



ANTI-WESTERN PROPAGANDA

2020



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

ANTI-WESTERN PROPAGANDA 2020



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INTRODUCTION |

This sixth annual report of anti-Western propaganda reflects the results of media monitoring conducted in 2020. A discourse analysis section provides an overview of anti-Western messages spread by various sources in traditional media, a structure of narratives and modification of narratives over time. A section on disinformation and manipulative content discusses the material identified not only in traditional media but also in social networks where the cases were revealed by means of a Facebook analytical tool, Crowdtangle, and within the framework of the partnership between Myth Detector and Facebook, Third-Party Fact-Checking Program.

The monitoring was conducted on media outlets as well as various sources: political class, clergy, civil organizations and individual representatives of society.

The report covers the period from 1 January through 31 December 2020. The introductory part provides key findings, methodology and total quantitative data by sources. The second chapter of the report overviews a hostile state's strategy of influence and a structure of narratives. A separate chapter is dedicated to discussing a method of false dilemma and terminology. The fifth chapter discusses disinformation and manipulative content revealed by fact-checking platform, Myth Detector. The last part of the report provides information about actors of external influence.

Media Development Foundation conducted analogous studies over the period from 2014 to 2019 too. The study is carried out in partnership with the UN Association of Georgia (UNAG) within "Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness Program in Georgia" implemented by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

METHODOLOGY

The monitoring applied a mixed study methodology:

- **CONTENT ANALYSIS.** Narratives and their sources are identified through content analysis of traditional Georgian language media (TV, print and online outlets), allowing to understand the context and observe trends, and process quantitative and qualitative data. A quantitative part provides the amount of anti-western messages broken down by topics, while the qualitative part focuses on the typology of messages.
- **IDENTIFICATION AND VERIFICATION OF FAKE NEWS.** CrowdTangle analytics tool is applied to identify fake news stories posted by Facebook pages and groups, to verify them and look into their sources. Additionally, fake stories supplied by readers are also verified but these stories and their sources identified by random selection through systematic monitoring.

SELECTING SUBJECTS OF CONTENT ANALYSIS. As an earlier study¹ of the MDF has shown, Russian media is used as a source of information in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities. Georgian-speaking media consumers receive identical disinformation from Georgian sources. It is for this very reason that Georgian media outlets have been selected as subjects of monitoring in this study.

Media outlets to be monitored were selected from mainstream as well as tabloid media. In total, 15 outlets were monitored. Several monitored TV programs that were taken off the air because of changes in TV programming, were replaced with the programs of similar format. The monitoring was conducted on the following subjects:

- **Daily prime-time news and weekly analytical programs on four TV channels:** Georgian Public Broadcaster (Moambe; Akhali Kvira); Matavari Arkhi (Mtavari News Program, Shabatis Matavari, Post Factum); Imedi (Qronika; Imedis Kvira); Obieqtivi TV (Namdvili Ambebi).

¹ MDF (2019), "Informing Ethnic Minorities on Georgia's Euro-Atlantic Integration."
<http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/107/>

- **Talk-shows of five TV channels:** Georgian Public Broadcaster (Kviris Interviu); Mtavari Arkhi (Gamis Mtavari)²; Imedi (Arena, Ghia Eteri);³ Obieqtivi (Ghamis Studia; Bakur Svanidzis Dzaan Politica⁴); Kavkasia (Bari-eri; Spektri).
- **Six online media outlets:** Sakinformi, Netgazeti, Interpressnews, Georgia & World, PIA, Marshalpress.
- **Four newspapers:** Rezonansi, Kviris Palitra, Asaval-Dasavali, Alia.

IDENTIFICATION AND VERIFICATION OF FAKE NEWS. Antiliberal, pro-Kremlin Facebook pages and groups with close links to the government are monitored through CrowdTangle analytics tool. Pages in the database are periodically updated. Identified fake or manipulative content is verified based on the methodology of MDF’s fact-checking portal, Myth Detector, which includes four stages:

1. Selection
2. Verification of facts
3. Assessment
4. Search of information about a source

Verification is carried out based on open sources and relevant tools (OSINET), which are detailed on the Myth Detector webpage.⁵

² After the change in ownership of Rustavi 2, the program “Archevani” moved to a newly established TV channel Mtavari Arkhi; consequently, the monitoring subject changed since October 2019.

³ After the closedown of the program “Pirispir” on the Imedi TV in November 2019, a talk show “Arena” became a subject of monitoring.

⁴ Program was discussing political issues in satirical manner

⁵ Myth Detector, methodology, <http://mythdetector.ge/en/page/methodology>

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| KEY FINDINGS

The following trends have been outlined:

- The media monitoring conducted in 2020 showed an increase in anti-Western messages in which the share of anti-US messages was the highest and followed by messages against the West, in general.

USA

- Increase in anti-USA narratives partially accounted for messages concerning internal developments in the USA and the defeat of President Trump in the elections, also a campaign in Georgia which was initiated by the pro-Kremlin political party, The Alliance of Patriots, to discredit the US research organizations (NDI and IRI) in the context of parliamentary elections in Georgia.
- Three new messages were identified with regard to internal developments in the USA: 1) The USA is divided/election was rigged/the USA has no moral right to lecture others; 2) There is a systemic racism in the USA; 3) The USA is corrupt.

NATO

- Unlike the USA, Comments against NATO has almost halved. A decrease in messages against NATO in 2020 may be partially explained by the absence of any initiative in the direction of integration.
- Two new narratives were identified with regard to the North Atlantic Alliance: 1) NATO is nonfunctional because of the pandemic/NATO = threat of getting infected; 2) The Nagorno Karabakh conflict alters security of NATO.

EU

- New messages regarding the European Union concerned the coronavirus pandemic and promoted the opinion about the pandemic jeopardizing the unity of the EU, because the EU failed to show solidarity and provide assistance to member states.
- Furthermore, the 2020 saw the increase in messages about uselessness of the Association Agreement for Georgia (33).

THE WEST

- Following messages were revealed in relation to the West: The West seeks the establishment of global control/new world order; The liberal order is losing ground; The West tries to rewrite history/cooperated with Hitler; The West does not show solidarity/failed to contain the pandemic.

RUSSIA

- Analysis of the dynamic of the past five years showed a gradual increase in statements portraying Russia as the only power that had no alternative, and supporting authoritative governance.
- Two new messages that clearly occurred with regard to Russia in 2020, concerned the internal electoral process in Georgia and the containment of “threat” coming from Turkey and Azerbaijan as well as the role of Russia in settling the Nagorno Karabakh conflict: 1) Accusations of Russia interfering in Georgia’s elections are unfounded; 2) Only Russia can contain Turkey/settle conflicts in the Caucasus.

IDENTITY

- Messages fueling fears for a loss of identity as well as a value-oriented discourse showed a little decrease, though anti-liberal discourse, in general, was observed across the board.
- Along with older messages about the West supposedly imposing homosexuality, pedophilia and perverted lifestyle and fighting against traditional identity/church, new messages alleged that the victory of Biden in the US presidential election would further LGBT agenda.

SOROS / NGOS

- Attitudes towards a US philanthropist and the founder of Open Society, George Soros, as well as NGOs have not changed in anti-Western media. A message dominating in 2020 was that Soros fights against traditional identity, encourages drug abuse, coups, including in the USA by funding Antifa, and interferes in Georgia’s domestic affairs.

INFLUENCE STRATEGIES AND STRUCTURE OF NARRATIVE

- In contrast to previous years, in 2020, the Kremlin and actors affiliated to it, employed, along with offensive strategy, the defensive communication to counteract the response of the West to hybrid threats emanating from Russia.
- Defensive communication was identified in statements about Russia’s interference in the Georgian elections, on the one hand, and on the other, a resolution of the European Parliament about the cooperation between the USSR and Nazi Germany.
- The structure of anti-Western messages, much like in previous years, was three-tiered and pursued the aim to 1) cultivate fears, 2) sow despair and skepticism, and 3) portray co-religious and powerful Russia as the alternative to the West.
- Similar to previous years, anti-western propaganda instrumentalized four types of fear: 1) fear of provoking Russia, resuming armed hostilities and instability; 2) fear of losing territorial integrity; 3) fear of biological terrorism and global control; 4) fear of losing identity and assimilation.

SOWING FEARS

- Apart from older messages alleging that the U.S. provoked the 2008 war and the West is not interested in normalizing Russia-Georgia ties, statements in 2020 about attempts to drag Georgia and the entire region into the conflict became topical because of the renewal of armed hostilities in Nagorno Karabakh.
- The fear of losing territorial integrity was again linked to integration into NATO and was fanned by misinterpretation of initiative about fast-tracking Georgia's NATO integration and a conspiracy theory about intervention of Turkish armed forces into Georgia.
- The fear of biological terrorism and global control, along with traditional messages about the Lugar Laboratory, was fanned in 2020 by new messages about artificial origin of the coronavirus and the establishment of global control.
- Although message about incompatibility of Catholicism with Orthodox Christianity was part of anti-Western discourse in previous years too, a statement of Pope of Rome Francis in 2020 that same-sex couples should be allowed legally to have civil unions triggered a surge of anti-Catholic messages.

INSTALLING DESPAIR AND SKEPTICISM

- Six messages were identified that helped instill skepticism towards the West: 1. The West cannot defend us against military threats; 2. The West cannot protect our territorial integrity; 3. The West cannot protect us from the threat of pandemic; 4. The liberal order is losing ground; 5. Democracy is a fiction; 6. Association Agreement/the EU is useless.
- A campaign launched in the run-up to the 2020 parliamentary elections by the ruling political party, Georgian Dream, which concerned the Davit Gareji Monastery Complex located on a disputed section of Georgia-Azerbaijani border, created a fertile ground for pro-Kremlin and antiliberal groups to consider Azerbaijan alongside Turkey in the context of historical occupation and to divert attention from current Russian occupation towards historic hostility. Furthermore, they promoted the allegation that strategic partners did not protect us against the threat posed by Azerbaijan and Turkey and the only power that could deter that threat is Russia.

RUSSIA AS THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE WEST

- In the effort to portray Russia as the alternative to the West, six messages were emphasized: 1) Political neutrality will defuse tensions between Georgia and Russia; 2) Only Russia can protect Georgia from neighboring countries as well as recovery of Abkhazia and Samachablo through direct dialogue; 3) The pandemic can be repelled by authoritarian countries/ healthcare of the Soviet Union; 4) Russia is the third Rome that protects us from Western moral occupation; 5) The Soviet Union was politically stable and socially protected system; 6) Georgia economically depends on the Russian market.

1. TOTAL DATA |

Similar to 2019, the monitoring conducted in 2020 showed an upward trend in anti-Western messages. The total of 3,545 such comments are analyzed in this report, that is an almost tripled indicator in the past five years (in 2016: 1,258 comments). Much like in the past three years, anti-American messages dominated 2020 (1,102), having almost doubled since 2019 (in 2019: 617). This increase partially accounted for messages concerning internal developments in the USA and the defeat of President Trump in the elections, also a campaign in Georgia which was initiated by the pro-Kremlin political party, The Alliance of Patriots, to discredit the US research organizations (NDI and IRI) in the context of parliamentary elections in Georgia.

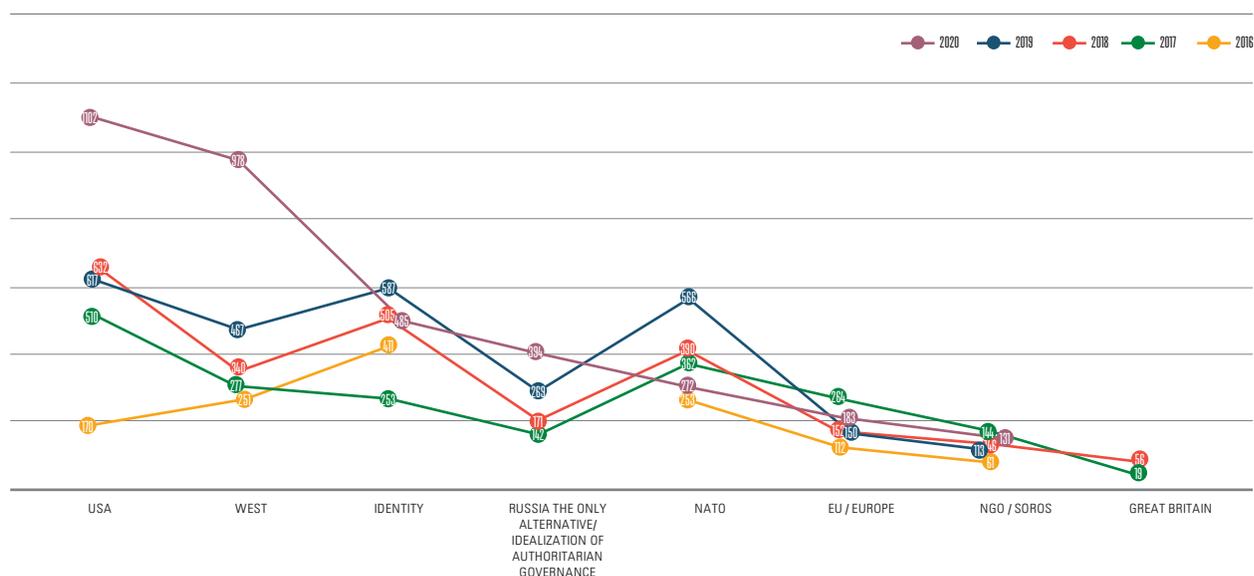
Anti-Western⁶ messages have also almost doubled as compared to 2019 (in 2020: 978; in 2019: 467). Little increase was seen in comments against the EU/Europe (2020: 183; 2019: 150), also against nongovernmental organizations and the philanthropist George Soros (2020: 131; 2019: 113).

Messages fueling fears for a loss of identity as well as a value-oriented discourse showed a little decrease (2020: 485; 2019: 587), though anti-liberal discourse, in general, was observed across the board. Comments against NATO has almost halved (2020: 272; 2019: 566). Anti-NATO discourse in the past five-year period was most active in 2019, which was attributable to an intensive campaign for political neutrality, launched by The Alliance of Patriots, and an initiative about fast-tracking Georgia's integration into NATO, which was not on the agenda in 2020.

The analysis of dynamics in the past five years shows a gradual increase in the statements favoring Russia as a power that has no alternative, as well as in messages supporting authoritarian governance (2020: 394, 2017: 142).

⁶ This category includes messages simultaneously concerning the USA, Europe and international institutions; also, messages in which the West is viewed as a common geopolitical and value-oriented space.

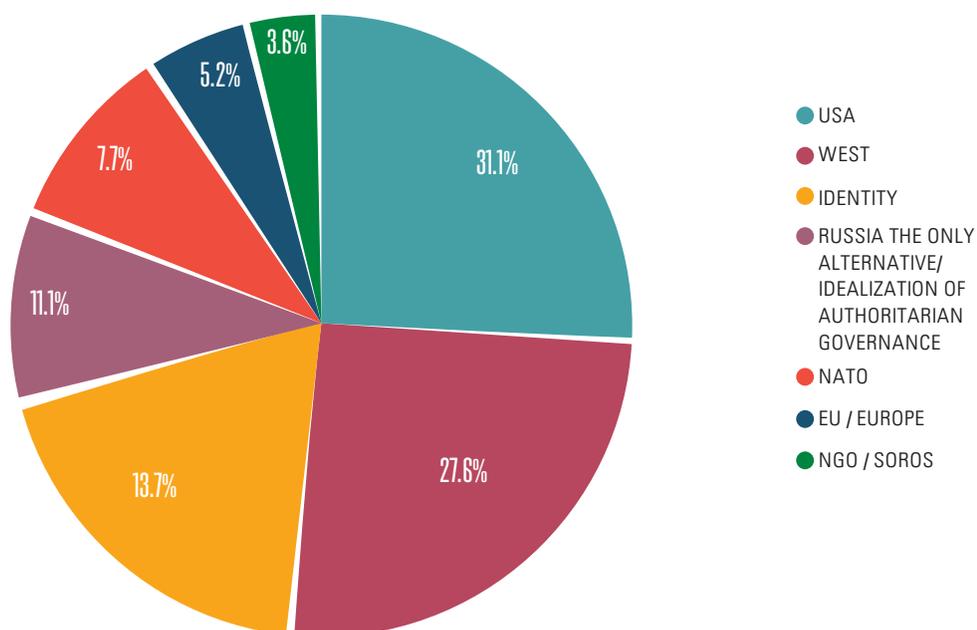
FIGURE 1. TOPICS OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES IN 2016-2020



TOPICS	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
USA	1102	617	632	510	170
West	978	467	340	277	251
Identity	485	587	505	253	411
Nato	272	566	390	362	253
Russia the only alternative / Idealization of authoritarian governance	394	269	171	142	
EU / Europe	183	150	152	264	112
NGO / George Soros	131	113	146	144	61
Great Britain			56	19	
Total	3545	2769	2392	1971	1258

As can be seen from Figure 2, the 2020 data shows a little difference between the shares of comments against the USA (31.1%) and against the West (27.6%) as a common geopolitical and value-oriented space. The share of comments fueling fears of losing identity (13.7%) has decreased compared to the previous year; while the share of comments against George Soros and NGOs remained the smallest (3.6%).

FIGURE 2. TOPICS OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES, 2020



THE USA. As noted above, the increase in anti-American messages in 2020 accounted for messages concerning internal political developments in the USA, including the presidential election, as well as the parliamentary elections in Georgia and in this context, a campaign conducted by the pro-Kremlin political party, The Alliance of Patriots, to discredit the US research organizations (NDI and IRI).

