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ANTI-WESTERN PROPAGANDA 2022



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INTRODUCTION |

The Media Development Foundation (MDF) has been publishing the Anti-Western Propaganda report annually from 2014 to 2020. Taking into account the recent changes in the media ecosystem, the research methodology has undergone some adjustments in terms of media subjects.

The following report analyzes the 2022 trends in anti-Western messages and reviews their typology and sources. Monitoring through traditional media (Television, print, and online outlets) was carried out on both media and other sources – political class, clergy, public organizations, and individual representatives of society.

The report covers the period from January 1 to December 31, 2022. The introductory part presents the main findings of the study, its methodology, and general quantitative data by sources. The second part reviews the structure of anti-Western messages and propaganda methods, while the last part deals with the sources of anti-Western messages.

I METHODOLOGY

The report uses a mixed methodology, which entails using the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

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. The quantitative part provides the amount of anti-western messages broken down by topics, while the qualitative part focuses on the typology of messages.

SELECTION OF CONTENT-ANALYSIS SUBJECTS. Similar to the previous years, in 2022, the Media Development Foundation was monitoring the Georgian-language media. In addition to mainstream media outlets, the subjects were selected based on their ties to the Kremlin and party affiliations. Some adjustments were made to take into account the changes in the media market.

11 traditional media outlets (television – 5, print – 4, online outlets – 2) were selected as monitoring subjects. Unlike previous years, the 2022 report focused on talk shows in television media, which provides more comprehensive data for discourse analysis.

The monitoring was carried out on the following subjects:

- **5 TV BROADCASTERS:** Talk shows of leading TV channels by TV ratings – TV Imedi’s “Imedi Live” and the Mtavari Channel’s “Ghamis Mtavari” were selected to represent different editorial policies and the binaries of political polarization (government, opposition).
- If in previous years the monitoring was carried out only on one pro-Kremlin TV broadcaster, namely the “Obieqtivi” TV linked to the “Alliance of Patriots” party, in 2022 two TV Broadcasters of the same niche were added to the list of monitoring subjects: “Alt-Info”, which is a TV platform of the extremist “Conservative Movement” party, and “Sezoni TV,” which has an overt pro-Kremlin editorial policy. In the case of “Obieqtivi”, the subject of observation was the talk show “Studio N8”, which is broadcast every day except weekends, as well as the daily news release – Real News; In the case of “Alt-Info”, monitoring was carried

out on the daily talk-show “Alt-Analytics”, and in the case of Sezoni TV – on the talk-show “Summary of the Day with Nikoloz Mzhavanadze”, which was broadcast daily except for weekends and was added to the monitoring base since September.

- **4 NEWSPAPERS:** Weekly publications “Asaval-Dasavali”, “Kviris Palitra”, “Alia” and daily “Resonance” (except weekends).
- **2 ONLINE OUTLETS:** Pro-Kremlin “Georgia and World” (www.geworld.ge) and News Front. The latter stopped operating in July, which is why the mentioned publication was replaced by the related Split News (www.spnews.io/ge).

Monitoring was carried out from January 1 to December 31, 2022.

KEY FINDINGS

While analyzing the 2022 data, the following tendencies have been identified:

- Out of approximately 10,000 comments analyzed as a result of the monitoring, the largest share of anti-Western messages was directed against the collective West and the US, followed by the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO);
- Anti-Ukraine messages entailed not only Russia's intervention in Ukraine but also Ukraine-Georgia relations and identity-related issues;
- Russia was the only subject presented positively in the given discourse, while all other subjects were presented negatively;
- 5 main themes of anti-Western messages were identified, concerning: 1) Foreign policy and security, 2) Democracy, sovereignty and democratic institutions, 3) Russian intervention in Ukraine, 4) Identity and liberalism, as well as 5) Foreign aid and economy;
- The EU was observed to be the main target in the context of foreign policy and security-related topics, which was largely related to the refusal to grant candidate status to Georgia;
- The idea that the West, the US, the European Union, Ukraine, and NATO were trying to drag Georgia into the war and open a second front in the country was amplified en masse;
- Manipulation of the fears of war gained special momentum in the background of the war in Ukraine and became the main tool of political manipulation when discussing the issue of granting candidate status to Georgia;
- The research identified clear congruence between the messages voiced by the ruling party ("Georgian Dream") and its satellite "People's Power", and the messages amplified by the pro-Kremlin parties – the Alt-Info/Conservative Movement and the Alliance of Patriots;
- The mentioned congruence was especially evident in the context of the cultivation of fears of war, during which the responsibility for the democratic challenges in the country was shifted to the European Union, which was accused of opening a second front and organizing a second Maidan in Georgia;
- The topic of neutrality was still prevalent in relation to NATO, which was most often voiced by the "Alliance of Patriots party;" The other pro-Kremlin party, the "Conservative Movement," ignored the topic of neutrality and advocated for a military alliance with Russia.

- New messages established the opinion that, given the example of the war in Ukraine, considering NATO as a security guarantor was no longer relevant, arguing that the record of Euro-Atlantic integration in the Georgian constitution should be revised;
- In parallel, Russia's intervention in Ukraine was considered as an opportunity to settle relations with Russia. It was argued Georgia should use the window of opportunity for its own benefit and seek security guarantees from Moscow;
- Similar to the previous years, Russia was named as the only factor deterring Turkey and other neighbors, at the same time, in the context of the war, a new message was being disseminated, which spoke of the threat of strengthening Turkey's influence in the region in case of Russia's defeat in Ukraine;
- Similar to the previous years, the anti-Western propaganda in Georgia resorted to the method of manipulating with threats in 2022 as well; however, this time, apart from the interests of external actors, the internal agenda of the government became more evident.
- The subjects of manipulation were the following five main threats: 1) fear of the opening of the second front and territorial integrity, 2) the second Maidan, 3) the encroachment of "sovereign democracy"; 4) democratic institutions, and 5) Western funding;
- The West, Western countries and institutions were predominantly named as the cause of all five threats; In certain cases, local institutions acting under the influence of the West were also labeled as such and were declared as agents of foreign countries and carriers of their interests;
- Along with the West, Turkey was also considered a threat to territorial integrity, which was discussed in terms of its alleged intention to restore the Ottoman Empire and the reignition of historical traumas.
- On the one hand, one heard statements that Georgia should not provoke Russia with its actions, while on the other hand, from 2022, the message that the West and Western institutions are trying to involve the country in military operations and open a second front has taken the form of a clear trend;
- Such a shift in messages creates a problem of threat perception, as it makes it unclear who the main security challenge for Georgia is – Russia, which occupies Georgian territories, or the US, the European Union, NATO, and Ukraine;
- The fears of organizing the second Maidan and changing the government in a revolutionary scenario were, on the one hand, linked to the refusal to grant Georgia the EU candidate status, and on the other hand, they mainly manifested themselves in relation to the US;
- The Kremlin's concept of "sovereign democracy", which considers the questioning of the country's democracy by external actors as interference in its sovereign issues, was also relevant in the context of Georgia;
- In response to the criticism of Georgia's internal democratic challenges, both the ruling party and pro-Kremlin actors equated such critical evaluations with interference in Georgia's sovereign affairs from the West, and in certain cases, even questioned the quality of democracy in consolidated democracies.
- All the democratic institutions that have the function of balancing the government were considered a threat;
- In certain cases, a dichotomy was created, establishing the idea that if being a Russian agent is a problem, Western agents should also be considered an enemy of the country:
- The representation of non-governmental organizations as agents of foreign influence was also related to their sources of funding. The manipulations that the civil sector is actually an agent that fulfills the orders

of other countries, in order to undermine institutional credibility, were spread deliberately to prepare the ground for a Russian-style legislative initiative, which aimed to declare organizations receiving foreign funding as agents;

- The purpose of Western funding was also being questioned by reinforcing the idea that the aid provided to Georgia was actually being used to sustain Western agents and for the fight against Georgian traditional identity;
- As in previous years, the threat of losing traditional identity was identified to be one of the vulnerable topics. Some of the messages reinforced the idea that the West itself is losing its traditional identity and at the same time fighting against it;
- Liberalism, the fight for homosexuals' rights, the fight against Orthodoxy, and divine retribution for sins were named as the cause of the war in Ukraine;
- On the other hand, Moscow was being positioned as the third Rome, which was supposed to bear the mission of deterring the West. The presentation of Russia's intervention in Ukraine as a religious war was also discussed in the context of Russia's messianic mission, which sometimes originated not only from Kremlin sources, but even from Western conservative platforms;
- In addition to its messianic mission of an identity defender, Russia was also positioned as a guarantor of security and economic prosperity.

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I. THE THEMES OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES – TOTAL DATA |

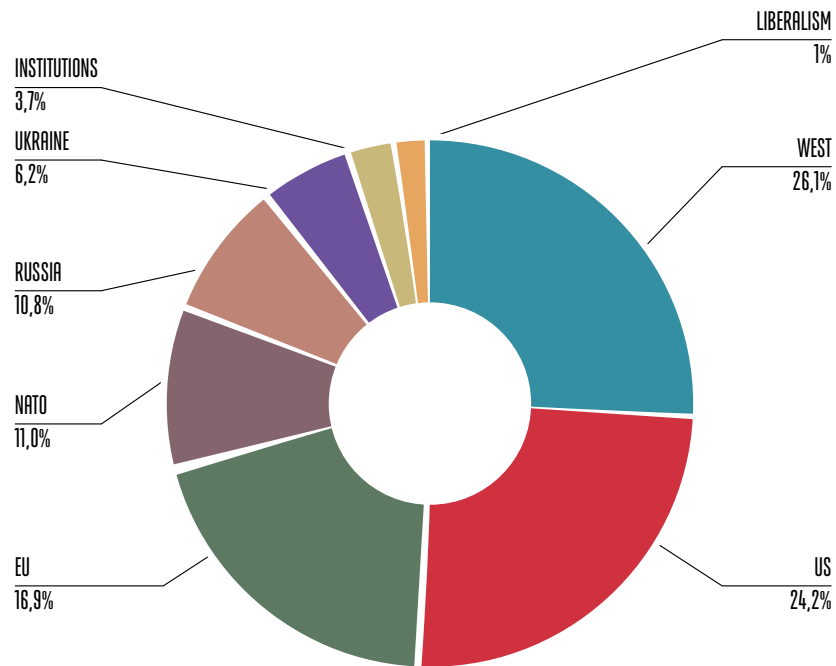
In the process of discerning the anti-Western discourse of 2022, the Media Development Foundation analyzed up to ten thousand comments (9,978). The majority of the messages were directed against the collective West¹ (26.1% – 2606), followed by comments made against the United States of America (24.2% – 2418). The following places were occupied by the European Union – EU (16.9% – 1682) and the North Atlantic Alliance – NATO (11% – 1100). The analyzed data also entail clear statements of support for Russia (10.8% – 1075) and anti-Ukrainian messages (6.2% – 622), which cover not only the topic of Russian intervention in Ukraine but also Ukraine–Georgia relations and identity issues. Comments against democratic institutions such as the non-governmental sector (NGO), public defender, and media² (3.7% – 372) were also part of the anti-Western discourse. Anti-liberal messages, which appeared as ubiquitous themes in different categories were categorized separately (1% – 103).

Notably, Russia is the only subject that is presented positively in the presented research, while all other subject are presented negatively.

¹ This category includes messages that concern both the US, Europe and international institutions; also the cases when the West was considered as a single geopolitical space with shared values.

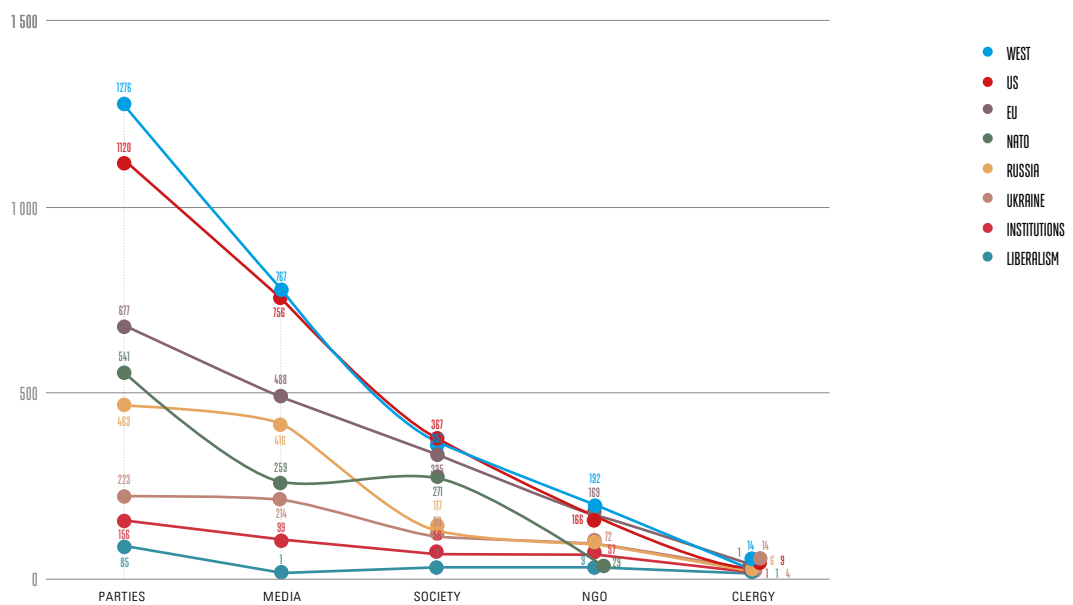
² Messages related to the media only concern the biased coverage of the events of Ukraine and the imposition of foreign values and do not include messages regarding political affiliation.

FIGURE 1. SUBJECTS OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES, 2022



As shown in Figure 2 and the accompanying table, the most frequent source of anti-Western messages was the political class (4541), followed by the monitoring subject media (3000). The next place is occupied by the Society (1609), which is comprised of experts affiliated with one or another political group, including the pro-government ones. Among the sources of anti-Western messages are the representatives of public organizations (766) and least of all the clergymen of the Georgian Orthodox Church (66).

FIGURE 2. SUBJECTS OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES BY SOURCES, 2022

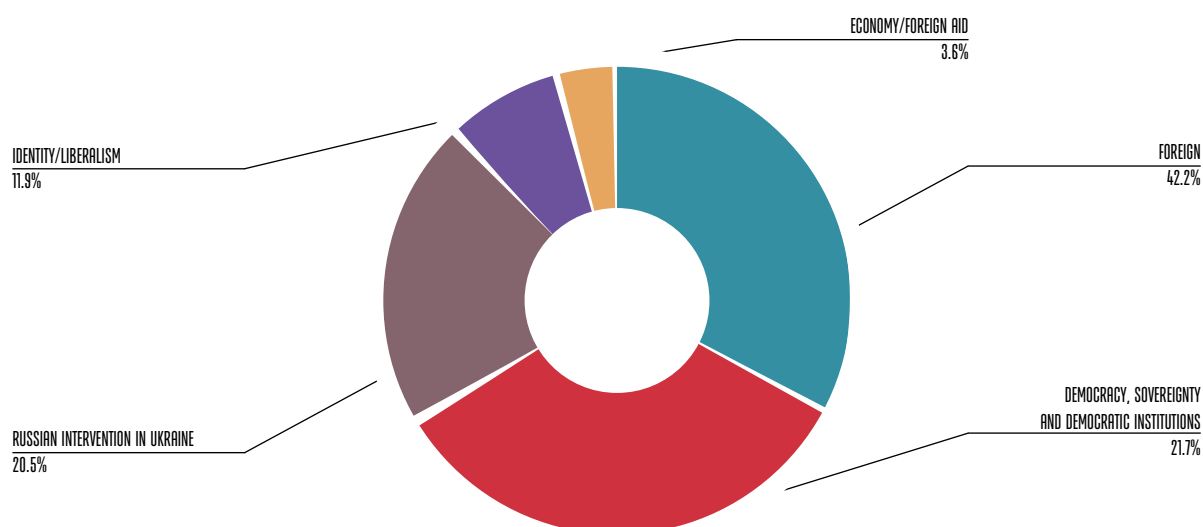


	WEST	US	EU	NATO	RUSSIA	UKRAINE	INSTITUTIONS	LIBERALISM	SUM
Parties	1276	1120	677	541	463	223	156	85	4541
Media	767	756	488	259	416	214	99	1	3000
Society	357	367	335	271	117	99	56	7	1609
NGO	192	166	169	29	73	72	57	9	766
Clergy	14	9	13		6	14	4	1	61
Sum	2606	2418	1682	1100	1075	622	372	103	9978

TOPICS. During data analysis, 5 main topics of anti-Western messages were identified. These are:

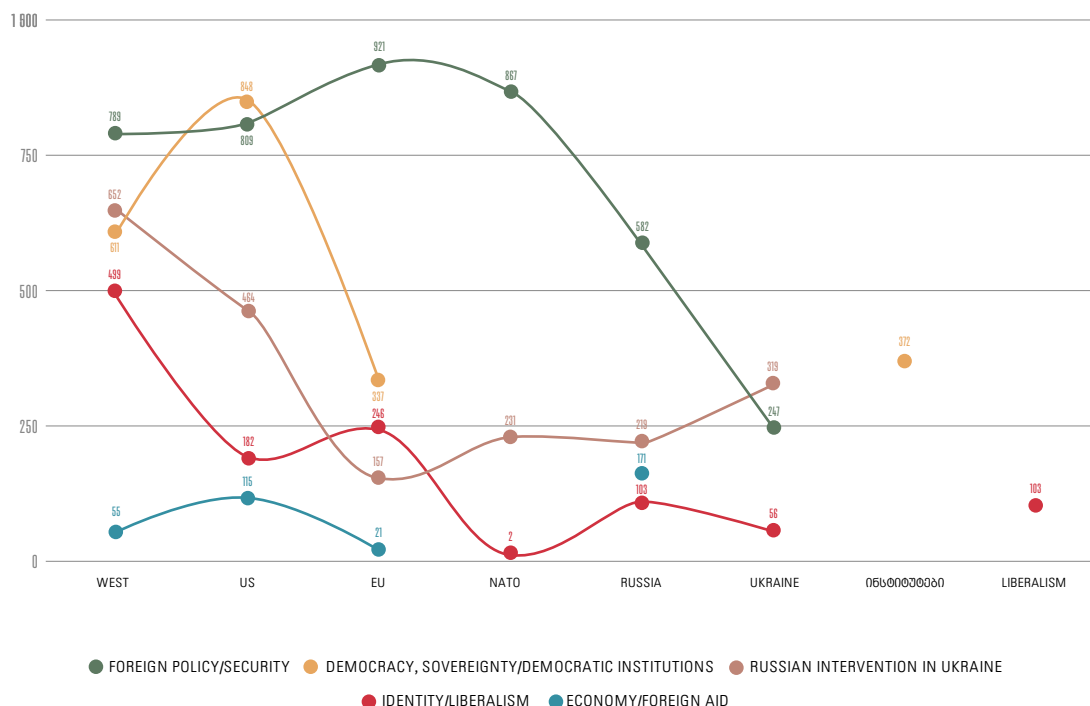
1. Foreign Policy and Security (42,2%)
2. Democracy, Sovereignty and Democratic Institutions (21,7%)
3. Russian Intervention in Ukraine (20,5%)
4. Identity and Liberalism (11,9%)
5. Foreign Aid and Economy (3,6%).

FIGURE 3. TOPICS OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES, 2022



Among the 5 topics, foreign policy and security-related issues were predominant (4215), where the most frequent target was the European Union (921), followed by NATO (867) and the US (809). The United States of America (848) was the main target on the topic of democracy, sovereignty, and democratic institutions (2168), and the West (652) on the topic of Russian intervention in Ukraine (2042). The topic of identity and liberalism (1191) was most often directed at the collective West (499), while at the same time, Russia, as the alleged defender of identity, was presented in a positive light (103). The positive representation of Russia (171) also dominated within the topic of economy and foreign aid (362), where the superiority of the Russian market was emphasized in parallel with questioning American (115) and Western (55) aid and their purpose.

