



GRASS Disinfo Brief

MONITORING PERIOD:
November 28 – December 5



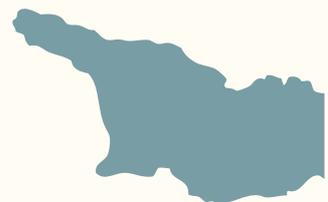
GRASS Disinfo Brief – November 28 – December 5

- Attempts to discredit Ivanishvili are coming from people who want to drag Georgia in a war, Georgian Dream says
- Georgian Dream's statements about refusing to join sanctions against Russia please Kremlin propagandists
- The ruling party continues to claim that the opposition is deliberately sabotaging Georgia's EU integration
- President Zourabichvili's campaign "Our voice to Europe!" hindered as Tbilisi and Kutaisi state universities refuse to cooperate
- Anti-Western narratives suggest Western integration is contrary to Georgia's national interests
- Pro-Russian propaganda legitimizes Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine

Attempts to discredit Ivanishvili are coming from people who want to drag Georgia in a war, Georgian Dream says

In the 2024 edition of [POLITICO's](#) annual ranking of Europe's most influential people, the former Prime Minister of Georgia, Bidzina Ivanishvili is referred to as an oligarch who "is widely known to be pulling the strings of the ruling Georgian Dream party he founded." Moreover, according to POLITICO, Ivanishvili's goal is "to push Tbilisi out of the EU's waiting room and into the Kremlin's clutches." The article elicited harsh reactions from the Georgian Dream's members.

- Chairperson of the Georgian Dream, Irakli Kobakhidze, [claimed](#) that the aforementioned article was published in exchange for financial compensation and might have been commissioned by a Georgian individual or organization. In defense of Bidzina Ivanishvili, Kobakhidze emphasized that the freezing of Ivanishvili's Swiss bank accounts amounted to a de facto sanction. Despite this setback, Kobakhidze contended that Ivanishvili demonstrated a commitment to the nation's well-being by refraining from taking any actions that could harm the country. He insinuated that the freezing of Ivanishvili's accounts might have been orchestrated to provoke Georgia into a conflict with Russia. Nonetheless, the former Georgian Prime Minister prioritized the interests of his country above his personal concerns. Kobakhidze has previously [propagated](#) this narrative. Additionally, Kobakhidze [underlined](#) that Bidzina Ivanishvili brought a political party into power that achieved the Association Agreement, visa-liberalisation, and now membership candidate status, thus claims that he aims "to push Tbilisi into the Kremlin's clutches" are baseless.



- Executive Secretary of the Georgian Dream, Mamuka Mdzinaradze, also [claimed](#) that those who called on Georgia to start a war were the same people who published sponsored articles about Ivanishvili, which is not a coincidence. Simultaneously, Mdzinaradze [argued](#) that the opposition's plan to portray the Georgian Dream as a pro-Russian power failed. A pro-Russian power would not be able to achieve EU membership candidate status.
- Chairperson of the Parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, [suspected](#) that the US Department of Justice Foreign Agents Registration Act would show that the article was sponsored by lobbyists who had previously spread anti-Georgian disinformation. Such cases result from political corruption, which, according to Papuashvili, is an unfortunate challenge in some of the EU institutions as well. According to Papuashvili, the adopted resolutions by the European Parliament critical of the Georgian government were actually written by hired lobbyists. As a result, anti-Georgian disinformation was reflected in some of the European Parliament's resolutions.
- Georgian Dream MP Beka Odisharia [assessed](#) the article as an unprofessional publication, either written by some ignorant journalist or because it was paid for. People have paid money to damage Georgia before. "Turns out Bidzina Ivanishvili is leading us towards Russia when in reality, after his Prime Ministership, Georgia has signed the Association Agreement, achieved visa-liberalisation, and is close to receiving EU candidate status," stated Odisharia.

Georgian Dream's statements about refusing to join sanctions against Russia please Kremlin propagandist

In response to an initiative made by the opposition political party Lelo, which, as announced, aims to protect Georgia from the influx of Russian citizens, businesses, and overall influence, Mamuka Mdzinaradze [stated](#) that the true intent behind Lelo's initiative is to damage Georgia's interests. The opposition attempts to undermine Georgia's economy by putting forth initiatives regarding Russia. Georgia makes sure that it is in full compliance with the sanctions imposed by the international community towards Russia, but it will not impose sanctions itself. According to Mdzinaradze, sanctioning Russia would be the same as sanctioning Georgian citizens, as it would jeopardize their livelihoods and financial stability. "Why would we sanction Georgian citizens? Are we crazy?! We are not, that is why we are successful", stated Mdzinaradze. This assertion by the Executive Secretary of the Georgian Dream was shared on social media by Kremlin propagandist [Margarita Simonyan](#), who described it as "surprisingly adequate" and expressed a wish for Armenia to adopt a similar approach.

