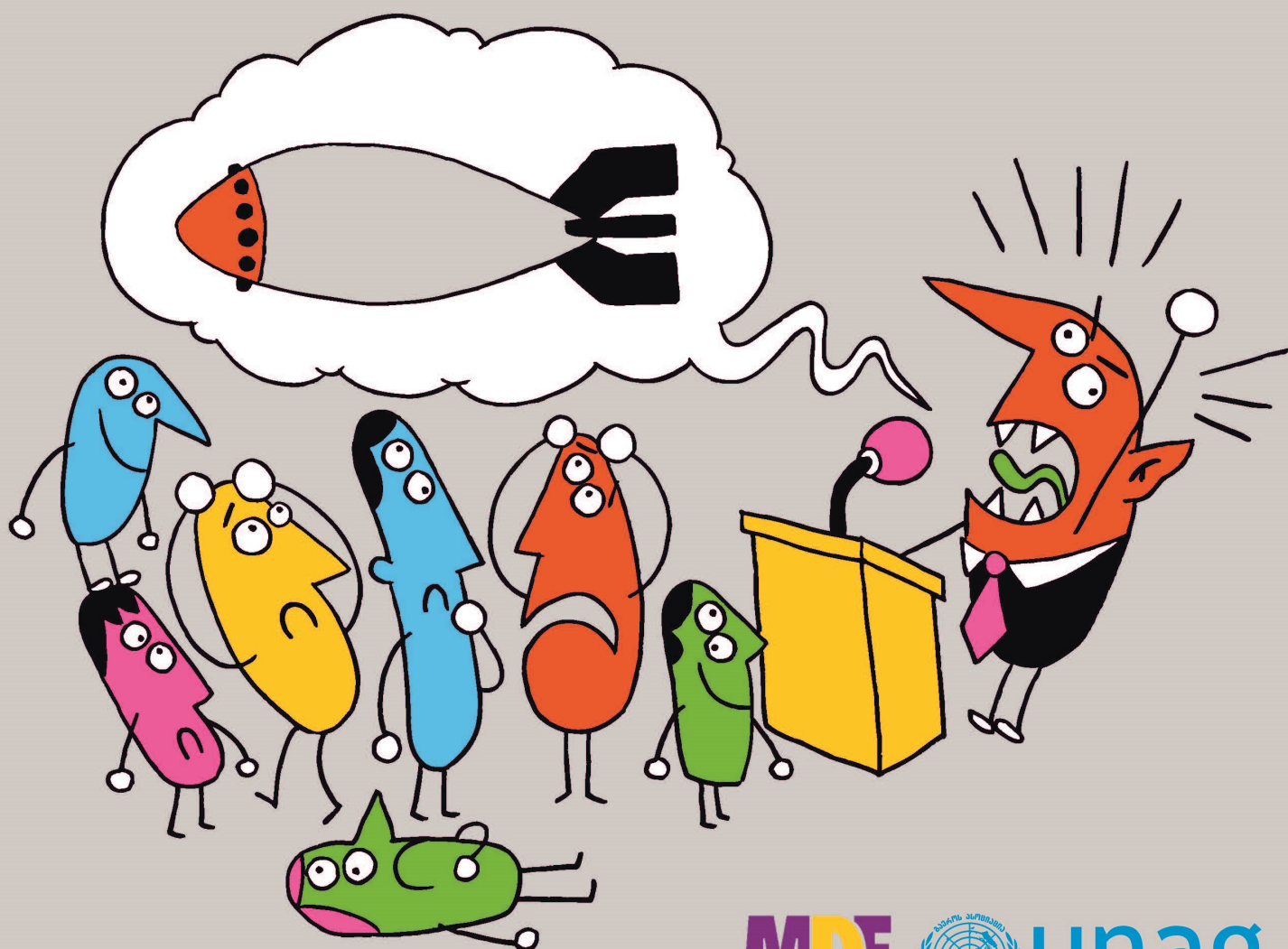


Election 2017

MONITORING OF HATE SPEECH AND ANTI-WESTERN SENTIMENTS IN PRE-ELECTION DISCOURSE



Authors:

Tamar Kintsurashvili, Tina Gogoladze, Giorgi Revishvili

Media monitoring by:

Sopho Gogadze, Khatia Lomidze, Tamar Gagniashvili.

