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Grass Disinfo Brief

GRASS Disinfo Brief 13-19 March

Georgian Dream escalates propaganda campaign

Despite the ruling Georgian Dream (GD) parliamentary majority dropping the controversial Russia-type draft law on the “transparency of foreign influence” Georgian Dream leaders have not backtracked in their aggressive rhetoric. Quite on the contrary, GD leaders are labelling CSOs and their representatives as [agents](#) [of foreign influence], accusing them of planning provocations and destructive [actions](#), etc, and blaming them for yet again Russia-coined phenomena of “liberal fascism”.

Secretary Cleverley’s Tbilisi visit triggers Kremlin’s mouthpieces in their propaganda against the UK:

- Pro-Russian account [spread](#) disinformation that according to the poll in the UK, Vladimir Putin is considered to be the best President by the Britons, well ahead of President Zelensky and President Biden.
- Propagandist blogger in the broadcast of pro-Russian Alt-Info [claimed](#) that the UK citizens were forced to adapt to the fact that their taxes are going to Zelensky to support Ukraine in order to prolong and escalate the war.
- Pro-Russian propaganda [assessed](#) the statement of the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, James Cleverley, during his visit in Tbilisi concerning security of the upcoming elections in Georgia as a demand to rig the elections to get the desirable results for the UK.
- The UK, along with the collective West, [wants](#) to jeopardise the Russo-Georgian alliance which would bear huge strategic importance – via Georgia Russia will connect with Iran and then with India and China. According to the propagandist, Russia was ready to resume direct flights with Georgia already from April and introduce visa-free for Georgians in June, but as it always happens when Georgia and Russia are getting closer to each other, the West intervenes to sabotage possible alliance and this time, Western influence got activated in Georgia to destabilise the country.
- Pro-Russian propaganda [claimed](#) that when the UK FCDO Secretary James Cleverley asked how Great Britain can strengthen Georgian democracy he meant strengthening their influence in Georgia, violence against children, changes of sex [by children] and brainwashing them, LGBT propaganda and also, labelling people peaceful protesters while they throw Molotov cocktails.

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Russian propaganda against the EU divided between “second front” conspiracy and old rigmorole of “EU imposing same-sex marriage” :

- Euro-integration was [described](#) as an instrument of imposing their quasi-ideology upon Georgian population and the EU as an organisation that seeks to drag Georgia into the war. The EU values was [claimed](#) to be equivalent to protecting the rights of zoophiles, agreeing to children of 3-4 years old changing their sex, etc.
- Also, a false claim [suggested](#) that amongst the EU's 12 priorities were legalising same-sex marriage.
- According to propaganda voiced in the broadcast of a pro-Russian TV channel Alt-Info, depolarisation (one of the 12 priorities that the EU set out for Georgia in order to achieve a candidate status) [meant](#) the capitulation of one side and in this case, the capitulation of Georgian Dream and transferring the power to other forces.
- Pro-Russian propagandists, in line with the Georgian Dream leaders, [accused](#) several MEPs, notably Andrius Kubilius of being a lobbyist of the United National Movement.
- Propaganda [described](#) the EU as a union of wealthy states where Georgia, with its poor economy, has no place, and the EU is interested in Georgia only to use it as a bargaining chip with Russia. Based on this, the message that Georgia has no chance of ever joining the EU is out of question has reappeared.
- The EU was [accused](#) of calling itself Georgia's friend but not implementing a single project in Georgia with the aim of economic development in 30 years, and only financing NGOs that are fighting against the church and traditions.
- The reason of not granting Georgia the EU membership candidate status unlike Ukraine and Moldova was once again [named](#) to be Georgia not being dragged into the war. Another argumentation claimed that the candidate status was used for extorting political pressure and blackmailing Georgia's government into taking anti-state steps, and when Georgia's enemies cannot manage to fulfil their objectives in this way, they even start implementing the plans of coup d'état.
- Besides, a propagandist blogger [linked](#) the crisis in the banking sector in the West to the sanctions imposed against Russia.