FIGURE 4. TOPICS OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES BY SUBJECTS, 2022



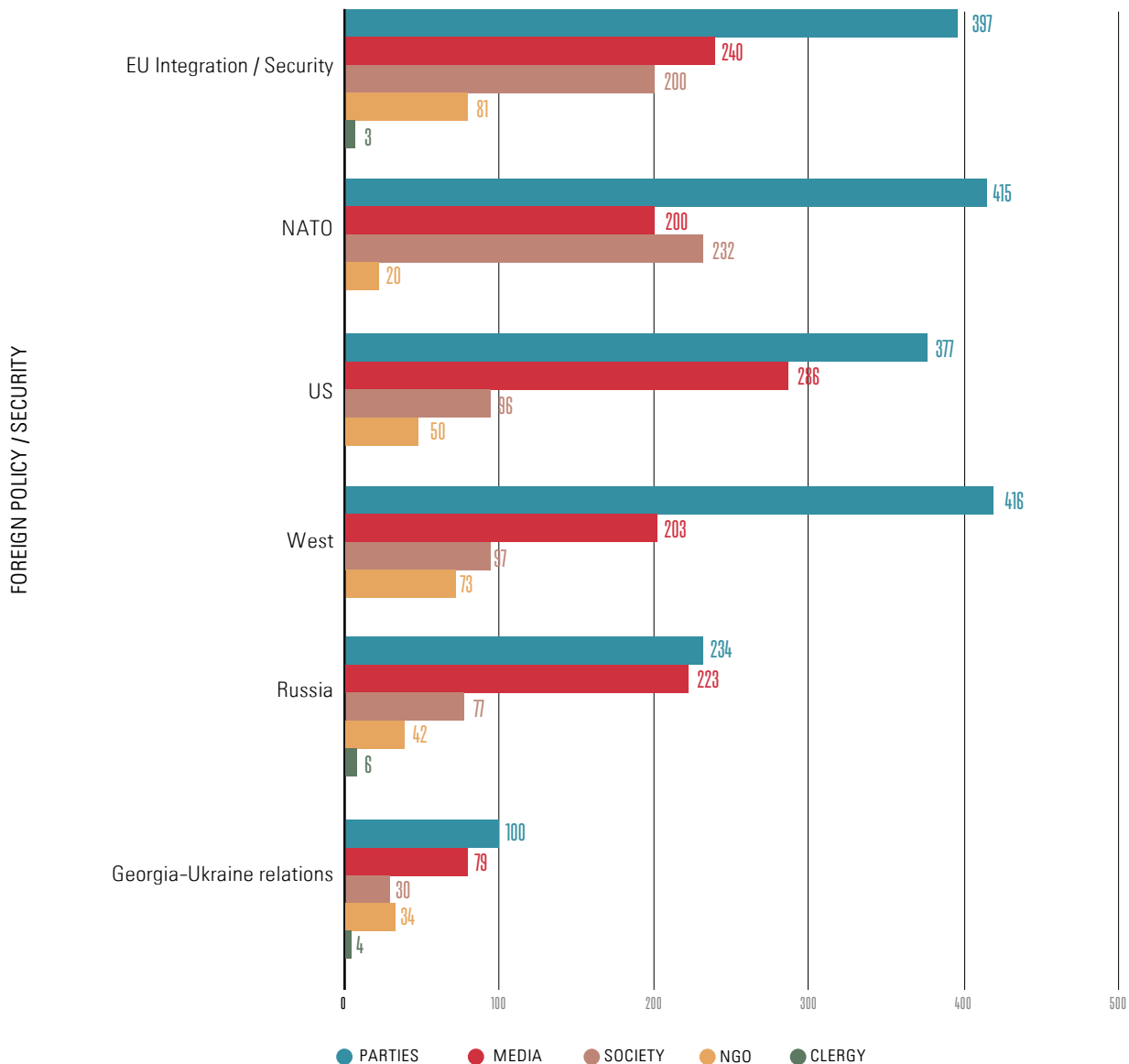
	WEST	US	EU	NATO	RUSSIA	UKRAINE	INSTITUTIONS	LIBERALISM	SUM
Foreign Policy / Security	789	809	921	867	582	247			4215
Democracy, Sovereignty / Democratic Institutions	611	848	337				372		2168
Russian Intervention in Ukraine	652	464	157	231	219	319			2042
Identity / Liberalism	499	182	246	2	103	56		103	1191
Economy / Foreign Aid	55	115	21		171				362
Sum	2606	2418	1682	1100	1075	622	372	103	9978

1.1 FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY

Among security-related topics, the main target was the European Union (921), which was related to the process of European integration, in particular, the topic of granting candidate status to Georgia. The European Union was followed by NATO (867), the United States of America (809), the West (789) and Ukraine (247). In all cases,

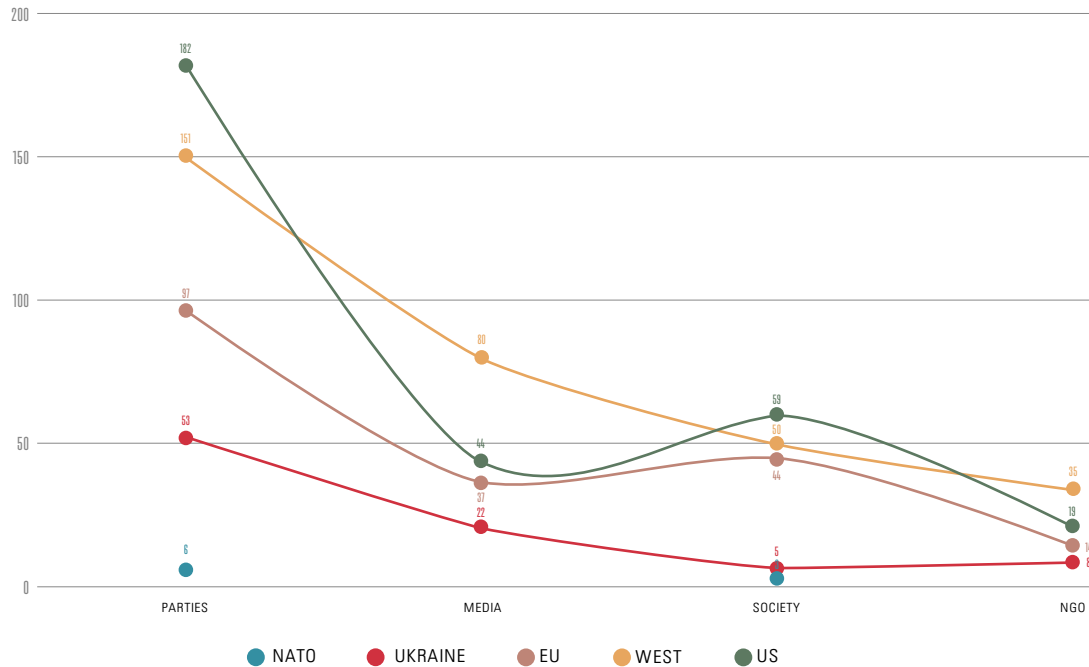
the main source of anti-Western messages were politicians, followed by the media, society, and NGOs. The sources of messages in support of Russia (582) were politicians (234) and the monitoring subject pro-Kremlin media outlets (223).

FIGURE 5. FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY-RELATED TOPICS BY SOURCES, 2022



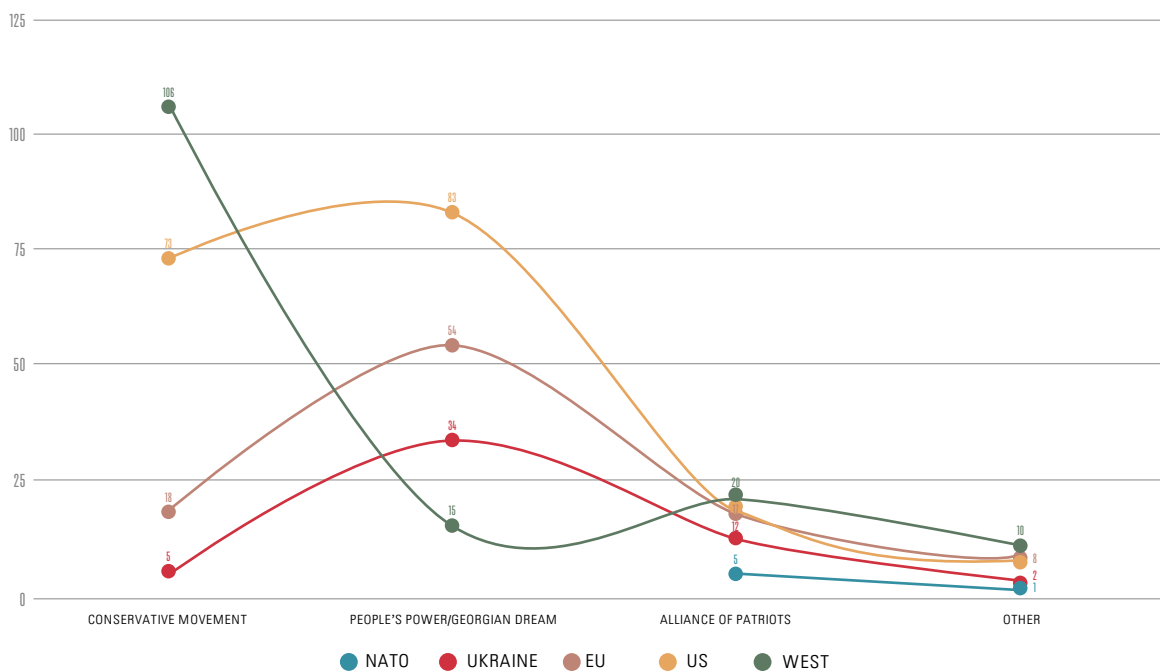
Common messages directed against all subjects except Russia were identified. Among such messages, the most sensitive was related to the instrumentalization of war fears and conveyed the idea that the West (316), the US (304), the European Union (192), Ukraine (88), and NATO (9) were trying to drag Georgia into the war and open a second front in the country. Manipulation of war fears gained special intensity amid the background of the war in Ukraine and became the main tool of political manipulation when discussing the issue of granting candidate status to Georgia. As can be seen from the Figure below, the political class most often resorted to the instrumentalization of fears of war.

FIGURE 6. INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF FEARS OF WAR, 2022



Among political parties, the topic of opening the second front was most often used by the pro-Kremlin “Alt-Info/ Conservative Movement” party (202), which mostly blamed the West and the US for trying to drag Georgia into the war with Russia. The ruling party’s satellite and members of the parliamentary majority faction “People’s Power” and “Georgian Dream” were slightly behind the Conservative Movement (186), largely linking the topic to the US and the European Union, as well as Ukraine. The next place was occupied by the pro-Kremlin party “Patriot Alliance” (72), which, along with others, accused NATO of trying to drag Georgia into the war.

FIGURE 7. INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF FEARS OF WAR BY POLITICAL PARTIES, 2022



EUROINTEGRATION. As mentioned, the dominance of the European Union in foreign policy issues was largely attributed to the process of European integration, and it intensified especially after the fact that on June 17, 2022, the European Commission did not support the granting of the candidate status only in the case of Georgia among the associated trio.³

The topic of European integration was almost equally dominated by messages that, on the one hand, stirred up Euroscepticism (193), and, on the other hand, instrumentalized the fears of war and reinforced the idea that the refusal to grant the candidate status was caused by the fact that the Georgian authorities did not agree to open a second front in the country (192) against the background of the war in Ukraine.

In addition to manipulating the topic of the opening of the second front, the responsibility was shifted towards the European institutions themselves, and in response to critical assessments regarding democratic backsliding in Georgia, MEPs were accused of lobbying the opposition and acting against Georgia (109). Some of the messages, on the one hand, reinforced the opinion that denying the candidate status to Georgia was unfair (73), and on the other hand, claimed that the candidate status was useless and futile (73), which was confirmed by the experience of Turkey. In addition to the alleged involvement of Georgia in the war, the candidate status was linked to messages regarding the alleged organization of the second Maidan and the change of power (50).

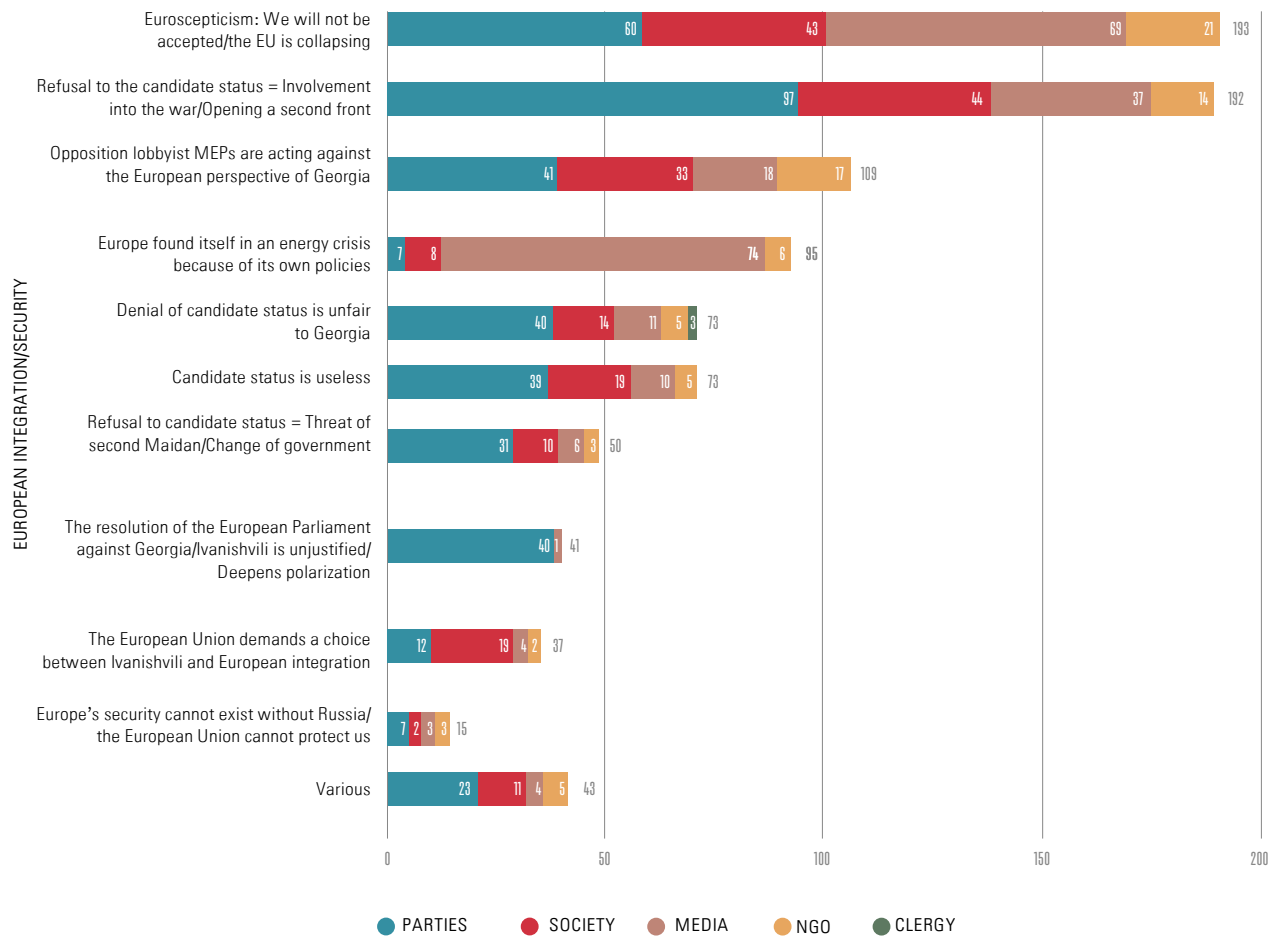
Two messages concerned the founder of the “Georgian Dream,” Bidzina Ivanishvili: in one case, the ruling party considered the resolution of the European Parliament, which demanded the imposition of sanctions⁴ on Ivanishvili due to the democratic backsliding and shrinking media freedom in Georgia, as unjustified towards Georgia and Ivanishvili (41); In the second case, various actors presented the EU’s demand for de-oligarchization as an ultimatum of the EU, allegedly calling on the ruling party to choose between Ivanishvili and the EU (37).

Messages related to security appeared relatively less in relation to the European Union, and in one case concerned energy security (“Europe found itself in an energy crisis due to its own policy” – 95), and in the other case, Russia’s special role in the overall security architecture (“European security cannot exist without Russia/ the European Union cannot protect us” – 15).

³ Gvantsa Nemsadze, Radio Liberty. 24 June, 2022. Geography Prevented Us from Getting Candidate Status – True or False? <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31912354.html>

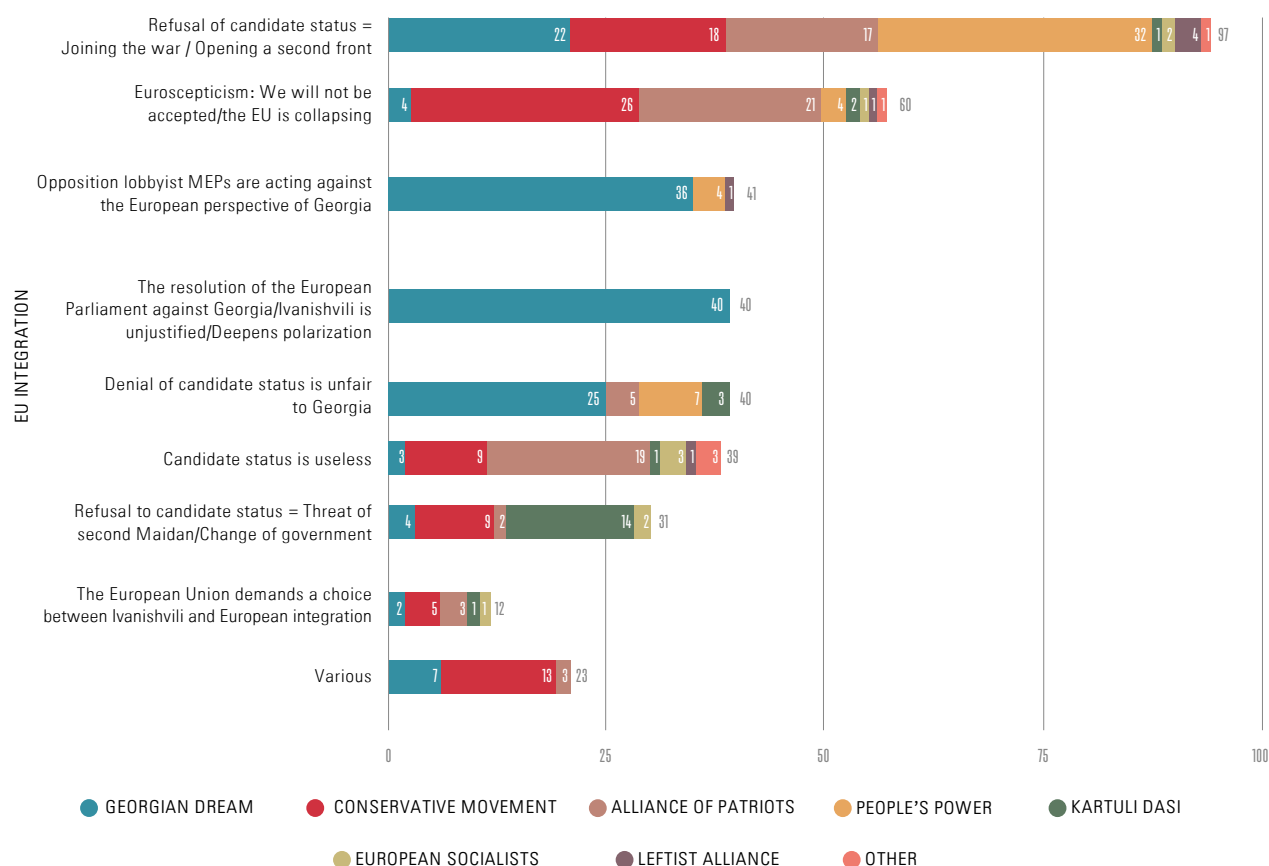
⁴ Civil.ge, 9 June, 2022. “EP’s Georgia Press Freedom Resolution Calls for Ivanishvili Sanctions” <https://civil.ge/archives/495319>

FIGURE 8. MESSAGES RELATED TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND SECURITY BY SUBJECTS, 2022



The analysis of the data on European integration from a political party point of view identified a congruence between the messages of the ruling “Georgian Dream” party and its satellite “People’s Power” and the pro-Kremlin parties – Alt-Info/Conservative Movement and the Alliance of Patriots. This congruence was especially vivid in the cultivation of war fears, during which the responsibility was shifted from the democratic challenges to the European Union, which was accused of trying to open a second front and organize a second Maidan in Georgia.

FIGURE 9. MESSAGES RELATED TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION BY POLITICAL PARTIES, 2022

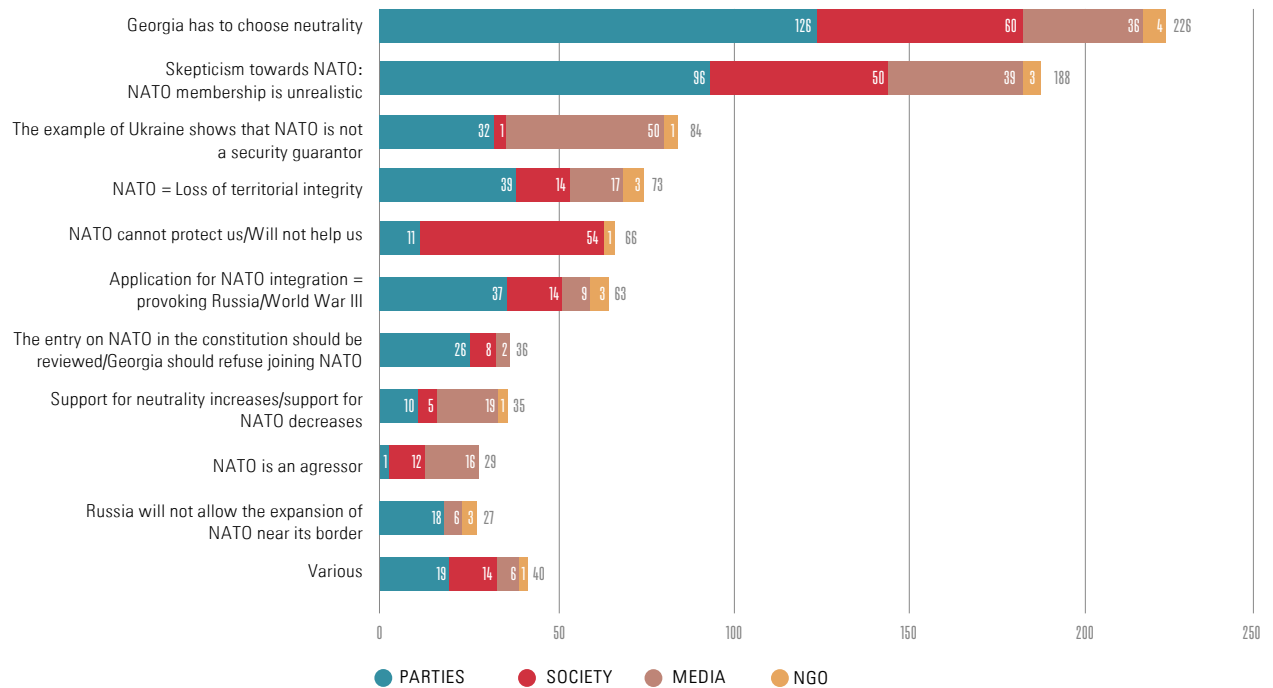


NATO INTEGRATION. In terms of foreign policy and security issues, after the European Union, the main target was the North Atlantic Alliance (867), dominated by the idea of Georgia's neutrality (226), which was most often voiced by the Alliance of Patriots (248) and the related media platform "Obieqtivi" (131). Along with the traditional skepticism towards NATO (188), which largely appealed to the unfeasibility of joining the alliance, new messages have emerged, amplifying the following opinions against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine:

- The example of Ukraine shows that NATO is not a security guarantor (84);
- Application for NATO integration = provoking Russia/World War III (63);
- The entry on NATO in the constitution should be reviewed/Georgia should refuse joining NATO (36).

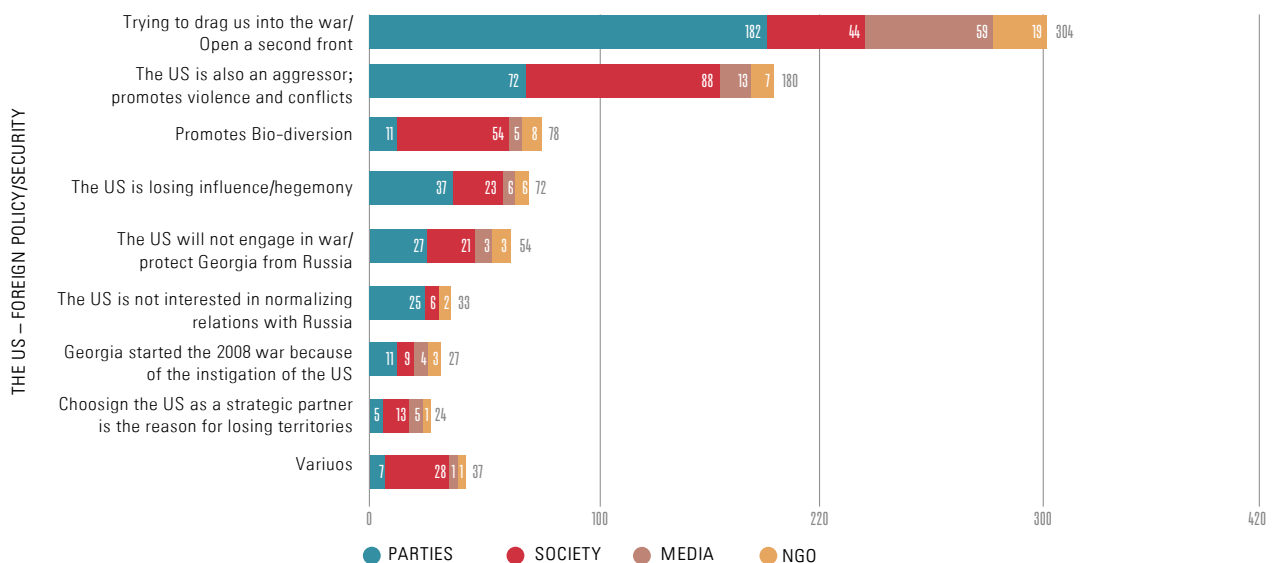
The recurring message that integration into NATO equals the loss of territorial integrity (73) and that Russia would not allow NATO expansion along its borders (27) was still being cultivated.