Regional PITA Youth Centers monitors:

Babaken Abajian, Varo Gabrelian, Victoria Egian, Lili Zazadze, Davit Zhorzholiani, Giorgi Bolkvadze, Luka Zedashidze, Irakli Iagorshvili.

Design by:

Mariam Tsutskiridze

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Monitoring of Hate Speech and Anti-Western Sentiments in Pre-Election Discourse

September 1 – October 7

Introduction

The present report provides the results of media monitoring carried out by the Media Development Foundation (MDF) and seven Youth Centers of the UN Association's PITA program ahead of the October 2017 municipal elections.

The monitoring was carried out on the cases of hate speech, xenophobic expressions and anti-Western statements disseminated by political subjects and media outlets.

Considering the peculiarities of municipal elections, besides national televisions, newspapers and online editions, monitoring also covered local media outlets and Facebook pages of regional political subjects.

The monitoring was conducted in partnership with the UN Association of Georgia, within the framework of the USAID-funded Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness Program (PITA) program.

Methodology

The study involves both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data involve the cases of hate speech, xenophobia, Turkophobia, discrimination on religious grounds, homophobia, as well as gender stereotypes and anti-Western messages according to sources. The qualitative data provide the types of messages and key narratives disseminated by various sources.

Both mainstream and fringe media outlets were selected as the subjects of monitoring:

- News and analytical programs of four televisions: Georgian Public Broadcaster (Moambe), Rustavi 2 (Kurieri, P.S.), Maestro (Kontakti), Imedi (Kronika, Imedis Kvira).

- Talk shows of four televisions: Maestro (Tsetskhilis Khazi), Iberia (Tsensuris Gareshe¹), Kavkasia (Barieri, Spektri), Obieqtivi (Gamis Studia, Okros Kveta).
- Special pre-election programs aired by two TV channels: Imedi (Amomrchevlis Pirispir), Georgian Public Broadcaster (Tvitmmartveloba 2017).
- Five online editions: Sakinformi, Netgazeti, Georgia and the World, PIA, Interpressnews
- Four newspapers: Rezonansi, Asaval-Dasavali, Alia, Prime Time

Besides regular subjects of monitoring, the report also involves politicians' discriminatory statements from other media outlets selected through using a random sampling principle.

Regional subjects. In case of regional monitoring, politicians were selected as monitoring subjects and the following media outlets were selected for this purpose:

- Kutaisi: Rioni TV; online edition Kutaisitoday
- Batumi: Channel 25; newspaper Adjara PS
- Akhaltsikhe: Channel 9; newspaper Samkhretis Karibche
- Akhalkalaki: jnews.ge, nor.ge, parvana.ge;
- Gori: Trialeti TV
- Telavi: Tanamgzavri TV; Dia TV; online edition Kakhetis Khma
- Gurjaani: Gurjaani TV

