



# ANTI-WESTERN PROPAGANDA





# ANTI-WESTERN PROPAGANDA 2019



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# INTRODUCTION |

The fifth annual report on anti-western propaganda reflects the results of media monitoring and fake news debunking in 2019. The monitoring report, which traditionally focuses on detecting anti-western messages, observing the process of their framing as well as shifting narratives over time, also identifies sources of these messages and verifies them when they contain fake information.

Monitoring is conducted on media outlets as well as other sources – political class, clerics, public organizations and separate public figures. Apart from monitoring traditional media, fake news is tracked down on the social network Facebook.

The report spans the period from 1 January through 31 December 2019. The introductory part of the report presents main findings of the study, monitoring methodology, total quantitative data and their sources. The third part provides an overview of how narratives are framed and contains a separate chapter on health and biosecurity which sums up the data of the past five years and reviews harmful information operations consistently conducted by Russian authorities against the Richard Lugar Center for Public Health Research. Final chapter describes the fake and manipulative content instances that were revealed and debunked under the Myth Detector project.

Similar studies were carried out by the Media Development Foundation (MDF) in 2014–2018 too. They were conducted in partnership with the UN Association of Georgia (UNAG) within the framework of USAID’s Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness Program.

# METHODOLOGY

The monitoring applied a mixed study methodology:

- **CONTENT ANALYSIS.** Narratives and their sources are identified through content analysis of traditional Georgian language media (TV, print and online outlets), allowing to understand the context and observe trends, and process quantitative and qualitative data. A quantitative part provides the amount of anti-western messages broken down by topics, while the qualitative part focuses on the typology of messages.
- **IDENTIFICATION AND VERIFICATION OF FAKE NEWS.** CrowdTangle analytics tool is applied to identify fake news stories posted by Facebook pages and groups, to verify them and look into their sources. Additionally, fake stories supplied by readers are also verified but these stories and their sources identified by random selection through systematic monitoring.

**SELECTING SUBJECTS OF CONTENT ANALYSIS.** As an earlier study<sup>1</sup> of the MDF has shown, Russian media is more used as a source of information in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities. Georgian-speaking media consumers receive identical disinformation from Georgian sources. It is for this very reason that Georgian media outlets have been selected as subjects of monitoring in this study.

Media outlets to be monitored were selected from mainstream as well as tabloid media. In total, 15 outlets were monitored. Several monitored TV programs that were taken off the air because of changes in TV programming, were replaced with the programs of similar format. The monitoring was conducted on the following subjects:

- **Daily prime-time news and weekly analytical programs on four TV channels:** Georgian Public Broadcaster (Moambe; Akhali Kvira); Rustavi 2 (Kurieri; P.S.);<sup>2</sup> Imedi (Qronika; Imedis Kvira); Obieqtivi TV (Akhali Ambebi).

<sup>1</sup> MDF (2019), "Informing Ethnic Minorities on Georgia's Euro-Atlantic Integration." <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/107/>

<sup>2</sup> After the European Court of Human Rights ruled against a claim of Rustavi 2 in July 2019, a new TV company "Mtavari Arkhi" established by former Rustavi 2 employees became the subject of monitoring; namely, the news program "Mtavari" and a weekly analytical program "Post Factum."

- **Talk-shows of five TV channels:** Georgian Public Broadcaster (Kviris Interviu); Rustavi 2 (Archevani) thereafter Mtavari (Archevani)<sup>3</sup>; Imedi (Pirispir);<sup>4</sup> Obieqtivi (Ghamis Studia; Dghis Bolos<sup>5</sup>); Kavkasia (Barieri; Spektri).
- **Six online media outlets:** Sakinformi, Netgazeti, Interpressnews, Georgia & World, PIA, Marshalpress.
- **Four newspapers:** Rezonansi, Kviris Palitra, Asaval-Dasavali, Alia.

**IDENTIFICATION AND VERIFICATION OF FAKE NEWS.** Antiliberal, pro-Kremlin Facebook pages and groups with close links to the government are monitored through CrowdTangle analytics tool. Pages in the database are periodically updated. Identified fake or manipulative content is verified based on the methodology of MDF's fact-checking portal, Myth Detector, which includes four stages:

1. Selection
2. Verification of facts
3. Assessment
4. Search of information about a source

Verification is carried out based on open sources and relevant tools (OSINET), which are detailed on the Myth Detector webpage.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> After the change in ownership of Rustavi 2, the program "Archevani" moved to a newly established TV channel Mtavari Arkhi; consequently, the monitoring subject changed since October 2019.

<sup>4</sup> After the closedown of the program "Pirispir" on the Imedi TV in November 2019, a talk show "Arena" became a subject of monitoring.

<sup>5</sup> The talk-show "Dghis Bolos" became a monitoring subject in September 2019, after the closure of Valeri Kvaratskhelia's program "Okros Kveta."

<sup>6</sup> Myth Detector, methodology, <http://mythdetector.ge/en/page/methodology>

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## KEY FINDINGS

The analysis of media monitoring results revealed the following trends in 2019:

- Similar to previous years, the 2019 media monitoring showed an upward trend in anti-Western messages with the indicator of increase having doubled in the past four years (2019: 2769; 2016: 1258).
- Compared to 2016, a notable increase was seen in anti-American and anti-NATO messages related to unconditional support of Georgia in security issues from the main strategic partner of the country, including a sustained support of the country's integration into NATO. The increase in anti-NATO messages can be attributed to an aggressive campaign on Georgia's neutrality, conducted by a pro-Russian political party, Alliance of Patriots.
- Two new messages were dominant in regard to the USA: 1) An opinion that the Anaklia deep sea port construction project is not of economic nature, but has a defense-military purpose for the USA; 2) Statements on unsuitability of deploying a US military base in Georgia following to a comment of the President of Georgia who equated such a possibility to provoking Russia, therewith providing a fertile ground for statement of pro-Russian actors.
- Statements in support of Russia increased, conveying messages about the need to settle conflicts through revising the foreign policy course and dealing one-on-one with the Kremlin.
- The indicator of anti-EU/Europe messages remained almost the same as in previous years, showing a decrease since 2017 when a visa-free travel with the EU was introduced. The decrease in anti-EU messages may also be explained by the fact that stages of further EU integration have not been actively discussed.

### SOURCES

The main source of anti-Western messages was media, followed by political parties and politicians. Comments by politicians have almost doubled compared to 2018, which was mainly because of campaign against the USA and NATO, conducted by the Alliance of Patriots.

- **MEDIA.** Five media outlets were again identified as main sources of anti-Western messages; they are: online media outlets Georgia & World, and Sakinformi, both with close links to the Kremlin; TV Obieqtivi associat-

ed with a pro-Russian political party, the Alliance of Patriots; and newspapers of ethno-nationalist stance, but often repeating the narrative of pro-Kremlin media (Asaval-Dasavali and Alia).

- **PARTIES / POLITICIANS.** In 2019, the leader by anti-Western messages, alike the previous year, was the Alliance of Patriots followed by the Russian government, the United Democratic Movement, the Neutral Socialist Georgia and the Georgian Idea. It should be noted that a number of statements of the ruling party Georgian Dream are not included in the quantitative data of anti-Western messages because of their indirect nature. However, they are cited to better understand the context as such indirect statements often enhance the anti-Western discourse.

## FRAMING OF ANTI-WESTERN NARRATIVES

As in previous years, the structure of anti-Western narratives is again three-tiered, consisting of the following stages: I. sowing fears; II. Instilling despair; and III. offering solutions.

### I. SOWING FEARS

- **FEAR OF IRRITATING RUSSIA.** In parallel to the declared aim of integration into NATO and the EU, the 2012 election manifesto of the Georgian Dream explicitly stated that Georgia would no longer be an item on the list of disagreements between the West and Russia. The same view was promoted in 2019 by actors having close links to Russia – representatives of the Eurasian Institute and the Alliance of Patriots. Along with the NATO integration and deployment of US servicemen in Georgia, the construction of Anaklia deep-sea port was considered inconsistent with Russia’s interest and in early 2020, the government terminated the agreement with the Anaklia consortium.
- **FEAR OF WAR** rested again on messages that the war was encouraged by the USA, that the USA and other Western partners are not interested in settling the conflict between Georgia and Russia and that the deployment of NATO or US bases in Georgia will turn the country into a foothold, leading it to “Syriaization.”
- **FEAR OF LOSING THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY** was associated, like in previous years, with a suggestion of extending Article 5 of NATO Treaty, concerning the collective security, to the occupied territories after the restoration of country’s territorial integrity and an initiative to expedite Georgia’s NATO membership, as well as with threats of deploying Turkish bases in Georgia in case of integration into NATO.
- **FEAR OF BIO-SUBVERSION** was fueled mainly in relation to Richard Lugar Biosecurity Laboratory established with the assistance from the US government, which has been targeted by the Russian government for years with the aim to sow fear of biological subversions among Georgian society. That the Russian government deems the Lugar Lab important is also proved by the fact that it is a regular topic on the agenda of President Putin himself and other top political officials whose comments are often heard in preplanned information influence operations.
- **THREAT OF LOSING IDENTITY** is based on the concept of the “Russian World” which determines an expansionist and messianic Russian foreign policy and provides it with a “moral” framework. The 2019 media analysis showed that the emphases were placed, on the one hand, on the incompatibility of Western values with the Ortho-

dox Christianity and, on the other hand, on a theory about the West causing a moral degradation of Georgia which will have significantly more devastating consequences than a physical occupation.

## II. DESPAIR

- **THE WEST CANNOT PROTECT US.** Much like in previous years, skepticism was instilled that the West/NATO and Georgia's partners cannot protect Georgia, that they will not engage in confrontation with Russia because of Georgia and that the US, which failed to protect Kurds, is an unreliable partner.
- **DEMOCRACY, SOVEREIGNTY IS A FICTION.** Similar to the previous years, an opinion was promoted that the West applies double standards and acts in accordance with political conjuncture, that in reality, Georgia is not a sovereign state and the US and other countries interfere in its domestic affairs much like the Soviet Union did. The anti-occupation rally on 20 June was also portrayed as the rally organized by the USA. Even more, this process was linked, both by the Russian government and local actors, to the former Assistant Defense Secretary Michael Carpenter.
- The narrative on US interference in Georgia's internal affairs was augmented by a rally staged by the pro-Russian party, the Alliance of Patriots, in front of the building of US Embassy as well as a campaign organized by the same political party against NDI and IRI surveys after the reliability of these institutions was criticized by the leader of the ruling party, Bidzina Ivanishvili.
- **TWO WESTS: LIBERALISM IS EXPERIENCING DEFEAT.** Narrators of both Georgian government and Russian interests were engaged in portraying the West as divided into two Wests. On the one hand, media evaluated the criticism voiced against the Georgian government at the McCain Institute conference as the opposition to Trump and an action taken against Trump by the Georgian political opposition; on the other hand, various actors separated the conservative West from the liberal West, placing the emphasis on the failure of liberalism.

## III. OFFERING SOLUTIONS

- **NEUTRALITY.** In parallel to fanning fears and instilling despair, anti-Western messages were focused on revising the foreign policy and supporting the idea of neutrality, accompanied with a campaign conducted by Alliance of Patriots to mobilize society.
- **DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH RUSSIA.** Settling the problem of Abkhazia and Samachablo through direct dialogue with Russia has been advocated by the Alliance of Patriots for years, which means rejecting the international Geneva format and remaining one-on-one with Russia, thereby turning a blind eye to its responsibility as the party to the conflict. All this will turn Russia from the occupier into a mediator between the Georgian and Abkhazian-Ossetian parties.
- **ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE ON RUSSIA = STABILITY.** An opinion was promoted that the economic stability achieved with Russia in recent years was endangered by the 20 June anti-occupation protest and that Georgia depended on Russia both historically and economically.
- **CO-RELIGIOUS RUSSIA FOR OVERCOMING MORAL OCCUPATION.** Messianic idea of Orthodox Christian Russia was again promoted by separate clerics and Georgia & World.

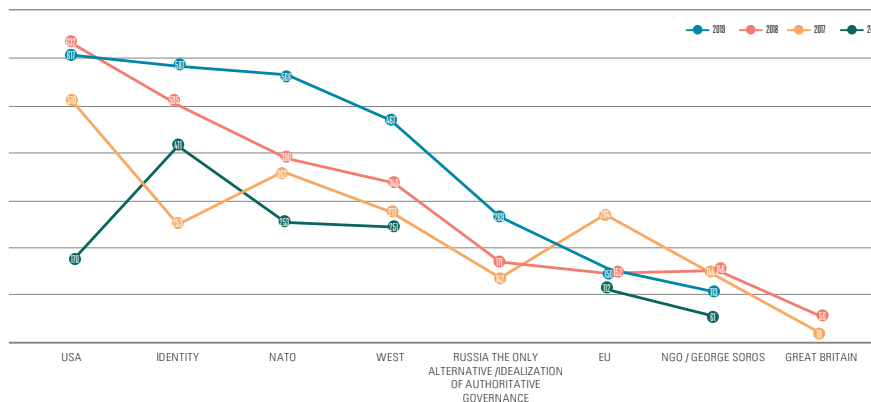
## FAKE AND MANIPULATIVE CONTENT

- The Media Development Foundation (MDF) within the Myth Detector project checked 199 information in 2019. From the media outlets, the highest number of fake news was spread by Georgia & World(31), Sputnik Georgia (17) and Saqinform (16); From the social media - Facebook pages Stalin (10) and “Alt-Info” (9); from political parties – Alliance of Patriots (24).
- The majority of cases of statistics fabrication/manipulation of numbers concerned the issues of economy and migrants; the majority of manipulated interviews was spread in the context of NATO integration; the majority of conspiracy theories were spread about healthcare and biosecurity, while falsification of history mainly concerned the Soviet past.
- Several disinformation was spread in 2019, about the separatist statements of Georgian muslims and Georgian citizens of Armenian origin aiming to incite hatred based on religion and ethnicity. The both materials included the “photo evidence” depicting totally different events.
- Portrayal of fragments from the movie as real events was aimed at promoting a narrative about Islamization of Europe and fanning anti-migrant sentiments.
- Alongside fake video depicting a clone of President George W. Bush talking about American Imperialism, a pro-Governmental blogger, whose photo was generated through artificial intelligence was revealed, quoted by pro-Governmental online media outlets against the founder of Anaklia Development Consortium, Mamuka Khazaradze, also against political opposition and critical media outlets as a real source.
- Compared with the last year, the number of satirical articles, spread as real information, has increased.

# 1. TOTAL DATA

The 2019 media monitoring report has revealed an increase in anti-western messages. The total of 2,769 such comments were analyzed, which is a doubled indicator in the past four years (in 2016: 1258). Similar to the previous two years, a leading theme was a negative discourse in relation to the USA, identity and NATO. Compared to 2016, a notable increase was seen in anti-American (2019: 617; 2016: 170) and anti-NATO (2019: 566; 2016: 253) messages related to unconditional support of Georgia in security issues from the main strategic partner of the country, including a sustained support of the country's integration into NATO. The increase in anti-NATO messages can be attributed to an aggressive campaign on Georgia's neutrality, conducted by a pro-Russian political party, Alliance of Patriots. At the same time, an increasing dynamic was observed in negative assessments about the West<sup>7</sup> (2019: 467; 2016: 251). There was a simultaneous rise in pro-Russian statements conveying a message about the need to reconsider the country's foreign course and settle the conflicts by means of direct dialogue with the Kremlin (2019: 269; 2017: 142). The indicator of anti-EU messages remained almost the same as in previous years, showing a decrease since 2017 when a visa-free travel with the EU was introduced. The decrease in anti-EU messages may also be explained by the fact that stages of further EU integration have not been actively discussed. Identity-related discourse continued to be intensive (587) though if this topic dominated over all other topics in 2016, in 2019 it was outnumbered by anti-American messages.

FIGURE 1. TOPICS OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES IN 2016-2019

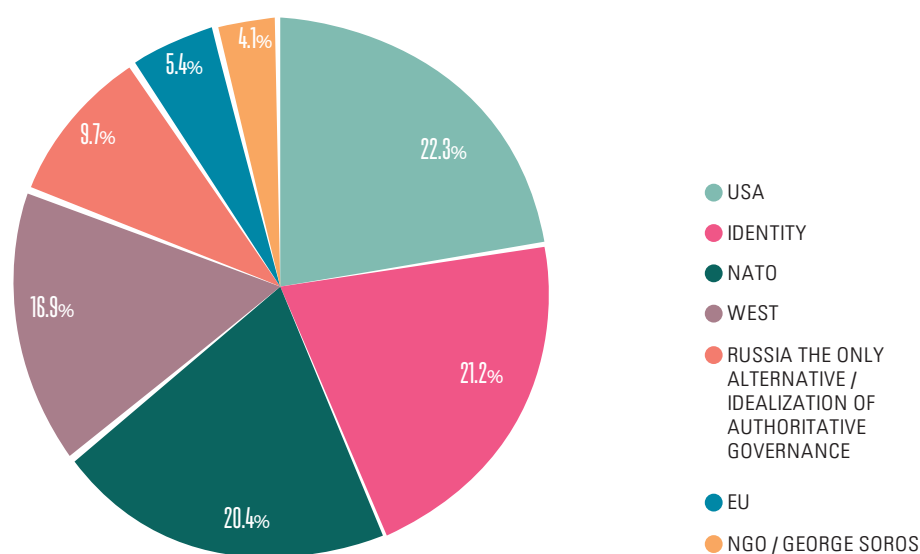


<sup>7</sup> This category includes messages that simultaneously concerned the USA, Europe and international institutions; also messages in which the West is viewed as an entire geopolitical space with shared values.

TOPICS	2019	2018	2017	2016
USA	617	632	510	170
Identity	587	505	253	411
NATO	566	390	362	253
West	467	340	277	251
Russia / authoritative governance	269	171	142	
EU / Europe	150	152	264	112
NGO / George Soros	113	146	144	61
Great Britain		56	19	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2769</b>	<b>2392</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1258</b>

As shown on Figure 2, the shares of anti-US (22.3%), identity-related (21.2%) and anti-NATO (20.4%) messages were nearly similar. The topic of Russia as being the only alternative and idealization of authoritative governance accounted for 9.7%. The shares of comments made against the EU (5.4%) and George Soros/non-governmental organizations (NGO) (4.1%) were lower.

FIGURE 2. TOPICS OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES IN 2019



**THE USA.** In 2019, two new messages were dominant in regard to the USA:

- **ANAKLIA DEEP SEAS PORT.** A new message in relation to the USA in 2019 concerned the Anaklia deep sea port construction which for its economic benefit and regional importance has become a target of the Russian government.<sup>8</sup> An opinion that the Anaklia project is not of economic nature, but has a defense-military pur-

<sup>8</sup> Myth Detector, 11 September 2019. Why is Russia Afraid of the Anaklia Port? <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/why-russia-afraid-anaklia-port>

pose for the USA was observed on 33 occasions and sourced by Russian officials as well as the pro-Kremlin political party, the Alliance of Patriots, and Georgian-language media proxies.