FIGURE 10. MESSAGES RELATED TO NATO INTEGRATION, 2022



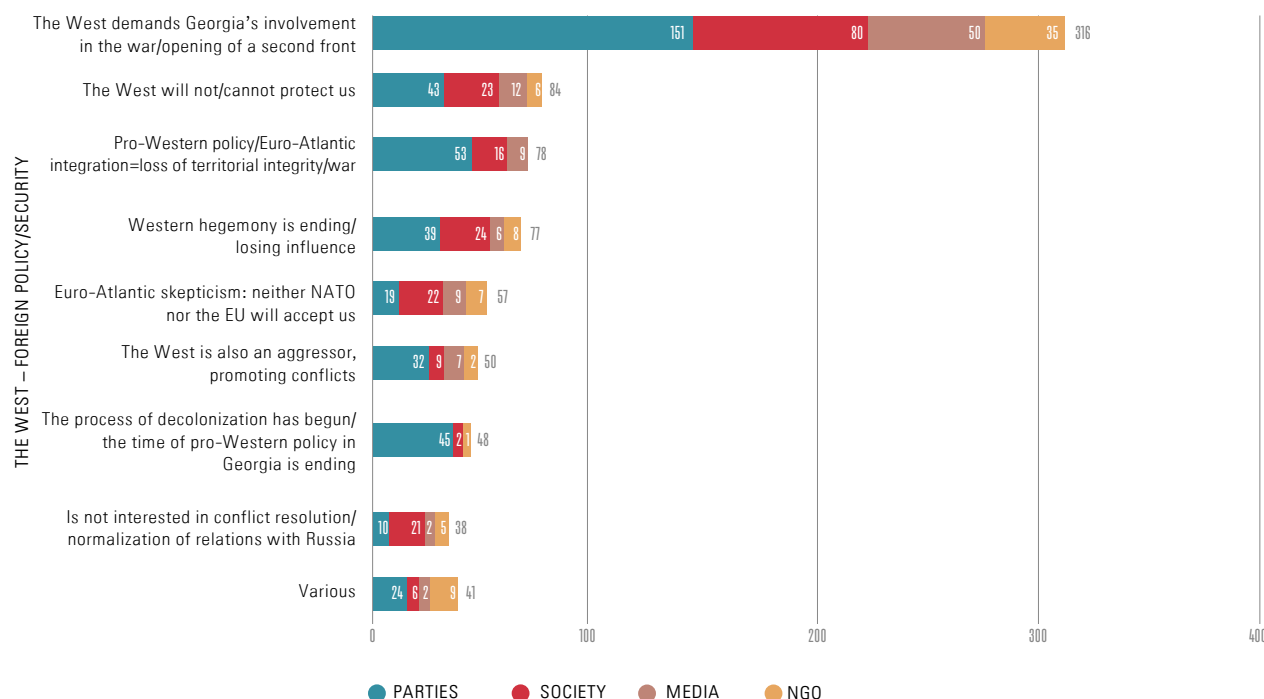
THE US – FOREIGN POLICY/SECURITY. Similar to the case of European integration, the foreign policy and security topics related to the US were dominated by the messages of Georgia’s involvement in the war and the opening of the second front (304). The next message established the opinion that not only Russia but also the US was the aggressor (180). Messages on the threat of bio-diversion from the US (78) were presented the most among the monitoring media (54). The opinion that the US cannot protect us and would not go to war with Russia because of Georgia (54) was accompanied by messages in which the US was blamed instead of Russia for the irregularity of relations with Russia (33), the incitement of the 2008 war (27) and the loss of territorial integrity of Georgia (24).

FIGURE 11. MESSAGES RELATED TO THE US ON FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY, 2022



THE WEST – FOREIGN POLICY/SECURITY. In addition to the threat of dragging Georgia into the war (316), other messages reinforced the idea that the West cannot guarantee Georgia's security (84), that pro-Western policies lead to the loss of territories (78), and that the process of decolonization of the country has begun, which will mark the end of pro-Western policies (48). The latter message was mainly cultivated by the Alt-Info/Conservative Movement (43).

FIGURE 12. MESSAGES RELATED TO THE WEST ON FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY, 2022

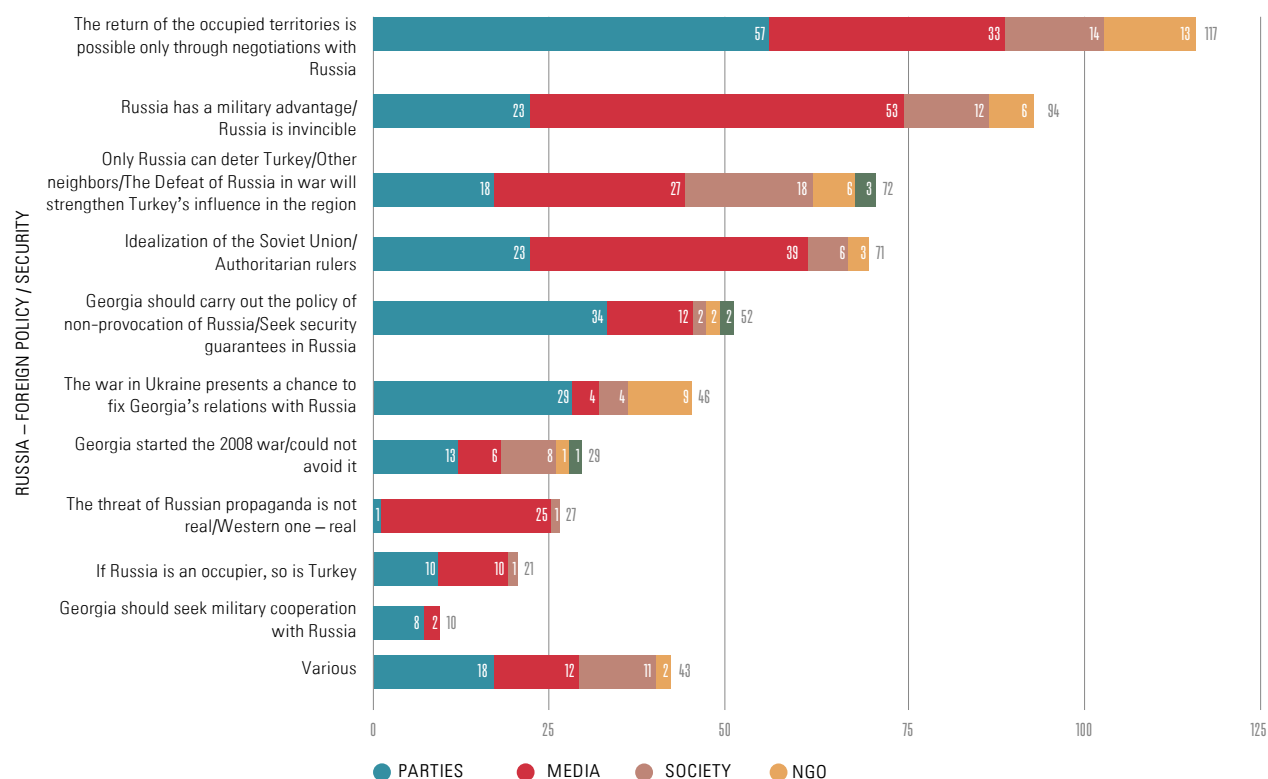


RUSSIA – FOREIGN POLICY/SECURITY. Messages supporting Russia considered the start of negotiations with Russia as the only solution for the return of the occupied territories (117) and considered the war in Ukraine as a chance to settle relations with Russia (46), at the same time focusing on the need to seek Russia's non-provocation policy and security guarantees (52).

As in previous years, Russia was mentioned as a deterrent factor for Turkey and other neighbors; at the same time, a new message emerged in the context of the war, which hinted at the possible threat of strengthening Turkey's influence in the region in case of Russia's defeat in Ukraine (72). The messages against Turkey were accompanied by a message that has been circulating for years and tries to shift the focus from the threat of Russia to the historical threat of Turkey ("If Russia is an occupier, Turkey is an occupier too" – 21).

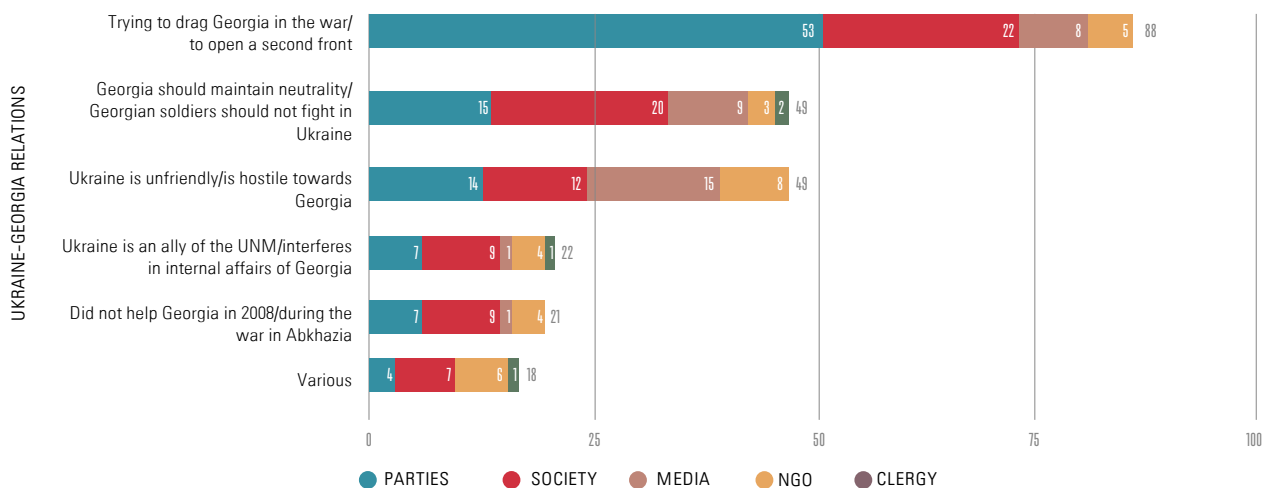
Along with messages of Russia's invincibility and military superiority (94), the pro-Kremlin Alt-Info/Conservative Movement advocated the idea of a military partnership with Russia (8). At the same time, the Soviet Union and authoritarian rule were idealized (71).

FIGURE 13. MESSAGES RELATED TO RUSSIA ON FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY, 2022



UKRAINE-GEORGIA RELATIONS. Ukraine was another party presented to be interested in the opening of the second front in Georgia (88), which was depicted as an unfriendly, and in some cases hostile towards Georgia (49). At the same time, statements that Georgia should maintain neutrality in the Russia-Ukraine war and that Georgian soldiers should not fight in Ukraine (49) were voiced. In addition to the accusations about the Ukrainian government's alleged connections with the opposition United National Movement party and interference in internal affairs of Georgia (22), it was further argued that Ukraine did not help Georgia in 2008 and during the war in Abkhazia (21).

FIGURE 14. MESSAGES RELATED TO UKRAINE AND GEORGIA ON FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY, 2022

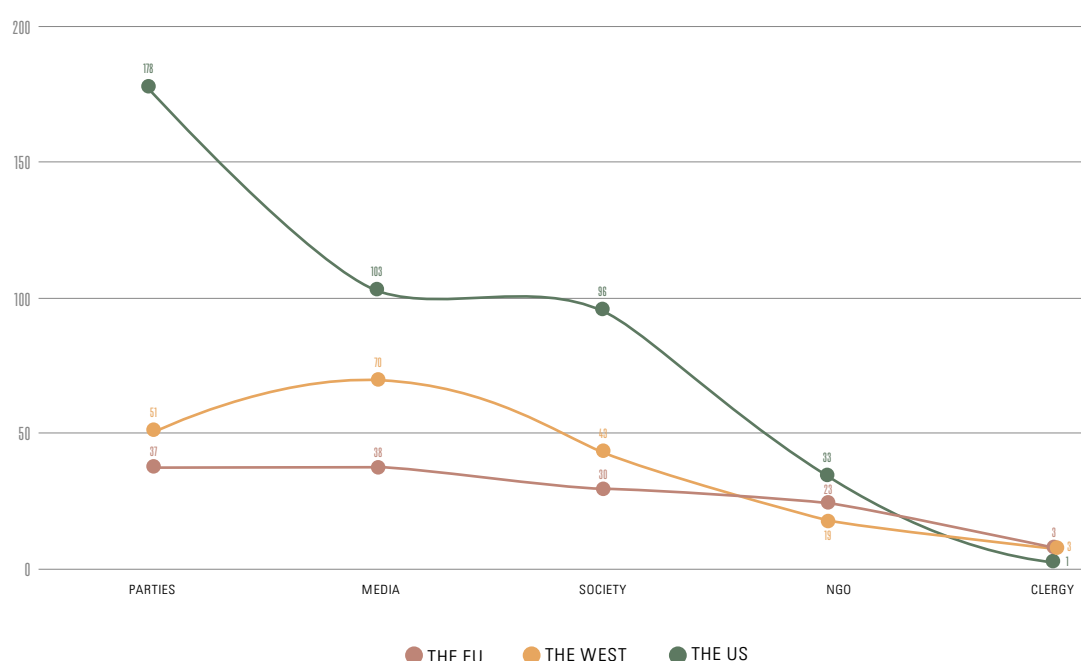


1.2 DEMOCRACY, SOVEREIGNTY/DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

In terms of democracy, sovereignty and democratic institutions, the most frequent target was the US (848), followed by the West (611) and the European Union (337).

“SOVEREIGN DEMOCRACY”. The message prevalent in the Georgian discourse, which claims that the US (411), the West (186) and the European Union (131) are trying to interfere in Georgia’s internal sovereign affairs and manage the country echoes the so-called concept of the sovereign democracy, which was coined in Russia.⁵ In this regard, as can be seen from the Figure, majority of the messages targeted the United States of America.

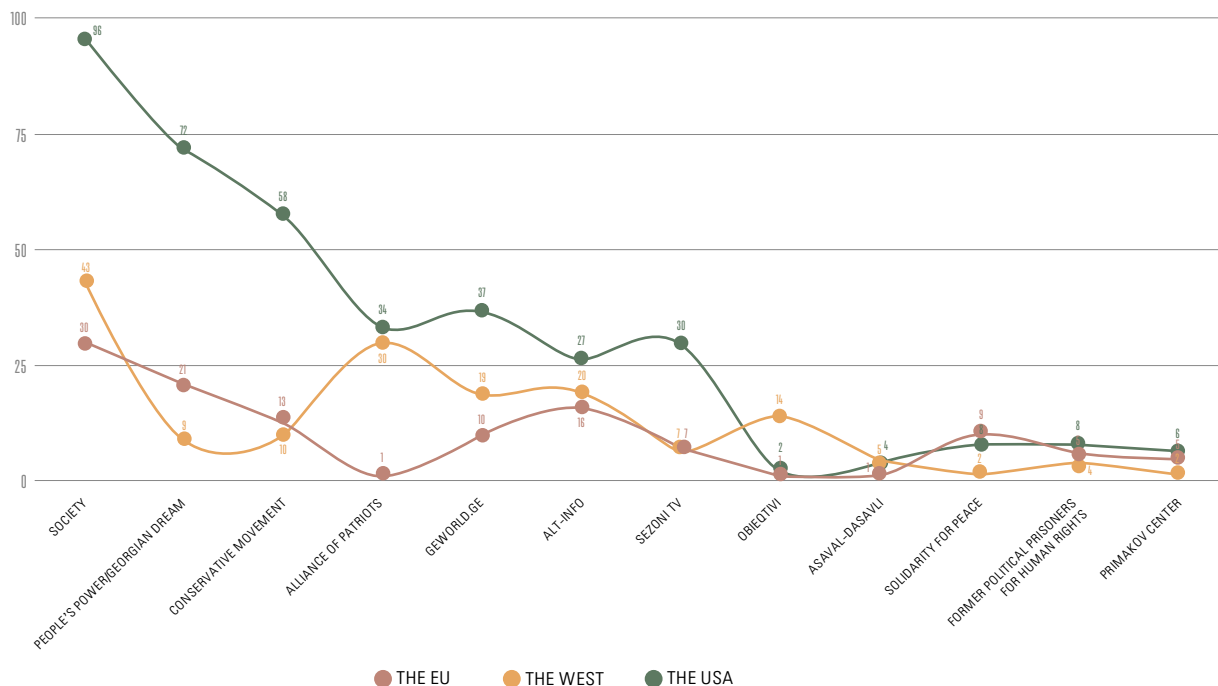
FIGURE 15. MESSAGES RELATED TO “SOVEREIGN DEMOCRACY” BY TARGETS, 2022



As seen in the Figure below, which shows the most common cases from individual subjects, the most common source of messages about interference in the internal sovereign affairs of Georgia by the US, the EU were the representatives of the public (169), including government experts, followed by government satellite “People’s Power” “and the ruling “Georgian Dream” party (102). The pro-Kremlin Alt-Info/Conservative Movement (81) and the “Alliance of Patriots” (65) occupy the next spots. Among the media, most of such types of messages were voiced by “Georgia and World” (Geworld.ge) (66), Alt-Info (63) and Sezoni TV (44); Among non-governmental organizations, the messages were voiced by the following organizations: Solidarity for Peace (19), Former Political Prisoners for Human Rights (17) and Primakov Center (13).

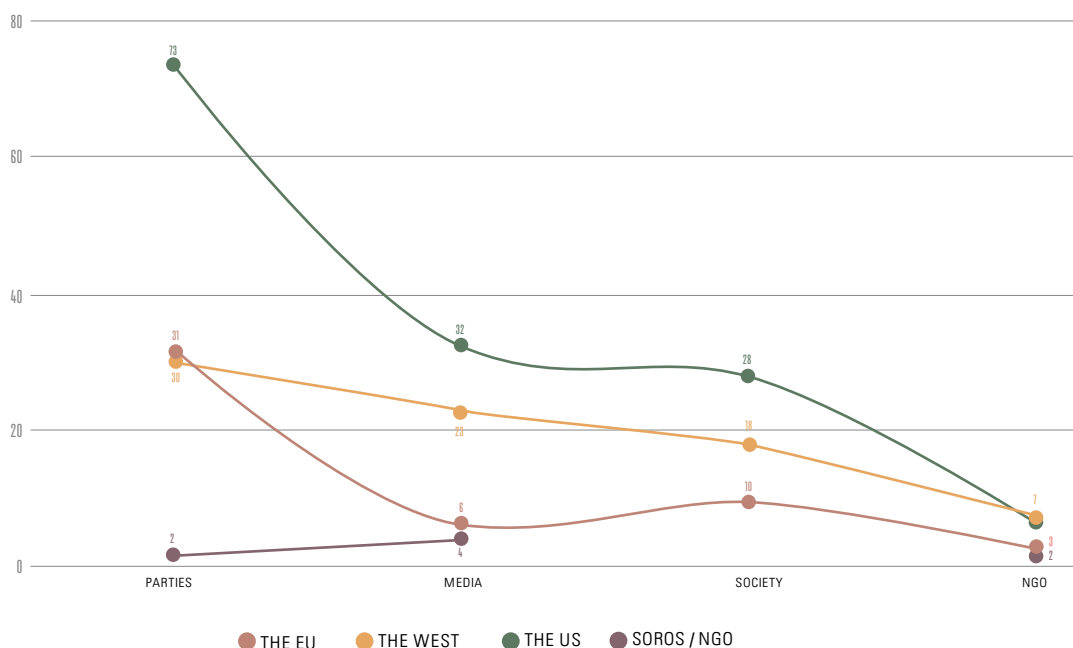
⁵ According to Vladislav Surkov, adviser to Russian President Vladimir Putin, the concept of sovereign democracy includes two messages: 1. Russia is democratic and 2. questioning this fact is perceived as an unfriendly and as meddling into Russia’s domestic affairs. Maria Lipman, July 15, 2006, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Putin’s Sovereign Democracy <https://carnegiemoscow.org/2006/07/15/putin-s-sovereign-democracy-pub-18540>

FIGURE 16. MESSAGES RELATED TO "SOVEREIGN DEMOCRACY" BY SOURCES, 2022 (MOST FREQUENT CASES)



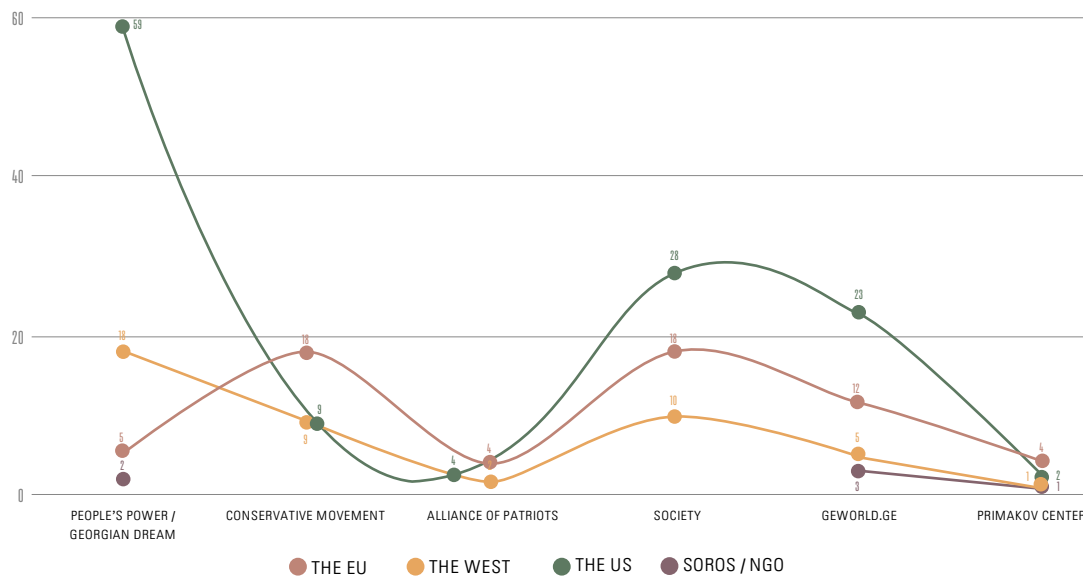
SECOND MAIDAN. Another prevalent message targeting the US, the West and the European Union was related to the accusation of changing the government of Georgia in a revolutionary scenario and setting up a second Maidan. Similar to “sovereign democracy”, the main target in this case was the US (140), then the collective West (78) and the European Union (50). Accusations of organizing a coup in Georgia were also voiced against local non-governmental organizations and George Soros (8), although they were relatively rare.