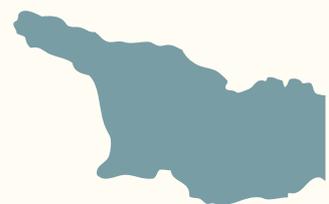
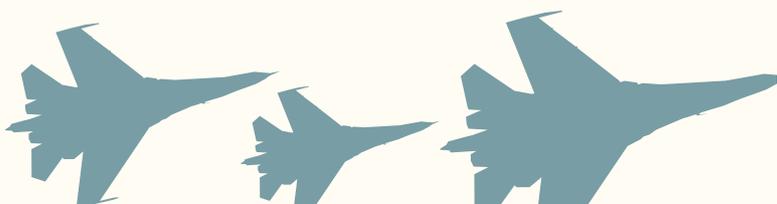
- Journalists inquired about Mdzinaradze's thoughts on Simonyan's assessment, to which the Georgian Dream MP [replied](#) that the Russians are trying to frame the situation as if the Georgian government is pro-Russian, which is a message also spread by the opposition. Simonyan's statement only benefits the opposition because it reinforces their narrative. Mdzinaradze reiterated his position that sanctions against Russia would damage the Georgian people. Irrespective of who endorses it; the truth, in his view, is the crucial factor.



- When asked by journalists what it means for the Georgian government when Russian officials and propagandists praise them, Shalva Papuashvili [emphasized](#) that the ruling party values the opinion of Georgian citizens above all. Papuashvili asserted that by imposing sanctions on Russia, Georgia would be shooting itself in the foot.
- Vice-speaker of the Parliament, Archil Talakvadze, [argued](#) that Mdinardze's statement complies with Georgia's national interests and has the full support of the ruling party. According to him, the only ones happy about Simonyan's statement are the radical opposition and their media. The Georgian Dream maintained peace, ensured economic growth, and fostered Georgia's EU integration. Thus, statements made by Russian officials are not important.

The ruling party continues to claim that the opposition is deliberately sabotaging Georgia's EU integration

- Talking about the involvement of the opposition and CSOs in the process of implementing the action plan adopted for the purpose of fulfilling the 9 priorities set out by the European Commission, Irakli Kobakhidze [stated](#) that the country will not fail if the opposition and the CSOs do not get involved, although it would be preferable that everyone comply with the EU's requirements. Kobakhidze indicated a lack of optimism regarding the opposition's cooperation. Notably, he emphasized that the Georgian Dream had independently completed the preceding twelve EU priorities and, if necessary, would achieve success in fulfilling the current nine priorities.
- Shalva Papuashvili [stated](#) that the United National Movement's only purpose is to damage the interests of the Georgian people. The leader of the party is a citizen of a foreign country, and Saakashvili was snuck into the country by foreign intelligence services. In a different statement, Papuashvili emphasized that the opposition is welcome to help the Georgian people and the government elected by it to fulfill the new nine priorities, but the ruling party is worried that the opposition and activist groups will deliberately hinder the process. Despite this, according to the Chairperson of the Parliament, Georgia will successfully counter these hindrances as it did when it fulfilled the 12 priorities.
- Mamuka Mdinardze [argued](#) that despite the attempts of the opposition, the representatives of "the war party," and their television networks to undermine Georgia, the country was able to get a positive assessment by the European Commission.
- Georgian Dream MP Gia Volski also [claimed](#) that "the radical opposition" will continue to sabotage working groups of the Parliament to set back Georgia's EU integration. According to Volski, the opposition is weakened because the European Commission's recommendation ruined their plans of starting a revolution. They will try to undermine the process until the European Council's final decision is announced on December 15th.



- Georgian Dream MP Beka Odisharia [stated](#) that the Georgian opposition is diverse - there are some constructive members, but most of them are malign actors who are the enemies of Georgia, its people, and its European integration. The EU candidate status is an existential threat to the United National Movement and "its small breakaway parties" because it will further diminish their chances of returning to power.