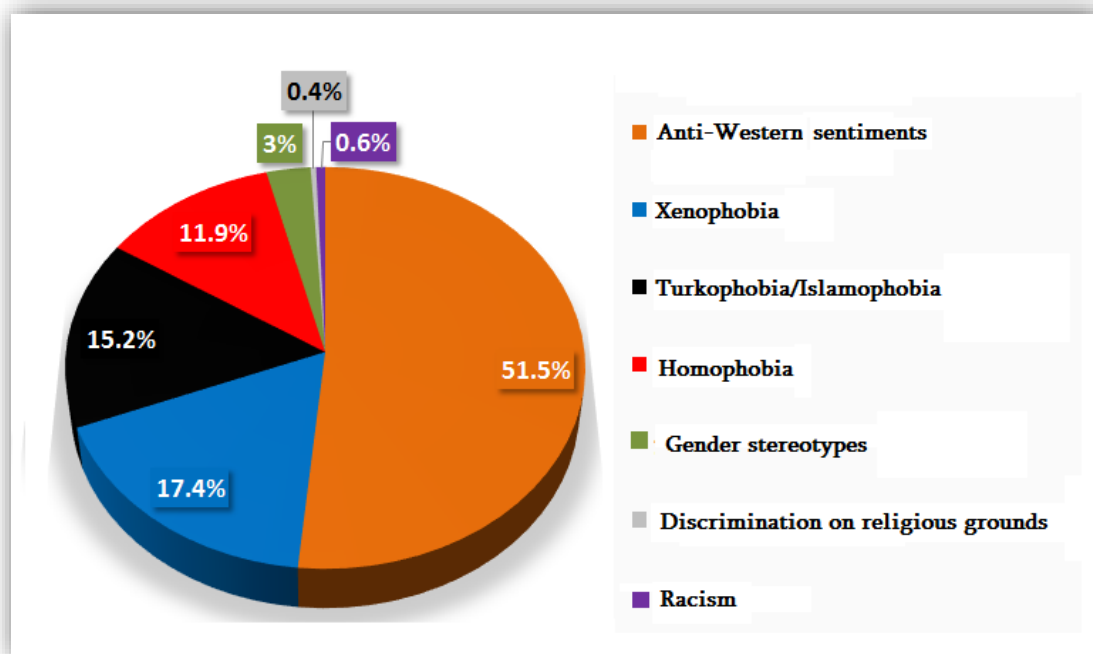
Besides the above mentioned media outlets, the random sampling principle was used to monitor Facebook pages of political subjects.

The monitoring was carried out in a period between September 1 and October 7.

Aggregate quantitative data

The content of over one half (139) of 270 comments made by political parties and media representatives during the monitoring period (September 1 – October 7) was clearly anti-Western, followed by xenophobia against various groups (47), Turkophobia (41), homophobia (32), gender stereotypes (8), discrimination on religious grounds (1) and racist (2) statements.

¹ Monitoring included Iberia TV's talk show from October 1.

