VIOLENT EXTREMIST NARRATIVES IN GEORGIA:
A RESEARCH REPORT

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Georgian Center for Strategy and Development (GCSD) is a non-partisan and neutral non-governmental organisation. The values of the organisation are based on the principles of equality, human rights and freedoms, respect, a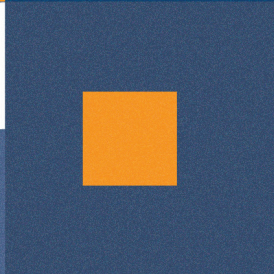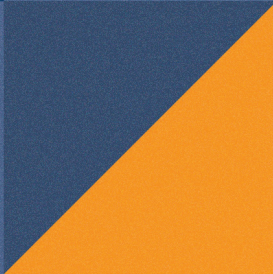ccountability, and transparency. The major goals of the Center include the following: ensure support for Georgia's national security; enhance the principles of effective governance and democratic rule; assist the country's European and Euro-Atlantic integration and create the conditions for sustainable development.

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FOREWORD

The report of this research is prepared by Georgian Center for Starategy and Development as part of the project - *Enhancing the Capacity of Georgia in Preventing Violent Extremism and Radicalisation.*

The aim of the document is to provide stakeholders with details about the key characteristics of violent extremist narrative in Georgia.

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ABSTRACT

Recent events in Georgia - including the acts of violence committed against media representatives in July 2021 at a street rally organised by Georgian far-right groups[1] and the arrest of 5 young people upon charges of joining a terrorist organisation in the Pankisi Gorge on 24 August[2] - indicate that not only is violent extremism actively disseminated in the territory of Georgia, but it also endangers the national security architecture.

This research report provides a detailed description of the key characteristics of the jihadist and far-right narratives disseminated in Georgia. It is noteworthy that this document does not study far-left narrative as it has been less violent and fairly infrequent in Georgia.

In order to study violent extremist narrative disseminated in the territory of Georgia, semi-structured interviews were conducted with subject-matter experts, content and language of the disseminated narrative were intensively studied through qualitative and quantitative, relevant literature as well as secondary and tertiary data were researched and processed.

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[1] OSCE, U. (2021). *On July 5 Violence in Georgia. U.S. Mission to the OSCE;* retrieved on 13 November 2021, from **https://osce.usmission.gov/on-july-5-violence-in-georgia/.**

[2] State Security Service (2021). Statement of the State Security Service; last seen: 13 November 2021. **https://ssg.gov.ge/news/712/saxelmtsifo-usafrtxoebis-samsaxuris-gancxadeba**

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

DAESH	the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
CCG	Criminal Code of Georgia
SSG	State Security Service of Georgia
GCSD	Georgian Center for Strategy and Development
ICCT	International Centre for Counter Terrorism
ICSVE	International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism

CONTENT

1. ABOUT THE RESEARCH OF VIOLENT EXTREMIST NARRATIVE IN GEORGIA

Judging from the specific nature of violent extremist narrative spread in Georgia, the report of this research is divided into 3 thematic parts. The first part of the document offers a working definition of violent extremist narrative, which was elaborated in consequence of this research. Two independent segments in the second part of the report provide detailed information about both the jihadist and far-right narratives in Georgia. The concluding part of this document summarises and evaluates interrelation between the jihadist and far-right narratives within the Georgian context.

In order to provide diverse stakeholders with detailed information about the jihadist and far-right narrative in Georgia, the complex process of this this research included the following: observation on the dissemination of violent extremist narrative from **the August War of 2008 to late January 2022**; a quantitative and qualitative content-analysis of the disseminated statements; semi-structured interviews with subject-matter experts; and a detailed analysis of information obtained from secondary and tertiary sources.

Along with the basic materials, this document is accompanied by a number of appendices that include information about and examples of both far-right and the jihadist narratives obtained and processed as part of this research.

Besides, in order to acquaint stakeholders with the results of this research promptly and efficiently, a brief review – adapted text – of the research is attached to the document.

2. CRITERIA FOR QUALIFYING VIOLENT EXTREMIST NARRATIVE

Violent extremist narrative and the process of its dissemination are relatively new phenomena in Georgia, as indicated not only by the absence of the respective thematic concentration in the Criminal Code of Georgia (CCG)[3], but also by the poor treatment of the violent extremist narrative in the National Strategy of Georgia on Fight Against Terrorism, which largely limits itself to the discussion of the jihadist extremist narrative.[4]

Notwithstanding the fact that diverse categories of violent extremist narrative may vary according to their ideology, far-right and the jihadist narratives display similarities that are common to all kinds of violent extremist narrative.

It is also worth noting that far-right extremist and the jihadist narratives are prevailing among the ideological categories of violent extremist narrative disseminated in Georgia. As far as violent far-left extremist narrative seems to be disappearing in the country, this document focuses on the jihadist and far-right narrative.

As mentioned above, there are fundamental ideological differences between the jihadist and far-right violent narratives. However, a close analysis of the language and content of these narrative categories in Georgia highlighted several shared characteristics between the two. This helps to define and understand a concept of violent extremist narrative specifically within the Georgian context, and this concept shall serve as the basis of this research paper.[5] (see Note 1, Note 2)

The reasons behind the elaboration of the working concept of violent extremist narrative disseminated in Georgia include both the urgency of the mentioned phenomenon and the ambiguity surrounding other seemingly similar concepts of violent extremist narrative – e. g., hate speech.

However, unlike hate speech, which is usually less organised and systematic in its nature, violent extremist narrative[6] usually has three (3) main actors included in the process of narrative dissemination. These actors may be arbitrarily referred to as a first-source of violent extremist narrative, agent-distributors, and target audiences.

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[3] საქართველოს პარლამენტი (2021). საქართველოს სისხლის სამართლის კოდექსი - კონსოლიდირებული ვერსია. საქართველოს საკანონმდებლო მაცნე [The Parliament of Georgia (2021). Criminal Code of Georgia – Consolidated Version. The Legislative Herald of Georgia].
https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/16426?publication=235

[4] საქართველოს მთავრობა (2019). ტერორიზმის წინააღმდეგ ბრძოლის შესახებ საქართველოს ეროვნული სტრატეგია [The Georgian Government (2019). The National Strategy of Georgia on Fight Against Terrorism].

* **Note ¹ : It is notable that the updated version of the National Strategy of Georgia on Fight Against Terrorism (2022) was not yet available at the time of research completion.**

[5] Note²: Judging from the fact that the definition of violent extremism here (stipulated below) is general, this report introduces separate working definitions for Jihadist and far-right narratives specific to the Georgian context.

* **Note³:** It is notable that the definitions presented in this document are not generalised concepts. They are specific to the Georgian context. Accordingly, any attempt to generalise these definitions will undermine their validity.

[6] United Nations (2021). Addressing and Countering Hate Speech and Violent Extremism through Education in a Digital World. **https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1u/k1u6lj3ito**

Besides, the unique nature of violent extremist narrative is well manifested by diverse platforms that are especially efficiently exploited by agent-distributors, also forms of dissemination and linguistic instruments, which, unlike hate speech, are mostly focused on the notions of in-group and out-group identities.

Accordingly, this document – based on the common characteristics identified in consequence of the detailed research of the jihadist and far-right extremist narratives in Georgia – presents the following working definition of violent extremist narrative:

> **Violent extremist narrative is a set of systematised ideological messages disseminated by a violent entity or its agent-distributors – both inadvertent and affiliated with the entity in a number of ways. Such a narrative sharply divides society into an out-group and in-group, calling for the latter to get involved in various suggested forms of violent actions against the members of the out-group** (see Note 3, p. 11).

This definition allows for the identification of those key characteristics that are shared by all types of ideologically diversified extremist narratives – breaking society and community into conflicting parts defined by J. M. Berger as in-group and out-group identities.[7]

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[7] Berger, J.M (2017). Extremist Construction of Identity: How Escalating Demands for Legitimacy Shape and Define In-Group and Out-Group Dynamics. International Center for Counter-Terrorism.
https://icct.nl/publication/extremist-construction-of-identity-how-escalating-demands-for-legitimacy-shape-and-define-in-group-and-out-group-dynamics/

3. ABOUT THE JIHADIST NARRATIVE DISSEMINATED IN GEORGIA

On 23-24 August 2021, five persons were arrested on charges of membership of a terrorist organisation in two villages of the Pankisi Gorge - Duisi and Qoreti - as part of a special operation conducted by Georgia's State Security Service. Criminal proceedings against these persons were initiated under Article 327 of CCG on membership of a terrorist organisation.

The State Security Service of Georgia stated that in addition to joining a terrorist organisation and devising plans to travel to Syria, the above-mentioned persons openly popularised the terrorist narrative and symbols.

This case is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, notwithstanding DAESH's weakening positions, its Jihadist narrative still influences persons living in the territory of Georgia. Apart from that, the case in question highlights the role of Jihadist narrative in radicalisation and vividly demonstrates the risks and threats that the dissemination of such narratives poses to Georgia.

3.1 WORKING DEFINITION OF THE JIHADIST NARRATIVE

Before discussing the ideological foundation of the jihadist narrative disseminated in Georgia, it is important to define what the concept of the jihadist narrative itself means in this document.

Although the jihadist narrative has been subject to a vast number of academic papers over the decades, this concept does not have a universally agreed definition. Within the boundaries of the empirical research, two types of approaches are used to define the jihadist narrative:

01 | **conceptual definition of the "jihadist narrative"** – this approach defines terms like "Jihad" and "Narrative" separately. Jihad implies the war against the enemies of Islam, while narrative refers to the process of sharing one's beliefs or worldview[8] with others. Thus, the jihadist narrative is a set of messages that aim to encourage people in various forms to get involved in the fight against Islam's enemies;

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[8] Oxford Reference (n,d.) Jihad. Internet;
https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100020733; last seen: 10 September 2021.

Hornblower, S. & Spawforth, A. (2005). Narrative; The Oxford Classical Dictionary; internet;
https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198606413.001.0001/acref-9780198606413-e-4338;
last seen: 10 September 2021.

02 | **definition based on individual cases** – this approach is based on the understanding that the primary source of the jihadist narratives is a violent organisation / entity, a movement, or an actor. Andrew Glazzard (2017) calls the jihadist narrative *"the worldview of violent Islamist groups and movements."* Glazzard further elaborates that many experts share this definition.[9]

jihadist narrative is a set of systematised ideological messages disseminated by a violent self- identified Islamist entity [10] or by agent-distributors - both inadvertent and affiliated with the violent entity in various forms. Such entities directly or indirectly call for people to get involved in various activities and acts of Jihad as interpreted by this entity [11] (see Note 2, p. 11) (see Note 4, p. 15)

3.2 LANGUAGE AND CONTENT OF THE JIHADIST NARRATIVE

While discussing the ideological foundations of the jihadist narrative disseminated in Georgia, it is important to consider several crucial factors. Georgia, due to its geographical, demographical, and historical characteristics, unites three diverse the jihadist narratives of different scale, the content of which defines the range of their dissemination.

Global, regional, and **local** (domestic) narratives described below are mostly reactive, reflecting and responding to processes occurring on global, regional, or local levels.

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[9] Glazzard, A. (2017). Losing the Plot: Narrative, Counter-Narrative and Violent Extremism; International Centre for Counter-Terrorism. p. 1

[10] *The term "violent entity" here refers to an entity, who identifies itself according to the violent and misguided interpretation of Islam.*

[11] **Note4:** Terrorist organisations are gradually expanding the concept of Jihad, which means that today the idea of Jihad envisages any form of involvement. A universal concept like Jihad also inspires people who think that the existing circumstances prevent them from positively contributing to public life.

3.2.1 Global   Narrative

Historical roots of the Islamic Caliphate serve as the ideological foundation of the global narrative. According to this narrative, once a glorious Islamic state is now occupied by unbelievers (the so-called "Kafirs"). **A softer version of the narrative argues that these territories may not occupied but governed by unbelievers or disloyal Muslims.** And the primary duty of any Muslim is to free these territories from unbelievers or betrayers, unite these lands, and establish Sharia laws there. This narrative is disseminated in all countries including Georgia, as according to this narrative, **all Muslims must join Jihad in any form possible.**

Interestingly, it is precisely this narrative that is actively used for recruiting new members by such Islamist terrorist organisations as DAESH and Al-Qaeda (see Appendix 1). The narrative about the Caliphate is conspicuously manifested in Badri Iremadze's statement:

> *...You may think that we are too far away, and the Caliphate will not reach Georgia. But I want to remind you of the period when Georgia was included in the Caliphate. Georgians of the era were more heroic and courageous than the contemporary enemies of Islam living in Georgia.*[12]

Qualitative content-analysis of Badri Iremadze's statement enables us to identify major functions of the jihadist narrative disseminated in Georgia (see Figure 1).

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[12] წულაძე, ძ. (2015). არის თუ არა ყურანის სწავლება ექსტრემისტული? ამერიკის ხმა. [Tsuladze Dz. (2015). Is Teaching the Quran Extremist? Voice of America.] Internet;
https://www.amerikiskhma.com/a/isis-georgia/3071479.html; last seen: 10 September 2021.

FIGURE 1.

Functions of the Global Jihadist Narrative in Georgia
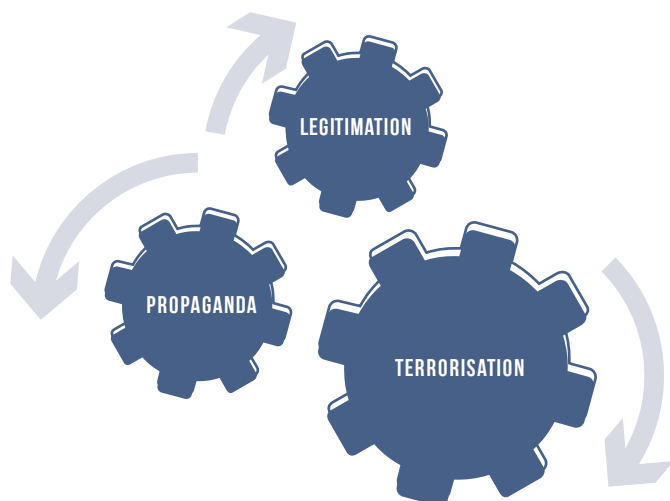
Functions of global Jihadist narrative disseminated in Georgia include **Jihad legitimation, in-group propaganda, and terrorisation, intimidation of the adversary.**

3.2.2 Regional Narrative

Regional narrative includes messages that express attitudes to processes occurring in individual regions. Currently, regional narrative in Georgia is disseminated among the Kists and ethnic Azerbaijanis. The narrative disseminated among the Kists is similar to the **one spread in Chechnya: the Chechen war is a war for freedom between Chechen Muslims and unbeliever Russians.** Such narrative spread to the Pankisi Gorge from Chechnya. One of the most evident examples of this narrative can be traced in the interview, which Muslim Abu Valid Al-Shishan **(Murad Margoshvili)** gave to the Turkish edition of Al-Jazeera. He draws parallels between the first war in Chechnya and the situation in Syria (see Appendix 2):

> *... Major reason why we came here [to Syria], is the Prophet's Hadith on Sham [Syria], and the chaos that was wreaked on Syrian people. We are no strangers to this. We have been suffering for years. We are the nation that best understands the Syrian people. And in this we resemble one another. And as stated in Hadith, we met those people, for whom we shall fight and die.*[13]*...*

Although not widely disseminated among ethnic Azerbaijanis living in Georgia, the presence of similar narratives is clearly felt. The narrative spread among ethnic Azerbaijanis in Georgia argues that **Azerbaijan is governed by the unbelieving family of the Aliev, and the unbelievers are reinforced on that territory; thus, each Muslim must try to get rid of them [betrayers of Islam].**

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[13] Al Jazeera (2017). An Interview with al-Shishani. Internet;
http://www.chechensinsyria.com/?p=24202&fbclid=IwAR2KZ2cN7eWJ32SsxJTPyL5fBHbaQsNR-7lqm72M6bnwQQnIUIwiyxjgbFQ;
last seen: 13 September 2021 (translated to Georgian by Nino Burchuladze)

3.2.3 Local (Domestic) Narrative

Local (domestic) narrative is mostly disseminated among Adjarians, and because Georgia is their historical motherland, the narrative is largely tailored to the Georgian context. The local narrative is an extremist response to processes occurring in Georgia. One example is a narrative concerning **Georgia's unbelieving government and the unbelieving Patriarchate that are trying to convert Muslim Adjarians to Christianity, exile them to other regions as ecomigrants, and settle Christians in their place to eradicate Islam from Adjara; accordingly, each Muslim must oppose to this process and the institutions that are in charge.** The narrative is manifested in Tamaz Chaghalidze's **(Ahmed Jurji)** statements, which he posted to a social network with the account of **Muvahid Muvahid:**

> *If you can, send us photos, names, and addresses of those people who are enemies of Islam, of all groups and site owners of the Kharijit Takfiri, Murjiites, Dagvats, Mushriqs, and all others who have harmed Muslims. This is our biggest request it is easy to contact us, and our sites, pages, blogs, groups and numbers are available [punctuation omitted here as in the original post].*[14]

3.3 AGENT-DISTRIBUTORS OF JIHADIST NARRATIVE IN GEORGIA

Jihadist narrative has two sides: distributors and the target audience. The former is referred to as an **agent-distributor,** the latter – as a **target audience** in this document. For the purposes of this research, **agent-distributor of violent extremist narrative is understood as a person / entity that either inadvertently or intentionally disseminates violent extremist narrative.** Agent-distributors of the jihadist narrative in Georgia may fall into two categories:

01 Affiliated **agent-distributors intentionally disseminating the jihadist** narrative;

02 **Inadvertent agent-distributors** of the **jihadist** narrative.