President Zourabichvili's campaign "our voice to Europe!" hindered as Tbilisi and Kutaisi state universities refuse to cooperate

The President initiated the campaign "Our Voice to Europe!" to garner signatures from the Georgian people, which will be sent to the EU to prove further the Georgian people's willingness to become part of Western institutions. Through the framework of the campaign, the President has held meetings with business owners, medical personnel, representatives of the cultural sphere, persons with disabilities, journalists, and others. On November 30th, during an international conference held by the Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy (EECMD), President Zourabichvili [stated](#) that the dean of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU) did not allow students to organize a space where students would be able to sign a statement directed towards the EU. The university dean [claimed](#) that the President's administration did not make an official request to organize an event on the university premises, which is why the university could not allocate relevant space.

The issue arose in regard to Akaki Tsereteli Kutaisi State University, where the President wanted to hold a public lecture. [According](#) to the dean, there is an exam period in the university, and the students need to attend lectures; therefore, it was the wrong time to hold such an event.

Additionally, the President [stated](#) that the representatives of local municipality officials from the regions never participated in the campaign, the purpose of which was to strengthen Georgia's European path. Moreover, Zourabichvili claimed that school pupils have been coerced not to attend the events she organizes.

- Irakli Kobakhidze [commented](#) about a meeting the President held with journalists, some of whom were from media channels critical of the government. According to Kobakhidze, most of these journalists had insulted the President in the past, but she still welcomed them into her residence. She became a part of the "collective UNM," which is shameful. Additionally, Kobakhidze [responded](#) to Zourabichvili's statement that local municipality officials refuse to meet with her. "Mayors, Chairpersons of the city councils, and other local officials are part of our political party; logically, they are not meeting with a member of the UNM," stated the Chairperson of the Georgian Dream, adding that Zourabichvili can meet with the Mayor of Tsalenjikha, who is a member of the UNM party.
- [According](#) to Mamuka Mdinardze, a person who does not even deserve to be called a President anymore but still formally holds the position should not be surprised that the people do not trust her. As he put it, Zourabichvili cheated and abandoned the Georgian society and her voters. Mdinardze expressed disappointment that the President called

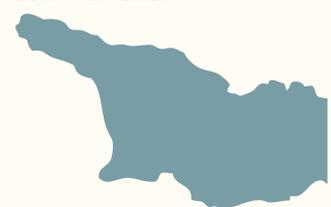


Ivanishvili an oligarch, criticised the ruling party, and “completely adopted the message box of the UNM.” Mdinardze assessed President Zourabichvili’s campaign as “populism”, underlining that the signatures are unnecessary when the European Commission recommended granting Georgia candidate status.

- Georgian Dream MP Aluda Ghudushauri [asserted](#) that President Zourabichvili has chosen the path of the radical opposition, and the only aim of her campaign is to attract attention. “What lecture is Salome Zourabichvili going to hold?! Will she explain to the students how she does not care about the Georgian Constitution?!” stated the MP.

Anti-Western narratives suggest Western integration is contrary to Georgia’s national interests

- The US Department of State released the 2022 Country [Reports on Terrorism](#). Regarding Georgia, the report assesses Alt-Info as “a far-right, pro-Russia group associated with violent extremism including with the organization of and the execution of violent attacks against dozens of journalists and activists during the July 5, 2021 Tbilisi Pride event and a July 6, 2021 protest against the July 5 violence. No group leaders or organizers of the violence at the 2021 event, including Alt-Info and far-right networks associated with violent extremism, were held legally responsible in 2022.” In response, Alt Info leaders [argued](#) that the US assesses people who fight against LGBT propaganda as extremists, while in Russia, those who spread LGBT propaganda are classified as extremists. This suggests that Russia is morally superior to the US, which is trying to silence “conservative” voices in Georgia.
- Alt Info and Conservative Movement leader Shota Martinenko [underlined](#) that the US Department of State labeled Alt Info as a “terrorist threat”, which is not true. [Although the group and its violent activities were described in the Terrorism report, Alt Info was recognised as a violent extremist group rather than a terrorist threat]. Martinenko argued that the West is commencing a radical attack on conservative powers in Georgia to increase its influence before the 2024 Parliamentary elections.
- Sezoni TV anchor and pro-Russian propagandist Nikoloz Mzhavanadze [reviewed](#) a social advertisement regarding homophobia, along with his frequent guest, Tristan Tsitelashvili, a former Georgian high-ranking officer who was previously imprisoned for spying in favour of Russia during the 2008 war. The video depicts a young man coming out as homophobic to his parents, who express disappointment and anger towards him. The propagandists argued that the video was created to brainwash the Georgian people and is somehow linked to the priorities set by the European Commission for Georgia, even though it was published in 2018.
- Recently, Ministry of Interior sent out a text message as part of the global campaign informing the citizens that violence against women is against the law and that victims



can contact emergency services through different channels. This social campaign was also targeted by a propagandist on Alt Info's broadcast, who [suggested](#) that the West, under the name of fighting violence against women, is trying to undermine Georgian traditional families.

