



GRASS Disinfo Brief

MONITORING PERIOD:

May 15 – May 21

GRASS
REFORMANDA



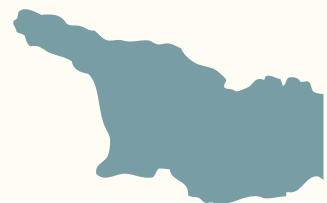
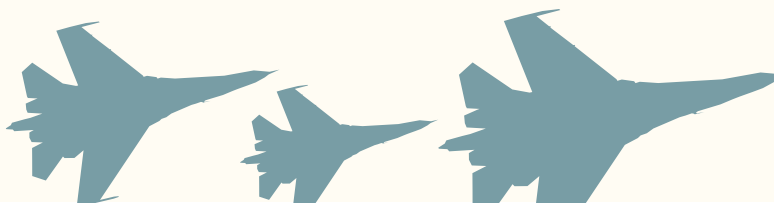


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Direct flights, the “second front” conspiracy and Lavrov’s daughter’s visit to Georgia have been on top of the busy political agenda in Georgia:

- Commenting on the issue of direct flights with Russia, chairman of the ruling Georgian Dream party and leader of the parliamentary majority Irakli Kobakhidze promised that similar to the models of Turkey, Israel and Azerbaijan, Georgia will pursue its own model and will not let the sanctioned companies fly in Georgia and thus, Georgia will not violate the sanctions regime. He [added](#) that those calling for Georgia to impose sanctions on Russia, such as “radical opposition”, want to destabilise the country and cause chaos which should eventually lead to the second front. He [reiterated](#) that when you ask for sanctioning Russia, which will cause a 10 to 18% economic decline, there is only one goal behind it - aggravating the situation in the country and creating economic problems with the hope that all this will lead to the second front. He stressed that Georgia’s policy regarding sanctions is clear – not imposing sanctions but not bypassing the existing sanctions.
- Furthermore, Irakli Kobakhidze stated that they have a cautious policy [vis-à-vis Russia], and they are often criticised for being cautious and pragmatic, which can be translated as being criticised for not punishing Georgia and Georgians without directly saying it. According to him, Moldova, which is in a situation similar to Georgia, also pursues a cautious policy towards Russia, however, there is no criticism towards Chisinau, which indicates that the "[Global War Party](#)" expects something else from Georgia - a different role to play; this is a hint at opening a second front. He accused MEPs of saying a thousand nonsense, absurdities and lies regarding Georgia but not calling the current government of Moldova pro-Russian.

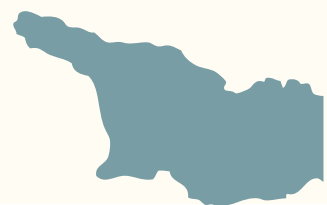
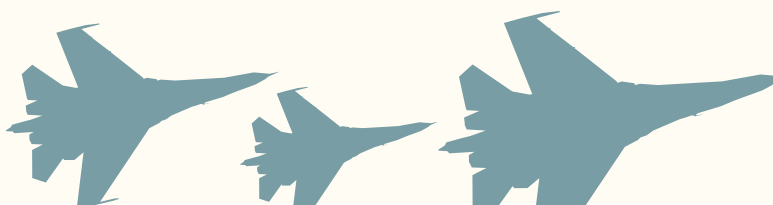


- Mr. Kobakhidze also continued [using](#) the term “[liberal fascism](#)” against groups critical of the ruling party in Georgia – an alarming development as the term has long been used by anti-Western fringe propaganda sources.
- Speaker of Russia’s MFA Maria Zakharova [noted](#) that regarding the critical reactions of some politicians on the resumption of air travel, it is impossible to be against direct flights, considering the number of citizens and families living in the two countries, if you represent your people and you are not carrying out others’ orders in exchange of money.
- Media reports, later [confirmed](#) by the first deputy Speaker of the Parliament, claimed that the daughter of Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was in Georgia attending the wedding of her relative in the town Kvareli of Georgia’s Eastern Kakheti region, famous for its lakes, fashionable hotels, wine, tourism and the birthplace of one of the most renowned public figures in Georgia’s history – Ilia Chavchavadze. This information sparked the protests on top of the existing protests against the direct flights with Russia in Tbilisi and Kvareli. Later, President Salome Zourabichvili [announced](#) that she received a promise from the Minister of Internal Affairs that the family that was going to hold the second half of the wedding has left and the wedding will not take place today. She called this a victory of the society. Georgian Dream leaders [called](#) the statement unserious and incorrect and claimed that it is impossible for the Minister of Internal Affairs to say such thing because he is not preoccupied with this type of matters [meaning allowing or disallowing someone’s wedding party].
Irakli Kobakhidze went as far as accusing the President of “[darkness](#)” (meaning “uncivilised) and [fuelling xenophobia](#) against the Russians. Mr Kobakhidze also [stated](#) that sanctioning the family members represents a gross violation of human rights. He once again [argued](#) that such so-called protests have the sole goal – escalation, causing unrest in Georgia and staging provocations with the eventual aim of [opening] the second front [in Georgia].
- President Zourabichvili was also [accused](#) by pro-Russian Alt-Info to be on the side of pro-Westerners who want to cause unrest and drag Georgia into the war.



