



# ISSUE 8



AUGUST 13 - 24, 2020

- ### TOPICS OF THIS ISSUE
- **The possible coalition of Georgian Dream party and Alliance of Patriots**
  - **NDI and IRI under the attack of Alliance of Patriots**
  - **Georgia's Actions to Seize Foreign Company Disrupt Telecommunications Corridor Between Europe & Asia**

## RECENT POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

**Disagreement within the Georgian Dream party regarding the**

## possible coalition with the pro-Russian Alliance of Patriots

There was somewhat a consensual perception among different political players and experts (including the GD affiliated experts) that Georgian Dream was going to form the coalition with the Alliance of Patriots in case they can't get enough support in the upcoming parliamentary elections to solely form the government. But recently Giorgi Volski – the member of Georgian Dream's political council and first vice-speaker of the parliament of Georgia, in response to Revaz Arveladze (another Georgian Dream MP) who didn't exclude the coalition perspective, **declared** that GD won't form coalition with the Alliance of Patriots as their vision towards the Georgia's foreign policy is intolerable for GD. Volski stated that "The Alliance of Patriots' vision regarding Georgia's foreign policy is not only categorically unacceptable for us [Georgian Dream], but it is harmful for the country."

**The fact that Giorgi Volski excluded the chance of forming the coalition with the Alliance of Patriots is quite attention-grabbing. Georgian Dream members are always cautious when talking about the Alliance of Patriots,** though a similar statement was made by the former chairman of the parliament and current Executive Secretary of the GD, Irakli Kobakhidze in October, 2019. Kobakhidze stated that "Red lines are drawn on the formation of a coalition with the United National Movement, European Georgia and the Alliance of Patriots".

These **statements from the GD leadership are important and they carry a message for domestic and international audiences, that GD isn't going to form the coalition with the openly pro-Russian party, which campaigns for the Georgia's neutrality for over the years,** but when it comes to critical decisions we all know that Bidzina Ivanishvili will have the final say, who so far hasn't expressed his take on the issue.