This chapter discusses specific nature of each type of agent and the content of their narrative.

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[14] ბურჭულაძე, ნ. (2016). "მოგვაწოდეთ ფოტოები, სახელი-გვარები და მისამართები იმ ხალხისა ვინც არიან ისლამის მტრები" - ISIS-ის ახალი მუქარა საქართველოს?! კვირის პალიტრა. [Burchuladze N. (2016). "Send us photos, names, addresses of the enemies of Islam" – a new threat of ISIS against Georgia?" Kviris Palitra.]

https://www.kvirispalitra.ge/versia/31526-qmogvatsodeth-mtrebis-misamarthebiq.html

3.3.1 Intentional Dissemination of Narrative

The concept of an agent involved in the intentional dissemination of the jihadist narrative in Georgia implies that the person / entity in question is aware of disseminating the jihadist narrative in the territory of Georgia. Generally, rebellious movements, military blocks, terrorist organisations, their affiliates, etc. may be included among these agents. Agents involved in the intentional dissemination of terrorist narrative in the territory of Georgia are mainly **terrorist organisations** and their **affiliates (persons or groups).**

▶ *3.3.1.1 Terrorist Organisation as a First-Source of the Jihadist Narrative in Georgia*

The National Strategy of Georgia on Fight Against Terrorism includes the dissemination of terrorist narrative among possible threats and dangers.[15] This security document highlights DAESH and Al-Qaeda as particularly dangerous organisations in this regard.[16] However, considering the latest events in Afghanistan, Taliban should be also added to threats in terms of narrative dissemination.

It is notable that terrorist organisations and similar entities are the primary sources - first-sources - **of the jihadist narrative, which implies their ability to design and conjure a narrative.**

3.3.1.1.1 DAESH. In terms of dissemination of violent extremist narrative, the case of DAESH is unique due to several reasons:

01 | Firstly, DAESH is the **unconditional leader** among other terrorist organisations in terms of **recruiting citizens** of Georgia, because the narrative it disseminated during the Syrian civil war was mostly oriented on recruiting.[17]

02 | The second interesting characteristic is the notable change in the global narrative disseminated by DAESH, as part of which the terrorist organisation called for the citizens of various countries to perform terrorist attacks in the territory of their own countries. With its positions noticeably weakened in Syria and Iraq, DAESH began encouraging citizens of various countries to commit terrorist acts in their countries, which, on the one hand, increases the scale of activity of a terrorist organisation and, on the other, poses threat to Georgia's national security architecture.

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[15] Government of Georgia (2019). *The National Strategy of Georgia on Fight Against Terrorism.*

[16] Ibid.

[17] Pokalova, E. & Karosanidze, T. (2020). Neighbouring an Insurgency: the case of Radicalisation in Georgia. Central Asian Survey (40); p. 243.

It is interesting that DAESH was the first one among other terrorist organisations to replace its calls for recruitment with calls for extremist violence in the respective home countries of recruits.[18] Accordingly, in the violent extremist narrative disseminated by DAESH in Georgia, centripetal recruitment (to Syria and Iraq) is accompanied with centrifugal narratives as well, which call for the acts of violence in the recruits' home countries.

DAESH's jihadist narrative, as well as the narrative of other Sunni terrorist organisations, mostly targets those Muslims who consider themselves marginalised. Interviews conducted by ICSVE[19] with terrorist convicts in French and Belgian prisons illustrated several interesting content-related details in DAESH narratives:

01 DAESH's extremist jihadist narrative is disseminated on two levels. The first one, the **general narrative** about DAESH agenda is intended for the ideological indoctrination of masses rather than the actual recruitment of people. This narrative is used to arouse interest in target audiences. This is followed by the second one, a different, **personalised narrative**, which is tailored to individual needs. The latter is employed by agents to persuade their targets into committing extremist acts in the territory of home of foreign countries;

02 In relation to the above-mentioned general and personal levels of DAESH narrative, it can be argued that the **first level (general) activities are usually implemented through the internet or other media, introducing marginalised Muslims with the "reality" interpreted by DAESH. Interested persons then contact the agent themselves or send out unconscious signals that they are ready for more personalised narratives;** *(See Appendix 1, Interview #3)*

03 in terms of content, topics of narrative disseminated by DAESH may be classified in three categories: **political, religious,** and **social.**

a. **Political** – according to this category of narrative, DAESH's political purpose is to create and restore the Caliphate, which shall not turn away from the teachings of Prophet Mohammed and ensure peaceful life for all Muslims inside Ummah [Islamic community].[20] This narrative disseminated by DAESH argues that western and pro-western states have been trying to prevent this purpose from fulfilment for centuries,[21] but Islamic State will necessarily win in the end. Interestingly, altered version of this narrative can be traced in a statement made by Khvicha Gobadze and his followers – „Message to the Georgian People" – which replaced the West with the Patriarchate of Georgia and all Georgian Christians as enemies of Islam. [22]

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[18] Lister, C (2017). Al-Qaeda versus ISIS: *Competing Jihadist Brands in the Middle East; Middle East Institute; გვ. 10-16.*

[19] *International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism – ICSVE*

[20] Lister, C (2017). Al-Qaeda versus ISIS: Competing Jihadist Brands in the Middle East; Middle East Institute; p. 10-16.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

b. **Religious –** as already mentioned above, the Jihad doctrine serves as the foundation of the second category of DAESH's narrative. Jihad, in its essence, means the fight for Islam. However, interestingly, DAESH altered the narrative so that the concept of **Jihad for Islam** was transformed into **Jihad for the Islamic Caliphate.** Similar replacement of concepts is demonstrated in the interviews conducted by ICSVE with terrorist convicts arrested for their past involvement in DAESH activities in Syria and Iraq (see Appendix 1).

c. **Social** – one might argue that this category of narrative is most actively used in the recruitment process. It is characterised with the highest flexibility and easily adapts to particular target audiences. The **fundamental principle**, however, **is to tailor the narrative to the needs of marginalised Muslims.** As mentioned by a woman-recruit in one of the interviews, the DAESH recruiter "sold a dream" to her (see Appendix 2). **Narrative of social character is most effectively disseminated during interpersonal communication** and promises members of the target audience better quality of life under the IS's protection.

3.3.1.1.2 Al-Qaeda. It is no less important to talk about the narrative disseminated by a terrorist organisation like Al-Qaeda. Due to the complex nature and subtlety of its narrative, Al-Qaeda was indeed an outstanding terrorist organisation at the initial stages of its development. Despite the weakening positions, recent events in Afghanistan may bring up questions about the actual weakness of this terrorist organisation and raise doubts about the dissemination of its extremist narrative in Georgia.

ICCT's research document[23] about Al-Qaeda's narrative provides a profound insight into the narratives disseminated by the terrorist organization.[24] In terms of diversity, Al Qaeda's current narrative may seem primitive as compared to DAESH's current narratives. Al-Qaeda's narrative bears close resemblance to DAESH's social narrative, which implies **"selling a dream"** to marginalised persons. Dissemination of narratives of this kind by Al-Qaeda consists of 3 stages:

01 **identifying root causes of marginalisation** – just like DAESH, Al-Qaeda frequently does not complicate matters too much, trying to benefit from a common, universal myth of an out-group marginalising and abusing the in-group, which fits all Muslims alike. In this case, Al-Qaeda disseminates the narrative that Muslims are ill-treated and abused by actors like West, Christians, etc.;

02 **offering ways to solve the problem** – after emphasizing the severity of marginalisation, Al-Qaeda highlights the existence of viable solutions. As usual, this often leads to the universal solution, and Al-Qaeda, like DAESH, offers Muslims a peaceful life and purely Islamic community within the Caliphate. However, again like DAESH, there are cases when individual offers are made by Al-Qaeda's agents through interpersonal communication. For example, offering a rich lifestyle and privileged status to a widowed woman in the terrorist-controlled territory (see Appendix 1);

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[23] * International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – ICCT *

[24] Schmid, P.A (2014). *"Single Narrative" and Attempts to Develop Counter-Narratives: The State of Knowledge;* International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT); p. 12.

03 | **offering a way of solution** – this stage of narrative mostly includes calls for action. Both generalised and individual narratives disseminated by Al-Qaeda imply persuading Muslims into accomplishing Jihad. **It is interesting that the universality of the concept of Jihad itself instils greater devotion in people. Terrorist organisations are gradually expanding the concept of Jihad, which means that today the idea of Jihad envisages any form of involvement. A universal concept like Jihad also inspires people who think that the existing circumstances prevent them from positively contributing to public life.** Accordingly, such a narrative equally effectively appeals to foreign fighters and women who are mostly recruited for the purposes of reproduction and care for the cubs of the Islamic Caliphate.

3.3.1.1.3 Taliban. Despite the fact that Georgia has never been the actual target of Taliban, following the recent events in Afghanistan,[25] it is important to factor in the importance of this organisation as well. The August occurrences in Afghanistan may entirely change the vector of terrorism, which implies the relative deactualisation of such regions, like northern and central Africa and re-establishment of Afghanistan as the so-called "terrorism incubator", which may be followed by massive recruitment to the Afghan territory.[26] Judging from geographic, historical, and social conditions of Georgia, the disseminated narrative may well target Georgia as well. In terms of content, Taliban's narrative is much similar to that of Al-Qaeda.

3.3.1.1.4 Major goals of the jihadist narrative disseminated by terrorist organisations. After analysing narratives disseminated by the above-mentioned three terrorist organisations, it is important to define those goals and aims, which may be feeding the jihadist extremist narrative disseminated in Georgia. Therefore, the narrative spread in Georgia by DAESH, Al-Qaeda, and Taliban may serve the following four major purposes (as illustrated by the content of the narrative):

01 | **gain support** – winning support of target audiences is the first task on the agenda of any terrorist narrative. **Based on the essence of Jihad, such support is rather a flexible concept and is not limited to physical support, depending on the scale of the activity of a terrorist organisation.** This notwithstanding, narratives spread in Georgia are mostly oriented on physical support, which means encouraging members of the target audience join active military activity as terrorist fighters in the conflict zones, provide military support for terrorist organisations, or commit a terrorist act in their home countries. Organisations like DAESH, Al-Qaeda, and Taliban are trying to obtain finances precisely through the use of such narrative. Besides, the Narrative spread in Georgia may be intended to gain support of local community leaders, which will help these organisations indoctrinate local marginalised communities through fewer resources and mediators;

02 | **Create or empower an in-group** – depending on the scale of its narrative, a terrorist organisation is trying to establish a so-called in-group, which will contradict the respective out-group. In other words, it is trying to unite the target audience under a single title. In case of DAESH and Al-Qaeda, this is an attempt to unite Sunni Muslims;

03 | **discourage the adversary** – a remarkably interesting detail may be highlighted in messages disseminated by Khvicha Gobadze. Terrorist narrative is often accompanied by an attempt to threaten and intimidate, which is significant to note for the following reasons:

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[25] **Note⁵:** this refers to the occupation of Kabul by the Taliban forces and the formation of a new government

[26] ფარსადანიშვილი, ბ. (2021). ავღანეთში განვითარებული მოვლენების გავლენა საქართველოზე. საქართველოს სტრატეგიის და განვითარების ცენტრი [Parsadanishvili B. (2021). Influence of Events in Afghanistan on Georgia. Georgian Center for Strategy and Development].

a. such forms of intimidation are aimed to discourage and demotivate adversaries of a terrorist organisation;

b. along with the discouragement of their enemies, such messages help **terrorist organisations assure their target audiences that they are the only real force capable of protecting them;**

04 **highlight success** – the above-mentioned 3 purposes of the narrative disseminated by a terrorist organisation would have never been fulfilled successfully without highlighting "the progress achieved". Terrorist organisations often disseminate processed, falsified visual materials that depict non-existent reality about lifestyle on terrorist-controlled territories. The goal of this is to assure people that life under a terrorist organisation is better than in normal circumstances. It is interesting that DAESH often conducts similar social campaigns, the digital dissemination of which poses risks to Georgia as well (see Appendix 3).

3.3.1.2 Affiliated agent-distributors. Persons / entities affiliated with terrorist organisations, as usual, spread the narrative, which the terrorist organisation composes. Thus, we may refer to them as **agent-messengers.** Such agents do not themselves impact the disseminated narrative. Their major duty is to transmit the terrorist narrative to the target audience. In Georgia, such messengers may include individual members of the target audiences of terrorist organisations.

Agent-messengers may be effectively used to create the so called Sleeping Cells. The above-mentioned Islamist terrorist organisations may try using people, who enjoy social impact and status in their community. As terrorist organisations are looking for marginalised persons in Sunni Muslim communities, they may try contacting religious leaders or other community leaders for the dissemination of their narrative. The latter may be viewed as messengers, whose major function is to transmit messages to target audiences, which may be out of a particular terrorist organisation's reach due to the lack of control or influence in that specific territory.

3.3.2 Potentially Inadvertent Agent-distributors of the Jihadist Narrative

A person or an entity may not always be aware of being inadvertent distributor of terrorist narratives. Considering the international practice, the following vulnerable persons / entities are among the top potential inadvertent distributors of the jihadist narrative: [27]

01 **media outlets** – information about terrorist attacks and the related content about the acts committed by terrorist organisations may prove controversial. Such information serves to raise public awareness of the illegal actions of terrorist organisations, however, at the same time, it may inadvertently disseminate the terrorist narrative;

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[27] Badaway, E, L., Comerford, M., & Welby, P. (2015). Inside the Jihadi Mind: Understanding Ideology and Propaganda. Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. Available at:
https://institute.global/sites/default/files/inline-files/IGC_Inside%20Jihadi%20Mind_18.08.17.pdf

02 | **academia / people working in the academic field** – like media outlets, people involved in research and employed at thematic educational institutions often describe the specific nature of the narrative disseminated by the above-mentioned terrorist organisations in detail while trying to raise society's awareness. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to select a correct plan for communicating such sensitive topics;

03 | **ordinary citizens** - ordinary citizens may inadvertently disseminate the jihadist narrative. At such times, an ordinary citizen may not always be aware of the subtext of the terrorist narrative, which may well be disguised as a joke. It is also notable here that, in most cases, terrorist organisations deliberately transmit this narrative to the so-called inadvertent distributors as such a plan may prove effective for the following purposes:

a. | **unseriousness of the disseminated narrative** - dissemination of the jihadist narrative in a non-traditional form may seem to speak of its unseriousness. In order to disseminate their narrative among young people, terrorist organisations like DAESH and Al-Qaeda use the so-called memes, comics, music and other visual materials;

b. | **strengthening the syndrome of impunity** - because of the unserious nature of the narrative provided in the above-mentioned format, often the feeling of impunity automatically arises among inadvertent distributors, because the state has insufficient legal leverage to halt the dissemination of the narrative of such format.

3.4 PLATFORMS USED FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF THE JIHADIST NARRATIVE IN GEORGIA

While discussing the jihadist narrative disseminated in Georgia, it is important to note those platforms, which the above-mentioned agents are using to disseminate their ideological views. This document divides platforms used for the dissemination of the jihadist narrative into two groups: **internet** and **face-to-face communication.**

It is noteworthy that narratives disseminated in various platforms vary in their content, function, and the ultimate goal.

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[28] Ghamari, M. at War Studies University (2017). Pro-Daesh Jihadist Propaganda. A Study of Social Media and Video Games. Security & Defence Quarterly 1 (4). p. 73.

3.4.1 Internet

Technological progress, which has done so much good to benefit people, also supported terrorist organisations better coordinate their violent extremist narrative. Today, internet accounts of persons affiliated with terrorist organisations are often notable for their intense activity.