FIGURE 17. MESSAGES RELATED TO THE ORGANIZATION OF "SECOND MAIDAN" BY TARGETS, 2022



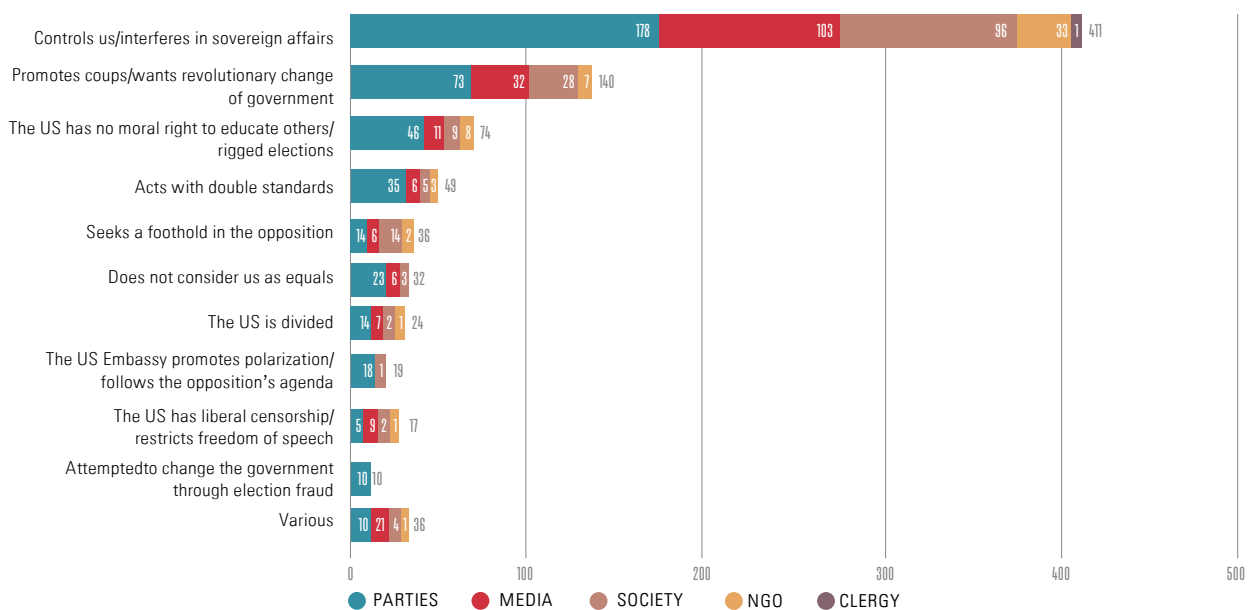
Among political parties, the messages about the fears of revolution were most often amplified together by “People’s Power” and “Georgian Dream” (84); followed by society (56); From the media – “Georgia and the World” (Geworld.ge) (43), from NGOs – Primakov Center (8).

FIGURE 18. MESSAGES RELATED TO THE ORGANIZATION OF “SECOND MAIDAN” BY SOURCES, 2022 (MOST FREQUENT CASES)



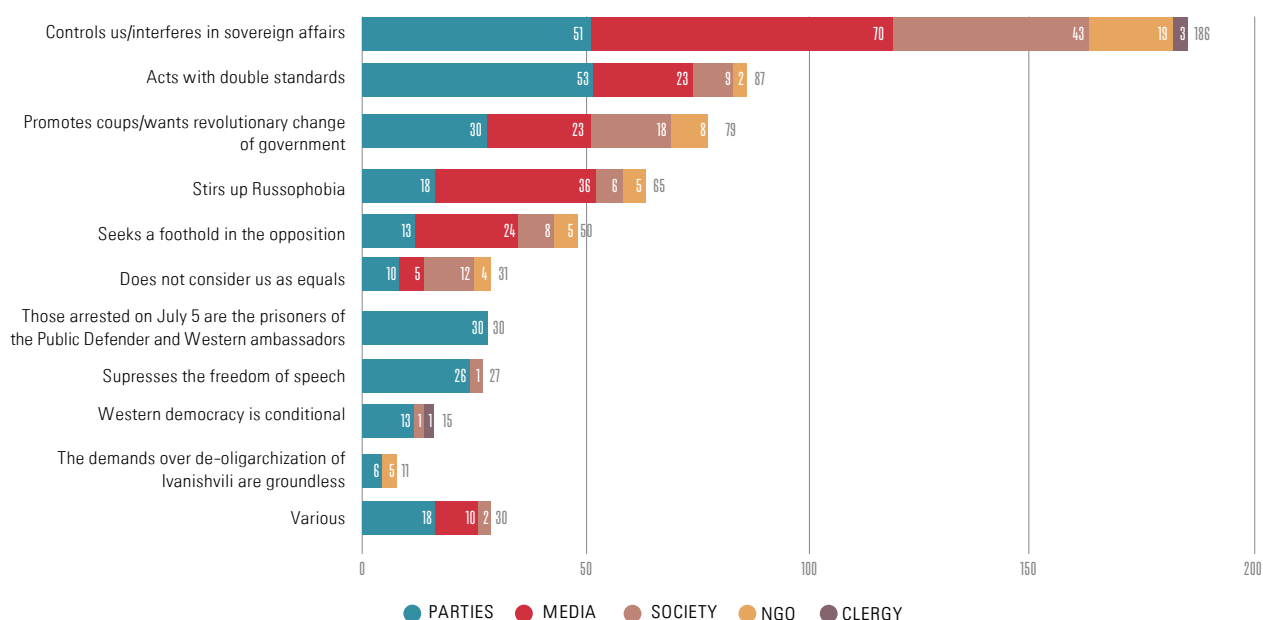
THE US – DEMOCRACY, SOVEREIGNTY. In addition to claims about the US’s alleged interference in Georgia’s sovereign affairs (411) and its plans of revolutionary change of government (140), messages argued that the US has no moral right to educate others, because it rigged the elections itself (74) and operates with double standards (49); Along with accusations of seeking a foothold in the opposition (36), in certain cases the US Embassy was accused of deepening polarization and acting on the opposition’s agenda (19), as well as attempting to change the government through election fraud (10).

FIGURE 19. MESSAGES AGAINST THE US ON THE TOPICS OF DEMOCRACY AND SOVEREIGNTY, 2022



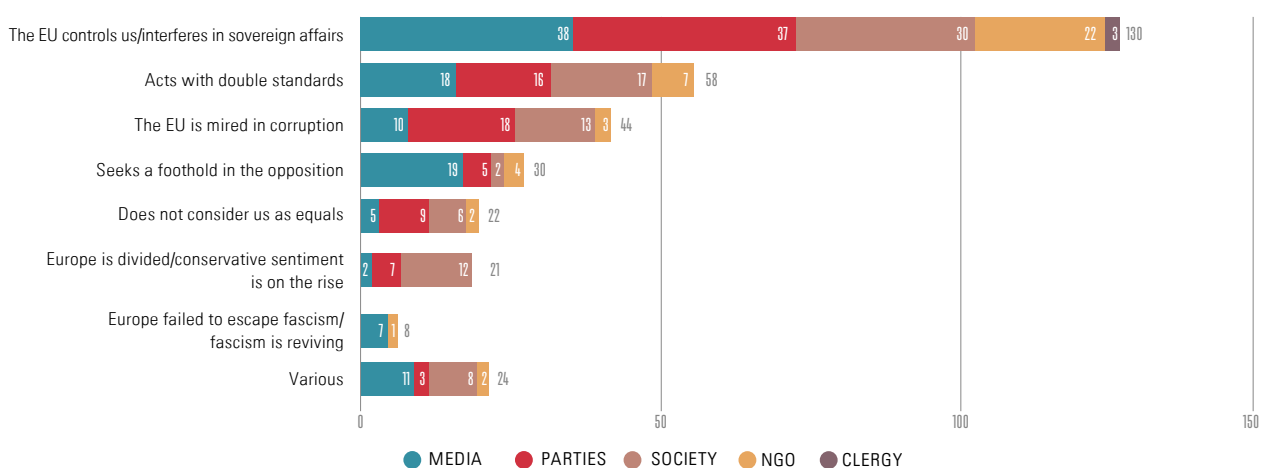
THE WEST – DEMOCRACY, SOVEREIGNTY. In addition to the messages about the alleged interference in the sovereign democracy (186) and the arrangement of the “second Maidan” (79), opinions that the West acts with double standards (87), stirs up Russophobia (65), seeks a base in the opposition (50) and does not treat us equally (31) were also amplified. The message that the people arrested for violent actions during the events planned within the framework of Tbilisi Pride in 2021 were hostages of the Public Defender and Western ambassadors (30), was largely spread by the organizer of this action, Alt-Info/Conservative Movement; “Georgian Dream” talked about the groundlessness of the demand about the de-oligarchization of Ivanishvili (11).

FIGURE 20. MESSAGES AGAINST THE WEST ON THE TOPICS OF DEMOCRACY AND SOVEREIGNTY, 2022



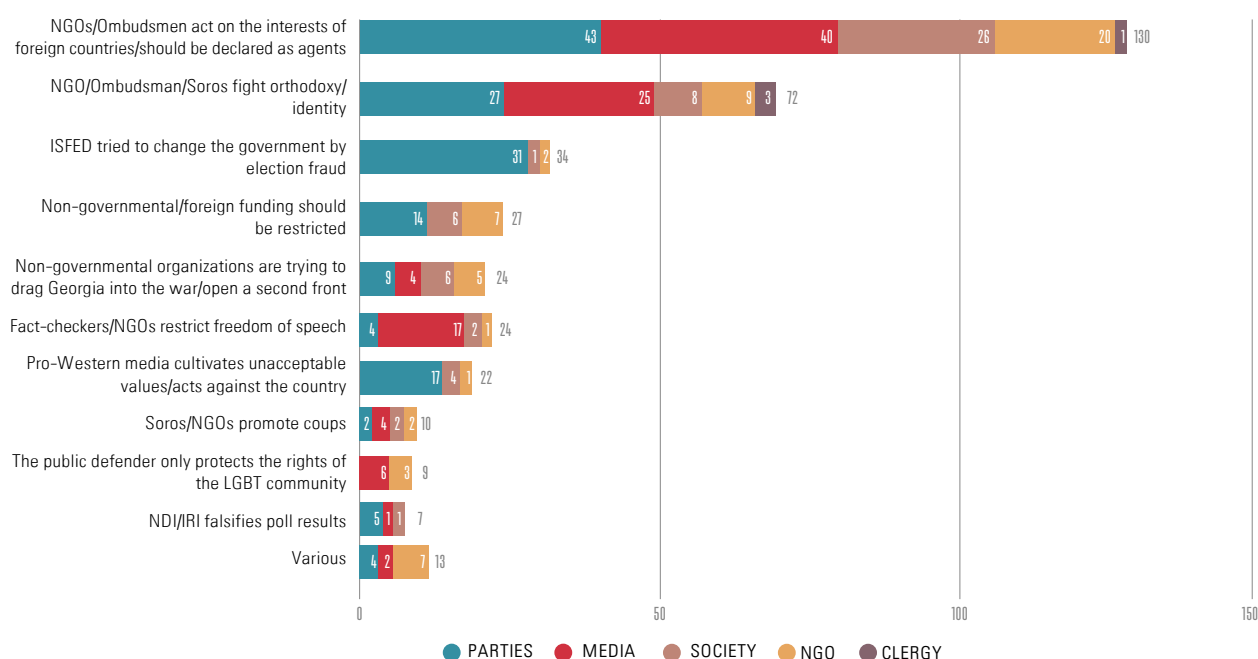
THE EUROPEAN UNION – DEMOCRACY, SOVEREIGNTY. In addition to the alleged EU interference in sovereign matters of Georgia (130), disseminated messages argued that the EU operates with double standards (58), is mired in corruption (44), seeks a foothold in the opposition (30) and does not consider Georgia as an equal (22). At the same time, part of the messages emphasized that Europe is not homogeneous, there is an sharp increase in conservative sentiments (21) and the rise of fascism (8).

FIGURE 21. MESSAGES AGAINST THE EU ON THE TOPICS OF DEMOCRACY AND SOVEREIGNTY, 2022



DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS. Most of the messages in this topic were related to non-governmental organizations and Public Defender Nino Lomjaria,⁶ who were accused of acting on the orders of a foreign country, and in some cases, the messages voiced the demand to declare non-governmental organizations as agents (130). Both non-governmental organizations, as well as the Public Defender and George Soros were portrayed as fighters against orthodoxy and traditional identity, imposing unacceptable values on society (72). It was further argued that the counting error made by the election observer organization – International Society for Fair Elections And Democracy (ISFED) during the 2020 elections was of a deliberate nature and that the organization wanted to change the government through election fraud (34), while American research organizations (NDI/IRI) were accused of falsifying the results of the nation-wide polls (7); Fact-checking organizations, including the Media Development Foundation was accused of restricting freedom of speech (24). Along with the calls to restrict the funding of the non-governmental organizations (27), it was argued that pro-Western media cultivates unacceptable values and acts against the interests of the country (22).

FIGURE 22. MESSAGES AGAINST DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, 2022



1.3. RUSSIAN INTERVENTION IN UKRAINE

The majority of the messages regarding Russian intervention in Ukraine were directed against the West (652), followed by the US (464), Ukraine itself (319) and NATO (231). Statements in support of Russia (219) were followed by messages against the European Union and Europe (157).

THE WEST AND THE US. As demonstrated by the Figures below, the messages directed against the West and the US were largely similar. The messages reinforced the narrative that both the West (141) and the US (104) use Ukraine and Georgia as a springboard to deter Russia; that the West (107) and the US (67) abandoned

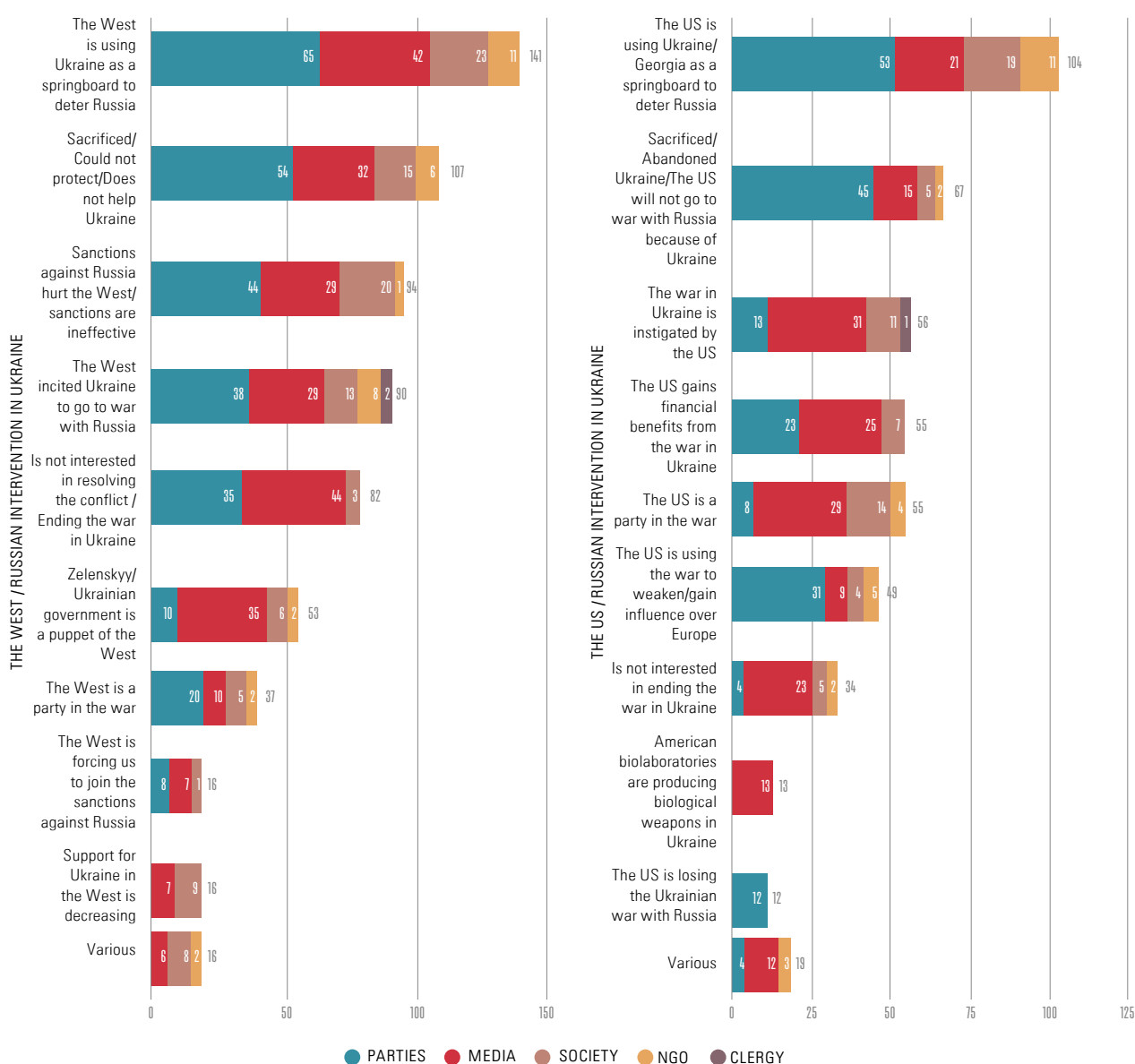
⁶ 2017–2022 <https://ombudsman.ge/geo/saqartvelos-sakhalkho-damtsvelebi/nino-lomjaria>

Ukraine; the war was instigated and incited by the West (90) and the US (56), and ending the war was not in the interest of any of them (West – 82, the US – 34). At the same time, both the West (53) and the US (55) were presented as parties to the war.

In addition to common messages, the opinion that the sanctions imposed on Russia hurt the West itself (94) was prevalent. At the same time, volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian government were presented as puppets of the West (37), arguing that the West is forcing Georgia to join sanctions against Russia (16).

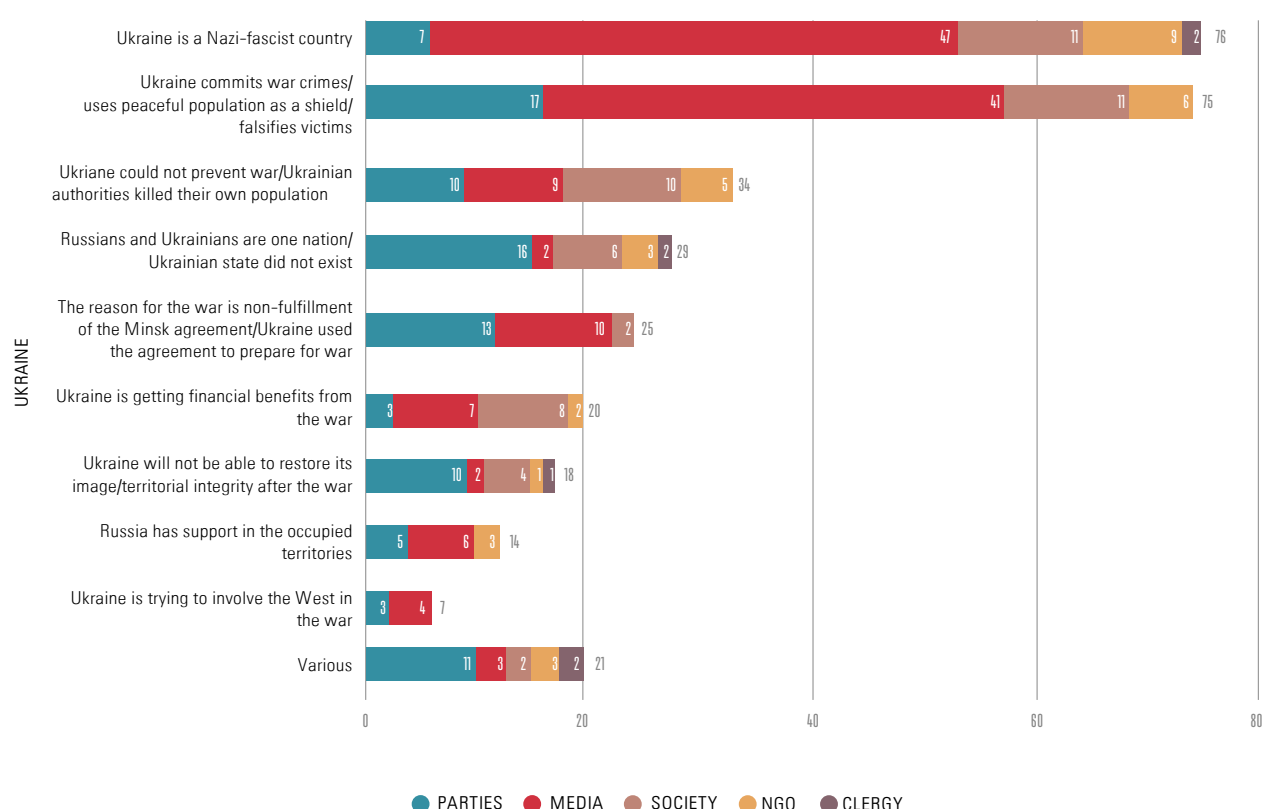
In the case of the US, it was argued that the US is gaining financial benefits in the war (55) and uses the war situation to weaken Europe and gain influence over it (49). Messages about the creation of biological weapons in biolaboratories in Ukraine (13) were accompanied by the opinion that the US is losing the Ukrainian war with Russia (12).

FIGURE 23. MESSAGES RELATED TO RUSSIAN INTERVENTION IN UKRAINE THAT WERE DIRECTED AGAINST THE US AND THE WEST, 2022



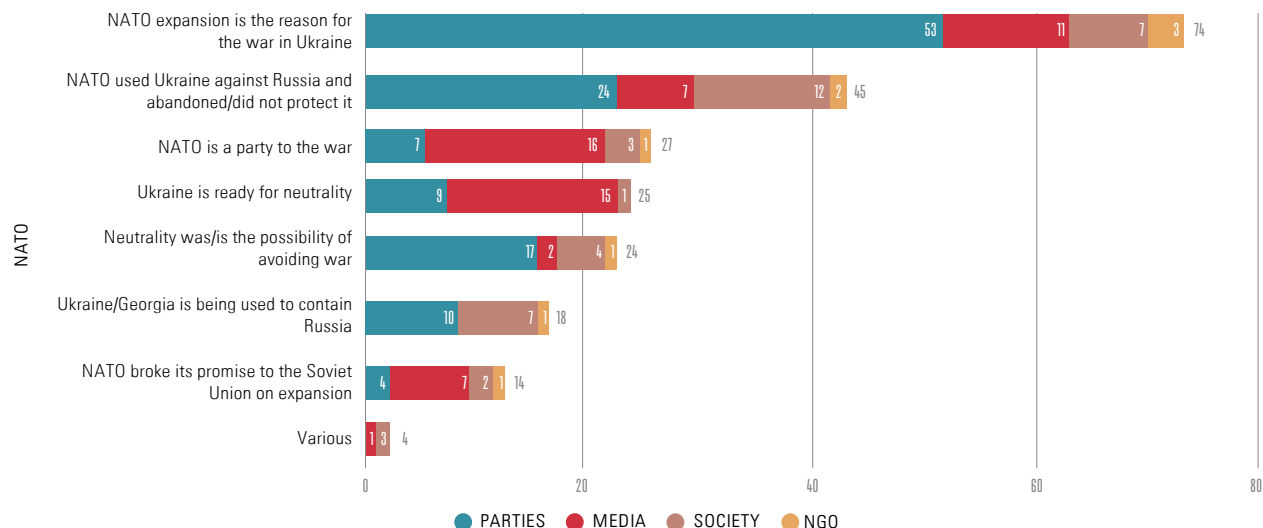
UKRAINE. Along with the representation of Ukraine as a Nazi-fascist country (76), the Ukrainian side was accused of war crimes and the killing of civilians (75), which was mostly argued by the monitoring subject media. It was further argued that the Ukrainian authorities could not prevent the war, the population perished (34), and the reason for the war was the non-fulfillment of the Minsk agreement (25). The existence of Ukraine as a separate nation and state was also questioned in parallel to voicing claims about Russians and Ukrainians being one nation (29). The Ukrainian government was accused of getting financial benefits from the war (20), arguing that after the war the country would not be able to restore its original form (18).