- **US MILITARY BASE IN GEORGIA.** Statements on unsuitability of deploying a US military base in Georgia were relatively fewer and concerned a comment of the President of Georgia who, in her interview to the Voice of America, equated such a possibility to provoking Russia,<sup>9</sup> therewith providing a fertile ground for statement of pro-Russian actors.

Opinions from old messages that continued to dominate were:

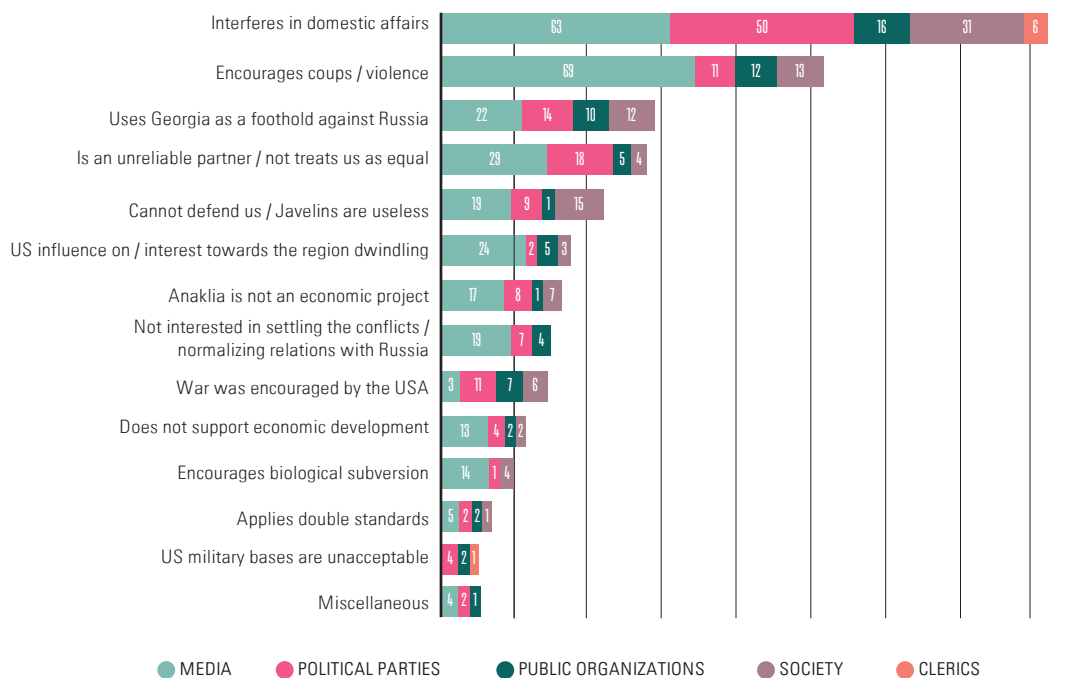
- **THE USA INFRINGES ON GEORGIA'S SOVEREIGNTY,** interferes in a decision-making process and actually runs the country (166). It should be noted that the US government was not always portrayed as a single entity and sometimes President Donald Trump was separated from these processes. Even more, actions of Democrats and the Georgian opposition, NGOs and other actors were interpreted as the actions against Donald Trump.
- **THE USA PROVOKES CONFLICTS, VIOLENCE, COUPS (105);** several attempts were observed of seeking a US trace in the events that unfolded after the dispersal of anti-occupation rally on 20 June.
- **THE USA USES GEORGIA AS A Foothold AGAINST RUSSIA (58),** promoting the opinion that the cause of conflict is not the Russian aggressions but the US-Russia antagonism in which Georgia is a victim in the opposition between these two super states.
- **THE USA IS AN UNRELIABLE PARTNER (56).**
- **IT CANNOT PROTECT GEORGIA (44).**
- **THE US INFLUENCE ON AND INTEREST TOWARDS THE REGION IS DWINDLING (34).**
- **THE USA IS NOT INTERESTED IN SETTLING THE CONFLICTS (30).**
- **THE WAR WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE USA (27),** furthermore, the start of war was tied to the aims of the presidential campaign of the late Senator John McCane.
- **THE USA DOES NOT SUPPORT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY (21).**
- **ENCOURAGES BIOLOGICAL SUBVERSION (19).**
- **APPLIES DOUBLE STANDARDS (10).**

As Figure 3 shows, anti-US comments were mainly made by media.

<sup>9</sup> Ia Meurmishvili. Voice of America, 1 May 2019. Inetrview with Salome Zurabishvili. <https://www.amerikiskhma.com/a/interview-with-presidnt-zourabishvili/4897528.html>



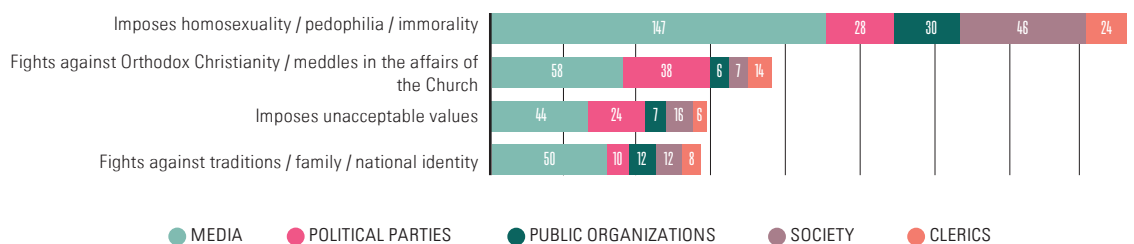
FIGURE 3. MESSAGES CONCERNING THE USA



**IDENTITY / VALUES.** A leading theme in the discourse concerning the loss of identity was a threat about homosexuality and perversion been forced on Georgians (275); this was followed by messages about the fight conducted against religion, namely the Orthodox Christianity, meddling in the affairs of the Church (123), and unacceptable values that have been imposed (97). Yet another promoted idea was that the West fights against traditional family, national identity (92).

Most frequently, the source of themes related to the threat of losing identity was the media.

FIGURE 4. MESSAGES CONCERNING IDENTITY



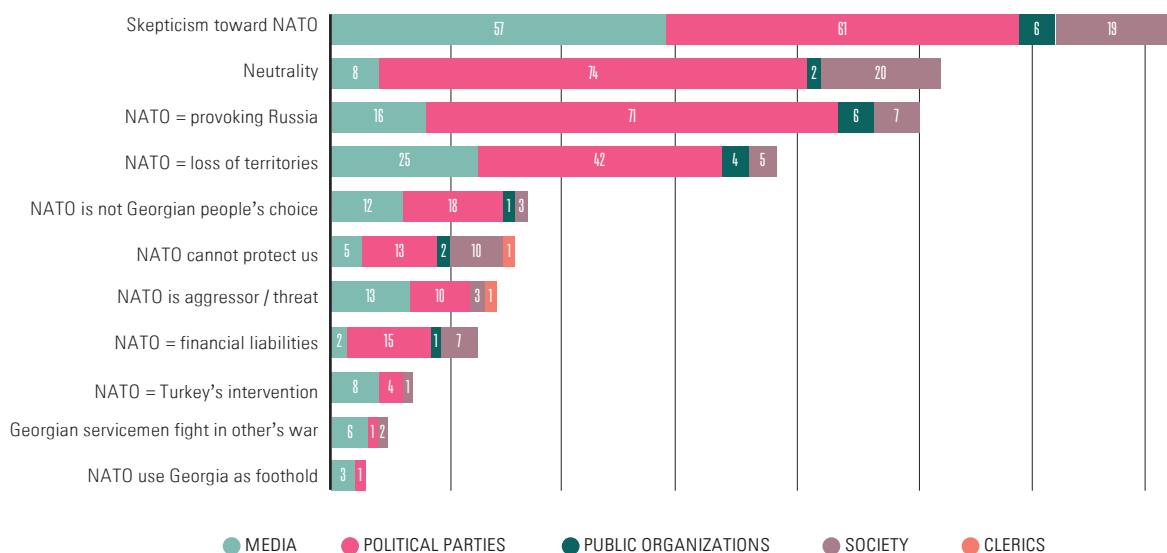
**NATO.** As regards NATO, the following themes were exploited:

- **NEUTRALITY.** The increase in messages was linked to a campaign conducted by a pro-Russian political party, Alliance of Patriots, in which they demanded Georgia's neutrality under the guise of non-alignment initiative (104).

- **NATO = FINANCIAL EXPENSES.** The same political party focused on the unsuitability of spending amounts from Georgia’s budget for collective security and assessed the contribution as unjustified financial costs (25).
- **NATO = LOSS OF TERRITORIES.** Equating Georgia’s integration in NATO to a threat of losing Abkhazia and Samach-ablo, the Georgian territories occupied by Russia, (76) was again linked to Article 5 of NATO Treaty, which concerns collective security. An initiative put forward by a researcher from Heritage Foundation Luke Coffey in 2018 to expedite Georgia’s NATO membership without extending Article 5 protection to the occupied territories until the country’s territorial integrity has been recovered was reiterated by Former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen during the McCain Institute and EPRC conference held in Tbilisi in 2019. This statement was followed by a wave of manipulative messages about the threat of losing the territories.
- **SKEPTICISM.** Skepticism towards NATO, sowing nihilism that Georgia’s integration into NATO is unreal and the unity of NATO is fragile (143) was dominant again.
- **NATO = PROVOKING RUSSIA** (100) was also a frequent message.
- **MISCELLANEOUS.** Attempts continued to instill ideas that NATO is not the Georgian people’s choice (34), NATO cannot protect us (31), NATO is an aggressor and a threat itself (27). Portrayal of the integration into NATO as an intervention by Turkey was, alike previous years, linked to Turkey’s membership of NATO and its politics of expansion in the region (13). Participation of Georgian servicemen in international peacekeeping missions under the NATO leadership was portrayed not as a contribution into collective security but a sacrifice made for the benefit of other countries (9). Messages about NATO using Georgia as a foothold were relatively fewer (4).

Most frequently anti-NATO statements were made by political parties and most active among them was the Alliance of Patriots.

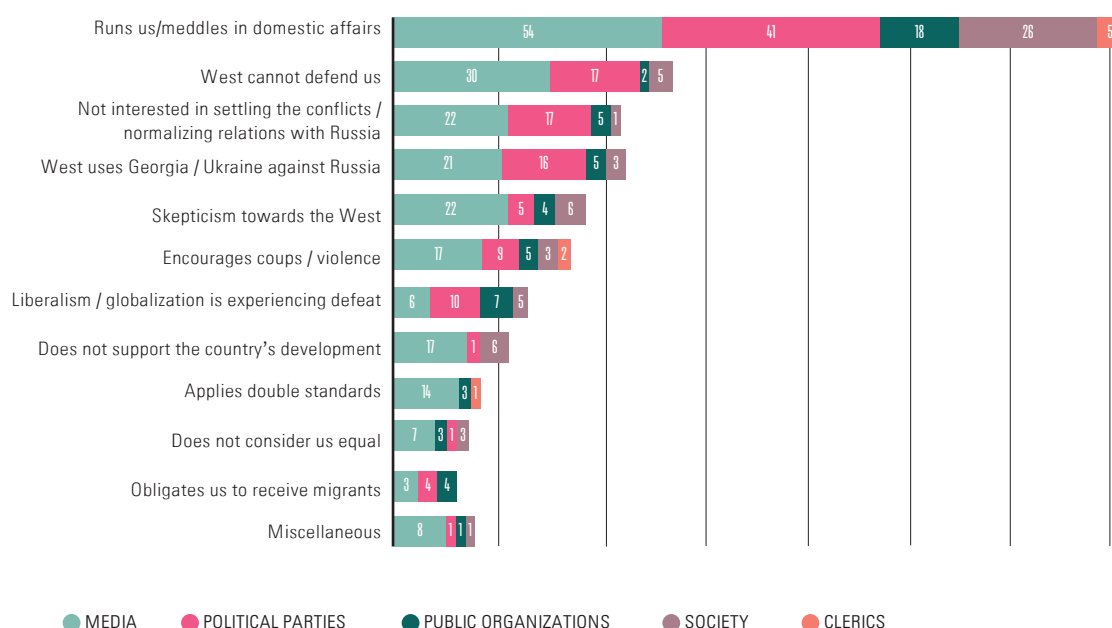
FIGURE 5. MESSAGES CONCERNING NATO



**THE WEST.** A new message that was spread about western countries was that liberalism, globalization is failing in the USA and other western countries and that Western values are being reconsidered (28).

From among older messages dominant were the opinions that the West infringes on Georgia's sovereignty by meddling in the domestic affairs and actually runs the country (144); the West cannot protect us (54); the West is not interested in Georgia settling the conflicts and improving relations with Russia (45) and uses Georgia and Ukraine against Russia (45). Along with sowing skepticism (37) towards the West, the West was portrayed as inspirator of violence (36) and opinions were promoted that the West does not support the development of the country (24), applies double standards (18), does not consider us equal (14) and obligates us to receive migrants (11).

FIGURE 6. MESSAGES CONCERNING THE WEST



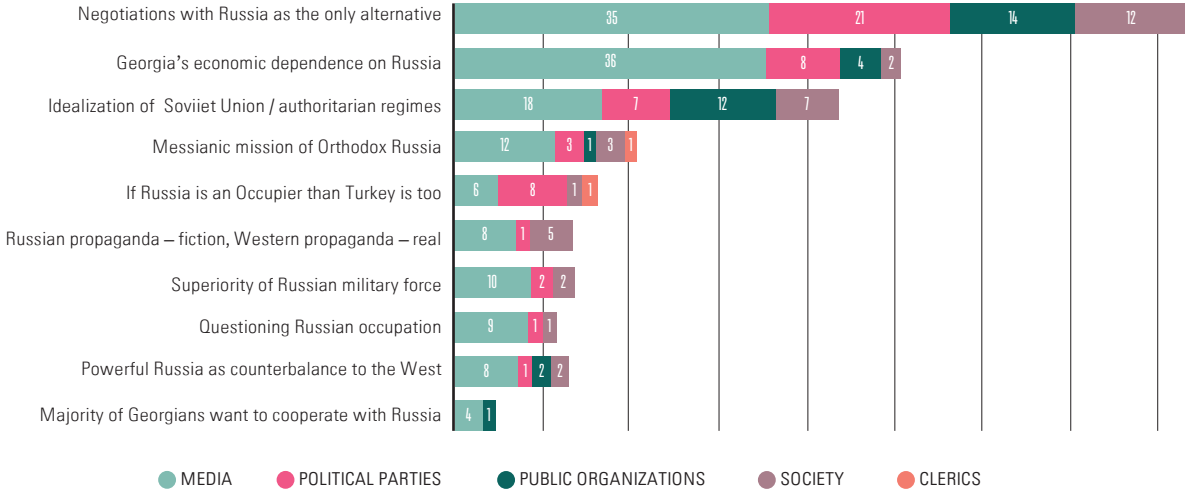
**RUSSIA HAS NO ALTERNATIVE / IDEALIZATION OF AUTHORITATIVE GOVERNANCE.** Messages on Georgia's economic dependence on Russia grew more intensive in 2019 (50) as compared to the previous period and were associated with a protest sparked by a speech of a Russian MP from communist party in the Georgian Parliament. The Kremlin reacted to this protest by suspending flights between Georgia and Russia<sup>10</sup>. Speculations that the suspension would harm the high tourist season in Georgia and the country could not survive without dependence on Russia's economy were exploited in the contexts of that very 20 June protest.

In contrast to previous years, a message "if Russia is an occupier then Turkey is an occupier too" was included in the quantitative data of the reporting period (16) because apart from Turkophobic context, which is traditionally discussed in the reports on Hate Speech, it shows an attempt to shift focus from Georgia's current security challenges (occupation by Russia) onto a historic occupation (occupation by Ottoman Empire). That message was applied when certain sources questioned the Russian occupation of Georgia (11).

<sup>10</sup> Tamar Gazdeliani, 120 December, 2019. Russia's "Punishment" – Embargo and Disinformation Campaigns. <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/russias-punishment-embargo-and-disinformation-campaigns>

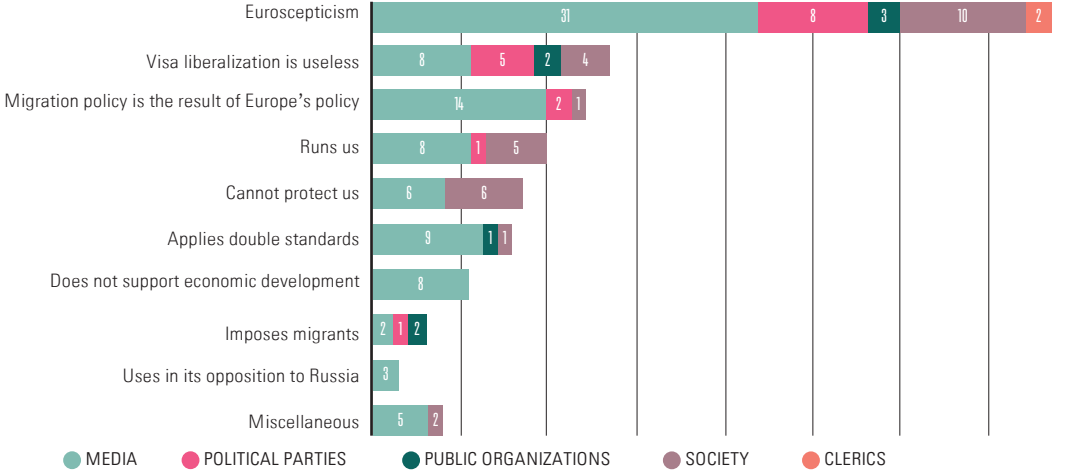
Compared to previous years, a notable increase has been seen in messages conveying a thought that there is no alternative to negotiations with the Northern neighbor and that direct dialogue with it is necessary (82); this was followed by messages idealizing the Soviet Union and authoritative regimes (44). An extraordinary mission of Russia as an Orthodox Christian country was again emphasized (20) as well as military superiority of Russia (14). Several sources dismissed a threat of Russian propaganda and claimed that propaganda was used by the West to promote its own political agenda (14). Portrayal of Russia’s strength as a counterweight to the West (13) was complemented by some sources with an opinion that the majority of Georgians want to cooperate with Russia (5).

**FIGURE 7. MESSAGES CONCERNING RUSSIA, THE SOVIET SYSTEM**



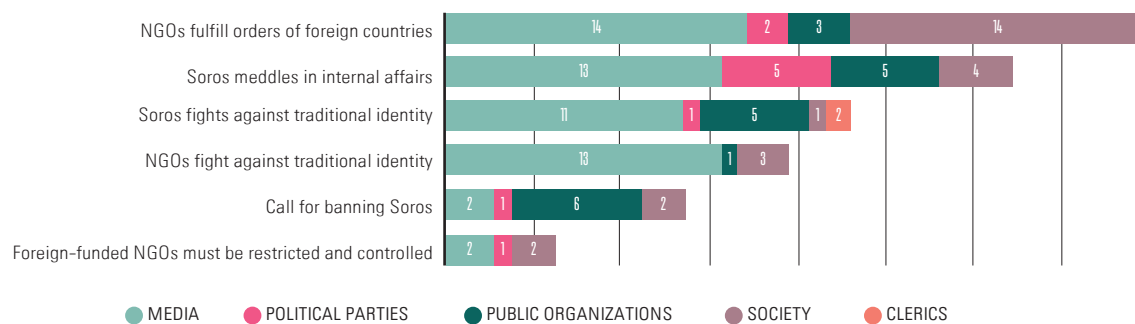
**EUROPE / EU.** Messages about the EU and Europe have not changed in content, nor have they increased in number. Euroscepticism (54) was in the lead, followed by messages that visa liberalization and the Association Agreement are useless (19), and that migration crisis is the result of Europe’s policy and Europe is a hostage of its own tolerance (17). Older messages also circulated that Europe/EU runs Georgia (14), cannot protect us (12), applies double standards (11) and does not support the country’s development (8). Although in a limited number but one could still hear that the EU obligates us to accept migrants (5) and uses us in opposing Russia (3).