Such development enabled the terrorist organisations reach out to larger audiences and transmit their ideology, thus turning the narrative dissemination into a global process. Therefore, it is important to discuss those internet platforms, through which people living in Georgia may have access to the jihadist narratives.

Internet platforms may fall into two categories based on the size and nature of their audiences: platforms with larger audiences (social network, internet publications, magazines, discussions forums, blogs, etc.) and inner communication networks.

A large network is an arbitrary, generalised term that covers multiple platforms with an extensive audience. It may include any social network, platform, internet publication, virtual group, etc., which does not target individuals and disseminates pre-defined and prepared narratives as widely as possible in the major target audience - as a collective **group. On such platforms, these narratives mostly serve as propaganda.**

Social networks are the most popular platforms in Georgia for the dissemination of the jihadist narrative, which, in their turn, may be divided into three sub-categories: **networks of non-homogenous audience, networks with homogenous audience, and inner communication networks.**

▶ *3.4.1.1. Social Networks with Non-Homogenous Audience*

Facebook is the most popular social network platform in Georgia.[29] Agent-distributors of the jihadist extremist narrative often choose this platform as their medium. The size of Facebook audience often hinders and prevents immediate response to the dissemination of such a narrative. Besides, it is also important to consider the diversified (non-homogenous) nature of Facebook audience. Such non-homogeneity makes Facebook a good platform for the dissemination of the jihadist extremist narrative in Georgia: due to the the high rate of overlap, the jihadist extremist narrative is almost certain to reach the target audience. Except for Facebook, less frequently used platforms include Pinterest, YouTube, VK, Mail.ru etc.

Terrorist organisations often use Twitter as well. Judging from the specific nature of Twitter, this platform is mainly used for making official statements and is less comfortable for arousing interest of wider audiences. A platform like Twitter is DAESH's so-called "umbrella" as, unlike Facebook and other networks, **it enables to obtain quick control over the audience of previously blocked accounts.** In this regard, terrorist organisations often create a number of additional accounts, which often replace the major account.

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[29] GlobalStats (2021). Social Media Stats in Georgia. Internet; **https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/georgia**; last seen: 12 Septemeber 2021.

▶ *3.4.1.2 Networks with Homogenous Audience*

These platforms usually unite diverse types of networks. Unlike social networks with larger audiences, on these platforms inner networks are not organised within a network and additional resources are not spent. Such platforms may include all networks with thematic audiences – blogs, live broadcasting platforms, gaming platforms, editions, etc. For example, in order to arouse the interest of young people in Jihad, terrorist organisations often disseminate their own jihadist extremist narrative on game platforms that are known to wider audiences in Georgia, like Twitch, Discord, Steam, etc.

The major goal of networks with homogenous and non-homogenous audiences is not to help in recruiting people through the jihadist narrative, but interest them, ideologically indoctrinate them, and prepare them for recruitment.

▶ *3.4.1.3 Internal Communication, End-to-End Encrypted Networks*

Terrorist organisations are particularly active in using the so-called end-to-end encrypted networks, the content of which is only available to a narrow circle of people engaged in interpersonal communication. This category includes networks like Telegram, WhatsApp, Signal, Mail.ru, etc.

The membership of these networks depends on the amount of interest people show in the respective matters, as well as the level of trust they deserve. Joining such platforms from social networks means that a person is promoted to a higher 'position' and trusted by the affiliated agent-distributor of extremist narrative.

However, it is noteworthy that the jihadist extremist narrative disseminated on such platforms may change. **The content of this narrative becomes more focused and operational.** Apart from exchanging literature, these networks are also used to plan certain actions, and, therefore, **they are more operational in their essence. Such networks may be used in Georgia for both planning terrorist attack and remote recruitment.**

3.4.2 Face-to-Face Communication

Interpersonal or face-to-face communication represents the oldest and hitherto unrivalled platform for disseminating the jihadist extremist narrative. Agent-distributors of the jihadist extremist narrative often use such communication in three situations:

01 | the target of indoctrination is a person, who may have exclusive value in terms of Jihad – they may be able to provide large financial aid or be a good fighter, and, accordingly, they require individual approach and more attention;

02 | on the other hand, interpersonal communication is a more reliable platform, because as usual, such communication takes place in the actual presence of the target audience, which is harder penetrated by law enforcement institutions;

03 | besides, such communication enables the jihadist entities disseminate their ideology in regions, where the target audience has relatively limited access to internet as compared to others. **Such territories inside Georgia include the Pankisi Gorge.**

In terms of interpersonal communication, there are two agents – a terrorist organisation and a local agent-distributor – the latter may be called the **local messenger.** As usual, at such time, a terrorist organisation contacts their local affiliate and tasks them with the dissemination of the jihadist narrative. In some cases, this person may potentially be a local community leader, a respected person, who has outreach to local audiences. On the other hand, the **local agent may be a simple young person, who disseminates the jihadist narrative among a circle of friends.**

3.5 FORMS OF THE JIHADIST NARRATIVE DISSEMINATION

The format of the narrative mostly depends on platforms through which they are disseminated. In other words, despite the fact that social networks like YouTube allow for the dissemination of both photos and videos, videos usually dominate as there are several trends concerning preferred format for certain platforms.

Therefore, it would be interesting to discuss the possible formats of the jihadist extremist narrative in Georgia. It is also notable that that each popular format has its strengths and weaknesses.

Frequently, terrorist organisations like DAESH, which control certain territories, may be using materials like social advertisements on billboards placed in public areas (see Appendix 3). **Despite the fact that such billboards will not be allowed in Georgia,** digital audio-visual materials about socially-themed billboards may still be disseminated. In terms of selecting a narrative format, we may speak of two widespread tendencies:

Agent-distributors of the jihadist narrative actively use **YouTube** to upload and post video and audio-content, publish posts and statements on anonymous blogs like **blogger, just paste it,** and disseminate photos mostly through platforms like **Pinterest, DailyMotion, SendVid, MNBR.**

It is interesting that Russian-language mailing platforms like mail.ru may be used to disseminate the jihadist extremist narrative in Georgia both through spam and direct private messages.

3.6 TARGET AUDIENCE OF THE JIHADIST NARRATIVE IN GEORGIA

The jihadist narrative is highly concentrated in form, which means that it has a clearly defined target audience as well as a particular methodology for the selection of target audience on particular territories.

This is conditioned by the fact that the jihadist narrative is largely disseminated by particular terrorist organisations or persons affiliated with them.

Before we move on to the immediate case of Georgia and identify potential target audiences for the jihadist narrative, it is important to describe those general steps that an agent-distributor takes during the selection of the target audience.

3.6.1 Selection of the Target Audience

Selection of the target audience for the jihadist narrative is a rather complex process, which, when simplified, consists of the following three stages:

01 **defining the location of the target audience** – as far as the jihadist narrative is mostly disseminated in communities that belong to the territory of various countries, it is important to study the lifestyle and environment of the community, wherein the narrative is planned to be disseminated. This means studying the legislation, economic and social conditions, as well as other settings existing in that territory;

02 **studying the target audience** – in order to disseminate the narrative in the correct manner, it is important for terrorist organisations to study particular characteristics of its target audience. These may include the level of secularisation of the community, access to the internet, demographic situation according to age, and, of course, vulnerable groups;

03 **studying the reasons of dissatisfaction within the community** – after studying the specific nature of the community, its history and reasons for dissatisfaction are actively explored in order to tailor the jihadist narrative in accordance with the reason of complaint. The reasons may include unfairness or perceived unfairness against Muslims.

Of course, there are other ways to explore target audiences and elaborate the relevant narratives; a narrative may be based solely on the concept of jihad. However, as usual, such gradual approach is more effective for audience radicalisation.

3.6.2 Locations with Highest Concentration of the Jihadist Narrative in Georgia

As already mentioned above, there are three major ethnic and religious minorities in Georgia that are targeted by the jihadist narrative. These groups, which include Kists living in the Pankisi Gorge, ethnic Azerbaijanis, and Adjarian Muslims, deserve special attention.

After enlisting the target audiences, it is important to name locations and the specific content of those narratives which may be disseminated among these groups.

▶ 3.6.2.1 The Kists in the Pankisi Gorge

As of today, the Kists mainly live in villages of the Pankisi Gorge. They reside mostly in Akhmeta municipality, in the following villages located along the Alazani River: **Duisi, Jokolo, Birkiani, Omalo, Dumasturi, Zemo Khalatsani, Shua Khalatsani, Kvemo Khalatsani, Tsinubani, Dzibakhevi. Koreti and Kvarelitskali** is also populated by the Kists.

Accordingly, in terms of the dissemination of the jihadist extremist narrative among the Kists, it is especially important to focus on the above-mentioned locations. As mentioned above, mostly regional and global narratives are disseminated among the Kists. The role of the Chechen wars is also notable in the dissemination of the narrative.[30]

▶ 3.6.2.2 Ethnic Azerbaijanis living in the territory of Georgia

Kvemo Kartli has the greatest number of Azerbaijani population (41.75%). According to municipalities, the biggest number of Azerbaijanis lives in Marneuli (83,77%). The following towns have the largest population of ethnic Azerbaijani community: Dmanisi (65.46%), Bolnisi (63.38%), Gardabani (43.53%), Tsalka (6.98%), and Tetritskaro (7.33%).[31]

The narrative spread among the Azerbaijanis is not as dangerous as the one disseminated among the Kists may actually be, however, it is still worth attention. The narrative disseminated among the Azerbaijanis is characterised mostly by two kinds of content: it is the expansion of the impact of the non-believers, which they should contradict as Muslims, and the narrative that Azerbaijan is governed by the non-believing Aliyev clan.

The fact notwithstanding that the above-mentioned locations are of less relevance in terms of the jihadist narrative dissemination, it is important to consider those topics that may serve as foundation for the construction of the jihadist narrative intended for the ethnic Azerbaijanis:

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[30] See p. 19

[31] Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI) (n,d.). რა უნდა ვიცოდეთ თანამოქალაქე ეთნიკური აზერბაიჯანელების შესახებ [What We Should Know About Azerbaijani Fellow Citizens]; internet: https://tdi.ge/ge/page/ra-unda-vicodet-tanamokalake-et-nikuri-azerbaijanelebis-shesaxeb; last seen: 12 Septemeber 2021.

01 | **experience that the Azerbaijani community had in Georgia in 1990s** – the period of Zviad Gamsakhurdia's national government was partly characterised by ethnic conflicts.[32] In 1990s, many Azerbaijani families were forced to return to Azerbaijan due to pressure, losing their property. These facts may be used by a number of entities while creating or disseminating the jihadist narrative intended for the ethnic Azerbaijanis living in the territory of Georgia;

02 | **low level of engagement in political processes** – regardless of a number of educational programmes implemented recently, the lack of fluency in Georgian prevents local population of ethnic Azerbaijanis from having adequate communication with the government bodies. This increases and intensifies their **political alienation,** which may be highlighted by the jihadist narrative first-sources and affiliated agent-distributors.

▶ 3.6.2.3 Muslims in Adjara

As already mentioned above, the jihadist narrative disseminated among Adjarians differs from the one spread among ethnic Azerbaijanis and the Kists, as Georgia is their historical motherland, and the narrative mostly focuses on the interpretation of events occurring in Georgia.

Narrative disseminated among Adjarians may be summarised in the following manner: according to this narrative, Georgian government and the Patriarchate of Georgia are trying to convert Adjarian Muslims to Christianity, exile local Adjarian Muslims to other territories, and replace the Muslim community with the Christian one. Thus, the duty of true Muslims is to fight against these processes and relevant institutions.

3.7 FACTORS PREVENTING THE DISSEMINATION OF THE JIHADIST NARRATIVE

Failure of the jihadist narrative depends on a number of factors. Successful ways of building resilience against the jihadist extremist narrative in Georgia may include the following:

01 | **infrastructural and institutional development** – infrastructural and institutional development helps the state take successful preventive measures against terrorism and violent extremism. Local, municipal-level infrastructural and institutional development may be a potential factor preventing the dissemination of the jihadist extremist narrative in Georgia;

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32 Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (2002). ეთნიკურ-კონფესიური ჯგუფები და სამოქალაქო ინტეგრაციის პრობლემები საქართველოში [Ethnic-confessional Groups and Challenges to Civic Integration in Georgia]. p. 17

02 | **improvement of social, political, and economic engagement** - the experience that the ethnic Azerbaijanis had back in 1990s points to the necessity of social, political, and economic participation of minorities. Also, the above-mentioned examples illustrate that the jihadist narratives disseminated among Muslim Adjarians is trying to assure Muslim Adjarians that they are social, political, and economic outcasts;

03 | **enhancing the resilience of vulnerable groups** - in order to build and improve the resilience of the vulnerable target audience against the jihadist narrative, it is important to work with these groups actively and raise awareness while also enhancing their social, economic, and political participation.

04 | **existence of competitive local identity** - another preventive factor that protects communities from the jihadist impact is the harmonious co-existence of other competing local identities,[33] which potentially prevents the dissemination of the terrorist narratives.

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[33] **Note⁶** : meaning Shia Muslim

4. ABOUT FAR-RIGHT NARRATIVE DISSEMINATED IN GEORGIA

Events of 5 July 2021 vividly demonstrated that far-right narrative may be not only an urgent issue, but a dangerous and threatening phenomenon for the public.

The need to study and research far-right narrative is conditioned by several factors.

Globally growing popularity of far-right ideology contributed to the increased relevance of similar narratives in Georgia as well. It is also notable however that far-right violent ideology is not alien to Georgia, and it has persisted in the country for decades already.

It is important to highlight the fact that the far-right narrative disseminated in Georgia is not always violent in nature. Accordingly, along with the open calls for violence, this research also studied non-violent forms of far-right narrative, as these narratives also vividly illustrated a tendency of dividing society into in-group and out-group identities and antagonising the latter.

4.1 ELABORATION OF THE WORKING DEFINITION OF FAR-RIGHT NARRATIVE

Unlike the jihadist narrative, scholarly literature on far-right narrative offers a relative abundance of definitions,[34] which is conditioned by a wide range of macro-level identities covered by the ideology. First-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative are functioning in multiple directions, which prevents the establishment of a generalised definition of far-right narrative. In order to elaborate a working definition of far-right narrative that is tailored to the Georgian context, specific characteristics of agent-distributors as well as the content details of their narrative were extensively studied as part of this research.

The use of this method in international practice led to a variety of definitions of far-right narrative, including its understanding as an anti-democratic ideology directed against liberal agenda.[35] Besides, term „far-right narrative" evokes associations of ultra-nationalist, neo-Nazi, racist, and homophobic groups.[36] The problem of definitions developed in a similar manner is the lack of their validity during the attempt of generalisation.

Given the wide range of macro-level identities of first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative in Georgia, this research studied shared aspects of the content and language of their narrative along with the universal characteristics of these agents to elaborate the working concept of far-right narrative. Accordingly, this document is based on the following definition of far-right narrative:

[34] Ravik, A. & Segers, B. I (2020). What is Right-Wing Extremism. Center for Research on Extremism (C-Rex). https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/groups/compendium/what-is-right-wing-extremism.html

[35] Carter, E. (2018). Right-wing extremism / radicalism: reconstructing the concept. Journal of Political Ideologies, 23(2), 157-182; Mudde, C. (2007). Populist radical right parties in Europe. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University

[36] Mudde, C. (1995). Right-wing extremism analyzed: A comparative analysis of the ideologies of three alleged right-wing extremist parties (NPD, NDP, CP'86). European Journal of Political Research, 27(2), 203-224.

Far-right narrative is a set of messages based on the radical interpretation of right-wing ideologies, which appeal to the superiority of one group over another, stigmatises the latter and calls for the privileged group under this interpretation to discredit the non-privileged group in various forms and with various methods (see Note 3, p.11).

It is notable that several authors [37] also highlight the usage of the concept of privileged and non-privileged groups in the dissemination of violent extremist narrative.

4.2 THE LANGUAGE AND CONTENT OF FAR-RIGHT VIOLENT NARRATIVE SPREAD IN GEORGIA

Far-right narrative disseminated in Georgia displays extraordinary complexity in terms of both language and content.

This chapter of the research report provides a detailed overview of the thematic directions and content of far-right narrative disseminated in Georgia, highlights diverse ideological foundations for these various directions, and describes linguistic mechanisms, their functions, and goals.

4.2.1 Content of Far-right Narrative

In order to better understand the thematic directions of far-right narrative, the following directions named below are arbitrarily grouped into two categories of narratives related to the issues of **foreign** and **domestic policy** [38] respectively.