With regard to internal developments in the USA, three new messages were identified:

- **THE USA IS DIVIDED / ELECTION WAS RIGGED / THE USA HAS NO MORAL RIGHT TO LECTURE OTHERS (142):** this new message was focused on spreading allegations about a sharp polarization of the internal political situation in the USA, erosion of democracy and the rigging of the presidential elections, with various actors asserting that the USA had no moral right to call on other countries to be loyal to democracy;
- **THERE IS A SYSTEMIC RACISM IN THE USA (31):** the death of an African American George Floyd as a result of violence by a police officer in Minneapolis and ensuing mass protests across the USA gave rise to messages about a systemic racism in the USA;
- **THE USA IS CORRUPT (20):** lobbying in the USA was presented as corruption and seen behind the criticism of internal political developments in Georgia on the part of US politicians and various institutions, which contributed to instilling skepticism about a democratic process in general.

Messages against the US research organizations (NDI and IRI) were observed in previous years too, but in smaller amounts and they fell under the category of “US interference in Georgia’s internal affairs.” In 2020, in the run up to the parliamentary elections, attacks against the US National-Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute took on a form of a campaign and therefore, this message was identified as a

separate category. The campaign was initiated by the pro-Kremlin political party, The Alliance of Patriots, and its affiliated media outlet, TV company Obieqtivi. The campaign was preceded by a statement made at the end of 2019 by Bidzina Ivanishvili, the founder of the ruling Georgian Dream party, in which he evaluated a loss of trust in US institutions (NDI and IRI) as the devaluation of institutions of the strategic partner and harmful for the interests of the USA.⁷

The campaign against the US research organizations, which largely targeted the National-Democratic Institute, included the following messages:

- **PUBLIC OPINION POLLS CONDUCTED BY THE NDI AND THE IRI ARE UNRELIABLE (156):** leaders of the Alliance of Patriots claimed that opinion polls were manipulated and hence, constituted an issue of security because they interfered with internal affairs of the country; therefore, the leaders of the organizations were to be held responsible, their corrupt interests to be investigated and the NDI and IRI be banned;
- **NDI AND IRI FIGHT AGAINST THE CHURCH (19):** a message that the aim of showing a decline in the trust towards the Church in the opinion polls was to fight against the Georgian identity came only from the Alliance of Patriots (13) and its affiliated TV Obieqtivi (6). This message is included in the category of fear of losing identity.

From older messages, a dominating one was the allegation that the US infringed on Georgia's sovereignty and interfered in the country's internal affairs; this type of message has doubled (324) as compared to 2019 (166).

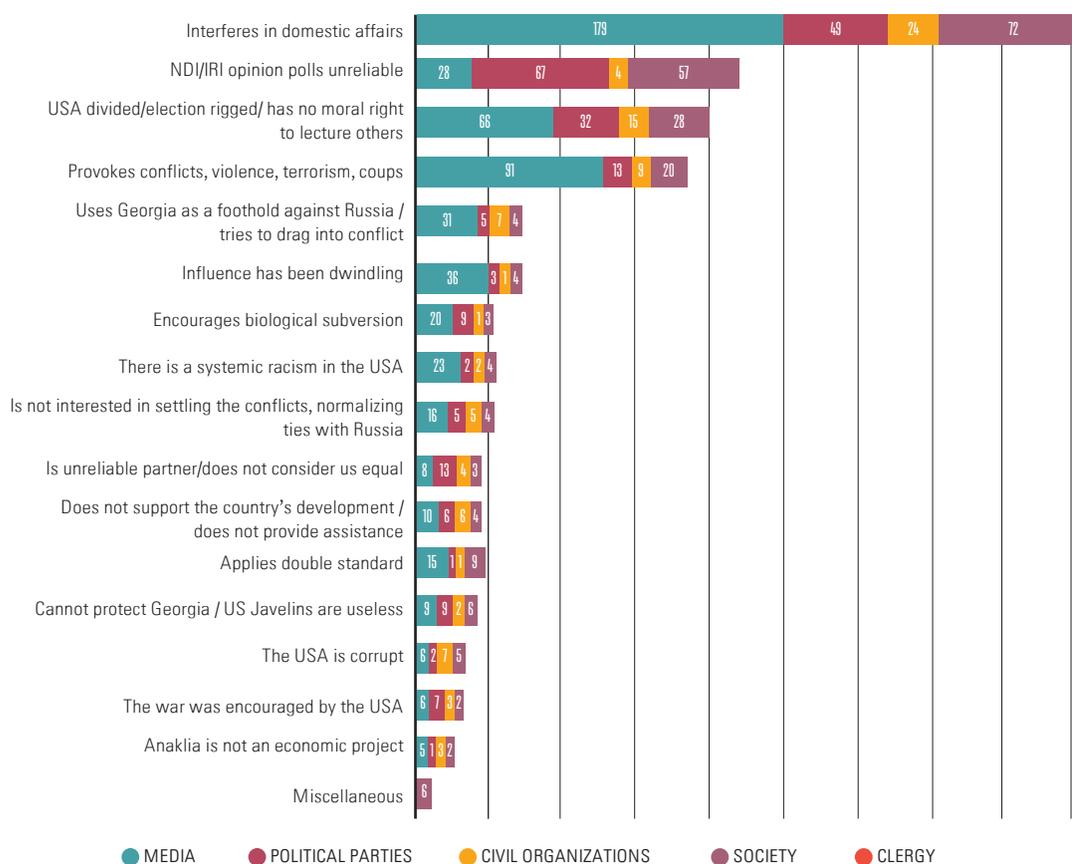
As Figure 3 shows, other messages were largely identical to those promoted a year before and included the following topics:

- **THE USA PROVOKES CONFLICTS, VIOLENCE, TERRORISM, COUPS (134);**
- **THE USA USES GEORGIA AS A FOOHOLD AGAINST RUSSIA / TRIES TO DRAG THE COUNTRY INTO CONFLICTS (47):** the older message that conflict was caused not by the Russian aggression but the use of Georgia by the USA against Russia, was supplemented with an allegation that the US tried to drag Georgia into the Nagorno Karabakh conflict;
- **THE US INFLUENCE HAS BEEN DWINDLING (44);**
- **THE USA ENCOURAGES BIOLOGICAL SUBVERSION (33);**
- **THE USA IS NOT INTERESTED IN SETTLING THE CONFLICTS, NORMALIZING TIES WITH RUSSIA (30);**
- **THE USA IS UNRELIABLE PARTNER / DOES NOT CONSIDER US EQUAL (28);**
- **THE USA DOES NOT SUPPORT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY (26);**
- **THE USA APPLIES DOUBLE STANDARD (26);**
- **THE USA CANNOT PROTECT GEORGIA / US JAVELINS ARE USELESS (26);**
- **THE WAR WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE USA (18):** like in previous years, this message pursued the aim to connect this allegation to the presidential campaign of the late Senator John McCane;

⁷ Netgazeti, 28 November. What did Ivanishvili hint at to the USA? <https://netgazeti.ge/news/410102/>

- **ANAKLIA DEEP SEA PORT IS NOT AN ECONOMIC PROJECT (11):** a message that the construction of a deep-sea port in Anaklia was a fiction and this economic initiative had, in fact, a military dimension was mainly linked to US strategic interests that countered the interests of Russia.

FIGURE 3. MESSAGES CONCERNING THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, 2020



THE WEST. Like in case of the USA, in case of the West, which includes the EU, the US and international western institutions, it was observed a doubling in messages that promoted the idea that Georgia's partners infringe the sovereignty of Georgia, meddle in the country's internal affairs and actually, run the country (2020: 312; 2019: 144). This upward trend was also attributed to an election cycle and statements made by Western partners in relation to the parliamentary elections in Georgia.

Apart from older messages, which are shown in Figure 4, some new trends were identified in 2020:

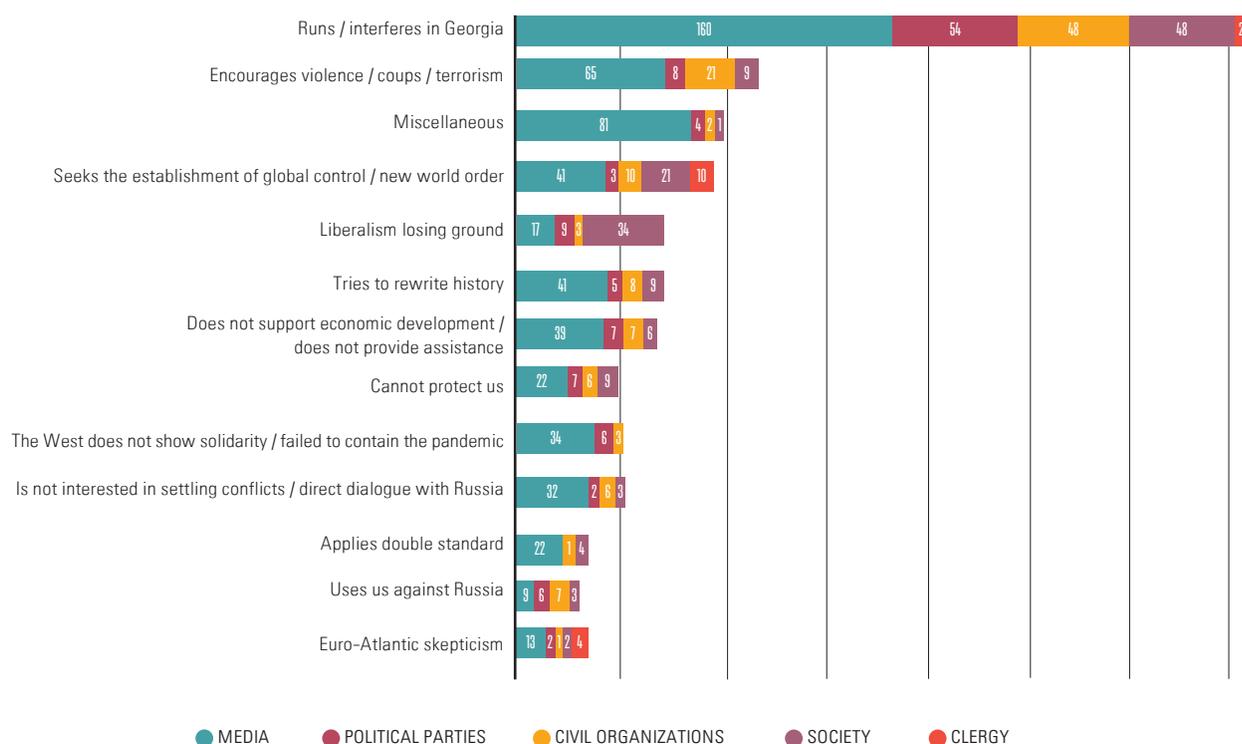
- **THE WEST SEEKS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GLOBAL CONTROL / NEW WORLD ORDER (85):** this message, which was of conspiratorial nature, was partially related to political processes and partially to Covid-19 pandemic and vaccination.
- **THE LIBERAL ORDER IS LOSING GROUND (63):** a statement made by Russian President Vladimir Putin in his interview with Financial Times that liberalism has become obsolete,⁸ was picked up on by the Georgian-language

⁸ Financial Times, 28 June, 2019, Vladimir Putin says liberalism has 'become obsolete'; <https://www.ft.com/content/670039ec-98f3-11e9-9573-ee5cbb98ed36>

anti-Western media outlets. This message, which was first detected in a monitored media in 2019 (28), tripled in 2020 (63) and was associated with the step-up of far-right political parties in Europe and Donald Trump's conservative agenda in the USA.

- **THE WEST TRIES TO REWRITE HISTORY / COOPERATED WITH HITLER (63):** yet another message that became popular in 2020 and echoed the spirit of Vladimir Putin's article⁹ published in the National Interest on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of WWII, alleged that the West tried to rewrite history and accused the West of cooperating with Hitler. This narrative was promoted in response to raising an issue of responsibility of the Soviet Union in the WWII because of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact¹⁰ of non-aggression between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union and the intervention in Poland in 1939.
- **THE WEST DOES NOT SHOW SOLIDARITY / FAILED TO CONTAIN THE PANDEMIC (43):** a new message concerned the Covid-19 pandemic, in which, on the one hand, the West, including the EU countries, was accused of not showing solidarity and failing to contain the pandemic and on the other hand, authoritarian countries (Russia, China) were presented in the positive light.

FIGURE 4. MESSAGES ABOUT THE WEST, 2020

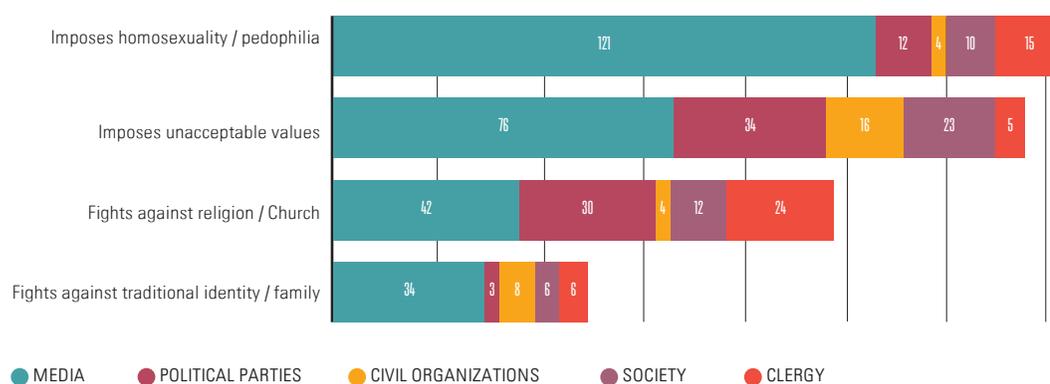


⁹ The National Interest, 18 June, Vladimir Putin: The Real Lessons of the 75th Anniversary of World War II. <https://bit.ly/3q2zRSK>

¹⁰ Myth Detector, 23 August 2019. 'Honeymoon' of Dictators – What Should We Know about Molotov-Ribbentrop Pacts? <https://bit.ly/3cPiuj1>

IDENTITY / VALUE-ORIENTED DISCOURSE. A discourse concerning the loss of identity was again dominated by messages fueling fears about the West imposing homosexuality, pedophilia and immorality (162). At the same time, an allegation was repeated that the victory of Joe Biden in the US presidential election would mean a further promotion of the LGBT agenda. The narrative that Western values were incompatible with Georgian identity (154), was followed by messages that the West fought against religion and the Orthodox Christian Church (112) as well as traditional identity and institution of family (57).

FIGURE 5. MESSAGES RELATED TO IDENTITY, 2020



RUSSIA THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE / IDEALIZATION OF AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNANCE. This category saw increase in messages evoking feeling of nostalgia for the Soviet Union (59), with a special emphasis placed on a socially protected state and Soviet welfare. Messages justifying and idealizing authoritarian countries in general, which alongside Russia implied China, Libya and other countries, were a little fewer (50) than the idealization of Soviet Union; the same holds true for the messages about Georgia’s economic dependence on Russia (49).

Two new messages identified within the category of Russia in 2020 were, on the one hand, related to the electoral process in Georgia and on the other hand, to the containment of Turkey–Azerbaijani “threat” and Russia’s role in settling the Nagorno Karabakh conflict:

- 1. ACCUSATIONS THAT RUSSIA INTERFERES IN THE GEORGIAN ELECTIONS ARE UNFOUNDED (34):** A statement of the US Ambassador Kelly Degnan¹¹ about an expected Russian interference in Georgia’s electoral process, and an investigation conducted by Dossier Center¹² claiming that the election campaign of the Alliance of Patriots was financed from the Kremlin nudged pro-Russian actors to go on defensive and negate those accusations.
- 2. CONTAINMENT OF TURKEY / ONLY RUSSIA CAN SETTLE CONFLICTS IN THE CAUCASUS (47):** the resumption of armed hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno Karabakh was followed by a message that the peace in the region can be established only by Russia and was accompanied by the narrative that only Russia can protect Georgia against Turkish threat.

