

GRASS Disinfo Brief: Putin's War of Choice

15 August – 21 August

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Ukraine War Disinfo Narratives in Georgia

15-21 August

Fearmongering by War Expanding into Georgia

The most dominant narrative has still been that the West and Georgian opposition parties seek to open a second front against Russia in Georgia. The messages regarding Russophobia in Georgia and the West trying to establish neo-colonial rule over Georgia, both quite popular in the previous week, have been merged with the fearmongering narrative. Notably, four MPs that have formally left the ruling Georgian Dream (GD) party (Kavelashvili, Subari, Khundadze, Macharashvili) have remained in the vanguard of amplifying this narrative. But this time, warmongering propaganda was built on the recent developments with regards to the International Society for Fair Elections And Democracy (ISFED) which was excluded by the ruling Georgian Dream from a working group intended to develop the legislative changes necessary for Georgia's EU candidate status. As MPs [claimed](#) by supporting the International Society for Fair Elections And Democracy (ISFED), the US embassy is practically telling GD that there should be a revolution in Georgia and the United National Movement should return to power to open a second front:

- Editor-in-chief of the pro-Russian website Isari.ge, Hamlet Chipashvili [argued](#) that the US ambassador to Georgia, Kelly Degnan, has been hostile towards the Georgian government since February 24 after receiving a new anti-Russian directive from Washington DC. He claimed that the American ambassador was told that the US

expected Georgia, as a partner who must fulfil all the demands of the US, would join sanctions and open a second front against Russia.

- Alt-Info [claimed](#) that the West, especially the US ambassador, tried to drag Georgia into the war by planning to orchestrate a revolution and take over the judiciary in September or October.
- One of the leaders of the Conservative Movement, [Zurab Makharadze](#), [suggested](#) that the fifth column of George Soros and their western overlords wanted to drag Georgia into the war and turn the country into the second target of Russian shells and Russian missiles, just like Ukraine.
- Nana Kakabadze, an anti-Western propagandist, stated that [three](#) MPs that have left Georgian Dream have revealed that the US embassy is helping people eager to open the second front in Georgia to come to power. However, according to her, the Georgian government took the right decisions, did not follow US ambassador Kelly Degnan and avoided the war in the country.

Propaganda continues claiming that the Russians are not treated well in Georgia

Propaganda continued to exploit the public debate concerning the high number of Russians arriving and potentially planning to stay in Georgia and once again voiced the accusation of Russophobia:

- Anti-Western and pro-Russian sources claimed that there is [Russophobia](#) in Georgia, and this has a form of a campaign. While others [claiming](#) that negative attitudes toward Russian tourists may get troublesome and cause yet another war with Russia. Hence, propagandists try to convince Georgians to get wary in their attitudes toward them.

Leader of the pro-Russian Conservative Movement [argued](#) that the demand to impose a visa regime on Russians is only a provocation with the aim to cause destabilisation and aggression towards Russians in order to force Russia to react aggressively.

Discrediting Georgia's Pro-Western Foreign Policy Course

- Anti-Western outlets disseminated claims that the EU and the US have a neo-colonial [attitude](#) toward Georgia, and they are trying to limit Georgia's [sovereignty](#) by forcing it to make decisions based not on people's but the US's desires. The [EU](#) and the [US](#) were also accused of trying to reinstate the previous ruling party, the [UNM](#), to the government and taking control of the judiciary to open a second front against Russia.
- As a solution to the threat of European and American “capitalists” looting Georgia, one of the pro-Russian Facebook pages [concluded](#) that Georgia needed a ruler as clever as Vladimir Putin.
- Pro-Russian outlet Saqinform.ge [argued](#) that Georgia should and highly likely join the 3+3 format and, instead of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, pursue Caucasian-oriented foreign policy.
- Alt-Info [tried](#) to persuade the public that pro-Western foreign policy is not beneficial for the country by arguing that the West is not able to save Georgia from Russian invasion, as it was unable in the case of Ukraine. On the contrary, Alt-Info asserted that Euro-Atlantic aspirations do not defend Georgia from Russia, but it caused the war with Russia [in 2008]. One of Alt-Info's respondents particularly [blamed](#) NATO integration

aspirations for [causing](#) a war in Georgia in 2008 and currently in Ukraine, turning a blind eye to Moscow's imperialist intentions and fear of democracy near its borders.

Russian Propaganda Justifies the War, Blames Ukraine for War Crimes and (Almost) Celebrates Victory

As Russia's offensive in Ukraine has been largely stalled for a while, Russia's Defence Minister Shoigu came up with a justification that Russian army is deliberately slowing down the speed of the attack to avoid civilian casualties. Russian propaganda machine, apart from justifying the unprovoked invasion, backed up Shoigu by claiming that Russia is winning and will win the war:

- On the air of Alt-Info, the leader of the pro-Russian Conservative Movement, Giorgi Kardava, [claimed](#) that President Zelensky had said that due to the high economic price of the evacuation, Ukraine had deliberately left peaceful civilians in the cities despite being aware of the upcoming imminent attack. He also mentioned that Russia acted contrary to Ukraine and initially evacuated the cities. Giorgi Kardava concluded that Ukraine purposely left civilians behind to have a high number of victims to display to the world, implying that the Ukrainian leadership does not care about civilians.
- A pro-Russian Facebook page [published](#) a video in which a group of people are shown beating a woman. According to the propaganda Facebook page, this is one of the examples of how Ukrainians oppressed Russian minorities. The page also reiterated the message that Vladimir Putin is protecting its people on Ukrainian soil, and that Crimea had never been and would be a part of Ukraine. The page concluded that American and European Nazism would definitely be defeated.