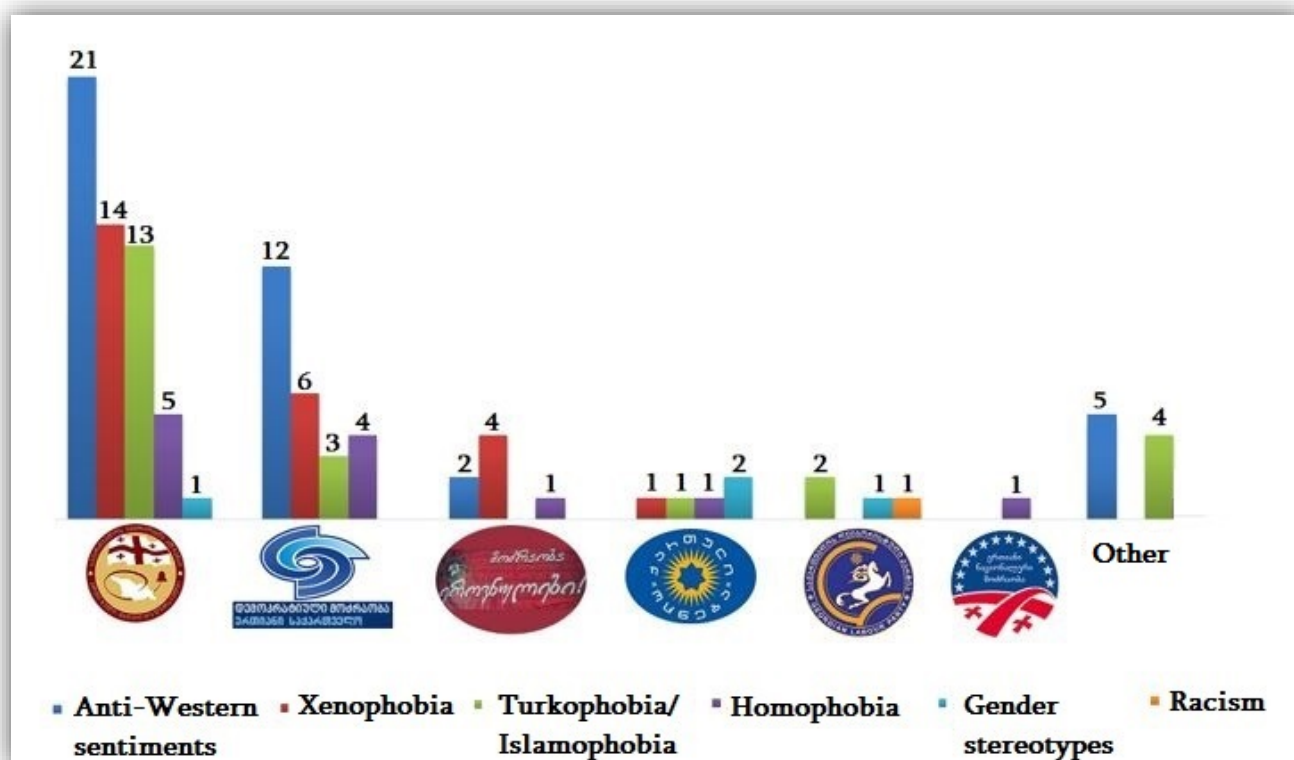


Anti-Western sentiments	139
Xenophobia	47
Turkophobia/Islamophobia	41
Homophobia	32
Gender stereotypes	8
Racism	2
Discrimination on religious grounds	1

The sources of most comments (164) were representatives of media outlets, followed by politicians with 106 comments.

Political Parties

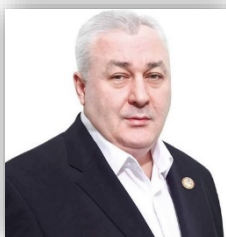
Among political subjects, Alliance of Patriots is leading with the greatest amount of anti-Western comments and discriminatory statements (54), followed by United Democratic Movement (25). The data of this latter also involve the data of Free Georgia party, as these two subjects decided to run on joint ticket in the municipal elections after forming an election bloc “Dimitri Lortkipanidze, Kakha Kukava – Democratic Movement – Free Georgia.” The movement Erovnulebi, which is associated with the March of Georgians, comes next (7). The ruling Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia party made 5 discriminatory comments, followed by Labor Party – 4 and United National Movement – 1. The category “Others” unite Our Homeland (3), Neutral Socialist Georgia (2), Georgian Troupe (2) and Left-Wing Alliance (2).



Alliance of Patriots

Anti-Western sentiments. The content of statements made by the representatives of Alliance of Patriots was anti-Western (21) and mainly focused on the need of negotiations with Russia

and discussing Georgia's territorial problems in a trilateral NATO-Georgia-Russia format. At the same time, the party emphasized that the West is incapable to defend Georgia's interests, while Turkey, which is a NATO member state, also cooperates with Russia in the sphere of military armament:



Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia: "Moscow perceives NATO as an enemy. Moscow is sure that NATO wants to attack Russia... Main thing is what the Russians think; they think that NATO plans to attack them... and they also think that NATO wants to use Georgia's territory for attacking Russia. We should work here and tell them convincingly that ... it creates a huge tension between us and Russia... Everyone, who has any links to diplomacy, knows that NATO will never accept us just for this reason. That's the whole problem with it."

Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, September 14



Gigi Maglakelidze, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia: "There will be neither Abkhazia nor Tskhinvali on the agenda with the policy and status quo that we have today. We will have deep concerns and anxieties from Europe and European countries... Turkey is one of the most powerful NATO member states... And several days ago Turkey purchased missile systems from Russia... It is actually a breakthrough in the context of NATO."

**Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia,
September 16**

Another representative of Alliance of Patriots accused the previous government, as well as the UN and the United States of violating Georgia's territorial integrity and particularly of the loss of the Kodori Gorge; he also spoke about the development of similar scenario by the same actors in Ukraine:



Emzar Kvitsiani, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia: "The UN has its Security Council and intelligence. Just people from its intelligence service helped Saakashvili stage a play in Kodori in 2006 – first, he brought army to the gorge and then alienated it. Russia and the United States also joined the UN in this adventure. Now the same forces took him to Ukraine. It means that they have some plans there too."