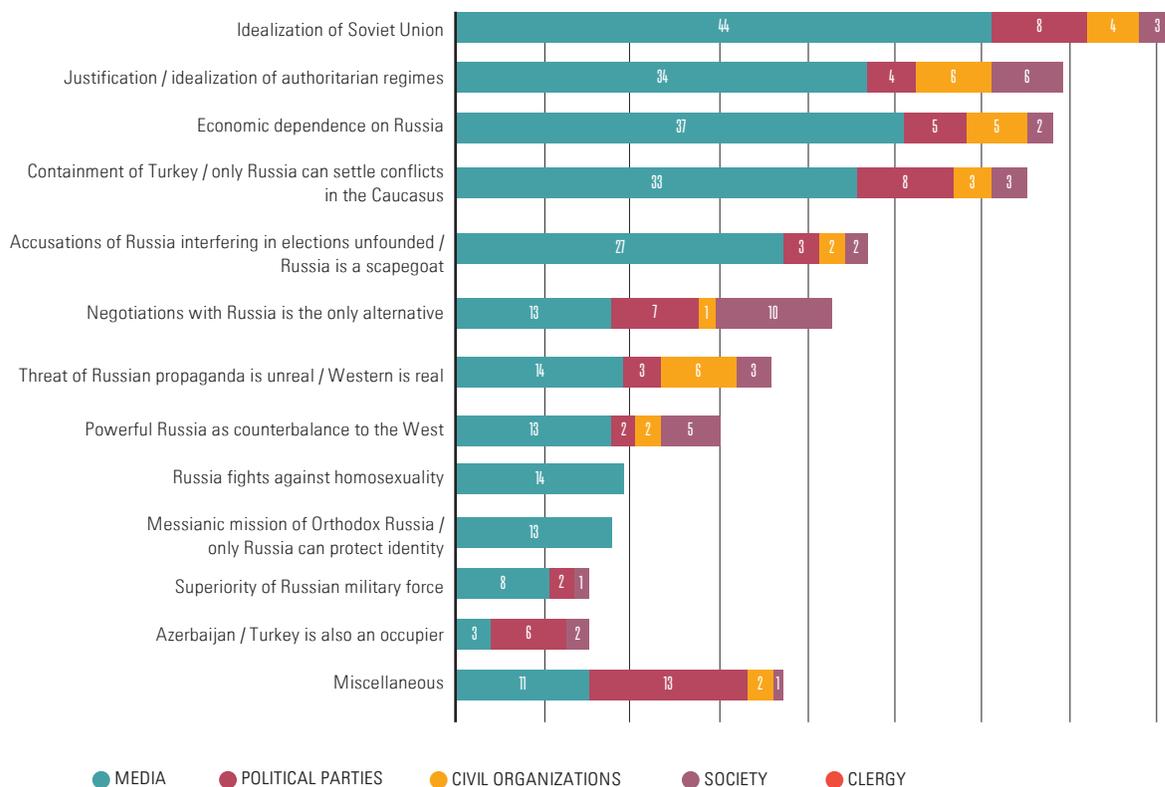
¹¹ RFE/RL, 1 July 2020. Kelly Degnan Says Election in Georgia is Obvious Target of Russia, <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/30701112.html>.

¹² Civil.ge, 26 August, Russian Watchdog: Kremlin Interferes in Georgia Polls, Aids Alliance of Patriots, <https://civil.ge/archives/363628>.

From older messages the one that persisted was the narrative that only Russia that has a messianic mission can

- Protect Georgia against homosexuality (14);
- Protect Orthodox Christianity and traditional identity (13).

FIGURE 6. MESSAGES CONCERNING RUSSIA, AUTHORITARIAN SYSTEMS, 2020



NATO. A decrease in messages against NATO in 2020 may be partially explained by the absence of any initiative in the direction of integration, also the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and new realities that emerged due to Nagorno Karabakh conflict which affected communicative messages with regard to North Atlantic Alliance. In particular, two new narratives were identified:

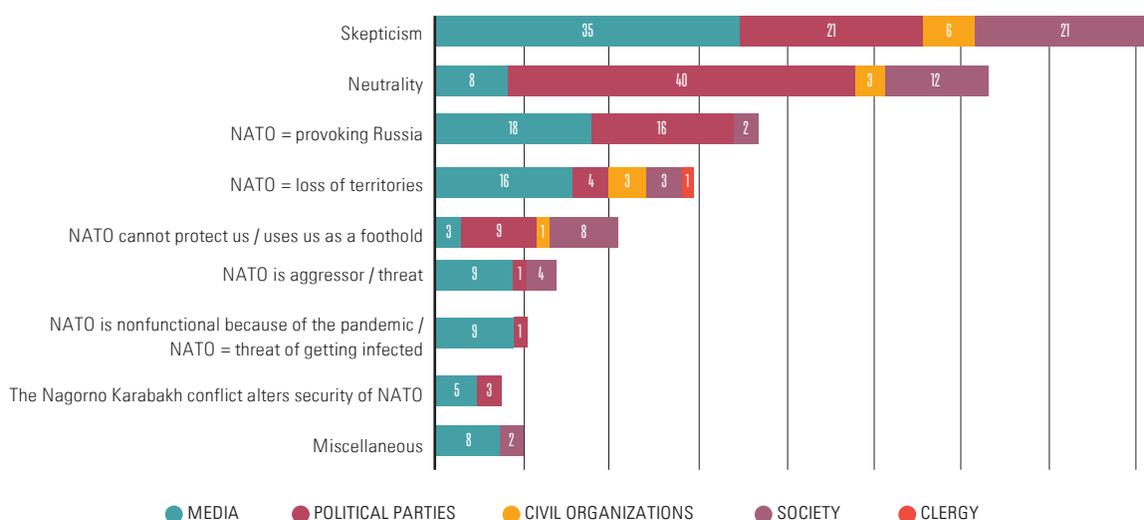
- 1. NATO IS NONFUNCTIONAL BECAUSE OF THE PANDEMIC / NATO = THREAT OF GETTING INFECTED (10):** this message alleging that the pandemic rendered NATO nonfunctional and that NATO is associated with the threat of getting infected, echoed the narrative of Sputnik, the Russian state-owned media outlet.¹³
- 2. THE NAGORNO KARABAKH CONFLICT ALTERS SECURITY OF NATO (8):** the resumption of armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno Karabakh and the signing by the parties of the ceasefire agreement brokered by Russia gave rise to conflicting messages. On the one hand, comments were made about Russia enhanc-

¹³ Media Development Foundation, 2021. Infodemic in Georgia. <http://www.mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/201/>

ing its influence and the West losing ground in the region; on the other hand, enhancement of Turkey on the Caspian Sea was equated with the enhancement of NATO there and hence, portrayed as a regional threat.

Persistent older messages related to NATO included ones sowing skepticism about the integration into the Alliance (30); promoting the idea of political neutrality (63), which was again articulated by a pro-Russian political party, The Alliance of Patriots; portraying the North Atlantic Alliance as a trigger to provoke Russia and resume armed hostility (36); equating the NATO integration with the loss of territories (27), which was related to speculations about an initiative of fast-tracking Georgia's integration, in particular, the initiative to apply Article 5 of North Atlantic Treaty. This initiative which suggested applying Article 5 to the occupied territories of Georgia only after the recovery of the country's territorial integrity was manipulatively equated to the loss of territories. Opinions were again promoted that NATO cannot protect us and just uses us as a foothold (21) and that NATO was an aggressor and threat itself (14).

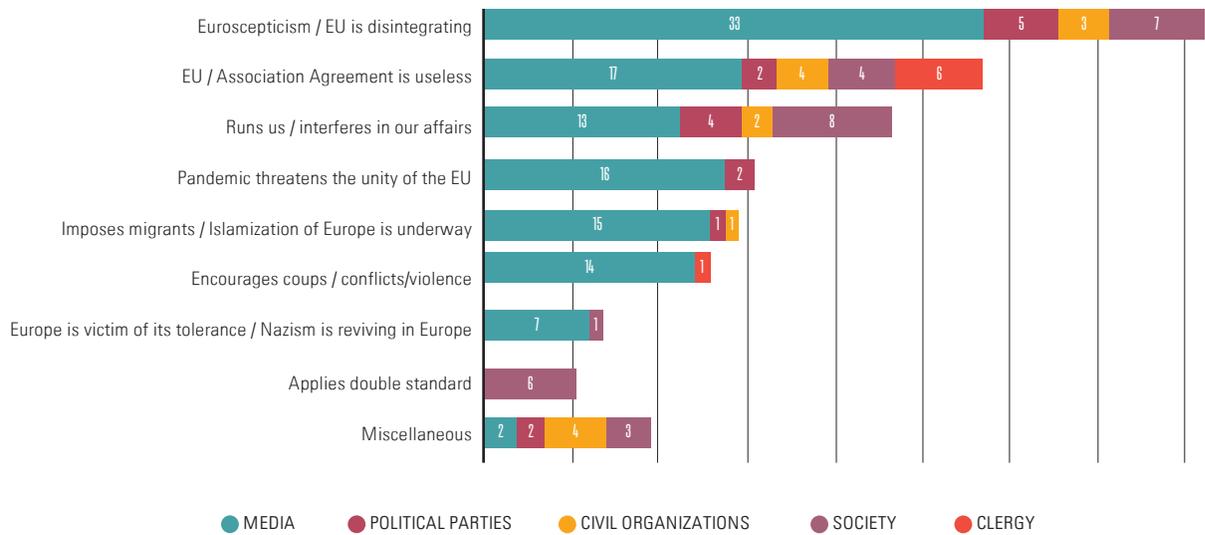
FIGURE 7. MESSAGES CONCERNING NATO, 2020



EUROPE / EU. In 2020, a new message concerning the EU and Europe was related to the Covid-19 pandemic, alleging that the pandemic threatened the unity of the EU (18) because the EU failed to show solidarity with, and provide assistance to, its member states.

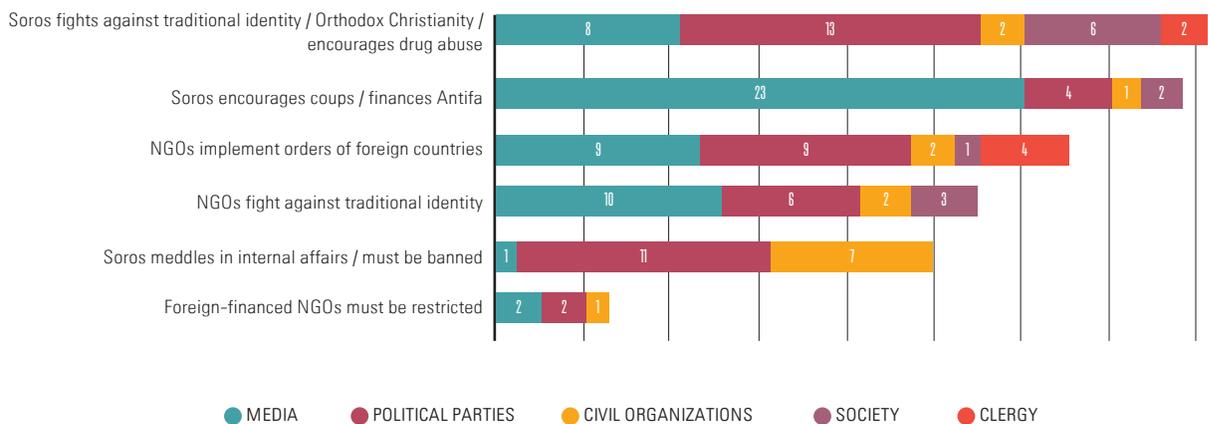
Furthermore, 2020 saw the increase in messages diminishing the importance of the Association Agreement for Georgia (33). Along with messages fueling general skepticism (48) and accusing the EU of meddling in Georgia's domestic affairs (27), a persistent allegation was that the EU, despite the pandemic, obligated Georgia to admit migrants thus putting the country under a threat of Islamization (17) as well as comments that Europe was a victim of its tolerance which has led to the revival of Nazism there (8).

FIGURE 8. MESSAGES CONCERNING THE EU, 2020



NGO, GEORGE SOROS. Attitudes towards the US philanthropist and the founder of Open Society, George Soros, as well as towards nongovernmental organizations have not changed in anti-Western media outlets. In 2020, dominating messages were that Soros fights against traditional identity/Orthodox Christianity/encourages drug abuse (31); encourages coups, including in the US and finances Antifa (30); meddles in domestic affairs of Georgia (19). Nongovernmental organizations were portrayed as implementers of foreign orders (25) and fighters against traditional identity (21); calls were heard for restrict and control foreign-financed NGOs (5).

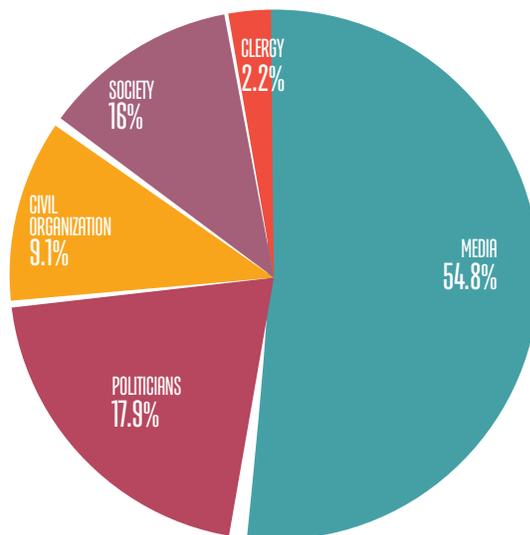
FIGURE 9. MESSAGES CONCERNING NGOS, GEORGE SOROS, 2020



2. SOURCE OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES

Much like in previous years, the main source of anti-Western messages was media (1,943), followed by political parties and politicians (634), separate representatives of society (566), civil organizations (321) and the clergy (81).

FIGURE 10. ANTI-WESTER MESSAGES BY SOURCES, 2020

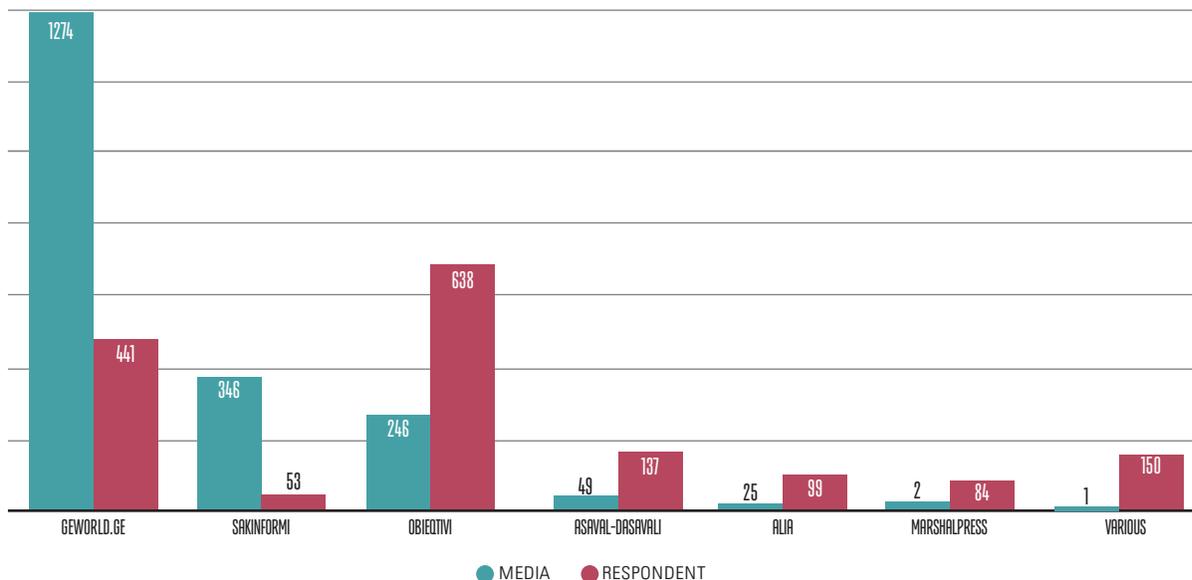


2.1 MEDIA

Similar to previous years, main sources of anti-Western messages were five media outlets: online editions Georgia and World, and Sakinformi, the TV company Obieqtivi, and the newspapers Asaval-Dasavali and Alia. From the named outlets, Georgia and World (Geworld.ge) was in the lead with the highest number of negative commentaries (1,274) published and as many as 441 anti-Western comments made by the respondents. In terms of anti-Western comments made by respondents, the leader was TV Obieqtivi (638) where journalists also made comments of similar nature (246). As for other media outlets, the situation was the following:

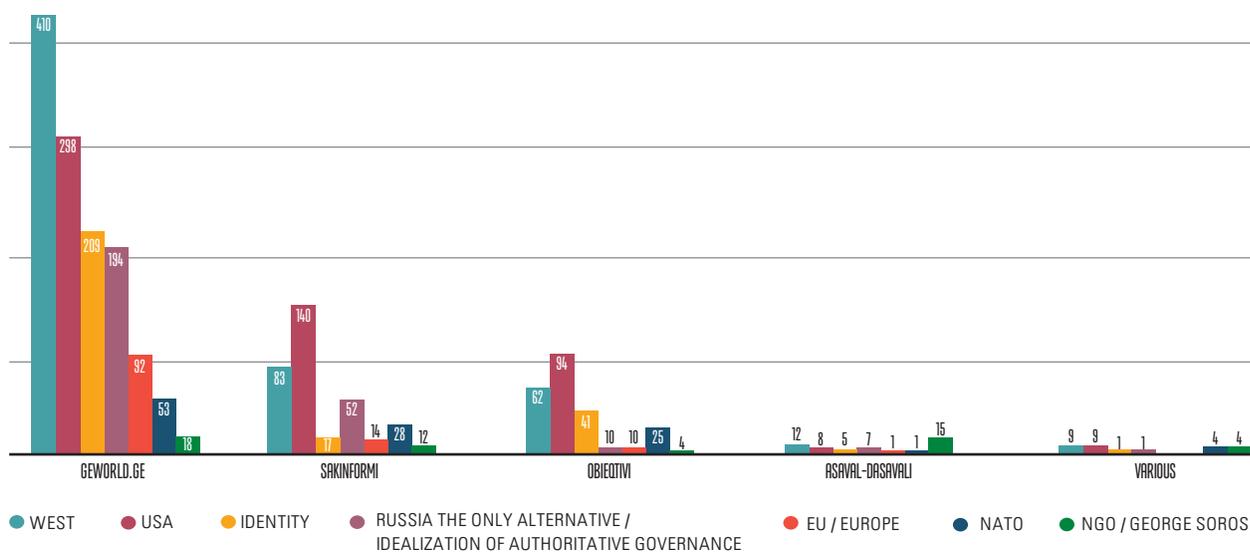
the news outlet Sakinformi: 346 editorial commentaries and 53 respondents' comments; the Asaval-Dasavali newspaper: 49 editorial commentaries and 137 respondents' comments; the Alia newspaper: 25 editorial commentaries and 99 respondents' comments.

