



Preventing Far-Right Extremism in Georgia

Far-Right Rhetoric and Trends in Social Media

2022

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1. Introduction

The Kremlin media outlets are actively engaged in an information warfare. This is done in parallel with Russia's invasion in Ukraine on 24 February 2022 and the ongoing attacks on civilians. Media platforms with distinct far-right rhetoric in Georgia are also involved in this disinformation campaign. Their main goal is to legitimise the Russian military aggression. The propaganda rhetoric of the pro-Kremlin forces in Georgia is openly aimed at changing the pro-western foreign policy and stirring up anti-Western sentiments in the society.

In Georgia, far-right groups spread false narratives about the ongoing war in Ukraine with the help of media and social networks openly linked to the Kremlin's policy. They have unlimited access to a wide audience. This creates a favourable environment for pro-Russian narratives to thrive and influence public opinion. Given the threats and challenges of the information warfare, it is particularly important to expose the propaganda pushed by far-right groups on online platforms and for this purpose to monitor social media.

In order to analyse the disinformation rhetoric and far-right narrative backed by the far-right groups, in the present report, the Democracy Research Institute (DRI) summarised the outcomes of the media monitoring that had been conducted in January and February 2022. During the reporting period, the DRI analysed 450 incidents, where disinformation and propaganda was spread on social and online media. The report also analyses political assessments made by far-right leaders in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine War. Political entities with openly pro-Russian aspirations wage information warfare through a coordinated network engaging various Facebook groups and websites.

In this information warfare, Alt-Info is arguably the major pro-Kremlin far-right platform, which in turn is closely linked to Conservative Movement, a political party in Georgia. [Alt-Info](#) broadcasts pro-Russian newsflashes which are later shared to Facebook audience through internal [groups](#) and [pages](#) linked to Conservative Movement. Alt-Info ensures that disinformation is spread swiftly and constantly among its followers, through a coordinated action. In addition, the Alt-Info team actively uses [TV](#) and [YouTube](#) channels, as well as the [Telegram](#) platform. On 26 February, their official website [went down](#) following a hacker attack.

During the reporting period, discrediting media campaign against Ukraine also intensified on the far-right Facebook page, [Kardhu](#), which continuously disseminates [photo/video](#) material depicting bombing of Ukrainian cities and airstrikes by Russia. The page also attempts to [discredit](#) the NATO and, in the wake of the Ukrainian crisis, portrays Georgia's potential membership in the military alliance as a threat to the country.

The online media outlets [Sakinform](#) and [News Front](#) have the same distinct pro-Russian rhetoric. They publish articles on their platforms where authors openly demonise the NATO and the United States, while repeating Kremlin narratives about Ukraine that Russia is only fighting for its own security.

During the reporting period, the audience of the far-right political party Conservative Party founded on Alt-Info significantly expanded. They have opened dozens of regional offices throughout Georgia (Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Shida Kartli, Imereti, Samegrelo, Ajara, Guria, Svaneti, and Kakheti). The party leaders [announced](#) their plan to open 84 offices by the end of March. Since the day of the party's establishment, their official income has been GEL [36,675](#). However, the number of the offices is increasing

every week. This gives rise to misgivings regarding the party's financial resources. In this regard, Zura Makharadze, the chairperson of the party, [named](#) Konstantine Morgoshia as their main sponsor and denied the existence of black money within the party and Alt-Info, whereas, according to official sources, the funding of Alt-Info amounted to GEL [269,447](#) in 2021.

The communication strategy of Conservative Movement is also noteworthy. The party is actively engaged in creating Facebook groups for each local office, which simplifies access to the audience and makes the communication more efficient. The content created by Conservative Movement and Alt-Info is frequently shared on Facebook pages [Traditionalist Platform](#), [Anti-Liberal Page](#), [Sarkrazmelebi](#), and [Conservative](#).

During the reporting period, Alt-Info presenters were also focused on the trials of those arrested and charged with assaulting journalists on 5-6 July. They monitor the court proceedings and [insult](#) journalists while covering court proceedings. According to the [disinformation](#) spread by the Alt-Info team, witnesses and victims were unable to identify the accused persons.