▶ 4.2.1.1 Far-right narratives related to foreign policy

Far-right narratives related to various aspects of Georgia's foreign policy have proved especially persistent. [39]

Far-right narratives related to various issues of Georgia's foreign policy may fall into three categories in terms of content: **Georgia's relations with Russia, discreditation of international partners, and Georgia's role in the international community.**

▶ 4.2.1.1.1 Far-right narrative about Georgia's relations with Russia

Among other directions of Georgia's foreign policy, the issue of relations with Russia persistently maintains higher relevance (see Figure 2).

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[37] Berger, J.M (2017). Extremist Construction of Identity: How Escalating Demands for Legitimacy Shape and Define In-Group and Out-Group Dynamics. International Center for Counter-Terrorism.

[38] Note 7 : "policy" mentioned in the titles of arbitrary categories does not necessarily mean that the content of far-right narrative is limited solely to policy-related topics

[39] Note 8: the ability of the narrative under this category to maintain relevance for a long time

FIGURE 2.

Mentions of countries of far-right groups on the internet in 2019. Source: DFRLab (2019)

MENTIONS OF COUNTRIES
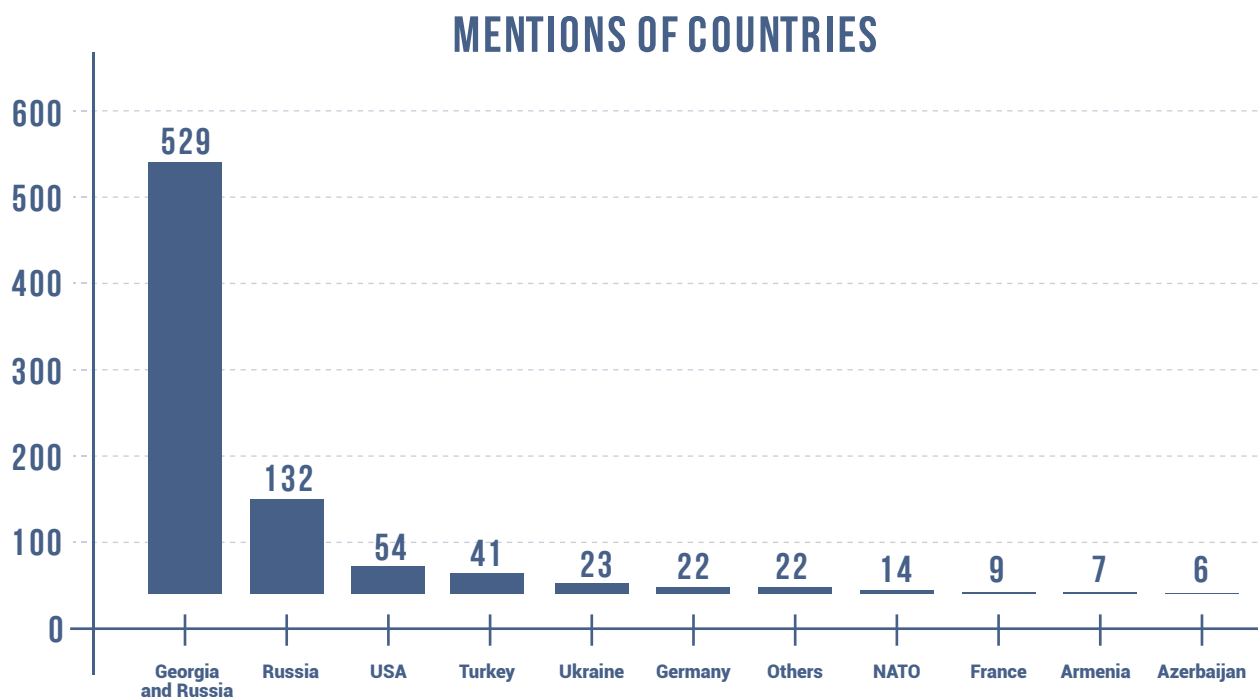
It is important to note that unlike **far-right narrative disseminated about other thematic directions of Georgia's foreign policy, narrative about Russo-Georgian relations is not only non-homogenous but also constantly changing.**

This sub-chapter discusses various thematic directions of far-right narrative Russo-Georgian relations.

4.2.1.1.1.1 The **War in August 2008.** Apart from the fact that far-right narrative about the August War has been undergoing serious transformation over the years, diverse views of the origins of the conflict began to emerge among far-right agents as early as 2008.

Despite the differences existing among the agent-distributors of far-right narrative, **the content of their narrative disseminated about the War divided the public into an in-group and an out-group, prioritizing the former one.[40]**

It is noteworthy here that, based on the history of Russo-Georgian relations, the existence of positive or negative attitude to Russia in society, including among far-right first-sources and agent-distributors, is rather natural and unsurprising. The aim of the figures below is to emphasise on the key feature of far-right narrative – a tendency to divide society into an in-group and an out-group.

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[40]**Note ⁹: in this case, an attempt was made to present the view of the in-group as the only legitimate one**

DFR Laboratory of the Atlantic Council divides post-war (after the Russo-Georgian War 2008) far-right narratives about Russia in 3 types: **positive, negative,** and **neutral.**[41] However, statements expressing neutral attitude obtained as part of this research were mostly oriented to divert public attention. Thus, neutral statements shall be considered as part of positive attitude toward Russia:

01 | **Negative attitude toward Russia** – a number of first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narratives began adopting vividly anti-Russian positions after the Russo-Georgian War. However, it is also important to note that along with the strengthening of anti-Russian attitudes, such narratives also envisaged dividing society into pro-Russian and anti-Russian parts, while aggressively emphasising on the deviant nature of the former (the Pro-Russian part) (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2.

Posts showing negative attitude on Facebook. Source: DFRLab   (2019).
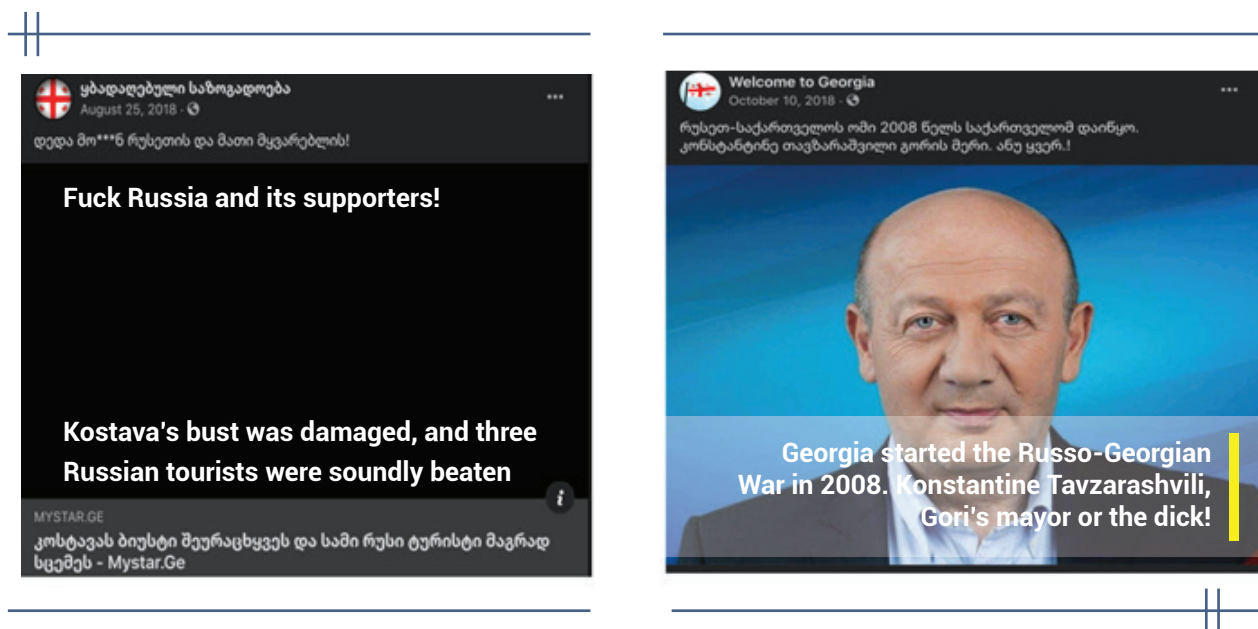
02 | **Positive attitude toward Russia** – along with the negative attitude, a number of far-right agents stood out by disseminating positive narrative about Russia through social media. It is important to note that such narrative mainly focused on positioning Georgia as the initiating party of the conflict (see Figure 3).

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[41] გიგიტაშვილი, გ. (2020). ანალიზი: ქართული ულტრამემარჯვენე Facebook გვერდები და მათი დამოკიდებულება რუსეთთან [Gigitashvili G. (2020). Analysis: Georgian far-right Facebook pages and their Attitude to Russia]. DFR; **https://medium.com/dfrlab/russias-2019-cyber-attack-against-georgia-followed-by-full-spectrum-propaganda-effort-4460673cb3e9**

FIGURE 3.

About the initiation of the War in 2008. Source: DFRLab

I'm very much interested in how these Nationalists are absolute dicks (not all of you of course). You were saying in 2008 Russia started military actions, and now the situation changed and there are photos and videos in which Saakashvili admits he started the military actions in Tskhinvali. And now you are changing the tune, "what could he have done, could he have waited for Russia to enter the country" – I wonder what you have in your heads, men, if you have any brains at all!

It is also notable that several agent-distributors of far-right narrative spread less harsh or radical statements, as the main goal of their message was to discredit the government / the governing party (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4.

About the start of the 2008 War. Source: კარდუ (Kardhu)

According to Tagliavini Report, night bombing of Tskhinvali by Georgian artillery on 7 August transferred the conflict to another, more severe phase and the start of the War became inevitable

Did Saakashvili make a fateful mistake by sending troops to the conflict zone and bombing Tskhinvali?

As mentioned above, several agent-distributors spread a relatively neutral narrative that concerning Russia, the aim of which was to divert the attention of the Georgian audience from the issues of the Russo-Georgian War (see Figure 5).

An attempt to divert attention from 2008. Source: DFRLab

> They are expressing deep regret and sending condolences to Gregory Vashadze / **გრიგოლ ვაშაძე,** the CEO of Fair Elections Mikhail Benidze also expressed condolences and brought a wreath to the headquarters. (Some woman said). Igor Korobov, Chief of the military intelligence agency – GRU - of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

4.2.1.1.1.2 The issue of territories occupied by Russia. It is noteworthy that the narrative the occupation of Georgia's territories is the most rapidly evolving and changing one among all other narratives disseminated by far-right agents about Russia. The transformation of the narrative is a linear process (see Figure 6).

FIGURE 6.

Transformation of vision related to the occupation of Georgia's territories by Russia.

Georgia's territories are occupied by Russia
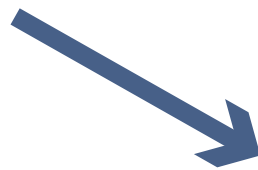
To return the occupied territories, it is necessary for Georgia to engage in a dialogue with Russia

As usual, the far-right narrative emphasises on two important aspects of the strategy of engaging in a political dialogue with Russia: **1. refusing membership of NATO and the EU in exchange for Abkhazia and Samachablo; 2. revising the policy of introducing benefits for people living in the occupied territories.** Such narrative is mainly characteristic of video addresses recorded and disseminated by far-right agents, and, as usual, these prove quite influential (see Figure 7).

FIGURE 7.

Attitudes to far-right strategy for Georgia's De-occupation. Source: ALT-INFO

m molodoi starik 9 months ago

მეც თანახმა ვარ რომ სამაჩაბლოს და აფხაზეთის სანაცვლოდ ნატოზე ვთქვათ უარი...
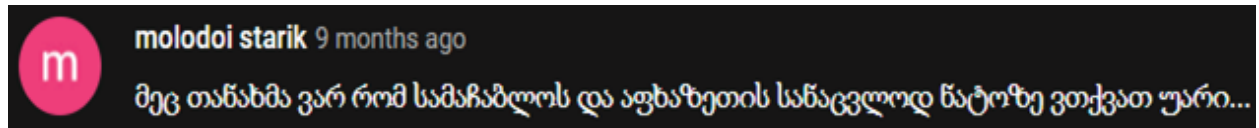
→ I also agree that we say no to NATO in exchange for Abkhazia and Samachablo...

A ▔▔▔▔▔ months ago

დღნი მიგვცეთ უფასოდ ბევრი რომ მაინინგებით ფული იშოვონ, იარაღი იყიდონ და ქუთაისამდე ჩამოვიდნენ. უკრაინა წყალს არ აძლევს და ჩვენ?

👍 39 👎 REPLY
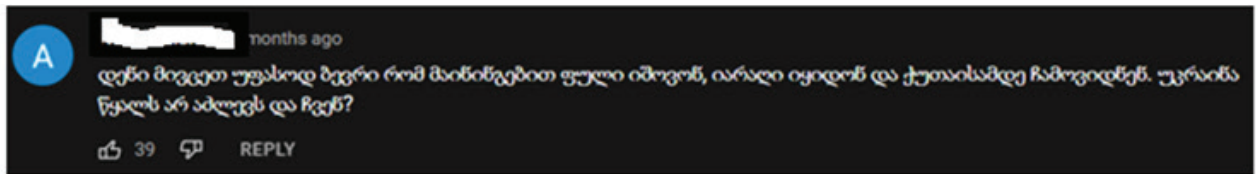
→ Let us give them electricity for free to let them make money through mining, buy ammunition and come [to take] Kutaisi as well. Ukraine is not providing water and what are we doing?

4.2.1.1.1.3 Russo-Georgian relations after the War. In terms of relevance, Russo-Georgian relations is next in popularity among issues related to foreign policy. Diverse first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative have non-homogenous attitude towards the relations with Russia. Some agents are trying to normalise non-political relations with Russia by claiming that they should not be mixed with politics. Other agents see political aspects in all kinds of relations with Russia. Accordingly, their attitude varies from positive to negative and vice versa. In this regard, far-right agents construct their narrative in four (4) major directions:

01 | **history of Russo-Georgian relations** – this direction remains invariably popular; however, views and assumptions related to the topic gain greater relevance and outreach every year with the approaching of the August War anniversary. As already mentioned above, this thematic direction inspires radically diverging views that may be roughly grouped under the two poles of positive and negative attitudes to Russia (see Figure 8);

FIGURE 8.

Russia's role as interpreted in far-right narrative[42]

PROTECTOR

OCCUPANT / ENEMY

---

[42] **Note⁹** : it is noteworthy that a greater majority of far-right agent-distributors view Russia as the enemy / occupant.

02 | **Russo-Georgian economic relations** – energy crisis 2006[43] is an event that must have given rise to the narrative about Russo-Georgian economic relations among far-right agent-distributors. It is noteworthy that the economic protectionism against Russia triggered by this crisis in a number of far-right groups gradually graded into the protectionist attitude against all countries:

...what does it matter who owns our hydro-power stations, Russia or Turky, the state should be the owner of 51 percent of shares, we should increase state control on energy resources and that will be genuine energy independence...[44]

03 | **Russo-Georgian religious relations** – groups with religious macro-level identity often appeal to the fact that Georgia and Russia share common religion. It is noteworthy that the narrative, which is built on the key thesis of **"one religion – one way"**, often becomes highly relevant when the Russian Orthodox Church is mediating in processes like the liberation of Georgian citizens that are illegally abducted from the occupied territories;

04 | **cultural, sports, and intellectual relations** – despite the fact that this topic is less popular, pro-Russian far-right groups seem to be conjuring narrative about cultural, sports, and intellectual relations with Russia. Often, a public protest against the work and activity of a famous [Georgian] public figure or celebrity in Russia is followed by far-right narrative, which is trying to defend and justify the person in question, thus adding to the polarisation of public opinion.

Of course, far-right narrative created about the Russo-Georgian relations encompasses other issues as well, however, the thematic directions presented above enjoy the highest relevance.

As already mentioned, far-right groups and agents have non-homogenous attitude to the topic of Russia. Negative attitude is highly dominant, however, there are several directions of far-right narrative that manifest neutral or positive attitude to Russia (see Figure 9).

FIGURE 9.