FIGURE 11. SOURCES OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES BY MEDIA OUTLETS AND THEIR RESPONDENTS, 2020



The highest number of comments against the West was made in Georgia and World (410). By anti-US comments, top three media outlets included Georgia and World (198), Sakinformi (140) and TV Obieqtivi (94). Comments about the loss of identity were most frequent in Georgia and World (209) and TV Obieqtivi (41). Georgia and World was the leader by expressing sentiments towards Russia too (194).

FIGURE 12. TYPOLOGY OF ANTI-WESTERN SENTIMENTS BY MEDIA OUTLETS, 2020

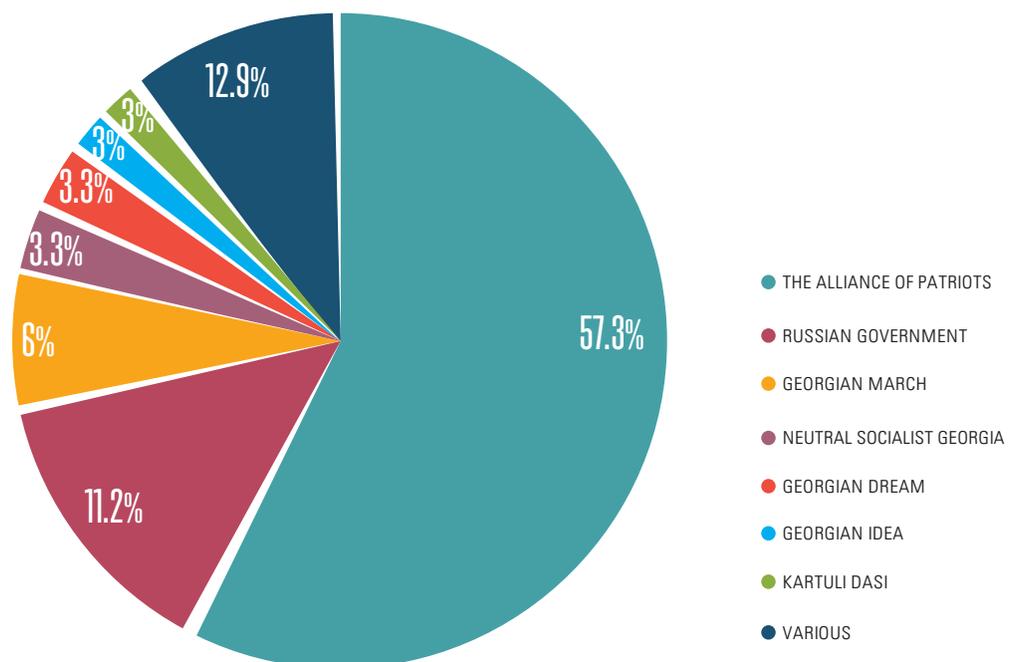


2.2 POLITICAL PARTIES / POLITICIANS

The Alliance of Patriots maintained its leading position in anti-Western messages in 2020 too (363). It was followed by: the Russian government (71), Georgian March (38), Neutral Socialist Georgia (21), Georgian Dream (21), Georgian Idea (19) and Kartuli Dasi (19).

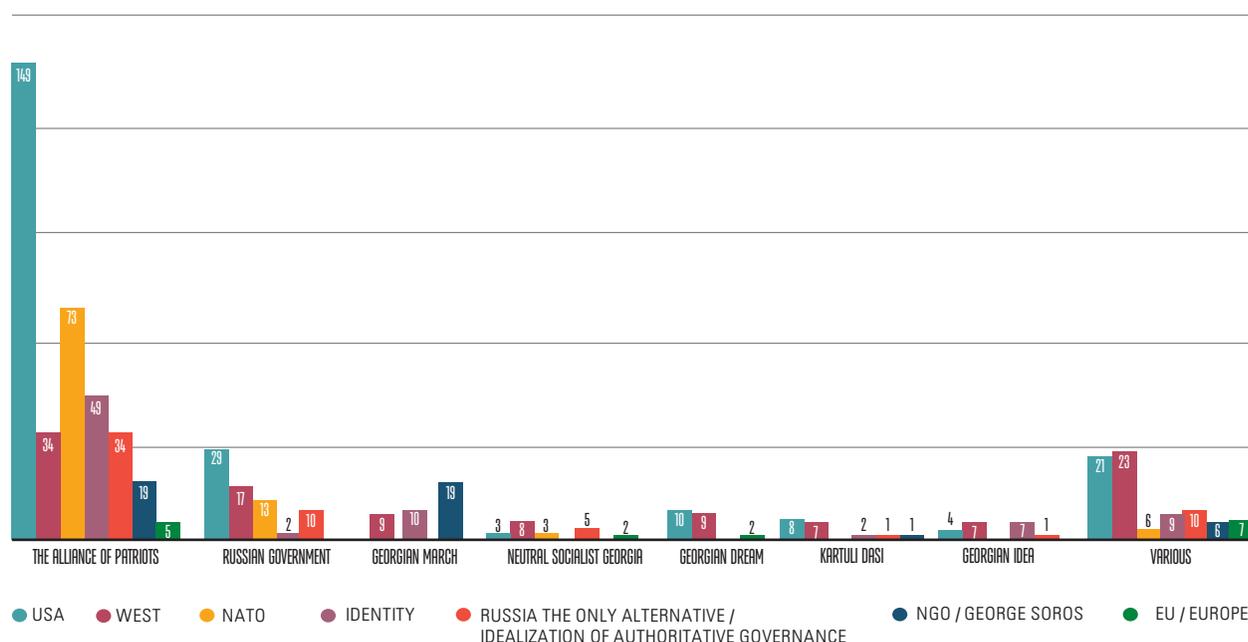
It is worth to note that the far-right movement, Georgian March, got registered as a political party in 2020 and stood for the parliamentary election; also, anti-Western messages from the United Democratic Movement sharply decreased (2), which may be attributed to the election process, and therefore, this political party is included in the category “Various.” During the election process, the leader of the abovementioned party, Nino Burjanadze, appeared in mainstream media to mainly speak, on behalf of the opposition, about electoral violations and was not given much opportunity to speak about foreign political processes; meanwhile, anti-Western media became less loyal to Nino Burjanadze because of her cooperation with the political opposition.

FIGURE 13. SOURCES OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES BY POLITICIANS, 2020



The Alliance of Patriots most prolific in making comments against the USA (149), against NATO (73) and about the loss of identity (49). Among the Russian government’s comments, most frequent ones were against the USA (29), while among comments made by Georgian March, most frequent ones concerned the identity (19).

FIGURE 14. TYPOLOGY OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES BY POLITICIANS, 2020



2.3 CIVIL ORGANIZATION

Ten civil organizations were identified as the most active in spreading anti-Western messages. The leader among them was the Eurasian Institute (69), which mainly made statements on the webpage of Georgia and World; it was followed by Development Laboratory of Georgia (54), mainly represented by its director Irakli Gogava;¹⁴ Primakov Georgian-Russian Civil Center (46); Former Political Prisoners for Human Rights (34); Association of Defenders of Rights (22), and others.

#	NGO	NUMBER
1	Eurasian Institute	69
2	Development Laboratory of Georgian	54
3	Primakov Georgian-Russian Civil Center	46
4	Former Political Prisoners for Human Rights	34
5	Association of Defenders of Rights	22
6	Stalin	21
7	Global research Center	14
8	Russian and Georgian People's Unity Foundation	12
9	Caucasian Center of Islamic Research	11
10	Public Assembly	8
11	Various	30

¹⁴ In 1999–2004, Gogava was a member of parliament of Georgia from the political party Union of Citizens and had closely associated with the governor of Kvemo Kartli, Levan Mamaladze, <https://old.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=640>

2.4 CLERGY

Archpriest Giorgi Razmadze of Ketevan Tsamebuli Church in Avchala was, like in the previous year, most active among the clergy by releasing anti-Western messages (37) which were mainly published by Georgia and World. Metropolitan Anton of Vani and Baghdadi Eparchy stepped up his activity in this regard too (11).

CLERGY	NUMBER OF MESSAGES	CLERGY	NUMBER OF MESSAGES
Giorgi Razmadze	37	Spiridon Abuladze	2
Anton Bulukhia	11	Ioane Gamrekeli	2
Ilia Chikvaidze	6	Ilia Zelenski	2
Guram Gamtsemlidze	6	Davit Isakadze	2
მეუფე Daniel	3	Various	4
Basil Mkalavishvili	3		
Andria Jaghmaidze	3		
		TOTAL	81

3. INFLUENCE STRATEGIES AND STRUCTURE OF NARRATIVE

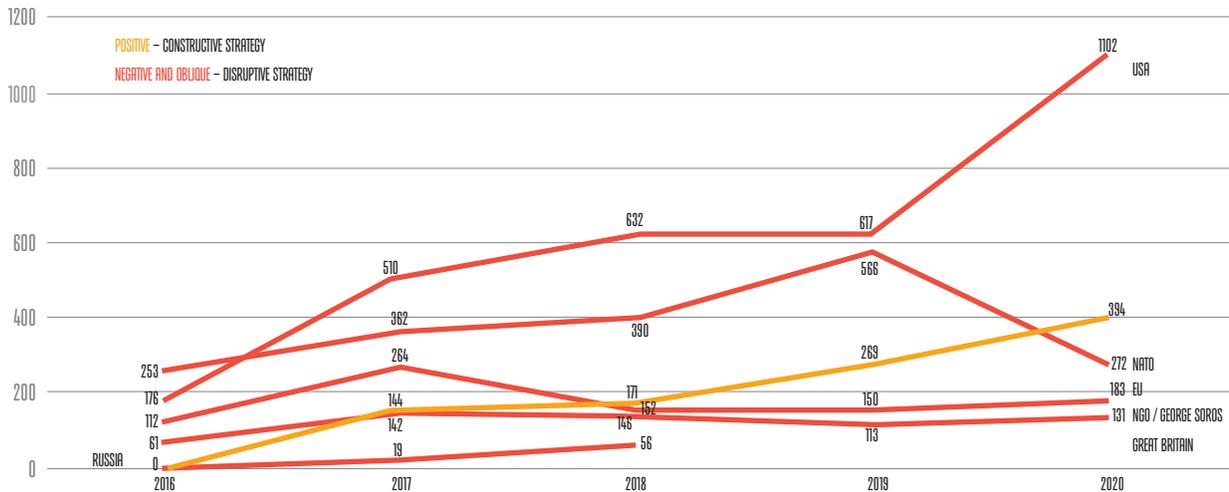
The Kremlin's information influence activities included positive, i.e. constructive as well as negative and oblique disruptive strategies.¹⁵

- **Positive or constructive strategies** try to establish a coherent narrative, either on a general societal level or with selected target audiences.
- **Negative disruptive strategies** attempt to prevent the emergence of a coherent narrative or weaken the existing one.
- **Oblique strategies** try to draw attention, with the aim of distracting from the key issues.

As Figure 15 shows, in the past five years, negative and oblique strategies have sharply increased against the USA; the identical activities against NATO peaked in 2019, when an initiative of fast-tracking Georgia's NATO integration, articulated by the former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen during his visit to Tbilisi, was intensively discussed; the decrease in these messages in 2020 can be attributed partially to the breakout of the pandemic and partially to the elimination of earlier initiatives from the agenda. The peak of negative and oblique disruptive strategic narratives against the EU was observed in 2017, the year when Georgia was granted a visa-free regime to travel to the EU countries; since then, they have declined which correlates with a slowdown in the process of further integration. Constructive strategy towards Russia has been increasingly applied, showing a gradual upward trend.

¹⁵ Lund University (2018). Countering Information Influence Activities. <https://www.msb.se/RibData/Filer/pdf/28697.pdf>

FIGURE 15. INFORMATION INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES



In contrast to previous years, in 2020, the Kremlin and actors associated with it applied, along with offensive strategy, a strategy of defensive communication to counter the response of the West to Russia’s hybrid threats. In particular, the defensive narrative included the following topics and messages:

TOPIC	MESSAGE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE KREMLIN	COUNTER NARRATIVE DEFENSIVE STRATEGY
ELECTIONS	Kelly Degnan, US Ambassador to Georgia: “We all know how active and creative Russian disinformation campaigns are when it comes to elections in many countries... and Georgia is an obvious target.” ¹⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accusations of Russia meddling in Georgia’s elections are unfounded. ● The USA interferes in Georgia’s election process itself.
	Dossier Center: Kremlin interferes in Georgia’s elections and to this end, finances the Alliance of Patriots ¹⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accusations of the Patriot of Alliance cooperating with the Kremlin are unfounded. ● Trump’s enemies fight against the Patriot of Alliance.

¹⁶ RFE/RL, 1 July, 2020. Kelly Degnan says Georgia’s elections an obvious target of Russia. <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/30701112.html>.

¹⁷ Civil.ge, 26 August, Russian Watchdog: Kremlin Interferes in Georgia Polls, Aids Alliance of Patriots. <https://civil.ge/archives/363628>.

TOPIC	MESSAGE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE KREMLIN	COUNTER NARRATIVE DEFENSIVE STRATEGY
HISTORY	<p>Resolution of European Parliament: “Whereas, as a direct consequence of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, followed by the Nazi-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty of 28 September 1939, the Polish Republic was invaded first by Hitler and two weeks later by Stalin – which stripped the country of its independence and was an unprecedented tragedy for the Polish people – the communist Soviet Union started an aggressive war against Finland on 30 November 1939, and in June 1940 it occupied and annexed parts of Romania – territories that were never returned – and annexed the independent republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.”¹⁸</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The West tries to rewrite the history <p>Vladimir Putin: “The European Parliament, adopted a resolution that practically lumps together Hitler’s Germany and the Soviet Union. They are very nearly blaming the Soviet Union, alongside Nazi Germany, for causing the Second World War, As if they have forgotten who attacked Poland on September 1, 1939, and the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941.”</p>

The common historic memory is the support which the Kremlin tried to instrumentalize for consolidating peoples participating in WWII. The statement made by Vladimir Putin at a rally of the Immortal Regiment in 2017, is the best manifestation of these aims:

Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation: “[The Immortal Regiment] is the best proof of international cooperation’s colossal potential and of how a commitment to historical truth and our common memory brings people closer and unites them, and strengthens the mutual trust.”¹⁹

It is worth to note that in response to the discourse concerning the WWII, in 2021, the Russian State Duma adopted a law that legally prohibits equating the roles of the USSR and the Nazi Germany in the war.²⁰

As regards to the structure of anti-Western narratives, like in previous years, was three-tiered: 1) sowing fears, 2) instilling despair and skepticism, and 3) presenting co-religious and powerful Russia as the alternative to the West.

¹⁸ European Parliament resolution on the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe (2019/2819(RSP), 18 September, 2019. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2019-0097_EN.html

¹⁹ Media Development Foundation, 2019. “Russian World” in Georgia. <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/117/>

²⁰ Ria Novosti, 9.6.2021, Госдума приняла закон о запрете уравнивания ролей СССР и Германии в войне <https://ria.ru/20210609/voyna-1736269869.html>

I. SOWING FEARS	II. INSTILLING DESPAIR AND SKEPTICISM	III. PRESENTING RUSSIA AS THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE WEST
1. Fear of provoking Russia, resumption of hostilities and instability	1. The West cannot defend us against military threats	1. Political neutrality will defuse tensions between Georgia and Russia
1. Fear of losing territorial integrity	2. The West cannot protect our territorial integrity	2.1. Only Russia can protect Georgia from neighboring countries 2.2. Abkhazia and Samachablo can only be recovered through direct dialogue with Russia
3. Fear of bio-terrorism and global control	3. The West cannot protect us from the threat of pandemic	3. The pandemic can be repelled by authoritarian countries / healthcare of the Soviet Union
4. Fear of losing identity and assimilation	4. The liberal order is losing ground	4. Russia is the third Rome that protects us from Western moral occupation
	5. Democracy is a fiction	5. The Soviet Union was politically stable and socially protected system
	6. Association Agreement/the EU is useless	6. Georgia economically depends on the Russian market

I. SOWING FEARS

Similar to the previous years, the anti-Western propaganda instrumentalized four types of fears:

1.1. FEAR OF PROVOKING RUSSIA, RESUMPTION OF HOSTILITIES AND INSTABILITY

In addition to the older messages alleging that the 2008 war was actually provoked by the USA and that the West was not interested in Georgia and Russia normalizing ties between each other, the increase in

statements about Georgia and the entire region being dragged into conflict was observed in 2020 because of the resumption of hostilities in Nagorno Karabakh:

The West tries to drag Georgia/Russia into the Nagorno Karabakh conflict

Giorgi Iremadze, the Eurasian Youth Union, writer at Georgia and World: “...We should not disregard a probability of Biden–Kramer trying to drag Georgia into the Karabakh conflict too.”²¹

Beso Barbakadze, journalist for Georgia and World: “One may get an impression that the West wanted Russia to get involved in the war [Karabakh conflict]; had that happened, the Caucasus would have turned into a military theater with Georgia becoming automatically engaged in the conflict, which, at the end of the day, would have turned the Caucasus into merely a territory.”²²

The Karabakh conflict will facilitate appearance of NATO on the shores of the Caspian Sea

Valeri Kvaratskhelia, Obieqtivi TV presenter: “If Azerbaijan and Turkey reach that agreement, NATO will find itself on the shores of Caspian Sea and one huge dream of the United States of America will thus come true.”²³

The West tries to move dramatic Syria–Turkey processes to Russia’s borders

Dimitri Lortkipanidze, the Primakov Georgian–Russian Public Center: “One of such aims could be to move dramatic processes going on along the Syria–Turkey border to southern borders of Russia.”²⁴

NATO strengthening in the Black Sea/Georgia’s NATO integration = provoking Russia

Maria Zakharova, spokesperson of Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry: “Expansion of NATO military presence in the Black Sea undermines regional stability and Russia has to respond to it accordingly.”²⁵

Gigi Maghlakelidze, the Alliance of Patriots: “For Russia Georgia represents a serious threat that may trigger a very large-scale conflict between NATO and Russia... Georgia may become a spark of very serious military conflict.”²⁶

NATO/the USA is turning Georgia into a target of ISIS/Iran

Arno Khidirbegishvili, editor-in-chief of Sakinformi: “Will not we, in case of becoming NATO member, turn into a target for Islamic fundamentalism?”²⁷

²¹ Georgia and World, 27 October, <https://bit.ly/3htAHWA>

²² Georgia and World, 17 October, <https://bit.ly/3bt2T8i>

²³ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia – For all to hear, 29 September, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3971527>

²⁴ Georgia and World, 18 October, <https://bit.ly/2wge8iP>

²⁵ News agency Pirveli, 3 December, <https://bit.ly/3xmZhNG>

²⁶ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 1 February, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3899262>

²⁷ Sakinformi, 2 June, <https://bit.ly/3xgzzy>

Gigi Maghlakelidze, the Alliance of Patriots: “Iran is our neighbor and Iran’s short-range and medium-range cruise missiles, which it has plenty, reach directly Georgia’s territory and Georgia’s territorial waters while Georgia does not have either anti-missile defense system, or air defense systems.”²⁸

Shota Apkhaidze, the Caucasian Center of Islamic Research: “It is a threat rather than the security because the deployment of NATO or the US military bases in the territory of Georgia will turn Georgia into a foothold for military actions. In case of a large-scale conflict with Russia or Iran, this territory will turn into a battlefield and not only military, but also civil infrastructure will be destroyed and the population will suffer.”²⁹

The 2008 Russia-Georgia war was in the interests of the USA. Georgia may be instrumentalized against Iran too.

