



GRASS Disinfo Brief

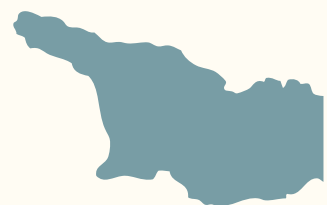
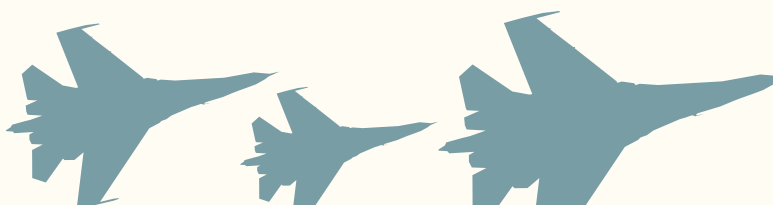
MONITORING PERIOD:
January 30 – February 5



- Georgian Dream nominates Irakli Kobakhidze as Prime Minister
- Georgian Dream slams civil society organizations
- The State Security Service conducts a search at the residence of Beka Vardosanidze, a pro-Russian blogger and far-right activist.
- Pro-Kremlin propaganda claims Gharibashvili was ousted by the West due to his conservative values and relations with China
- US embassy decides election results in Georgia, pro-Kremlin propaganda claims

Georgian Dream nominates Irakli Kobakhidze as Prime Minister

- Georgian Dream Chairperson Irakli Kobakhidze was nominated for the Prime Minister's post during the ruling party's congress on February 1st. The outgoing Prime Minister, Irakli Gharibashvili, will become the party's Chairperson. In his speech, Kobakhidze [thanked](#) the founder of the Georgian Dream, Bidzina Ivanishvili, for trusting him and underscored that he is the reason Georgia has democracy, peace, economic development and EU membership candidate status. The newly nominated Prime Minister expressed confidence in the ruling party's victory in the upcoming 2024 parliamentary elections. Emphasizing the two main missions of the Georgian Dream, he articulated the goals of fostering physical and spiritual unity across Georgia, including Abkhazia and Samachablo and creating a European standard of well-being for the Georgian people, where no one lives in poverty.
- Outgoing Prime Minister and new Chairperson of the ruling party, Irakli Gharibashvili, also [thanked](#) Bidzina Ivanishvili for "initiating a historic victory in 2011, when Georgia's survival was at stake" and giving him the opportunity to serve Georgia. Moreover, Gharibashvili argued that if not for Bidzina Ivanishvili, Georgia would be engulfed in a war, and if he were in power in 2008, the August war would not have occurred. He [referred](#) to the United National Movement and the opposition as "an evil power, criminal organization and pursuer of anti-national interests" who remains in politics. The Georgian Dream is the only choice in the 2024 elections to prevent war and chaos.
- Mayor of Tbilisi, Kakha Kaladze, [stated](#) that Georgia had a very difficult year with having to face serious challenges and threats from radicals, who continue to cause trouble. "with this unity and spirit, I am confident we will maintain peace and avoid threats facing the country", stated Kaladze.
- [According](#) to the Chairperson of the Parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, the duo of Irakli Gharibashvili and Irakli Kobakhidze has brought political and economic achievements to the country and successful election results to the ruling party. In Papuashvili's view,



the fact that the newly nominated Prime Minister was selected from the parliament is important to Georgia's democracy as Georgia is a parliamentary republic.

- First Speaker of the parliament, Gia Volski, [argued](#) that the personnel changes within the ruling party were not based on Ivanishvili's unilateral decisions and were discussed for a long time within the party. Although, if Ivanishvili has some opinions, it should not be surprising since "he has much experience, has done many good things for the country, does not have a single flaw in his actions or analytical skills".

Georgian Dream slams civil society organizations

On January 30th, Georgian civil society organizations working on democracy and the rule of law issues released a joint [statement](#), according to which the Georgian parliament did not invite them to the working meeting held on January 29th between the ruling party, the opposition, and the representatives of the national platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. Civil society organizations appealed to the parliament to expand the working group format and ensure a working process that would allow all interested organizations to be involved in Georgia's European integration process. "Our appeal was not satisfied at this stage, and the parliament refused to invite the civil society organizations requesting to be included in the process", reads the statement, which argues that due to the 9th step set out by the EU for Georgia, the parliament is obliged to expand the working process.

Additionally, ISFED and IDFI representatives [stated](#) that the Georgian Dream is not ready to foster an inclusive work process inclusively on the issue of completing steps set out by the EU for Georgia, which is a big problem.

