

2023

GRASS Disinfo Brief

Disinformation trends in Georgia – 1- 6 February

Europe – land of Fascism and Nazism and poverty

- Europe has been [characterised](#) as a land where fascism and Nazism, alongside with oppression of humans, is still spread and Russia is fighting exactly against this.
- Propagandists conveyed the narrative that life conditions in the US and Europe is terrible by [exaggerating](#) the inflation crisis. Somehow, a conspiracy theory also linked Bill Gates to the price increase of eggs to advance his business interest in artificial eggs.

Ditch the US and the West, Russia is guarantor of Georgia's statehood, security and traditions:

- Georgia refusing to participate in a Russia-dominated so-called 3+3 format dialogue on the South Caucasus issues (Russia, Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia and also Georgia is envisaged but has repeatedly excluded involvement) has been [assessed](#) as Georgia preferring West-imposed LGBT policies over reuniting occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions into Georgia. The disinformation also falsely claimed that the negotiations were ongoing regarding Tskhinvali region but they were collapsed by the Ukraine war. Propaganda also blamed the ruling Georgian Dream party, the largest opposition party – United National Movement and the NGOs for it and claimed that they were financed by foreign forces and were serving interests of their external patrons.

Actually, Georgian and Russian side are negotiating in the Geneva International Discussion (GID) format over the occupied territories since 2008. These negotiations were hampered by Russia's war in Ukraine but they have resumed. Even before the war in Ukraine, the talks were stalled and parties have never been near any breakthrough. Also, as a result of GID, negotiations are taking place in Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism ([IPRM](#)) format, that mainly provides a platform for discussion on potential risks, the follow-up of incidents and the exchange of information, as well as problems affecting the communities on a daily basis. IPRM meetings have been halted with Abkhaz side well before the war but is taking place with Tskhinvali region even [after](#) Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Although, IPRM meeting have some tangible positive results, it does not discuss the issue of reunification or anything related. Therefore, it is Russian propaganda creating an illusion that Russia is willing to restore Georgia's territorial integrity but local elites, acting under the supervision of the West, are jeopardising the process.

- Somewhat-forgotten anti-Turkish propaganda [resurfaced](#) once again, claiming that Turkish pupils are taught that they should cheer on Russia's collapse to easily take over and swallow Georgia. Disinformation criticised anti-Russian groups in Georgia, arguing that without Russia Georgia would be divided between Turkey and Iran and Georgia would lose its statehood and national culture, while the US and Europe would only express concerns.

- Fearmongering by Russia's collapse was witnessed elsewhere too. Particularly, Russia's loss was [equated](#) to Georgia's destruction because as propaganda claims, those who are on Russia's side are well-defended by Russia. Propagandist argued that Russia is protecting and patronising Georgia very well and if Georgia still exists it is thanks to Russia's might. However, sorrow was expressed that ungrateful and traitor Georgians are serving the US interests and helping Americans in dissolving Russia.
- Propagandists also [reported](#) on Biden signing same-sex and interracial marriage protections into US law and highlighted the contrast to Putin's speeches on the same issue, implying that Russia is a protector of traditional values.

Ukraine on Russia's Georgian supporters' radar

- Propaganda continues to provide various explanations for the start of the war, all of which have at least one common aim – to deflect the blame from Russia. This time around, the true reason for the war has been [stated](#) to be the plan of the “Synagogue” – the West to wage a war with Russia, China and Iran. Other explanation, based on “Jewish expert”, [provided](#) that Russia is not fighting to conquer Ukraine but no to let NATO on Russia's borders and claimed that the war should end with the expelling the US, a world troublemaker, from Europe.
- Another version [suggested](#) that Russia was dragged into the war with Georgia and then with Ukraine by NATO, but as a result Russia got Sokhumi (capital of Abkhazia region), Tskhinvali, Crimea and Donbas. According to disinformation, Russia is currently dragged into the war with Ukraine for the second time, hinting that a second time is not excluded in Georgia, as well. Such “dragging of Russia into the war by NATO” was assessed as a masochistic behaviour from NATO.
- Some anti-Western sources [conveyed](#) the message that despite pro-Western actors initially bragging that Russian army was amateur and Ukraine was hammering it, now they have to admit that Russia is destroying Ukrainian cities and taking control of them one by one.
- Some pieces of propaganda [appeared](#) in the social media to argue that Ukraine is forcefully mobilising its citizens into the army, something that Georgian media is covering up.
- Georgian volunteers fighting in Ukraine were [accused](#) of a plan to turn their attention on Georgia after the war finishes, whether Ukraine wins or loses, to organise a revolution with the help of local agents and the United National Movement.
- In response to Ukraine's Zelensky requesting the release of Mikheil Saakashvili, former President of Georgia, from imprisonment, propagandist [accused](#) Zelensky of killing hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians on a continuous basis.
- Economic sanctions imposed on Russia were once again on a target of disinformation. Propagandist [misused](#) the claim of MEP Guy Verhofstadt that the EU's nine packages of sanctions against Russia were totally ineffective.

Attention, Moscow is Speaking - Russian Disinformation on Facebook and Instagram

- Throughout Putin’s aggressive war against Ukraine, the Kremlin has been employing information campaigns, trying to justify its war goals and convince everyone that no matter what happens, Russia will eventually emerge victorious.
- The first week of February has seen some fresh pieces of disinformation, which have been debunked by FactCheck Georgia. First, the decision to finally provide the Ukrainian army with the Western-made main battle tanks has seemingly worried many in Moscow – one viral false story claimed how in Berlin, a video on a billboard showed protest to the transfer of German Leopard tanks to Ukraine – this has [turned out](#) to be fake. On the same topic, another disinformation piece falsely claimed that Poland is getting ready to take back control over Lviv, and to that end, Warsaw is actively [hiring](#) its citizens to compose Leopard tank crews destined for Ukraine.
- Going further, Russian propaganda also targeted the US, falsely claiming that US weekly online news magazine Newsweek [explained](#) how Ukraine’s titanium reserves have urged Washington to “occupy” the country and instigate the war against Russia. Finally, a fake report on military losses in Ukraine went viral this week – citing some Turkish publication Hurseda Haber, which allegedly received anonymous data from Israeli intelligence, Russian sources have been falsely claiming that only 18,480 of their soldiers have been killed in Ukraine since February 24, while deaths on the Ukrainian side having reached 157,000. The same fake “data from Mossad” included information about the death of more than 2000 NATO soldiers and instructors in Ukraine – read the full story in this [FactCheck Georgia article](#).