Marshalpress, September 21

European integration was linked to the obligation of accepting migrants and it was associated with threats:



Gigi Maglakelidze, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia: “European integration does not mean that your territory should be given to Arabs, Indian and Pakistanis, or even Syrians... let those people, who lit a fire, assume the responsibility and let them accept as many people to their respective countries as they want, without dragging Georgia into it...”

Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, September 16

As for regional candidates, Badri Porchkhidze of Alliance of Patriots, who is the Sakrebulo membership candidate in Kutaisi’s Kakhianouri constituency, made hate speech remarks on his Facebook page when commenting on the use of special troops by the Spanish government during the Catalonia developments:



Badri Porchkhidze: “If after this fact anyone utters even a word about European democracy, I will poke a stick into their mouths.”



Xenophobia. Xenophobic remarks (14) were mainly related to the sale of lands to foreigners, allowing migrants into the country and related threat to national identity. In both cases, emphasis was laid on foreign nationals of Asian and African origin:



Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia: “One thing is that the country accepted a lot of people as refugees, emigrants from Syria or other hot regions, though the government should not have done it. It tries to conceal it, but look wherever you want and you will fail to find a place without refugees and it is obvious that they have already settled down here.”

**Obieqtivi, Gamis
Studia, September 2**



Tengiz Tavdgiridze, Batumi mayoral candidate of Alliance of Patriots: “We sent a letter to the government, where we demanded the abolition of several laws adopted by the previous parliaments; it concerned the anti-discrimination law, the law on religion, the law on education, the law on acquiring citizenship by foreign nationals, the law on alienation of Georgian lands, pastures, forests, parks, coastal lines, rivers to foreign citizens; we are against it and have stated our position for multiple times...”

Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, September 2

Turkophobia. Turkophobic statements (13) gave rise to a perception that Turkey is carrying out an expansion in Adjara, the Treaty of Kars contains threats and only Russia can deter the threats coming from Turkey. In addition, members of Alliance of Patriots drew parallels between Georgia’s historical occupation by the Ottoman Empire and Russia’s current occupation of Georgia and gave rise to a perception that if Russia is an occupant, then Turkey is an occupant as well:



Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia: “Let me say that Batumi and Adjara – and we have been saying it for about 20 years - represent a frontline. Batumi is the city, where Turkey carries out direct expansion of Georgia.”

Imedi, Amomrchevlis Pirispir, September 12



Vazha Otarashvili, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia: “I do not want to recall the Treaty of Kars, Article 5 of which includes very dangerous words, and we have reiterated frequently that the Adjarian population will decide the future fate of Adjara... What is happening in Adjara... and Turkey is afraid of Russia...”

Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, September 30

Vazha Otarashvili, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia: “Tao-Klarjeti belonged to us. Let me reiterate that if Russia has occupied over 22% of Georgian territories, Turkey has grabbed over 32% of Georgian territories. A century has not passed yet since Turkey grabbed these territories. So, does it mean that Turkey is not an aggressor any longer?”

Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, September 30

Homophobia. Homophobic comments (5) mainly concerned the portrayal of homosexuality as an illness, preparation of TV program by Rustavi 2 with the participation of LGBT persons and activities of non-governmental organizations.



Tengiz Tavdgiridze, Batumi mayoral candidate of Alliance of Patriots: “This law is about sexual minorities; nobody is insured against having such people in a family. There were a lot of such people, who never spoke about their physical defects publicly and died without revealing this secret... It is a human defect. Everyone wants to have a healthy child and it is normal... It is not ruled out that these defects are inherited and cannot be cured.”

Alia, October 2-8

Gender stereotypes. One instance of discrimination on gender grounds was related to traditional understanding of female and male roles in a family and the system of quotas.



Emzar Kvitsiani, Alliance of Patriots: “Is it possible to force you to bring women to the party?!... There are 240 parties in Georgia and if party lists are composed of 150 persons with female members comprising its half, who will bring up children?!”