- Chairperson of the parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, [stated](#) that the civil society organizations that released the statement left the national platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum because their favoured candidate did not become the Chairperson of the Forum. Papuashvili assessed it as radicalism and said that donor organizations are responsible for stopping it. He also criticized civil society organizations for not notifying the public or the parliament when they left the forum. He added that CSOs only informed their donors as they only felt accountable to them. He concluded by saying that their actions are the donor's responsibility. "We see there are attempts to discredit the process from the NGOs, so it is their donor's responsibility to stop that radicalism", said Papuashvili.
- First Speaker of the parliament, Gia Volski, [stated](#) that the parliament is engaged with the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, which is supported by the EU and unites 200 organizations. Therefore, accusing the parliament of not holding inclusive discussions is baseless, especially when the accusations come from organizations that willingly left the platform. "I think this is all done to cause a scandal; their statement only aims to discredit and damage the process", stated Volski



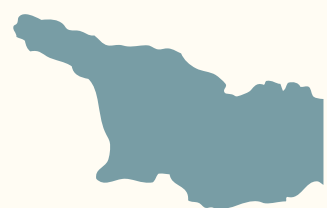
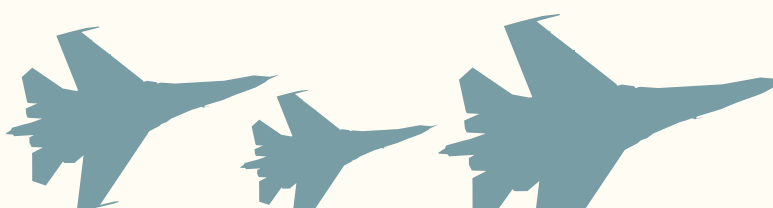
- Chairperson of the parliament's Human Rights and Civil Integration Committee, Mikheil Sarjveladze, [argued](#) that the opposition and some civil society organizations under their influence are trying to cause maximal damage to the government's reputation. Civil society organizations and the opposition have done this before when they portrayed Georgia as undeserving of EU membership candidate status. According to Sarjveladze, some civil society organizations are part of opposition political parties and aim to undermine the country's success in order to damage the ruling party. However, Sarjveladze expressed that as they failed to take away Georgia's EU membership candidate status, they will fail in the future.

The State Security Service conducts a search at the residence of Beka Vardosanidze, a pro-Russian blogger and far-right activist.

On January 31st, as part of an ongoing investigation into false reports of terrorist acts, the State Security Service searched Beka Vardosanidze's apartment and garage and seized computers and electronic devices carrying information. [According](#) to a statement issued by the authorities, an email containing threats of terrorist bombings was sent to various agencies such as the State Security Service, the Tbilisi Police Department, and Imedi TV. The email stated that explosive devices were planted in a nightclub- "Bassiani", in a bar - "Rati's Bar", on one of the stages installed for the New Year's celebrations on Rustaveli Avenue, as well as in various vehicles surrounding the area. Vardosanidze, known for his anti-Western disinformation and far-right stances, was released the same day.

The incident caused controversy withing the pro-Russian groups. For example, Alt Info became concerned enough to broadcast an emergency broadcast.

- Irakli Martinenko, one of the leaders of Alt Info and the Conservative Movement, [assessed](#) Beka Vardosanidze was unjustly accused and questioned by the State Security Service for falsely reporting on terrorism. He claimed that the ruling party made a deal with the West to make up accusations against Vardosanidze, whose only "crime" is publicly expressing his opinions. In his words, the US embassy instructed Bidzina Ivanishvili to neutralize the conservative wing in Georgia and get involved in a war with Russia.
- Shota Martinenko, another leader of the pro-Russian group, also [claimed](#) Bidzina Ivanishvili made a deal with the West to silence conservative activists and make Gharibashvili resign, who held conservative values. He emphasizes that Beka



Vardosanidze is just an independent blogger and supporter of conservative ideology thus arresting him is equal to fighting against the conservative community.

- One of the hosts of the Alt-Info emergency broadcast [claimed](#) that the West works in specific ways, meaning that the West does not care if the country's main authority is an oligarch or dictator destroying the state as long as they serve Western interests. To illustrate his point, he stated that Ukraine, in particular, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who, in his words, repressed opposition parties, prohibited the Church from operating, and refused to hold elections, still remains a partner for the West. Moreover, according to the propagandist, Mikheil Saakashvili was praised as a beacon of democracy despite his repressive regime, when “every third person was jailed, and every third jailed person was beaten to death”, because he served Western interests.
- One of the organizers of the July 5th, 2021, attacks on the LGBTQI+ community and journalists, Guram Palavandishvili, [stated](#) that the State Security Service's actions could be explained by one of the provisions included in the 9 steps set out by the EU for Georgia. Specifically, according to the propagandist, the EU directly demands that the conservative wing be neutralized and defeated in Georgia.
- One of the hosts on Alt Info's broadcast [argued](#) that the United National Movement, the liberal West and former US Ambassador in Georgia, Kelly Degnan, demanded imprisonment of the members of the conservative wing. He also recalls that the State Department declared Alt-Info as a terrorist group. Therefore, he asserted that the controversy surrounding Beka Vardosanidze only benefits “liberals, anti-Georgian forces, and the enemies of the Church”.