Pro-Russian sources celebrate direct flights:

- Pro-Kremlin outlet ran the [headline](#) – “The Russian plane starts the process of “taking away Europe!”. The article downplayed the security concerns and sanctions regarding Russian planes, and complained about the inappropriately expensive pricing of flight tickets.
- Pro-Russian propagandist Valeri Kvaratskhelia ([leader of the “Socialist Georgia”](#), anchor of the pro-Russian TV Obieqtivi and former MP in the 1990s), who was on a visit to Russia to meet Russian officials alongside with pro-Russian Georgian NGO “Solidarity for Piece” and then returned to Georgia with the first direct flight, [wrote](#) an article for the pro-Russian newspaper Georgia and the World from Russia with a triumphant tone. He claimed that the Georgian delegation [of pro-Russian propagandists] asked their hosts to relay their gratitude to Vladimir Putin for removing visa requirements for Georgia and resuming direct flights. He stated that the protests about the decision were nonsense because flights were still taking place via third countries, albeit it was more expensive. He claimed that US Ambassador Kelly Degnan is behind these terrorist protesters. According to him, the West has nothing else to offer to Georgia and threatened not to grant candidate status to Georgia in case of the resumption of flights, which, according to him, is nonsense due to the same argument. He concluded that Georgia should now end the policy of being in a position of a slave vis-a-vis the West, and instead partner with only those forces in Europe and the US that are not spreading LGBT propaganda but are against it, and go through the path of Christianity and traditions that the West is fighting against.
- Georgia and the World ran another [article](#) from Valeri Kvaratskhelia with a headline – “a plane of hope” referring to the first direct flight after its resumption which, according to him, should pave the way for Georgia to correct its policy - resolve relations and ally with Russia instead of the West.

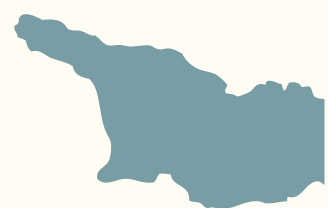
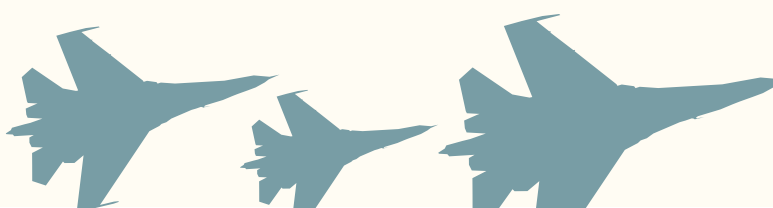


- Temur Pipia, the coordinator of the socialist movement, [argued](#) that the opposition that wants to block this decision of Russia's president are traitors. He said that he had no information about the possibility of direct dialogue between the Georgian government and the Russian government but hailed the importance of the visits of Georgian propagandists to Russia in promoting humanitarian and economic topics - apart from Valeri Kvaratskhelia and himself, Merab Chiqashvili – head of the pro-Russian NGO “Solidarity for Peace” - were named as organisers, and the head of Russia's MFA's Gorchakov's fund's Georgia office Dimitri Lortkipanidze as one of the participant of the dialogue. According to him, the decision is a positive step taken by Russia for the benefit of our country, but the kindness that we can receive is unacceptable for the Georgian opposition because they have such orders; however, neither they nor the West will be able to change anything because this time around, Russia has done its part. He added that in the future, the Russian side can make decisions beneficial to Georgia even on issues related to the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts. He also discussed the possibility of opening a railway through Abkhazia - not an easy process but easy to solve if the authorities of Georgia, Abkhazia, and Russia discuss it. He concluded that the opening of the railway and the restoration of territorial integrity is a complex issue and the involvement of government representatives is necessary. According to Pipia, relations between Russia and Georgia are slowly warming up, and this process will be hindered only if the Georgian government fails to withstand the unprecedented pressure from the West.
- Pro-Russian Georgia and the World also [spread](#) information based on the Russian source (Тайная канцелярия) that the Russian authorities do not rule out that a delegation of Georgian officials will soon arrive in Moscow as part of efforts to warm relations with the Georgian authorities, and this delegation would probably include several Georgian ministers, as well as a number of high-ranking functionaries of the ruling Georgian Dream party such as Kakha Kaladze. No reputable source has reported on this “leak”, and it's highly likely this is not based on real information.
- One of the leaders of the pro-Russian Alt-Info and a businessman currently operating in Russia, Konstantine Morgoshia, [claimed](#) that it is well-known in Russian insider circles



that these decisions were taken in Russia in August, 2022 but were delayed in order to accommodate the interests of Georgian Dream government to face big internal attacks. He claimed that July 5, 2022 events (when protestors partially organised by Alt-Info prevented Pride March from happening in Tbilisi, physically assaulted more than 50 journalists, and raided offices of several NGOs) in which Alt-Info played a key role paved the way for these decisions.