Bondo Mdzinarashvili, Obieqtivi TV presenter: “In 2008, Americans spared no effort to use military actions in Georgia for the benefit of their election campaigning. While it was a tragedy for us, for them it was politics... One may wonder whether the launch of military actions in Iran will be such a political instrument?”³⁰

Giorgi Lomia, the Alliance of Patriots: “There was a need at that very moment for Russia to be an aggressor, to wage a war in the Caucasus region with, for example, Georgia, so that McCain could shout out everywhere that the relationship with Russia must be stricter...”³¹

Valeri Kvaratskhelia, writer at Georgia and World: “They made Saakashvili start war in South Ossetia in 2008 in order to leave Russia with no other option but to respond to violence with violence.”³²

The USA/NATO is not interested in Georgia settling the conflict and mending ties with Russia

Gulbaat Rtskhiladze, Eurasian Institute: “It is the US politics; they want to prevent any dialogue with Russia exactly like they prevent Georgia from speaking to Russia.”³³

Guram Nikolaishvili, the Alliance of Patriots: “They do not like this wall to turn into a bridge with Samachablo and Abkhazia. They [Ben Hodges, McCain institute] want Georgia to always be a loaded gun targeted at Russia.”³⁴

Sergey Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister: “We hope that the U.S. and NATO take our warnings seriously and stop inciting Georgia against Russia. For our part, there is a constant interest in normalizing bilateral relations between the two countries.”³⁵

²⁸ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 9 January, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3892093>

²⁹ Georgia and World, 15 July, <https://bit.ly/2Cdruzn>

³⁰ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 3 January, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3890535>

³¹ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 8 August, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3957651>

³² Georgia and World, 9 September, <https://bit.ly/3m1Ry2q>

³³ Georgia and World, 24 June, <https://bit.ly/2YtfrpW>

³⁴ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 25 December, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3997615>

³⁵ Mtavari Arkhi, Mtavari, 17 January, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3894748>

Color revolutions in Russia's neighborhood are directed against Russia/after Belarus, US plans to stage coup in Georgia:

Valeri Kvaratskhelia, writer at Georgia and World: “A filthy process of coup d'état that has begun in Belarus is directed not as much against Belarus as against Russia. In this particular case the key target is Russia. They want to deprive Russia of a strategic partner at its borders.”³⁶

Valeri Kvaratskhelia, writer at Georgia and World: “Current Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was a leader brought to power by Americans through so called color revolution, who ruined relations with Russia and brought Armenian people to face the gravest reality.”³⁷

Giorgi Iremadze, the Eurasian Youth Union, writer at Georgia and World: “Following this chain of logic, the situation in all Eastern Partnership member states is revolutionary and conflicting, as if someone's common plan is being implemented; considering the forthcoming elections, this wave may, God forbid, reach Georgia and Moldova too... Much like in Belarus, the political opposition here will also act under the leadership of American guardians.”³⁸

Arno Khidirbegishvili, editor-in-chief of Sakinformi: “The former commanding general of United States Army Europe [Ben Hodges] threatens that after the coup in Belarus is accomplished, they will stage a revolution in Georgia... Yes, after Belarus, there will be an attempt undertaken in Georgia, then in Armenia and in future, in Kazakhstan.”³⁹

1.2. FEAR OF LOSING TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

NATO = loss of Abkhazia and Samachablo

Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, the Alliance of Patriots: “To cede Sokhumi and Tskhinvali forever, to acknowledge [independence of] these territories and to turn away from them – this is NATO's stance.”⁴⁰

Givi Gureshidze, writer for Georgia and World: “If my tortured and slimmed body is, God forbid, accepted in this wicked NATO, I will forever lose Sokhumi and Tskhinvali and also other parts of my body – the Marneuli district and Javakheti; what will then be left of me?”⁴¹

NATO = Turkey's intervention

Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, the Alliance of Patriots: “Nor do they hide that we must give Adjara to Turkey and NATO will come here... In other words, for the only reason to ensure that NATO comes here, we must give away everything – Sokhumi, Tskhinvali, Batumi, Akhaltsikhe, Ozurgeti, everything.”⁴²

³⁶ Georgia and World, 19 August, <https://bit.ly/31f8tpX>

³⁷ Georgia and World, 17 November, <https://bit.ly/364zWwf>

³⁸ Georgia and World, 27 November, <https://bit.ly/3hEfbOL>

³⁹ Sakinformi, 3 September, NEWS FRONT, <https://bit.ly/3eHt63C>

⁴⁰ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 11 August, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3958942>

⁴¹ Georgia and World, 17 November, <https://bit.ly/3A17kfr>

⁴² Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 7 August, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=3957432

The Caucasian Center of Islamic Research: “No matter how many anti-Western statements Erdogan makes, he will anyway remain the West’s moderate partner... If Georgia joins NATO, the US will primarily transfer these territories to Turkey.”⁴³

Turkish NATO vs Russian peacekeeping forces

Nino Ratishvili, Obieqtivi TV presenter: “We remember Russian peacekeeping forces; they, at their own initiative, were more or less peacekeeping forces, weren’t they? **Will Turkish NATO give us dividends?...** Is Turkish NATO not dangerous in Georgia? We know that the situation in Adjara is really bad.”⁴⁴

1.3. FEAR OF BIOLOGICAL TERRORISM AND GLOBAL CONTROL

Apart from traditional allegations concerning the Lugar Laboratory, voiced, much like in previous years, by the Russian government representatives or local actors with close ties to the Russian government, new messages appeared in 2020 about artificial origin of coronavirus and attempts of gaining a global control.

Coronavirus is a bacteriological warfare, waged against religion

Ilia Chikvaidze, Georgia and World: “This coronavirus, in my humble opinion, is a bacteriological warfare against mankind... Firstly, this is a fight against religion and secondly, perhaps the process of chipization [implanting microchips].”⁴⁵

Coronavirus has been created in American laboratories

Nika Korinteli, journalist: “Russian experts share a theory that the coronavirus could be created in laboratories on the other side of the ocean and then, either consciously or unconsciously, it got out of control.”⁴⁶

Coronavirus harmed those countries that represent threat to the USA

Arno Khidirbegishvili, editor-in-chief of Sakinformi: “As you are well aware, the coronavirus most severely hit those countries that represent the major threat to the USA according to the Pentagon and CIA conclusions. These countries are China, Russia and Iran.”⁴⁷

⁴³ Georgia and World, 11 July, <https://bit.ly/32m3iWm>

⁴⁴ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 14 September, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=3966662

⁴⁵ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 23 March, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=3915965

⁴⁶ Georgia and World, 31 March, <https://bit.ly/2QZkSZF>

⁴⁷ Sakinformi, 9 March, <https://bit.ly/3wdM4FM>

Americans use the Lugar Lab as a testing ground

Jeffrey Silverman, Veterans Today: “I am sure that dangerous experiments are being conducted on humans and animals in Georgia. Anthrax, bubonic plague and so-called swine flu are created in the laboratory in Tbilisi.”⁴⁸

Giorgi Iremadze, the Eurasian Youth Union, writer at Georgia and World: “There is a high probability that Washington conducts secret and dangerous experiments through the Lugar Laboratory.”⁴⁹

US labs near Russia’s borders is a threat

Maria Zakharova, spokesperson of Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry: “We cannot ignore the fact that the Americans are developing an infrastructure with hazardous biological potential in the direct proximity to the Russian borders.”⁵⁰

Dmitry Medvedev, Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of Russia: “Activities of US-established labs across the world must be reasonably transparent in order not to cause any suspicion with a new outbreak of an infectious disease.”⁵¹

1.4. FEAR OF LOSING IDENTITY AND OF ASSIMILATION

Although message about incompatibility of Catholicism with Orthodox Christianity was part of anti-Western discourse in previous years too, a statement of Pope of Rome Francis⁵² in 2020 that same-sex couples should be allowed legally to have civil unions triggered a surge of anti-Catholic messages:

Catholicism is incompatible with Orthodox Christianity / Vatican supports anti-Christian forces

Vazha Otarashvili, the Alliance of Patriots: “Georgian Orthodox morality and mentality will never be compatible with the Catholic Europe .”⁵³

Georgia and World: “...Vatican openly supports violent methods of global transformation of the world, implemented by anti-Christian forces.”⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Georgia and World, 17 June, <https://bit.ly/3ebKfko>

⁴⁹ Georgia and World, 17 June, <https://bit.ly/3ebKfko>

⁵⁰ Sakinformi, 20 April, <https://bit.ly/3heJKKA>

⁵¹ Sakinformi, 18 June, <https://bit.ly/2V2BB37>

⁵² RFE/RL, 21 October, Pope of Rome supports civil unions of same-sex couples. <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/30905645.html>

⁵³ Georgia and World, 10 November, <https://bit.ly/36pHKsJ>

⁵⁴ Georgia and World, 23 September, <https://bit.ly/3omOWOq>

The West imposes homosexuality

Davit Mkheidze, Georgia and World, author: “With the blessing of so-called Holy Inquisition, tens of thousands of protestants were burn at the stake alive on absurd accusations of heresy and witchcraft and the head of Church with such history shamelessly supports same-sex marriage.”⁵⁵

Aleksandre Chachia, politologist: “All countries that are under the influence of the USA have to legalize and encourage unions between homosexuals... when they legalize same-sex marriage, Caucasians will call us the nation of prostitutes and pederasts.”⁵⁶

Sandro Bregadze, Georgian March: “If the protection of Davit Gareji and territorial integrity of Georgia (?) are the interests of the Kremlin while the protection of faggots is the politics of the West, then the greatest discredit upon the West is brought by people who say that.”⁵⁷

Biden’s victory = LGBT terror

Giorgi Gigauri, Asaval-Dasavali, journalist: “If Biden becomes the president of the USA, LGBT terror will treble across the world! Biden has openly nominated a faggot for the position of Transportation Minister!”⁵⁸

Juvenile fascism = allowing homosexuals to adopt children separated from families

Dimitri Lortkipanidze, the Primakov Georgian-Russian Public Center: “The phenomenon of separating children from their families which has been established as a result of juvenile fascism, serves, at the end of the day, the aim of meeting the interests of materially sustainable and morally perverted new families created through ‘partner’ relations... ensuring them with the right to adopt children.”⁵⁹

The West fights against traditional family

Levan Chachua, Georgian Idea: “Prisons are overcrowded with husbands arrested on absurd allegations of their wives ... A targeted attack is underway against the Church and family as against a cornerstone of a strong society.”⁶⁰

Fights against religion / Church

Avto Enukidze, the Alliance of Patriots: “These organizations [NDI/IRI] are here to ruin your faith and to destroy you as a nation.”⁶¹

⁵⁵ Georgia and World, 27 October, <https://bit.ly/3fqHNIS>

⁵⁶ Georgia and World, 27 October, <https://bit.ly/3fbLWRS>

⁵⁷ Marshalpress, 9 October, <https://mpn.ge/archives/34462>

⁵⁸ Asaval-Dasavali, 28 December–10 January.

⁵⁹ Georgia and World, 24 November, <https://bit.ly/3dli7ay>

⁶⁰ Georgia and World, 3 June, <https://bit.ly/2XykAfZ>

⁶¹ Obieqtivi, Namdvili A, bebi, 6 February, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3900671>

Anton Bulukhia, episcopo: “I wonder should we not reconsider our choice, when we made it in favor of the Euro-Atlantic path. If the European value is to hate church, to neglect traditions and purity of family, we do not want such Europe.”⁶²

Europe is a victim of its own tolerance/Europe experiences Islamization/mixture of ethnicities

Nika Korinteli, journalist of Georgia and World, according to Fondsk.ru: “Today, every European country that tries to develop their economy by attracting cheap labor force and so-called multiculturalism, experiences the strengthening of ethnic enclaves... Afro-Asians resettled to Europe do not want to be restricted by anyone.”⁶³

Irakli Rogava, Georgian Development Laboratory: “This emigration is carried out on purpose... to have Europe no longer belonging to Europeans and to mix races, ethnic groups – this is the scenario of globalists.”⁶⁴

Georgia and World: “Migration and Islam [in Europe] have merged into one problem that was ripening unnoticed.”⁶⁵

II. INSTILLING DESPAIR AND SKEPTICISM

2.1. THE WEST CANNOT DEFEND US AGAINST MILITARY THREATS

Bondo Mdzinarishvili, Obieqtivi, presenter: “In 2008, we were actually abandoned to mutual intolerance between the local provocateur and the foreign aggressor and at the end of the day, our territories have been recognized, by one big and three small countries though, as independent states, haven’t they?!”⁶⁶

Guram Nikoleishvili, a majoritarian candidate from the Alliance of Patriots: “The Georgian side will refuse to provide a corridor but when Russia needs it who will go against it? Which international organization or military block will dare to stop it?”⁶⁷

Beso barbakadze, Georgia and World, journalist: “Then a US ship will enter Batumi or Poti seaport, unload bottled water and diapers (or medical facemasks, depending on circumstances), will sooth us, tell us encouraging words... and that’s it; they will even impose sanctions on Russia using us as a cause.”⁶⁸

⁶² Netgazeti, 25 May, <https://netgazeti.ge/news/455253/>

⁶³ Georgia and World, 20 October, <https://bit.ly/3eN6LTq>

⁶⁴ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 1 July, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3946907>

⁶⁵ Georgia and World, 9 September, <https://bit.ly/3bGJHTi>

⁶⁶ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 12 February, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3902607>

⁶⁷ Alia, 12-18 October.

⁶⁸ Georgia and World, 24 June, <https://bit.ly/2Yv3BeP>

Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, the Alliance of Patriots: “All talks about Georgia joining NATO are merely a big lie. And talks that NATO will defend someone from anyone somewhere is a bigger lie.”⁶⁹

Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, the Alliance of Patriots: “It is not in the interests of the United States of America to engage in any war with Russia now.”⁷⁰

2.2. THE WEST CANNOT PROTECT OUR TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

A campaign launched in the run-up to the parliamentary elections by the ruling political party, Georgian Dream, which concerned the Davit Gareji Monastery Complex located on a disputed section of Georgia-Azerbaijani border,⁷¹ including the arrest of two civil servant,⁷² brought the topic of disputed territories to the fore. While in previous years, actors pursuing interests of the Kremlin tried to distract attention from the Russian occupation towards historic occupation of Georgia by the Ottoman Empire (“If Russia is the occupier, Turkey is the occupier too”), the Gareji campaign additionally created a fertile ground for pro-Russian and ultra-nationalist actors to consider Azerbaijan in this context alongside Turkey and to divert attention from current Russian occupation towards historic hostility. Furthermore, they alleged that strategic partners did not protect us against the threat from Azerbaijan and Turkey and the only power that could deter that threat was Russia.

