where they would face potential imprisonment, even torture.

The most likely scenario in 2024 is a dispersal of *relokanty* outside these four states and even fewer arrivals. If worst-case scenarios for *relokanty* are realized in Georgia and Armenia, this will negatively affect economic growth in both states, even as it might tame inflationary pressures and improve social cohesion in Georgia. Regardless, there will be

<sup>3</sup> The members of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation include Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan. On 5 January 2022, CSTO peacekeepers were announced to be deployed to Kazakhstan in response to anti-government unrest in the country. This was the first such instance for the CSTO peacekeeper troops.

important local economic effects in cities and regions that form the main departure and arrival points. Türkiye, Cyprus and Egypt have gained popularity for weather, cheaper prices and greater stability. The issue of *relokanty* is unlikely to be politicized and the possibility of forced repatriation minuscule. Serbia provides not only a reduced cost of living, but also a welcoming environment to Russians – especially those who are not actively anti-Putin, <sup>XCVII</sup> Russian migrants will continue to fly to Mexico, where they will join ethnic Georgians, Armenians, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz who seek their futures in the United States.

Small numbers of migrants are returning to Russia. Since the proposal to send *relokanty* to some form of the gulag, Russian media and politicians have taken a softer line. In early 2024, they highlight increased returns of Russians as signs of an ostensibly failed Western policy to tear apart the country. Only an end to active conflict, unlikely in 2024, would spur a significant return. Worries persist about government retribution as well as awkward professional or social encounters with Russians who remained. Significant numbers of Russians will stay in Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, where they will form the latest wave of human movement and ethnic diversity that has characterized the Caucasus and Central Asia over centuries.

None of these countries, nevertheless, can rely on *relokanty* skills and money as a continued driver of economic growth. Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan now, after two years of in-migration, should conduct detailed studies of the benefits and costs of the presence of *relokanty* and develop relations with sectors likely to bring economic benefits that outweigh costs, either in terms of internal politics or the potential of upsetting the Russian government.

Russia over 2023 has reasserted its status as a regional hegemon, even as the stalemate in Ukraine renders military intervention in neighbouring countries – Georgia would be the most plausible, but not only, target – unlikely. Given the diverse composition and views of *relokanty*, it is implausible that they could be used as an active “fifth column” in Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan. At the same time, the Russian government could employ their presence as a pretext for intervention – which would place *relokanty*, especially those with family in Russia, in an extremely difficult position.

Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan need to prepare therefore for a range of possible scenarios that have internal and international, political, economic and societal consequences. For the *relokanty* to remain, how much state support should they receive, in terms of Russian-language education and services? Understandably, the governments in these four states have avoided letting this issue bleed into one that might activate nationalist sentiments and lead to social disruption, but this scenario must also be contemplated. Governments should ensure that *relokanty* are paying taxes and that their contributions to the national economy are highlighted. *Relokanty* themselves should be made aware of the colonial legacies of their presence and should work, with government assistance, to integrate themselves into non-Russian states.

The European Union and the United States should assist these states in managing *relokanty* issues and reducing the possibility for domestic internal tension and other scenarios that might allow Russia to intervene. This might include opening pathways for entry to Russian migrants or economic assistance to integrate. International civil society organizations could develop programs for societal or cultural integration, especially for poor *relokanty*. They might assist in the deepening of environmental or other initiatives where Russian migrants work alongside local activists to improve the quality of life in host states.