Propaganda against the US:

- Pro-Russian media Alt-Info [discussed](#) the work of USAID in Georgia, particularly its involvement in the high education sector. According to the anchor and the respondent, USAID is penetrated into every university - they approve study programmes and money comes from USAID, meaning that those 250 professors [referring to the professors that signed a public statement criticising the so-called draft “foreign agents law”] acknowledge that if they do not sign and talk what would please their patrons in the US they will not receive the money.
- A propagandist [stated](#) that based on the instruction from the US, anybody who angers journalists affiliated with the United National Movement must be put into jail, referring to a case when police detained one of pro-Russian activists for abusing a journalist. According to the propagandist, Americans are present in the office of Prosecutor General and the Courts all the time and conducting various trainings and claimed that with such tactics Americans have occupied prosecutor’s office and the courts, even deciding who to be promoted.
- While assessing the statement from one of the leaders of the ruling Georgian Dream party – Mamuka Mdinardze, who said that Georgia was amongst 38 countries who appealed to the ICC to investigate Russia’s war crimes based on which ICC issued an arrest warrant for Putin, the same propagandist [claimed](#) that the ruling party has carried out yet another task of the US and supported the clown-type decision of Hague (ICC) to issue an arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin.
- Propagandist blogger [argued](#) that Georgia’s so-called international partners only have their vested interests in relations with Georgia and want to use Georgia as a marionette in confrontation with other super-states thanks to Georgia’s weak government. He also criticised civil society and its fight against disinformation in Georgia. He claimed that they control whole of the traditional and social media and finances in Georgia and for them fight against disinformation is considered the fight against undesirable information for them, He further argued that the fight against misinformation and disinformation in the Biden administration was also a fight against true information which was undesirable for them, claiming that this is already a proved fact that the US government was censoring its citizens in the name of fighting disinformation.

Discrediting the protesters of the rally against the “foreign agents law” by propaganda was still active:

- For instance, propaganda accused them of [violence](#), lack of [awareness](#) about the issue they were protesting and accepting bribes to take part in the demonstrations. One propagandist [stated](#) in a negative context that the demonstrators were the youth raised on the Western ideology that was promoted by the Georgian Dream, and as a result of GD’s pro-Western policy, the society started fighting against the church and the army.
- [According](#) to the director of Georgian branch of Kremlin-affiliated Primakov Georgian-Russian Public Center – Dimitri Lortkipanidze, “Liberal platforms”, such as Franklin Club (a recent target of baseless accusations from the Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili and the ruling party), were not dedicated to cultural or educational purposes but operated as political platforms on which Neo-Liberal Fascism was born. In the same context of the demonstrations, he also accused MEPs of overt actions against constitutional order in Georgia.
- According to one piece of propaganda, the devils hiding behind the finances of the EU were [running](#) on Rustaveli and setting fire to the Georgian soldiers, who have been fighting against the Russian empire.
- Disinformation also [blamed](#) the West. According to the anchor of pro-Russian Alt-Info, the West is behind the radical opposition and Western politicians are even bribed and act as lobbyists of radical opposition. According to propaganda, recent protests were so well-organised that they were not planned by only radical opposition but their Western backers. Others [claimed](#) that it is already a well-known fact that the opposition and the [West](#) want to organise a Maidan-style revolution in Georgia and then drag Georgia into the war and open a second front against Russia.
- Disinformation was also actively [spread](#) to persuade the public that the same laws were also in force or in the process of adoption in most of the Western countries.

Attention, Moscow is Speaking - Russian Disinformation on Facebook and Instagram, 13-19 March

During the week of 13-19 March, when the International Criminal Court (ICC) judges [issued](#) arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin over alleged war crimes, the Kremlin propaganda had to hit back – so, together with emphasizing that the acting head of nuclear-powered Russia simply cannot be imprisoned, online [disinformation](#) pieces claimed that Hungary, on the other hand, had called on launching an international investigation “over the war crimes committed by the Zelensky’s regime.” The claim however was unsubstantiated and such a statement has not been made by Hungarian officials.

Other Russian-language propaganda posts focused on a religious issue – the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra. According to the disinformation, after the representatives of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate were expelled from the Lavra, the golden crosses there [started to blacken](#). And lastly, a long-existing Russian [disinformation](#) narrative on Zelensky being a drug-addict was once again spread on social media by Russian-language Facebook users – this time, including BBC’s [fabricated news story](#).