The West cannot protect us against the threat coming from Azerbaijan and Turkey

Beso Barbakadze, Georgia and World, journalist: “Western partners stay silent about the Gareji disputed territory. The reason is simple: Azerbaijan is not Russia. Neither Europe nor America fights against Azerbaijan... We will necessarily face the same problem next year and face it in the setting when the Russian factor will no longer be a deterrent for Turkey.”⁷³

Levan Chachua, Georgian Idea: “I am surprised about so-called strategic, European partners who release statement after statement against Russia and say nothing about Azerbaijan’s actions. Do they not see that the occupation of Georgian territories is underway openly, without any fight?!”⁷⁴

2.3. THE WEST CANNOT PROTECT US FROM THE THREAT OF PANDEMIC

Beso Barbakadze, Georgia and World, journalist: “The West abandoned Italy in difficult situation and imagine what will they do when it comes to Georgia?!”⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 21 January, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3895379>

⁷⁰ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia – For all to hear, 15 September, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3967028>

⁷¹ Media Development Foundation, 2020. PRE-ELECTION MONITORING 2020 – Anti-Western Messages, Hate Speech, Fake News, pg.23, <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/191/>

⁷² Civil.ge, 21 October, 2020, Backgrounder: the “Cartographers’ Case”. <https://civil.ge/archives/374990>

⁷³ Georgia and World, 27 February, <https://bit.ly/3cn4ueC>

⁷⁴ Georgia and World, 9 June, <https://bit.ly/3hkaUgK>

⁷⁵ Georgia and World, 3 June, <https://bit.ly/3gXQ1YM>

2.4. THE LIBERAL ORDER IS LOSING GROUND

Nino Ratishvili, Obieqtivi presenter: “The liberal world that became obsolete.”⁷⁶

Giorgi Mdivani, writer for Georgia and World, and Politico: “The liberal ideology has already been experiencing crisis across the world.”⁷⁷

Gigi Maghlakelidze, the Alliance of Patriots: “This despicable pseudo-liberal... globalist ideas imposed on us will slide into oblivion and totally exit the political field.”⁷⁸

Georgia and World, according to Regnum.ru: “Putin is putting an end to the project of liberalism on the planet.”⁷⁹

2.5. DEMOCRACY IS A FICTION

US/West interfere in Georgia’s domestic affairs

Irma Inashvili, the Alliance of Patriots: “These so-called opinion polls [conducted by NDI/IRI] pose a direct threat to our state and have become a state security problem.”⁸⁰

Bondo Mdzinarishvili, presenter: “This looks more like a **strategic vassalage**, we are constantly chastised by the USA.”⁸¹

Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, the Alliance of Patriots: “Georgia is not a US colony, not at all.”⁸²

Jaba Khubua, journalist of Asaval-Dasavali: “Throughout its history, Georgia, which was destroyed by Pompeys of various ethnicities, rarely had a chance to be a genuinely independent state... In contrast to Khlestakov, [Mike] Pompeo is the real inspector general!”⁸³

Jaba Khubua, journalist of Asaval-Dasavali: “Had the collective [Donald] Tusk really cared for the development of Georgian democracy, they would not have focused on the arrest of Zhorika Rurua alone.”⁸⁴

⁷⁶ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 25 June, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3944993>

⁷⁷ Georgia and World, 24 November, <https://bit.ly/3bwDNFw>

⁷⁸ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 4 June, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3939451>

⁷⁹ Georgia and World, 31 March, <https://bit.ly/39AJM8u>

⁸⁰ Sakinformi, 21 January, <https://bit.ly/3hNQoqf>

⁸¹ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 13 June, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3941560>

⁸² Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 24 January, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3896730>

⁸³ Asaval-Dasavali, 16-22 November.

⁸⁴ Asaval-Dasavali, 22-28 June.

Giorgi Gigauri, Asaval-Dasavali, journalist: “Openly meddles in domestic affairs of the state – it suffices to recall Rose Revolution which was staged by [George] Soros.”⁸⁵

The US has no moral right to lecture others

Maria Zakharova, spokesperson of Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry: “It is high time for partner countries to speak up about all this... Americans have no moral or any other right to talk about human rights violations in other countries.”⁸⁶

Gigi Maghlakelidze, the Alliance of Patriots: “Today, it [the USA] has been morally losing this leverage, the leverage of a global policeman and lecturer of the world.”⁸⁷

Nana Devdariani, the Alliance of Patriots: “They have yet to figure out what’s happening in their own country... It transpires that everything is in disarray in the USA, a country that was regarded to be the superstate, a country of democracy, elections, rule of law.”⁸⁸

2.6. ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT / THE EU IS USELESS

Giorgi Razmadze, a religious servant: “Let anyone cite a single benefit brought by that Association Agreement to ordinary citizens... They go to Europe as slaves, cheap workforce; just show me a single citizen who would say that he or she has found a decent job there.”⁸⁹

Dimitri Lortkipanidze, the Primakov Georgian-Russian Public Center: “Talks about the European Union opening up its markets for Georgian products to sell easily, or issuing loans to us and so on and so forth is bluff.”⁹⁰

III. RUSSIA AS THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE WEST

3.1. POLITICAL NEUTRALITY WILL DEFUSE TENSIONS BETWEEN GEORGIA AND RUSSIA

Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, the Alliance of Patriots: “Today, there are only two clear-cut demands [from Russia]: military neutrality for Georgia and a corridor, which will remove any disagreement between Georgia and Russia.”⁹¹

⁸⁵ Asaval-Dasavali, 3-9 August.

⁸⁶ Mtavari Arkhi, Mtavari, 2 June, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3938694>

⁸⁷ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 4 June, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3939450&rc=1>

⁸⁸ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 9 November, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=3984162

⁸⁹ Georgia and World, 17 June, <https://bit.ly/2AAyi9D>

⁹⁰ Georgia and World, 18 March, <https://bit.ly/2wge8iP>

⁹¹ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia – For all to hear, 21 July.

Nino Burjanadze, United Democratic Movement: “Why should it [Georgia] be [a NATO member]? Block-free status means that I do not want a foreign military force in the territory of Georgia, the Russian armed forces in this case, which are stationed illegally in the territory of Georgia.”⁹²

Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, the Alliance of Patriots: “Today, Russia demands the only one thing! It demands that Georgia not be involved in any opposition to Russia.”⁹³

3.2. ONLY RUSSIA CAN PROTECT GEORGIA FROM NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

Dito Chubinidze, Asaval-Dasavali, journalist: “The history has proved that the Russian dagger always defeated the Turkish yatagan in Georgia... it is also a bitter truth that had it not been for the Russian occupier, the Turkish occupier would have seized and occupied larger swaths of Georgian land.”⁹⁴

Vazha Otarashvili, the Alliance of Patriots: “I think we should consider Russia a sort of geopolitical protector today too; had it not been for the Russian factor, Turkey would have easily invaded Adjara and occupied it within 24 hours.”⁹⁵

Jaba Zhvania, Georgia and World, journalist: “I agree with you that the ‘liberal’ West, which is severed from Christian roots, cannot stop an aggressive Islamic expansion.”⁹⁶

Vladimir Khomeriki, The Foundation for the Unity of the Russian and Georgian People: “If Saakashvili succeeds in that [engaging in a new war with Russia], Georgia will necessarily lose a substantial part of Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli to Armenia and Azerbaijan; furthermore, after the Treaty of Kars expires, Adjara will come to face enormous threat from Turkey which **can only be contained by Russia. This, however, means that Georgia may disappear from a political map and its territories will be redistributed among other countries.**”⁹⁷

Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, the Alliance of Patriots: “Russian peacekeepers found themselves in Karabakh. Russia made Armenia and Azerbaijan understand that he is the master there because Azerbaijan would not be able to reclaim anything had it not been Russia’s permit and consent and had Russians wanted to defend Armenians, they would have defended them, but Russians did not defend them because since Pashinian became President, Armenian generals have stopped cooperation, any cooperation whatsoever with Russia.”⁹⁸

⁹² News agency Pirveli, 3 October, <https://bit.ly/3hrdjaw>

⁹³ Obieqtivi, 22 October, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3978633>

⁹⁴ Asaval-Dasavali, 28 September–4 October.

⁹⁵ Georgia and World, 10 November, <https://bit.ly/3fPqGk8>

⁹⁶ Georgia and World, 15 July, <https://bit.ly/2Opfn4z>

⁹⁷ Asaval-Dasavali, 27 July–2 August.

⁹⁸ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia – For all to hear, 24 November, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3988600>

3.3. ABKHAZIA AND SAMACHABLO CAN ONLY BE RECOVERED THROUGH DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH RUSSIA

Vazha Otarashvili, the Alliance of Patriots: “Direct dialogue is necessary and it is a bluff that the US or Europe will settle our problems. Let me reiterate, we must speak face-to-face, directly, without mediators with our northern neighbor. This dialogue is necessary not only for Georgia but also for Russia because Russia is also an Orthodox Christian country and opposing the Orthodox Georgia is a very heavy burden for it.”⁹⁹

3.4. THE PANDEMIC CAN BE REPELLED BY AUTHORITARIAN COUNTRIES / HEALTHCARE OF THE SOVIET UNION

Valeri Kvaratskhelia, Neutral / Socialist Georgia: “The first victim of this global adventure should have been the Chinese socialist economy and the capitalist legal banditry would have no alternative... However, something unimaginable happened. China defeated coronavirus within the shortest period of time – something nobody expected. Even more, it ricocheted it and this biological disaster causing mass deaths returned as a boomerang to the US and turned-into-US-vassal Europe.”¹⁰⁰

Nika Korinteli, Georgia and World, journalist: “The quarantine regime is being exited by yet another non-Western country, Russia, where the experience of Soviet healthcare system has been recalled... This is the result of the efficiency of those sociopolitical systems in which society joins forced in emergency situations.”¹⁰¹

3.5. RUSSIA IS THE THIRD ROME THAT PROTECTS US FROM WESTERN MORAL OCCUPATION

Davit Mkheidze, author for Georgia and World: “Political events may unfold in such a way that Georgia might come to face a fatal choice – either **Pope of Rome, that is godless West, or the third Rome, i.e. co-religious Russia.**”¹⁰²

Davit Mkheidze, author for Georgia and World: “Bearing in mind that the world (with the exception of the Islamic world) is more or less liberastic, it follows from that that the world fights against the defender of traditional ideology and values – Russia.” “The Batka’s [Lukashenka] failure means the victory of liberasts whereas the victory of the latter means the failure of Orthodox Russia.”¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Georgia and World, 22 January, <https://bit.ly/2NPwqx0>

¹⁰⁰ Asaval-Dasavali, 23-29 March.

¹⁰¹ Georgia and World, 3 June, <https://bit.ly/3eZlvfr>

¹⁰² Georgia and World, 27 October, <https://bit.ly/3fqHNIS>

¹⁰³ Georgia and World, 23 September, <https://bit.ly/2QlqOix>

3.6. THE SOVIET UNION WAS POLITICALLY STABLE AND SOCIALLY PROTECTED SYSTEM

Giorgi Gigauri, journalist for **Asaval-Dasavali**, member of **Georgian March**: “Belarussians are truly grateful to their Batko [Lukashenka] because after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, he succeeded, better than Russia, in maintaining all those benefits that people received from Soviet socialist order.”¹⁰⁴

Giorgi Mdivani, writer for **Georgia and World**, and **Politikano**: “Belarus maintained Soviet institutions. Factories operate round-the-clock... Many liberals are very jealous but let me tell them: Western technologists of ‘color revolutions’ have to improve their methods – flowers, human chains and odes to freedom have already become obsolete.”¹⁰⁵

3.7. GEORGIA ECONOMICALLY DEPENDS ON THE RUSSIAN MARKET

Gulbaat Rtskhiladze, the **Eurasian Institute**: “A question arises: while we wait for joining the European Union and hope that our citizens will be able to work legally there, which is, of course, a sheer illusion, should it not be better to look in another direction too and think about integrating into the Eurasian Union?”¹⁰⁶

Sakinformi: “On the one hand, Georgia exists on the account of Russia which is in the lead by remittances and number of tourists to Georgia and import of products from Georgia, and on the other hand, Georgia takes part in a suspicious adventure [NATO military trainings in Europe] which forces Russia to make huge expenditures?!”¹⁰⁷

Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, the **Alliance of Patriots**: “We benefit from Russian economy and now Turkey, a way stronger state than Georgia, benefits from our economy.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Asaval-Dasavali, 6-12 April.

¹⁰⁵ Georgia and World, 19 August, <https://bit.ly/3yoP2Zk>

¹⁰⁶ Georgia and World, 1 December, <https://bit.ly/3heWKj0>

¹⁰⁷ Sakinformi, 23 January, <https://bit.ly/3xitDAX>

¹⁰⁸ Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia – For all to hear, 11 August, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3958936>

4. FALSE DILEMMA METHOD AND TERMINOLOGY |

One of the propaganda methods, actively used by monitoring subjects in the past few years, is false dilemma.

False dilemma or black and white reasoning that limits available choices to only two alternatives and gives preference to either of them.

Examples of false dilemma, provided below, were identified in 2020 and they create a false dichotomy with regard to religious and sexual identity mainly by proposing two extreme choices in the context of foreign political course:

FALSE DILEMMA



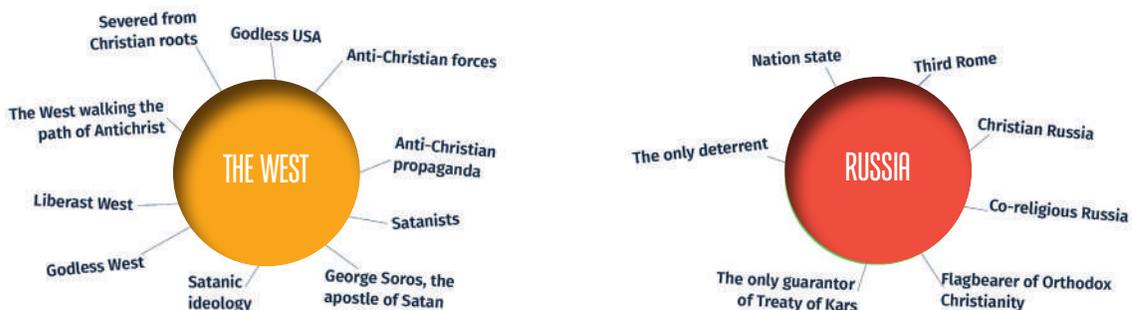
¹⁰⁹ <https://bit.ly/3fbLWRS>

¹¹⁰ <https://mpn.ge/archives/34462>

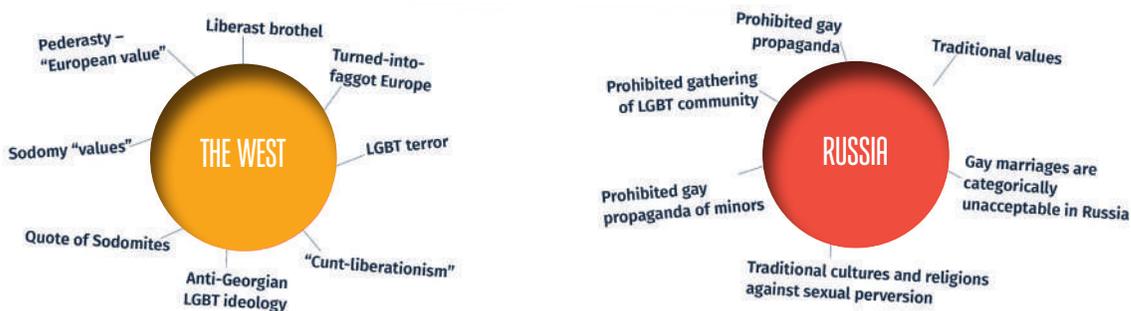
The false dichotomy – Orthodox Russia vs godless and immoral West, was reflected in the terminology and separate phrases too.

FIGURE 16. TERMINOLOGY RELATED TO RELIGIOUS / NATIONAL IDENTITY

RELIGION / NATIONAL IDENTITY



SEXUAL IDENTITY



5. DISINFORMATION AND MANIPULATIVE CONTENT |

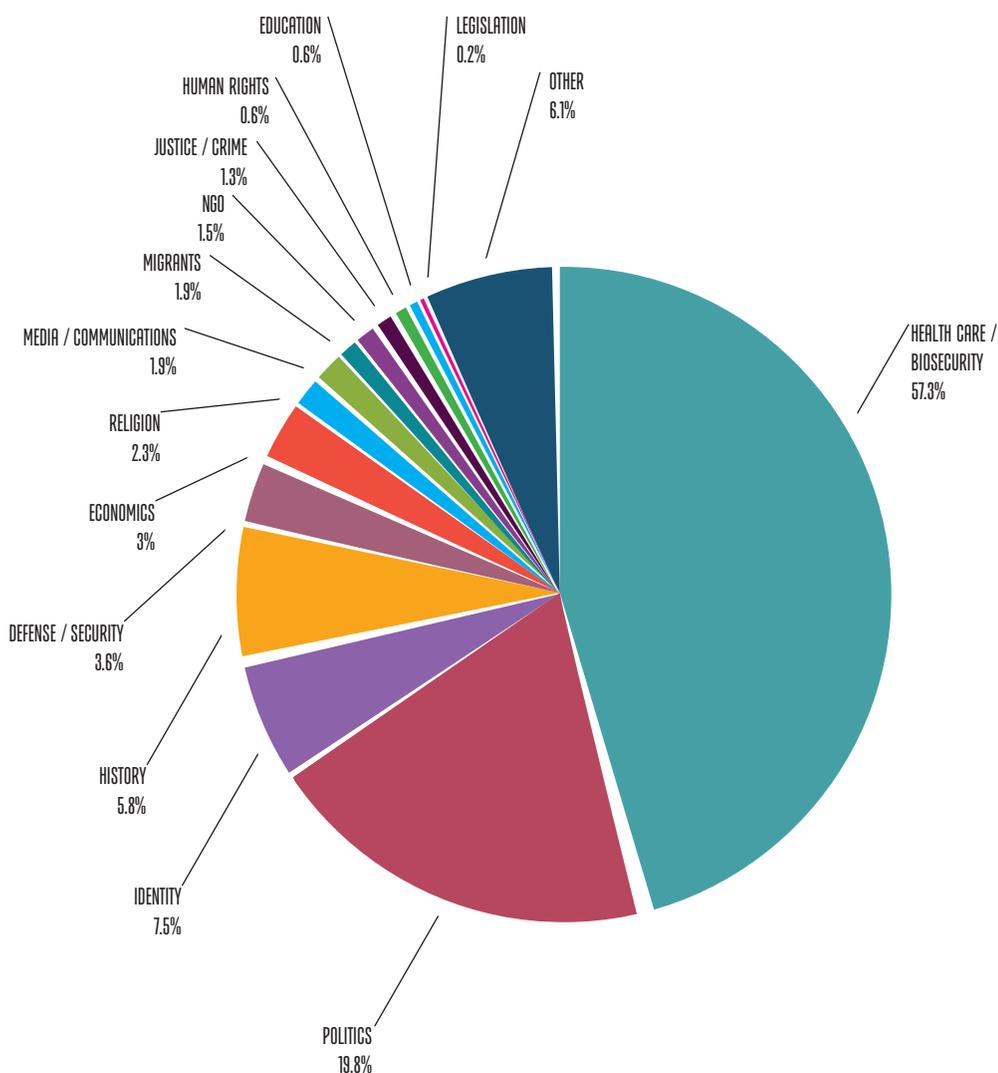
In 2020, the Media Development Foundation exposed 449 types of disinformation and manipulative content within the framework of fact-checking platform, Myth Detector. Apart from traditional media outlets, the Media Development Foundation identified disinformation and manipulative information in social networks by means of analytical tool Crowdtangle as well as within the scope of partnership with Facebook (Third-Party Fact-Checking Program). Furthermore, fact-checked materials also include the cases of media coverage that were supplied by readers. In 2020, Myth Detector identified the following types of disinformation and manipulation:

DISINFORMATION AND MANIPULATION	449
Disinformation	162
Manipulation	107
No evidence	21
Misleading	13
Partially incorrect	9
Visual (photo/video) manipulation	87
Conspiracy theory	54
Faked quote	28
Satire	11
Pseudo treatment	11
Faked statistics	1
TOTAL	449

NOTE: A number of articles published by Myth Detector were assigned more than one category and therefore, the sum of data provided in the table exceeds the total number of articles.