- <sup>I</sup> The Economist. Russians have emigrated in huge numbers since the war in Ukraine. 23 August 2023. Available at: <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2023/08/23/russians-have-emigrated-in-huge-numbers-since-the-war-in-ukraine>
- <sup>II</sup> Inozemstev, V. The Exodus of the Century: A New Wave of Russian Emigration. *Russie. Eurasie. Visions*, No. 129, Ifri, July 2023. Available at: [https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/ifri\\_inozemstev\\_exodus\\_july\\_2023.pdf](https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/ifri_inozemstev_exodus_july_2023.pdf)
- <sup>III</sup> Ward, A. & L. Ukenye. The coming fight over Russian asylum seekers. *Politico*. 26 September 2022. Available at: <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/national-security-daily/2022/09/26/the-coming-fight-over-russian-asylum-seekers-00058807>
- <sup>IV</sup> European Union Agency for Asylum (2023). Latest Asylum Trends, January 2023–June 2023, Midterm Review. Available at: [https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-09/EUAA\\_Latest\\_Asylum\\_Trends\\_Midterm\\_2023.pdf](https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-09/EUAA_Latest_Asylum_Trends_Midterm_2023.pdf)
- <sup>V</sup> Global Initiative. Entrepreneurial newcomers: Russian-speaking migrant smugglers on the US southern border. 11 May 2023. Available at: <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/russian-migrant-smugglers-us-southern-border/>
- <sup>VI</sup> Troianovski, Anton (2023) 'Russia outside Russia: For elite, Dubai becomes a wartime harbor, *New York Times*. March 13. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/13/world/europe/russia-dubai-ukraine-war.html>
- <sup>VII</sup> Meduza. Russian wartime emigration sparks a 'reckoning' in Central Asia. 9 February 2023. Available at: <https://meduza.io/en/episodes/2023/02/10/russia-s-wartime-emigration-sparks-a-reckoning-in-central-asia>
- <sup>VIII</sup> Lillis, Joanna (2023). Kazakhstan: New migration rules to hit Russians fleeing the draft. *Eurasianet*. Jan 17. Available at: <https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-new-migration-rules-to-hit-russians-fleeing-the-draft>
- <sup>IX</sup> Forbes Russia. 'Krovavaia baryna.' Relokanty sdelali zhizn' v Almaty dorozhe, chem v Moskve. 22 September 2023. Available at: [https://forbes.kz/actual/stats/kсениya\\_sobchak\\_relokantyi\\_sdelali\\_jizn\\_v\\_almatyi\\_stala\\_doroje\\_chem\\_v\\_moskve/](https://forbes.kz/actual/stats/kсениya_sobchak_relokantyi_sdelali_jizn_v_almatyi_stala_doroje_chem_v_moskve/)
- <sup>X</sup> Stanovaia, T. (2023) Russia's new conscription law brings the digital gulag much, much closer. *Carnegie Politika*. 17 April. Available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/89553>.
- <sup>XI</sup> Reuters. Russians who back Ukraine should be sent to region known for gulag camps- duma speaker. 10 October 2023. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russians-who-back-ukraine-should-be-sent-region-known-gulag-camps-duma-speaker-2023-10-10/>
- <sup>XII</sup> Ilyushina, Mary (2023). Russia eyes pressure tactics to lure fleeing workers home. *Washington Post*. 8 March. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/03/08/russia-employers-intimidation-workers-war/>