**FIGURE 8. MESSAGES CONCERNING THE EU**



**NGO, GEORGE SOROS.** There were no changes observed either in attitudes to or messages about NGOs and US philanthropist and Open Society Foundation founder George Soros. Dominating messages were that Soros meddles in Georgia's internal affairs (27) and fights against a traditional identity (20) much like NGOs do (17). Calls were made for banning the Soros Foundation (11) as well as restricting and controlling foreign-funded NGOs (5).

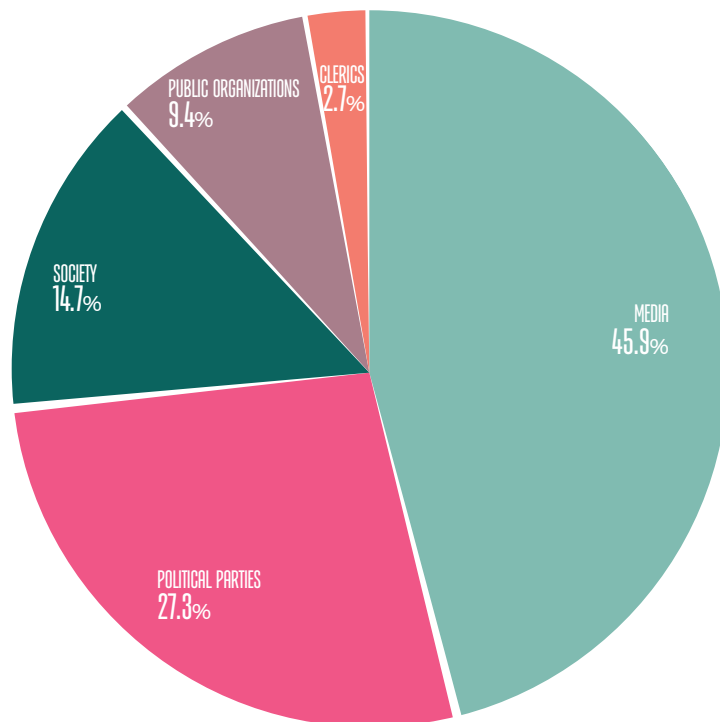
FIGURE 9. MESSAGES CONCERNING NGOS, SOROS



## 2. SOURCE OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES

Similar to the previous year, the main source of anti-Western messages was media (1,271), followed by political parties and politicians (756). Comments by politicians have almost doubled compared to 2018 (2018: 430), which was mainly because of campaign against the USA and NATO, conducted by the Alliance of Patriots. Anti-Western messages made by separate representatives of society (407) and public organizations (206) were almost identical to the previous year whereas those made by clerics were relatively lower (75).

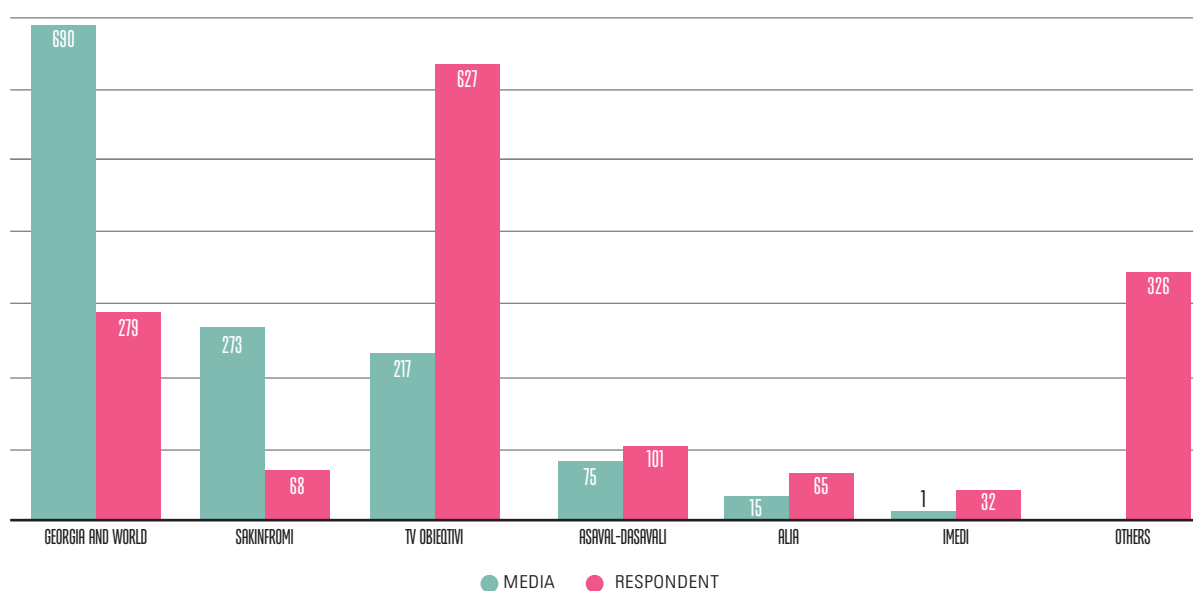
FIGURE 10. ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES BY SOURCES



## MEDIA

Main sources of anti-Western messages were five media outlets again; online outlets Georgia and World, and Sakinformi, TV Obieqtivi, and Asaval-Dasavali and Alia newspapers. Georgia and World (geworld.ge) was in the lead by the number of negative editorial assessments (690); moreover, 279 respondent comments were also identified in this outlet. The leader by anti-Western comments of respondents was TV Obieqtivi (627) where 217 such comments were made by the journalists. As regards other outlets, the situation is the following: Sakinformi – 273 editorial and 68 respondent comments; Asaval-Dasavali – 75 editorial and 101 respondent comments; and Alia – 15 editorial and 65 respondent comments. On Imedi TV one anti-Western comment was made by a journalist and 32 by respondents.

FIGURE 11. SOURCES OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES BY MEDIA OUTLETS AND THEIR RESPONDENTS

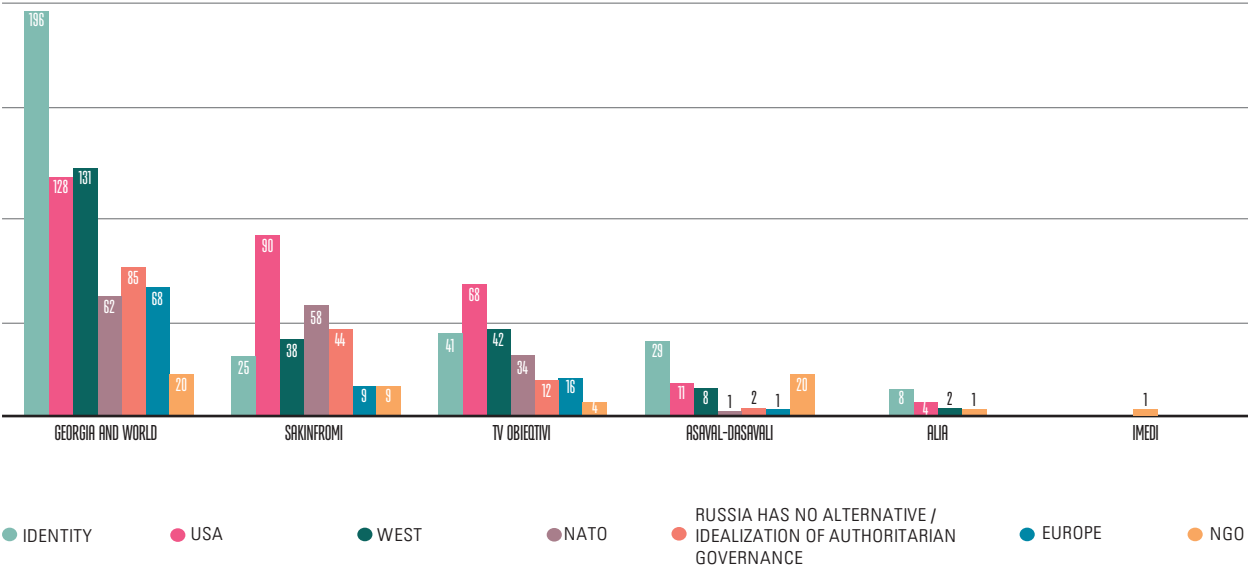


The category “Other” includes those media outlets that reported respondents’ anti-Western comments. The highest number of them was reported by news agencies IPN (94), and Marshalpress (74), Rezonansi newspaper (32), news agency PIA (32) and Kavkasia TV (29).

MEDIA	RESPONDENTS	MEDIA	RESPONDENTS
IPN	94	Mtavari Arkhi	15
Marshalpress	74	Channel 1	12
Rezonansi	32	Kviris Palitra	11
PIA	32	Netgazeti	9
Kavkasia	29	Prime Time	1
Rustavi 2	17		

Comments about the loss of identity were dominant in Georgia and World (196), newspapers Asaval-Dasavali (19) and Alia (8). Online outlet Sakinformi (90) and TV Obieqtivi (68) were distinguished for most frequent comments against the USA. Comments against NATO were most frequently seen in Georgia and World (62) and Sakinformi (58), while against NGOs and Soros were seen in Georgia and World (20) and Asaval-Dasavali (20).

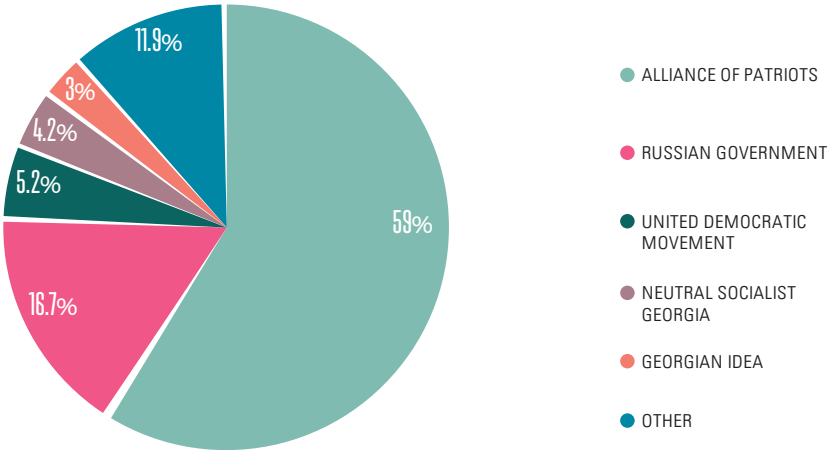
FIGURE 12. TYPOLOGY OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES BY MEDIA OUTLETS



POLITICAL PARTIES / POLITICIANS

In 2019, the leader by anti-Western messages, alike the previous year, was the Alliance of Patriots (446), moreover, the number of such comments increased by four times. The Alliance of Patriots is followed by the Russian government (126), the United Democratic Movement (39), the Neutral Socialist Georgia (32) and the Georgian Idea (23). The leader of the Neutral Socialist Georgia, Valeri Kvaratskhelia, is a presenter of TV Obieqtivi too and consequently, is also mentioned in the category of media.

FIGURE 13. SOURCES OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES BY POLITICIANS

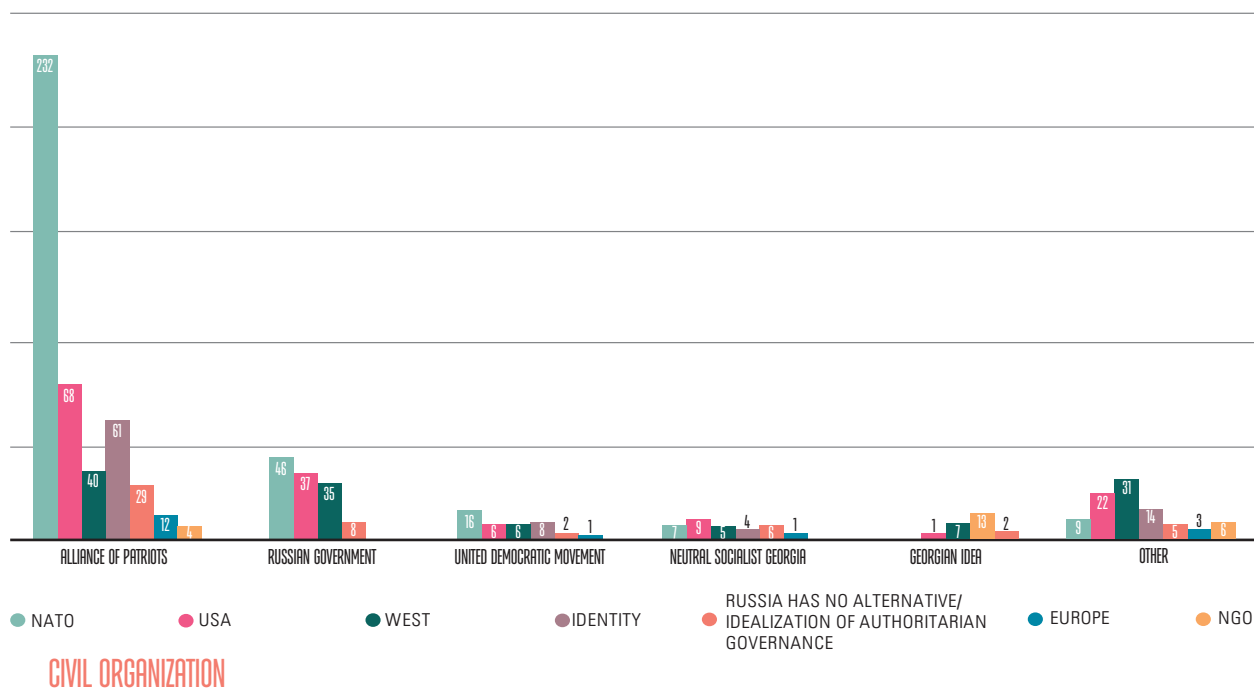




As Figure 14 shows, the Alliance of Patriots prevailed in every topic though anti-NATO messages were way higher in number (232) than all comments on other topics. Russian government comments were directed against NATO (46), the USA (37) and the West (35).

Comments of the United Democratic Movement were most frequently directed against NATO (25). The Russian government (34) and the United Democratic Movement (25) most frequently made comments against the USA. Comments on the threat to lose identity were made most frequently by the Alliance of Patriots (61); this message was dominant in the comments by an anti-liberal political party, the Georgian Idea (13) too.

FIGURE 14. TYPOLOGY OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES BY POLITICIANS



### CIVIL ORGANIZATION

The media monitoring identified 23 civil organizations spreading antiwestern messages as last year. The new one was “Development Laboratory of Georgia” (23), which was represented by its director Irakli Gogava<sup>11</sup> and has been appearing mostly on “TV Obieqtivi”. Among the other organizations, the most active were Primakov Georgian-Russian Civil Center (45) and Eurasian Institute (45), which were often publishing their position on the website “Georgia and the World”, as well as the organization “Stalin”.

#	CIVIL ORGANIZATIONS	ANTIWESTERN MESSAGES
1	Primakov Georgian-Russian Civil Center	45
2	Eurasian Institute	45
3	Association of Defenders of Rights	36
4	Development Laboratory of Georgia	23
5	Global Research Center	19
6	Stalin	17
7	Georgian March	17

<sup>11</sup> Gogava was the MP in 1999-2004 from Citizens of Union and affiliated with Governor of Kvemo Kartli Levan Mamaladze. <http://old.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=640>

8	Public Assembly	14
9	Strategic Institute of Management	9
10	Terrorism Research Center	7
11	Association of Child's Rights	5
12	Former Prisoners for Human Rights	5
13	Georgian Mission	4
14	Various	14
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>260</b>

## REPRESENTATIVES OF SOCIETY

Among anti-Western comments (407) by representatives of society, the most active persons were: retired General Guram Nikolaishvili (58); businessman Levan Vasadze, that accumulated his capital in Russia and affiliated with the World Congress of Families (WCF); Political analyst Tamar Kiknadze (31) who actively participates in events organized by the Primakov Center and in Georgian-Russian forums and was a frequent respondent of Obieqtivi TV; The audience of Obieqtivi TV (24), making anti-Western comments mainly during phone-ins and others. Among them was also Veterans Today's journalist Jeffrey Silverman (10) who mainly was active against Lugar Laboratory.

REPRESENTATIVES OF SOCIETY		REPRESENTATIVES OF SOCIETY	
Guram Nikolaishvili	58	Rezo Amashukeli	12
Levan Vasadze	38	Guram Kartvelishvili	11
Tamar Kiknadze	31	Goga Khaindrava	10
The audience of TV Obieqtivi	24	Jeffrey Silverman	10
Mamuka Areshidze	13	Hamlet Chipashvili	10

## CLERGY

As in 2018, among clergy, the most active with anti-Western messages was arch-priest of Ketevan Tsamebuli Church in Avchala, Giorgi Razmadze.

CLERGY		CLERGY	
Giorgi Razmadze	26	Davit Nozadze	2
Davit Kvlividze	8	Iakob Iakobashvili	2
Various religious servants	8	Melkisedek Diakonidze	2
Davit Isakadze	7	Kristepore Tsamaladze	2
Spiridon Abuladze	5	Davit Lasurashvili	1
Ioane Gamrekeli	4	Iremia Lomadze	1
Basil Mkalavishvili	3	Roman Vaskresensky	1
Giorgi Pavlov	3		

## 3. FRAMING OF ANTI-WESTERN NARRATIVES

As in previous years, the structure of anti-Western narratives is again three-tiered, consisting of the following stages: I. sowing fears; II. Instilling despair; and III. offering solutions.

FIGURE 15. STRUCTURE OF ANTI-WESTERN NARRATIVES



## I. SOWING FEARS

### 1.1. FEAR OF IRRITATING RUSSIA

In contrast to the government of the United National Movement (2004–2012), distinguished for its radical rhetoric and actions (expulsion of Russian spies) in the relationship with Russia, the ruling Georgian Dream party, that came to power in 2012, adopted a qualitatively different attitude to the Kremlin. In parallel to declared aim of integration into NATO and the EU, the 2012 election manifesto of the Georgian Dream explicitly stated that Georgia would no longer be an item on the list of disagreements between the West and Russia. The same view was promoted in 2019 by actors having close links to Russia – representatives of the Eurasian Institute and the Alliance of Patriots:

#### 2012 ELECTION MANIFESTO OF GEORGIAN DREAM<sup>12</sup>

“Georgia should no longer be a factor in disagreement between the West and Russia”

#### EURASIAN INSTITUTE, 28 JANUARY, 2019

**Gulbaat Rtskhaladze:** “Our goal: to prevent the Caucasus and especially, Georgia from forming into an arena of confrontation between Russia and the USA, the West.”<sup>13</sup>

#### ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS, 22 JULY, 2019

**Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi:** “Georgia has already become a factor of confrontation and it shall not be.”<sup>14</sup>

On the premise of avoiding irritating Russia, the ruling political party did not always react to information operations of the Kremlin (for example, a deliberate campaign against the Lugar Lab) while narrators of the Kremlin’s interests constantly referred to those topics with a potential to irritate Russia. Along with the NATO integration and deployment of US servicemen in Georgia, the construction of Anaklia deep-sea port was considered inconsistent with Russia’s interest and in early 2020, the government terminated the agreement with the Anaklia consortium.<sup>15</sup>

**ANAKLIA SEAPORT IS NOT AN ECONOMIC PROJECT.** A pro-Russian political party, the Alliance of Patriots, and TV Obieqtivi, closely associated with the political party, questioned the economic purpose of the seaport, discussing it in the context of US military interests.