On 21 February, several days prior to Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, the far-right parties - Alliance of Patriots of Georgia, Georgian March and about 50 affiliated organisations addressed Russia's President Vladimir Putin in their [open letter](#). According to the letter, these entities support Georgia's military neutrality and the idea to have relations with Russia normalised. This is an overt and significant display of the pro-Russian foreign policy aspirations of the far-right political entities in Georgia.

2. Pro-Western Aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia Targeted by Far-Right Pro-Russian Groups

2.1. News Front - Kremlin Mouthpiece

In the wake of the Russia-Ukraine War, the media outlet News Front spreads distinct pro-Kremlin narratives. Most of the articles published on the platform are based on statements made by Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs and President as well as the Kremlin spokesperson. On 25 February, News Front published an [address](#) of Russia's President Vladimir Putin to Ukrainian military personnel, where he referred to the Ukrainian authorities as a „gang of drug addicts and neo-Nazis” and called for a coup. On 28 February, News Front published a [statement](#) of the Kremlin's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov according to which Russia's President Vladimir Putin is indifferent to the personal sanctions and Russia has the necessary potential to compensate for the damage from these sanctions.

This trend demonstrates how openly News Front is involved in the Kremlin's information warfare and propaganda.



ვლადიმირ პუტინს მის წინააღმდეგ დაწესებული სანქციების მიმართ გულგრილი დამოკიდებულება აქვს – დიმიტრი პესკოვი



პუტინი უკრაინელ სამხედროებს: “ჩვენ თქვენთან უფრო იოლად მოვილაპარაკებთ, ვიდრე ნარკომანების და ნეონაცისტების “შაკასთან!”



რუსი გენერალი კონაშენკოვი კიეველებს მიმართავს: თქვენი გამოყენება უნდათ ცოცხალ ფარად!

2.2. Russia-Ukraine War Presented in the Alt-Info’s Disinformation Campaign

During the reporting period, in parallel to Russia’s military aggression towards Ukraine, Alt-Info started pushing openly pro-Russian and pro-Kremlin narratives even more actively. In the format of military-analytical programmes, the Alt-Info team seeks to arouse public scepticism against the NATO and to highlight the need to distance ourselves from the West by misinterpreting the Ukrainian crisis. When it comes to the war, there is a noticeable trend to portray Russia as victorious and Ukraine as doomed to loose against such an adversary. The Alt-Info's team repeats the Kremlin's propaganda narratives word for word and tries to present Russia's invasion in Ukraine as a special operation conducted for security considerations. Alt-Info presenters use hate speech, stir up anti-liberal sentiments, discredit the Ukrainian government and speak openly about the need for an economic and military alliance to be forged between Georgia and Russia.

Alt-Info tries to portray Ukraine as a party, which was incited and later abandoned by the NATO and the European Union. Consequently, in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine War, the authorities are openly called upon to change the country’s pro-Western foreign policy and declare military neutrality. Their rhetoric also appeals to religious identity and emphasises ideological unity with Russia as a country holding the same faith.

Alt-Info's programmes are openly aimed at supporting and justifying the crimes committed by the Russian Federation in Ukraine. The use of lethal military force against civilians, which is also a gross violation of international humanitarian law, is explained as Russia exercising its right to self-defence. Ukraine's pro-Western policy is discredited on the one hand and on the other hand, Russia’s President is portrayed as an invincible figure with superior moral values who avoids using military force against civilians as much as possible.

Alt-Info has a profound help in spreading disinformation and legitimising Kremlin messages from individuals presented as political scientists and analysts. Based on these experts’ insight and experience, the Alt-Info team promotes nihilistic and anti-Western, anti-NATO narratives. [Demur Giorkhelidze](#), a political scientist is one of the guests who openly maintains that Ukraine and Georgia will never be admitted in the NATO.