Interpressnews, September 13; Alia, September 18-24

United Democratic Movement/Free Georgia

Anti-Western sentiments. The anti-Western messages (12) made by the United Democratic Movement were mainly related to legalization of homosexuality by the West, as well as an

obligation of accepting migrants and a threat of losing an identity. Moreover, these messages promoted a spirit of skepticism that NATO and the United States cannot protect Georgia. Military exercises held in Georgia with the participation of U.S. soldiers were portrayed as a threat:



Dimitri Lortkipanidze, United Democratic Movement: “The work on developing a legislative norm related to civic relationships of same-sex couples started just upon the request of this European commission [ECRI] and they plan to approve it quite soon.”

Maestro, Tsetskhlis Khazi, September 20

Dimitri Lortkipanidze, United Democratic Movement: “For already years, the European Union forces Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia to accept Arab citizens, but unsuccessfully. The leaders of these countries categorically resist the EU directives saying openly that “we do not need Islamization!”

Asaval-Dasavali, September 18-24



Nino Burjanadze, United Democratic Movement: “We are obsessed with an idea that NATO and the United States will save us and they will settle our problems; and we do not talk to the country, which can really contribute to preventing the destruction of Georgian villages and suspending this process.”

Maestro, Tsetskhlis Khazi, September 23

Nino Burjanadze, United Democratic Movement: “... How would he estimate the recent military exercises held in Georgia, during which U.S. military hardware with American flags moved on the main highway in the country. Would it give rise to the feelings of instability and danger among our Abkhaz and Ossetian countrymen?”

Interpressnews, September 13

Turkophobia/Islamophobia (3). The election campaign carried out by the election bloc² formed by the United Democratic Movement and Free Georgia ahead of the October municipal elections gave rise to Islamophobic and anti-migrant, as well as anti-liberal

² Dimitri Lortkipanidze, Kakha Kukava – Democratic Movement – Free Georgia

sentiments. The purpose of the campaign was to ban wearing chadors in public places; moreover, the process of migration was associated with Islamization of Georgia:

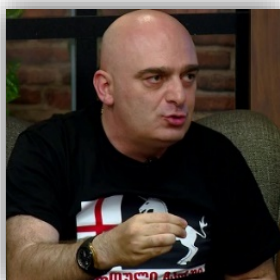


Dimitri Lortkipanidze, United Democratic Movement: “Great resettlement” is underway in Georgia! It is a treacherous plan of Georgia’s Islamization!”

Homophobia. Homophobic comments (4) were mainly related to the presentation of an LGBT activist by the Republican Party as its candidate for Sakrebulo membership.

Erovnulebi (Nationals)

The movement Erovnulebi does not run in the municipal elections; however, its leader is affiliated with extremist movement “The March of Georgians.” This movement mainly stirred up xenophobia (4) against migrants and persons of Islamic identity:



Sandro Bregadze, Erovnulebi: ... “After several years the Chinese will become an ethnic majority in Samegrelo and Guria! I call on entire Georgia to resist it!”

“Tbilisi has been wiped away by foreigners wearing turbans and chadors.”

Asaval-Dasavali, September 18-24

Sandro Bregadze’s statements were also directed against the activities of George Soros in Georgia.

Georgian Dream

Xenophobia. The ruling party’s Tbilisi mayoral candidate made one statement in xenophobic context during the monitoring period, which was related to the loss of previous appearance of the Agmashenebeli Avenue and disappearance of Georgian identity there. This place is frequently used in the rhetoric of nationalist groups as a symbol of the area grabbed by foreigners of Asian origin.



Kakha Kaladze, Georgian Dream: “Let’s take the Agmashenebeli Avenue, where new life has emerged, where you will see inscriptions in all languages except Georgian that is categorically unacceptable; I do not attack anyone, but Georgian alphabet and Georgian letters will be a priority and will be protected adequately.”

Marshallpress, September 10

Turkophobia. The ruling party’s representative also gave rise to a perception that Batumi belongs to neighboring country, Turkey.