Attitude of far-right groups to various aspects of relationship with Russia in social media. Source: DFRLAB

Sentiments by topic
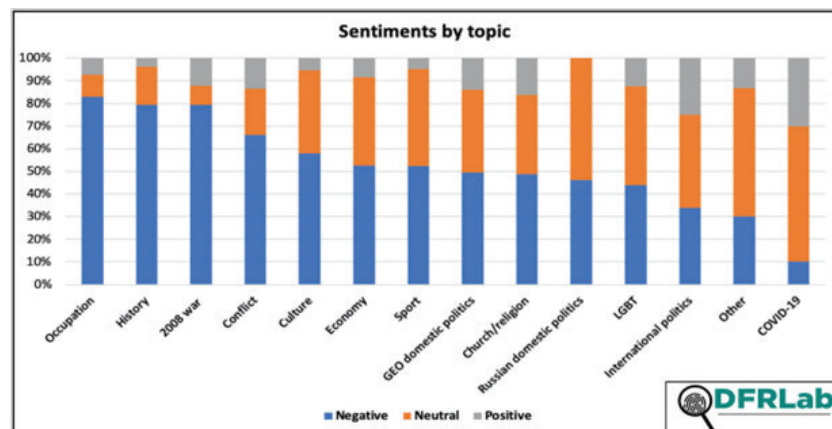
[43] Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty (2006); Georgia: Gas Cut-off Highlights National Security Flaws. Available at: **https://www.rferl.org/a/1065359.html**

[44] ALT-INFO (2021). "კანონი დაგვიცავს!"- ლიბერალების უტოპიური შეხედულებები ["The Law Shall Protect Us!" – Utopian views of the Liberals] [0.34: 0.50]; available at: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RpvLVmHEc-c&ab_channel=ALT-INFO**

4.2.1.1.1.4 Russia's role in international relations. Apart from the Russo-Georgian relations, dissemination of narrative about Russia's international role is highly popular among far-right groups. Positive view of Russia is especially notable of attitudes both positive and negative in this regard. This positive narrative, as usual, is based on the understanding of Russia as a large state [and a significant international player]. This narrative is usually accompanied with sub-narratives, according to which, a high calibre state like the Russian Federation has no interests in a small country like Georgia (see Figure 10).

FIGURE 10.

Russia's positive role in international relations.
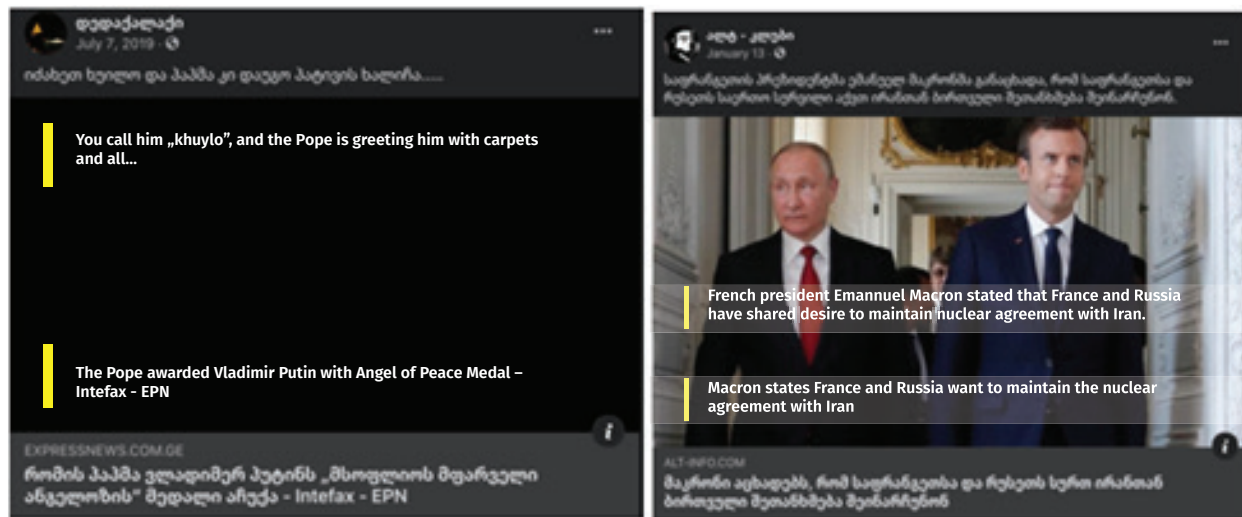
▶ *4.2.1.1.2 Discreditation of Georgia's International Partners*

4.2.1.1.2.1 Discreditation of Georgia's western partners. The qualitative content analysis of the narrative disseminated to discredit Georgia's western partners revealed a notable tendency.

The narrative spread for the above-mentioned purpose does not usually target individual states rather, it aims to discredit the West in general, and, more particularly, the EU and NATO.

Notably, the narrative aimed at the discreditation of Georgia's western partners intensified upon the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War on 24 February.

During the qualitative content analysis of statements containing the far-right narrative intended to **discredit the EU**, it becomes evident that **the discreditation is targeted not to particular political institution or individual state, but to the entire union, which is perceived by far-right agents as a general concept of "Europe". Referring to European civilisation and culture by a collective name ("the Europe" / "the West") [by first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative] emphasises the fact that these agents lack awareness and adequate knowledge of both European civilisation and political management of the EU.** It is notable that **such generalised perception of Europe rooted in European culture lies behind the fact that the far-right narrative to discredit the EU is mostly highlights the cultural discrepancy** (see Figure 11).

FIGURE 11.

Appealing to cultural differences through Facebook.

June 19 · 🌐

საქართველოში ვერასოდეს დამკვიდრდებიან მართლმადიდებლობის მტრები, აღვირახსნილი გარყვნილი, მომაცადე, ჰომოფაშისტები, მათი უზნეო , ცხოველური წესხვეულება, ყველანაირ ადამიანურ მორალურ ზღვარს სცდება, რაც ადამიანის გამრავლების, განვითარების, დასასრულის საწინდარია, ამიტომ ყველა ნორმალურ ადამიანის ვალია წინ ლუდგეს მათ ძალადობრივ მცდელობას დაამკვიდრონ მათი ცხოველური ყოფა ნორმად

🙂❤️ 17   1 Comment 2 Shares

👍 Like   ↱ Share

> Enemies of Orthodoxy shall never prevail in Georgia, corrupt, lecherous, violent homofascists (abusive and uninformed reference to homosexuals), their immoral, beastly ways go beyond all boundaries of human nature, which will lead to the end of normal human reproduction and development, and thus the duty of each normal person is to contradict their violent efforts to establish their beastly ways as a norm

Despite the fact that far-right agents are usually appealing to cultural differences, some go as far as to criticise the involvement of the EU in the domestic processes of the country:

> *...signing the document known as the Danielson's document was the last straw by both the Georgian Dream and the majority of United Opposition. If this document shall be fully implemented and enforced, our country shall be deprived of its already limited, shrunk sovereignty because it shall not be able to decide how Central Elections Committee will function, how it will count votes; the state shall not decide who will be appointed as judges without the intervention of foreigners...*[45]

As already mentioned above, the discreditation of the EU, which, as we have already mentioned, is largely based on the perceived discrepancy with European culture and civilisation; discreditation of the North-Atlantic countries focuses on the discreditation of NATO and the USA. Three major mechanisms can be identified in the far-right narrative intended to discredit the North-Atlantic structures and the USA:

01 **highlighting the failure of NATO and the USA** - annexation of Crimea by Russia and ongoing war in Ukraine serve as a frequent example cited as evidence of failure of NATO and the USA. Far-right agents often note the passivity of the North-Atlantic structures within this

02 **reference to double standards** - several agent-distributors of far-right narrative point to the "unfairness" and "injustice" in the relationship between Georgia and the USA, as well as Georgia and NATO (see Figure 12);

[45] Rustavi 2 (2021). ბოლო წვეთი იყო შარლ მიშელის დოკუმენტზე ხელმოწერა - ლევან ვასაძე ქართულ პოლიტიკაში მოსვლის მიზეზს ასახელებს. [Signing the Charles Michel Document was the last straw – Levan Vasadze names the reason of coming to politics]; available at: **https://rustavi2.ge/ka/news/198225**

FIGURE 12.

Appealing to double standard in Georgian-American Relations.

> August 26 at 1:36 PM · 🌐
>
> თალიბანთან საუბარი ყოფილა თურმე შესაძლებელი დასავლეთისთვის, აი ჩვენ კი რუსეთთან დეოკუპაციაზე საუბარსაც კი გვიკრძალავენ...
>
> 👍😂 81   2 Comments 7 Shares
>
> 👍 Like   ↪ Share
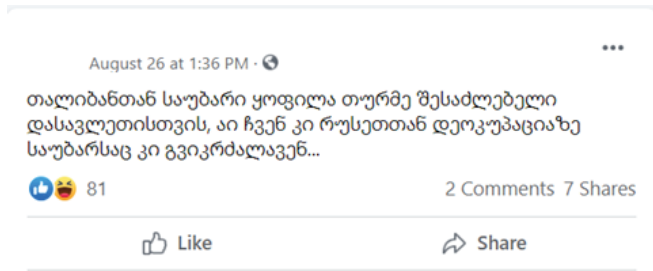
So, the West found they can talk to Taliban, and they forbid us from mentioning de-occupation with Russia…

03 | **a small state among large actors** - another important mechanism of discredition in the hands of far-right agents is a suggestion that the USA and NATO shall not act against the interests of Russia for a small country like Georgia.[46] Currently, far-right agents disseminating this specific narrative are already appealing to the events taking place in Ukraine, trying to discuss the processes in Ukraine in relation to Georgia.

▶ *4.2.1.1.2.2 Discreditation of other strategic partners*

from among other international partners of Georgia, agent-distributors of far-right narrative most often target Turkey and Azerbaijan. **It is notable that discreditation against Turkey and Azerbaijan often contains religious element.**

4.2.1.1.2.2.1 Turkey. Two directions of far-right narrative are notable in terms of discreditation of Turkey:

01 | **"occupation" of the Georgian territory by Turkey** – it is noteworthy that the rhetoric of far-right groups in relation to Turkey as a strategic partner is rather varied. Some far-right agents do not recognise Turkey as a strategic partner and disseminate the narrative, according to which Turkey is a greater occupant than Russia:

… The biggest part of Georgia's territory - 33 percent - is annexed and occupied by Turkey. Now half a million people live in this territory, who identify themselves as the Gurji or Georgians…[47]

---

[46] რუსეთისა და ევრაზიის პროგრამა (2021). მითები და მცდარი მოსაზრებები რუსეთის შესახებ არსებულ დებატებში მათი ზემოქმედება დასავლურ პოლიტიკაზე და საჯაროდ გამოსავალი. საქართველოს სტრატეგიის და განვითარების ცენტრი [Russia and Eurasia Programme (2021). Myths and Misconceptions in the Debate on Russia. How They Affect Western Policy and What Can Be Done. Georgian Center of Strategy and Development]; available at: **https://gcsd.org.ge/storage/files/doc/Chatham%20House%20-%20Myths%20and%20misconceptions%20in%20the%20debate %20on%20Russia%20-%20GEO.pdf**

[47] მედიის განვითარების ფონდი (Media Development Foundation - MDF) (2019). ობიექტივი, ყველას გასაგონად, 12 ნოემბერი, თარხან-თურქეთი [Obieqtivi for Everyone to Hear, 12 November, Tarkhan-Turkey]; available at: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=klJr2oVtbLw&ab_channel=Mdf%2CMediadevelopmentFoundation**

On the other hand, discreditation against Turkey is based on a conspiracy theory popular among far-right groups, according to which, the Turkish will gradually encroach on Georgia. **It is notable that this narrative is not conjured by far-right agents functioning in Georgia; rather, its birthplace is Russia. The dissemination of this narrative is actively supported by both far-right agents and the members of their target audience** - **the inadvertent disseminators** (see Figure 13).

FIGURE 13.

Importing the Russian narrative by Georgian far-right agents. Source: MythDetector

Cardhu: source: Tvalsazrisi.ge: Turkey began complaining about the persecution of Georgian Muslims in Adjara and reacted to the problem related to the new mosque under construction: "Adjarian Muslims are ready to fight and protect their independence. We have an information that the situation in Adjara is tense. The confrontation between Adjarian Muslims and Georgian Christians is growing into a large-scale and religious conflict...

Kartuli Dzala [the Georgian power]: Turkey began complaining about the persecution of Georgian Muslims in Adjara and reacted to the problem related to the new mosque under construction:

Special Forces / Spetsrazmi: Turkey began complaining about the persecution of Georgian Muslims in Adjara and reacted to the problem related to the new mosque under construction: "Adjarian Muslims are ready to fight and protect their independence. We have an information that the situation in Adjara is tense. The confrontation between Adjarian Muslims and Georgian Christians is growing into a large-scale and religious conflict...
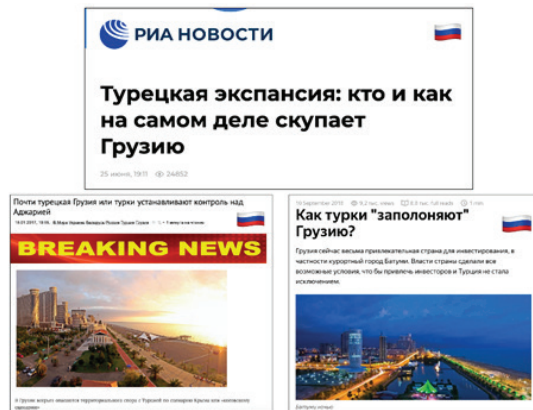
Georgian government does not allow Adjarian Muslims construct mosques. Georgians must have forgotten that in [Adjara]...

It is notable that the popularisation of this narrative through far-right agents helps the Kremlin clear its own image and indirectly highlight circumstances created by identical and different religions.

4.2.1.1.2.2.2 Discreditation of Azerbaijan. In terms of discrediting Azerbaijan, first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative were particularly active in relation to the recent events related to Davit Gareji, which once again highlights the reactive nature of the far-right narrative. It is also notable that the narrative intended to discredit Azerbaijan was mostly notable for religious aspects.

▶ *4.2.1.1.3 Georgia's international role*

A number of far-right agents evaluate the country's foreign policy course based on its geographic, social, demographic, economic, political, and military circumstances. In this regard it is important to note that the far-right narrative about Georgia's foreign policy course is based on two concepts, which, as already mentioned, gained particular popularity during the war in Ukraine:

01 | **narrative based on the concept of a small state** – according to the narrative disseminated by a number of far-right agents, it would be lethal for a small country like Georgia to go against the interests of its larger neighbour (Russia);

02 | **appealing to the potential neutrality of Georgia** – appealing to the potential neutrality of Georgia is mostly in line with the Russian narrative. First-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative tend to equate Russia and NATO / the EU. At the next level of this narrative, the far-right agents appeal to the fact that large states exploit small countries to their own advantage.

4.2.1.2 Far-Right Narrative Related to Domestic Policy

Far-right narrative about domestic economic issues of Georgia envisages attaching particular economic privileges to an in-group. Notably, the idea of economic protectionism is not exclusive to the far-right narrative disseminated in Georgia. Far-right narratives based on perceived threats of migrants stealing employment positions from locals are relevant not only in Georgia but in Europe and the USA as well. Narrative based on the idea of economic protectionism is developed into several thematic directions in Georgia:

Systemic analysis of the above-mentioned far-right narrative [conducted as part of this research] revealed 6 fundamental ideas, which serve as the basis for variously-themed about Georgia's domestic policy:

▶ 4.2.1.2.1 Economic protectionism

Far-right narrative about domestic economic issues of Georgia envisages attaching particular economic privileges to an in-group. Notably, the idea of economic protectionism is not exclusive to the far-right narrative disseminated in Georgia. Far-right narratives based on perceived threats of migrants stealing employment positions from locals are relevant not only in Georgia but in Europe and the USA as well. Narrative based on the idea of economic protectionism is developed into several thematic directions in Georgia:

01 | **sceptic attitude to foreign investments** - as already mentioned above, a sceptic attitude to foreign capital among far-right agents arose during the energy crisis of 2006. However, this sceptic attitude towards Russian economic engagement was quickly replaced by similar attitude towards all kinds of foreign capital. It is important to note that especially sceptical attitude is expressed to the foreign investment in strategic infrastructure.[48] On the other hand, several far-right agents not only object to the investments in strategic infrastructure, but also highlight the changes to the Land Law:

...in the USA we have been worshipping so hard, only less than one percent of agricultural lands belong to foreign citizens. This is ridiculous. They are asking us [in Georgia] to pass the law, which they do not want to have in their own country...[49]

It is notable that such far-right narrative takes more radical forms, which contradicts any kind of economic activity by any citizen of any other country in the territory of Georgia (see Figure 14):

FIGURE 14.