¹ Photo #1: Dmitry Peskov says Vladimir Putin is indifferent to personal sanctions; Photo #2: Putin speaks to Ukrainian soldiers: “it will be easier for us to come to an agreement than with this gang of drug addicts and neo-Nazis!”; Photo #3 Russian General Konashenkov appeals to Kyiv residents: they want to use you as a human shield!

Another desirable guest frequenting Alt-Info is [Dimitri Lortkipanidze](#), the head of the Primakov Georgian-Russian Community Centre. He is notorious for his anti-Western rhetoric. Dimitri Lortkipanidze refers to Georgia as an experiment of the West that will not allow for national consensus due to the help from external forces.

The monitoring revealed that the main message of Alt-Info's propaganda campaign is to arouse anti-Western scepticism in the society and, in the light of this, to promote the idea of forging a close alliance with Russia. Alt-Info's disinformation and propaganda media content is shared within Conservative Movement's internal Facebook groups in a coordinated manner.

The Facebook page [Alt-TV](#) is another important platform for spreading disinformation and propaganda rhetoric. It permanently shares TV reporting, newflashes and snippets entirely devoted to discrediting the West in the Russia-Ukraine War and voicing pro-Russian narratives. The Alt-Info web includes the Facebook pages [Traditionalist Platform](#), [Anti-Liberal Page](#), [Sarkrazmelebi](#), and [Conservative](#), which, in coordination with Alt-Info, distribute pro-Russian, anti-liberal, xenophobic narratives and messages discrediting civil society.

The Alt-Info team not only justifies the Russian Federation's attack on civilian facilities in Ukraine, but also openly states that military aggression against civilians and civilian facilities is "permissible" for military gain. On 27 February, Giorgi Qardava, the host of Alt-Analytics and Secretary General of Conservative Movement, said he would have resorted to even more frequent airstrikes against civilians and civilian facilities. He blames the Ukrainian government for the ongoing war, including the bombing of civilian facilities by Russia.

"Russia avoids the use of heavy artillery and aviation in populated areas. Consequently, Russia has to carry out an operation with assault and military losses. *I, for example, would have used it more. From a purely military point of view, the city might be damaged, but if the enemy remains the city, it means they does not care for their civilians.* Nevertheless, the Russians are avoiding casualties among the civilian population."²

"The Ukrainian government is making a big mistake from the strategic point of view. They have no command in charge and act spontaneously. This is possible only because Russia is not using its full might in this war. It may sound cruel, but I would have preferred to have fewer of my soldiers killed than my opponent's, and civilians too. In my opinion, I would rather use a lot more of 500 kg air bombs than think about not damaging a house somewhere."³

At the same time, the Alt-Info team echoes the [statement](#) of Margarita Simonyan, one of the leaders of the Kremlin's information warfare and the editor-in-chief of Russia Today, a Russian media platform, which claims that the Russian army does not pose any threat to civilians. According to Zura Makharadze, a presenter of Alt-Analytics, the only exception is Kharkiv, as Russia will need the city to install there an alternative government in Ukraine.

"As a rule, Russians do not enter cities, with the exception of Kharkiv, which has a population of 2 million. Only this is an exception and here Russia's political interests are at stake. Should there be an attempt to form an alternative government in eastern Ukraine **Russia will need a large population base to turn the city into an**

² Alt-Info, Programme Alt-Analytics, Giorgi Qardava, 27.02.2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/378BHwb>.

³ Alt-Info, Programme Alt-Analytics, Giorgi Qardava, 27.02.2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/378BHwb>.

*alternative centre. This should happen here in Kharkiv.*²⁴

2.3. The NATO Being the Target of the Propaganda Campaign of Far-Right Groups

In Georgia, in the wake of the Ukrainian crisis, leaders and media platforms with far-right rhetoric are actively seeking to spread online narratives alleging that the NATO integration is disastrous for both Georgia and Ukraine. At the same time, they consider closer communication with Russia as an alternative. On 24 February, Alt-Info responded promptly to the Russian military invasion in Ukraine and launched a disinformation campaign against Ukraine in a [newsflash](#). The programme was in an anti-Western spirit and aimed at portraying Russia as a force without alternative. **The presenters of the programme openly called upon Ukraine and Georgia to change their pro-Western foreign policies.**

In the wake of the Russia-Ukraine War, the Facebook page Kardhu, with a distinct far-right rhetoric, seeks to [discredit](#) the NATO. The platform often features [photo and video footage](#) highlighting Russia's military prowess and superiority. Against this background, Georgia's attempt to join the NATO is considered a significant threat.