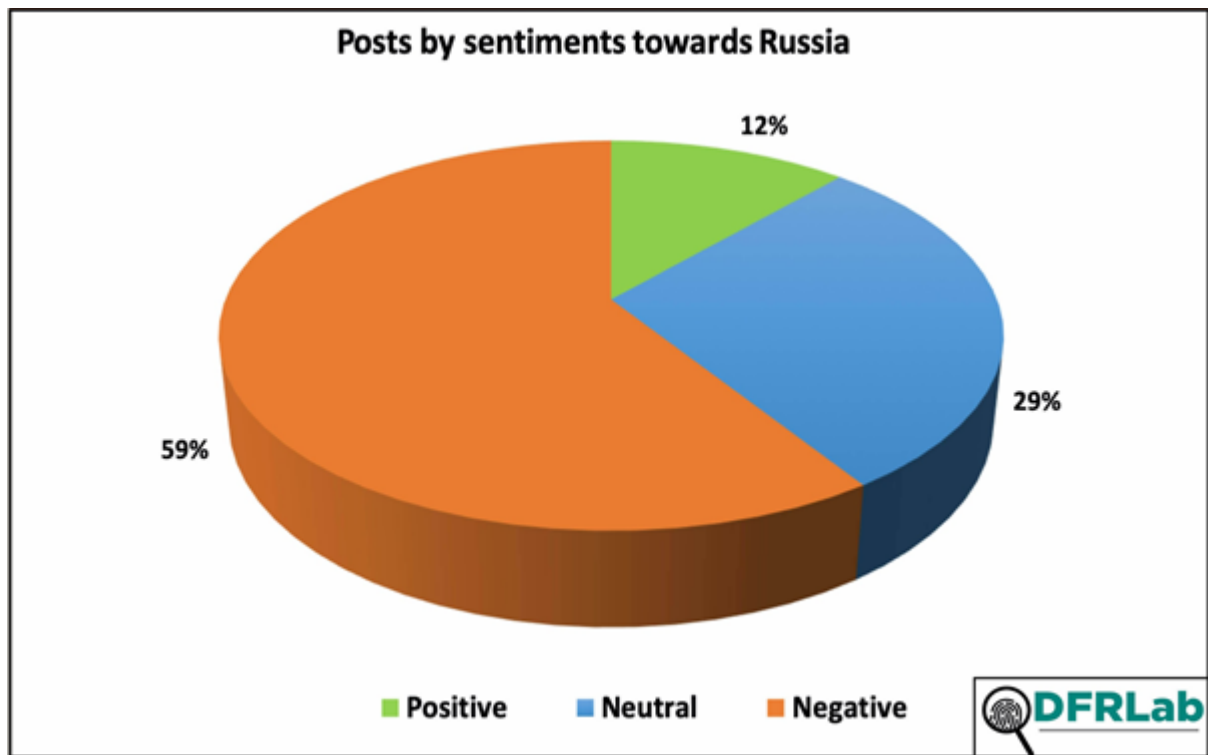
---

## Georgian far-right Facebook pages and their stance toward Russia

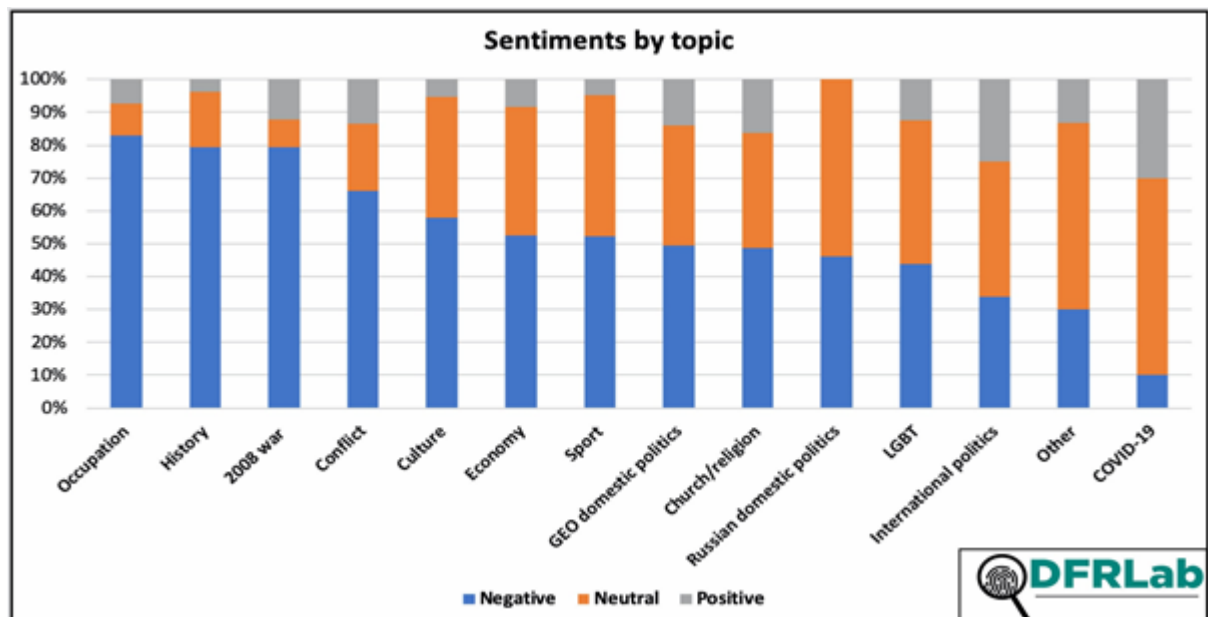


The DFRLab conducted a social media content analysis of several Georgian far-right Facebook pages in order to examine their attitudes and discourse toward Russia. The results showed that these groups are not homogenous in terms of their sentiment toward Russia, instead of expressing a range of opinions, from open support of the Kremlin to active hostility.

Although the selected far-right groups all pushed anti-liberal narratives and some of the posts depicted Russia in a positive light, almost 60 percent of the analyzed posts (398) exhibited negative attitudes toward Russia, mostly involving criticism and disapproval of Russia's actions toward Georgia. Slightly below one-third of them (194) were written in a neutral tone, meaning they did not convey a clearly positive or negative stance about Russia. Lastly, 12 percent of the posts (79) registered a positive tone toward Russia, portraying its actions in a positive light.