- <sup>XIII</sup> Najibullah, Farangis (2023). Living in fear of the draft, Russian emigres in Kazakhstan have no plans to go home. *Eurasianet*. 22 January. <https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-russian-emigres-ukraine-war/32234453.html>
- <sup>XIV</sup> Kuleshova, A., Chigaleichik, E., Podolsky, V., & Baranova, V. (2023). Russian migration to Armenia and Georgia in 2022: Enclave Economy and Local Employment. *Caucasus Edition: Journal of Conflict Transformation*.
- <sup>XV</sup> <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/new-wave-russians-head-georgia>
- <sup>XVI</sup> Avakov, Artur. (2023). 'Rossiian obyeschshayut nakazat' za "tikhoie vtorzhenie" v Gruziiyu,' *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*. 31 October. [https://www.ng.ru/cis/2023-10-31/1\\_8866\\_georgia.html](https://www.ng.ru/cis/2023-10-31/1_8866_georgia.html); Zanatta, Leonardo. (2023). 'The Impact of Russian Migration in Georgia,' *Italian Institute for International Political Studies*. November 6. Accessed at: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/the-impact-of-russian-migration-in-georgia-151256>; Transparency International (2023). *Georgia's Economic Dependence on Russia Continues to Grow: January to June 2023*. Available at: <https://www.transparency.ge/en/post/georgias-economic-dependence-russia-continues-grow-january-june-2023>; VKPress. 'Gruziiia opasaetsia russkikh i russkoviazychnykh, osobenno relokantov,' 1 November 2023. Available at: <https://www.vkpress.ru/life/gruziia-zayavila-ob-opaseni-russkikh-i-russkoyazychnykh-vystavit-relokantov/?id=167899> (figures here 112 000 to 113 000- transparency 62 000; vkpress 120 000)
- <sup>XVII</sup> Muhlfried, Florian. (2023). 'Between hospitality and hostility: Russian citizens in Georgia,' *Anthropology Today* 39 (3): 17.
- <sup>XVIII</sup> Zanatta, Leonardo. (2023). 'The Impact of Russian Migration in Georgia,' *Italian Institute for International Political Studies*. November 6. Available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/the-impact-of-russian-migration-in-georgia-151256>.
- <sup>XIX</sup> CBS. "A Quiet Invasion." 26 October 2023. Available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/video/a-quiet-invasion-sunday-on-60-minutes/>.
- <sup>XX</sup> VKPress. 'Gruziiia opasaetsia russkikh i russkoviazychnykh, osobenno relokantov,' 1 November 2023. Available at: <https://www.vkpress.ru/life/gruziia-zayavila-ob-opaseni-russkikh-i-russkoyazychnykh-vystavit-relokantov/?id=167899>.
- <sup>XXI</sup> Chanadiri, Nino. (2023). 'Russian migration during the war in Ukraine: reality and challenges in the host countries,' *New Eastern Europe*. 21 September. Available at: <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2023/09/21/russian-migration-during-the-war-in-ukraine-reality-and-challenges-in-the-host-countries/>.
- <sup>XXII</sup> Nechepurenko, Ivan. (2023). 'Flood of Russians Alters Life for Countries That Took Them in.' *The New York Times*. 14 March. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/14/world/europe/russians-georgia-armenia-war.html>.
- <sup>XXIII</sup> Tsaava, Maradia. (2023). 'One year after emigration: Russians in Georgia.' *JAM News*. 29 March. Available at: <https://jam-news.net/russians-in-georgia/>.
- <sup>XXIV</sup> *JAM News*. 'Georgia's main problems: unemployment, price growth, poverty. Edison Research.' 10 November 2023. Available at: <https://jam-news.net/edison-research-on-georgias-problems/>.