In terms of topics, the highest number of disinformation and manipulative content (233) concerned health care and biological security, which can be explained by the Covid-19 pandemic. The second frequently faked content was about politics (105) which also contained domestic political disinformation due to election process. The content on this topic is detailed in a separate special report.¹¹¹ Fact-checked materials on identity (40), history (31) and defense/security (19) were much less than the first two topics, but still in a substantial amount.

FIGURE 17. TOPICS OF DISINFORMATION AND MANIPULATIVE CONTENT

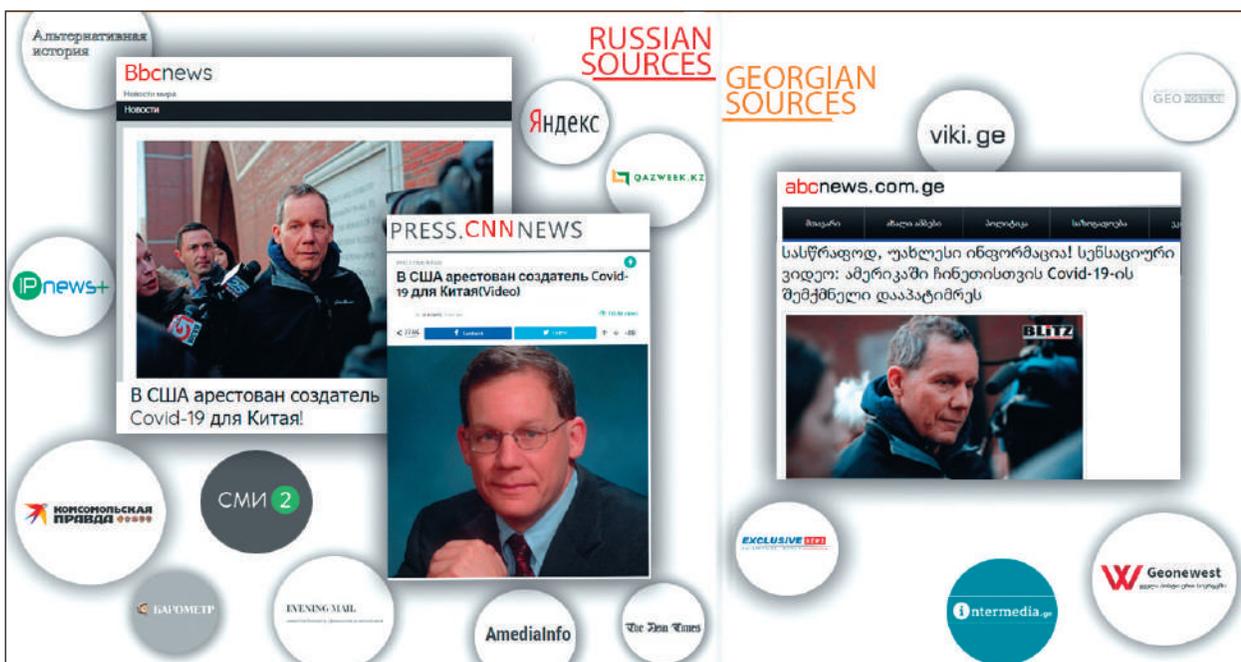


Most prolific in releasing disinformation were News Front Georgia (49), Georgia and World (37), Tvalsazrishi (25), Alia (20), Sputnik Georgia (19) and TV Obieqtivi (17) from among media outlets; Facebook pages Stalin (12), Kardhu (10) and Politicano (8) from social media; and the Alliance of Patriots from among political parties.

¹¹¹ Media Development Foundation (2020). PRE-ELECTION MONITORING 2020 – Anti-Western Messages, Hate Speech, Fake News. <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/191/>

DEFLECTIVE SOURCE MODEL AND SATIRICAL PRIMARY SOURCES

Like in previous years, a method used for viral spread of information in social networks was the deflective source model, i.e., a model of evading a primary source¹¹², when a real source is concealed for the aim of legitimizing a message or a false news. One of manifestations of deflective source is the “cloning” of websites of popular Western media brands, when in the conditions of massive flow of information in social networks, media consumers get attracted by brand popularity and thus, misled. During the pandemic, the Myth Detector revealed online media outlets that looked very much like popular US brands such as CNN, ABC and the British BBC; of these online outlets, IP addresses of those cloning CNN and BBC¹¹³ were in Sankt-Petersburg. In this particular case, these cloned websites spread disinformation about a Harvard Professor, Charles Lieber, supposedly been arrested for artificially creating the coronavirus.¹¹⁴



SATIRICAL SOURCES

Yet another method applied, alike previous years, for the spread of disinformation was the publication of stories invented by satirical sources as true information. At such times, these stories were not signposted as invented and they misled the audience.

¹¹² Garth Jowett, Victoria O'Donnell (2005). Propaganda and Persuasion, Sage

¹¹³ Myth Detector, 15 April 2020, “Russian Cluster” of disinformation and its “internal spread” in Georgia.
<http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/russian-cluster-disinformation-and-its-internal-spread-georgia>

¹¹⁴ Myth Detector, 8 April 2020. Disinformation by Fake BBC, CNN, ABC about Harvard Professor Allegedly Arrested for Creating COVID-19.
<http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/disinformation-fake-bbc-cnn-abc-about-harvard-professor-allegedly-arrested-creating-covid-19>

SATIRICAL-HUMOROUS PRIMARY SOURCES	INVENTED STORY	COVERED AS REAL STORY
World News Daily Report	Hillary Clinton, the former candidate for US presidency and former Secretary of State, had an affair with Yoko Ono, the wife of John Lennon ¹¹⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Marshalpress
panorama.pub	Henry Kissinger said: “We only had sex, they (Soviet people) had true love ¹¹⁶ .”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● gnn.ge ● Geworld.ge
panorama.pub	The Federal Assembly of Switzerland endorsed the termination of vaccination for five years, citing adverse health effects of rubella, smallpox and other vaccines as the reason behind its decision. ¹¹⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Progressnews ● megatv.ge
panorama.pub	A WHO top official dies after choking on broccoli – Ryan Paterson intended to disclose sensational information about COVID-19. ¹¹⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Progressnews
World News Daily Report	The health Minister of Belgium banned sexual intercourse between three or more persons. ¹¹⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Progressnews ● Marshalpress ● presa.ge ● readtime.ge ● Newpost.ge ● alia.ge ● For.ge ● info9.ge ● msolfio.ru

¹¹⁵ Myth Detector, 11 June, 2020. Had Hillary Clinton an affair with Yoko Ono? <https://bit.ly/3696t4g>

¹¹⁶ Myth Detector, 18 September, 2020. Do the Words “We Only Had Sex, They (Soviet People) Had True Love” Belong to Kissinger? <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/do-words-we-only-had-sex-they-soviet-people-had-true-love-belong-kissinger>

¹¹⁷ Myth Detector, 19 May, 2020. Did Switzerland Ban Vaccination and who is Father Escobar? <https://www.mythdetector.ge/en/myth/did-switzerland-ban-vaccination-and-who-father-escobar>

¹¹⁸ Myth Detector, 13 April, 2020. Did WHO Top Official Die after Choking on Broccoli? <https://www.mythdetector.ge/en/myth/did-who-top-official-die-after-choking-broccoli>

¹¹⁹ Myth Detector, 26 March, 2020. Has Group Sex been Banned in Belgium due to Coronavirus? <https://www.mythdetector.ge/en/myth/has-group-sex-been-banned-belgium-due-coronavirus>

SATIRICAL-HUMOROUS PRIMARY SOURCES	INVENTED STORY	COVERED AS REAL STORY
panorama.pub	Propagating traditional family values became punishable in Belgium. ¹²⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sakinformi ● TV Obieqtivi (Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi)
panorama.pub	North Korean leader Kim Jong-un erected the monument to Stalin in the Pyongyang Park of War Heroes. ¹²¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stalin
dosier-venezuela.press	A Venezuelan webpage, Dossier-venezuela.press published “scandalous information” about finances of the United National Movement and the European Georgia. ¹²²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tv Obieqtivi ● tinp.ge ● The Alliance of Patriots
World News Daily Report	Death of a man after fatal bear attack was ascribed to corona-virus. ¹²³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● metronome.ge ● newposts.ge
panorama.pub	Pope of Rome called on the parish to get chipped. ¹²⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● News portal Kartuli Azri (Georgian Thought) ● itar.ge ● n.videosports.ge ● arxi.ge

¹²⁰ Myth Detector, 21 February, 2020. What Messages does “Patriot” Tarkhan-Mouravi Get from the Russian Satirical Edition Panorama.pub?
<https://www.mythdetector.ge/en/myth/what-messages-does-patriot-tarkhan-mouravi-get-russian-satirical-edition-panoramapub>

Myth Detector, 19 February, 2020. How did Russian “Satire” Become Saqinformi’s Disinformation?
<https://www.mythdetector.ge/en/myth/how-did-russian-satire-become-saqinformis-disinformation>

¹²¹ Myth Detector, 20 February, 2020. Did Kim Jong-un Place Monument to Stalin in North Korea?
<https://www.mythdetector.ge/en/myth/did-kim-jong-un-place-monument-stalin-north-korea>

¹²² Myth Detector, 2 September, 2020. Inashvili responds to Dossier’s accusations on Russian money with satire and 3-day Venezuelan Dossier.
<https://www.mythdetector.ge/en/myth/inashvili-responds-dossiers-accusations-russian-money-satire-and-3-day-venezuelan-dossier>

¹²³ Myth Detector, 30 September, 2020. Update: Is Fatal Bear Attack Ascribed to Coronavirus Deaths?
<https://www.mythdetector.ge/en/myth/update-fatal-bear-attack-ascribed-coronavirus-deaths>

¹²⁴ Myth Detector, 11 May, 2020. What Scheme was Used to Spread Conspiracy Theories about Pope Francis and Chips?
<https://www.mythdetector.ge/en/myth/what-scheme-was-used-spread-conspiracy-theories-about-pope-francis-and-chips>
<https://bit.ly/365yuJW>

I 6. ACTORS OF EXTERNAL INFLUENCE

Actors of the Kremlin's external influence and their communication channels are fragmented in Georgia and they experience certain transformations in line with political developments.

THE ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS AND AFFILIATED COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

While in 2014¹²⁵–2016,¹²⁶ the leader by the frequency of anti-Western messages was the United Democratic Movement, a political party openly supporting pro-Russian foreign policy, since 2018,¹²⁷ this title has been held by the Alliance of Patriots. While the declaration of openly pro-Russian foreign course did not prove successful for the United Democratic Movement in the 2016 parliamentary elections, the Alliance of Patriots consolidated by Turkophobic and Islamophobic messages. Once it gained seats in the parliament in 2016, this political party began to openly articulate messages that fit into the Kremlin's foreign policy agenda and included: 1. An initiative about military neutrality of Georgia; 2. Proposal to neglect the international format of Geneva talks and settle the conflicts through a direct dialogue with Russia without the involvement of the West; 3. Conduct of targeted campaigns against NATO and US research institutions.

A journalistic investigation¹²⁸ into Russian links of the Alliance of Patriots in the run-up to the 2020 parliamentary elections carried out by Mikhail Khodorkovsky's investigative project, The Dossier Center, asserted, based on documents obtained from the secretariat of General Vladimir Chernov, that the Kremlin bankrolled the Patriot of Alliance and assisted it in planning the elections strategy by hiring a political scientist, Sergey Mikheyev, and a Moscow-based company POLITSECRETS to this end.

¹²⁵ Media Development Foundation (2015). Anti-Western propaganda 2014–2015. <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/15/>

¹²⁶ Media Development Foundation (2017). Anti-Western propaganda 2016. <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/65/>

¹²⁷ Media Development Foundation (2019). Anti-Western propaganda –2018. <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/119/>

¹²⁸ Центр «Досье» (2020), Как Кремль вмешивается во внутреннюю политику соседних стран, Часть первая: выборы в Грузии <https://bit.ly/3jUI0IO>

A TV company affiliated with the Alliance of Patriots is Obieqtivi TV whose editorial policy echoes foreign policy orientation of the political party. After boycotting the results of the 2020 parliamentary elections, where the Alliance of Patriots garnered only 3.14% of the votes, a decrease as compared to the result in the previous elections, the party leader, Irma Inashvili, began to host her own political talk-show in 2021. In this talk show she has tried to capitalize on the allegation that the West fights against the church and religion.¹²⁹

In addition to Obieqtivi TV, the Alliance of Patriots was affiliated with a number of social network accounts,¹³⁰ some of which were deleted by Facebook in the autumn of 2020 for coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB),¹³¹ including Tinp.ge – Today in politics, which was engaged in the election process and, in line with the above-mentioned political party, in a campaign to discredit the NDI and the IRI.¹³²

GEORGIAN MARCH

Yet another political party mentioned in the context of Russia's interference in the Georgian elections was the Georgian March: the international security report of Estonia,¹³³ published in 2020, referred to the Georgian March as an umbrella organization for extremist movements, which by spreading allegations about the values supposedly imposed by the West aimed at “rattling public support for joining the European Union and NATO – a foreign policy consensus that has held for nearly 15 years.”

A surreptitious recording about the ties of Georgian March to Russia was released in the run-up to the 2020 elections. In this recording the leader of the party, Sandro Bregadze, is believed to be talking with Igor Morozov, a member of the Federation Council and former officer of Russia's intelligence service (successor of the KGB), about the sale of Russian natural gas in Georgia and links with Russian businessmen.¹³⁴ One can also find in open sources a photo taken in 2017,¹³⁵ which features members of the Georgian March with Giorgi Iremadze who is the chairperson of openly pro-Russian organization, the Eurasian Youth Union, also with Konstantine Morgoshia, the current owner of Alt-Info, and representatives of Georgian Mission.