FIGURE 24. MESSAGES RELATED TO RUSSIAN INTERVENTION IN UKRAINE THAT WERE DIRECTED AGAINST UKRAINE, 2022



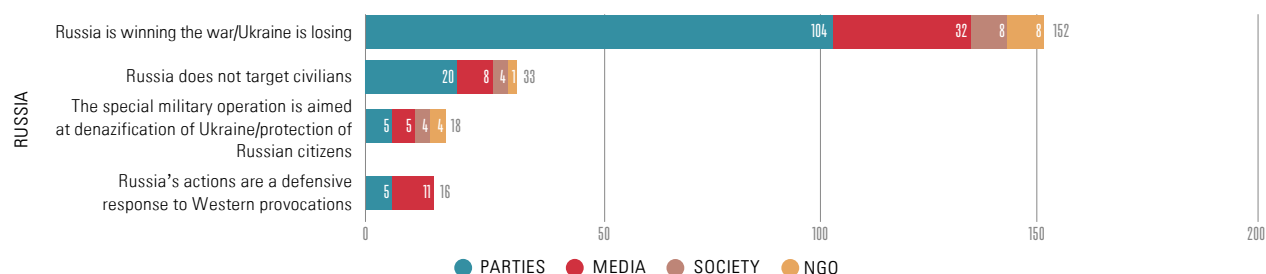
NATO. The messages naming NATO expansion as the cause of the war (74), which were mostly disseminated by politicians, were predominant and aimed to shift attention from the responsibility of Russia to the responsibility of the North Atlantic Alliance. The viewpoint that NATO used Ukraine against Russia and did not defend it (45) was accompanied by statements that the North Atlantic Alliance was a party in the war (27). Some of the messages claimed that Ukraine was ready for neutrality (25), and some expressed the opinion that neutrality was an opportunity to avoid war (24), which was another attempt to shift responsibility for Russia's military actions to NATO. An unsubstantiated claim that NATO had broken its promise to the Soviet Union on expansion (14) was also amplified.

FIGURE 25. MESSAGES RELATED TO RUSSIAN INTERVENTION IN UKRAINE THAT WERE DIRECTED AGAINST NATO, 2022



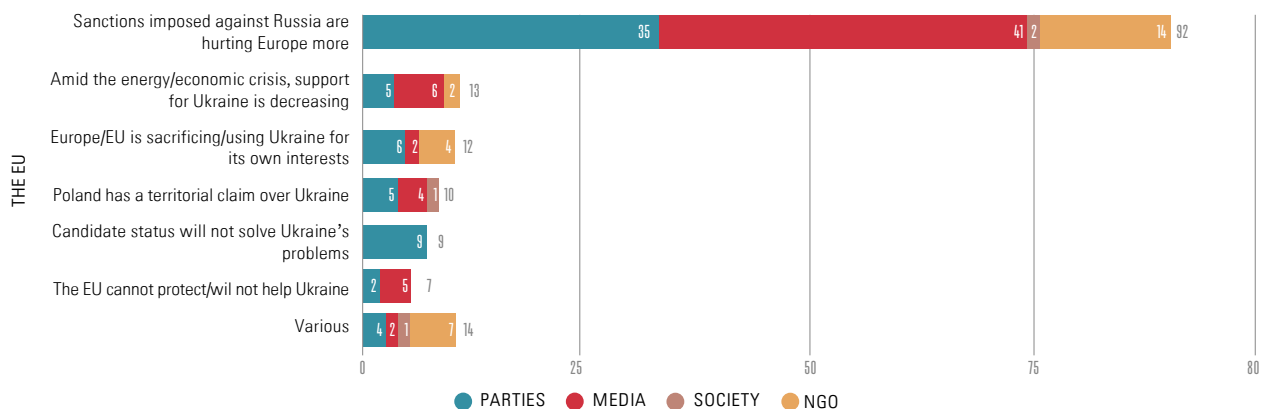
RUSSIA. The claim that Russia is winning the war while Ukraine is losing (152) was mainly amplified by politicians. Messages claiming that Russia does not target the civilian population (33) were also present, arguing that the special military operation is aimed at denazifying Ukraine/protecting Russian citizens (18), and that Russia's actions were a defensive response to Western provocations (16).

FIGURE 26. MESSAGES RELATED TO RUSSIAN INTERVENTION IN UKRAINE MADE IN SUPPORT OF RUSSIA, 2022



THE EUROPEAN UNION. In the case of the European Union, the dominant message was that sanctions against Russia hurt Europe more (92). Other messages, which were relatively few, established the idea that in the background of the energy/economic crisis, the support of Ukraine in Europe is decreasing (13), that the European Union is sacrificing Ukraine and using it for its own interests (12), and that Poland is taking advantage of the war situation and plans to return the historical territories of Western Ukraine (10).

FIGURE 27. MESSAGES RELATED TO RUSSIAN INTERVENTION IN UKRAINE THAT WERE DIRECTED AGAINST THE EU, 2022

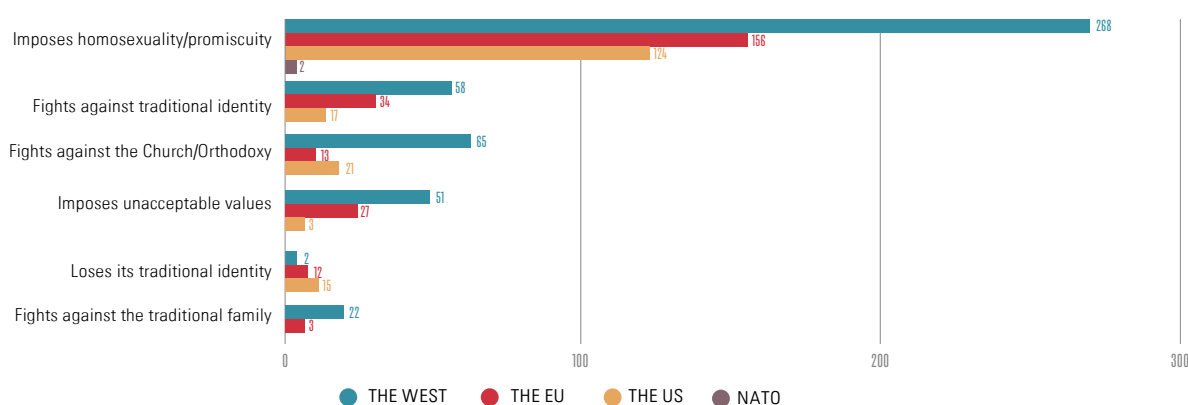


1.4. IDENTITY/LIBERALISM

Identity-related messages were most often directed against the West (499), followed by the European Union (246) and the US (182), and the least – against NATO (2). The representation of Russia as a defender of identity (103) was accompanied by messages that equated military actions in Ukraine with the fight for homosexual rights and the march against Orthodoxy (56).

IDENTITY – THE WEST, THE US AND WESTERN INSTITUTIONS. The majority of the messages concerned the imposed homosexuality and promiscuity, mostly ascribed to the collective West (268), followed by the European Union (156). Compared to homophobic comments (total 550), fewer messages talked about the fight against traditional identity (total 109), church, orthodoxy (total 99) and traditional family (25), as well as imposition of unacceptable values (81).

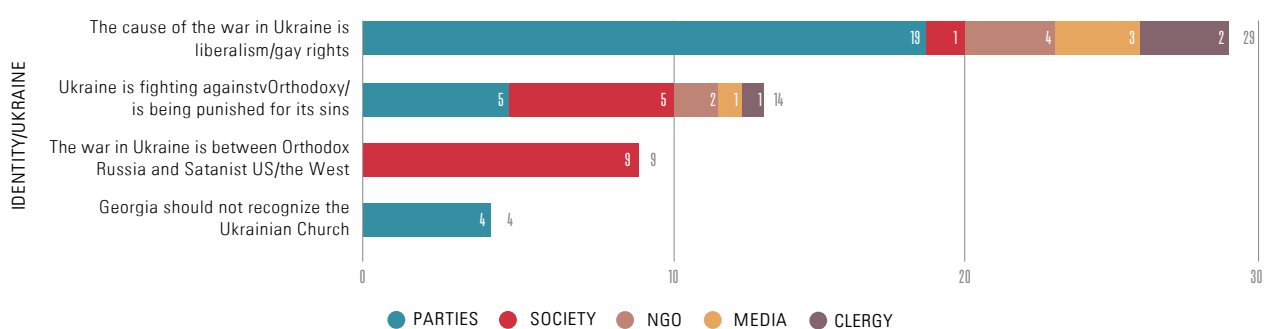
FIGURE 28. IDENTITY-RELATED MESSAGES BY TARGETS, 2022



In addition to these common messages, individual claims were also identified, which alleged that pro-Westernism means fighting with identity (6), that the West punishes Hungary for pursuing national policies (1); that Europe is being Islamized (1), and the US split the Ukrainian Church into two (2).

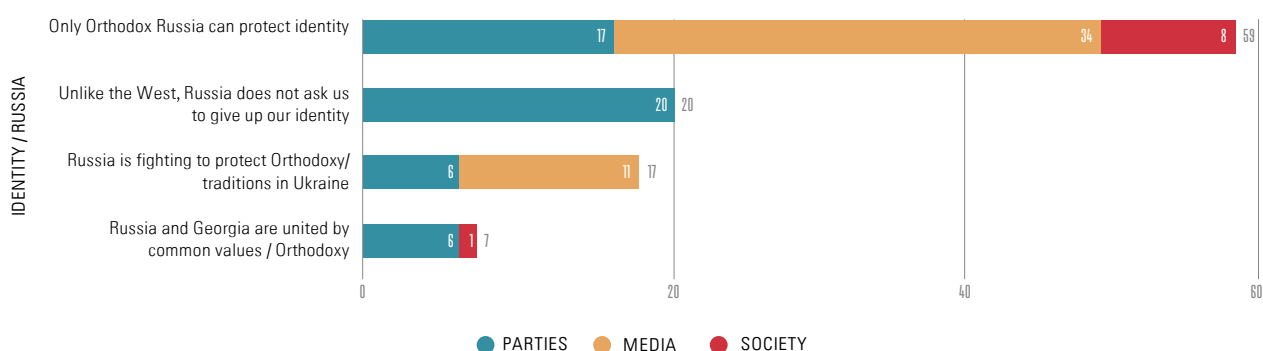
UKRAINE. In the case of Ukraine, identity-related messages were mostly related to the war. It was argued that the cause of the war in Ukraine is liberalism and gay rights (29), that because of its fight against Orthodoxy, Ukraine is being punished for its sins (14) and that the war in Ukraine is between Orthodox Russia and Satanist US/the West (9). At the same time, several statements claimed that Georgia should not recognize the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church (4).

FIGURE 29. IDENTITY-RELATED MESSAGES AGAINST UKRAINE, 2022



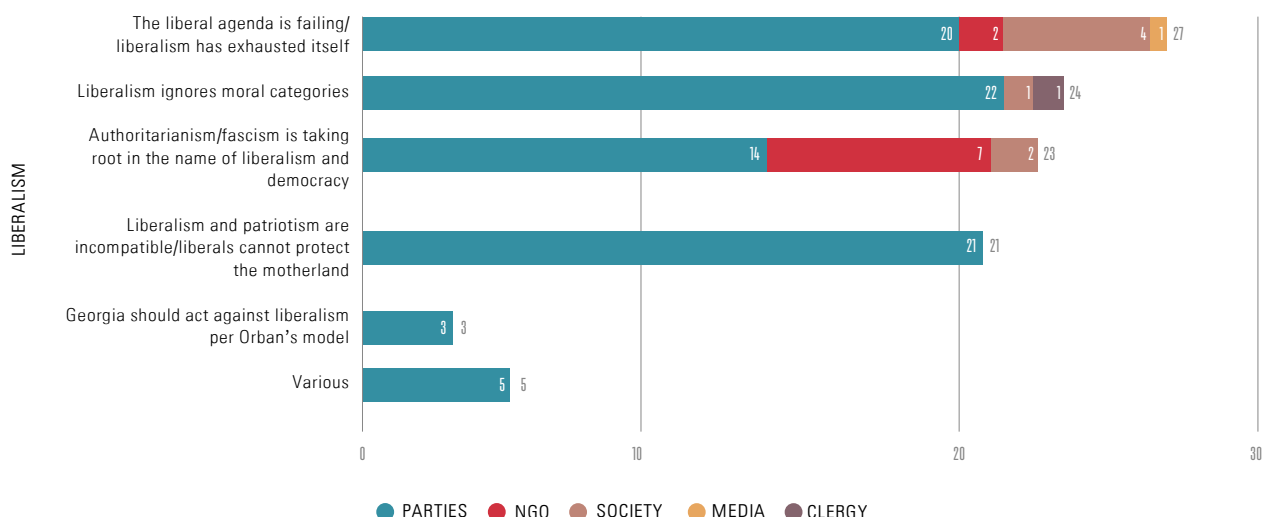
RUSSIA. In the backdrop of the West, which fights against identity and Ukraine, which “fights for the rights of homosexuals”, there was a positive representation of Orthodox Russia as the only defender of identity (59). It was argued that Russia, unlike the West, does not ask us to give up our identity (20) and that Georgia is connected with Russia by common values/orthodoxy. (7). If in the case of Ukraine the fight of Ukrainians for the rights homosexuals was named as the reason behind the war, in the case of Russia – it was the fight for the protection of Orthodoxy/traditions (17).

FIGURE 30. IDENTITY-RELATED MESSAGES ABOUT RUSSIA, 2022



LIBERALISM. While anti-liberal messages appear as a pervasive theme in relation to various issues, we singled out narratives directly related to liberalism, which were most often disseminated by politicians. The predominant message was that the liberal agenda is failing/liberalism has exhausted itself (27), that liberalism ignores moral categories (24), and that in the name of liberalism and democracy, authoritarianism and fascism are taking root (23). We also encountered messages that asserted that liberalism and patriotism are incompatible/liberals cannot protect the motherland (21). In several cases it was argued that Georgia should act against liberalism according to Orban’s model (3)

FIGURE 31. ANTI-LIBERAL MESSAGES, 2022



1.5. ECONOMY/AID

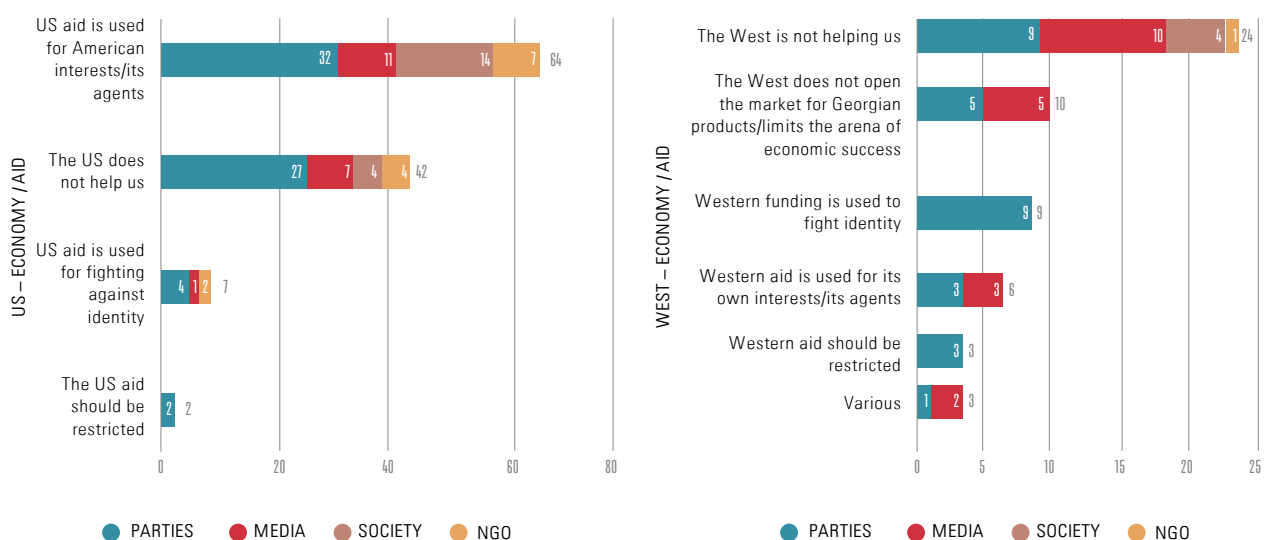
In the topics of aid and economy, the majority of the messages were directed against the US (115), and while Russia was being presented most positively (171).

On the one hand, the messages argued that neither the US (42), nor the West (24) and the European Union (2) were helping us, and on the other hand, it was claimed that the aid of the US (64) and the West (6) was used for their own interests and funding of their own agents. In separate statements the fight against identity was named as the purpose of funding from the West (9), the US (7) and the European Union (2); hence, calls were made to limit funding from the US (2) and the West (3).

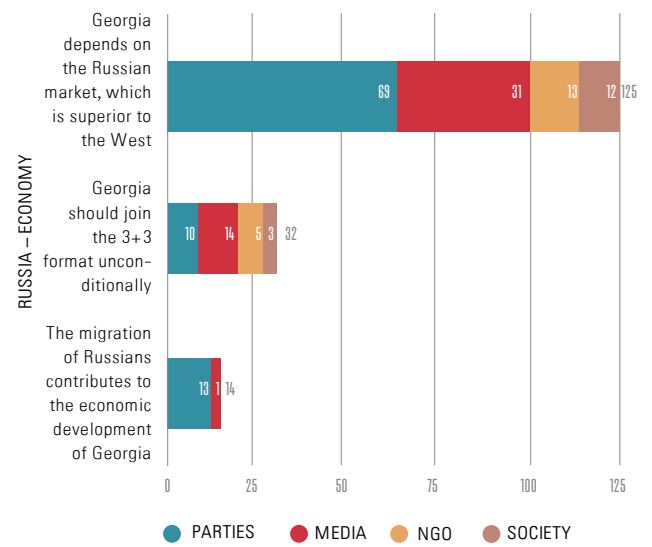
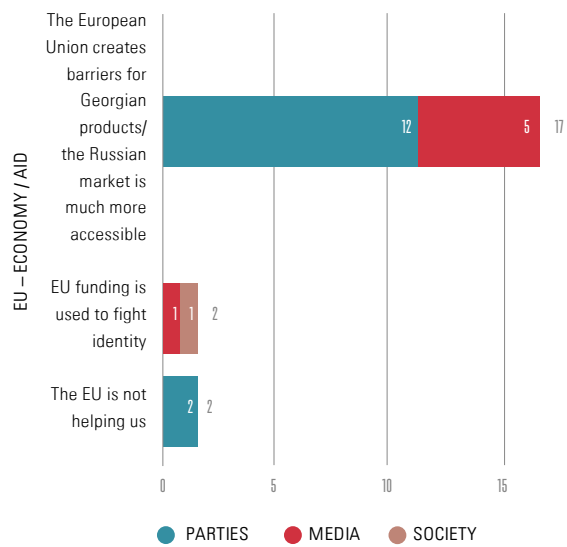
On the one hand, it was argued that the European Union creates barriers for Georgian products, when the Russian market is more accessible (17) and that the West limits the arena of economic success for Georgian products (10). On the other hand, the dependence on the Russian market and its economic superiority (125) was emphasized.

Certain actors also advocated the 3+3 regional format,⁷ which envisages economic cooperation between the three states of the South Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan) and their “big neighbors” (Russia, Turkey, Iran). In connection with this topic, it was argued that despite the opposition of Western countries, Georgia should unconditionally join the format (32). Some of the messages were related to Russian citizens who migrated to Georgia in the background of the war, which was presented as a stimulating factor for the Georgian economy (14).

FIGURE 32. ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES RELATED TO ECONOMY AND AID, 2022



⁷ Sandro Gigauri, Myth Detector, 18 October, 2021 “Who Advocates for the 3+3 Format and What Danger Does It Pose For Georgia?” <https://bit.ly/3S1hFYe>



II. THE STRUCTURE OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES AND PROPAGANDA METHODS

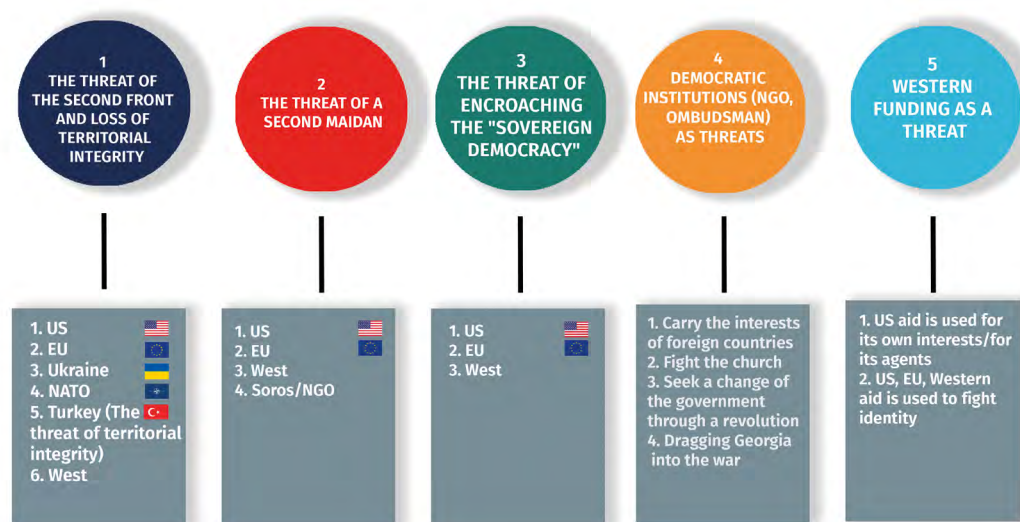
Similar to the previous years, the anti-Western propaganda in Georgia resorted to the method of manipulating with threats in 2022 as well; however, this time, apart from the interests of external actors, the internal agenda of the government became more evident. In order to maintain and strengthen its power, the ruling “Georgian Dream” party, together with “People’s Power,”⁸ used the same tactics of manipulating threats as the Kremlin-affiliated actors.

As can be seen from the infographic below, out of the top 5 threats that were used as manipulation subjects, one was related to the physical security of people and the fears of war, as well as the issue of territorial integrity; Three were related to internal democratic processes and institutions, which were securitized in terms of external interventions; The last topic concerned the Western financial assistance focused on strengthening internal democracy.

The West, Western countries and institutions were predominantly named as the cause of all five threats; In certain cases, local institutions acting under the influence of the West were also labeled as such and were declared as agents of foreign countries and carriers of their interests. Along with the West, Turkey was also considered a threat to territorial integrity, which was discussed in terms of its alleged intention to restore the Ottoman Empire and the reignition of historical traumas.