**Bondo Mdzinarishvili, presenter of TV Obieqtivi:** “...when General [Hodges] makes such statement, does the subtext not imply that the Anaklia seaport is crucial for totally different aims than economic development?”

**Gigi Maglakelidze, Alliance of Patriots:** “A serious question arises about the economic efficiency of this seaport.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Georgian Dream, 2012 Election Manifesto [http://www.ivote.ge/images/doc/pdfs/ocnebis%20saarchevno%20programa.pdf?fbclid=IwAR09\\_KnlZVAdSBcUvmX7vh3vcA7l-S\\_\\_P3lyFysgPAxP5UhpKNhHWmuX1W0](http://www.ivote.ge/images/doc/pdfs/ocnebis%20saarchevno%20programa.pdf?fbclid=IwAR09_KnlZVAdSBcUvmX7vh3vcA7l-S__P3lyFysgPAxP5UhpKNhHWmuX1W0)

<sup>13</sup> <https://bit.ly/2XTuuZK>

<sup>14</sup> Obieqtivi, Dghis Bolos, 22 July <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3825956>

<sup>15</sup> Ana Chkhikvadze, Voice of America, 14 January. Unclear future of the Anaklia port. <https://www.amerikishkma.com/a/unclear-future-of-the-anaklia-port-project/5244109.html>

<sup>16</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studis, 26 October. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3867060>

**Davit tarkhan-Mourvai, Alliance of Patriots:** “In case of non-alignment, we will have a deep seaport in Anaklia... Non-alignment means that no foreign submarines will be stationed there while this, in turn, means that Russia will feel no danger.”<sup>17</sup>

The editor-in-chief of Sakinformi stressed that in contrast to the previous government, the incumbent government did not blindly implement Americans’ orders and hence, it suspended the construction of the Anaklia seaport.

**Arno Khidirbegishvili, editor-in-chief of Sakinformi:** “In contrast to Saakashvili, Ivanishvili will not blindly execute their will and has already suspended the construction of Anaklia seaports – the first ever US naval base on the Black Sea.”<sup>18</sup>

A deputy Russian foreign minister attributed a statement of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo<sup>19</sup> that the seaport will enhance Georgia’s relationship with free economies and prevent it from falling prey to Chinese and Russian economic interests, to anxiety caused in the West by the normalization of ties between Russia and Georgia:

**Grigory Karasin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia:** “The anxiety in the West is caused by the fact that the relationship between Georgia and Russia is normalizing... It is up to Georgia to decide how to act concerning the Anaklia seaport, but what Pompeo said about Russia and China, is not the tone that is appealing to us.”<sup>20</sup>

## 1.2. FEAR OF WAR

Fear of the resumption of hostilities has been fueled for years by actors pursuing Kremlin’s interests in Georgia. To this end, they continued to promote the following messages:

**THE WAR WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE USA.** this message pursued the aimed to ignore Russia’s responsibility and blame Georgia and its strategic partner in starting the conflict:

**Jeffrey Silverman, Veterans Today:** “The 2008 August war was also part of the US test-plan.”<sup>21</sup>

**Levan Chachua, Georgian Idea:** “As regards to Bryzas and Kramers who tell us that Russia understands only the language of force, it was with such wicked encouragement that they brought Saakashvili to a condition that he bombed sleeping Tskhinvali.”<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Obieqtivi, Dgis Bolos, 25 June. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3812793>

<sup>18</sup> Sakinformi, 2 December. <https://bit.ly/3fgzjSS>

<sup>19</sup> RFE/RL, 11 June, 2019. Pompeo: I communicated our hope that Georgia completes the port project. <https://bit.ly/2MLSWWG>

<sup>20</sup> Sakinformi, 7 December. <https://bit.ly/37IrUPi>

<sup>21</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 13-19 May.

<sup>22</sup> Georgia & World, 19 September. <https://bit.ly/2kmZ7Wq>

**Nino Burjanadze, United Democratic Movement:** “The problem was that McCain and his team encouraged Saakashvili, because McCain very much needed an anti-Russian hysteria in the run up to the US presidential elections.”<sup>23</sup>

**Vladimir Putin, President of Russia:** “Americans were in the zone of hostilities [in 2008]. The Georgian army was equipped by Americans; it is also a fact that Americans trained them.”<sup>24</sup>

US/West is not interested in settling the conflict and normalizing the relationship with Russia:

**Giorgi Lomaia, Alliance of Patriots:** “No one is interested in establishing peace in your country.... in order to always have someone to point finger at and say that it is an aggressor, occupier, etc... Foreigners need us as experimental guinea pigs to use us as a bargaining chip with Russians.”<sup>25</sup>

**Maria Zakharova, spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs:** “Our Western colleagues, especially the United States, continue to make unfounded accusations against Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Instead of helping to ensure peace and security in the South Caucasus, they are actually doing the opposite and destabilizing the region. We can see how Georgia is being flooded with arms and drawn into military blocs.”<sup>26</sup>

#### US / WEST USES GEORGIA AS A Foothold AGAINST RUSSIA:

**Beso Barbakadze, a journalist of Georgia & World:** “The best foothold for fighting Russia is our territory. Americans know perfectly well that they cannot nudge, cannot “fool” other neighbors [into confrontation with Russia].”<sup>27</sup>

**Nino Ratishvilis, TV Obieqtivi presenter:** “The key factor still is that the US needs the Georgian territory for waging war with Iran.”<sup>28</sup> “I fear seeing ‘Syria-zation’ of Georgia, turning it into a foothold.”<sup>29</sup>

**US / NATO BASES WILL PROVOKE RUSSIA.** Comments on unsuitability of deploying US military bases in Georgia were related to an initiative put forward by the director of Foreign Policy Studies at the Heritage Foundation, Luke Coffey,<sup>30</sup> to deploy US servicemen, after they withdraw from Syria, in Georgia, namely in Samtskhe-Javakheti; also, represented the reaction of pro-Russian actors to a statement of President of Georgia<sup>31</sup> that the deployment of US bases in Georgia would provoke Russia:

<sup>23</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 12-18 August.

<sup>24</sup> Rustavi 2, P.S., 5 May, library record. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3786254>

<sup>25</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 11 September. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3849196>

<sup>26</sup> Imedi, Qronika, 13 September. <https://www.imedi.ge/ge/video/41859/pasukhi-moskovs#!?type=2&page=2>

<sup>27</sup> Georgia & World, 19 September. <https://bit.ly/2lZhstc>

<sup>28</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 25 June. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3813031>

<sup>29</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 23 October. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3865556>

<sup>30</sup> Nino Gelashvilil, RFE/RL, 25 October, 2019. “On the part of Luke Coffey, it is a testing of attitudes both in Georgia and the USA. <https://bit.ly/2C3RVam>

<sup>31</sup> Ia Meurmishvili, VOA, 1 May 2019. Inetrview with Salome Zourabichvili. <https://www.amerikiskhma.com/a/interview-with-presidnt-zourabishvili/4897528.html>

**Bakur Svanidze, journalist:** “This idea [the deployment of US servicemen in Georgia after their withdrawal from Syria] is indeed an ‘excellent chance’ for Georgia to take after (God forbid!) Syria and become a testing ground for two (or three) large states to test each other’s force.”<sup>32</sup>

**Gigi Maglakelidze, Alliance of Patriots:** “If a military base is established in Georgia and, God forbid, even one bomb is dropped, a nuclear weapon is already so powerful... I think that from the standpoint of the country’s security, Georgia must not rely on muscle flexing, javelins and demonstrating some force.”<sup>33</sup>

**Dimitri Lortkipanidze, Primakov Georgian–Russian Public Center:** “I want to comment on Georgian President’s statement regarding the deployment of foreign bases in Georgia; I think the statement is wise and very pragmatic and I support it.”<sup>34</sup>

**Melkisedek Diakonidze, Archbishop:** “[President Salome Zourabichvili] said no to the installment of an US base and I humbly extend my thanks to her for that.”<sup>35</sup>

A message that the integration into NATO will provoke Russia was again actively promoted:

**Anzor Danelia, author at Georgia & World:** “Russia which now has the power to threaten, repeatedly warned us that it would not allow any NATO or whatnot near its borders!... You will force Russia, much like that subversive Saakashvili did and as a result Samachablo and Abkhazia were lost, to make mincemeat out of everything here.”<sup>36</sup>

**Vazha Otarashvili, Alliance of Patriots:** “If even one NATO base is deployed here, we will be left without the state. Russia will make mincemeat out of us next to that very base.”<sup>37</sup>

Russian government made sharp statements about Georgia’s NATO integration, calling the Georgian government to be consistent and instead of playing a double game, make a choice:

**Grigory Karasin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia:** “Tbilisi has to decide; either to choose the atmosphere of regional favor in the South Caucasus, or the Euro–Atlantic agenda... We remember full well what caused Ukraine’s problem... History shows that an attempt to play simultaneously on two boards leads to confusion which may have negative consequences.”<sup>38</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Georgia & World, 30 October. <https://bit.ly/31WZA0Z>

<sup>33</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 11 May. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3789664>

<sup>34</sup> Marshallpress, 9 May. <https://marshallpress.ge/archives/234915>

<sup>35</sup> Alia, 6–12 May.

<sup>36</sup> Georgia & World, 19 September. <https://bit.ly/2msBFrL>

<sup>37</sup> Kavkasia, Barieri, 16 September. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3851684>

<sup>38</sup> Saagento Pirveli, 28 February. <https://bit.ly/2EIEkIV>

### 1.3. FEAR OF LOSING THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

Fear of losing territorial integrity was associated, like in previous years, with a suggestion of extending Article 5 of NATO Treaty, concerning the collective security, to the occupied territories after the restoration of country's territorial integrity and an initiative to expedite Georgia's NATO membership, voiced by Former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen<sup>39</sup> in 2019. This initiative, apart from Kremlin actors, was negatively assessed by separate representatives of the Georgian Dream too:

**Gia Volski, Georgian Dream:** “Neither we nor any other political force can or will concede these territories because doing so would mean going against the history and the state.”<sup>40</sup>

**Free Georgia:** “Discussions about Georgia's integration into NATO should and must indeed start but not in view whether it is acceptable to integrate into NATO without Abkhazia and so-called South Ossetia but whether it generally makes sense to continue cooperation with NATO if this leads to disintegration of Georgia's territorial integrity instead of recovery thereof.”<sup>41</sup>

A conspiracy theory that Georgia's integration into NATO equals the entry of Turkish army and loss of territories was mainly spread by notoriously Turkophobic party, the Alliance of Patriots, and the publisher of the pro-Kremlin media outlet, Georgia & World:

**Alexandre Chachia, publisher of Georgia & World:** “Only idiots may not believe that if Georgia becomes a member of NATO and the latter deploys its armies to Georgia at the Psou river, that army will inevitably be the Turkish army.”<sup>42</sup>

**Davit Tarkhan-Mourvai, Alliance of Patriots:** “Unless there is a military non-alignment, mark my words, Turkey will swallow up Ajara and this will be facilitated by NATO member states.”<sup>43</sup>

### 1.4. FEAR OF BIOLOGICAL SUBVERSION

The Lugar Lab, named after US Senator Richard Lugar, at the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC) has been targeted by the Russian Federation for years now. The program within which the Lugar Lab was built in Georgia aims at reducing biological threat in the former Soviet countries through focusing on research and equipping local labs with modern technologies.<sup>44</sup> A legislative initiative of the Senators Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar, which was adopted by the Congress, serves the goal of transforming weapons of mass destruction scattered in post-Soviet countries and around the world for peaceful scientific aims.

<sup>39</sup> Civil.ge, 11 September 2019. A Risky Proposition? Interview with Anders Fogh Rasmussen. <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/319831>

<sup>40</sup> Interpressnews, 10 September. <https://bit.ly/2C1dZCI>

<sup>41</sup> Interpressnews, 10 September. <https://bit.ly/3e2nGys>

<sup>42</sup> Sakinfromi, 2 October. <https://bit.ly/3fdDy1s>

<sup>43</sup> Obieqtivi, Dgis Bolos, 23 July. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3826729>

<sup>44</sup> Nunn-Lugar Revisited. National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 447 <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB447/>



This chapter sums up the key trends that were observed in the past few years in the Russian government's deliberate attacks against the Lugar Lab.

That the Russian government deems the Lugar Lab important is also proved by the fact that it is a regular topic on the agenda of President Putin himself and other top political officials whose comments are often heard in preplanned information influence operations. The Russian government's interests in relation to the Lugar Lab, which aim to sow fears in Georgian society about biological subversion, are promoted by the following actors:

1. **Former security minister of Georgia, living in Russia.** The former security minister of Georgia, Igor Giorgadze, who was on the wanted list for a terrorist attack on President Shevardnadze, drew the attention of media in September 2018, when he called a special news briefing in Moscow to allege that people died from experiments conducted in the Lugar Lab, were linked to the trial of US medication Sovaldi against Hepatitis C.<sup>45</sup>
2. **Foreign named journalists with links to the Kremlin:**
  - **Dilyana Gaytandzhieva**<sup>46</sup> a Bulgarian journalist with ties to Hezbollah and the Kremlin, whose investigation into the Lugar Lab was aired on Al-Mayadeen, a TV company linked to Hezbollah, and published by websites News Front,<sup>47</sup> registered in Crimea, and South Front,<sup>48</sup> connected to Russia, as well as by Zero Hedge, a website notorious for publishing conspiracy theories. The Russian Defense Ministry's TV Zvezda presented Gaytandzhieva as the author of investigation into the Lugar Lab, supporting the claims about "dangerous trials" made by Igor Giorgadze from Moscow. Gaytandzhieva has access to classified correspondence between the US Embassy in Georgia and the Ministry of Health of Georgia as well as to official correspondence of employees of the Ministry, which indicates about the leak of information from separate government entities.<sup>49</sup> From Georgian media, Gaytandzhieva's investigations were published by Georgia & World and tvalsazrishi.ge.
  - **Jeffrey Silverman**,<sup>50</sup> the head of Georgian bureau of Veterans Today. He is also an author of US-sanctioned website USA Really, founded by Alexander Malkevich. Silverman is one of the main sources of anti-Lugar Lab information for Russian pro-government media.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, in 2018–2019, Silverman was a volunteer teacher in the "Teach and Learn with Georgia" program implemented by the Teacher Professional Development Center, getting funding from the state budget. Silverman's accusations of the Lugar Lab for testing biological weapons are often reported not only on Russian TV channels (Russia's

<sup>45</sup> Myth Detector, 20 September 2018. "Giorgadze's Claims about Hepatitis C Treatment Program Allegedly Causing Death are Groundless." <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/giorgadzes-claims-about-hepatitis-c-treatment-program-allegedly-causing-death-are-groundless>

<sup>46</sup> Dilyana Gaytandzhieva, profile. <http://mythdetector.ge/en/profile/gaytandzhieva-dilyana>

<sup>47</sup> News front, profile. <http://mythdetector.ge/en/profile/news-front>

<sup>48</sup> EU vs Disinfo, APRIL 08, 2019, South Front - Russian Hiding Being Russian [https://euvsdisinfo.eu/south-front-russia-hiding-being-russian/?fbclid=IwAR1rPhJcvHedfAvjUwf6U7SpO\\_yyP4H3Mi2OuUKS9AHZRtDIshpbuUUCyNE](https://euvsdisinfo.eu/south-front-russia-hiding-being-russian/?fbclid=IwAR1rPhJcvHedfAvjUwf6U7SpO_yyP4H3Mi2OuUKS9AHZRtDIshpbuUUCyNE)

Dilyana Gaytandzhieva, 16 January 2018. The Pentagon Bio-Weapon. <https://southfront.org/pentagon-bio-weapons/>

<sup>49</sup> Myth detector, 27 September 2018. "How Kremlin Tries to Cover up Russian Trace in Skripal Case with Lugar Laboratory." <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/how-kremlin-tries-cover-russian-trace-skripal-case-lugar-laboratory>

<sup>50</sup> Jeffrey Silverman, profile. <http://mythdetector.ge/en/profile/silverman-jeffrey>

<sup>51</sup> Myth Detector, 5 November 2019. "Author of the U.S.-sanctioned USA Really is Involved in Georgian Government-sponsored Program as a Teacher." <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/author-us-sanctioned-usa-really-involved-georgian-government-sponsored-program-teacher>

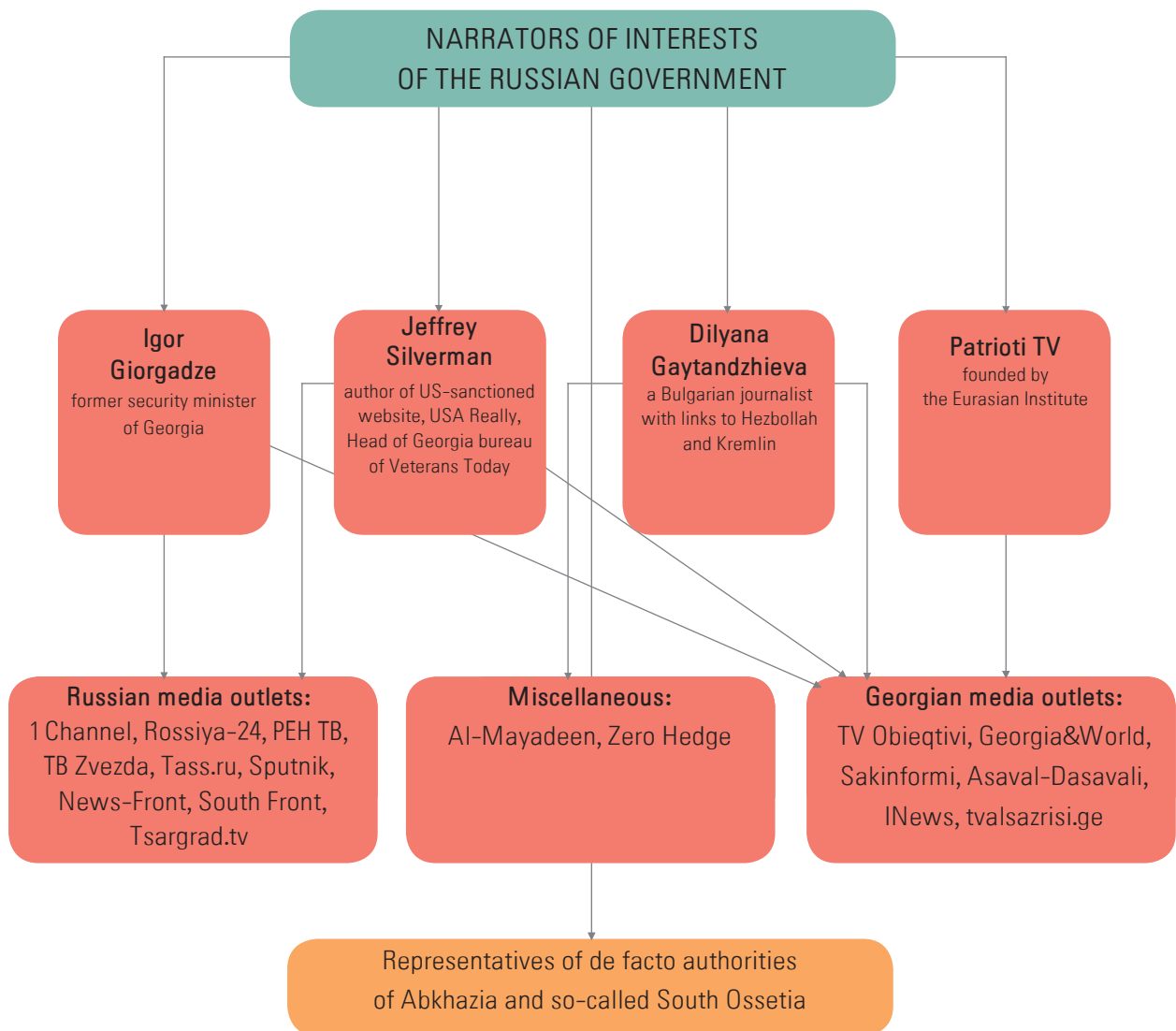
First Channel, Rossiya 24), but also in Georgian media (Asaval-Dasavali, Georgia & World, Obieqtivi, Sakinformi).