Beka Sivsivadze, Georgian Dream: “The Turks look like hosts rather than guests. I think that they have already bought entire Batumi...”; “we should call on our Georgian men to be careful, because their women may be pinched by the Turks on the beach...”

Netgazeti, September 28

Homophobia. A video recording was released in social networks, featuring Jaba Jishkariani, member of the Tbilisi Sakrebulo from Georgian Dream, who addresses one of the members of the National Movement and makes a homophobic comment against the party’s Tbilisi mayoral candidate.



Jaba Jishkariani, Georgian Dream: “Keep an eye on Zaal Udumashvili, who cannot clarify whether he is a man or a woman.”³

eurus.ge, September 29

Gender stereotypes. The ruling party made two comments, which promoted deepening of gender stereotypes:

³ http://eurus.ge/index.php?act=new_view&id=4958



Guguli Magradze, Georgian Dream: “We have to give due consideration to competition, because other political parties have named mainly male candidates. We do not want our candidates to be oppressed; therefore, we try to select such male candidates, who will have more chances to win.”

Rezonansi, September 9

Labor Party

Islamophobia. The Labor Party representatives made two Islamophobic comments with one of them linking Islam to terrorism and crime:



Jelal Kikava, Labor Party's Batumi mayoral candidate: “They have chosen an incorrect path. I want to tell the Union of Muslims, they have entered the path of confrontation. They intimidate the public with their actions; I mean their plans – we will build here something; we will do it this way; switch on your TV sets and you will see – a Muslim has exploded something; a Muslim has stabbed someone. No, I am telling you the facts. What does it mean to link? I am just telling you the facts. Actually, Irina is absolutely right. I am saying what I see on TV.”

Adjarian Public Broadcaster, “Akhali Sivrtse,” September 4

Racism. Shalva Natelashvili, the Labor Party leader, made a racist statement against a political opponent:



Shalva Natelashvili, leader of the Labor Party: “When a foreigner looks at Ivanishvili, what will he think, which race we belong to: African, yellow race, mixed Negroid or other race? It is impossible to distinguish his racial identity.”

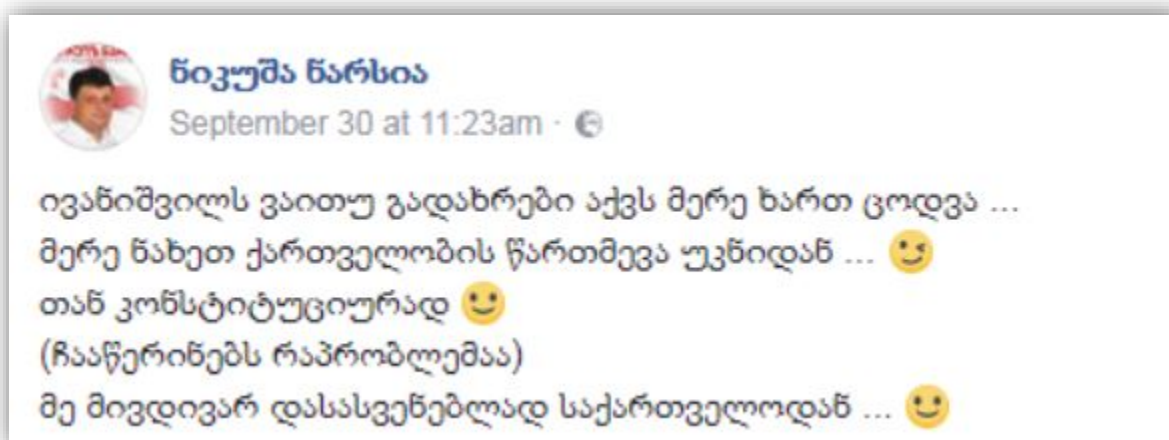
TV Pirveli, Reaktsia, September 19

United National Movement (UNM)

Homophobia. Nikoloz Narsia, the National Movement's Sakrebulo membership candidate in Kutaisi's City Museum constituency, posted a homophobic comment on his Facebook page on September 30:



Nikoloz Narsia, National Movement: “If Ivanishvili appears to have some abnormalities, than look at how you will be taken away your Georgian identity from the back.”