⁸ In 2022, several deputies separated themselves from the parliamentary faction “Georgian Dream” to expose the “behind the scenes truth.” Later, they founded the “People’s Power” movement and maintained the parliamentary majority with the ruling party. Radio Liberty, 2 August, 2022 <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31970666.html>

INFOGRAPHIC 1. THE FIVE-STEP MODEL OF THREATS



2.1. THE EROSION OF THREAT PERCEPTION

The “National Security Concept of Georgia,”⁹ dated 2011, names the occupation of Georgian territories by the Russian Federation and terrorist acts organized by Russia from the occupied territories as threats and challenges facing Georgia. The website of the National Security Council mentions that “due to the recent changes in the security environment in the Black Sea region and in the Euro-Atlantic sphere, the issue of updating the National Security Concept of Georgia has been put on the agenda.” In order to clarify the information about when the aforementioned document is planned to be adopted, we requested public information from the Council. According to the response of the agency’s office, although the updated document has been developed in an inter-agency format, its approval depends on outlining the main contours of security and stability in the region:

“The apparatus of the National Security Council developed the final draft of the “National Security Concept” in an inter-agency format; however, taking into account the dynamic nature of the security environment, the draft of the concept is regularly updated and the document will be approved after the main contours of regional security and stability are outlined,” – states the letter of the apparatus of the National Security Council.

As for the National Threat Assessment Document,¹⁰ according to the information received from the apparatus, if the documents of 2007–2009 and 2010–2013 contained an open part along with the classified part, the current document no longer has an open part.

⁹ National Security Council. National Security Concept of Georgia. Last accessed: 27 January, 2024
<https://bit.ly/3Ua52MY>

¹⁰ National Security Council. National Threat Assessment Document of Georgia, Last accessed: 27 January, 2024,
<https://bit.ly/3SzK5tK>

Beyond the policy document, the renewal of which depends on outlining the “main contours of regional security and stability,” the issue is also reflected in the public discourse; on the one hand, one hears statements that Georgia should not irritate Russia with its actions, which obscures the process of societal consolidation around threats, and, on the other hand, from 2022, the message that the West and Western institutions are trying to involve the country in military operations and open a second front has taken the form of a clear trend. Such a shift in messages contributes to the erosion of the perception of threats and makes it unclear who the main security challenge for Georgia is – the military power of Russia, which occupies 20% of Georgia’s territory, or the US, the European Union, NATO, and Ukraine. When threats are not perceived, even in the face of objective evidence, there can be no mobilization of defensive resources.¹¹

The analysis of the 2022 monitoring data shows that the topic of opening a second front and using Georgia and Ukraine as a springboard against Russia was cultivated both by pro-Kremlin parties and their media platforms, as well as by the ruling party and its affiliate “People’s Power.” The latter have much larger and more influential communication channels for spreading similar messages than the pro-Kremlin actors, whose means of communication are more fragmented.

TABLE 1. MESSAGES ABOUT OPENING A SECOND FRONT AND USING GEORGIA/UKRAINE AS A SPRINGBOARD

THE RULING “GEORGIAN DREAM” PARTY AND MEMBER OF THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY “PEOPLE’S POWER”	PRO-KREMLIN PARTIES
IRAKLI GARIBASHVILI, PRIME MINISTER: “It turns out that Georgia should be punished because there is no war in Georgia today?... It was directly said that Ukraine was granted the status because Ukraine is at war.” ¹²	KONSTANTINE MORGOSHIA, FOUNDER OF ALT-INFO: “Of course, they wouldn’t give us the candidate status, because they asked us to open a second front and hold these immoral marches.” ¹³
GIVI MIKANADZE, GEORGIAN DREAM: “This is blackmail, the goal of which is to somehow return Bidzina Ivanishvili to politics and force him to open a second front in Georgia.” ¹⁴ PEOPLE’S POWER: “The [US] embassy wants Bidzina Ivanishvili to use this influence and turn to political processes to involve Georgia in the war .” ¹⁵	DAVIT TARKHAN-MOURAVI, ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS: “[America’s] attempts were to drag Georgia into the war , for it to become a participant in the Russia-Ukraine conflict... We arrived in Moscow. What can be seen there is actually a lot of pressure, including financial pressure, on Ivanishvili himself.” ¹⁶
IRAKLI KOBAXIDZE, GEORGIAN DREAM: “When some people try to stir up the rhetoric of war and the [US] ambassador doesn’t distance herself from that, it naturally raises some questions.” ¹⁷	ZURAB MAKHARADZE, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: “That ambassador does not dissociate herself from all the US-funded non-governmental organizations that drag us into the war .” ¹⁸
IRAKLI GARIBASHVILI, PRIME MINISTER: Officials of the Ukrainian government , including the Secretary of the Security Council, publicly stated that they wanted a “ second front ” to be opened in Georgia, so that not only Ukrainian women and children would be killed , but also Georgians .” ¹⁹	SHOTA MARTINENKO, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: “The task and request is to do the same thing to yourself that Ukraine is doing , and that is not an order of the Ukrainian people, it is an order of the West and the treacherous Ukrainian government, which has done this to its own people and practically lost the statehood .” ²⁰

¹¹ Raymond Cohen (1978) Threat Perception in International Crisis <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2149052>

¹² Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 22 June, 2022 <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4124017>

¹³ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 22 June, 2022 <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4124143>

¹⁴ Resonance, 24 October, 2022

¹⁵ Georgia and World, 11 August, 2022, <http://geworld.ge/ge/parlamentis-wevrebis/>

¹⁶ Obieqtivi, Real News, 28 July, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4130552>

¹⁷ Georgia and World, 31 July, 2022, <http://geworld.ge/ge/irakli-kobaxidze-22/>

¹⁸ Alt-Info, Alt-Analytics, 16 July, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4128895>

¹⁹ Sezon TV, Summary of the Day with Nikoloz Mzhavanadze, 7 December, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4152365>

²⁰ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 21 July, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4129811

THE RULING "GEORGIAN DREAM" PARTY AND MEMBER OF THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY "PEOPLE'S POWER"	PRO-KREMLIN PARTIES
<p>PEOPLE'S POWER: "For them, our only function is to deter Russia. They have been preparing Ukraine and Georgia for this function for years; however, the Georgian government did not allow the destruction of the country, for which the Americans cannot forgive us."²¹</p> <p>ZAZA PAPUAŠVILI, GEORGIAN DREAM: "We are only needed so that they can use us as cannon fodder, as Saakashvili did in 2008! Russia should periodically attack us, then everyone, including NATO and the EU, will hide and the US will complain – look what huge Russia does to small Georgia! This is, it turns out, our function!"²²</p>	<p>ZURAB MAKHARADZE, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: "We have to perform a function, and that function is the function of deterring Russia... We are the firewood that catches fire and we provide this belt of fire!"²³</p> <p>GIORGI LOMIA, ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS: "America has never fought on its territory... it always fights on someone else's territory."²⁴</p>

In the context of the threat of war and change of government, not only Western countries were discussed, but also the international conference "Glory to Ukraine!" organized by "McCain Institute," "The George Bush Institute" and the "Economic Policy Research Center" in Tbilisi. The participants of the conference were labeled as enemies of Georgia by one of the leaders of the ruling party, while the representative of the people's power blamed them for wanting to open a second front and change the government in Georgia:

KAKHA KALADZE, GEORGIAN DREAM: "Those who attend this conference ["Glory to Ukraine"] are the **enemies of this country**, pretending to be friends."²⁵

SOZAR SUBARI, PEOPLE'S POWER: „The **conference** organized by the McCain Institute in Tbilisi a couple of weeks ago was part of the campaign aimed at **changing the government** in Georgia and **opening a second front**. The conference involved all those Georgian and foreign politicians and representatives of non-governmental organizations, who spare no effort to **drag Georgia into the war**."²⁶

The influence of these manipulative messages on public opinion is also revealed by the results of the 2023 survey,²⁷ which shows that when thinking about the war in Ukraine, 22% of respondents consider the opening of a second front in Georgia, and 17% the issue of Russia's attack as problematic (39% in total). At the same time, conspiracy messages about Georgia's alleged involvement in the war are considered credible by a significant part of the respondents.

²¹ Georgia and World, 20 September, 2022 <http://geworld.ge/ge/saqartvelos-parlamentis-2/>

²² Asaval-Dasavali, 11–17 July, 2022

²³ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 8 August, 2022 <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4133144>

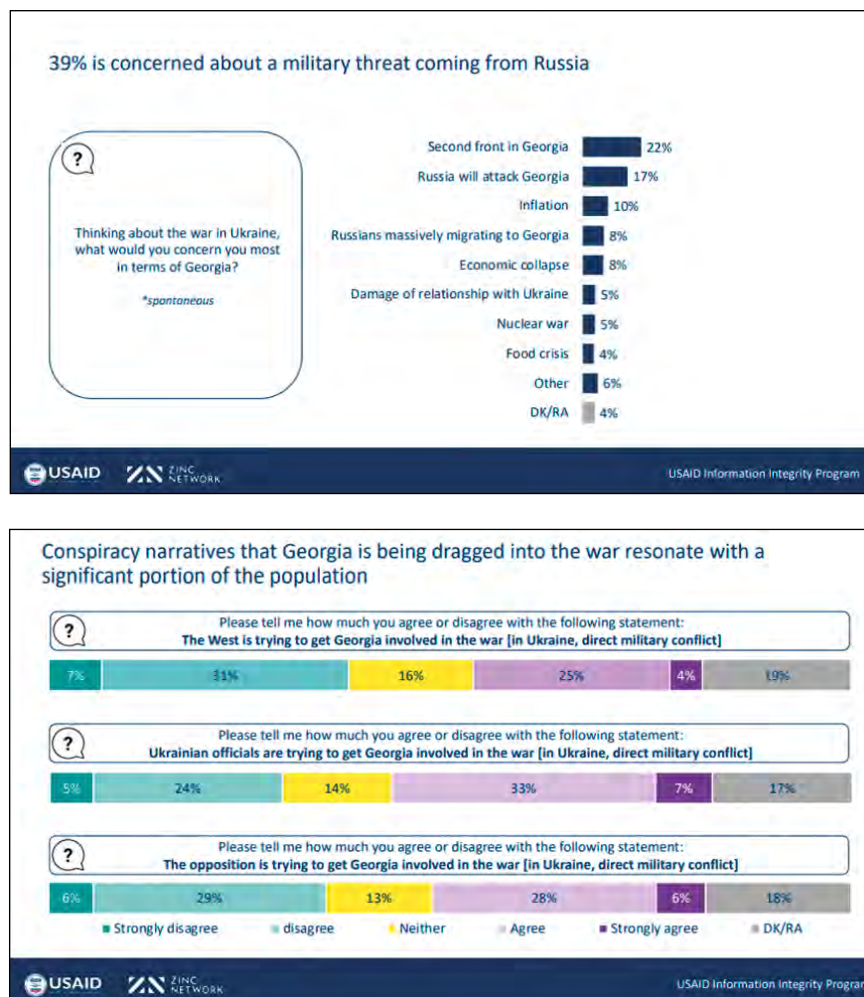
²⁴ Obieqtivi, Studio N8, 13 December, 2022 <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4153376>

²⁵ Georgia and World, 5 September, 2022 <http://geworld.ge/ge/kaxa-kaladze-2/>

²⁶ Asaval-Dasavali, 19–25 September, 2022

²⁷ Zinc Network, CRRC Georgia. 8 May, 2023. Information Integrity Program: Audience Research Results. pg. 33, <https://bit.ly/42fvoPO>

FIGURE 33-34. THE RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY ON THE MILITARY THREAT FROM RUSSIA AND THE CONSPIRACY MESSAGES OF GEORGIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE WAR



In addition to Western countries, Turkey was also considered a threat, although only pro-Kremlin actors, mostly the “Alliance of Patriots” and the Conservative Movement, as well as individual media outlets, actualized this topic. Along with the traditional message – “if Russia is an occupier, Turkey is an occupier too” – a new narrative emerged in the background of the war in Ukraine, which established the idea that Russia’s defeat in Ukraine would strengthen Turkey’s influence in the region. This new narrative was also in line with the old message, which considered Russia as the only deterrent from the “Turkish threat.”

VAZHA OTARASHVILI, ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS: “The **fall of Russia** means that Georgia’s **historical enemies** – Iran or Turkey – **will pop up**.”²⁸

Dito Chubinidze, “Asaval-Dasavali” Journalist: „Let’s not let it happen so that with the **disintegration of Russia**, we got **Turkey** in the North Caucasus as well!”²⁹

²⁸ Sezoni TV, Summary of the Day, 12 September, 2022 https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4136965

²⁹ Asaval-Dasavali, 29 September – 2 October, 2022

NIKOLAZ MZHAVANADZE, SEZONI TV HOST: “If Russia ends, Georgia will end as well... the scumbag Prime Minister Kvirkashvili announced that Turkey is our strategic partner.”³⁰

ZURAB MAKHARADZE, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: During this tragedy that is unfolding in Ukraine, a new world order is being born here, and in this new world order, Georgia is either in the zone of influence of Turkey, the forward of the new Islamic civilization, and becomes a bridge to Central Asia for Great Turan, or it is an ally of Russia, which is now rebuilding its empire. If the state, some kind of unity of the Orthodox countries is established now, if Belarus and Ukraine are included in it... we have no other choice.”³¹

2.2. FEARS OF REVOLUTION

In addition to the threats of war and territorial integrity, the propaganda messages also exploited the fears of organizing a second Maidan in Georgia and changing the government in a revolutionary scenario, which on the one hand was linked to the refusal of the EU candidate status, and on the other hand, it mainly appeared in connection to the US.

TABLE 2. MESSAGES ABOUT THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE SECOND MAIDAN

THE RULING “GEORGIAN DREAM” PARTY AND MEMBER OF THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY “PEOPLE’S POWER”	PRO-KREMLIN PARTIES
IRAKLI ZARKUA, GEORGIAN DREAM: „...It was an attempt [refusal to grant EU candidate status] to orchestrate a revolution here in Georgia! They wanted to bring out the people, bring out the young people, and make a coup here.” ³²	ZURA MAKHARADZE, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: “...This [refusal of the candidate status] was done in order to raise the bar for them, to create a precondition for the Maidan... and the Maidan is a chain of systematically controlled escalations.” ³³
SOZAR SUBARI, PEOPLE’S POWER: “If the American instructors do not start training Georgian non-governmental organizations, representatives of the opposition, how to organize a revolution, then the economic growth in Georgia will be much higher.” ³⁴	GIORGI KARDAVA, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: „The issue of a sacrifice and then organizing a coup d’état over it is a classic technique of the Americans.” ³⁵

2.3. THE THREAT OF ENCRDACHING THE “SOVEREIGN DEMOCRACY”

The concept of “sovereign democracy”, which has appeared in Russia since 2005, according to Vladislav Surkov, adviser to Russian President Vladimir Putin, includes two main messages: 1. that Russia is a democratic country, 2. questioning this fact is perceived as an unfriendly act and meddling in Russia’s domestic affairs.³⁶ In response to the criticism of Georgia’s internal democratic challenges, both the ruling party and pro-Kremlin actors equated such critical evaluations with interference in Georgia’s sovereign affairs from the West, and in certain cases, even questioned the quality of democracy in consolidated democracies.

³⁰ Sezoni TV, Summary of the Day, 12 September, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4136975

³¹ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 1 March, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4102545

³² Imedi, Imedi Live, 13 November 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4148420>

³³ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 20 June 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4123641>

³⁴ Resonance, 17 November, 2022, http://www.resonancedaily.com/index.php?id_rub=4&id_artc=169706

³⁵ Alt-Info, Alt-Analytics, 8 January, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4090782

³⁶ Maria Lipman, July 15, 2006, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Putin’s Sovereign Democracy <https://carnegie moscow.org/2006/07/15/putin-s-sovereign-democracy-pub-18540>

TABLE 3. MESSAGES ON “SOVEREIGN DEMOCRACY” AND FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

THE RULING “GEORGIAN DREAM” PARTY	PRO-KREMLIN PARTIES
IRAKLI ZARKUA, GEORGIAN DREAM: “Despite the young democratic processes, as it turned out, according to the conclusion of the OSCE-ODIHR, Georgia is way ahead [of the US] than I personally thought, and once again I am proud of it.” ³⁷	GIORGI KARDAVA, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: “I am telling you this for real that the quality of democracy in Georgia is higher than in America itself.” ³⁸
IRAKLI KOBAXIDZE, GEORGIAN DREAM: „...This [US Embassy statement about leaving the director of the opposition channel in custody ³⁹] was a direct interference in the independence of the judiciary... Our partners should be equally careful about the rule of law, and the independence of the judiciary both in their own country and in other countries.” ⁴⁰	ZURAB MAKHARADZE, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: “It is not only acceptable for the West, but necessary for the Georgian court to carry out their direct orders... The control of the court should be exercised not from the State Chancellery, but from the US Embassy and the directives should be given by Mrs. Kelly Degnan.” ⁴¹
ZAZA PAPUASHVILI, GEORGIAN DREAM: “... Then what is the difference between a Russian and an American or European censor?” ⁴²	GIORGI KARDAVA, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: “The Americans consider Georgia as a colony, and the fact is, Georgia is largely governed by the United States.” ⁴³
GIA TSAGAREISHVILI, GEORGIAN DREAM: “If we are a sovereign country, then we should be allowed to decide for ourselves how to live, who to listen to, who to choose. Not by military coups, not by orders from someone from the outside, but by our own independent, unbiased decisions.” ⁴⁴	GIORGI KARDAVA, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: „Our red lines are, first of all, internal sovereignty... Today, the US is ruled by a liberal force, and we want sovereignty and independence from this liberal force; our task is not to fall from one slavery to another. Our task is internal autonomy.” ⁴⁵

2.4. DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AS A THREAT

Apart from the protection of “sovereign democracy,” all those institutions that have the function of balancing the government were considered a threat. For example, the anchor of the TV company related to the pro-Kremlin “Conservative Movement” party considered the 2 recommendations of the European Union, which concern the involvement of the civil sector in the decision-making process and the transparent procedure for the selection of the public defender, to be problematic.

TATIA GABRICHIDZE, ALT-INFO ANCHOR: “Among the demands is the involvement of civil society at all levels of decision-making. That is, the collective Gigauri, Simonishvili, Makarashvili-Dighmelashvili, and Baia Patara-ias should be involved in making the decisions that should be as a rule made by the government?! After all, it is clear to everyone what the involvement of the country’s enemies like Captain Gigauri serves, what results it will bring to the country. The last request concerns the Public Defender, it is not new to

³⁷ Imedi, ImediLive, 13 November, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4148422>

³⁸ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 24 January, 2024, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4093657>

³⁹ Civil.ge 2 November, 2022, “U.S. Embassy: Gvaramia’s Continued Imprisonment ‘Puts at Risk’ Georgia’s European Future” <https://civil.ge/archives/513512>

⁴⁰ Georgia and World, 4 November, 2022, <http://geworld.ge/ge/irakli-kobaxidze-ashsh-saelchos/>
Sezoni TV, Summary of the Day with Nikoloz Mzhavanadze, 3 November, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4146894>

⁴¹ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 15 July, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4128779>

⁴² Asaval-Dasavali, 11-17 July, 2022

⁴³ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 13 April, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4111169>

⁴⁴ Imedi, Imedi Live, 10 November 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4148140

⁴⁵ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 8 February 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4096942>

anyone that the main stronghold of the collective West here is the Public Defender's office together with the NGO sector.”⁴⁶

The involvement of non-governmental organizations in the democratic process was unacceptable for both the pro-Kremlin actors and the parliamentary majority member “People’s Power”, because the check and balancing function was equated with the interests of foreign countries. Moreover, “People’s Power” was manipulatively equating concepts such as “democracy” and “agentocracy”; “Independent” and “externally controlled”:

TABLE 4. MESSAGES ABOUT “AGENTOCRACY” AND EXTERNAL CONTROL

DEMOCRACY = AGENTOCRACY	INDEPENDENT = EXTERNALLY CONTROLLED
<p>“PEOPLE’S POWER”: “Since in the dictionary of pseudo-liberals, democracy actually means agentocracy, any process that leads to the replacement of agentocracy with democracy or, on the contrary, which does not lead democracy to agentocracy, is considered a democratic setback... They will constantly continue to talk about the so-called democratic setback until they achieve the restoration of agentocracy in Georgia.”⁴⁷</p>	<p>“PEOPLE’S POWER”: “According to the dictionary of pseudo-liberals, the word ‘independent’ is synonymous with ‘externally controlled’. For example, an independent court means an externally controlled court, independent media means an externally controlled media, etc. According to this model, the courts should be run by the parties they control or the “NGOs” they finance, and only those media that are controlled by agents of foreign influence and serve to establish or strengthen the agentocracy in the state can be referred to as independent.”⁴⁸</p>

In certain cases, a dichotomy was created, establishing the idea that if being a Russian agent is a problem, Western agents should also be considered an enemy of the country:

TABLE 5. MESSAGES ABOUT THE AGENTS AND THE FIFTH COLUMN

“PEOPLE’S POWER”	PRO-KREMLIN PARTIES
<p>GURAM MACHARASHVILI, „PEOPLE’S POWER”: „Whether you are an agent of the US or an occupying state, this is unacceptable“.⁴⁹</p> <p>„PEOPLE’S POWER”: If in the 80s and 90s the main threat to Georgia’s sovereignty was posed by “KGBshniks” and agents of the Russian special services, in the 2000s, along with the Russian agents, the American agents became a serious problem for sovereignty.”⁵⁰</p>	<p>MALKHAZ TOPUTIA, ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS: “The fifth column does not mean the fifth column only from Russia, because when you are financed by the money of a foreign country against your own country, you are the fifth column, and this country is not only Russia.”⁵¹</p>

The representation of non-governmental organizations as agents of foreign influence, in addition to their natural function of checking and balancing the government, was also related to their sources of funding. Since the projects that support democracy, the rule of law, media, etc are mainly financed by Western foundations, the manipulations that the civil sector is actually an agent that fulfills the orders of other countries, in order to undermine institutional credibility, were spread deliberately. Such messages prepared the ground for a Russian-style legislative initiative, which aimed to declare organizations receiving foreign funding as agents. The bill was passed by the Georgian Parliament in the first reading in 2023, but as a result of strong protests, it was forced to drop it in the second reading.⁵²

⁴⁶ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 17 June, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4123021>

⁴⁷ Split-news, 18 November, 2022, <https://split.spnews.io/ka/archives/153722>

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Georgia and World, 8 September, 2022, <http://geworld.ge/ge/guram-macharashvili-chveni/>

⁵⁰ Resonance, 7 September, 2022, https://www.resonancedaily.com/index.php?id_rub=4&id_artc=164906

⁵¹ Obieqtivi, Studio N8, 13 September, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4137228>

⁵² Radio Liberty, 10 March, 2023 “The Parliament dropped the Agents’ Law” <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32311562.html>

TABLE 6. MESSAGES ABOUT THE AGENTS OPERATING WITH FOREIGN FUNDING

THE RULING "GEORGIAN DREAM" PARTY AND MEMBER OF THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY "PEOPLE'S POWER"	PRO-KREMLIN PARTIES
PEOPLE'S POWER: "The largest part of American funding is directed to "NGOs", which means that this money is not used for our country, but for their own agents . We think it is a matter of honor not to allow anyone to make a big deal of funding its own agents." ⁵³	ZURAB MAKHARADZE, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: "...these are agents of foreign governments that openly receive money to influence the Georgian political space, the Georgian legislative space, the Georgian ideological information sphere, in a way needed by the owners from the outside." ⁵⁴
IRAKLI KOBAXIDZE, GEORGIAN DREAM: "Questions were raised [by the People's Power] regarding the funding and... all this... made the public interested in what American funds were spent on in Georgia ." ⁵⁵	DAVIT TARKHAN-MOURAVI, ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS: " The West managed to create a whole class of people using and through its money ... Among them there are many people who have already sold their souls, sold their bodies, and sold their homeland and would sign everything – they would even support Kosovo." ⁵⁶
PEOPLE'S POWER: "...we believe that the existing practice of financing NGOs from abroad creates a natural threat to the sovereignty of Georgia. Thus, not only should nobody make a big deal out of the funding of NGOs, on the contrary, this funding should be included in strict legal frameworks ." ⁵⁷	ZURAB MAKHARADZE, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: The mass media should be controlled and foreign funding should be limited , and when you say that, you are usually blaspheming the system." ⁵⁸