- The founder of government-supported NGO "Former Political Prisoners for Human Rights," Nana Kakabadze, appeared on Alt Info's broadcast where she [argued](#) that President Zourabichvili is a member of the UNM, which itself is a part of "the global war party," leaders of whom are in high ranking positions in the US and European governments. Therefore, Kakabadze suggested that President Zourabichvili and the UNM members are agents of the West.
- Another narrative about the EU priorities [claimed](#) that the deoligarchisation priority aims to undermine every business person who is not connected to the West. The West wants to weaken Bidzina Ivanishvili so it can control Georgia more efficiently, while it does not pay attention to the leader of the opposition party Lelo, Mamuka Khazaradze, and former Georgian Minister of Defence, Davit Kezerashvili because they are under Western influence.
- An anchor on Alt Info [stated](#) that Georgia's population halved, its territories got occupied, education and sciences plummeted because of the country's Western foreign policy. Therefore, anyone who suggests that Western integration can improve the Georgian people's lives is lying.
- Another propagandist on Alt Info [asserted](#) that the EU will not accept Georgia as a member, but even if it does, it is not in the Georgian people's interest to become part of Western civilization as it is in rapid decline. The only interest that the EU has in Georgia is to use it as a geopolitical tool against Russia, which it tried to utilize when the war in Ukraine started.
- A different propaganda source [argued](#) that the candidate status is a geopolitical trap for Georgia.

Propaganda claims the West deliberately failed the peace negotiation between Ukraine and Russia to prolong war

- Propagandists on Alt Info continued to [propagate](#) anti-Ukrainian narratives, according to which the West installed Zelenskyy's government. The Ukrainian President is merely a puppet controlled by Western leaders. Initially, former US President Donald Trump refused to provoke Russia, which is why Zelenskyy and Putin were negotiating the situation in Luhansk and Donetsk in the framework of the Normandy Format. After Joe Biden became the President, the US decided to utilise Ukraine as a weapon to weaken Russia, ultimately starting the war in 2022.
- This narrative was [enforced](#) by an argument that Ukraine was dragged into the war because of its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. The EU candidate status and its alignment with the West is nothing compared to the human and material cost of the war against Russia.



- The same propagandists [argued](#) that the war could have ended through negotiations when it initially broke out, but Western leaders urged the Ukrainians to keep fighting, resulting in a prolonged war that devastated Ukraine. The orders to keep fighting Russia were directly coming from Western leaders.
- An anchor on Alt Info [asserted](#) that when Ukraine and Russia were close to reaching an agreement, the West “staged a scene in Bucha” to undermine the peace negotiations and prolong the war.
- The [narrative](#) that Ukraine is depleted of military power and finances also remains prevalent. The Ukrainian leaders often speak about the country’s integration into the EU and NATO, but the matter of fact is that it has no functioning economy anymore, and its state budget is decrepit. Ukraine is completely dependent on Western countries, and if financial assistance is stalled, the country will collapse.
- Finally, the war-related propaganda [suggested](#) that Russia has become more powerful ever since the war as it learned to become self-sufficient.

Pro-Russian propaganda legitimizes Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine

- One of the leaders of Alt Info and the Conservative Movement appeared on a broadcast hosted by the opposition party Girchi. The propagandist [argued](#) that despite the fact that the US is economically and militarily stronger than Russia, it is geographically far away, and in the event of a Russian attack, it will not be able to defend Georgia. Therefore, the propagandist continued, Georgia has only two choices – either start negotiations with Russia and refuse further Western integration to ensure national security and survival of the Georgian state, or become a satellite of Turkey, in which case Georgia would have to adopt Islam.
- A propagandist on Alt Info’s broadcast [asserted](#) that the war in Ukraine is a war between the US and Russia. Russia represents traditional values, while the US stands for sodomy.
- Another narrative [suggested](#) that by waging war against Ukraine, Russia is restoring control over its historical territories. Thus, its aggression is justified. If Georgia were to become strong militarily and economically and regain control over its historic territories currently under Turkish control, it would also be legitimate.
- An anchor on Alt Info [claimed](#) that the reason why Russia did not fully occupy Ukraine and bombed its major cities is because Moscow spared the Ukrainian people, which is why Ukraine maintains some ability to continue resistance.