- The editor in Chief of the pro-Russian Tao News, Nikoloz Mzhavanadze, [stated](#) that the fact that Russia had not conquered Ukraine yet does not mean that the Russian military is losing the war. Instead, he recalled that it took seven years for the USSR to establish control over Ukraine after World War II.
- On the air of Alt-info, pro-Russian former ranking military officer Tristan Tsitelashvili tried to justify Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by [stating](#) that Russia had indeed conducted a protective operation in Ukraine due to the threat of biological weapons. He also repeated that Ukrainians oppressed Russian-speaking minorities for years. Two other respondents of Alt-Info - [Simon Chachanidze](#), head of one of the regional offices of the pro-Russian Conservative Movement, and notorious alt-right anti-Western activist [Alexandre Palavandishvili](#) - also argued that the trigger of the war was that Ukrainians were acting as fascists and oppressing Russians; while Director of the pro-Russian Patrioti TV, Giorgi Iremadze [claimed](#) that Ukraine's bombing of not only Donetsk and Luhansk, but Rostov, as well, was to a reason for Russia to conduct a special operation to liberate Ukraine. Another Facebook page [blamed](#) the US for provoking the war, and the Sect Facebook page [furthered](#) this message by stating that the US started this process in 2013-2014, indicating the Revolution of Dignity.
- Pro-Russian journalist Zaza Davitaia and former officer Tristan Tsitelashvili, previously convicted for treason, falsely [blamed](#) Ukraine for deliberately bombing a prison in Donetsk to kill Azov Battalion PoWs so that that did not admit war crimes. They also argued that Russians treat PoWs according to international conventions while Ukrainians torture prisoners.
- The pro-Russian Facebook page [accused](#) Ukraine of bombing the Zaporizhia nuclear power plant with US-provided rockets, which indicates that Ukrainians had deliberated on seriously damaging Europe's biggest nuclear power plant.

- The Sect Facebook page [asserted](#) that Russia would eventually achieve its tasks and Ukraine would forever lose Donbas and Crimea, but Ukraine might still celebrate this defeat and state that they retook Mariupol and Kherson.
- The pro-Russian Facebook page [published](#) a video of Ukraine PoWs and wished more such success to the "Russian brothers".
- Propagandist "expert" Demur Giorkhelidze voiced the [message](#) that the US is using Ukraine as an instrument against Russia and also for ruining cooperation in Europe.

Kremlin wants to impose “Ukraine Fatigue” on the West

Ukraine feels hopeful about launching an offensive to retake Kherson and mounting successful counterattacks in new [directions](#). However, it is wary of, as Defence Minister Reznikov coined - "fatigue syndrome" of the international community, i.e. the continued military and financial aid to Ukraine and economic pressure on Russia from the West - and this is perceived by Ukraine as one of the most acute threat. Kremlin propaganda tries its best to intensify this "fatigue syndrome" in order to slow down weapons supply to Kyiv:

- Alt-Info [questioned](#) how long the West would manage to provide weaponry and support Ukraine by feeding it and ensuring that it existed. Alt-Info argued that it is hard to predict, but by its estimations, Western assistance would last until the new year, and then the West would encounter problems; the pro-Russian outlet also concluded that beyond that period, it is militarily impossible, and no one would be able to sustain that effort.
- In the broadcast of the pro-Russian TV Obieqtivi, the talk show participants [asserted](#) that the Western states are getting rid of the old weaponry and

selling it to Ukraine at the price of new weapons. According to the claim, Ukraine is buying these weapons by loans, which is why the three US corporations have bought the most fertile lands in Ukraine.

- Propagandist Facebook page had a different opinion and [argued](#) that the US benefits from the war as Russia is getting weaker, and Europe is getting exhausted economically and militarily by providing military aid to Ukraine. According to the propaganda page, the US does not care that Ukraine is getting devastated since the war would weaken Russia, making it possible for the US then to destroy Moscow with the hands of Baltic states and Poland, and to weaken Europe, ultimately making it dependent on the US.

For the Kremlin Propaganda Sanctions still only hurt the West

Propaganda regarding economic issues – stating that the sanctions only hurt the West and exaggerating the energy crisis – is a continuing trend which received one of the most interactions:

- [Giorgi Kardava](#), the leader of the pro-Russian Conservative Movement, claimed that the West is socially and economically in crisis. According to him, the gas price could double in the winter; thus, Germany may have to switch to using firewood.
- [A former](#) MP currently associated with infamous pro-Russian public figure Levan Vasadze, Khatuna Khoperia, published a Facebook post where she claimed that Germans are using a wet towel instead of a shower to save electricity and water.

- The pro-Russian Facebook page [stated](#) that the Russian economy had not been damaged but, on the contrary, is growing while Euro and USD are constantly devaluing.



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