The DFRLab also identified 13 topics mentioned most often in the context of Russia by these pages; most concerned Georgia-Russia relations. The occupation of Georgian territories by Russia and the 2008 war remain the two primary sources of tension between the countries. Further sentiment analysis revealed that the 2008 war is not the only topic driving negative sentiment contributing to anti-Russia discourse among Georgian far-right groups. Discussions related to Georgia's prior history, particularly the [1992 Abkhazia war](#) and Russia's role in it.



The DFRLab observed that, although the majority of the far-right groups under analysis accused Russia of invading Georgia in 2008, they also criticized Georgia's previous government for not being wise enough to avoid escalation of

**the conflict that resulted in military clashes.** The DFRLab found that over 40 percent of posts with negative attitudes toward Russia were related to occupation, the 2008 war, and other aspects of Russia-Georgia conflict. Georgian far-right groups exhibited a relatively neutral tone when writing about Russian domestic politics or internal developments that did not involve Georgia.

Two topics that evoked the highest volume of positive sentiment, however, were COVID-19 and Russia's role in international politics. A small number of posts put the blame for starting the 2008 war with Russia in Georgia. Some posts further suggested that only the Kremlin can guarantee peace and Georgia's territorial integrity, while others criticized the Georgian political establishment for its repeated use of the Russian threat to explain domestic problems in Georgia.

The DFRLab analysis may suggest that the attitudes of Georgian far-right groups toward Russia are heterogeneous. Russia's occupation of Georgia, as well as several other historical points of tension in Georgia-Russia relations, has perhaps led some far-right actors to adopt a more nationalist, pro-Georgia stance, despite some ideological overlap with the Kremlin on attitudes toward the West. At the same time, it is worth mentioning that this study did not involve an analysis of the motivations of these far-right actors, and further research should explore whether these groups are genuine in their criticism of Russia or whether they are merely attempting to capitalize on anti-Russian sentiment among the Georgian public.

Read the full article [here](#).

---

### **Georgia's Actions to Seize Foreign Company Disrupt Telecommunications Corridor Between Europe & Asia**

According to [CaspianNews](#), attacks on the Caucasus Online have threatened the realization of a digital telecommunications corridor between Europe and Asia. Despite the political and economic importance of the project for Georgia, developing a modern transit fiber-optic (FO) infrastructure network connecting Europe to Asian markets through the Caucasus region has been endangered by the Georgian authorities. The [Parliament of Georgia has amended the law regarding the country's electronic communications that significantly expanded powers to the Georgian National Communications Commission \(GNCC\)](#). **It is believed that the main target of these amendments was Caucasus Online, a foreign-owned Georgian telecommunications company owning the only Black Sea submarine fiber-optic cable transiting internet traffic from Europe to the Caucasus region.** These [amendments have been widely criticized](#) by different local telecommunications companies, civil society actors, and local media watchdogs. The GNCC attacks on

business owners appear to be inappropriate, according to law firms such as [Quinn Emanuel, DLA Riper, and PwC](#).

## MONITORING OF DISINFORMATION CASES

**Myth Detector** revealed that openly pro-Russian, Kremlin-related actors, and media, anti-liberal groups express solidarity and support for Lukashenko. Narratives about the Belarus protests boiled down to three main messages:

- The Georgian side gives Lukashenko an excuse to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali;
- Lukashenko is a successful ruler and defender of traditional identity;
- The protest against Lukashenko is an externally managed process

See more on [Myth Detector site](#).

---

**A Russian psychic's conspiracy about vaccination.** Georgian media outlets For.ge, Resonancedaily.com, and Primetime.ge disseminated information citing Russian psychic Anatoly Kashpirovsky, claiming that after COVID-19 vaccination by the help of Bill Gates the "universal death of mankind" will begin. Kashpirovsky's video address, which has half a million views, was also shared by Georgian Facebook pages and in Russian media. The false [claim](#) that mass vaccination is aimed at massive human mortality and that Bill Gates is involved in the process is an old conspiracy, debunked by Myth Detector and other fact-checking platforms.