Since 25 February, Russia's smear campaign against Ukraine alleging the latter bombs its own cities and carries out airstrikes continued through the dissemination of false [media content](#).



Facebook pages [Anti-Liberal Page](#) and [Conservative](#) that are openly affiliated with Conservative Movement are also actively engaged in discrediting the NATO. These pages spread sarcastic propaganda material in the form of photos and videos mainly aimed at sending out a message to emphasise Russia's superiority and demonise the West.

The openly pro-Kremlin online media outlets [Georgia and the World](#), [Sakinform](#), and [News Front](#) have assumed similar rhetoric. They publish articles on their platforms where the authors openly discredit the NATO and the United States, while repeating the Kremlin narratives that Russia is only fighting in Ukraine to protect its own security.

On 27 February 2022 Arno Khidirbegishvili, Sakinform's Editor-in-Chief published an [article](#) entitled

⁴ Alt-Info, Programme Alt- Analytics, Zura Makharadze, 27.02.2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/378BHwb>.

⁵ Photo #4: Kardhu - How the military forces of Russia and Ukraine compare; Photo #5: Kardhu - Russian blitzkrieg in Ukraine; Photo #6: Kardhu - Russian Armoured Convoy heading to the Ukrainian border. A photo for illustration.

Georgia-Russia: Union or Neutrality. It emphasised that “Both in Georgia and Ukraine, at the instigation of the United States, “neo-Nazi” authorities are acting against Russia.” In addition, the author suggests a theory, laden with anti-Turkish messages that the only plan of salvation for Georgia is not to be neutral but to forge an alliance with Russia. **“If Georgia wants to remove the internal borders the way Azerbaijan did it, then it must enter into an alliance with Russia, especially since Georgia's neighbours are not only friendly Armenia and Azerbaijan, but also an aggressive Turkey with a strong army and express territorial claims.”**

Another pro-Kremlin media, Georgia and the World, assesses Russia's military intervention as inciting Russo phobia in Ukraine by the US. The [article](#) “We do not want a war, but we will not allow anyone to trample on our interests or ignore them!” is based on an interview given by Sergey Lavrov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Both the article and the interview suggest that the US is pushing Ukraine towards military escalation and supplies military equipment for this very purpose. According to the article, **“the actions of the United States and NATO constitute the main reason for the escalation of the situation. They have “filled” Ukraine with weapons and are pushing the country towards the military adventure.”**

Attempts to discredit NATO is obvious on the website of Georgia and the World in an [Article](#) by Valeri Kvaratskhelia published on 28 February entitled “US Leads us to Nuclear Apocalypse”. According to the conspiracy theory concocted by the article’s author, the Russia-Ukraine War was planned by the West collectively to overthrow the world order and dominate the planet. **“All the provocations, blackmails, wars that the Americans are waging with the collective West in any part of the world are ultimately directed against Russia.”** In addition, the article summarises several key points where Russia is presented as a force against which the collective West is fighting, while the NATO is presented as an alliance that has violated Russia's security guarantees.



2.4. The Key Messages of Pro-Kremlin Media Platforms and Leaders

Far-right leaders also send out overtly pro-Kremlin messages. They openly promote Kremlin-backed messages about Georgia’s membership in international platforms initiated by Russia and putting military

⁶ Photo # 7: Georgia and the World, 28 February 2022, The US is pushing us to a nuclear apocalypse. Photo #8: Anti-Liberal Page, An American Aid: Volodymyr Zelensky: Hello, I’d like to speak to Joe Biden, Joe Biden: Wrong number.

neutrality on the agenda. This rhetoric is always punctuated with discrediting messages about the NATO.