- <sup>xxv</sup> Chanadiri, Nino. (2023). 'Russian migration during the war in Ukraine: reality and challenges in the host countries,' New Eastern Europe. 21 September. Available at: <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2023/09/21/russian-migration-during-the-war-in-ukraine-reality-and-challenges-in-the-host-countries/>.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Transparency International (2023). Georgia's Economic Dependence on Russia Continues to Grow: January to June 2023. Available at: <https://www.transparency.ge/en/post/georgias-economic-dependence-russia-continues-grow-january-june-2023>.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Kucera, Joshua. (2023). 'After A Frosty Reception, Tbilisi's Wartime Russians Are Beginning To Leave,' Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 24 January. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-russians-fleeing-war-leaving-/32784835.html>
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Musavi, Nika. (2023). 'Pochemu rossiiskim relokantam slozhno vnov' popast' v Gruziiyu,' DW. 24 May. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/ru/rossijskim-relokantam-vse-slozhee-ynov-popast-v-gruziiyu-v-cem-pricina/a-65710859>.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Kucera, Joshua. (2023). 'After A Frosty Reception, Tbilisi's Wartime Russians Are Beginning To Leave,' Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 24 January. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-russians-fleeing-war-leaving-/32784835.html>
- <sup>xxx</sup> Mejjumyan, Ani. (2022). 'Armenian labor migrants reassess work in collapsing Russian economy,' Eurasianet. 29 April. Available at: <https://eurasianet.org/armenian-labor-migrants-reassess-work-in-collapsing-russian-economy>.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Sputnik Armenia. 'Kak sebia chuvstvuyut rossiiskie relokanty v Armenii: posol'stvo RF podelilos' nablyudenyami.' 18 October 2022. Available at: <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/20221018/kak-sebya-chuvstvuyut-rossiyskie-relokanty-v-armenii-posolstvo-rf-podelilos-nablyudenyami--49961953.html>.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Avetisyan, Ani. (2023). 'Armenian PM sees "no advantage" in Russian troop presence as ties with Moscow deteriorate further.' Eurasianet. 31 October. Available at: <https://eurasianet.org/armenian-pm-sees-no-advantage-in-russian-troop-presence-as-ties-with-moscow-deteriorate-further>.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> : Barseghyan, Arshaluys. (2023). 'Moscow and Yerevan summon ambassadors as relations continue to plummet.' OC Media. 26 October. Available at: <https://oc-media.org/moscow-and-yerevan-summon-ambassadors-as-relations-continue-to-plummet/>.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Sahadeo, Jeff (2023). Personal Communication. 6 December.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Khayurtdinov, Timur. (2023). 'The price of Russian migration.' Novaya Gazeta. 21 July. Available at: <https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2023/07/21/the-price-of-russian-migration-en>; Dovich, Mark. (2023). 'Fitch expects Russian migrants to stay in Armenia for 2-3 years, upgrades Armenia's credit outlook.' Civilnet. 13 February. Available at: <https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/691710/fitch-expects-russian-migrants-to-stay-in-armenia-for-2-3-years-upgrades-armenias-credit-outlook/>.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> ArmenPress. 'Number of temporary migrants and expats who arrived in Armenia is around 250,000-300,000 – says economist.' 26 January 2023. Available at: <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1102599/>. (300 000); Poghosyan, Benjamin. (2023). 'How Russian Migration Fuels Armenia's IT Sector Growth.' Italian Institute for International Political Studies. 6 November. Available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/how-russian-migration-fuels-armenias-it-sector-growth-151311> (60 000).
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> EurAsia Daily. 'Relokanty uezzhayut transferty sokrashchayutsia, Lars stoit: Armenia teriaet dinamiky rosta,' 5 December 2023. Available at: <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2023/12/05/relokanty-uezzhayut-transferty-sokrashchayutsya-lars-stoit-armeniya-teryaet-dinamiku-rosta>.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> EurAsia Daily. 'Relokanty uezzhayut transferty sokrashchayutsia, Lars stoit: Armenia teriaet dinamiky rosta,' 5 December 2023. Available at: <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2023/12/05/relokanty-uezzhayut-transferty-sokrashchayutsya-lars-stoit-armeniya-teryaet-dinamiku-rosta>.
- <sup>xxxix</sup> Ivorski, Ivalio; Kasyanenko, Sergiy; Singer, Dorothe. (2023). 'Sluggish Growth, Rising Risks: Europe and Central Asia Economic Update.' Office of the Chief Economist, World Bank. Fall 2023. 8.
- <sup>xl</sup> Poghosyan, Benyamin. (2023). 'How Russian Migration Fuels Armenia's IT Sector Growth,' Italian Institute for International Political Studies. Available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/how-russian-migration-fuels-armenias-it-sector-growth-151311>; Sputnik Armenia, 'Direktor UATE: relokanty v 2022-m otкрыli bespretsedentnoe chislo startapov v Armenii,' 25 January 2023. Available at: <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/20230125/direktor-uate-relokanty-v-2022-m-otkryli-bespretsedentnoe-chislo-startapov-v-armenii-54306836.html>.
- <sup>xli</sup> Poghosyan, Benyamin. (2023). 'How Russian Migration Fuels Armenia's IT Sector Growth,' Italian Institute for International Political Studies. Available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/how-russian-migration-fuels-armenias-it-sector-growth-151311>.
- <sup>xlii</sup> Bridges, Levi. (2023). 'Russia's war turns Armenia into a booming tech sector,' The World. 22 March. Available at: <https://theworld.org/stories/2023-03-22/russias-war-turns-armenia-booming-tech-sector>.
- <sup>xliii</sup> Krawatzek, Felix; Soroka, George; DeSisto, Isabelle. (2023). 'Russians in the South Caucasus: Political Attitudes and the War in Ukraine,' Zentrum fur Osteuropa-und internationale Studien. 5 March. Available at: <https://www.zois-berlin.de/en/publications/zois-report/russians-in-the-south-caucasus-political-attitudes-and-the-war-in-ukraine>.
- <sup>xliv</sup> : Khodorkovsky. 'The Ark. The Support Group for Immigrants Who Left Russia as a Result of the War Against Ukraine.' Available at: <https://khodorkovsky.com/resources/the-ark-the-support-group-for-immigrants-who-left-russia-as-a-result-of-the-war-against-ukraine/> - no date. need more info on this?
- <sup>xlv</sup> Liberated School (2023). 'Liberated School.' <http://liberatedschool.tilda.ws>. Accessed January 5th.
- <sup>xlvi</sup> Berkhead, Samantha. (2022). 'Russian Emigres in Armenia Fuel Flourishing Food, Creative Scenes,' The Moscow Times.

