



GRASS Disinfo Brief

MONITORING PERIOD:

March 27 - April 2

GRASS
REFORMANDA



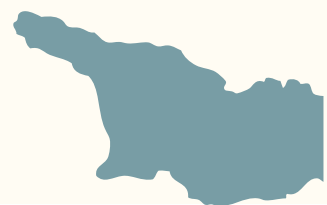
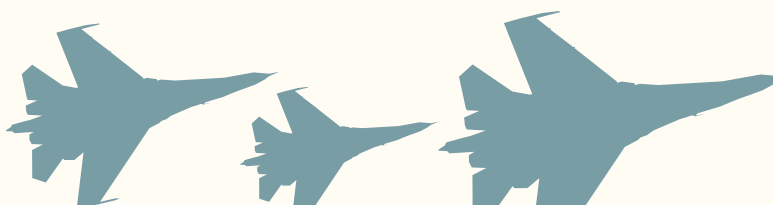


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Russian officials engage in propaganda campaign regarding Georgia:

- At a press conference with his Armenian colleague Ararat Mirzoyan in Moscow, Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister, claimed that the West is trying to strengthen its hegemony everywhere, directly attacking the legitimate interests of its three closest neighbours - Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. According to him, the West is actively working on torpedoing the foundation of the 3+3 format in the South Caucasus by imposing the services of the EU and the US upon three South Caucasus states. He mentioned that the Georgian side is still thinking about involvement, and the door is open for Tbilisi while the participants are considering holding a second meeting. He reiterated the propaganda of the Georgian ruling party and argued that along with these geopolitical plans, the West financially supports various NGOs that are engaged in activities related to the preparation for a new "colour revolution", and all these NGOs are known as they speak publicly, defend the interests of the West and try to discredit the actions of the likes of Russia and Iran.
- Lavrov's deputy Mikhail Galuzin furthered his boss's propaganda narratives. According to him, they "are sure that further normalisation of relations between Russia and Georgia, united by common history and culture, combining the destinies of millions of people, fully meets the interests of the people of two countries." He claimed that despite the growing pressure from outside and the absence of diplomatic relations", the relations between the countries are developing, first of all, in the trade and economic sphere. Mikhail Galuzin said that the joint work of Moscow and Tbilisi "to ensure the continuous operation of the only highway between the two states" is an example of "successful Russian-Georgian cooperation". He stated that "The common focus between the two countries is security issues in the South Caucasus, which are discussed in a multilateral format with the participation of Abkhazia, Georgia, South Ossetia, Russia and the United States under the co-chairmanship of the European Union, the United Nations and the OSCE", referring to the Geneva International Discussions. Galuzin also commented on the recent protests in Georgia against the Russian-style "foreign agents bill", saying that "behind the March protests, we see the desire of the West, dissatisfied with the pragmatic course of the Georgian government, to undermine the situation in the republic [of Georgia], to convince its leadership to more actively support Ukraine, to cut ties with Russia."



Georgian Dream and the "second front conspiracy" remain an inseparable duo:

- The ruling Georgian Dream party has been holding party conferences in the regions where, according to the chairman of the "Georgian Dream" faction in the parliament – Mamuka Mdinardze, the so-called Russian law ("foreign agents bill") is also discussed shortly amongst other issues. He claimed that branding the law as Russian was based on fake campaigns from the media and the United National Movement, and its patrons, including the "Global War Party" representatives.
- After President Salome Zourabichvili lambasted the propaganda campaign of the Georgian Dream during her address to the parliament, calling the "second front" a "conspiracy theory", debunking the myth that the EU wants war in Georgia and stating that "it is a fact that Tbilisi and Moscow speak the same language on the topic of the "second front", she, too, was accused of been involved in the attempts to drag Georgia into the war with Russia in Georgia. Chairman of the Georgian Dream and Leader of the parliamentary majority Irakli Kobakhidze responded that the "second front" threat is not a conspiracy and that a "Global War Party" exists interested in prolonging the first front in Ukraine and opening a second front in Georgia. Kobakhidze stated that Georgia should defend itself from these threats and that Georgian society should be vigilant not to allow the "Ukrainisation" of Georgia. According to him, Salome Zourabichvili has detailed information on this issue but still makes opposing statements.