Far-right narrative directed against foreign immigrants.
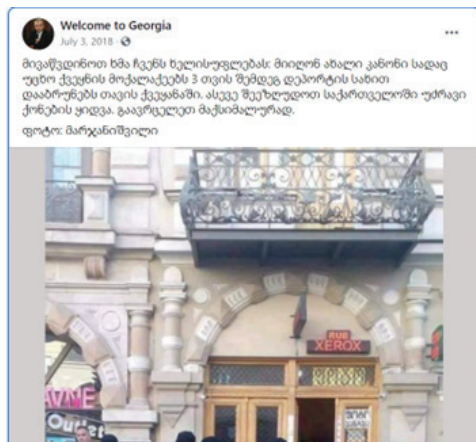
Let us call for our government to pass a new law, which will deport foreign citizens to their countries after three months [of staying here]. Also, let us limit the sale of assets in Georgia [to foreign citizens]. Share with as many people as you can.

Photo: Marjanishvili

It is important to note that far-right agents disseminating similar narrative mostly believe that protecting economy means protecting it from Muslims. Post pictured on Figure 14 shows a photo taken in Marjanishvili Street, Tbilisi;

---

[48] See [35]

[49] Imedi TV (2015). ლევან ვასაძე გადაცემა რეაქციაში [Levan Vasadze in TV programme Reaktsia]; available at:

02 | **protectionism of the Georgian workforce** - another popular direction among the thematic directions of far-right narrative inspired by economic protectionism is the protection of ethnically Georgian workforce. However, as already mentioned above, messages inspired by this idea are not exclusive only to Georgia. They are frequent in other countries as well. The thematic direction of Georgian workforce protection is largely disseminating two messages of populist character:

1.Georgians are not able to be employed because of increased immigration;

2.Georgia is not able to create adequate employment conditions for Georgians, which makes the latter leave for foreign countries in search of work.

▶ *4.2.1.2.2 Cultural Conservatism*

The concept of cultural conservatism in itself means the protection of cultural heritage of a state or a particular group that stands out from others.[50] In its essence, cultural conservatism is a positive idea, however, first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative effectively managed to combine this concept with anti-European, anti-liberal, xenophobic, racist, and other far-right ideas.

Cultural conservatism altered in the Georgian context found its new image in the fear of losing cultural identity, which is why far-right agents disseminate messages highlighting the attempt of "Europe" to destroy Georgian culture, fear "of losing Georgian identity", and other related conspiracy theories (see Figure 15).

FIGURE 15.

Far-right narrative directed against foreign immigrants.

June 13 ·

რაც დღეს ეკლესიის წინააღმდეგ მიმდინარეობს, უხილავი კი არა, ხილული (ფიზიკური) ბრძოლაა!!!
მართალია ეს ბრძოლა მთელი ისტორიის განმავლობაში მიმდინარეობდა მეტ-ნაკლები სიმწვავით, მაგრამ უახლოეს ისტორიას თუ ჩავუღრმავდებით, დავინახავთ რომ ბოლშევიკების მიერ დანგრეული (ზოგი ჯერაც აღუდგენელი) ტაძრების ქვები არა მარტო იმათ ამხელს, ვინც წერაქვითა და ჩაქუჩით ანგრევდა ეკლესიას, არამედ იმათაც, ვინც დასავლეთიდან რუსეთის გავლით რეექსპორტირებული (პარიზის კომუნა) იდეოლოგიით უქედავდა ტვინს ქართველობას და იდეოლოგიურად ამზადებდა ამ პროცესებს...

არასრულფასოვნების სინდრომმა და უცხოთმიმბაძველობამ ქართველობა ჯერ ურწმუნოების სულამდე მიიყვანა, მერე მებრძოლ ათეისტებად ჩამოაყალიბა, ბოლოს კი ტაძრების დამანგრეველებად აქცია...
ზუსტად იგივე პროცესებს უყრიან საფუძველს თანამ ე დ რ ო ვ ე დასავლურ-ლიბერალური პოლიტიკური ელიტა, აგენტურული ქსელის არასამთავრობოები და მართული ბორდელვიზია...

What is being done against the Church today is not an invisible but a very visible (physical) fight!!! Although this fight has been going on throughout the entire history with more or less intensity, but if we look at the recent history more profoundly we shall see that the stones of temples destroyed by the Bolsheviks (some of them still not restored) expose not only those who were ruining the churches with a pickaxe and a hammer, but those who were instilling the ideology re-exported from the West via Russia (Paris commune) in the heads of the Georgians, ideologically preparing these processes...

Inferiority syndrome and tendency to imitate foreigners brought Georgians to the spirit of atheism (absence of faith) and then turned them into fighting atheists, and, ultimately, in the destroyers of churches...

These same processes are prepared the c o n t e m p o r a r y political elite, NGOs of agent network and controlled brothelevision...

[50] Rayner, J (1986). Philosophy into Dogma: The Revival of Cultural Conservatism. British Journal of Political Science. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge

▶ *4.2.1.2.3 Religious Monopolism*

The idea of religious monopolism means the existence of a particular privileged religion on a particular territory and discreditation of all other religions.[51] In the Georgian context, far-right narrative united under this idea appeals to the privileged status of Orthodox Christiany, trying to villainise representatives of all other groups (see Figure 16).

FIGURE 16.

Narrative signifying the religious monopolism

Enemies of Orthodoxy shall never prevail in Georgia, corrupt, lecherous, violent homofascists (abusive and uninformed reference to homosexuals), their immoral, beastly ways go beyond all boundaries of human nature, which will lead to the end of normal human reproduction and development, and thus the duty of each normal person is to contradict their violent efforts to establish their beastly ways as a norm

It is important to note that the narrative pertaining religious monopolism grows particularly active as part of religious conflicts, which was evident in January this year during the Buknari conflict (see Figure 17) .

FIGURE 17

Buknari conflict and the concept of enemies of religion. Source: MythDetector [52]
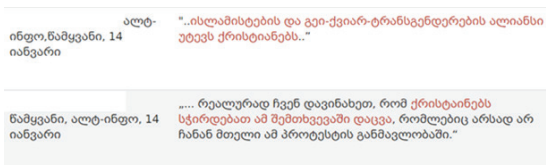
Alt-info, presenter, 14 january: "an alliance of Islamists and Gay-queer -transgender people are attacking Christianity..."

Alt-info, presenter, 14 january: "...actually, we see that Christians have to be protected in this case, who are never seen throughout the entire protest rally..."

▶ *4.2.1.2.4 Social Preservationism*

The idea of social preservation highlights the importance of preserving social and demographic status-quo and mostly fights against changes to be introduced to the existing structure. Ideas expressed through the narrative of social preservation are often termed "natural" and "normal". Thus, in this direction, far-right narrative disseminated in Georgia refers to "normal" gender roles, demographic quotas and other related aspects of a society.

---

[51] **Note¹⁰:** relatively extremist form of religious monopolism is the attempt to destroy all other religions

[52] MythDetector (2021). 6 გზავნილი ბუკნარის მოვლენების შესახებ, რომელიც მუსლიმების მიმართ სიძულვილს აღვივებს [Six messages about Buknari events, which ignites hatred against Muslims]; available at: **https://www.mythdetector.ge/ka/myth/6-gzavnili-buknaris-movlenebis-shesakheb-romelits-muslimebis-mimart-sidzulvils-aghvivebs**

Far-right narrative containing the idea of social preservation encompasses three main thematic directions in Georgia:

01 | **preservation of social structure and roles interpreted as "traditional"** – narrative disseminated under this thematic direction is largely focused on drawing the audience's attention to the roles favoured by far-right groups, highlighting the breach of gender-related social status-quo (see Figure 18):

FIGURE 18.

Concept of a traditional family in far-right narrative

ერის გადარჩენის,გამრავლების ფუნდამენტური ამოცანა ტრადიციული ოჯახია.იქ სადაც კაცი მამა არაა და ქალი დედა, ერის მომავალი განწირულია

A traditional family is the fundamental objective of saving and reproduction of a nation. Where a man is not a father and a woman is not a mother, the future of the nation is doomed
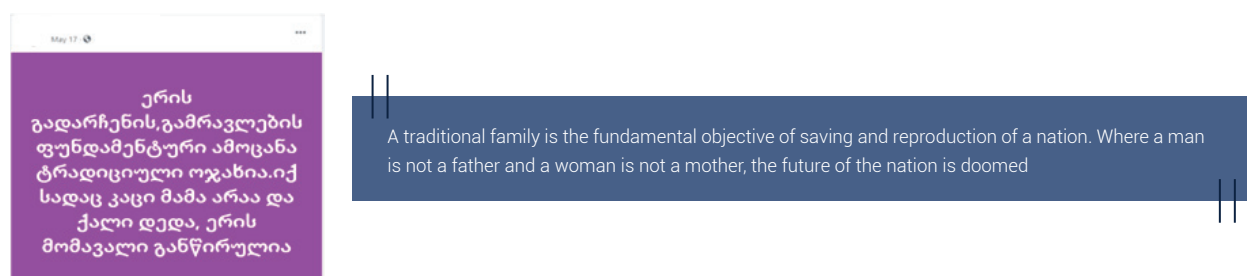
02 | **preservation of genetic purity –** systematic proliferation of messages inspired with the idea of preserving genetic purity began in 2014. The proliferation of these messages mostly meant appealing to the cases of Georgian women marrying ethnically non-Georgian men, which, according to the narrative, would lead to the apocalyptic scenario of the loss of the Georgian genes (see Figure 19);

FIGURE 19.

Concept of genetic purity and betrayal of homeland. Source: Presa

presa.ge
30 იანვარი, 2019 · 🌐
"როდესაც ქართველი ქალი უცხოელზე თხოვდება, ეს ქვეყნის ღალატია"

PRESA.GE
"როდესაც ქართველი ქალი უცხოელზე თხოვდება, ეს ქვეყნის ღალატია"

When a Georgian woman is marrying a foreigner, she is committing betrayal of homeland.

03 | **discreditation of minorities** - it is notable that the target audience of far-right narrative in Georgia is composed of various groups representing the majority. Thus, the narrative of these agents is mostly intended to emphasise the privileged nature of the majority and discredit the minority groups. Discred-itation mainly threatens sexual, ethnic, religious, and racial minorities.

4.2.1.2.5 Institutional Retractionism

The idea of institutional retractionism implies the discreditation of various aspects of the current form of governance in Georgia along with the agitation for various past forms of governance (see Figure 20).
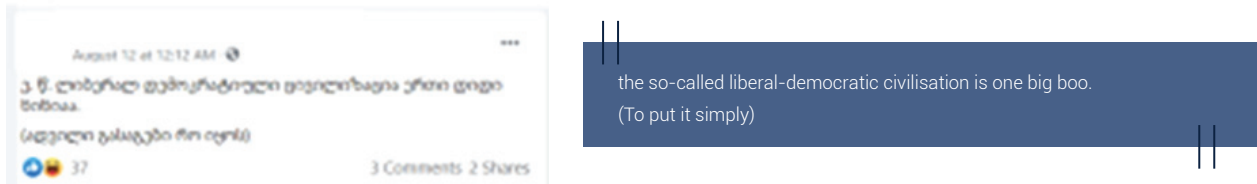
FIGURE 20.

Discreditation of liberal democracy by far-right agents

the so-called liberal-democratic civilisation is one big boo.
(To put it simply)

The narrative inspired by the idea of institutional retractionism usually criticises democracy and democratic institutions and, in several cases, expresses support for past forms of governance like monarchy, for example.[53]

4.2.1.2.6 Selective Fear of innovations

The idea of innovation phobia implies strict protest against novelties in technologies, science or any other field. It is noteworthy that first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative in Georgia are characterised with **selective innovation phobia.** Selective fear of innovations is expressed in the fact that the far-right groups are actively benefiting from youth and social media platforms, however, on the other hand, they have radical protest against other novelties. Far-right agents actively disseminated the narrative of innovation phobia in response to the vaccination process (see Figure 21).

FIGURE 21.

Innovation phobia among Georgian far-rights

Vaccination does nothing to stop virus dissemination. It is a fact already. The virus is spreading as fast in countries with the greatest number of vaccinated people as in less-vaccinated countries. So, it is better for you, Tikaradze and Imnadze, stop terrorizing unvaccinated people, better search for better ways of treatment or a vaccine that will truly protect people from virus.

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[53] გელაშვილი, თ. (2019). *მემარჯვენე ექსტრემიზმის პოლიტიკური შესაძლებლობები საქართველოში.* საქართველოს პოლიტიკის ინსტიტუტი [Gelashvili T. (2019). *Political Opportunities of Right-Wing Extremism in Georgia.* Georgian Political Institute].

July 22 · 🌐

გუშინ როგორც კი დავწერე შევქმნათ: "სამოქალაქო დაცვის
მოძრაობა" და ვიბრძოლოთ სავალდებულო ვაქცინაციის
წინააღმდეგ მეთქი, "სისტემა" მაშინვე შეუდგა მუშაობას,
იდეის გასანეიტრალებლად, გამოასისინა ხალხი, რომლებსაც
ამდენი ხნის მანძილზე კოვიდტერორზე ერთი განცხადებაც
კი არ გაუკეთებიათ, იქით მარგინალურ ჯგუფები ჩართეთ:)
მე რას გამომაპარებთ, ყველას გიცნობთ ვინ საიდან
იკვეპებით... ვიცი, ხალხის დაბოლება არ გიჭირთ ხოლმე,
მაგრამ წირვებზე მოსაჩვენებლად რომ გიჭირავთ იმ
სანთლებს გადიცევით, ღმერთთან რომ ახვალთ, იქ რა პასუხს
გასცემთ?:)

> Yesterday, as soon as I wrote "let us create a movement of civic protection" and fight against obligatory vaccination, the System was brought into action immediately to neutralise the idea. People, who have been silent for so long about Covidterror began hissing here like snakes, and included marginalised groups:)You cannot fool me, I know you all there, who you are, what is feeding your brains... I know you are good at cheating people, but by those candles you are holding at holy masses to pretend being religious, what answer will you give God when you face him?:)

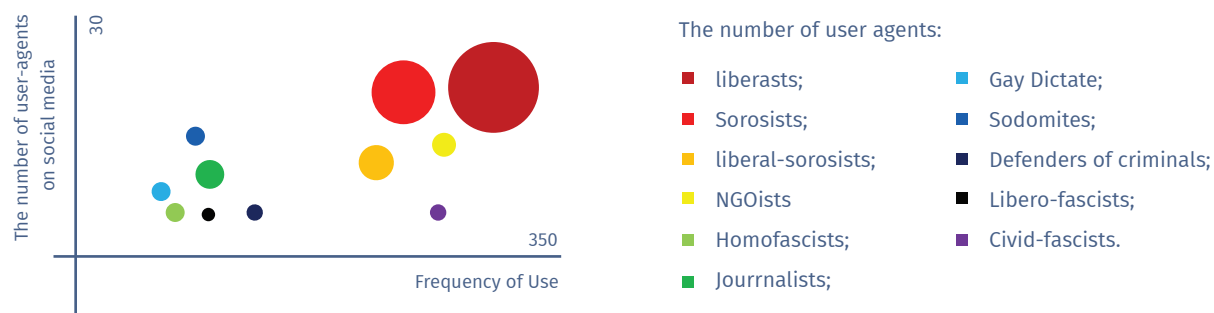## 4.2.2 The Language of Far-right Narrative Disseminated in Georgia

Employment of linguistic techniques is of special importance to ensure the effective dissemination of extremist narrative. Usually, agent-distributors of far-right narrative use diverse linguistic mechanisms to impact the members of the privileged in-group.

Analysis of the language of the far-right narrative revealed a number of linguistic techniques employed by far-right agents. The linguistic mechanisms used in messages containing far-right narrative seemed to serve the following purposes:

01 **social demarcation** – the definition of far-right narrative included in this document emphasises on the ability of the narrative to create privileged (in-groups) and non-privileged (out-groups) groups. Texts of several statements containing far-right narrative often clearly mark boundaries between the inner and outer circles. This is especially true for the use of particular [abusive] words;

02 **discreditation of non-privileged groups** – discreditation of non-privileged (out-groups) groups through the usage of linguistic mechanisms in the Georgian context mainly encompasses the use of abusive vocabulary by far-right narrative first-sources and agent-distributors as well as their target audience (see Figure 22);

FIGURE 22.

Terms of reference used to discredit non-privileged groups

The number of user agents:

- liberasts;
- Sorosists;
- liberal-sorosists;
- NGOists;
- Homofascists;
- Jourrnalists;
- Gay Dictate;
- Sodomites;
- Defenders of criminals;
- Libero-fascists;
- Civid-fascists.

54 Note[11]: linguistic mechanisms given on Figure 22 include the most popular and wide-spread terms intended for the discreditation of out-groups.