Zura Makharadze, the leader of the far-right party Conservative Movement, [stated](#) in a TV Pirveli interview that NATO does not ensure our security and we should maintain negotiations with Russia. On 2 February, [Konstantine Morgoshia](#) the leader of the Conservative Movement told Alt-Info in a programme Commentary of the Day that NATO's real mission was to “destroy the Orthodox countries.”

[Irma Inashvili](#), the leader of Alliance of Patriots of Georgia, also responded to Russia's invasion in Ukraine, calling the support for NATO integration betrayal of the country and calling on the Georgian authorities to remain silent instead of openly supporting Ukraine. The propaganda rhetoric of the far-right pro-Russian forces intensified even before the war in Ukraine.

Alexander Palavandishvili, notorious for his far-right rhetoric, says Ukraine is doomed against Russia and accuses pro-Western forces of attempts to force Georgia in the war. He posted a [video address](#) in response to Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili's [statement](#) about Georgia not joining sanctions against Russia. Alexander Palavandishvili pledged his full support to the Prime Minister and assessed his decision as an attempt to pursue a sensible policy in national interest.

Levan Vasadze, the leader of the far-right political entity Unity, Essence, Hope – abbreviated in Georgian as ERI, meaning “nation” also gave his takeaway on the Russia-Ukraine War. He described Ukraine's bid to join NATO as a threat and likened Georgia to a “minefield” where caution is needed because of Russia. “*The reality in which we have been for the last 48 hours makes Putin indifferent to criticism. How is it different for Putin, he will be criticised only because of Ukraine and will be sanctioned, or this criticism will be for Transcaucasia as well. That is why we are entering a highly sensitive moment in our history, where we are treading directly on a minefield,*” Levan Vasadze said on 25 February in a [programme](#) hosted by Soso Manjavidze.

Open calls for Georgia's involvement in the 3+3 format initiated by Russia also emerged in the far-right discourse. [Dimitri Lortkipanidze](#), the head of the Primakov Foundation, posted on his Facebook page on 22 January that the Euro-Atlantic reference in the Constitution deprives the country of the opportunity to be part of the regional cooperation.

[Zviad Tomaradze](#), the leader of the far-right political entity Nation and State also commented on the Russia-Ukraine War in his open letter. Zviad Tomaradze, unlike his counterparts, dismisses any covert or overt sympathy for the Russian Empire as a shameful act and openly supports Ukraine. Furthermore, according to Zviad Tomaradze, Russia is completely isolated and Ukraine will definitely emerge as victorious in this war. On 25 January, Nation and State published a statement on its official website [Ersa.ge](#). According to the statement, “*Georgia is obligated to express its moral support to the Ukrainian people, which would be proportioned to the support it received from Ukraine both during the Abkhazia war and the 2008 war.*” The statement stressed that the military intervention in Ukraine is Russia's militaristic policy against Orthodox countries.



ზვიად ტომარაძე
25 February at 21:39

6 საათის წინ დავწერე: "გამოსავალი მსოფლიოს მიერ რუსეთის სრული იზოლაცია, საბანკო ანგარიშების გაყინვით დაწყებული, ნებისმიერი კულტურულ-სპორტულ-საგანმანათლებლო ღონიძებებიდან გარიყვით!"
ჰოდა: გუშინ უეფას მიერ ჩემპიონთა ლიგის ფინალის რუსეთში გაუქმების შემდეგ, დღეს ევროპის საბჭომ რუსეთს წევრობა შეუჩერა; "ფორმულა1" რუსეთში აღარ ჩატარდება; რაგბი ევროპა რუსეთში საქმიანობას წყვეტს; ევროვიზიაზე რუსეთის წარმომადგენელი მონაწილეობას ვერ მიიღებს... ყველაზე დიდმა ჰაკერულმა დაჯგუფებამ "ანონიმუსმა" ომი გამოუცხადა და რუსეთს გათიშეს; რუსეთის თავდაცვის სამინისტროს ვებგვერდი; გაზპრომის და "Russia Today" საიტები...
to be continued