Pro-Kremlin propaganda claims Gharibashvili was ousted by the West due to his conservative values and relations with China

- One of the prominent leaders of Alt Info, Zurab Makharadze, [claimed](#) that foreign funding of CSOs and media should be prohibited because it allows foreign countries to influence political and cultural changes in Georgia.
- One of the leaders of Alt Info, Giorgi Kardava, [asserted](#) that gender theories and sex education in schools resulted in 25% of Gen Z identifying as members of the LGBT community in the West. He added that sex education is used as propaganda instrument for mental degradation.
- Kardava also [argued](#) that if a coalition government is formed after the 2024 elections, the threat of war will increase because the West is attempting to use Georgia as a geopolitical tool like it uses Ukraine.
- One of the prominent Pro-Russian propagandists who hosts a broadcast titled “Solidarity for Peace”, Valeri Kvaratskhelia, [argued](#) that the West is behind Irakli Gharibashvili's resignation because he was against “the LGBTQI+ agenda” and protected traditional

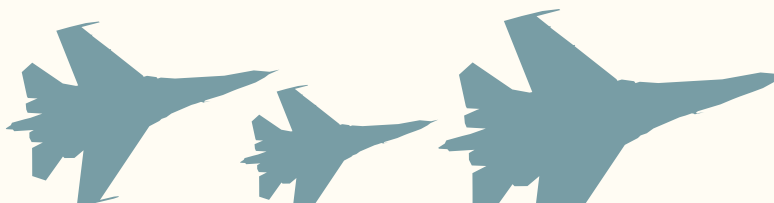


values. In turn, the EU “carried out a disaster on the whole continent”, meaning the support of freedom of expression and protection of LGBTQI+ rights. According to Kvaratskhelia, the outgoing Prime Minister exposed the corruption within the European Parliament, criticised some of the directives issued by the EU, and deepened relations with China, which is why he became unacceptable to the West and was forced to resign.

- Valeri Kvaratskhelia [claimed](#) that the West is providing aid and assistance to Ukraine to force “brothers”, Ukrainians and Russians, to kill each other. He also stated that the West is greatly profiting from the war in Ukraine.
- In an article published on pro-Russian “GeWorld”, Valeri Kvaratskhelia [stated](#) the West installed every leader that Georgia has had since independence. Moreover, it executed coups in 1992 and 2003. On this background, it is only logical that the West is behind Irakli Gharibashvili’s resignation.
- [According](#) to a propagandist on Alt Info, the EU became scared it would lose influence in Georgia after Irakli Gharibashvili held an official visit to China, which is why it decided to grant Georgia membership candidate status. The EU decided to get rid of Gharibashvili because he was not exclusively pro-Western and was deepening relations with other countries.
- Another propagandist [accused](#) the EU of preventing Georgia from restoring territorial integrity. The narrative suggests that the EU does not allow Georgia to negotiate with Russia, which is the only way of restoring control over Abkhazia and Samachablo.
- The West destroyed and executed national values and political movements in Georgia when it installed Shevardnadze as a leader, another propaganda source [claimed](#).

US embassy decides election results in Georgia, pro-Kremlin propaganda claims

- The host of Sezoni TV, Nikoloz Mzhavanadze, mentioned the US embassy in the context of the last parliamentary elections of Georgia and [claimed](#) that it is known that the embassy was involved in compiling parliamentary lists of political parties for the elections.
- A frequent guest on the broadcast, Dimitri Chubinidze, [reiterated](#) the narrative and added that US Ambassadors choose which parties should overcome the threshold and get into the parliament. He claims that the US wants to create a coalition government in Georgia as the latter will be more easily instructed and manipulated.



- Another guest on Sezoni TV, Maia Nikoleishvili, [stated](#) that because of the presidential elections in the US in November, the US will leave Georgia alone and let it be independent for a short period – which will be a happy occasion. In addition, Nikoleishvili notes that, in her opinion, the prospect of military confrontation has shifted from the South Caucasus to the Baltics, which will relieve Georgia from pressure as well.
 - The same propagandist also [claimed](#) that the only state that wants chaos in the Caucasus is the US, and therefore, it will do everything in its power to cause unrest in the region, just like it did in the Middle East.
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