3. **Patrioti TV founded by the Eurasian Institute**

- Patrioti TV, founded by the Pro-Russian organization Eurasia Institute, aired a documentary<sup>52</sup> portraying the Lab as a facility dangerous to life in the spring of 2018. It featured the same respondents who appeared in Gaytandzhieva’s investigative film, and also in addition the founder and 100% shareholder of the Patrioti TV, Giorgi Iremadze.

4. **Representatives of de facto authorities of Abkhazia and so-called South Ossetia** made repeated statements that diseases were spread from the Lugar Lab to their territories.

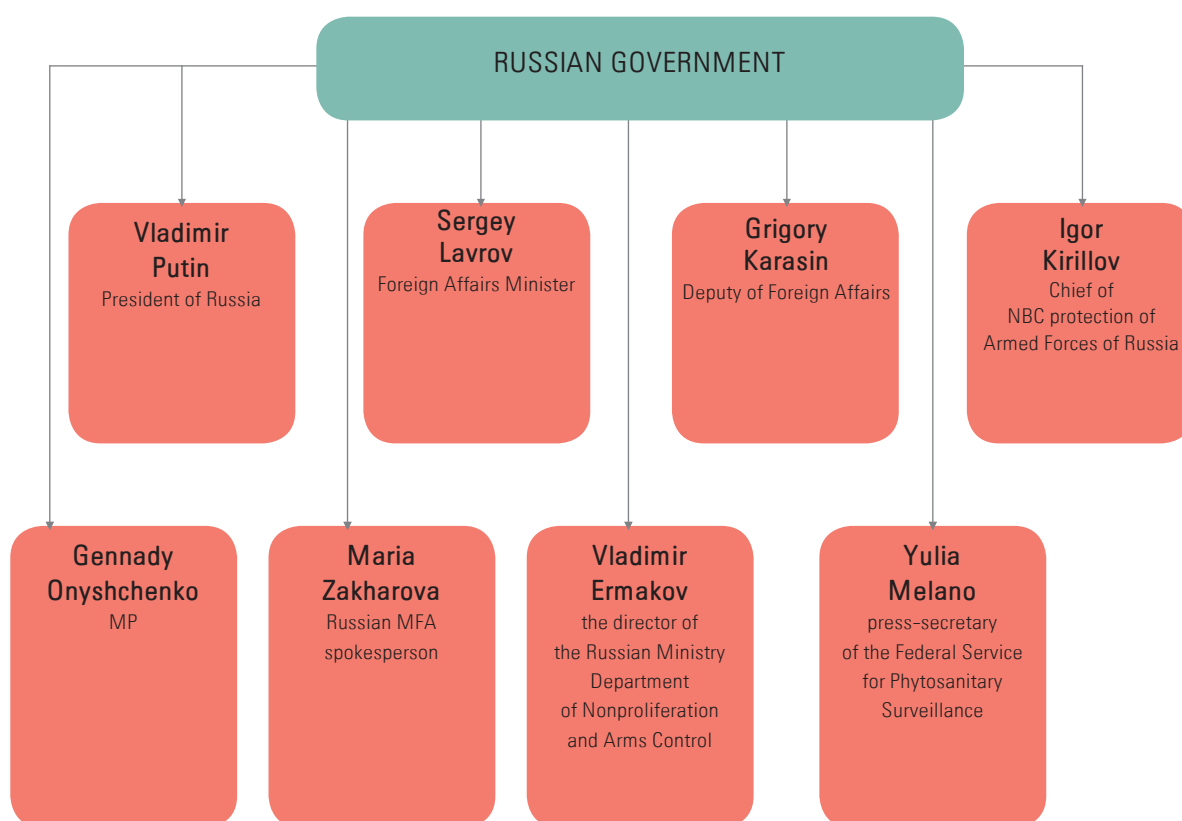
FIGURE 16. NARRATORS OF INTERESTS OF THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT AGAINST LUGAR LAB



<sup>52</sup> Myth Detector, 28 January 2019. What Particular Sources Does the Kremlin Cite for Spreading Conspiracy Theories about Lugar Lab? <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/what-particular-sources-does-kremlin-cite-spreading-conspiracy-theories-about-lugar-lab>

Viewpoints of narrators of Russian interests and their engagement in information influence operations provide a fertile ground for the Russian government to allege about threats emanating from labs developed by the US support in Georgia and other post-Soviet countries and declare that it will not allow the testing of biological weapons at its borders.<sup>53</sup>

FIGURE 17. RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES AGAINST LUGAR LAB



Allegations made by Igor Giorgadze in September 2018 about testing the medication Sovaldi (which is licensed in Russia as a vitally important medication) in the Lugar Lab, was followed by statements of Vladimir Putin<sup>54</sup> and others about the threats which, as they claimed, were created in the Lugar Lab with the involvement of Americans. It was this very allegation that was supported by the investigative film of the Bulgarian journalist<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Vladimir Ermakov, the director of the Russian Foreign Ministry Department of Nonproliferation and Arms Control: Russia will not allow biological experiments by US at its borders. Obieqtivi, Sakinformi, 25 September. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3678525>

<sup>54</sup> Vladimir Putin, President of Russia: “I would not judge whether this [about Lugar Lab] is true or not. I saw this statement by the former Georgian minister of state security. This is definitely cause for concern. These developments – if they are actually taking place – are very dangerous and are related to the latest achievements in genetics. From what I have seen, I can only repeat what is there: it is about finding agents that can selectively affect people depending on their ethnic group, and over two or three generations, allegedly, they have used animals to conduct such experiments... So if someone is developing this technology, they have to understand that others will be doing so as well. So it is better to sit at the negotiating table beforehand and develop unified rules of conduct in this very sensitive area.” <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/putin-calls-dangerous-georgians-medication-which-among-vital-medications-russia-2016>

<sup>55</sup> Myth Detector, 27 September 2019. How Kremlin Tries to Cover up Russian Trace in Skripal Case with Lugar Laboratory. <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/how-kremlin-tries-cover-russian-trace-skripal-case-lugar-laboratory>

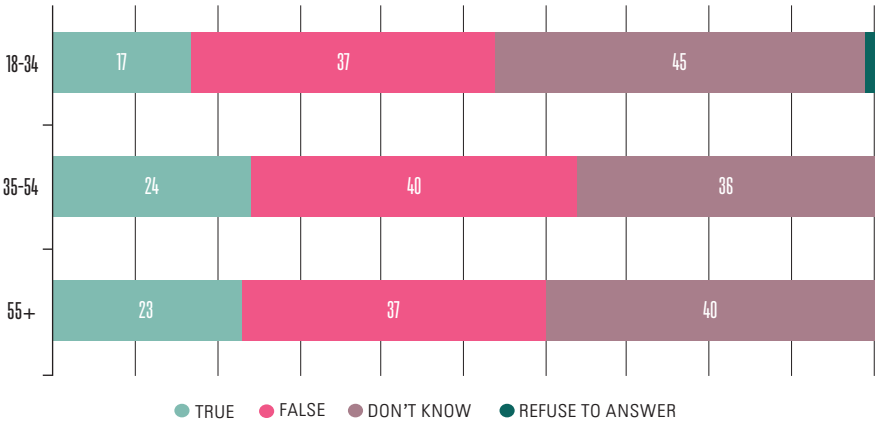
and accompanied with comments by Silevrman.<sup>56</sup> All this, however, came at the time when Great Britain accused Russia in the case on Skripals poisoning with a nerve agent Novichok<sup>57</sup> and aimed at distracting the attention from Russia’s responsibility towards “American threats.”

The attached table (Annex 1) sums up all main messages spread about the Lugar Lab in the past few years and identifies sources of those messages.

**INFLUENCING PUBLIC OPINION.** A survey<sup>58</sup> conducted by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in 2019 showed a rather high number of those respondents who did not know whether the Lugar Lab contributes to the spread of epidemics in Georgia (18-34 – 45%, 35-54 – 36%, 55+ – 40%). These figures taken together with those who believed the Lugar Lab was a hotbed of epidemics (18-34 – 17%, 35-54 – 24%, 55+ – 23%) add up to more than 50% of respondents who either lacked information and had wrong information on this topic.

**FIGURE 18. ATTITUDES TO THE LUGAR LABORATORY (AGE GROUPS), NDI, 2019**

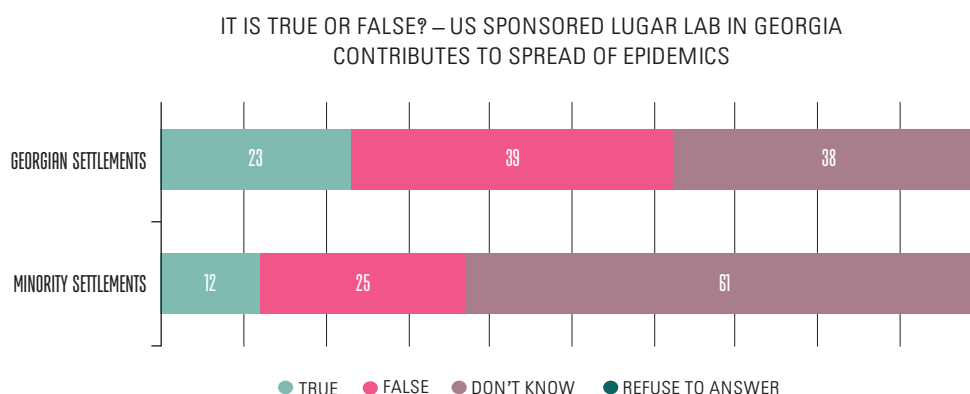
IT IS TRUE OR FALSE? – US SPONSORED LUGAR LAB IN GEORGIA CONTRIBUTES TO SPREAD OF EPIDEMICS



In the regions populated with ethnic minorities, the share of those who lacked information on this issue was significantly higher (61%) while the share of those who believed the statement was true, stood at 12%.

<sup>56</sup> Jeffrey Silverman, 25 September 2018, TV Obieqtivi. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3678530>  
<sup>57</sup> NY Times, 5 September, 2018 UK Charges 2 Men in Novichok Poisoning. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/05/world/europe/russia-uk-novichok-skripal.html>  
<sup>58</sup> NDI, April, 2019. Public Attitudes in Georgia. <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/na2019ge/TFLUGLAB-by-AGEGROUP/>

FIGURE 19. ATTITUDES TO THE LUGAR LABORATORY (ETHNICITY), NDI, 2019



The study into anecdotal evidence, conducted by the MDF in 2019, in which 139 people were surveyed through face-to-face interviews in four regions,<sup>59</sup> also showed that respondents were most susceptible to conspiracy theories about viruses and epidemics. Some 45.8% of respondents believed that viruses were spread artificially and biological weapons and other medications were tested on us.<sup>60</sup> A segment of the respondents who so thought, believed that the aim was to annihilate the population to misappropriate territories while another segment believed that testing medications on Georgians served the interests of pharmaceutical companies as well as the interests of neighboring Turkey.

Both the NDI survey and the interviews conducted by the MDF revealed a correlation between the Kremlin's messages and public perceptions as well as the situation before the coronavirus pandemic. One should also note that varying narratives of the Kremlin during the COVID-19 pandemic and an extraordinary role played by the Lugar Lab in diagnosing the cases of the disease may show a different picture in future surveys.

### 1.5. THREAT OF LOSING IDENTITY

A threat of losing the identity has been exploited by the Kremlin propaganda for years now. It is based on the concept of the "Russian World"<sup>61</sup> which determines an expansionist and messianic Russian foreign policy and provides it with a moral framework.

The 2019 media analysis showed that the emphases were placed, on the one hand, on the incompatibility of Western values with the Orthodox Christianity and, on the other hand, on a theory about the West causing a moral degradation of Georgia which will have a significantly more devastating consequences than a physical occupation.

<sup>59</sup> Samtskhe–Javakheti, Ajara, Kakheti, Shida Kartli. MDF, 2019. Anecdotal Evidence Research. <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/129/>

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pg. 8.

<sup>61</sup> Nicolai N. Petro, March 23, 2015, Russia's Orthodox Soft Power [https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/articles\\_papers\\_reports/727](https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/articles_papers_reports/727)

- THE WESTERN VALUES THAT REST ON CATHOLICISM-PROTESTANTISM ARE INCOMPATIBLE WITH ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

Alexandre Chachia, publisher of *Georgia & World*: “The history of confrontations between Catholicism-Protestantism and Orthodox Christianity counts a millennium... Values of our Church are incompatible with the Western mode of life which they vigorously try to establish here.”<sup>62</sup> “The foundation of Protestant worldview and Anglo-American-German mentality is rationalism, clear-cut individualism and analytical thinking, life and fight in solitude, reliance on oneself... All these properties are totally unacceptable for Orthodox Christian consciousness... A notion that ‘shared religion’ is a factor that we have in common with the West is unfounded.”<sup>63</sup>

- ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY IS THE KEY CHALLENGE TO WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Giorgi Razmadze, cleric: “Foreign Minister of Sweden Carl Bildt... used to openly say that the Orthodox Christianity was the key challenge to Western civilization because it regulated family relationships and did not recognize the rights of sexual minorities.”<sup>64</sup>

- INSTEAD OF OCCUPYING WITH TANKS, THE WEST OCCUPIES US MORALLY WHICH IS WAY MORE DANGEROUS

Nino Ratishvili, presenter of TV *Obieqtivi*: “Whose interests are being served by, for example, financing and promoting LGBT and other similarly painful for us [issues] in order to create a problem and confrontation in society?... They decided not to waste tanks, bombs, guns, bullets on Georgia and it does not matter now what you apply to occupy me, suspend the economy and development, reproduction.”<sup>65</sup> “Russia is the occupier, of course... but for me, no less fearful and even more evil and dangerous occupier is libertarianism – a wanton immorality which was slyly dubbed as freedom by liberast occupiers.”<sup>66</sup>

- THE WEST IMPOSES HOMOSEXUALITY, UNACCEPTABLE VALUES, THEREBY CREATING ANTI-WESTERN ATTITUDES

Giorgi Gigauri, Asaval-Dasavali journalist: “The question is posed in the following way: it is not whether you choose ‘Russia or America?!’ but whether you ‘support pederasty or not?!’... Do not even dare trying to sell pederasty for democracy to the Georgian government and Georgian people!”<sup>67</sup>

Sopo Kikacheishvili, *Georgian Dream*, representative of the Mayor in the Melitauri village community: “Everything is good, food, clothes, but is Europe better? Europe?! The country of pederasts and as they are called – gays and lesbians?! I am fond of Russia, their traditions.”<sup>68</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Georgia & World, 13 November, 2019. <https://bit.ly/2rE2POF>

<sup>63</sup> Georgia & World, 9 October, 2019. <https://bit.ly/2OwLfpl>

<sup>64</sup> Georgia & World, 6 November, 2019. <https://bit.ly/32hi905>

<sup>65</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 28 May 2019. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3797799>

<sup>66</sup> Marshalpress, 9 May 2019.

<sup>67</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 17-23 June. <https://marshalpress.ge/archives/234661>

<sup>68</sup> Rustavi 2, Kurieri, 2 July. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3816581>

**Giorgi Razmadze, protopriest:** “Primarily, I address ambassadors and have such a question to them: Is the Georgian democracy – I ask you forgiveness but have to use this word – measured by human buttocks?”<sup>69</sup>

**Levan Chachua, Georgian dream:** “I want to openly tell those representatives of embassies and foreign missions who encourage the Georgian state to confront the Georgian society, that their coercion of Georgian nation generates anti-Western attitudes in society.”<sup>70</sup>

**Kakha Kukava, Free Georgia:** “Each such debate in Georgia will more or less increase the number of people with anti-Western attitudes... When you tell to a Georgian person that England demands the conduct of a gay pride whereas Putin is against it, you get this [increased] percentage.”<sup>71</sup>

## II. DESPAIR

### 2.1. THE WEST CANNOT PROTECT US

Much like in previous years, skepticism was instilled that the West/NATO and Georgia’s partners cannot protect Georgia, that they will not engage in confrontation with Russia because of Georgia and that the US, which failed to protect Kurds, is an unreliable partner.

- THE WEST FAILED TO PROTECT US DURING THE 2008 WAR

**Bondo Mdzinarishvili, Obieqtivi presenter:** “Wasn’t it the USA that failed to protect its interests here in 2008?!”<sup>72</sup>

**Rezo Amashukeli, poet:** “I do not think they will send anything but diapers, especially considering that Trump said that he cannot spend time on us, he has to take care of his Americans.”<sup>73</sup>

- THE USA / NATO WILL NOT LOCK HORNS WITH RUSSIA OVER GEORGIA

**Gulbaat Rtskhilladze, Eurasia Institute:** “Anyone is mistaken who expects that America will lock horns with Russia over Georgia and weaken Russian and then we will live well, this will not happen.”<sup>74</sup>

**Davit Kvlividze, protopriest:** “And you think that NATO will draw Russia out of Abkhazia and tell them anything? No one will tell anything to anyone... They need Georgia as a foothold.”<sup>75</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 18-24 November.