The Georgian March was registered as a political party ahead of the 2020 parliamentary elections. This political party built its election campaign on the demand for abolishing the liberal legislation and legislating sanctions for offending religious feelings. This political party whose list of nominated candidates to the parliament

¹²⁹ Myth Detector (2021), Radicalization in the Name of Religion and against Political Opponents – by whom and what Reason is the Pride March used for? <http://mythdetector.ge/en/research/radicalization-name-religion-and-against-political-opponents-whom-and-what-reason-pride>

¹³⁰ Myth Detector, 12 March 2020. “Connect to real opposition!” – FB accounts with close links to Alliance of Patriots and other anti-Western groups. <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/connect-real-opposition-fb-accounts-close-links-alliance-patriots-and-other-anti-western>

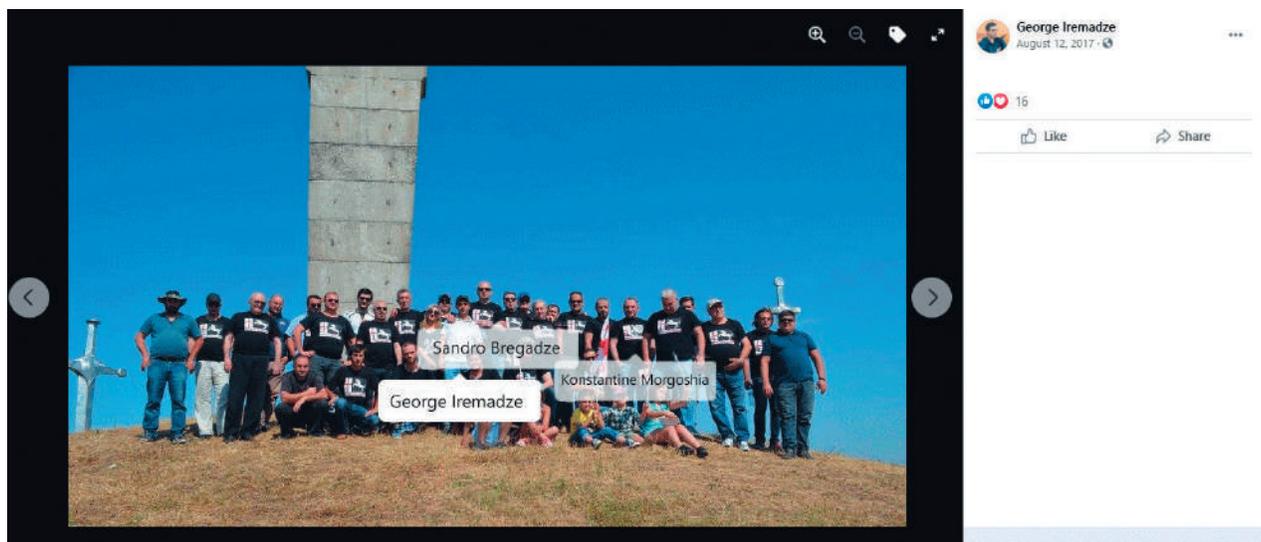
¹³¹ Radio Liberty, 6 November 2020. Facebook deletes accounts and pages associated with Alliance of Patriots and Alt-Info. <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/30934069.html>

¹³² Myth Detector, 26 August 2020. USD 1,000 – 1,500 Spent on Ad against NDI and IRI at Tinp.ge. <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/usd-1000-1500-spent-ad-against-ndi-and-iri-tinpge>

¹³³ International Security and Estonia 2019 pg. 51 <https://www.valisluureamet.ee/pdf/raport-2020-en.pdf>

¹³⁴ On.ge, 21 September 2020. Bregadze is promised trust in Russia, he confirms the talk, but calls it edited. <https://bit.ly/3wznX4q>

¹³⁵ Giorgi Iremadze Facebook profile. <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1151515604981502&set=t.100003692209282>



included Giorgi Gigauri, a journalist of Asaval-Dasavali newspaper who is notorious for his hate speech, failed to clear the election threshold in the 2020 parliamentary elections.

The ultra-nationalist movement, Georgian March, became visible during protests staged against migrants in the spring of 2017, in which they called on Iranians, Arabs and Africans to leave Georgia.¹³⁶ In 2018, the Georgian March formed “people’s patrol”¹³⁷ with the aim to expose offences committed by migrants from Africa and Asia. Members of the Georgian March, along with Levan Vasadze and other radical groups, participated in physical attacks on journalists and violent actions to ban the screening of a movie on the theme of gays.¹³⁸ One of the founders of Georgian March, Sandro Bregadze, served as a deputy minister in the government of the ruling Georgian Dream party.

LEVAN VASADZE, ALT-INFO, AND ALTERNATIVE FOR GEORGIA

The leader of yet another radical-extremist grouping with close ties to Russia and Russian Church is businessman Levan Vasadze. Vasadze, who established a political party “Unity, Identity, Hope” in 2021, was monitored as a separate subject till the end of 2020.

Vasadze is a representative of Christian-Evangelical organization, the World Congress of Families (WCF), in Georgia, which opposes LGBT rights on the premise of defending “natural family.” The World Congress of Families has ties to a Russian oligarch Konstantin Malofeev, who is under U.S. and European Union sanctions for the events in Crimea, also to Alexey Komov, the official representative of the World Congress of Families in

¹³⁶ Media Development Foundation (2017), Monitoring of the activities of ultra-nationalist groups on the Facebook ahead of Georgian March. <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/71/>

¹³⁷ On.ge, 5 March 2018. People’s patrol of the neo-Nazi group, Georgian March, patrols Tbilisi for 10 days now. <https://bit.ly/3e4za6y>

¹³⁸ Civil.ge, 3 July, Nativist ‘Georgian March’ Movement Becomes Political Party. <https://civil.ge/archives/358303>

Russia,¹³⁹ who has close ties with the leader of the Eurasia Movement, Aleksandr Dugin. Levan Vasadze also has close ties with Aleksandr Dugin who is often hosted by the TV channel Alt-Info.¹⁴⁰

Groups linked to Vasadze as well as presenters of TV channel Alt-Info participated in the violence unleashed against Tbilisi Pride in Tbilisi in 2021. In 2019, ahead of Pride, Vasadze came up with the initiative to form “people’s legion” in order to carry out patrolling during the period of events planned by Tbilisi Pride.¹⁴¹

ALT-INFO. After Facebook, in 2020, deleted accounts linked to Alt-Info for coordinated inauthentic behavior,¹⁴² Alt-Info obtained a broadcasting license and went on the air in 2021. The owners of Alt-Info are Konstantine Mogoshia’s aunt (50 percent) and a presenter of the program, Shota Martinenko (50 percent).

ALTERNATIVE FOR GEORGIA. Konstantine Mogoshia, who is closely associated with Levan Vasadze and the Alt-Info group, registered a new organization, Alternative for Georgia,¹⁴³ in 2019; in addition to Morgoshia, co-founders of this organization are presenters of Alt-Info, Shota Martinenko and a Russian citizen Giorgi Kardava, also, Irakli Kizilashvili who is registered at Martinenko’s living address.

Morgoshia was a member of Georgian March until 2019, while in 2016, he ran for elections from the Alliance of Patriots as a majoritarian candidate in Mtskheta.

LEVAN CHACHUA, GURAM PALAVANDISHVILI – GEORGIAN IDEA

Another political subject that exploits ethnonationalist and identity-related topics and is among the actors in the Kremlin orbit is the Georgian Idea. The chairman of the political party, Levan Chachua, was a member of Orthodox Parents’ Union and was arrested in 2010 for extremist actions in the TV company Kavkasia, namely, for storming the TV company during a live broadcast and violence committed there.¹⁴⁴ In 2012, the newly-elected parliament released Levan Chachua from prison as a political prisoner.

The Georgian Idea, along with Society for the Protection of Child’s Rights founded by Guram Palavandishvili, the Primakov Georgian–Russian Public Center, and Levan Vasadze oppose the Code on the Rights of the Child, and in the vein of Russian propaganda, portray the juvenile legislation as juvenile fascism directed against the institution of family.

¹³⁹ Myth Detector, 28 May, 2018. Russian Links of World Congress of Families. <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/russian-links-world-congress-families>

¹⁴⁰ Myth Detector, 4 February, 2021. Dugin: “On certain occasions, we are forced to do...” <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/dugin-certain-occasions-we-are-forced-do>

¹⁴¹ On.ge, 16 June 2019. Levan Vasadze announces about forming people’s regiments and legion. <https://bit.ly/2VkrFly>

¹⁴² Radio Liberty, 6 November 2020. Facebook deletes accounts and pages associated with Alliance of Patriots and Alt-Info. <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/30934069.html>

¹⁴³ [https://bs.napr.gov.ge/GetBlob?pid=400&bid=boVlyOwIsX3qmYsntmLmFMMyQLSGI\[nngq8IR5AhWluEMAmwiCo4U5oAGzS6g82zMN](https://bs.napr.gov.ge/GetBlob?pid=400&bid=boVlyOwIsX3qmYsntmLmFMMyQLSGI[nngq8IR5AhWluEMAmwiCo4U5oAGzS6g82zMN)

¹⁴⁴ Civil.ge, 10 May 2010. Seven Sent to Pre-Trial Detention over Kavkasia TV Fistfight. <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22284&search=>

In 2020, the Georgian Idea and Guram Palavandishvili stood for the parliamentary elections. On 4 December 2013, Guram Palavandishvili, who is the founder of the Society for the Protection of Child’s Rights, was detained together with Davit Lortkipanidze on charges of disorderly conduct for antisemitic actions when they, at the celebration of Hanukkah, ripped posters away and damaged the rostrum erected for the event. The detainees were later released, getting away with just GEL 100 fine each.¹⁴⁵ In 2019, Palavandishvili also participated in forming “people’s legion” initiated by Levan Vasadze and was detained for disobeying the police.¹⁴⁶

There is some evidence of Georgian Idea’s association with the Primakov Georgian-Russian Public Center, the Eurasian Institute, the Historical Heritage (which publishes Georgia and World), which was also apparent during the event, Reanimation of Fascist Ideology (“Реанимации фашистской идеологии), held in Tbilisi in April 2019.¹⁴⁷

PRIMAKOV GEORGIAN-RUSSIAN PUBLIC CENTER

The Primakov Georgian-Russian Public Center was established in 2013. The founders were the Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund which was established under the order of President of Russia, and the Georgian Institute of International Relations. The Center finances Russian language learning courses and various events. The 2019 international security report of Estonia¹⁴⁸ names the Primakov Georgian-Russian Public Center, along with Georgian March, among subjects with close ties to the Kremlin.

Since March 2018, the director of Primakov Center is Dimitri Lortkipanidze, a former member of the Democratic Movement – United Georgia. Lortkipanidze ran for the 2020 parliamentary elections as a majoritarian candidate.

EURASIAN INSTITUTE

The Eurasian Institute was founded on 22 September 2009. One of the partners of the Eurasian Institute is a Russian organization Lev Gumilev Center, which was founded by Eurasian Center in Moscow in 2011. The Center focuses on promoting the idea of “Eurasianism” as a way of settling ethnic conflicts. The founder of the Eurasian Institute, Gulbaat Rtskhiladze, is actively engaged in organizing the Kremlin’s propagandist projects, such as the march of the Immortal Regiment, in Georgia.¹⁴⁹ He often publishes his articles in the pro-Kremlin media outlet, Georgia and World, which, in turn, is linked to Georgian language edition of Russian news agency, News Front, also to Patrioti TV, and Politicano, the edition of Primakov Center.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Tabula, 6 December 2013. TDI: 4 December incident is the first manifestation of church antisemitism. <https://tabula.ge/ge/news/558698-tdi-4-dekembris-pakti-saeklesio-antisemitizmis>

¹⁴⁶ Radio Liberty, 20 June 2019. Guram Palavandishvili is detained. <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/30010014.html>

¹⁴⁷ Media Development Foundation, 2019. “Russian World” in Georgia. <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/117/>

¹⁴⁸ International Security and Estonia 2019 pg. 51 <https://www.valisluureamet.ee/pdf/raport-2020-en.pdf>

¹⁴⁹ Media Development Foundation, 2019. “Russian World” in Georgia. <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/117/>

¹⁵⁰ Myth Detector, 1 November 2019. News Front Georgia – Kremlin’s New Information Front in Georgia. <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/news-front-georgia-kremlins-new-information-front-georgia>

EURASIAN YOUTH UNION

The head of Eurasian Youth Union, Giorgi Iremadze, who also founded Patrioti TV, often appears on the pages of Georgia and World. Iremadze is intensively engaged in campaigns against the Lugar Laboratory¹⁵¹ and to this end, cooperates with the TV channel of Russian Defense Ministry, Zvezda, also a Bulgarian journalist with close ties to the Kremlin, Diliana Gaitanjieva,¹⁵² who produced a film discrediting the Lugar Laboratory for a TV company associated with Hezbollah, Al-Mayadeen, and with an American journalist, Jeffrey Silverman who is also engaged in this campaign.¹⁵³ Apart from the Georgian March, Iremadze supports other radical groups too. In 2021, he called on population to take to the street against Tbilisi Pride and also shared similar calls of Alt-Info.

MEDIA

Apart from TV Obieqtivi affiliated with the Alliance of Patriots, which pursues the editorial policy toeing the political party line, there are several media outlets that stand out for their open support to Russia and anti-Western stance.

GEORGIA AND WORLD – the Georgia and World newspaper and its online edition www.geworld.ge is founded by the Historical Heritage LTD. The Historical Heritage LTD was founded by Taras Gagnidze. In 2009, the establishment of the Historical Heritage was publicly welcomed by the then President of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev. One of the members of the public council of Historical Heritage is Aleksandre Chachia.¹⁵⁴ On 13 February 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin awarded the Order of Honor to Chachia for his great contribution to strengthening friendship and cooperation and development of scientific and cultural ties with the Russian Federation.¹⁵⁵ Chachia is one of key ideologists of pro-Kremlin groups promoting the narrative about incompatibility of Western values with the Orthodox Christianity.

Georgia and World brings together various actors supporting the Kremlin policy:¹⁵⁶ the Eurasian Institute, the Eurasian Youth Union, the Primakov Georgian-Russian Public Center, News Front, the author of Politicano online edition and Facebook page project, Giorgi Mdivani who often appears as a writer and a respondent on the Georgia and World platform. It should also be mentioned that the presenter of Primakov Center's Politicano can be often seen as a writer for Spacesnews, an online platform affiliated with the government, which received budget funding and pursues a hybrid (progovernment-pro-Kremlin) editorial policy.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ Media Development Foundation (2021). INFODEMIC IN GEORGIA –2020. <http://www.mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/201/>

¹⁵² Profile <http://mythdetector.ge/en/profile/gaytandzhieva-dilyana>

¹⁵³ Profile <http://mythdetector.ge/en/profile/silverman-jeffrey>

¹⁵⁴ Profile <https://www.mythdetector.ge/en/profile/chachia-alexander>

¹⁵⁵ <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/acts/files/0001201402130018.pdf>

¹⁵⁶ Myth Detector, 1 November 2019. News Front Georgia – Kremlin's New Information Front in Georgia.

<http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/news-front-georgia-kremlins-new-information-front-georgia>

¹⁵⁷ Myth Detector, 2 July 2021. "Spaces" for Pro-Russian and Governmental Experts are funded from the State Budget.

<http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/spaces-pro-russian-and-governmental-experts-are-funded-state-budget>

As the infographic provided below shows, Georgia and World is the one among monitoring subjects that most frequently uses Russian-language propagandist media platforms as a source of information. This edition relies most heavily (23) on materials of the Strategic Culture Foundation (Fondsk.ru¹⁵⁸). According to the 2020 report of the US Department of State,¹⁵⁹ the Strategic Culture Foundation is directed by Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service and closely affiliated with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In April 2021, the US Department of Treasury imposed sanctions on the Strategic Culture Foundation.¹⁶⁰ Georgia and World also often relies on Russian-government-established Ria Novosti (22), propagandist platform Vzglyad (vz.ru) (18), News Front (12), EADaily (6), Russia Today, topwar.ru, Topcor.ru, tsargrad.tv, regnum.ru and others. It is worth to note that Tsargrad TV (Царьград ТВ) which was often cited by Georgia and World with regard to juvenile legislation, is founded by the Russian oligarch, Konstantin Malofeev. Malofeev supports the idea of reinstatement of Russian Empire; he also funded the process of annexation of Crimea by Russia, which prompted the USA and the EU to put him on the list of sanctioned individuals. In 2015–2016, the editor-in-chief of the Tsargrad TV was Aleksandr Dugin, the leader of Eurasia Movement and ideologist of Russia’s aggressive expansionist policy.

FIGURE 18. RUSSIAN SOURCES



¹⁵⁸ Profile <http://mythdetector.ge/ka/profile/strategiuli-kulturis-pondi-fond-strategiceskoi-kulturny-fondskru>

¹⁵⁹ US State Department, GEC Special Report: August 2020 Pillars of Russia’s Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Pillars-of-Russia%E2%80%99s-Disinformation-and-Propaganda-Ecosystem_08-04-20.pdf

¹⁶⁰ US Department of Treasury. 15 April, 2021. Treasury Escalates Sanctions Against the Russian Government’s Attempts to Influence U.S. Elections <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0126>

THE NEWS AGENCY, SAKINFORMI, was established in 2010. The founder of the agency is Arno Khidirbegishvili who also serves as the editor-in-chief of the outlet. Sakinformi and Georgia and World often reprint materials of each other. Khidirbegishvili often quotes anti-western newspaper Asaval-Dasavali. As shown on the above infographic, Sakinformi often publishes materials of the Kremlin's propagandist media outlets such as News Front (30), Sputnik (26), ria.ru and regnum.ru.

MEDIA UNION OBIEQTIVI was established in August 2010. One of the founders of the outlet was Irma Inashvili, the current secretary general of the political party the Alliance of Patriots, although since 2014, she has not been listed among the management of the channel. In addition to television frequency, Obieqtivi broadcasts via radio frequency and the Internet. TV Channel pursues Turkophobic, xenophobic and homophobic editorial policy. One of the presenters of the Obieqtivi TV, Valery Kvaratskhelia, is a writer for print and online media outlet, Georgia and World, also the leader of Neutral Socialist Georgia. A program presenter on Obieqtivi TV was Nikoloz Mzhavanadze who is the head of the Union of Defenders of Rights; he is known for his xenophobic and anti-Western statements and pursues the analogous editorial policy in a newly-founded online edition TaoNews.

A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER, ASAVAL-DASAVALI, was founded in 1992. The owner of 100 percent of the shares in the newspaper and editor-in-chief is Lasha Nadareishvili. The newspaper pursues an openly xenophobic and anti-Western editorial policy. The newspaper does not reveal its print-run. A Moscow-based businessman Vladimir Khomeriki who is the head of the Foundation for the Unity of Russian and Georgian Peoples often appears on the pages of the newspaper, under the section "Voice from Moscow."