---

**Alliance of Patriots Party against NDI and IRI.** Last week Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, one of the leaders of Alliance of Patriots Party stated on Obiektivi TV that the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) had stopped conducting research for a year after the Alliance of Patriots exposed their lies in regards of the research polls. On August 13, the Alliance of Patriots Party held a special briefing in which Irma Inashvili, the party's chairwoman, expressed distrust in the IRI poll published the previous day. She once again accused NDI, IRI, and Edison Research of lying, as evidenced by the results of her party's alternative poll. Inashvili also demanded the recall of the head of the IRI from the country, as, according to her, the head of the NDI had been recalled earlier. Myth Detector rates these claims as another [disinformation](#) attack on NDI and IRI, which aims to discredit western research institutions. In fact, the NDI and IRI continued publishing the surveys, and the head of NDI has moved to work as an IDEA Global Programs Director in Stockholm, she was not recalled as a result of the Alliance of Patriots Party campaign.

---

**Child deprivation is falsely connected to AA.** Nino Ratishvili, the host of the

program Night Studio on Obiektivi TV, stated that the child deprivation from economically disadvantaged mothers is related to the requirements set by the Georgia-EU Association Agreement (AA). Myth Detector's fact-checked this statement and [found](#) out that there is no record/reference of child deprivation in the Association Agreement and its Action Plan. The issue of children is mentioned only twice in the AA: the first case (article 21) concerns the development of judicial cooperation between Georgia and the EU in the field of child protection. The second entry on child rights (Article 229) calls for the abolition of child labor in order to comply with internationally recognized labor standards.

## CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS' INITIATIVES

**The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy** (ISFED) published [research](#) about the network on Facebook supporting the pro-Russian political party - "Alliance of Patriots (AoP)." According to ISFED, apart from the social media page of television company Obiektivi (founded by the leader of the Alliance of Patriots - Irma Inashvili), some online media connected to it are also engaged in the information campaign favoring "Alliance of Patriots." An activist famous for his anti-Western and pro-Russian views - Bakur Svanidze and his team manages ten Facebook pages, affiliated with the AoP. Previously, MDF's [research](#) identified 8 pages connected to Bakur Svanidze that campaigns against both ruling and opposition parties (except for "Alliance of Patriots"), certain media, and NGOs. The names of the pages are discrediting George Soros, political party "European Georgia", political party "United National Movement", political party "Georgian Dream" and favoring "Alliance of Patriots".

---

**Open Information Partnership** (OIP) in partnership with Georgia's Reforms Associates (GRASS) and Media Development Foundation (MDF) published a [report](#) about COVID-19 disinformation narratives in Georgia in April-June, 2020. The report is a result of the COVID Working Group coordinated by Zinc Network. The report singles out the outlets and notable actors that were pushing the most problematic content, the key narratives, notable stories, the impact, and possible future trends of the COVID-related disinformation.

---

On 17-20 August, **Civic IDEA** held the workshop "[Investigative Journalism and Open Source Research Course](#)" at Radisson Blu Hotel, Batumi. The learning course focused on the following topics: the methodology, history and the role of investigative journalism, fact-checking and verification mechanisms, the concepts of soft, sharp



and hard power, authoritarian states' imposition in Georgia and worldwide, role of strategic communication in modern societies. The course involved foreign and Georgian trainers and aimed to raise the awareness of the mid-career journalists in Georgia.

[SUBSCRIBE HERE](#)

*This newsletter is a part of the project „**Strengthening of the resilience of civil society organizations in Georgia against foreign malign influence**“, which is funded by the TRANSITION PROMOTION program of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and by the EMERGING DONORS CHALLENGE PROGRAM of the USAID.*

**TRANSITION**  
Transition Promotion Program



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



**European Values Center for Security Policy**  
*is a non-governmental, non-partisan institute  
defending freedom and sovereignty*

Office +420 608 739 902  
E-mail [info@europeanvalues.net](mailto:info@europeanvalues.net)  
Web [www.europeanvalues.net](http://www.europeanvalues.net)

[Facebook.com/evropskehodnoty](https://www.facebook.com/evropskehodnoty)



**European Values Center for Security Policy**  
[info@europeanvalues.net](mailto:info@europeanvalues.net)

[Unsubscribe](#)