Georgian Dream MPs and propaganda sources lash out against MEP Viola von Cramon:

- During her visit to Georgia, MEP Viola von Cramon came to the rally in support of Lazare Grigoriadis, detained for alleged charges of throwing Molotov cocktails and burning a police car during the 7-8 March protests. This alarmed GD MPs and sparked a wave of comments and propaganda against her:
- The First Vice-Speaker of the Parliament, Gia Volski, stated: "Everything became clear. This is a strategy that should evolve from rallies to physical confrontation and the kind of civil conflict that involves blood and human sacrifice. Von Cramon is one of those who support this from the tribune of Europarliament. Von Cramon is taking part in the conspiracy against Georgia, and also the authors of the resolution in the Europarliament [referring to one of the resolutions critical to Georgia] are lobbyists working against Georgia."
- According to Mikheil Sarjveladze, Chairman of the Human Rights Committee of the Parliament, in recent times, this person [Viola Von Cramon] has been very distinguished by her efforts to develop revolutionary scenarios and by supporting radicalisation.
- According to the Vice-Speaker of the Parliament, Archil Talakvadze, Ms Viola works in a place where the law punishes attacks on citizens, burning property bought with taxpayers' money, but it seems that she has come to Georgia with the exact opposite purpose.



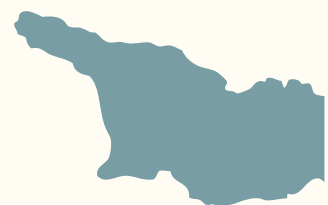
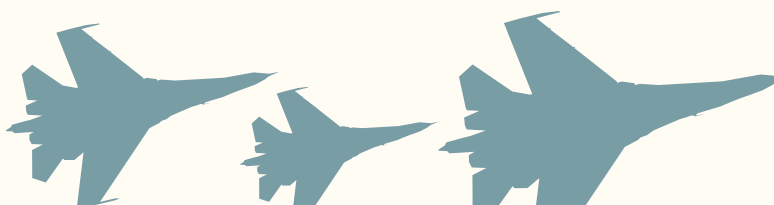
- Georgian Dream MP stated in a derogatory manner that von Cramon runs around here at rallies, and her tone was very disturbing. He expressed hope that she would understand this and apologise.

Apart from Georgian Dream representatives, propaganda sources were also actively engaged in the discrediting campaign:

- Viola von Cramon engages in a revolutionary scenario in Georgia to overthrow the government, similar to Euromaidan in Ukraine, and that is the reason for her arrival. According to the propaganda, this is what Georgia has been prepared for 30 years – to use it against Russia at the right moment, and the moment has arrived; therefore, alongside other countries, Georgia is being pressed to join the war against Russia.
- With derogatory wording, she was accused of hypocrisy due to not going into the US and protesting when the police shot a woman during the protests at the Capitol and currently not protesting in support of the detained people in the demonstrations in Paris and Washington.
- Viola von Cramon, alongside MEP Andrius Kubilius, was accused of instigating anti-Western attitudes amongst Georgian people.
- One of the leaders of the pro-Russian political party Conservative Movement/Alt-Info, Shota Martinenko, stated that MEP Viola von Cramon came to the rally demanding the release of Grigoriadis, who was arrested for throwing a Molotov cocktail at the special forces. According to him, it is incredible impudence and insult to our society as the officials of the globalist empire literally tell us without hesitation that no matter what atrocities their agents have committed, even if they are accused of burning people alive and trying to storm the parliament, Georgian laws should not apply to them and the state should not dare to react to their actions.
- Ms Von Cramon was also accused of supporting terrorism due to supporting an "official gay boy" who was burning people with Molotov cocktails.
- Regarding this case, it was also stated that Public Defender is not protecting Georgians, for instance, those jailed for violence during July 5, 2021 events, and only protects the interests and rights of LGBT and everyone except traditional Georgians.

Kyiv Pechersk Lavra issue dominates Russian propaganda regarding Ukraine in Georgia:

- Due to the ongoing issue regarding Kyiv Pechersk Lavra in Ukraine and its transfer from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (of the Moscow Patriarchate) to Orthodox Church of Ukraine, disinformation was actively targeting Zelensky and his government as fighters against Christianity. Pro-Russian sources in Georgia have used the crisis around Kyiv Pechersk Lavra to picture the Ukrainian government as "anti-Christian".