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ზვიად ტომარაძე
27 February at 13:25

1. როდესაც ამბობ, რომ უკრაინას ნატოში არ იღებენ (ამას ვეთანხმები) და ამავდროულად ამბობ, რომ რუსეთმა უკრაინის ნატოში მიღების გამო დაუწყო ომი, რომელია აქედან ტყუილი (ჩემი აზრით მქორე)?
2. როდესაც ამბობ, რომ უკრაინაში სარაკეტო კომპლექსის დაყენების პერსპექტივის გამო დაუწყო ომი რუსეთმა, დაახლოებით იგივე მანძილია ნატოს წევრი ლატვიიდან მოსკოვამდე, რაც უკრაინის საზღვრიდან, მაქსიმუმ 1,5 წუთი იქნება განსხვავება, მაშინ რა მნიშვნელობა აქვს სად იდგება ეს სარაკეტო კომპლექსი?
3. როდესაც პუტინი ამბობს, რომ ლუგანსკის და დონეცკის ოლქების მოსახლეობას ეხმარება და ამ მიზნით შვედია უკრაინაში, მაშინ რა ესაქმება კიევში, ხარკოვში და სხვა ქალაქებში?
4. ომის დროს, როდესაც ხალხი იხოვება, რატომ უნდა ჩატარო რუსთაველზე კონცერტი? მითუმეტეს არა მხოლოდ წელი და სუვედანი მუსიკით, არამედ სამხიარულო სიმღერებით?
რუსეთმა მოახერხა და გააერთიანა თითქმის ყველა სახელმწიფო მის წინააღმდეგ და კივიც რომც აიღოს, გრძელვადიან პერსპექტივაში რუსეთი აუცილებლად დამარცხებული გამოვა ამ ომიდან... ნამდვილად მშურს უკრაინელი ხალხის, თუ როგორ

In the context of the Russia-Ukraine War, the main rhetoric of pro-Kremlin media platforms and leaders in Georgia is as follows:

- Russia does not carry out military attacks on civilian settlements and the Ukrainian government is responsible for the humanitarian crisis caused (27.02.2022, programme [Alt Analytics](#)),
- The military operations carried out by the Commander-in-Chief and the Government of Ukraine are feeble, incompetent and inconsistent (27.02.2022, programme [Alt Analytics](#)),
- The Ukrainian government is led on against Russia by the West and Russia will definitely win this war (27.02.2022, programme [Alt Analytics](#)),
- Georgia needs to maintain a dialogue with Russia and membership in an economic and military alliance with it is necessary (27.02.2022, Zura Makharadze, programme [Droeba](#)),
- Joining Euro-Atlantic alliance is a liberal agenda which is forced on the country (25.02.2022, programme [Alt-Analytics](#)),
- Western sanctions will not end the war in Ukraine, they are just to create the impression that the West is doing something (02.03.2022, programme [Alt-Analytics](#)),

7 Photo #9: “Zviad Tomaradze: I wrote 6 hours back: “Russia’s complete isolation is a solution, starting with freezing its bank accounts and banning it from any cultural, sport or educational event!”

Here: after yesterday’s cancellation of UEFA Champions League final in Russia, today the Council of Europe suspended Russia from the membership. Formula 1 won’t be held in Russia. Rugby Europe is leaving Russia. Russia’s representative won’t participate in Eurovision... The largest hacker group Anonymous declared war and brought down the Russian Defence Ministry’s website, Gazprom and Russia Today’s websites....”

- 8 Photo # 10: “Zviad Tomaradze
1. If you are saying that Ukraine is not being admitted in the NATO (I agree with that) and at the same time you are claiming that Russia started the war against Ukraine because of its admission in the NATO, which one is a lie (I think the second one)?
 2. If you are saying that Russia started the war because of the potential installation of a missile system in Ukraine, there is approximately the same distance from the NATO member Latvia to Moscow with maximum 1.5 minute difference from the distance to the Ukrainian border. Then how does it matter where that missile system is placed?
 3. If Putin claims to be helping residents of Luhansk and Donetsk districts, then why is it in Kyiv, Kharkiv and other cities?
 4. During a war, when people are dying why should you be holding a concert on Rustaveli Avenue? Especially, if they are playing not only slow and sad songs but also cheerful songs?
Russia managed to unite almost all states against it and even if it manages to seize Kyiv, it will definitely be defeated in this war in the end. I really envy the Ukrainian people how they...”