5 December. Available at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/12/04/russian-emigres-in-armenia-fuel-flourishing-food-creative-scenes-a79517>.

<sup>XLVII</sup> Ilyushina, Mary. (2023). 'Russia eyes pressure tactics to lure fleeing tech workers home,' The Washington Post. 8 March. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/03/08/russia-employers-intimidation-workers-war/>.

<sup>XLVIII</sup> Berkhead, Samantha. (2022). 'Russian Emigres in Armenia Fuel Flourishing Food, Creative Scenes,' The Moscow Times. 5 December. Available at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/12/04/russian-emigres-in-armenia-fuel-flourishing-food-creative-scenes-a79517>.

<sup>XLIX</sup> Yusupova, Guzel. 'Empire in Exile: Coloniality vs. Reflexivity of Recent Russian Immigrants in Armenia,' draft manuscript. June 2023.

<sup>L</sup> Yusupova, Guzel. 'Empire in Exile: Coloniality vs. Reflexivity of Recent Russian Immigrants in Armenia,' draft manuscript. June 2023.

<sup>LI</sup> Nechepurenko, Ivan. (2023). 'Flood of Russians Alters Life for Countries That Took Them in,' The New York Times. 14 March. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/14/world/europe/russians-georgia-armenia-war.html>.

<sup>LII</sup> Latypova, Leyla. (2023). "We're All Hostages Here": Wanted Russian Activists, Draft Dodgers, Stuck in Legal Limbo in Kazakhstan,' The Moscow Times. 13 September. Available at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/09/13/were-all-hostages-here-wanted-russian-activists-draft-dodgers-stuck-in-legal-limbo-in-kazakhstan-a82434>; Kikov, Zhuman. (2023). 'pochti 15 tysiach rossiian emigrirovali v Kazahstan posle nachala voiny – ekserpt,' Press KZ. September. Available at: <https://press.kz/novosti/pochti-150-tysyach-rossiyan-emigrirovali-v-kazahstan-posle-nachala-voiny-ekspert?amp>.

<sup>LIII</sup> Goble, Paul. (2023). 'Kazakhstan Faces Variety of Separatist Threats, Any of Which Russia Could Use,' Eurasia Daily Monitor 20, (160). Available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/kazakhstan-faces-variety-of-separatist-threats-any-of-which-russia-could-use/>.

<sup>LIV</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 'Russian Ally Kazakhstan Says It Won't Recognize Referendum Results From Ukraine,' 26 September 2022. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-ukraine-referendums-recognize-russia/32052907.html>.

<sup>LIV</sup> Umarov, Temur. (2022). 'After Ukraine, Is Kazakhstan Next in the Kremlin's Sights?' Carnegie Politika. 8 October. Available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/87652>.

<sup>LVI</sup> Vaal, Tamara. (2023). 'Russia's Putin talks wheat, fertiliser and logistics in Kazakhstan,' Reuters. 9 November. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/russias-putin-talks-wheat-fertiliser-logistics-kazakhstan-2023-11-09/>.

<sup>LVII</sup> CIA. 'Country Comparisons – Real GDP (purchasing power parity).' Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/real-gdp-purchasing-power-parity/country-comparison/>.

<sup>LVIII</sup> Najibullah, Farangis. (2023). 'Living In Fear Of The Draft, Russian Emigres In Kazakhstan Have No Plans To Go Home.' Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 22 January. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-russian-emigres-ukraine-war/32234453.html>; Meduza. 'Russia's wartime emigration sparks a "reckoning" in Central Asia.' 9 February 2023. Available at: <https://meduza.io/en/episodes/2023/02/10/russia-s-wartime-emigration-sparks-a-reckoning-in-central-asia>.

<sup>LIX</sup> Bridges, Levi. (2023). 'Anti-war Russians who fled for safety now face deportation,' The World. 24 July. Available at: <https://theworld.org/stories/2023-07-24/anti-war-russians-who-fled-safety-now-face-deportation>.

<sup>LX</sup> Latypova, Leyla. (2023). "We're All Hostages Here": Wanted Russian Activists, Draft Dodgers, Stuck in Legal Limbo in Kazakhstan,' The Moscow Times. 13 September. Available at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/09/13/were-all-hostages-here-wanted-russian-activists-draft-dodgers-stuck-in-legal-limbo-in-kazakhstan-a82434>.