<sup>70</sup> Interpressnews, 19 June. <https://bit.ly/37qm2Eq>

<sup>71</sup> Imedi, Pirispir, 18 June. <https://www.imedi.ge/ge/video/39217/pirispir--18-ivnisi-2019-tseli#!?type=1&page=1> (1:18:10-1:20:35)

<sup>72</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 15 August. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3836663>

<sup>73</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 16 May. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3791653>

<sup>74</sup> Georgia & World, 25 December. <https://bit.ly/2SxAYLp>

<sup>75</sup> Marshalpress, 24 October. <https://marshalpress.ge/archives/261920>

## ● THE USA ABANDONED KURDS

**Irma Inashvili, Alliance of Patriots:** “Everyone sees that Americans failed to protect Kurds who were their strategic allies and partners in the fight against the ISIS.”<sup>76</sup>

## 2.2. DEMOCRACY, SOVEREIGNTY IS A FICTION

Similar to the previous years, an opinion was promoted that the West applies double standards and acts in accordance with political conjuncture, that in reality, Georgia is not a sovereign state and the US and other countries interfere in its domestic affairs much like the Soviet Union did. To voice protest against the interference, the Alliance of Patriots staged a protest rally outside the building of US Embassy in Tbilisi in September 2019, demanding that the former assistant to US State secretary, David Kramer, be declared persona non grata;<sup>77</sup> Patriots staged another rally in early 2020 to voice protest against NDI and IRI surveys, which was preceded by the statements of Bidzina Ivanishvili, the leader of Georgian Dream about unreliability of these institutions.

## ● US / WEST INTERFERES IN SOVEREIGN AFFAIRS OF GEORGIA

**Valeri Kvaratskhelia, Obieqtivi presenter:** “Unfortunately, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Georgia has not had a leader who was not managed by America.”<sup>78</sup>

**Vazha Otarashvili, Alliance of Patriots:** “In short, we freed ourselves from Moscow’s yoke but put on the yoke of Washington. Russia was, at least, the Orthodox Christian country and we had shared values.”<sup>79</sup>

**Giorgi Razmadze, cleric:** “Our society – minors or adults, must go to the embassies, primarily to the US embassy, and demand from them that either they withdraw from this country or stop meddling in our domestic affairs once and for all.”<sup>80</sup>

**Irma Inashvili, Alliance of Patriots:** “We are neither a US colony nor Russia’s province... We declare that Georgia must itself determine its external or internal policy steps.”<sup>81</sup>

**Ada Marshania, Alliance of Patriots:** “We, Georgia, are a very serious and deep colonial country. Now our territory is an American colony, under the protectorate of America.”<sup>82</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 25 October. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3866579>

<sup>77</sup> On 10 September, the appearance of the leader of Alliance of Patriots, Irma Inashvili, at a joint conference of the McCain Institute and the EPRC without registration ensued a row between her and David Kramer. RFE/RL, 11 September 2019. “Irma Inashvili puts forward an initiative on introducing a ‘Kramer list’.” <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/30159225.html>

<sup>78</sup> Obieqtivi, Okros Kveta, 6 July. [https://www.myvideo.ge/?video\\_id=3820378](https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=3820378)

<sup>79</sup> Georgia & World, 13 February. <https://bit.ly/2S2OoeL>

<sup>80</sup> Georgia & World, 7 August. <https://bit.ly/2OXRHHY>

<sup>81</sup> Marshalpress, 11 September. <https://marshalpress.ge/archives/256447>

<sup>82</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 26 June. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3813587>



- **NDI / IRI INTERFERE IN THE ELECTION PROCESS.** At the end of 2019, the leader of Georgian Dream, Bidzina Ivanishvili criticized the US institutions (NDI and IRI) for the results of their surveys, saying that it was the devaluation of the institutions of the strategic partner and damaging to the US interests. At the end of the year, the pro-Kremlin Alliance of Patriots launched an anti-NDI campaign, staging a rally outside the US embassy in early 2020 and conducting an alternative survey through public gatherings:

**Bidzina Ivanishvili, Georgian Dream:** “But it is a general feeling that an obvious bias is persistent in these surveys and institutions of our partners experience devaluation in our country... The most distressing for me is that such partner institutions are devaluing which may lead to a common distrust [towards them] and this may be further aggravated by an opinion that if this is bad it means that your strategic partner may be doing something improperly.”<sup>83</sup>

**Gigi Maglakelidze, Alliance of Patriots:** “This is a direct interference against Georgia’s state interests... When such fuss is kicked in the US over Russia’s interference in the US elections... which almost led to impeachment... such fake surveys (NDI / IRI) are direct meddling in the political life of Georgia and pressure on society and political manipulation of society.”<sup>84</sup>

- **ANTI-OCCUPATION RALLY IS LED BY AMERICA.** The anti-occupation rally on 20 June, triggered by Russian communist MP Sergey Gavrillov taking a seat of the speaker in the Parliament of Georgia, was portrayed as the rally organized by the USA. Even more, this process was linked, both by the Russian government and local actors, to the former Assistant Defense Secretary Michael Carpenter.

**Davit Isakadze, protopriest:** “These processes are led from the USA, the US Embassy.”<sup>85</sup>

**Dimitri Lortkipanidze, Primakov Georgian–Russian Public Center:** “Much like, back then, reactionary forces in the center of Kyiv were waiting for cookies distributed by Victoria Nuland, some people here are also waiting for a serious interference from abroad.”<sup>86</sup> “... this is proved by direct participation of security employees of the embassy in the storming on 20–21 June... All this was then followed by the Tbilisi pride which was supposed to provoke destabilization in the country.”<sup>87</sup>

**Sergey Gavrillov, Russian MP from the communist party:** “Interparliamentary assembly of Orthodox Christianity with the participation of Russian MPs was merely a premise for a coup. That was not a spontaneous protest. All activists had been prepared in advance and led by coordinators speaking US English.”<sup>88</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Netgazeti, 28 November. What did Ivanishvili point out to the USA? <https://netgazeti.ge/news/410102/>

<sup>84</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 23 November. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3877191>

<sup>85</sup> Inetrpressnews, 15 June. <https://bit.ly/2XYXVK0>

<sup>86</sup> Georgia & World, 20 November. <https://bit.ly/37lv84V>

<sup>87</sup> Georgia & World, 31 July. <https://bit.ly/2LRdkqZ>

<sup>88</sup> Georgia & World, 26 June. <https://bit.ly/2NgoxCZ>

**Valentina Matvienko, Russian politician:** “Mass unrest in Georgia began just days after the visit of Michael Carpenter, the former Assistant Secretary of Defense and current Managing Director of the Biden Center at the University of Pennsylvania. He tweeted on his Twitter: ‘Just spent 3 days in Georgia. I’m not sure the government [of Georgia] fully understands the implications of its open-door policy with Russia’ and he continues in the same vein... This looks like a deliberately planned provocation against Russia as well as Georgia.”<sup>89</sup>

**Vyacheslav Volodin, Chairman of the State Duma:** “This provocation began overseas.”<sup>90</sup>

### 2.3. TWO WESTS: LIBERALISM IS EXPERIENCING DEFEAT

Narrators of both Georgian government and Russian interests were engaged in portraying the West as divided into two Wests. On the one hand, media evaluated the criticism voiced against the Georgian government at the McCain Institute conference as the opposition to Trump and an action taken against Trump by the Georgian political opposition;<sup>91</sup> on the other hand, various actors separated the conservative West from the liberal West, placing the emphasis on the failure of liberalism.

**Giorgi Gigauri, journalist:** “Trump, if elected for the second term, will be hundred times more conservative and ruthless towards Sorosism, liberastia and LGBT ideology!”<sup>92</sup>

**Vladimir Putin, President of Russia:** “The ‘liberal idea’ had ‘outlived its purpose’ as the public turned against immigration, open borders and multiculturalism.”<sup>93</sup>

**Irma Inashvili, Alliance of Patriots:** “... and today Trump, the President of the United States, is also taking this path and the situation in Europe has also radically changed – though, unfortunately, this is not discussed in Georgia – not in favor of that pseudo-liberalism. That wave is gradually abating and forces with conservative values are coming, among others, to the European Parliament.”<sup>94</sup>

## III. OFFERING SOLUTIONS

### 3.1. NEUTRALITY

In parallel to fanning fears and instilling despair, anti-Western messages were focused on revising the foreign policy and supporting the idea of neutrality, accompanied with a campaign conducted by Alliance of Patriots to mobilize society.

<sup>89</sup> Interpressnews, 10 July. <https://bit.ly/3d5wS3U>

<sup>90</sup> Rustavi 2, P.S., 21 July. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3825631>

<sup>91</sup> Imedi, Imedis Kvira, 15 September, journalist: “How rightful is it to decide, under the instruction of the opposition to Trump, not only as to which political figure should attend the conference, but also who should be a US ambassador to Georgia?” <https://www.imedi.ge/ge/video/41916/antitrampistebis-politika#!?type=2&page=1>

<sup>92</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 13-19 May.

<sup>93</sup> Sakinformi, 1 July. <https://bit.ly/3fs64N1>

<sup>94</sup> Obieqtivi, Dgis Bolos, 30 May. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3798326>

- FOREIGN POLICY VECTOR MUST BE CHANGED

**Levan Vasadze, businessman:** “It is impossible to reintegrate Abkhazia and Samachablo without Russia’s will, but it must be noted here that it is possible to do that without the will of the West; therefore, given the reality, we, perhaps, should **reject the integration into NATO.**”<sup>95</sup>

- NON-ALIGNMENT IS THE GUARANTEE OF SECURITY FOR RUSSIA

**Giorgi Lomaia, Alliance of Patriots:** “Block-free status means that Russia will not face a constant threat of some danger that will come from our territory and naturally, we will not face a threat which we constantly expect from Russia.”<sup>96</sup>

**Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Alliance of Patriots:** “Two enormous actors, two empires – Russia and China have been constantly speaking of late about a new security concept which is, perhaps, one of the best for them, they speak precisely about military non-alignment and collective guarantees of non-aggression.”<sup>97</sup>

### 3.2. DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH RUSSIA

Settling the problem of Abkhazia and Samachablo through direct dialogue with Russia has been advocated by the Alliance of Patriots for years, which means rejecting the international Geneva format and remaining one-on-one with Russia, thereby turning a blind eye to its responsibility as the party to the conflict. All this will turn Russia from the occupier into a mediator between the Georgian and Abkhazian-Ossetian parties.

**Dito Chubinidze, journalist:** “Like a woman and man cannot conceive a child by Bluetooth, this problem cannot be solved without talking to Putin!”<sup>98</sup>

**Gigi Maglakelidze, Alliance of Patriots:** “This key lies in Moscow, this key lies in Sokhumi, this key lies in Tskhivali.”<sup>99</sup>

**Vazha Otarashvili, Alliance of Patriots:** “We must establish a direct link with Moscow, Sokhumi and Tskhinvali and it should be declared that the first step must be a military non-alliance.”<sup>100</sup>

### 3.3. ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE ON RUSSIA = STABILITY

An opinion was promoted that the economic stability achieved with Russia in recent years was endangered by the 20 June anti-occupation protest and that Georgia depended on Russia both historically and economically.

<sup>95</sup> Imedi, Imedis Kvira, 23 June. <https://www.imedi.ge/ge/video/39399/vis-tamashss-tamashobs-levan-vasadze#!?type=2&page=2>

<sup>96</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 21 September. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3853965>

<sup>97</sup> Obieqtivi, Dgis Bolos, 10 May. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3788819>

<sup>98</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 14–20 October.

<sup>99</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 26 October 2019. <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3867097>

<sup>100</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 6 October. [https://www.myvideo.ge/?video\\_id=3859335](https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=3859335)

**Jaba Khubua, journalist:** “As a result of improved economic and cultural ties with Russia the tourism, the main segment of Georgian economy, hugely benefited from the multiplicity of Russian tourists. And all this, this stability achieved in the past seven years, was ruined in one fell swoop by the United National Movement and Bokeria’s European Georgia by means of anti-statehood disturbance staged on the Rustaveli Avenue.”<sup>101</sup>

**Alexey Pushkov, Russian Senator:** “They can now send their wine and water to their NATO allies free of charge – I do not think they will pay for it.”<sup>102</sup>

**Sergey Lavrov, Foreign Affairs Minister of Russia:** “There are different states in the Black Sea area which at the same time are closely linked and interconnected historically and economically.”<sup>103</sup>

**Ramzan Kadyrov, leader of republic of Chechnya:** “It’s high time for the Georgian government to understand that there is no closer neighbor than Russia, any other state that will lend a helping hand faster.”<sup>104</sup>

#### 3.4. CO-RELIGIOUS RUSSIA FOR OVERCOMING MORAL OCCUPATION

Messianic idea of Orthodox Christian Russia was again promoted by separate clerics and Georgia & World.

**Davit Mkheidze, author:** “In the eternal battle between evil and good that is underway in the world, the Orthodox Christian Russia is on the one side of the divide while the entire West under the leadership of the USA is on the other side. Because of this, this battle is also called the confrontation between the Orthodox Christianity and the Satanists... The integration into Russia 236 years ago saved Georgians from the physical annihilation and the mental degradation from Islamization: Within the USSR, the Georgian Soviet Republic experienced unprecedented prosperity and revival.”<sup>105</sup>

**Davit Kvlividze, protopriest:** “Look at Russia: homosexuality is prohibited, Jehovah’s Witnesses are taken to task, preaching is not allowed for everyone who so desires, that’s why people long for not Russians, but the situation that is in that country.”<sup>106</sup>

**Nika Korinteli, journalist:** “In order to succeed in liberalizing the Church, they need to primarily destroy the influence of Moscow Patriarchate within it and then, transform local churches one by one.”<sup>107</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 1-7 July.

<sup>102</sup> Georgia & World, 10 July. <https://bit.ly/2LM8pXA>

<sup>103</sup> Sakinformi, 31 May. <https://bit.ly/2YCXleD>

<sup>104</sup> Alia, 24-30 June.

<sup>105</sup> Georgia & World, 27 November. <https://bit.ly/20mAaXt>

<sup>106</sup> Marshalpress, 24 October. <https://marshalpress.ge/archives/261920>

<sup>107</sup> Georgia & World, 19 November. <https://bit.ly/204s8m3>

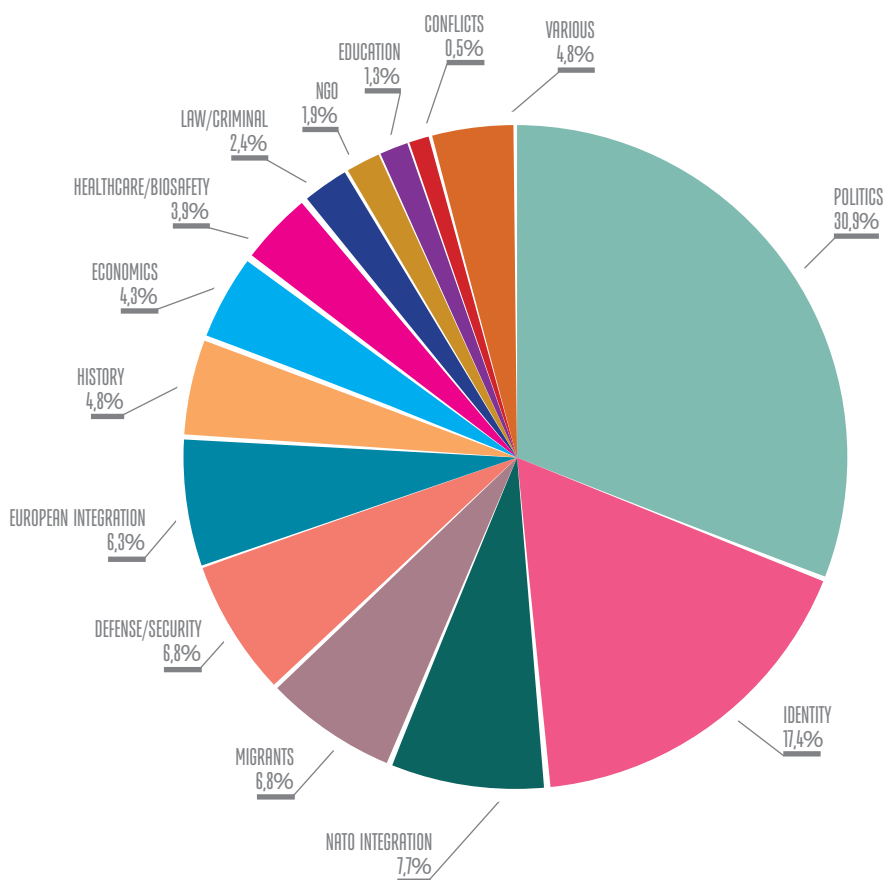
## 4. FAKE AND MANIPULATIVE CONTENT |

The Media Development Foundation (MDF) within the Myth Detector project checked 199 information in 2019. In addition to traditional media outlets, fake news and manipulative information was revealed using the Crowd-tangle analytical tool in social media. Also, the media reporting cases, provided by readers were included in the revealed data. In 2019, Myth Detector revealed the following disinformation:

Fake News	109
Fabrication of Statistics	23
Fabrication of interview / comments	19
Photo / video manipulation	18
Conspiracy	15
Fabrication of History	9
Presenting satirical work as a real fact	6

The largest proportion of fake news or manipulative information concerned politics (30.9%) and the threat of losing identity (17.4%), followed by NATO integration (7.7%), migrants (6.8%), defense/security (6.8%) and European integration issues (6.3%). Almost the same share of fake news was concerning history (4.8%) and economy (4.3%). The share of fake news concerning justice (2.4%), NGOs (1.9%), education (1.3%) and conflicts (0.5%) was small.

FIGURE 20. TOPICS OF FAKE NEWS



From the media outlets, the highest number of fake news was spread by “Georgia and the World” (31), “Sputnik Georgia” (17) and “Saqinform” (16); From the social media – Facebook pages “Stalin” (10) and “Alt-Info” (9); From political parties – “Alliance of Patriots” (24).

#### FABRICATION AND MANIPULATION OF STATISTICS

The majority of cases of statistics fabrication/manipulation of numbers concerned the issues of economy and migrants.

- **MIGRANTS.** Manipulative statistics were spread concerning the migrants owning property<sup>108</sup>, as well as the number of migrants of Asian and Middle East origin in European countries<sup>109</sup>.

<sup>108</sup> Myth Detector, June 19, 2019, “Disinformation as if Turkish Citizens own the majority of Real Estate in the Center of Batumi”. <https://bit.ly/37TCIEq>

Myth Detector, May 14, 2019. “Disinformation as if Number of Foreign Nationals Residing in Georgia is Alarming”. <https://bit.ly/2CBDOtf>

Myth Detector, October 1, 2019. “Disinformation by Alliance of Patriots as if Georgia will Accept 200 000 Syrian Refugees” <https://bit.ly/2YWc61E>

<sup>109</sup> Myth Detector, April 22, 2019. “Disinformation, as if the number of migrants is increasing in Sweden” <https://bit.ly/3dnrCcd>

Myth Detector, July 24, 2019. “Four Lies of “Georgia and World” about Number of Muslims in Europe”. <https://bit.ly/3esJWSz>

- **GEORGIAN ECONOMY AFTER 20 JUNE PROTESTS.** Manipulative statistics were spread about the economy in the context of 20 June anti-Occupation Protests and the accompanying sanctions imposed by Russian Government, when there were assessments about the destruction of Georgian economy, the inflation of Georgian Lari, petrol price<sup>110</sup> and the tourism loss.<sup>111</sup>
- **ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT, DCFTA:** The importance of Association Agreement and DCFTA was neglected, insisting that the Free Trade Agreement does not benefit Georgia<sup>112</sup>.
- **VISA LIBERALIZATION AND DEPORTATION:** Fabricated statistics was spread about the massive deportation of Georgian citizens from the Schengen Zone<sup>113</sup>.
- **THE SUPPORT OF EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION.** Manipulative reporting of public opinion research results was observed with the aim to show that the majority of Georgian population does not support Euro-Atlantic integration<sup>114</sup>.
- **NATO.** Fabricated statistics was spread about NATO-funded programs in Georgia<sup>115</sup> and about the participation of Alliance members in the Afghanistan mission<sup>116</sup>.