03 **popularisation of in-groups** – it is noteworthy that along with the discreditation of outer groups, agent-distributors of far-right narrative in Georgia are popularizing the members of the in-groups. Popularisation of the membership of the in-group, as usual, is happening by appealing to a particular macro-level identity. Often agent-distributors of far-right narrative use phrases like "true Georgians", „Orthodox brothers and sisters", etc.

4.3 AGENT-DISTRIBUTORS OF FAR-RIGHT NARRATIVE IN GEORGIA

Classification of first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narratives in Georgia can be performed in a number of ways. This part of the research report explains the diversity of possible classification along with the multiplicity of the macro-level identities of first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative.

However, it is essential to consider the reactive nature of these agents and social, economic, and political processes in Georgia, which conditions both the diversity and multitude of far-right narrative first-sources and agent-distributors.

The aim of this paragraph is not only to explain the multitude of first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narratives in Georgia but also provide detailed information about the major characteristics of far-right agents.

4.3.1 The Macro-level Identity of Far-right Agents

This document uses the concept of macro-level identity several times in relation to first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative. In its sense, the macro-level identity of far-right agents is a comparatively narrow ideological and value system, which serves as the foundation for self-identification and developing major directions of the narrative.

It is noteworthy that the above-mentioned macro-level identity is characteristic not only of far-right agents but also of their target audiences. Besides, the existence of similar or identical macro-level identity among far-right agents and their target audience is an essential for the efficient dissemination of the narrative.

Besides, the fact that a far-right agent has a certain macro-level identity does not mean that the far-right narrative disseminated by this agent will be necessarily and totally different from the narrative disseminated by other agents. On the contrary, agents of different macro-level identities often collaborate, which, in a number of cases, is conditioned by their shared interests [related to their macro-level identities].

The following are notable from among the macro-level identities of far-right agents functioning in Georgia:

01 | **Ultranationalist macro-level identity** – there are many definitions for ultranationalism, which arises out of the essence of ultranationalism itself. In general, this term is defined as an extremist form of nationalism, which raises the interests of one nation or state above the interests of others[55]

In Georgia (and not only in Georgia) ultranationalism serves as the foundation for the macro-level identities of racist, Nazi, Neo-Nazi, fascist, and xenophobic groups (see Figure 23).

FIGURE 23.

Ideologies unified under ultranationalist macro-level identity [56]

■ Ultranationalism;

■ Racism;

■ Fascism;

■ Nazism / Neo-Nazism;

■ Xenophobia.
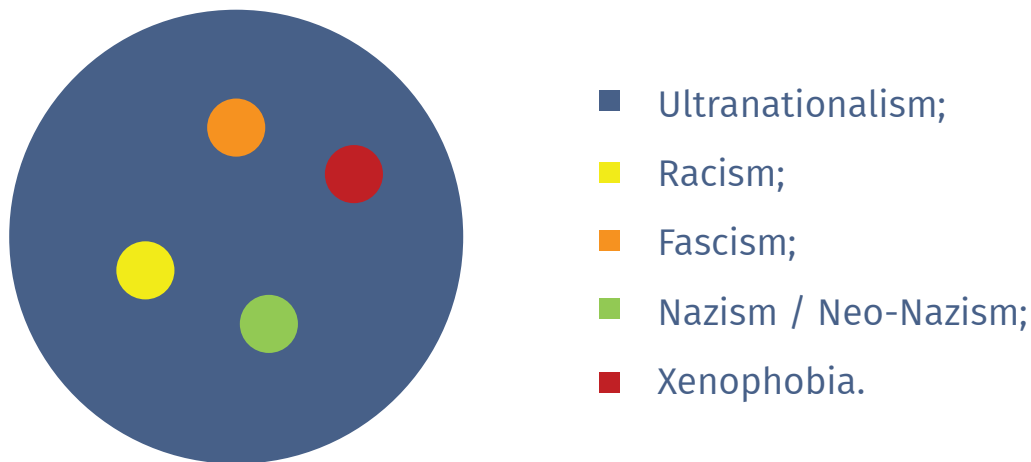
02 | **religious macro-level identity** – in the Georgian context, religious macro-level identity mostly coincides with Orthodox Christian macro-level identity. Far-right agents of religious macro-level identity have the highest level of activity when religion-related processes are taking place in the country.[57]

Despite the fact that ultranationalist macro-level identity prevails in far-right agents, the mostly religious macro-level identity of their target audience conditions the effort of these groups to position themselves as true Christians. This effort is reflected in the attempt of far-rights to deepen relationships with spiritual institutions, which is well manifested in their habit to arrive at street rallies in company with priests and clergy.

[55] Oxford English Dictionary (n,d). Ultranationalism

[56] Note[12]: unification of macro-level identities given on figure 23 under the ultranationalist macro-level identity is conditioned by the tendency of the Georgian groups of these macro-level identities to position their group as ultranationalist in the disseminated narrative. **This, of course, does not mean that these groups do not act outside the ultranationalist group ideology. However, as usual, at such times their activity is mostly low-scale.**

[57] Note[13] : this does not, of course, mean the passivity of ultranationalist groups of religious macro-level identity in relation to any other issues of relevance.

03 | **Agents with homophobic macro-level identity** – homophobic macro-level identity occupies a funda-mental place among other far-right macro-level identities. Besides, **it represents a kind of a linking macro-level identity for other macro-level identities.** The linking role of homophobic macro-level identity is illustrated by far greater number of protesters gathered to counter LGBTQ community supporting rallies as than at other far-right events.

The ability of a homophobic macro-level identity to unite other far-right macro-level identities at street protests and, consequently, create large-scale street rallies, is conditioned by the especially efficient stigma-tisation of the out-group in question (LGBTQ community) by the in-group (agents with homophobic mac-ro-level identity), the major motif of which is to present all members of the out-group as enemies of far-right agents [and audience] in Georgia (see Figure 24).

FIGURE 24.

Homophobic macro-level identity as a unifying factor.

Those who think that the nation that was allotted to Virgin Mary would be broken! And I don't even care for the opinions of some here about violence. Don't write to me.

Laws in Georgia are established by the God himself, and the Georgian nation is protecting it. And let the rest of them know their place!

It is important to note that the linking role of a macro-level identity often depends on social, economic, and political processes in the country and, accordingly, it is quite possible that other macro-level identities obtained the leading role in individual cases.

4.3.2 Four Major Operational Characteristics of Far-Right Agents

The study of the specific characteristics of first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative revealed four major operational characteristics of the process of narrative dissemination that were regularly demon-strated by these agents.

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58 **Note14 :** for example, **the street rallies against immigrants (2017-2018) inspired by the ultranationalist propaganda, the ultrana-tionalist macro-level identity failed to assume the linking role in the following years, as far as the out-group (Muslim immigrants in this case) was not successfully positioned as an enemy to other macro-identities.**
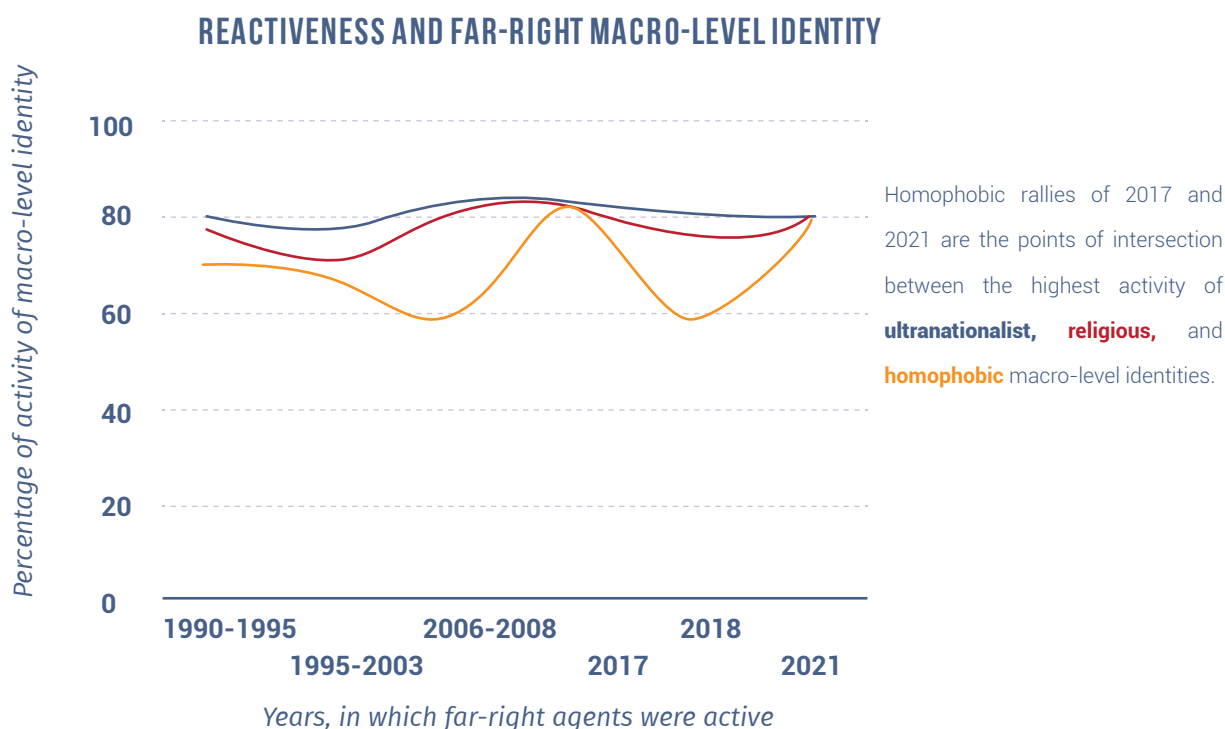
Providing information about the characteristics listed below is important to cope with the far-right narrative in the future.

01 | **Reactiveness** – just like the jihadist narrative, far-right narrative is of reactionary nature, which means the tendency of the narrative to respond to an important ongoing process. It is noteworthy that the scope of the issue that ignites the reaction of far-right agents determines the scope of the response itself (and, consequently, the respective narrative).

After discussing the macro-level identity of far-right agents, it is important to note that a macro-level identity usually gains relevance with the heightening reactiveness of agents. Due to such reactiveness, activities related to macro-level identity may have several phases and points of intersection (overlap) with various macro-level identities (see Figure 25).

FIGURE 25.

Phases of activity of macro-level identity; points of intersection in the Georgian context

REACTIVENESS AND FAR-RIGHT MACRO-LEVEL IDENTITY

Homophobic rallies of 2017 and 2021 are the points of intersection between the highest activity of **ultranationalist, religious,** and **homophobic** macro-level identities.

02 | **Peripheral nature** – a no less interesting feature of first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative is their peripheral nature, which, in a way, complements their reactiveness. In this document, the peripheral nature of far-right agents is understood as an ability to emerge at the periphery of a frank protest against certain social, political, or economic problems and gradually try to gain control of the process.

Analysis of the history of far-right agents in Georgia reveals their peripheral nature. **In most cases, the strife of far-right agents from the peripheries of protest to its centre is targeted at the realisation of their political potential (as the ultimate outcome).** In the Georgian context, this means, the transformation of a far-right movement into a political entity (see Table 1).

TABLE 1.

From a far-right entity to a political party

Far-right entity	Establishment of a far-right entity	A far-right political entity	Formation of a far-right political entity
	2012	„Patriots' Alliance of Georgia"	2012
Georgian March	2017	„The Georgian March – National Movement"	2020
Alt-info	2019	„Conservative Movement"[59]	2021
	2013[60]	„Unity, Identity, Hope - Nation".	2021

03 | **Selective adaptation** – the concept of selective adaptation among far-right first-sources and agent-distributors refers to their non-homogenous attitude to novelties.

The innovation phobia mentioned above, which serves as the ideological background of several narratives disseminated by far-right agents, combined with their selective adaptation, results into a tendency of these agents use certain novelties to update and improve their operational capacity, while expressing radical contempt for any novelty that does not benefit them.

One of the manifestations of selective adaptation was the usage of a relatively new platform in Georgia – TikTok – by far-right groups in order to mobilise young people and gather them at rallies on 5 July.

> *All organisational meetings ended successfully. We are ready... The rest is unto you – the people. Tomorrow since 10 a. m. we will be gathering in the Qashueti yard. The parade of pederasts will not be conducted in Georgia...*[61]

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[59] **Note[15]:** on 7 December 2021 the Public Register registered the Conservative Movement as a political party.

[60] **Note[16]:** this research considers the essay – Nation and State (March 2013) – by Levan Vasadze, the leader of "Unity, Identity, Hope – Nation" to be his first political statement.

[61] **Note[17]:** the transcript is extracted from a video address on a Tik-Tok account:
https://www.tiktok.com/@zurabmakharadze/video/6981107441438182658?is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1

04 | **Normative nativism** – normative nativism is the fundamental characteristic of far-right agents, which mostly wins them long-term and sustained existence. In the Georgian context, the concept of normative nativism means that both the agents and their ideology are positioned as natural, native, and normal.

The statements presented above (containing far-right narrative) manifested several signs of normative nativism.

In order uphold the naturality of their narrative, their ideology and their group, far-right agents in Georgia, while being supported by the normative nativism in the Georgian context, present themselves as being the representatives of the real Georgian phenomenon for years.

4.4 PLATFORMS USED FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF FAR-RIGHT NARRATIVE

A set of the above-mentioned characteristics of first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative condition the usage of a vast number and diverse types of platforms for the transmission of this narrative.

Unlike the jihadist narrative, the attitude to platforms in the process of far-right narrative dissemination is mostly quantitative and not qualitative. This is due to the vividly defined goals of the jihadist narrative, and the dissemination process itself is far better organised. **The aim of the jihadist narrative is to arouse interest of the target audience and then recruit its members for several reasons, which conditions relatively selective and efficient approach to platforms. On the other hand, the chief goal of far-right agents is not to recruit new members, but to disseminate the narrative as widely as possible and increase their target audience.**

Apart from this, the usage of more platforms by far-right agents in Georgia is conditioned by the fact that the target audience of far-right narrative is bigger than that of the jihadist narrative, and the members of the former's target audience have greater access to diverse platforms.

This chapter describes numerous ways these platforms are used by far-right agents to disseminate their narrative and the specific nature of using these platforms.

4.4.1 Migration of Far-right Agents Toward the Internet

Extensive popularisation of internet in Georgia began since 2008 (see Figure 26).

FIGURE 26.

*Usage of internet by Georgia's citizens in 1990-2020; Source:* **DataWorldBank**
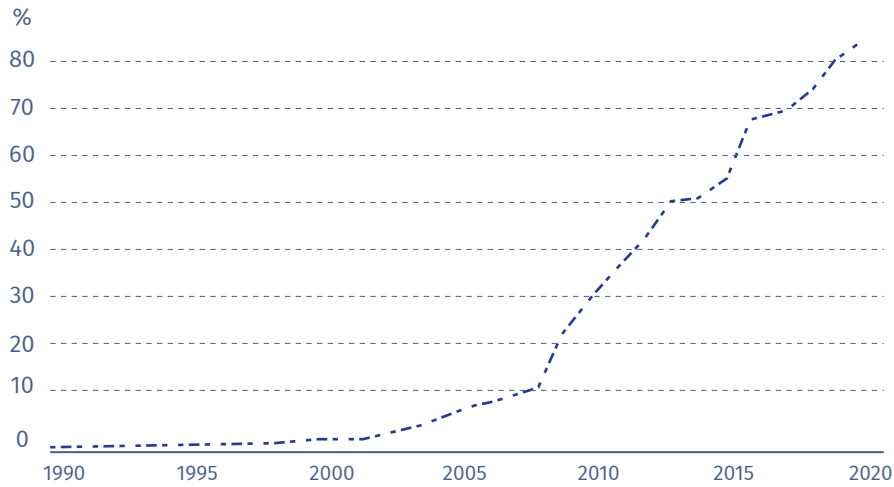
The mass migration of target audience of first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative towards the internet naturally led to the emergence of these far-right entities on these new platforms.

Based on the information obtained as part of this research, from among the platforms used by far-right agents it is important to note the following: social media, mobile apps, forums / blogs, and other websites.

In terms of dissemination of far-right narrative, social media is an unconditional leader among other internet platforms. This paragraph discusses social media platforms that stand out with the highest intensity of the dissemination of far-right narrative (see Figure 26).

FIGURE 26.[62]

Social media platforms in accordance with the amount of far-right narrative posted to them in 2021.