<sup>LXI</sup> Bridges, Levi. (2023). 'Anti-war Russians who fled for safety now face deportation,' The World. 24 July. Available at: <https://theworld.org/stories/2023-07-24/anti-war-russians-who-fled-safety-now-face-deportation>.

<sup>LXII</sup> Latypova, Leyla. (2023). "We're All Hostages Here": Wanted Russian Activists, Draft Dodgers, Stuck in Legal Limbo in Kazakhstan,' The Moscow Times. 13 September. Available at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/09/13/were-all-hostages-here-wanted-russian-activists-draft-dodgers-stuck-in-legal-limbo-in-kazakhstan-a82434>.

<sup>LXIII</sup> Latypova, Leyla. (2023). "We're All Hostages Here": Wanted Russian Activists, Draft Dodgers, Stuck in Legal Limbo in Kazakhstan,' The Moscow Times. 13 September. Available at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/09/13/were-all-hostages-here-wanted-russian-activists-draft-dodgers-stuck-in-legal-limbo-in-kazakhstan-a82434>.

<sup>LXIV</sup> Najibullah, Farangis. (2023). 'Living In Fear Of The Draft, Russian Emigres In Kazakhstan Have No Plans To Go Home.' Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 22 January. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-russian-emigres-ukraine-war/32234453.html>.

<sup>LXV</sup> Meduza. 'Russia's wartime emigration sparks a "reckoning" in Central Asia.' 9 February 2023. Available at: <https://meduza.io/en/episodes/2023/02/10/russia-s-wartime-emigration-sparks-a-reckoning-in-central-asia>.

<sup>LXVI</sup> Monteiro Benson, Misha. (2023). 'Russia's war loss is Kazakhstan's brain gain,' Asia Times. 11 October. Available at: <https://asiatimes.com/2023/10/russias-war-loss-is-kazakhstans-brain-gain/>.

<sup>LXVII</sup> Radio Azattyk. 'V ozhdanii vtoroi mobilizatsii. Kak osvvaivayutsia relokanty i sluchitsia li novyi pritok rossiian v Kazahstan?' 12 January 2023. Available at: <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kak-osvvaivayutsya-relokanty-i-sluchitsya-li-novyy-pritok-rossiyan-v-kazahstan-/32212555.html>.

LXVIII Monteiro Benson, Misha. (2023). 'Russia's war loss is Kazakhstan's brain gain,' Asia Times. 11 October. Available at: <https://asiatimes.com/2023/10/russias-war-loss-is-kazakhstans-brain-gain/>.

LXIX Monteiro Benson, Misha. (2023). 'Russia's war loss is Kazakhstan's brain gain,' Asia Times. 11 October. Available at: <https://asiatimes.com/2023/10/russias-war-loss-is-kazakhstans-brain-gain/>.

LXX Schenk, Caress. (2023). 'Russian Migrants and National Identity in Kazakhstan,' Italian Institute for International Political Studies. 6 November. Available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/russian-migrants-and-national-identity-in-kazakhstan-151365>.

LXXI Schenk, Caress. (2023). 'Russian Migrants and National Identity in Kazakhstan,' Italian Institute for International Political Studies. 6 November. Available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/russian-migrants-and-national-identity-in-kazakhstan-151365>.

LXXII Al-Jazeera. 'Refusing Putin's War: The Russians fleeing to Kazakhstan.' 13 April 2023. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/101-east/2023/4/13/refusing-putins-war-the-russians-fleeing-to-kazakhstan>.

LXXIII Auyezov, Olzhas. (2023). 'Kazakhs increasingly wary of Russia's belligerence, poll shows.' Reuters. 17 May. Available at: [https://www.reuters.com/world/kazakhs-increasingly-wary-russias-belligerence-poll-2023-05-17/#:~:text=May%2017%20\(Reuters\)%20%2D%20The%20Kazakh%20researchers%20showed%20on%20Wednesday](https://www.reuters.com/world/kazakhs-increasingly-wary-russias-belligerence-poll-2023-05-17/#:~:text=May%2017%20(Reuters)%20%2D%20The%20Kazakh%20researchers%20showed%20on%20Wednesday)

LXXIV Najibullah, Farangis. (2023). 'Russians Getting Kyrgyz Passports As A Way Out Amid Ongoing Ukraine War,' Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 4 April. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/russians-kyrgyz-passports-ukraine-war/32349496.html>; Shambetov, Toktosun; Chynybaeva, Baktygul. (2023). 'Russia's Runaway Opposition Activist Vanishes In Kyrgyzstan,' Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 20 October. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-skoryakin-opposition-disappears-abducted-fsb-kyrgyzstan/32647123.html>; Rickleton, Chris. (2023). 'Russia's Net Tightens Around Dissidents Sheltering In Kyrgyzstan,' Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 17 June. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/kyrgyzstan-russia-ukraine-war-dissidents-targeted/32463479.html>.