#### FABRICATION OF INTERVIEW / COMMENT

Compared with 2018 data, in 2019 the number of interview / comment fabrication cases significantly increased: on the first hand, it was happening by spreading warped, manipulated context of the existing statement and on the other hand, interviews / comments were fabricated. The majority of manipulated interviews was spread in the context of NATO integration.

- **SCEPTICISM TOWARDS NATO:** Facebook pages of anti-liberal groups and pro-Kremlin media outlets manipulatively reported the interview with NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, James Appathurai. Appathurai's quotes that NATO and an aspirant country will make membership decisions independently, without the interference of any third party was reported in an absolutely opposite interpretation: "we cannot accept a new member, if it increases tension"<sup>117</sup>.
- **NATO AGAINST IDENTITY:** To show the legalization of homosexuality as the precondition for Georgia to join Nato, the priest provided fake comment of NATO's Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg as an example while preaching<sup>118</sup>.

<sup>110</sup> Myth Detector, July 29, 2019. "Three Manipulations by Sputnik Author about Lari, Fuel Prices and Tourism". <https://bit.ly/3dtpZtr>

<sup>111</sup> Myth Detector, July 13, 2019. "Manipulation by Sputnik's Political Analyst as if Lack of Russian Tourists Led to Economic Decline in Georgia" <https://bit.ly/3errR7l>

Myth Detector, October 11, 2019. "Manipulative Headline by Sputnik Georgia about an Alleged Decrease in the Number of Tourists in Georgian Airports" <https://bit.ly/3ey0VTC>

<sup>112</sup> Myth Detector, April 10, 2019. "Manipulation of "Rezonansi" that DCFTA does not Benefit Georgia" <https://bit.ly/2VJVie4>

<sup>113</sup> Myth Detector, July 25, 2019. "Disinformation as if Georgians are being Massively Deported from the EU" <https://bit.ly/2zZIEzq>

<sup>114</sup> Myth Detector, May 24, 2019. "Disinformation by Saqinform, as if majority of Georgia's citizens is against the Euro-Atlantic course" <https://bit.ly/2Nji0EC>

<sup>115</sup> Myth Detector, May 1, 2019. "Disinformation by the "Alliance of Patriots", as if no program in Georgia is funded by NATO and USA". <https://bit.ly/3esDLhk>

<sup>116</sup> Myth Detector April 23, 2019. "Disinformation by the "Alliance of Patriots", as if NATO Member States Do not Participate in Afghanistan Mission". <https://bit.ly/2V7Ehty>

<sup>117</sup> Myth Detector, August 2, 2019. "Who Spread Appathurai's Interview with Misleading Headline?". <https://bit.ly/2BA98HX>

<sup>118</sup> Myth Detector, October 30, 2019. "Davit Kvlividze's disinformation as if NATO requires Georgia to "legalize homosexuality". <https://bit.ly/3hWbQbs>

- **NATO AND EU DISSOLUTES:** one of the leaders of the Alliance of Patriots, stated that Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel considers leaving NATO<sup>119</sup>. The statement of French President Emmanuel Macron offering to expel member states from the European Union also manipulatively was spread<sup>120</sup>.
- **USA AND EU DON’T HELP THEIR ALLIES:** the statement of Ben Hodges, former commander of the United States Army Europe allegedly saying that the U.S. Army will not protect Baltic states against Russia’s attacks manipulatively was spread<sup>121</sup>. The quote of George Soros, allegedly saying that Europe doesn’t care about Ukraine also went viral while the actual quote appeared to belong to the political commentator of a pro-Kremlin media outlet<sup>122</sup>.
- **USA IS FIGHTING AGAINST ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY.** The fake quote from Zbigniew Brzezinski’s book “The Grand Chessboard” was spread, allegedly portraying Orthodox Christianity as the primary target of the United States after the fall of Communism<sup>123</sup>.

### CONSPIRACY THEORIES

The majority of conspiracy theories were spread about healthcare and biosecurity and the main target was the Lugar Laboratory, based in Georgia (see Annex 1 for more details). Like the past years, the conspiracy theory was repeated about the Kars Treaty, claiming that the validity period for the Treaty expires in 2021, so Russia will reject its role as a guarantor of territorial integrity Adjara will become part of Turkey<sup>124</sup>.

The conspiracy theory alleging that Salvador Dali’s surrealistic painting “a geopoliticus child who is looking at the birth of the new man” depicts the birth of Antichrist, and the umbrella above depicts NATO, was spread in social networks again in 2019<sup>125</sup>.

### FABRICATION / MANIPULATION OF HISTORY

The following trends of history fabrication was revealed:

- **STALIN AS THE WINNER OVER NAZISM AND THE LIBERATOR OF EUROPE:** The majority of the cases of manipulative reporting in 2019 concerned World War II and the defeat of Nazism. There were settling opinions that Operation Overlord’s importance in the victory against Nazism is exaggerated<sup>126</sup>, Baltic states were not occupied, but liberated from Nazism<sup>127</sup>, Stalin granted lands to Baltic states, Poland and Czechia and liberated Europe from Nazism<sup>128</sup>.

<sup>119</sup> Myth Detector, December 26, 2019. “Tarkhan-Mouravi, putin-news.ru and others claim, as if Merkel considers Germany’s withdrawal from NATO”. <https://bit.ly/2Yqo8RR>

<sup>120</sup> Myth Detector, May 29, 2019. “Disinformation as if Macron Offers to Expel Member States from the EU”. <https://bit.ly/319nwli>

<sup>121</sup> Myth Detector, February 18, 2019. “Fake News about American General Allegedly Saying U.S. will not Protect Baltic States against Russia”. <https://bit.ly/3erZS7j>

<sup>122</sup> Myth Detector, October 8, 2019. “Fake Soros Quotes Actually Belong to Political Commentator of Pro-Kremlin Media Outlet”. <https://bit.ly/3es02vr>

<sup>123</sup> Myth Detector, November 4, 2019. “Geworld, Stalin, and TV Obiektivi Disseminate another Fake Quote by Brzezinski”. <https://bit.ly/2NohfdG>

<sup>124</sup> Myth Detector, April 18, 2019. “Repeated Conspiracy Theories about the Treaty of Kars”. <https://bit.ly/3hWdc62>

<sup>125</sup> Myth Detector, May 16, 2019. “Anti-Western Conspiracy on the Painting by Salvador Dali “Geopoliticus Child”. <https://bit.ly/2V9NgKF>

<sup>126</sup> Myth Detector, June 24, 2019. “Myth that Overlord’s Importance in the Victory against Nazism is Exaggerated”. <https://bit.ly/3fHON2q>

<sup>127</sup> Myth Detector, September 27, 2019. “Russia’s 2 Myths about Baltic Countries”. <https://bit.ly/2Yr8NQV>

<sup>128</sup> Myth Detector, April 22, 2019. “4 Myths about Stalin”. <https://bit.ly/3a0lfgL>



- **RUSSIA AS A PROTECTOR OF SMALL NATIONS AND OLDER BROTHER:** The myth was spread that Russia's intention was not the assimilation of small nations, but to strengthen the local cultures<sup>129</sup>; priest was insisting that Russians and Ukrainians were one nation, Moscow Russia (Big Russia) was the protector of white Russians (Belarussians) and small Russians (Malaya Rossia)<sup>130</sup>.
- **THE IDEALIZATION OF AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES / DICTATORS:** National treasure was stolen by the Government of the First Republic and Stalin saved them<sup>131</sup>; divided Germany was united by the USSR<sup>132</sup>.
- **RISING NOSTALGIA TOWARDS USSR:** The dissolution of USSR and neo-liberal reforms damaged the economy; USSR saved the world from global disasters<sup>133</sup>.
- **REJECTING HISTORY:** The First Democratic Republic of Georgia did not exist, it was the Menshevik Republic, saved by the USSR<sup>134</sup>.

### VISUAL (PHOTO / VIDEO) MANIPULATION

The following methods of visual manipulations were used in 2019:

1. Authentic photo, not related to the event description.
  2. Portrayal of a film image as a real-life story.
  3. Fake video, Deep Fake
  4. Discrepancy between an authentic video and its caption
  5. Fake context.
1. **AUTHENTIC PHOTOS, NOT RELATED TO THE EVENT DESCRIPTION.** Several disinformation was spread in 2019, about the separatist statements of Georgian muslims and Georgian citizens of Armenian origin aiming to incite hatred based on religion and ethnicity. The both materials included the “photo evidence” depicting totally different events.
    - 1.1. **RELIGIOUS MOTIVE.** Based on Russian edition Ekspress Gazeta (Экспресс газета), Tvalsazrisi.ge spread the information that Georgian muslims, because of violating their religious rights, are ready to gain independence with arms and with the support of Turkish government. To illustrate the protest of Georgian muslims, Russian original source, as well as Tvalsazrisi.ge attached identical photos, depicting the event held 6 years ago. Particularly, the photo shows not a protest, demanding independence, but the peaceful protest, held because of dismantling by Customs service of minaret in 2013<sup>135</sup>. This article was shared by the following antiliberal Facebook pages: “Kardhu”, “Specrazm”, “Georgian power”, “Jaba Museliani Blog” and pro-Kremlin “Stalin”.

<sup>129</sup> Myth Detector, June 3, 2019. “Three Myths about Russia as Defender of Small Nations”. <https://bit.ly/2YpLiaR>

<sup>130</sup> Myth Detector, September 19, 2019. “Bishop Spiridon’s Myth of “Older Brother” about “Kyivan Rus”. <https://bit.ly/2YrZb8F>

<sup>131</sup> Myth Detector, May 1, 2019. “Recurrent disinformation, that National Treasure was stolen by the Government of the First Republic and saved by Stalin”. <https://bit.ly/3f2UPLy>

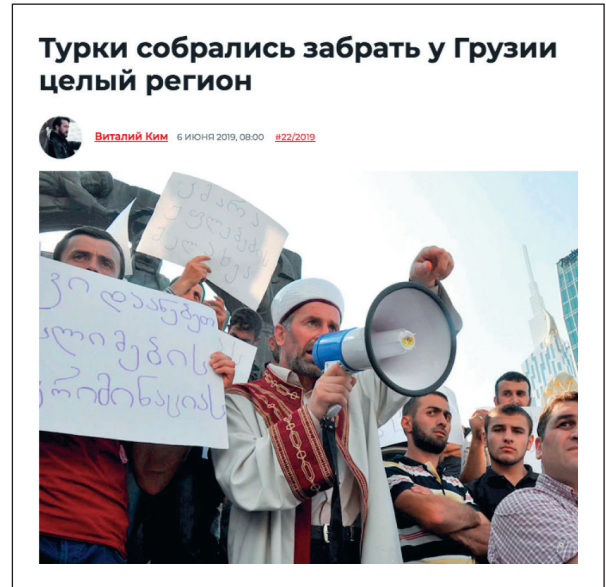
<sup>132</sup> Myth Detector, September 23, 2019. “Manipulation as if German Unification was Result of Soviet Policy”. <https://bit.ly/3eskV9V>

<sup>133</sup> Myth Detector, September 9, 2019. “3 myths about the USSR”. <https://bit.ly/2YeUI9C>

<sup>134</sup> Myth Detector, April 2, 2019. “5 centuries missing: the host of TV Obieqtivi calls Soviet annexation as historical unification”. <https://bit.ly/3cSSvVi>

<sup>135</sup> Myth Detector, June 16, 2019. “Disinformation, as if Turkish government is going to help Adjarian Muslims to gain independence”. <https://bit.ly/2YrCnWy>

Myth Detector, September 25, 2019. “Stalin and Jaba Museliani Blog Try to Incite Hatred by Disseminating Disinformation”. <https://bit.ly/2B2lckf>



1.2. **ETHNIC MOTIVE.** TVM.ge, Timenews.ge and Georgian Idea published the information that Armenians, living in Samtskhe-Javakheti region will demand “independence” if Georgia joins NATO. The article involves a photo, depicting the rally with Armenian flag. In fact, The photo belongs to RFE/RL’s Georgian Service and it depicts a protest rally held in Samtskhe-Javakheti on April 23-24, 2019, where ethnic Armenian citizens of Georgia demanded recognition of genocide of ethnically Armenian population from Turkey.<sup>136</sup> This article was spread in an organized manner by antiliberal groups in social media.

**MANIPULATED PHOTO**

14-15 SEPTEMBER 2019  
Javakheti Armenians against NATO

**FAKE**

**REAL PHOTO**

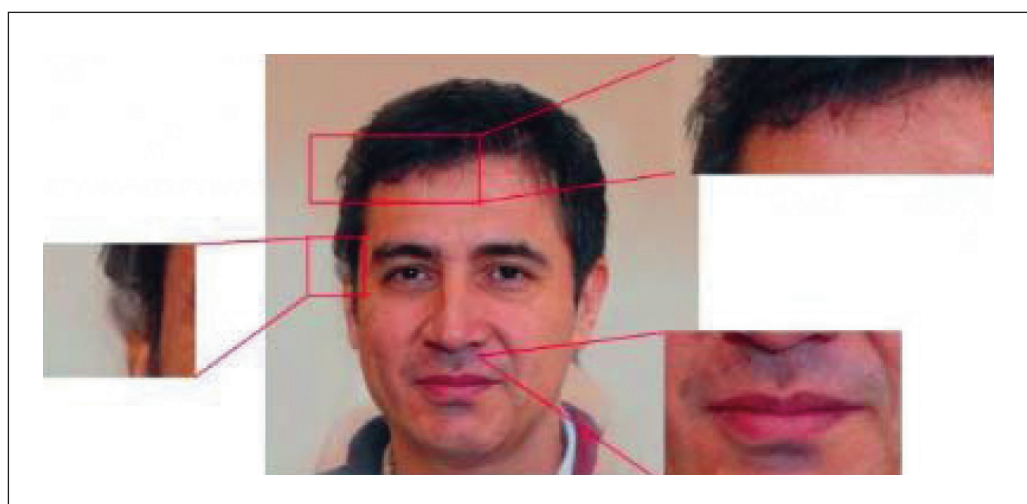
23-24 APRIL 2019  
A march by Georgia’s ethnically Armenian citizens demanding recognition of genocide

<sup>136</sup> Myth Detector, September 18, 2019. “How and Who Uses Genocide-related Photo as Proof of Anti-NATO Protests”. <https://bit.ly/2NnelQO>

2. **PORTRAYAL OF A FILM IMAGE AS A REAL-LIFE STORY.** Antiliberal Facebook page “Anti-Paradox” published a video with the title “How the Islam is propagated among the children, Germany”. In reality, the video, aiming to incite anti-migrant hatred, is a fragment from German iconic series – “Lindenstraße”, which goes on TV channel “Das Erste” since 1985<sup>137</sup>.



3. **FAKE VIDEO, DEEP FAKE.** TV Obiektivi aired a fragment from the documentary, spread online as “Big American Show” (Большое Американское Шоу) and was presented as US production by TV channel. The video purportedly depicts a clone of the 43rd President of the United States, George W. Bush, created via video editing, who tells the audience about American Imperialism<sup>138</sup>. In 2019, Myth Detector revealed a pro-Governmental blogger, whose photo was generated through artificial intelligence and was cited as a real source by pro-Governmental online media outlets against the founder of Anaklia Development Consortium, Mamuka Khazaradze, also against political opposition and critical media outlets<sup>139</sup>.



<sup>137</sup> Myth Detector, October 3, 2019. “How did the Anti-paradox fake the “Lindenstraße” series aiming to manipulate with religious feelings?”. <https://bit.ly/2Yo6Rc6>

<sup>138</sup> Myth Detector, July 30, 2019. “George W. Bush Clone Appears on Air at TV Obiektivi”. <https://bit.ly/3fQzx38>

<sup>139</sup> Myth Detector, November 22, 2019. “A Pro-Governmental “Blogger” Giorgi Aghapishvili is Actually an AI-Generated Photo”. <https://bit.ly/3fJxoGu>

4. **DISCREPANCY BETWEEN AN AUTHENTIC VIDEO AND ITS CAPTION.** Sputnik-Georgia published an information titled “Wave of protests in the EU – Why European farmers are discontented?”. According to the publication, the attached video depicts the protests held by farmers in Germany and France, creating an effect that the farmers’s protests in Europe goes on continuously. In reality, the frames, used by Sputnik to describe protests, was shot during four years (2019, 2017, 2016, 2015) in 5 countries (Netherlands, Spain, Italy, France, Belgium) and depicts different events<sup>140</sup>.
5. **FAKE CONTEXT.** Antiliberal Facebook pages “Antiliberal Club”, “Unofficial Conspiracies”, “Geo Pepe” and Jaba Museliani Blog published a video with the caption that the children in Denmark are forced to perform Islam Prayer. In reality, the video shows a lesson, where the students share with each other the different cultures and lifestyles<sup>141</sup>.

#### SPREADING SATIRICAL-COMIC ARTICLES AS REAL INFORMACION

Compared with the last year, the number of satirical articles, spread as real information, has increased. Different media outlets did not refer to the original source or did not clearly indicate the nature of the content, thus intentionally misleading the audience.