- United National Movement is trying to involve Georgia in a large-scale war through an effort orchestrated with the Ukrainian authorities (01.03.2022, programme [Comment of the Day](#)),
- Dialogue with Russia is the only way for us not to go down the same road as Ukraine and avoid war (28.02.2022, Zura Makharadze, programme [Alt-Analytics](#))
- NATO is an organisation that has one objective – to destroy the Orthodox Christians. It was they who provoked and tricked the Orthodox brothers in taking up arms against each other; where they failed to do so, they went on to bomb and divide Orthodox countries, incited separatism, and seized territories from the Orthodox (25.01.2022, Konstantine Morgoshia, [Tvalsazrisi.ge](#)),
- “The hysteria about the NATO's open door policy resulted in Georgia giving up Kodori - Upper Abkhazia in 2008; we lost a very large portion of Samachablo, Akhagori, towards which the separatists had had no ambitions, we lost it all. Crimea is understandable. It is a Russian community and Russians live there, but still it was within Ukraine, and until Yanukovich was in office, there was no question of annexing Crimea. However, since 2014, Ukraine has been completely paralysed and enslaved” (02.02.2022, Konstantine Morgoshia, programme [Comment of the Day](#)),
- Supporting the NATO integration amounts betraying our country and the Georgian government should keep quiet instead of openly supporting Ukraine (24.02.2022, Irma Inashvili, [TV Pirveli](#)),
- The Euro-Atlantic reference in the Constitution deprives the country of the opportunity to participate in regional cooperation (22.01.2022, [Dimitri Lortkipanidze](#)), and
- Today, Russia must destroy neo-fascism in Ukraine and liberate the heroic cities of Kyiv and Odessa. Today, the West claims the clown Zelensky is a hero. He, similar to Saakashvili will be soon forgotten; he will face a trial and will be thrown into a jail for the death of thousands of innocent people and complete destruction of Ukraine (03.03.2022, Arno Khidirbegishvili, [Sakinform](#)).

A few days before Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, on 21 February, the leaders of Alliance of Patriots of Georgia and Georgian March, along with the leaders of organisations affiliated with them, wrote an [open letter](#) to Russia's President Vladimir Putin. The signatories expressed their desire to meet with the Council of the Russian Federation and the leadership of the State Duma and, in this context, openly supported the idea of Georgia's neutrality. The main points of this letter coincide fully with the Kremlin's foreign policy. The letter to the President of Russia can be broken down in the following [points](#):

- Georgia and Ukraine should become neutral countries,
- “Georgia is not a free country” and “US position is an assignment forced on the Georgian government”,
- NATO exercises on Georgian territory “provoke Russia”,
- The population of Georgia does not want to join the NATO, and
- Georgia will not be able to cope with regional and global challenges without the cooperation with Russia.

3. Political Transformation of Alt-Info and Its Pro-Russian Rhetoric

During the reporting period, in parallel with the large-scale Russia-Ukraine War, there was a trend for regional expansion and an increase in visibility of Conservative Movement, a political party based on Alt-Info. It is noteworthy that the openly pro-Russian entity has already opened dozens of regional offices throughout Georgia. The number of regional offices is planned to reach 80 by the end of March.

According to the state audit report, the official income of the party has only been GEL [36,675](#) since its

establishment. These financial resources may not be sufficient to cover the above logistics expenditure. Consequently, there are many questions about the party's donors and its financial capital. According to the state [audit](#), the heads of regional offices are the main sponsors of the party. For instance, Giga Sulakadze and Gia Gulua, representatives of Kutaisi and Zugdidi offices respectively, donated GEL 1900; Giorgi Ratiani from Mestia donated GEL 500. Zura Makharadze, the party chairperson [stated](#) that businessperson Konstantine Morgoshia was their main sponsor and that he considered any questions about Conservative Movement's financial resources as anti-PR pushed by the liberal media.