LXXV Higgins, Andrew. (2022). 'Russians Fleeing the Draft Find an Unlikely Haven,' The New York Times. 5 October. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/05/world/asia/russians-fleeing-draft-kyrgyzstan-putin.html>.

LXXVI Khayurtdinov, Timur. (2023). 'The price of Russian migration.' Novaya Gazeta. 21 July. Available at: <https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2023/07/21/the-price-of-russian-migration-en>.

LXXVII Khayurtdinov, Timur. (2023). 'The price of Russian migration.' Novaya Gazeta. 21 July. Available at: <https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2023/07/21/the-price-of-russian-migration-en>.

LXXVIII uluu Marlis Myrzakul; Auyezov, Olzhas. (2023). 'Russia's Putin visits Kyrgyzstan in first foreign trip since ICC arrest warrant,' Reuters. 12 October. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/russias-putin-visits-kyrgyzstan-first-foreign-trip-since-icc-arrest-warrant-2023-10-12/>.

LXXIX Open Dialogue. 'Russia's Accomplices in the War Against Ukraine: Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Army's Reliable Rear.' 9 May 2023. Available at: <https://en.odfoundation.eu/a/627027.russias-accomplices-in-the-war-against-ukraine-kazakhstan-and-kyrgyzstan-the-russian-armys-reliable-rear/#>.

LXXX In October 2023, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic abolished the rule by which foreign citizens permitted to stay visa-free for 60 or 90 days could leave the republic and immediately return to reset their stay, a practice known as "zeroing." 24.kg. 'Visa-free regime restrictions for foreigners do not apply to Russian citizens.' 19 October 2023. Available at: [https://24.kg/english/277796\\_Visa-free\\_regime\\_restrictions\\_for\\_foreigners\\_do\\_not\\_apply\\_to\\_Russian\\_citizens/](https://24.kg/english/277796_Visa-free_regime_restrictions_for_foreigners_do_not_apply_to_Russian_citizens/).

LXXXI Shambetov, Toktosun; Chynybaeva, Baktygul. (2023). 'Russia's Runaway Opposition Activist Vanishes In Kyrgyzstan,' Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 20 October. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-skoryakin-opposition-disappears-abducted-fsb-kyrgyzstan/32647123.html>.

LXXXII Arbat Media. 'Relokantam ot vlastei RF v SNG ne skryt'sia – Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan budut delit'sia dannymi o rossiikh.' 22 June 2023. Available at: <https://arbatmedia.kz/exo-moskvj/relokantam-ot-rossiiskix-vlastei-v-sng-ne-skrytsya-kyrgyzstan-kazaxstan-budut-delitsya-dannymi-o-grazdanax-rf-2766>.

LXXXIII Moscow Times. 'Russian Activist Found in Moscow Jail After Disappearing in Kyrgyzstan.' 3 November 2023. Available at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/11/03/russian-activist-found-in-moscow-jail-after-disappearing-in-kyrgyzstan-a82993>.

LXXXIV Shambetov, Toktosun; Chynybaeva, Baktygul. (2023). 'Russia's Runaway Opposition Activist Vanishes In Kyrgyzstan,' Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 20 October. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-skoryakin-opposition-disappears-abducted-fsb-kyrgyzstan/32647123.html>.

LXXXV Open Dialogue. 'Russia's Accomplices in the War Against Ukraine: Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Army's Reliable Rear.' 9 May 2023. Available at: <https://en.odfoundation.eu/a/627027.russias-accomplices-in-the-war-against-ukraine-kazakhstan-and-kyrgyzstan-the-russian-armys-reliable-rear/#>.

LXXXVI Higgins, Andrew. (2022). 'Russians Fleeing the Draft Find an Unlikely Haven,' The New York Times. 5 October. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/05/world/asia/russians-fleeing-draft-kyrgyzstan-putin.html>.