- Pro-Russian media Saqinform and its notorious editor-in-chief Arno Khidirbegishvili devoted several editorial articles to the issue. He [ran](#) the headline: “Georgia is expanding the Azimuth [the name of the Russian company that performed the first flight from Russia to Tbilisi since the restoration of direct flights] from Washington to Moscow - we expect the restoration of railway traffic with Russia in the wake of air traffic”. Apart from criticising the protestors in the same fashion as other propagandists, he also criticised Georgian Dream for defending itself with the claims that Russia’s decisions were unilateral and ex-President Saakashvili has removed visa requirements for Russians. He called on changing the pro-Western foreign policy and focusing on restoring railway traffic with Russia via Abkhazia.
- Khidirbegishvili also [praised](#) Prime Minister Garibashvili for his recent actions, such as participation and speech in CPAC, not opening a second front, not providing weaponry to Ukraine and did not join sanctions, foiled the plans of a Russhophobic revolution, etc., and argued that Russia might have seen them in a positive light, as well, which then led to Russia’s decisions. According to him, the West is not content with Georgia’s current government and wants opposition in its place because they will carry out orders from the West. Therefore, he argued that the West will try to oppose resuming direct flights between Russia and Georgia by either blackmail, terrorist attack, or sabotage as the resumption of the flights is a step towards Georgia warming its relations with Russia.
- In another article, he [claimed](#) that the West lost Georgia due to fighting against traditional values that Russia is protecting. Khidirbegishvili also [lied](#) in his claim that



Georgia receives 3 times more dollars per year from Russia than it received from the US for 30 years.

- Pro-Russian Sezoni TV also [argued](#) that the protests against the resumption of direct flights were financed by the US and that these protests were against Georgian farmers. Another argument voiced in this media [claimed](#) that the US is against wealth getting in Georgia and the condition of Georgians getting better.
- Many propagandists claimed that [pro-Western](#) activists and opposition do not want to retake Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region through negotiations with Russia because in that case, they would lose function and hence, prefer, to continue profiting from non-restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity.
- Alt-Info [argued](#) that the US should remove visa requirements for Georgians but the US does not care about Georgians, therefore, the US ambassador should not interfere in the process of Georgia normalising its relations with Russia.
- Propaganda actors also [manipulatively](#) connected the resumption of direct flights and removing visa requirements as progress towards restoring territorial integrity.

Propaganda portrays European integration futile from social, (geo)political and economic perspectives

- Pro-Russian Alt-Info [argued](#) that Georgia has no chance of becoming part of Europe [EU] as the EU does not need Georgia – hence, the arguments that by some decisions somebody is taking Europe from Georgia is only a manipulation.
- Alt-Info's other anchor [stated](#) that he does not want Europe in Georgia or Georgians to become Europeans but rather wants Georgia in Georgia. He suggested to those who desire Europe to immigrate to Europe until the EU removes visa-free travel – something that the EU will definitely do, according to him, because Georgia is not joining the war.
- Article 78 of Georgia's constitution - the constitutional bodies shall take all measures within the scope of their competences to ensure the full integration of Georgia into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization” – was heavily [criticised](#) for instance by the [argument](#) that if the EU collapses, Georgian constitution will lose its essence.



- One of the respondents of Alt-Info [compared](#) Georgia's trade with the EU and Russia and argued that Georgia exports nothing to the EU that would outweigh its exports to Russia excluding the drain of Georgian people who migrate and work as slaves for Europeans.
- According to [Alt-Info](#), European integration directly fights against Georgia's traditions and values, the EU views any small steps towards the restoration of territorial integrity by Georgia as unacceptable, and the EU, instead of being a guarantor of Georgia's prosperity, development, and security, is itself fighting against Georgia's security, economy, social situation and demography. Alt-Info also [argued](#) that any step that Georgia takes independently is assessed as anti-Western, followed by threats of sanctions from the West.
- Alt-Info [stated](#) that there are double standards when any pro-Western person such as Nika Gvaramia, director of Mtavari TV, is arrested, he is declared as political prisoner and the arrest is assessed as unacceptable but people are arrested for only anti-Western slogans, such as it happened during the arrests of the participants of July 5 rally that have done nothing wrong.