In order to question the funding, another message was amplified, which perpetuated the perception that the most significant part of the Western funding was used to fight against identity and tradition. This idea was mainly disseminated by pro-Kremlin actors:

KONSTANTINE MORGOSHIA, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: "When they are transferring substantial amounts, **billions**, 90 percent of it is **spent on fighting against the church, Georgian identity, and traditions**, and then 10 percent will be given to some poor people for 2 small farms or something, **is this the European aid?**"⁵⁹

MALKHAZ TOPUTIA, ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS: „They are involved in the **fight with the church, the fight with spirituality**, and where is the interest of the Georgian people **in these 6 billion**, Ms. Degnan cannot give us an answer. She will again be surprised to tell us: "Why is the funding for gay organizations so little?"⁶⁰

2.5. THE THREAT OF LOSING IDENTITY

As in previous years, the threat of losing traditional identity was identified to be one of the vulnerable topics, which was not only related to the issue of funding but also to the identity crisis in the West and the war in Ukraine. Some of the messages reinforced the idea that the West itself is losing its traditional identity and at

⁵³ Alt-Info, Alt-Analytics, 18 November, 21 November, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4149913>

⁵⁴ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 22 August, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4134344>

⁵⁵ Georgia and World, 21 September, 2022, <http://geworld.ge/ge/irakli-kobaxidze-samwuxarod/>

⁵⁶ Obieqtivi, Studio 8, 4 August, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4132588

⁵⁷ Alt-Info, Alt-Analytics, 18 November, 21 November, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4149913>

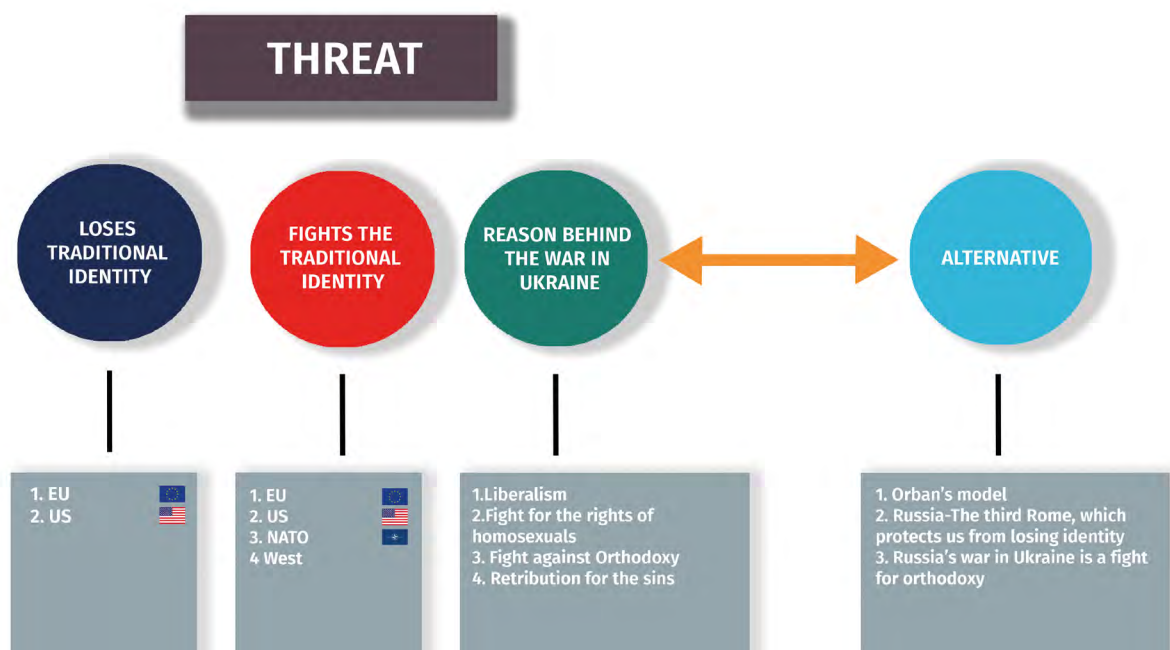
⁵⁸ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 13 January, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4091828

⁵⁹ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 30 June, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4125714

⁶⁰ Obieqtivi, Studio 8, 4 February, 2022, <https://obieqtivi.info/tv-shows/20220204-22-30/> [46:51 – 47:18]

the same time fighting against it. In parallel, new messages emerged that attempted to manipulatively shift the focus from the Kremlin’s responsibility for Russia’s intervention in Ukraine to identity-related topics.

INFOGRAPHIC 2. FEARS OF LOSING IDENTITY



Sins were most often named as the cause of the war in Ukraine by clerics, who connected divine retribution with the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church and conflict with the Russian Church:

GIORGI PAVLOVI, CLERIC: “A part of the Ukrainian society **opposed the integrity of the Orthodox Church and the divine punishment followed!**”⁶¹

DAVIT ISAKADZE, ARCHPRIEST: “The **split with God and the true church** in Ukraine became the **reason for self-inflicted punishment** for this country!”⁶²

Both clerics and political actors named the fight of Ukrainians for homosexual rights as the reason for the war:

STEPANE KALAWISHVILI, BISHOP OF CHKONDIDI, TSAGERI, AND LENTEKHI: “They are **fighting to hold gay parades** and they are fighting to bring some strange deviations into our lives that are totally unacceptable for humans... They are standing on the brink of a world war for what?”⁶³

⁶¹ Asaval-Dasavali, 28 March – 3 April, 2022

⁶² Asaval-Dasavali, 25 April – 1 May, 2022

⁶³ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 24 January, 2022 <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4093642>

GIORGI KARDAVA, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: „That is, **Ukraine is fighting for transgenders.**“⁶⁴

At the same time, the ongoing processes in Ukraine were presented as a fight against Orthodoxy, accusing the West of dragging two Orthodox nations into a fratricidal war:

RAMAZ GAGNIDZE, GEORGIAN MISSION: “We all know very well that the **conflict** between Russia and Ukraine did not start between these two peoples. It was started **by the US and Europe** and, as I told you above, **against Orthodoxy.**”⁶⁵

BESIK AKHVLEDIANI, ARCHPRIEST: “...Ukraine and Russia – **two Orthodox countries were dragged in a fratricidal war!**”⁶⁶

2.6. RUSSIA AS THE THIRD ROME

The justification of Russia’s expansionist aspirations with the messianic idea and the positioning of Moscow as the third Rome, which has the function of deterring the Antichrist, were relevant both in the context of Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine and in relation to Georgia. Russia’s military intervention was presented as a religious war mainly by pro-Kremlin actors:

DAVID MKHEIDZE, AUTHOR AT “GEORGIA AND WORLD”: “...the same is happening **in Ukraine**. In general, about 40 states are fighting against Russia in different ways. This is practically **a war with Orthodoxy**, in which Russia is **the third Rome**, and that is why **our place is on the side of co-religionist Russia.**”⁶⁷

ZURAB MAKHARADZE, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: „A sovereignty-oriented, **ideological war** has been declared **not against Ukraine**, but **against the West as a whole**. This is **a war between Western, globalist, liberal and conservative, sovereignty-oriented ideologies...** [Putin’s] entire speech was about Russia’s mission to stop the powers that sometimes imagine that world domination is theirs and the fact that the West has now become the **carrier of satanic ideology** and there is a war with it... Now this is an anti-liberal manifesto.”⁶⁸

JABA ZHVANIA, ANCHOR OF ALT-INFO: “...in the context of Russia’s geopolitical aspirations, it is not the first time the **West mentions the cross and Christianity as an ideological barrier to liberalism...** actually, the ongoing **war in Ukraine is not a Russia-Ukraine war, but a great global clash of civilizations.**”⁶⁹

Notably, the manipulative interpretation of Russia’s intervention in Ukraine as a religious war, the purpose of which was to shift the attention from Russia’s responsibility to that of the US, in certain cases, carried the characteristics of Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI),⁷⁰ which originated from American

⁶⁴ Alt-Info, Alt-Analytics, 31 October, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/41462515>

⁶⁵ Georgia and World, 22 August, 2022, <http://geworld.ge/ge/ramaz-gagnidze/>

⁶⁶ Asaval-Dasavali, 7 – 13 March, 2022

⁶⁷ Georgia and World, 4 July, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3ap8FKx>

⁶⁸ Alt-Info, Alt-Analytics, 30 September, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4141221

⁶⁹ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 14 October, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4143735

⁷⁰ Tamar Kintsurashvili, Tina Gogoladze (2022), Media Development Foundation, “Anti-Gender and Anti-LGBTQI Mobilization in Georgia”, pg. 74 <https://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/239/>

conservative sources (Tucker Carlson, FoxNews) and then was spread in the Russian-language propaganda media (Russia Today, Московский комсомолец, Взгляд). In the Georgian context, in addition to pro-Kremlin publications (Alt-Info, Georgia and World)⁷¹, such cases were localized against the US by pro-government actors (experts and media)⁷²:

GOGA KHAINDRAVA: “In his program, Tucker Carlson informed us that: Democrat congressman from Maryland, Jamie Raskin, said that **Russia is an Orthodox country** that preaches traditional values, **so it must be destroyed! No matter what the cost to the US**. Not because he is an aggressor... not because he is an imperialist and a conqueror, no! Because it is an Orthodox country... that’s what Democrat Ruskin from Maryland thinks. What do you think, Mrs. Ambassador Degnan, **Georgia is an Orthodox country too**, a preacher of traditional values. **What should we expect?**”⁷³

Pro-Kremlin actors considered the common religious identity with Russia as a prerequisite for solving conflicts in the political field. Alt-Info/Conservative Movement party focused on the common cultural and religious identity with Russia and conveyed the idea that, unlike the West, Russia was not motivated by the intention of ideological expansion and identity change, which created a good precondition for the process of political negotiations:

SHOTA MARTINENKO, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: „...the **perspectives of dialogue** between us and the Russians are largely **based on our shared religion**, you can talk differently when you have cultural and religious proximity.”⁷⁴

SHOTA MARTINENKO, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: “The difference between Russia and the West is that **Russia does not even attempt ideological expansion...** The **West entails giving up your identity** and accepting a Western liberal identity... Fixing relations with Russia means talking about the congruence of geopolitical interests, not about changing your identity and therefore disrupting the content of statehood, which integration in the West entails... Our nation’s goal must be to preserve this identity. **Choosing a pro-Western course is a historical mistake.**”⁷⁵

SHOTA MARTINENKO, ALT-INFO: “...**Integration into Europe** necessarily entails **rejection of Christian identity** and national identity, and **in the case of dialogue with Russia, no one will make such demands.**”⁷⁶

In certain cases, together with Russia, Hungary’s model and Orbán’s experience were mentioned as a role model for the fight against globalist-liberal forces, which also served as an exemplary case in terms of limiting the space for democratic institutions:

⁷¹ Tinatin Tvaure, Myth Detector, 1 November, 2022 “Did US Congressman Raskin Say that Russia Should be Destroyed Because of Orthodoxy?” <https://bit.ly/3UsxGsY>

⁷² Myth Detector, 2 November, 2022 “False Statement Attributed to a US Congressman Disseminated Among Pro-Governmental Media” <https://bit.ly/30cOyQw>

⁷³ Imedi, 1 November, 2022. “Goga Khaindrava: Congressman Jamie Raskin said that Russia is an Orthodox country that preaches traditional values, so it must be destroyed, Mrs. Ambassador Degnan, What should we expect?” [Archive link] <https://archive.ph/co8sK>

⁷⁴ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 28 March, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4108273>

⁷⁵ Alt-Info, Alt Analytics, 8 September, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4136403

⁷⁶ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 12 April, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4110904

GIORGI KARDAVA, CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT: „...The Hungarian population supports the position of Orbán, who has completely distanced himself from these globalist-liberast-liberal forces and is trying to pursue the interests of the Hungarian population and protect the identity of the Hungarian population, which annoys the West... Orbán has completely put an end to globalist forces in his country, the Soros Foundation has been banned altogether, and many such legislative changes have been carried out in Hungary, which must be implemented in our country as well, including in the context of non-governmental organizations.”⁷⁷

DAVID KARTVELISHVILI, PEOPLE'S POWER: „When we focus on this miller, i.e. pseudo-liberal ideology, as a great friend of Georgia, the Prime Minister of Hungary, more accurately called it – the Soros empire – we will see this battleground in a wide range...”⁷⁸

2.7. RUSSIA AS A SECURITY GUARANTOR

In addition to its messianic mission of an identity defender, Russia was also positioned as a security guarantor; however, pro-Kremlin actors had different approaches in this regard. While the Alliance of Patriots still advocated the idea of political neutrality, the Alt-Info/Conservative Movement advocated military cooperation with Russia in the new security architecture.

The following messages regarding security alternatives were identified:

- GEORGIA SHOULD NOT BECOME A PLACE OF CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS: „We must not be a point of clash between civilizations. Georgia should not become a place of conflict between the US and Russia”⁷⁹ (Giorgi Kardava, Conservative Movement).“
- NEUTRALITY GUARANTEES THAT GEORGIA WILL NOT BECOME A FIRING RANGE OF CONFLICT: “Neutrality means that we will not support any opposing side against another... and most importantly, neutrality is a guarantee that Georgia will not become a firing range for opposing states (Nana Devdariani, Alliance of Patriots).”⁸⁰
- THE EXAMPLE OF UKRAINE SHOWS THAT NATO IS NOT A SECURITY GUARANTOR: „...There are talks about unprecedented, new security guarantees and platforms. We see that NATO has suffered a complete collapse. We saw and heard Zelenskyy's statements! (Irma Inashvili, Alliance of Patriots).”⁸¹
- GEORGIA SHOULD SEEK MILITARY ALLYSHIP WITH RUSSIA: “In fact, a new cold war is starting now and everyone is required to choose a side. And we say that when we go to trade and talk with Russia, our main offer will be reduced to the fact that... we are on your side, we will turn from the location of the enemy's base into an ally, and what can you offer in return?!”⁸² (Zurab Makharadze, Conservative Movement).
- THE WAR IN UKRAINE OPENS UP A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY FOR GEORGIA TO SETTLE ITS RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA: “In the course of the war in Ukraine, the value of our Georgia is immeasurably high. Now we can trade with Russia in a much more open and firm

⁷⁷ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 6 April, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4109878>

⁷⁸ Obieqtivi, Studio 8, 3 November, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4146825

⁷⁹ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 22 March, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4107343

⁸⁰ Obieqtivi, Real News, 13 April, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4111209>

⁸¹ Obieqtivi, Studio N8, 22 March, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4107090>

⁸² Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 22 February, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4100478

manner (Giorgi Kardava, Conservative Movement).⁸³ “This time... Georgia took a very correct course of action... now is the best time for the Georgian state to take the first very real step to restore real diplomacy [with Russia] (Dimitri Lortkipanidze, Primakov Center).⁸⁴

2.8. RUSSIA AS A GUARANTOR OF ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Along with security, a positive representation of Russia took place from an economic point of view. This tactic was mainly utilized by pro-Kremlin actors who cultivated the following three messages: 1) Georgia depends on the Russian market, which is superior to the Western one; 2) Georgia should unconditionally join the 3+3 format, which will unite the three states of the South Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan) and their “big neighbors” (Russia, Turkey, Iran), despite the opposition from the West; 3) The migration of Russian citizens to Georgia fosters the economic development of the country.

- **GEORGIA DEPENDS ON THE RUSSIAN MARKET/THE RUSSIAN MARKET IS SUPERIOR TO THE WESTERN ONE:** “First of all, **Georgia is not even allowed to enter the market of European countries...** whatever expectations the population has from the economic point of view in case of Georgia’s accession to the Euro-Atlantic space, those **expectations will actually be realized** much more if the **relations with Russia are sorted out** (Irakli Martinenko, Conservative Movement).⁸⁵ “All this **European Union talk is a lie... we are tied to the Russians**, from wheat to all vital indicators. If someone presses a button there, and I hope they don’t do it, we will be reduced to dust here (Mikheil Zghenti, Solidarity for Peace).⁸⁶
- **GEORGIA SHOULD JOIN THE 3+3 FORMAT UNCONDITIONALLY:** „We don’t want to be a source of problems for the world... Participating in the **3+3 format would be one of the good methods** for this, because it would **at least lead to the restoration of flights with Russia, simplification of the visa regime**, and a large part of the **population of Georgia would relieve** a little bit **economically** (Zurab Makharadze, Conservative Movement).⁸⁷ “Georgia has a unique chance to define its foreign policy through participation in the format of regional cooperation... I have the Western factor in mind, which is **trying in every way to disrupt Georgia’s participation in regional processes**, and in this case, a clear **example of this is the “3+3” format** (Dimitri Lortkipanidze, Primakov Georgian-Russian Public center).⁸⁸
- **RUSSIAN MIGRATION FOSTERS THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF GEORGIA:** “The opposition also complains that the **Russians founded hundreds of companies in Georgia**, and yes, they did. They do not mention the fact that **Georgians** working in these companies **can’t hide their satisfaction**, because they get paid a solid salary and are treated humanely (Levan Gabashvili, Georgia and World).⁸⁹

⁸³ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 25 March, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4107618>

⁸⁴ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 25 August, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4134666

⁸⁵ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 26 April, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4113376

⁸⁶ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 24 June, 2022, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/4124686>

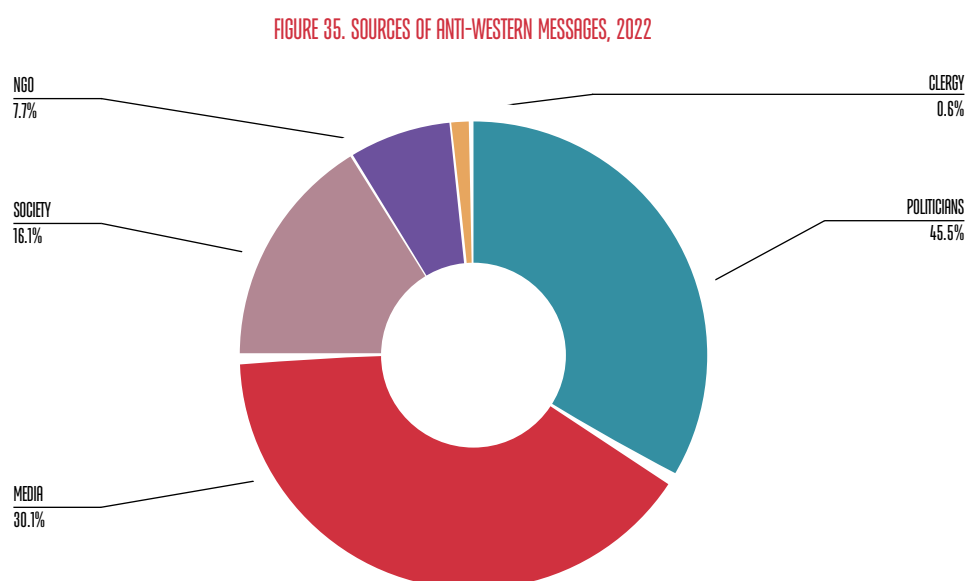
⁸⁷ Alt-Info, Alternative Vision, 18 January, 2022, https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=4092732

⁸⁸ Georgia and World, 8 February, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3GxgmIR>

⁸⁹ Georgia and World, 8 November, 2022, <http://geoworld.ge/ge/ruseti-rom-ara/>

III. SOURCES OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES |

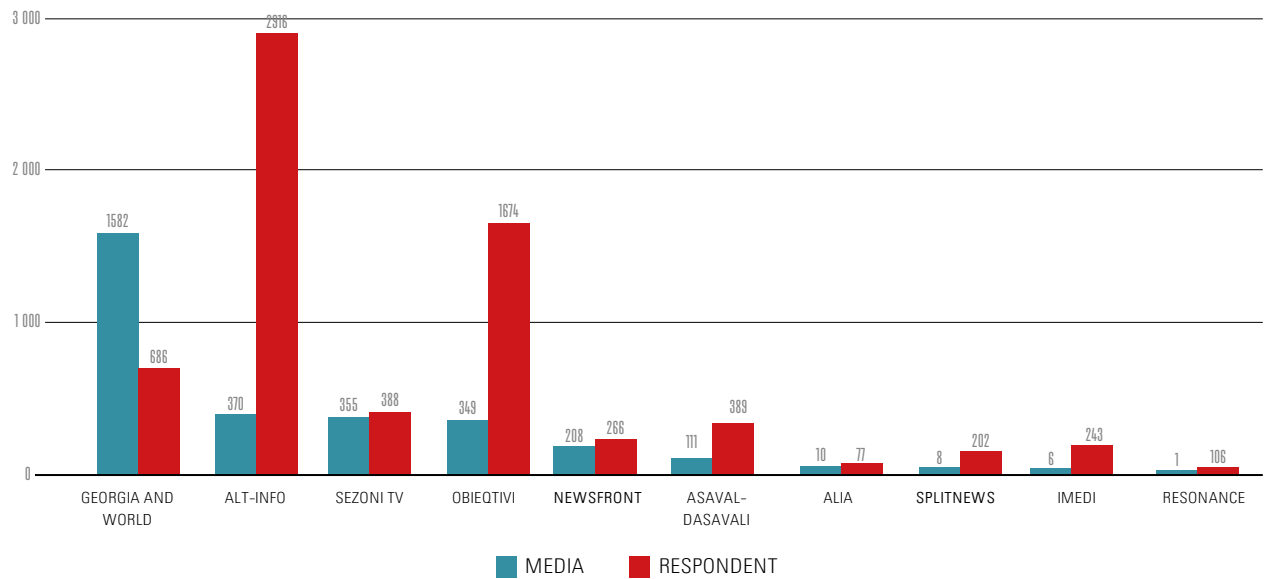
The main source of anti-Western messages were politicians (45.5%), followed by the media (30.1%), society (16.1%), and non-governmental organizations (7.7%); the least significant share is occupied by the clergy (0.6%). Notably, among the representatives of society, a large share is occupied by pro-government experts, who mainly voiced the message box of the ruling party and its satellite “People’s Power.”



It should be underscored that in some cases it was difficult to draw a line between politicians and the media since politicians appeared as both respondents and hosts at politically affiliated media outlets. This trend was most evident in the case of “Alt-Info/Conservative Movement” (TV Alt-Info) and “Alliance of Patriots” (TV Obiektivi). As can be seen in Figure 36, the number of anti-Western statements made by the respondents on both televisions significantly exceeded that of the representatives of the media themselves.

The number of anti-Western messages by respondents was high in the case of NewsFront (266) and Splitnews (202), Asaval-Dasavali (389), pro-government TV “Imedi” (243), and “Resonance” (106).