Other parties

The parties united in the category “other parties”, among them Neutral-Socialist Georgia, whose leader is the host of talk show on Obieqtivi TV, as well as Left-Wing Alliance mainly stirred up anti-Western sentiments. In case of Georgian Troupe and Our Homeland, mainly Turkophobic comments were observed.

II. Media

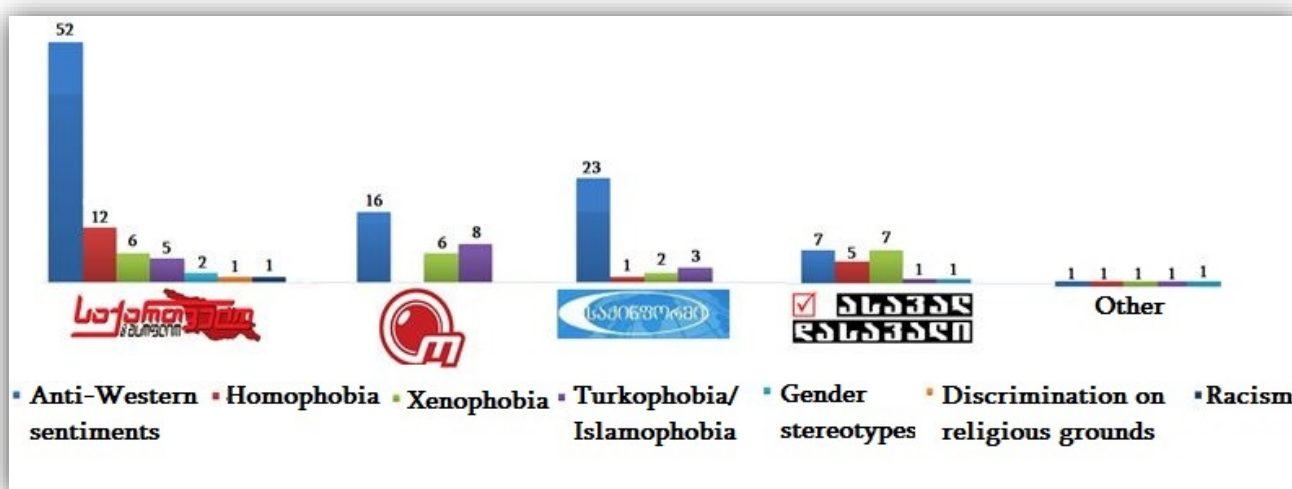
Quantitative data. Out of 164 comments made by the representatives of media outlets, 99 had an anti-Western content and as chart 2 shows, most of them were disseminated by online edition Georgia and the World (52), followed by online edition Sakinform (23), Obieqtivi TV (16) and newspaper Asaval-Dasavali (7).

Most xenophobic statements were disseminated by newspaper Asaval-Dasavali (7 out of 22), followed by Obieqtivi TV (6) and Georgia and the World (6). Xenophobic comments were also disseminated by Sakinformi (2) and newspaper Alia (1).

Out of 19 homophobic comments made by media outlets, 12 were made by the authors of Georgia and the World. Homophobic statements are also met in newspaper Asaval-Dasavali (5), Sakinform (1) and Alia (1).

The largest share of Turkophobic/Islamophobic comments (18) made by media outlets accounts for Obieqtivi TV (8) affiliated with the Alliance of Patriots party. Turkophobic/Islamophobic narrative can also be met in Georgia and the World (5), Sakinform (3), Asaval-Dasavali (1) and Kavkasia TV (1).

Gender stereotypes are observed in Georgia and the World (2), newspapers Asaval-Dasavali (1) and Prime Time (1). Racist comment (1), as well as discrimination on religious grounds (1) was disseminated by Georgia and the World.



Qualitative data: The messages disseminated by the media outlets subject to monitoring were identical to those made by politicians and mainly involved anti-migrant sentiments, issues of land sale to foreigners, issues related to identity and portraying Russia's advantage over the West.