LXXXVII get source here

<sup>LXXXVIII</sup> Matsuevich, Yan. (2023). 'Home cooking and power cuts: life in a Russian draft-dodgers' house-share,' *The Economist*. 29 March. Available at: <https://www.economist.com/1843/2023/03/29/home-cooking-and-power-cuts-life-in-a-russian-draft-dodgers-house-share>.

<sup>LXXXIX</sup> Meduza. 'Russia's wartime emigration sparks a "reckoning" in Central Asia.' 9 February 2023. Available at: <https://meduza.io/en/episodes/2023/02/10/russia-s-wartime-emigration-sparks-a-reckoning-in-central-asia>.

<sup>XC</sup> Central Asia Barometer (2022). 'Russia-Ukraine War: Public Opinion in Central Asia.' Available at: <https://ca-barometer.org/assets/files/froala/f67ac6f34d17e7e3b51e3be30aedb9ffe60d9ae9.pdf>.

<sup>XCI</sup> Meduza. 'Russia's wartime emigration sparks a "reckoning" in Central Asia.' 9 February 2023. Available at: <https://meduza.io/en/episodes/2023/02/10/russia-s-wartime-emigration-sparks-a-reckoning-in-central-asia>.

<sup>XCII</sup> Sharshenova, Aijan (2023). 'Seen from Bishkek: The Impact of Russian Migration to Kyrgyzstan,' *Italian Institute for International Political Studies*. 6 November. Available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/seen-from-bishkek-the-impact-of-russian-migration-to-kyrgyzstan-151271>.

<sup>XCIII</sup> Meduza. 'Russia's wartime emigration sparks a "reckoning" in Central Asia.' 9 February 2023. Available at: <https://meduza.io/en/episodes/2023/02/10/russia-s-wartime-emigration-sparks-a-reckoning-in-central-asia>.

<sup>XCV</sup> Najibullah, Farangis. (2023). 'Russians Getting Kyrgyz Passports As A Way Out Amid Ongoing Ukraine War,' *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/russians-kyrgyz-passports-ukraine-war/32349496.html>; Altynbaev, Kanat. (2023). 'Russian elite use Kyrgyzstan as stepping-stone to third-country citizenship,' *Caravanserai*. 6 April. Available at: [https://www.google.com/search?q=2023-04-06&rlz=1C5CHFA\\_enCA893CA893&oq=2023-04-06&gs\\_lcrp=Eg-ZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOdIBBzU5MWowajSoAgCwAgA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=2023-04-06&rlz=1C5CHFA_enCA893CA893&oq=2023-04-06&gs_lcrp=Eg-ZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOdIBBzU5MWowajSoAgCwAgA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8).

<sup>XCV</sup> Altynbaev, Kanat. (2023). 'Russian elite use Kyrgyzstan as stepping-stone to third-country citizenship,' *Caravanserai*. 6 April. Available at: [https://www.google.com/search?q=2023-04-06&rlz=1C5CHFA\\_enCA893CA893&oq=2023-04-06&gs\\_lcrp=Eg-ZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOdIBBzU5MWowajSoAgCwAgA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=2023-04-06&rlz=1C5CHFA_enCA893CA893&oq=2023-04-06&gs_lcrp=Eg-ZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOdIBBzU5MWowajSoAgCwAgA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8).

<sup>XCVI</sup> Kucera, Joshua. (2023). 'After A Frosty Reception, Tbilisi's Wartime Russians Are Beginning To Leave,' *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. 24 January. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-russians-fleeing-war-leaving-/32784835.html>

<sup>XCVII</sup> Kucera, Joshua. (2023). 'After A Frosty Reception, Tbilisi's Wartime Russians Are Beginning To Leave,' *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. 24 January. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-russians-fleeing-war-leaving-/32784835.html>

© All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission of the copyright owners.

This publication was produced in the framework of the Prague Process, a component of the Migration Partnership Facility, with the assistance of the European Union.

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way represent the views of the European Union. The advice and expert opinion reflected in the document do not necessarily reflect the position of the organization to which the author belongs.

## Contact Information

Prague Process Secretariat  
International Centre for Migration  
Policy Development (ICMPD)  
Gonzagagasse 1  
A-1010 Vienna  
Austria  
[www.pragurprocess.eu](http://www.pragurprocess.eu)



Funded by the European Union