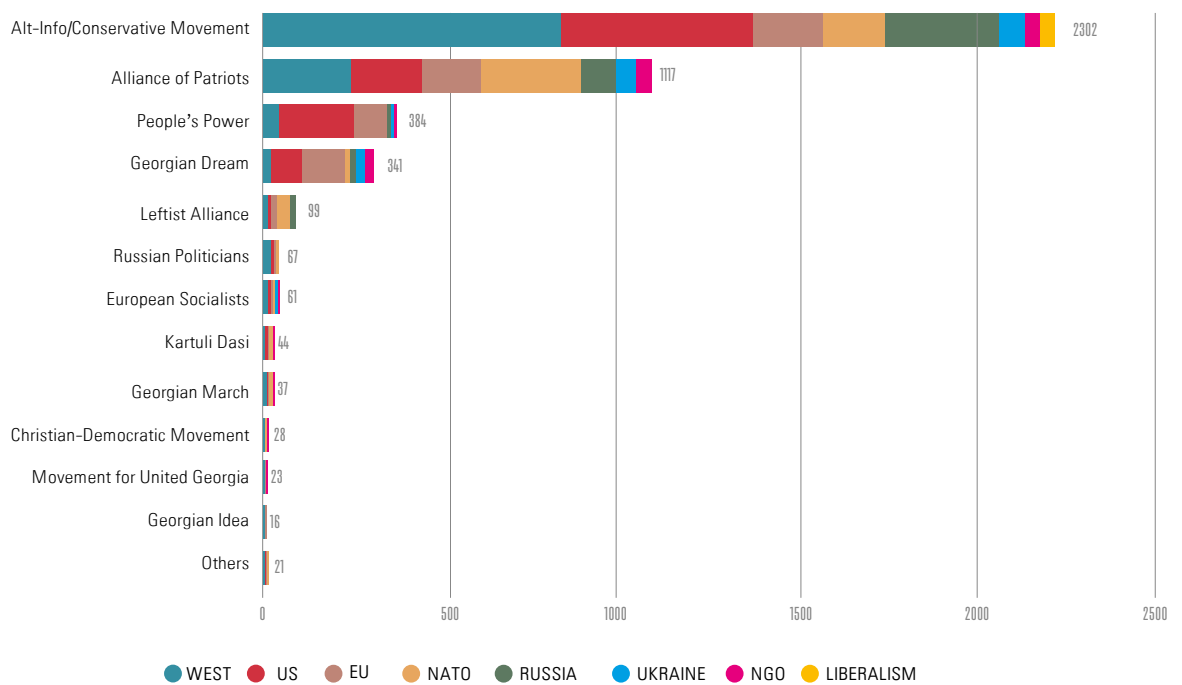
FIGURE 36. SOURCES OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES BY MEDIA OUTLETS AND THEIR RESPONDENTS, 2022



3.1. POLITICIANS

As demonstrated by the figure below, anti-Western messages were mostly voiced two pro-Kremlin parties – Alt-Info/Conservative Movement (2302) and Alliance of Patriots (1117) – through their own TV channels (“Alt-In-fo” and “Obieqtivi”).

FIGURE 37. SOURCES OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES BY POLITICAL PARTIES, 2022



ALT-INFO CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT. The founders of the Alt-Info/Conservative Movement are the former hosts of the TV channel “Alt-Info” and its owner.⁹⁰ The transformation of the media project into a political platform took place in 2021 after the violent dispersal of Tbilisi Pride on July 5, during which 53 journalists were physically assaulted. The founders and hosts of “Alt-Info” were directly involved in extremist actions and even promoted violence, although the legal responsibility of the organizers was never upheld, which became the subject of criticism from both local and international organizations.⁹¹ The party, which has close ties with the founder of the Eurasianist movement, Alexander Dugin, came out with the initiative of a radical change in foreign policy, military cooperation with Russia, and the replacement of liberalism with Christian-conservative ideology. Party leaders even talked about the theocratic model of governing the country together with the church.⁹² In 2022, the party’s connections with Russian government circles became more evident:

- In October 2022, leaders of the Conservative Movement participated in the Eurasian Business Forum in Moscow;⁹³
- Within the framework of the forum, the leaders of the Conservative Movement met with the Minister of the Eurasian Union of Russia, Sergey Glazyev, and the Senator of the Federation Council, Igor Morozov;⁹⁴
- In January 2022, together with other organizations from Georgia, “Conservative Movement” participated in the round table organized by the “Union of Communist Parties” (Союз коммунистической партии – КПСС – КППФ) on the topic “Possibilities for positive development of relations between Russia and Georgia”.⁹⁵ Duma MPs Kazbek Taysaev and Artem Turov participated in the event from the Russian side; From Georgia – in addition to the Conservative Movement, representatives of the “European Socialists” party, “Solidarity for Peace”, “ERI Media”, and “Union of Human Rights Defenders” were present at the event.

⁹⁰ Ani Kistauri, Media Development Foundation, 2022. “The Anatomy of Violent Groups- One year since the events of July 5” <https://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/229/>

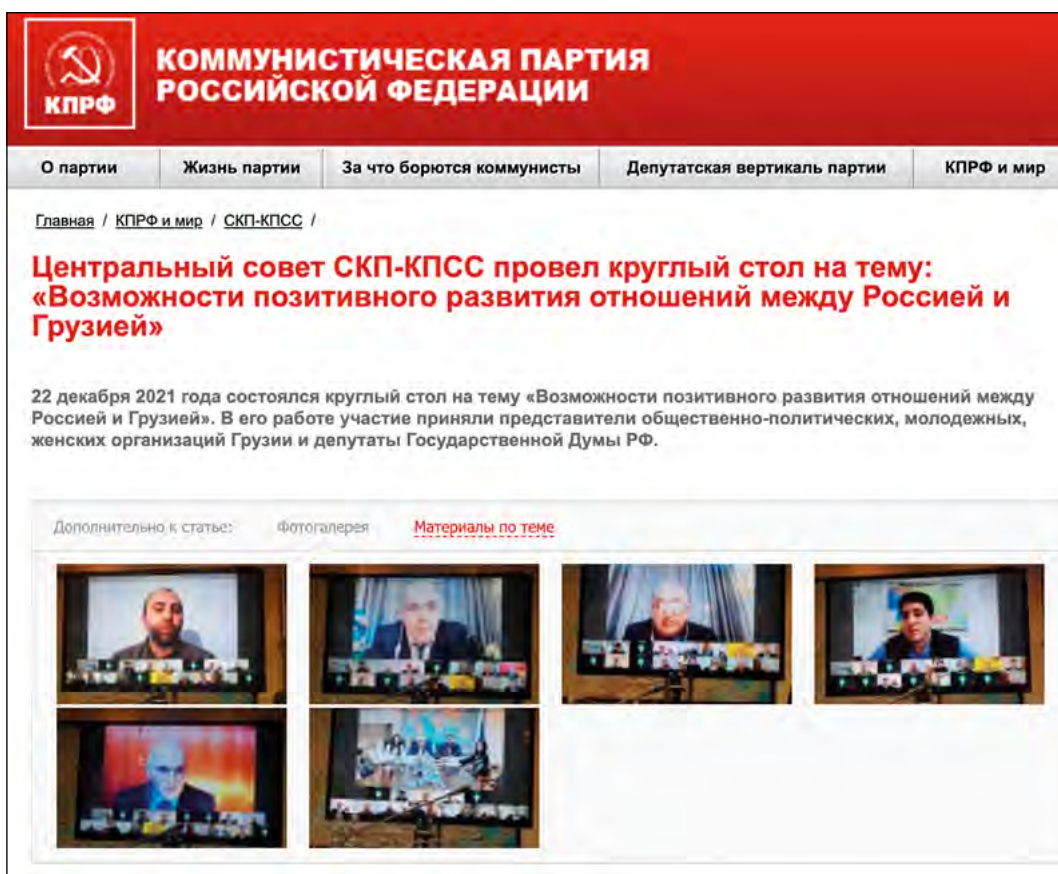
⁹¹ GYLA, 7 May, 2022. The events that took place on July 5-6, 2021 have not yet been properly investigated. <https://bit.ly/49gDkTC>

⁹² Tamar Kintsurashvili, Ketu Khutsishvili, Myth Detector, 15 July, 2021 “The strategy of Pro-Kremlin Violent Groups: Burning of the Western Symbolic should be Normalized!” <https://bit.ly/42IQMNC>

⁹³ Radio Liberty, 7 October, 2022. „Leaders of the “Conservative Movement” took part in the Eurasian Union Integration Forum in Russia,” <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32070187.html>

⁹⁴ Научный центр евразийской интеграции, 12/10/2022, Семинар-конференция «Грузия и Евразийский экономический Союз: от политики конфронтации к совместной созидательной повестке» <https://bit.ly/49fxQsd>

⁹⁵ Отдел ЦК КПРФ по национальной политике и СКП-КПСС, 21/01/2022. Центральный совет СКП-КПСС провел круглый стол на тему: «Возможности позитивного развития отношений между Россией и Грузией» <https://kprf.ru/kpss/208055.html>



Picture: Roundtable by “Union of Communist Parties” on “Possibilities of positive development of relations between Russia and Georgia”





Picture: The visit of Alt-info/conservative movement to Moscow in October 2022

"ALLIANCE OF PATRIOTS". In contrast to the Conservative Movement, the second pro-Kremlin party – "Alliance of Patriots of Georgia" instead of military relations with Russia, advocates for military neutrality. The party has been trying to capitalize on the topic of Turkophobia for years with the message – "If Russia is an occupier, Turkey is an occupier too" – trying to shift attention from modern threats to historical ones. In addition to neutrality, party members have been advocating for ignoring the international format of the Geneva negotiations and resolving conflicts through face-to-face dialogue with Russia, without the involvement of the West;⁹⁶ The party is also demanding the prohibition of American organizations NDI and IRI and their research activities.⁹⁷

Dossier Center, an investigative project by Mikhail Khodorkovsky, published a journalistic investigation⁹⁸ on the Russian connections of "Alliance of Patriots" before the 2020 parliamentary elections.

Against the backdrop of Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, in April 2022, representatives of the "Alliance of Patriots" also held meetings in Moscow. The meeting was attended by the Deputy Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Russian Federal Council, Vladimir Jabanov, and another member of the same

⁹⁶ Myth Detector, 10 August, 2017, Risks of Direct Dialogue with Russia, <https://mythdetector.ge/en/risks-of-direct-dialogue-with-russia-2/>

⁹⁷ Civil.ge, 27 January, 2020 Alliance of Patriots Rallies, Wants NDI, IRI Banned in Georgia, <https://civil.ge/archives/336057>

⁹⁸ Центр «Досье» (2020), Как Кремль вмешивается во внутреннюю политику соседних стран, Часть первая: выборы в Грузии <https://bit.ly/3jUI0IO>

committee, Mikhail Sinitsin. Together with the leaders of the Alliance of Patriots (Irma Inashvili and Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi), the President of the organization “Javakhk Diaspora of Russia,” Agassi Arabian was also present at the meeting.⁹⁹



Picture: Meetings of the leaders of the Alliance of Patriots in the Federal Council of Russia

GEORGIAN DREAM AND PEOPLE'S POWER. 2022 was significant from the point of view that following the two infamous pro-Kremlin parties, in terms of spreading anti-Western messages, the ruling party “Georgian Dream” (341) and its division, member of the parliamentary majority “People’s Power” (384) occupied the next places. The ruling party, which has a publicly declared Euro-Atlantic course, immediately after coming to power in 2012, changed the radical approaches of the previous government in relation to Russia. In the 2012 pre-election program of the Georgian Dream, it was clearly stated that Georgia should no longer be in the list of conflicting issues between the West and Russia.¹⁰⁰ In the program of the 2020 parliamentary elections, in parallel with the Euro-Atlantic integration, the ruling party emphasized the need of “pursuing a policy based on balanced and mutually beneficial partnership cooperation in the region” and spoke of “continuing the promotion of trade, economic, cultural and people-to-people contacts with the Russian Federation within the framework of a rational and de-escalation policy.”¹⁰¹

“People’s power”, which was founded in the summer of 2022 by the MPs who left the Georgian Dream, was created to voice the positions of the ruling party in more radical forms. However, the mentioned union still remains part of the parliamentary majority and the difference between them is only in the forms of expression.

Noteworthy that in order to maintain power, the messages of the ruling party and its satellite union, in terms of instrumentalizing the fears of war, and presenting democracy and democratic institutions as a threat, are in line with the narratives of pro-Kremlin actors. Instead of consolidating society in the direction of fighting against foreign threats coming from Russia, their efforts are directed against democracy and democratic institutions.

⁹⁹ Совет Федерации является «верхней» палатой Федерального Собрания – парламента Российской Федерации. 4/04/2022В. Джабаров провел встречу с председателем политической партии «Альянс патриотов Грузии» Д. Тархан-Моурави <http://council.gov.ru/events/news/134720/>

¹⁰⁰ “The factor of Georgia should no longer be in the list of conflicting issues between the West and Russia” pg.22. Georgian Dream, 2012 Pre-Election Program, <https://bit.ly/3SYBdxZ>

¹⁰¹ <https://gd.ge/uploads/programs/b5045f9c70101fae8.pdf>

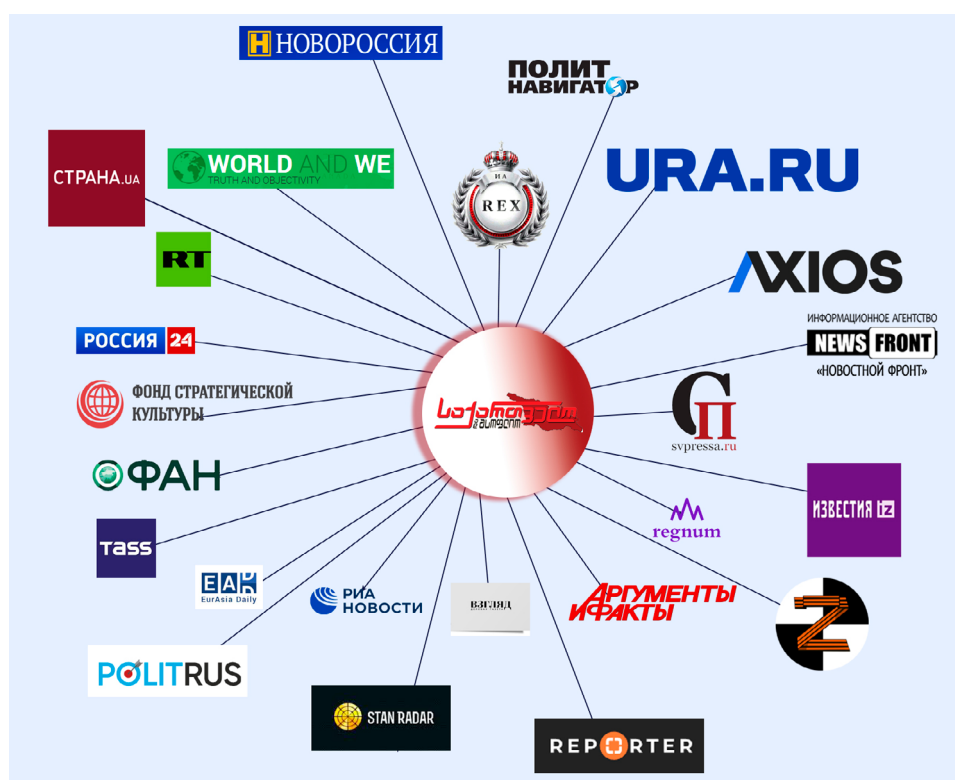
OTHER PARTIES. As can be seen in Figure 37, the number of messages voiced by other parties was relatively small, including the “Georgian March”, which was more visible in the political arena in the previous years. The shift may be explained by the fact that its niche was occupied by a more radical Conservative Movement.

3.2. MEDIA

GEORGIA AND WORLD. Among media outlets, anti-Western messages were spread most often, like in previous years, by the pro-Kremlin publication “Georgia and World”¹⁰² (1582), whose founding organization – “Historical Heritage” – has direct links with the Kremlin. In 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin awarded Alexander Chachia, a member of the Public Council of “Historical Heritage”, with an honorary order for his great contribution to the strengthening of friendship and cooperation and the development of scientific and cultural ties with the Russian Federation. In the awarding order, Chachia is mentioned as the publisher of “Georgia and World”.¹⁰³

Similar to the previous years, in 2022, “Georgia and World” often relied on publications translated from Russian-language propaganda media, such as: Russia Today, Россия 24, Фонд стратегической культуры, RIA Novosti, TASS, “Известия”, EurAsia Daily, Daily, Взгляд, PolitRUS, “ПолитНавигатор », «Аргументы и факты», Regnum.ru, «Свободная пресса», NewsFront and others.

INFOGRAPHIC 3. RUSSIAN SOURCES OF “GEORGIA AND WORLD”



¹⁰² Myth Detector, “Georgia and World,” Profile, <https://mythdetector.ge/en/profiles/geworld-ge/>

¹⁰³ <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/acts/files/0001201402130018.pdf>

ALT-INFO. “Georgia and World” is followed by “Alt-Info” (370), which is affiliated with the conservative movement, where the respondents from the Conservative Movement party made the most anti-Western comments (2916). The television, which, along with its anti-Western editorial policy, is distinguished by hate speech, was involved in the organization and incitement of violence of the violent action against Tbilisi Pride on July 5, 2021.¹⁰⁴ In April 2023, Alt-Info TV promoted an online contest organized by the International Council of Russian Compatriots (MCPC) and the Georgian-Russian Initiative Group for Georgian youth on the topic of the Second World War.¹⁰⁵



SEZONI TV. “Sezoni TV” (355),¹⁰⁶ owned by Giorgi Kandelaki, a former boxer and supporter of Stalin’s ideology, also stood out in terms of its anti-Western rhetoric.

OBJEQTIVI. As mentioned, similar to “Alt-Info,” in terms of the number of respondents (1674), Obieqtivi TV (349) – a media outlet affiliated with the second pro-Kremlin party “Alliance of Patriots” stood out as well, which has also been cultivating Turkophobic and homophobic statements for years now.¹⁰⁷

ASAVAL-DASAVALI. Newspaper “Asaval-Dasavali” (111) is another publication distinguished by its anti-Western editorial policy and hate speech, positioning itself as a conservative platform.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Ani Kistauri, Media Development Foundation, 2022. “The Anatomy of Violent Groups- One year since the events of July 5” <https://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/229/>

¹⁰⁵ Международный юношеский онлайн-конкурс, посвященный Дню Победы в Великой Отечественной войне 1941-1945 гг <https://archive.is/SWFDM>

¹⁰⁶ Sezoni TV Profile, <https://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/sezoni-tv>

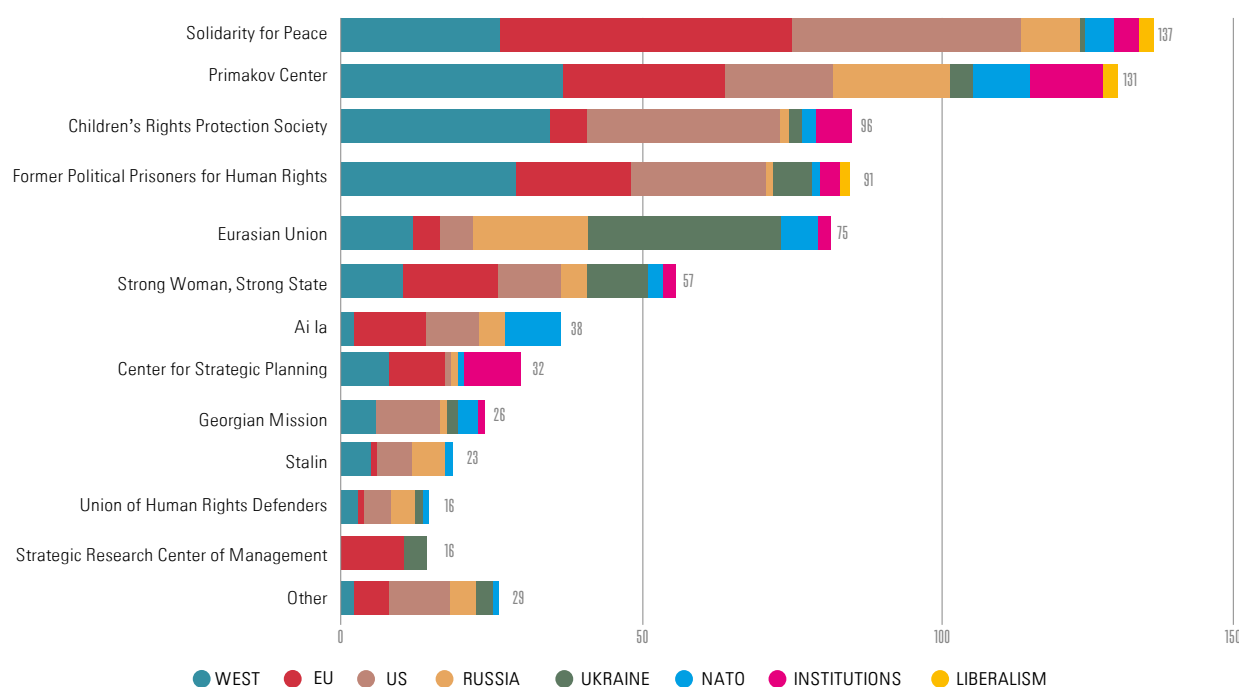
¹⁰⁷ Tinatin Gogoladze, Media Development Foundation, Hate Speech – 2020 <https://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/219/>

¹⁰⁸ Asaval-Dasavali profile, <https://mythdetector.ge/en/profiles/asaval-dasavali/>

3.3. CIVIL ORGANIZATIONS

“Solidarity for Peace” (137) and Primakov’s Center for Russian-Georgian Public Relations (131) were in the lead among public organizations in terms of voicing anti-Western messages.

FIGURE 38. SOURCES OF ANTI-WESTERN MESSAGES BY CIVIL ORGANIZATIONS, 2022



Solidarity for Peace is an organization founded in 2021 and has close ties with Russia. Together with the head of the Primakov Center and other organizations, the organization held several meetings in Moscow in 2022–2023 in order to normalize relations between Russia and Georgia.¹⁰⁹ According to “Ria Novosti”, “Solidarity for Peace” has been conducting an intensive dialogue with the Russian authorities since the end of 2022 to restore air traffic between Russia and Georgia.¹¹⁰



Picture: Georgian Delegation in Moscow (7 December, 2022)

¹⁰⁹ Фонд стратегической культуры, 8/12/2022. Аспекты нормализации российско-грузинских отношений обсудили на форуме в Москве <https://archive.is/tFS2X>

¹¹⁰ РИА Новости, 19/05/2023. https://t.me/rian_ru/203151

Among other public organizations, some support the Kremlin (Eurasian Union, Stalin, Union of Human Rights Defenders), some have an anti-liberal agenda (Children's Rights Protection Society, Georgian Mission), and some support the government and are positioned on the conservative flank (Ai la, Strong Woman, Strong State, former political prisoners for human rights).

3.4. CLERGY

Among the clergy, the largest share of anti-Western messages were voiced by the Archpriest of the Vardigori Fathers' Monastery, Spiridon Tskifurishvili, an Orthodox priest who supports the Conservative Movement and called for violence during the violent rally of July 5, 2021.¹¹¹ Basil Mkalavishvili, who was excommunicated from the church, Stefane Kalaijishvili, Ioane Gamrekeli, Giorgi Razmadze, and other active priests also stood out in terms of anti-Western messages.

¹¹¹ Ani Kistauri, MDF, 2022. "The Anatomy of Violent Groups – One year since the events of July 5" <https://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/229/>

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