ORIGINAL SOURCE OF SATIRICAL-COMIC ARTICLES	FABRICATED NEWS	COVERED AS REAL
PANORAMA.PUB	The Dissolution of Soviet Union was the Biggest Crime of the United States – Henry Kissinger is Disappointed with Capitalism <sup>142</sup>	Progressnews.ge
NEWS THUMP	The USA and Great Britain are next to each other in the rating of the stupidest nations <sup>143</sup>	Politicano
WORLD NEWS DAILY REPORT	In Saudi Arabia women Proclaimed as Domestic Animals <sup>144</sup>	Sputnik Georgia
WORLD NEWS DAILY REPORT	91-years-old nun auctions her virginity and plans to sacrifice this money for restoration of Notre-Dame <sup>145</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Droni.ge</li> <li>• Primetime.ge</li> <li>• Itar.ge</li> <li>• News.coa.ge</li> </ul>

<sup>140</sup> Myth Detector, October 30, 2019. “Manipulation of Sputnik, that European farmers protest general poverty”. <https://bit.ly/35jXiww>

<sup>141</sup> Myth Detector, September 26, 2019. “Manipulation, as if children at a Danish school are forced to perform Islamic Prayer”. <https://bit.ly/3hTBpdy>

<sup>142</sup> Myth Detector, October 22, 2019. “Kissinger’s Interview about USSR is Fake and was Disseminated by Progressnews based on a Russian Satirical Edition”. <https://bit.ly/37S0QaC>

<sup>143</sup> Myth Detector, May 17, 2019. “Politicano spreads satire from NewsThump as a real research”. <https://bit.ly/2ASdxq3>

<sup>144</sup> Myth Detector, December 12, 2019. “How “Someone’s” Satire Turns into “News“ on Sputnik – Chronicles of Repeated Disinformation”. <https://bit.ly/3fQHaGV>

<sup>145</sup> Myth Detector, May 8, 2019. “A fictional story, as if a 91-year-old nun is selling her virginity to support restoration of Notre- Dame”. <https://bit.ly/2YWkBK6>

WORLD NEWS DAILY REPORT

Nanny, Under Strong Influence of Drugs, Decided to Eat a 3-Month-Old Infant<sup>146</sup>

- Droni.ge
- worldnewss.ge
- geonewss.com

8 SATIRE

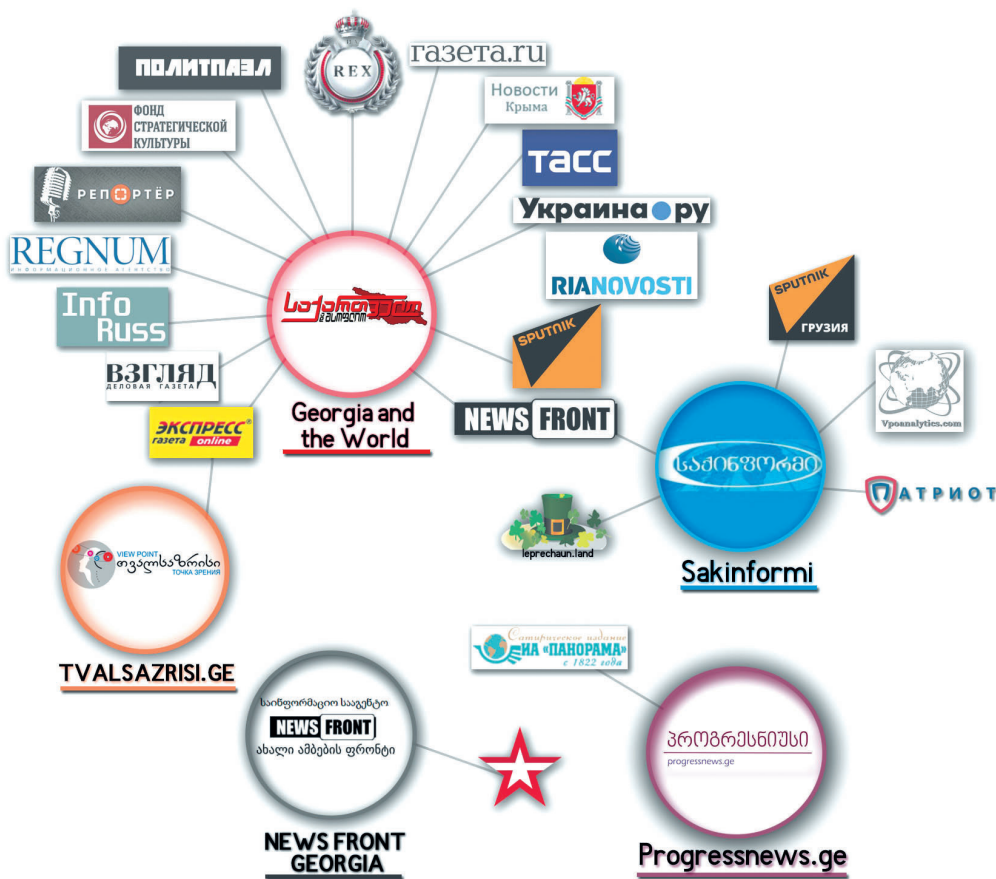
The man raped a fish: the fish did not say no, and it was completely naked<sup>147</sup>

Primetime.ge

RUSSIAN SOURCES

Georgian-language media outlets often refer to Russian-language media outlets as original sources. But in some cases, the original sources are not mentioned. With additional fact-check, the original sources were revealed, where identical disinformation was spread. The figure below shows the Russian-language media outlets, identified in articles.

FIGURE 21. RUSSIAN SOURCES



<sup>146</sup> Myth Detector, February 27, 2019. “The Fictional Story, as if a Nanny was Trying to Eat a Three-Months-Old Infant”. <https://bit.ly/2B2KnEr>

<sup>147</sup> Myth Detector, January 15, 2019. ““Primetime” covers satire of a raped fish as real news”. <https://bit.ly/2V4SDuD>

# ANNEX 1.

## BIOSECURITY: LUGAR LAB – TARGET OF RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT

THEMES	MESSAGE	SOURCE	MEDIA OUTLET
POLYGON OF BIOLOGICAL EXPERIMENTS	Sovaldi medication used for the treatment of Hepatitis C is tested in Lugar Laboratory	Vladimir Putin, President of Russia <sup>148</sup>  Igor Giorgadze, Georgia’s ex-security chief <sup>149</sup>  Igor Kirillov, the head of the Russian military’s radiation, chemical and biological protections troops	Final session of the club Valdai, held annually in Sochi, October 18, 2018  1 канал, Россия-24, РЕН ТВ, “Звезда” НТВ , Sputnik Georgia, September 11, 2018  TV Obieqtivi, October 4, 2018
	US diplomats involved in trafficking of human blood and pathogens for secret military program	Dilyana Gaytandzhieva, Bulgarian journalist <sup>150</sup> , <a href="http://dilyana.bg">http://dilyana.bg</a> , September 12, 2018  TV “Звезда”, September 14, 2018  AI-Mayadeen TV, September 21, 2018 <sup>151</sup>	Zero Hedge, September 16, 2018  “Georgia and the World”, January 10, 2018

<sup>148</sup> Myth Detector, 22 October, 2018. Putin calls as dangerous for Georgians the medication which is among the vital medications in Russia since 2016 <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/putin-calls-dangerous-georgians-medication-which-among-vital-medications-russia-2016>

<sup>149</sup> Myth Detector, 20 September, 2018. Giorgadze’s Claims about Hepatitis C Treatment Program Allegedly Causing Death are Groundless <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/giorgadzes-claims-about-hepatitis-c-treatment-program-allegedly-causing-death-are-groundless>

<sup>150</sup> Myth Detector, 28 September, 2018. How Kremlin Tries to Cover up Russian Trace in Skripal Case with Lugar Laboratory <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/how-kremlin-tries-cover-russian-trace-skripal-case-lugar-laboratory>

<sup>151</sup> AI Mayadeen Documentaries 21 September, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWY09Xq-ByI>

THEMES	MESSAGE	SOURCE	MEDIA OUTLET
	Russia would never allow conducting biological experiments by the Americans near its borders	Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia  Grigory Karasin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia  Vladimir Yermakov, Director of the Russian Foreign Ministry Department for Non-Proliferation and Arms Control	Saqinform, December 18, 2018  Saqinform, October 12, 2018 <sup>152</sup>  Tass.ru September 25, 2018
	There are “Cold rooms” in the Lugar laboratory, which are not used in any other laboratory. <sup>153</sup>	Gennady Onishchenko, the member of the Duma	Sputnik Georgia, December 5, 2018
	The experiments on human beings and animals are being conducted in Lugar Laboratory	Jeffrey Silverman  Sputnik Georgia, November 11, 2018  Maria Zakharova, Special Representative of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia <sup>154</sup>  Jeffrey Silverman	“Asaval–Dasavali”, January 14–20, 25 February – 3 March, 2019  TV Obieqtivi, News, September 14.  TV Obieqtivi, September 25, 2018 <sup>155</sup>  “Georgia and World”, November 23, 2017 <sup>156</sup> Original source: Patriot TV  “Georgia and World”, November 18, 2015 <sup>157</sup>
	The death of two Filipino men working at the Lugar Laboratory is linked with the flies spreading Leishmaniasis <sup>158</sup>	Dilyana Gaytandzhieva, Bulgarian journalist  “Georgia and the World”, February 9, 2018  Jeffrey Silverman	Patriot Tv, April 5, 2018

<sup>152</sup> Sakinformi, October, 2018. We have doubts that the invitation to the conference aimed at legalizing actions in the lab, – Grigory Karasin. <https://bit.ly/37cGZ5Q>

<sup>153</sup> Myth Detector, 7 December, 2018. Onishchenko Tries to Make Georgians Fear of Lugar’s “Cold Room”, Which Is Also a Common Practice in Russian laboratories <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/onishchenko-tries-to-make-georgians-fear-lugars-cold-room-which-also-common-practice-russian> <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3676020>

<sup>154</sup> <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3678530>

<sup>155</sup> Georgia & World, 23 November, 2017. Scandalous interview of an American journalist with “Lugar” laboratory. <https://bit.ly/3cGlyv5>

<sup>156</sup> Georgia & World, 18 November, 2015. Jeffrey Silverman: Infected staff at Lugar’s laboratory were secretly taken to Aramyants Hospital for treatment. <https://bit.ly/30jxv7c>

<sup>157</sup> Myth Detector, 27 February, 2018. Disinformation about Filipino Workers and Bulgarian Journalist with Russian Links <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/disinformation-about-filipino-workers-and-bulgarian-journalist-russian-links>

<sup>158</sup>

THEMES	MESSAGE	SOURCE	MEDIA OUTLET
	Lugar Laboratory is a test polygon / Biological weapon is kept in Lugar Laboratory	Patriot Tv, April 5, 2018  Jeffrey Silverman	inews, January 1, 2019 “Georgia and the World”  “Georgia and the World”, September 4, 2013 <sup>159</sup>  “Georgia and the World”, January 18, 2014 <sup>160</sup>
	Laboratories like Lugar is forbidden in the USA	Giorgi Maglakelidze, Alliance of the Patriots	TV Obieqtivi, Night Studio, October 19, 2018 <sup>161</sup>
	Lugar Laboratory must be closed, the flu does not exist	Ana Zhgenti, lawyer	tvm.ge, intermedia.ge, akhalitaoba.ge, timenews.ge, January 6, 2019  geonius.ge, euronews.ge, one.newsnow.ge, news.net.ge
	Georgian trace may be found in the case of poisoning ex-GRU colonel Sergei Skripal in the Great Britain <sup>162</sup>	Maria Zakharova, a spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry  Sakinform, 16 April, 2018	Patriot Tv, April 5, 2018
SOURCE OF FLUS AND EPIDEMICS	The spread of African Swine Fever Virus (ASFV), nodular prurigo, and the brown marmorated stink bug in “South Ossetia” is linked to Lugar Laboratory <sup>163</sup>	Alan Margiev, Head of Veterinary and Phytosanitary Service of de-facto South Ossetia	Sputnik Ossetia, August 6, 2019
	The outbreak of swine fever in Abkhazia is connected with Lugar’s laboratory <sup>164</sup>	Muhammad Kilba, Secretary of the Security Council of the De facto Republic of Abkhazia	Netgazeti, 10 March, 2017

<sup>159</sup> Georgia & World, 4 September, 2013. Jeffrey Silverman: The network of laboratories in Georgia is, in fact, run by the US Department of Defense and has the potential to attack.. <https://bit.ly/2BK2D5P>

<sup>160</sup> Georgia & World, 18 June, 2014. American journalist Jeffrey Silverman: The US keeps a secret strain of the Black Death in Georgia. <https://bit.ly/2UgNbEq>

<sup>161</sup> <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3698099>

<sup>162</sup> Myth Detector, 20 April, 2018. Sakinform and Zakharova Looking for “Georgian Trace” in Skripal Poisoning <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/sakinform-and-zakharova-looking-georgian-trace-skripal-poisoning>

<sup>163</sup> Myth Detector, 12 August, 2019. Lugar Laboratory is Once Again Accused of Spreading Diseases, Now on the Occupied Territories <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/lugar-laboratory-once-again-accused-spreading-diseases-now-occupied-territories>

<sup>164</sup> Netgazeti, 10 March, 2017. The Abkhazian side also links the closure of checkpoints to the activities of Lugar’s laboratory <https://netgazeti.ge/news/178970/>



THEMES	MESSAGE	SOURCE	MEDIA OUTLET
	Brown marmorated stink bugs are spread by Americans in de-facto Abkhazia and South Ossetia	Dimitry Medoev, de-facto minister of foreign affairs of South Ossetia	Marshallpress, September 28, 2018 <sup>165</sup>
	The brown marmorated stink bug, spread in Abkhazia, might be artificially produced under “a biological sabotage”	Yulia Melano, the press-secretary of the Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance of Russia (“Rosselkhoz nadzor”) <sup>166</sup>	Российская газета, March 30, 2018
	Mosquitos, causing virus in Abkhazia was produced in Lugar Laboratory	Gennady Onishchenko, the member of the Duma of Russian Federation	eadaily.com, February 16, 2016
	The spread of dangerous diseases in the post-Soviet countries is coincided with the launch of American biological laboratories	Georgia and the World, October 17, 2019 <sup>167</sup>	
	The swine flu was spread from Lugar Laboratory <sup>168</sup>	Jeffrey Silverman, Georgian Bureau Chief for Veterans Today  Asia Ivanova, the head of Bulgaria Bureau of News Front  Rossia 24, Vesti, October 4, 2018  Facebook post of Lado sadgobelashvili  regnum.ru, January 22, 2016 <sup>169</sup>	TV Zvezda, Sputnik.ru, Риа Фан, Tsargrad tv, 360tv.ru, polit.info, December 27, 2018, gazeta.ru, January 6, 2019  sm-news.ru, January 8, 2019  2020news.ge, www.infopostalioni.com, January 5, 2019  removed: Alia, www.worldnews.ge, onone.ge, metronome.ge, euronews.ge
	Virus meningitis was spread from Lugar Laboratory	Tengiz Kitovani, former minister of Defense of Georgia	“Asaval-Dasavali”, June 23-29, 2014

<sup>165</sup> Marshallpress, 28 September, 2018. They are still singing the old song, how long are they going to destroy the Asian pheasant in South Ossetia? – Dimitri Medoev. <https://marshallpress.ge/archives/197304>

<sup>166</sup> Myth Detector, 5 April, 2018. Russian Conspiracies about Lugar laboratory: Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, Zika Virus and African Swine Fever <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/russian-conspiracies-about-lugar-laboratory-brown-marmorated-stink-bug-zika-virus-and-african>

<sup>167</sup> Georgia & World, 17 October, 2019. Pentagon imposes control over pathogens and epidemics in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine. <https://bit.ly/2BmKSWF>

<sup>168</sup> Myth Detector, 10 January, 2019. Kremlin’s Virus in Georgia: Three Pieces of Disinformation on Swine Flu. <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/kremlins-virus-georgia-three-pieces-disinformation-swine-flu>

<sup>169</sup> regnum.ru, 22 января 2016. Свиной грипп из Грузии? Страсти вокруг лаборатории Лугара. <https://regnum.ru/news/society/2061312.html>

THEMES	MESSAGE	SOURCE	MEDIA OUTLET
	Frequent virus epidemics are spread from Lugar Laboratory	Georgia and the World, February 9, 2018 <sup>170</sup>  Elizbar Javelidze, Public Assembly <sup>171</sup>	Geworld.ge, May 28, July 15, 2014
	The virus spread threatens the region	Arno Khidirbegishvili, editor-in-chief of Saqinform, May 5, 2014 <sup>172</sup>	
	America keeps the secret strain of the Black Death in Lugar Laboratory	Jeffrey Silverman	“Georgia and the World”, January 18, 2014 <sup>173</sup>
THE SOURCE OF DANGEROUS VACCINES	The vaccines for Swine Flu and Measles are produced not in Europe, but in the Lugar Laboratory and causes death. <sup>174</sup>	Jeffrey Silverman, Georgian Bureau Chief for Veterans Today	Rossia 24, Vesti, September 11, 2019  Rossia 24, Vesti Nedeli, September 16, 2019
	Only Russian vaccine is safe		“Asaval-Dasavali” newspaper, 25 February – 3 March, 2019
	Military vaccines are produced in Lugar Laboratory, which are transported by drones	Valery Kvaratskhelia, a host of TV Obieqtivi, September 15, 2018 <sup>175</sup>	
MILITARY PROJECT	Pentagon tries to control dangerous biological pathogens in CIS states <sup>176</sup>	Georgia and the World, October 17, 2019	
	Lugar Laboratory is a military test polygon	Global Research Center <sup>177</sup>	“Alia”, August 1-7, 2016, “Georgia and the World”, “Saqinform”, “Sputnik Georgia”, “Кавказское сотрудничество”, July 28-29, 2016

<sup>170</sup> Georgia & World, 9 February, 2018. What are the links between the flies spreading Leishmaniasis and the death of two Filipino men working at the Lugar Laboratory. <https://bit.ly/2Y0rUA1>

<sup>171</sup> Myth Detector. 15 July, 2014. The myths about Lugar center are misleading <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/myths-about-lugar-center-are-misleading>

<sup>172</sup> ibid

<sup>173</sup> Georgia & World, 18 June, 2014. American journalist Jeffrey Silverman: The US keeps a secret strain of the Black Death in Georgia. <https://bit.ly/2UgNbEq>

<sup>174</sup> Myth Detector, 28 February, 2019. The measles vaccine is not manufactured in Lugar’s laboratory, but in Belgium and the United States, and is also used in Russia. <http://mythdetector.ge/ka/myth/citelas-vaktsina-ara-lugaris-laboratoriashi-aramed-belgiasa-da-ashsh-shia-carmoebuli-da-mas>

<sup>175</sup> <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3675867>

<sup>176</sup> Georgia & World, 17 October, 2019. Pentagon imposes control over pathogens and epidemics in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine. <https://bit.ly/2BmKSWF>

<sup>177</sup> Myth Detector, 4 August, 2016. Disinformation by global research center in Alia regarding the Lugar laboratory. <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/disinformation-global-research-center-alia-regarding-lugar-laboratory>

THEMES	MESSAGE	SOURCE	MEDIA OUTLET
	Biological weapon is produced and kept in Lugar Laboratory	Jeffrey Silverman Saqinform, October 11, 2019 <sup>178</sup> Saqinform, September 24, 2018 <sup>179</sup>	TV Obieqtivi, September 15, 2018 <sup>180</sup>
	The USA evades the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons	Jeffrey Silverman	Asaval-Dasavali, April 16-22, 2018
	Biological weapon used in Syria was produced in Lugar Laboratory	TV Obieqtivi, МИР, Россия 24, 31 КАНАЛ and RBK TV, 2015 <sup>181</sup>	

<sup>178</sup> Sakinformi, 11 September, 2019. The Pentagon’s biobacteriological activities pose a threat to peace and security in Eurasia. <https://bit.ly/30icZnG>

<sup>179</sup> Sakinformi, 24 September, 2018. Arno Khidirbegishvili: From Spying to the President?! Saakashvili’s party resorted to espionage methods to fight for power! <https://bit.ly/30nHYyJ>

<sup>180</sup> <http://www.myvideo.ge/v/3675866>

<sup>181</sup> Myth Detector, 11 December, 2015. The myth that the Lugar laboratory conducts biological experiments on Georgian population is groundless <http://mythdetector.ge/en/myth/myth-lugar-laboratory-conducts-biological-experiments-georgian-population-groundless>