კონსერვატიული მოძრაობა - ოფიციალური გვერდი



It is noteworthy that the process of regional expansion of Conservative Movement caused civil protests. In particular, on 23 February, a group of citizens painted the [Gori](#) office in red paint. Protest signs appeared on the walls of the [Akhaltsikhe](#) office on 3 March. Inauguration of Conservative Movement's offices in [Ambrolauri](#) and [Mestia](#) was followed by a public outcry that escalated into a physical and verbal confrontation. Both Giorgi Qardava, the General Secretary of the party and Zura Makharadze, the chairperson appealed to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in a live [address](#) and requested the timely and effective investigation into the mentioned incidents. They threatened to identify all individuals involved in the protest and take the law in their own hands in case there was no follow-up to their request. On [27 February](#), there was a verbal confrontation between a group of civil activists and Alt-Info presenters in front of Alt-Info's office in Tbilisi, where citizens openly protested against Alt-Info's pro-Kremlin rhetoric in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine War.



Source – Primetime



Source – Radio Liberty

In addition to regional expansion, Alt-Info has significantly increased its access to a wider audience. Their visibility has been completely transformed in terms of communication and strategic development. In particular, during the reporting period, the coordinated network distribution of Alt-Info's propaganda messages on the [official](#) Facebook page of Conservative Movement and in Facebook [groups](#) of internal regional offices became a noticeable pattern. Conservative Movement operates openly using up to dozens of internal Facebook pages and groups. Online interaction on the social network intensified significantly in February in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine War. According to the current data, on behalf of Alt-Info and Conservative Movement, the media content is created and disseminated mainly by the following Facebook pages: [Alt-Info](#), [Official Page of Conservative Movement](#) and [Anti-Liberal Page](#). The Alt-Info team is engaged in open propaganda warfare through the pages of local offices. Furthermore, this platform is used to disseminate information about the far-right politics and activities.

Facebook groups created for regional representation often publish photo and video material about the opening of local offices and outreach activities carried out for voters. In addition, the focus is on disseminating daily briefings and video appeals of the party leaders. Alt-Info's propaganda messages are actively shared on the anonymous Facebook page [Conservative](#). Alt-Info publishes media content mostly in the form of video collages of news programmes and imparts it to a wider audience. In addition, the addresses and live broadcasts of Conservative Movement's leaders are often shared. This page is an important information platform for Conservative Movement. The Facebook page makes it easier for party leaders to impart their messages to a wider audience.

Online and social media plays an important role in consolidating the legitimacy and visibility of the far-right rhetoric. There is also a noticeable trend to use social networks as an important political tool in the process of forming public opinion.

During the reporting period, Alt-Info presenters shifted their attention to the trials of the like-minded individuals accused of assaulting journalists on 5-6 July. On 12 February, during a live programme, Alt-Info's presenters verbally [insulted](#) journalists and disseminated [disinformation](#) that victims are unable to identify their attackers. A host of Alt-Analytics Shota Martinenko [stated](#) the following: “*We’ve checked each shots where they are asking a witness, here, tell us if you’ve seen any of them and if you can identify anybody. We could not find a single shot with anybody saying that this is the one who hit me. There are no such shots. Even now, these people sitting here. Nobody can recognize them, right? No such facts.*”

Zura Makharadze, the leader of Conservative Movement stated that those arrested in connection with the violence of 5-6 July 5 were political prisoners and their arrest "without sufficient evidence" was politically motivated. "We say that you have no evidence against the person, but political reasons dictate you to have him thrown into the jail and keep him there, that's a real political prisoner."

* * *

The DRI believes that the use by Alt-Info and Conservative Movement of fake news and manipulative photo and video material for maintaining propaganda media campaign is dangerous. Therefore, the enquiry into their activities and financial resources is critically important for the state.