- With Russia trying to position itself as a defender of the Christian faith in Georgia, where the vast majority of the population identifies themselves as Orthodox Christian, this message is particularly dangerous. In particular, pro-Russian sources tried to depict Zelensky and Ukraine's government as fighters against Christianity in order to diminish popular support towards Ukraine in Georgia.
- As Russia has for long tried to label itself as a defender of Christianity and persuade the Georgian population that Russia should be Georgia's ally due to this shared religion, this direction of disinformation is unsurprising. It also aims to justify Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine by creating the illusion of Russia defending Christianity in Ukraine (this was first reported by the Open Information Partnership (OIP) and the Ukraine War Disinfo Working Group, of which GRASS is a member. For instance, propaganda claimed that the Ukrainian government was forcing priests out of churches en masse. If you would like to receive the weekly monitoring report of propaganda in 12 Central and Eastern European countries related to Russia's war in Ukraine, please leave a message to the GRASS Communications Manager (contact information is listed at the end of the newsletter).
- Pro-Russian propagandists addressed "Russophobes" and argued that Russia's loss would be the same as Georgia's loss. According to her, Georgia should change its foreign policy because the US, NATO and the EU are not saviours but constitute the way of dooming Georgia. She also described the West as a source of depravity. She also argued that the Georgian side does not yet realise that the West has abandoned and lost interest in it and still tries to maintain ties artificially. She hailed Putin for, in just two decades, transforming Russia from a kneeled country into a superpower that will not let the US conquer the world. She concluded that Russia is a country that gives world peoples, including Georgians, a chance to free themselves from the US yoke.
- According to pro-Russian propaganda, Russian tanks will soon enter Berlin, and German neo-fascists and hostile countries towards Russia, first of all, the US will be in a terrible situation.
- According to pro-Russian propaganda, alongside Russia, the US and Europe are also facing severe economic damage due to the sanctions, and the West could not manage only to harm Russia.
- According to propaganda, Zelensky considers that Bakhmut does not have tactical importance but only political because in case Bakhmut falls, Western aid to Ukraine will significantly reduce and therefore, battle morale in the Ukrainian society will deteriorate, and Zelensky will be forced to compromise with Russia, something that Putin is waiting for. Hence, according to the propaganda, Zelensky is going to blame the West and Ukrainian society if Bakhmut falls, and he will be forced to sign some kind of compromise. Propaganda further claimed that Ukrainian losses already account for 400 thousand.
- It was stated on the pro-Russian Alt-Info that the opposition and their supporters had crossed the red lines and were trying to overthrow the government even with the condition of sacrificing Georgia for war and opening the second front in Georgia.



Propaganda against the US:

- To divert the attention from Russia's regular bombing of civilian places in Ukraine, one whataboutism listed 34 instances of the US bombing various countries.
- LGBT-related issues were employed to discredit the US:
- Pro-Russian propagandists claimed that the US army is proud of having the first gay fighters team.
- A derogatory post against Kelly Degnan, questioning her gender identity, was also observed.

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

- During the week of March 27 – April 2, Russian propaganda on Facebook and Instagram pushed its long-existing narratives – Ukraine's steadfast supporter, Poland, was once again targeted, with the pro-Russian accounts claiming that Polish state television is "already dividing Ukraine." "The map shows that the entire south and east of Ukraine will be included in Russia. The western part will join Poland. Small pieces of territories will pass to Romania and Hungary", viral posts claimed. In fact, however, this was a manipulation. Though the video presented by the propagandists was quite real – a map with the divided territories of Ukraine was indeed shown on the Polish state channel TVP1 – the content of the plot had nothing to do with the statement about Poland's alleged intentions to divide the neighbouring country. TVP1 used the map of divided Ukraine back in 2014 in order to illustrate for its audience the infamous proposal of then vice-speaker of the Russian State Duma Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who officially asked Poland, Romania, and Hungary to divide the territory of Ukraine.
- Going further, in another attempt to portray Europe and the US as atheists and enemies of the true faith, the defender of which is the third-Rome, i.e. Russia, social media accounts made up a story, according to which, while meeting with the Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, Lithuania's Seimas speaker Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen told him that it was unacceptable that the God "covers the Kremlin's imperialism" – a statement not found anywhere but on Russian sources.
- And lastly, the Kremlin propaganda's favourite topic of drug-addicted Zelensky was this time "backed up" by a video, also shared on Twitter by Dmitry Polyansky, Deputy Permanent Representative of Russia to the UN, allegedly showing a Zelensky ally MEP using cocaine – in fact, however, the video did not depict MEP, but a former Bundestag member Jens Mayer, who used to be a member of the extremist wing of the far-right Alternative for Germany party Der Flügel, and was most likely sniffing a tobacco.