VOLUME OF THE MATERIAL WITH FAR-RIGHT CONTENT ON DIVERSE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS
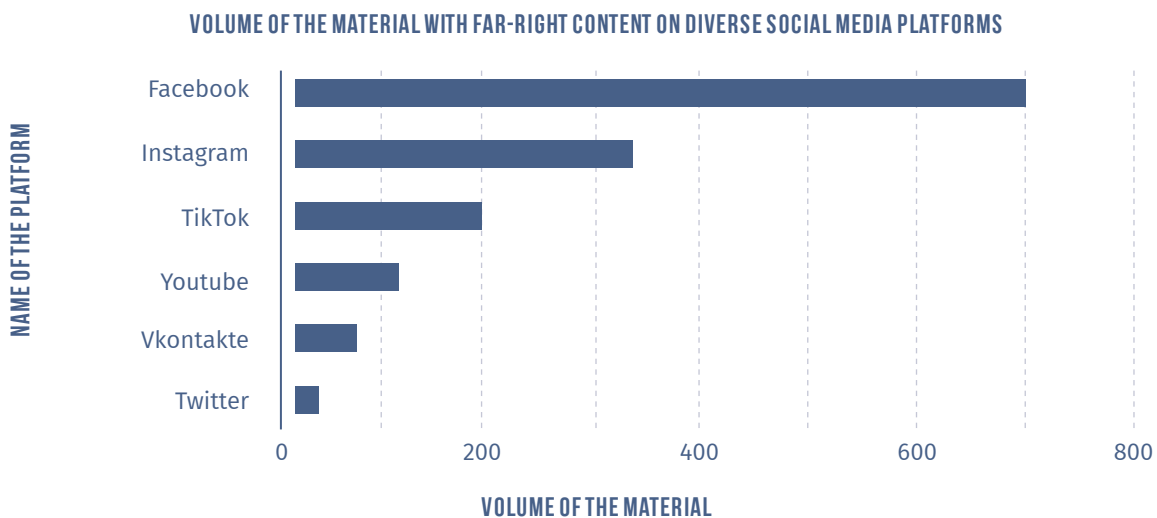
[62] **Note[18]:** data presented on figure 26 is obtained as part of the research. The data only partially depicts the amount of far-right narrative disseminated on the platforms. Besides, while creating this chart, diverse types of materials (video, audio record, post, photo, etc.) were attached equivalent weight of one (1).

As demonstrated from the above-mentioned chart, 5 major social media platforms are used for the dissemination of far-right narrative in Georgia. It is also important to note that, in terms of far-right narrative dissemination, Facebook has been the most popular and prevailing platform among those listed not only this year but since 2008.

Such popularity of the **Facebook** platform among first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative is conditioned by the multifunctional nature of the platform itself, which enables the dissemination of content of diverse formats. On the other hand, it is important to note Facebook's simple navigation, which benefits both users and first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative. Besides, another factor is consistent and abundant representation of the target audience of far-right narrative on this platform in Georgia.

The majority of users of **Instagram,** as a social media platform related to Facebook, is composed of young people, which makes it a far more relevant platform for first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative in Georgia to attract the interest of young people (see Figure 27).

FIGURE 27.

Distribution of Instagram users according to age group (October 2021). Source: **Statista**
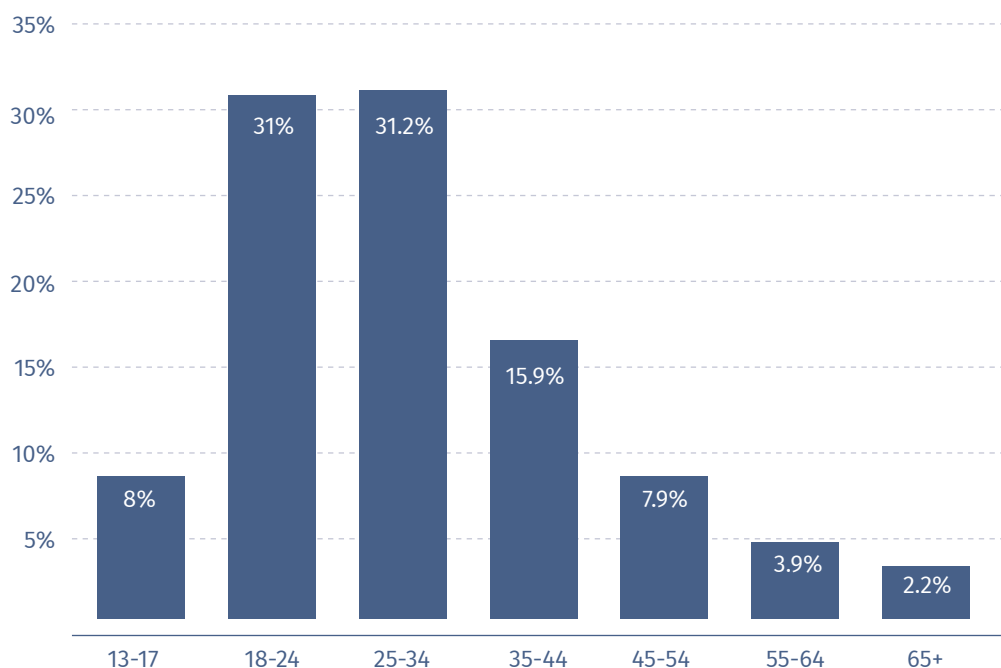
However, despite the availability of such concentrated target audience, Instagram platform limits agent-distributors of far-right narrative in terms of diversity of the posted material. The activity of these agents on Instagram is mostly limited to posting audio and visual materials.

Especially active and intense dissemination of material containing far-right narrative on **TikTok** was notable in 2021 in relation to 5 July events. The TikTok platform, which enables first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative post short videos, was mostly concentrated on street rallies to attract young people in the first half of 2021.

For a long time, **YouTube** was used by a number of agent-distributors of far-right narrative as a kind of alternative to a broadcasting media. Thus, materials posted to YouTube as long discourses and programmes, despite their small quantity, lends greater credibility to far-right narrative. Besides, unlike TV broadcasting, less regulated YouTube provides more flexibility for the dissemination of far-right narrative.

Despite the limited quantity of material disseminated on it, the Russian analogue of Facebook platform **Vkontakte** shows low activity of first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative. Based on the distribution of users of this platform according to their country, it is logical to assume that the major aim of the usage of this platform by [Georgian] far-right agents is to disseminate far-right narrative among Georgians living abroad (especially in Russia) (see Figure 28).

FIGURE 28.

Vkontakte's users according to countries for October 2021. Source: **SimilarWeb**

Unlike the agents of the jihadist narrative, far-right agents do not favour **Twitter,** which is largely conditioned by the relative complexity of the platform and the lack of far-right target audience.

Just like the jihadist agents, however, far-right agent distributors often use apps of interpersonal communication - end-to-end encrypted platforms like **Telegram** and **WhatsApp**, for example - for organisational and operational purposes.

4.4.2 ATTEMPTS OF FAR-RIGHT AGENTS TO OBTAIN BROADCASTING RIGHTS

Just like the jihadist agents, however, far-right agent distributors often use apps of interpersonal communication - end-to-end encrypted platforms like Telegram and WhatsApp, for example   for organisational and operational purposes.

„Alt-Info" received TV broadcasting right on 26 November 2020. The channel could be viewed by about 400 000 subscribers of Magticom and Akhali Kselebi [New Networks] as well as users of Multiplex platform. On 8 June 2021, Silknet refused to include Alt-Infor on its list of channels, claiming a technical problem as a reason for such a decision. After this statement, on 17 June, Alt-Info filed a complaint against Silknet. On 29 July, the founder of the channel, Shota Martinenko asked for the termination of proceedings.

Alt-Info's complaint on being refused the right of broadcasting was based on Article 40 of Georgia's law on broadcasting, according to which:

"The Public Broadcaster, a community broadcaster, a general over-the-air and/or satellite broadcaster autho-rised under this Law, which broadcast within the service area of a person authorised to transit broadcasting (for the purposes of this article, the broadcasting area for a satellite broadcaster is the entire territory of the country), as well as an authorised general over-the-air broadcaster, the broadcasting of which is available to at least 20% of the population as a result of over-the-air broadcasting, may demand from a person, authorised to transit broadcasting, to place their TV channels in all packages offered to consumers ('must carry'). In this case, the right of the broadcaster shall not be permitted to charge persons authorised to transit broadcasting with a fee for the transit of the broadcaster's signal." [63]

In early September, Alt-Info again filed another complaint against Silknet. They demanded that their broad-casting channel were included in all subscriber packages; in case of refusal, they were threatening that Silknet would be subject to legal measures.

Silknet offered to settle the dispute, and the Communications Commission of Georgia granted Alt-Info with a right of nationwide broadcasting on 9 September 2021.

The process of legal dispute between Alt-Info and Silknet clearly demonstrates that far-right groups may well exploit a non-adequately developed legislative frame to their advantage.

4.4.3 Political Platform

First-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative often express their political interest, which, as usual, ultimately results in their attempt to form a political party and, in some cases, participate in the elections to obtain some success (see Table 1, p.93).

It is important to note that based on the limited amount of data available today, **large far-right movements (since the moment of formation) need a period of two to four years to be formally included in political processes (meaning creation of a political party and participation in election campaign).**

Successful political platform for far-right agents, on the one hand, confirms the effectiveness of their narra-tive, and on the other, enables them to implement the views formed and presented as part of their narrative.

4.4.4 The Relevance of Face-to-face Communication

Active migration towards the internet (as mentioned earlier) notwithstanding, it is notable that face-to-face communication maintain relevance among far-right agents.

Platforms for face-to-face communication include protests, rallies, and other types of political manifesta-tions. **On the one hand, such platforms enable far-right agents in Georgia to realistically evaluate the number of their active supporters and, accordingly, measure the efficiency of their narrative, and on the other, also periodically demonstrate their power.**

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[63] The Law of Georgia on Broadcasting. Article 401. Transit of Broadcasting by Authorised Persons.

4.5 TARGET AUDIENCE OF FAR-RIGHT NARRATIVE IN GEORGIA

Due to their multitude and diversity, far-right agents view the entire population of Georgia as their target audience, trying to reach out to everyone. In most cases, the target audience of far-right agents is composed of Orthodox Christian and ethnically Georgian population living in this country.

Instead of arbitrary categorisation of the target audience, this paragraph discusses the attitude between far-right agents and the target audience, which is uncharacteristic of other countries; the paragraph also describes the formation of target audiences as well as the potential change of behaviour of these agents in relation to their future target audiences.
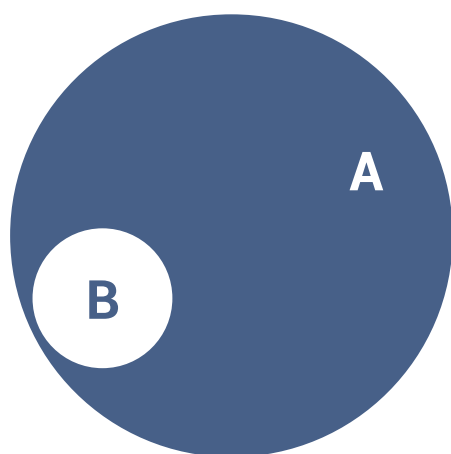
4.5.1 The Paradox of the Target Audience

While discussing the macro-level identity of far-right agents, this document also reviews the macro-level identity of their target audiences. It is crucially important to highlight the issue of macro-level identity while researching far-right narrative, as far **as the effectiveness of a narrative's largely depends on the similarity** (and, ideally - coincidence) o**f views of the agent and the target audience.**

This sub-chapter uses this proposition to explain the paradoxical relationship between far-right agents and their target audience (see Figure 29).

FIGURE 29.

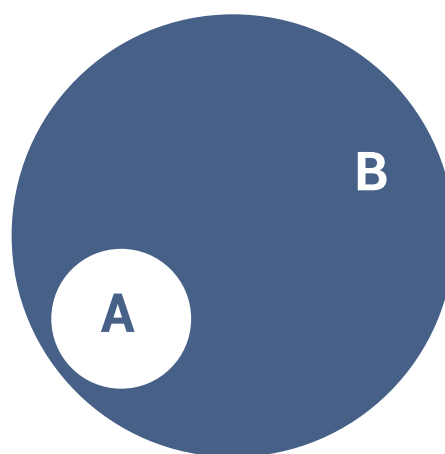*Relationship between far-right agents and macro-level identities of their target audiences.*

FIGURE 1. GEORGIA

FIGURE 2. OTHER REGIONS

A – number of macro-level identities of far-right agents

**B** - number of macro-level identities of the target audience

Figure 29 depicts the paradox relationship between far-right agents and the target audience in Georgia. **Collective number of macro-level identities of far-right agents is greater than those of their target audience, which is naturally accompanied by paradoxical results.**

Such difference leads to the fact that **far-right agents may prove relatively successful and maintain relevance in Georgia only if their macro-level identity is similar or identical with that of its target audience.**

Besides, new far-right agents in Georgia, whose macro-level identity goes beyond the limits of macro-level identity of their target audiences and enjoy only periodic success, are active only for short periods, rapidly losing relevance. One of the most vivid examples of this tendency is the immediate rise and fall of the relevance of a far-right group known as the National Unity (see Figure 30).

FIGURE 30.

Mentions of the National Unity by diverse media outlets in 2017-2021.
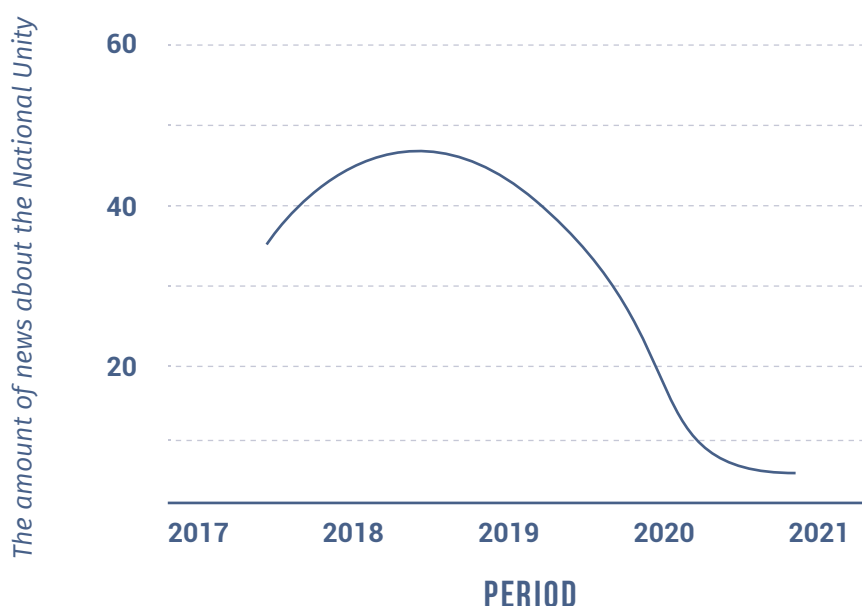
As usual, such small far-right groups begin collaboration with bigger far-right groups after losing popularity to achieve and maintain a degree of relevance among the target audiences.[64]

4.5.2 Formation of the Target Audience

The above-mentioned paradoxical relationship between far-right agents and their target audience may be explained by the process of target audience formation.

Unlike the jihadist narrative, which is mostly formulated to arouse interest of and recruit marginalised Muslims, far-right agents are spending much more effort on society's polarisation, which creates an impression that, through the effort spent on polarisation, the agents themselves create the target audience.

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[64]**Note19:** in October this year, the Facebook page of the National Unity began actively sharing Alt-Info's programmes. Unfortunately, these posts were rapidly removed.

Analysis of the jihadist and far-right narrative disseminated in Georgia revealed one major difference between these two narratives: **far-right narrative** (unlike the jihadist narrative) **places greater emphasis not on a particular in-group** (which is common in the jihadist narrative), **but on the macro-level identity of the respective out-group.**

This greater emphasis placed on the macro-level identity of the out-group ensures a clearer vision of the out-group, however, it also limits the number of macro-level identities of the in-group, which then leads to the above-mentioned paradoxical relationship between the macro-level identities of far-right agents and their target audiences.

▶ *4.5.3 Expansion and Potential Monopolisation of Target Audience*

The above-mentioned paradoxical relationship creates significant problems for far-right agents in terms of controlling the target audience. **Recent years have seen increasing competition among far-right agents to attract larger audiences.**

Accordingly, several far-right groups have demonstrated certain changes in their behaviour to gain monopolist control of larger audiences.

To monopolise target audiences, far-right agents are appealing to the common macro-level identity shared by these agents and the target audience. As already mentioned above, homophobic macro-level identity proved successful twice, uniting people of diverse macro-level identities. However, it is notable that **this is not the result of homophobic macro-level identity itself, but the product of the effort spent on villainising the particular out-group (i. e. LGBTQ community).** Notably, the key target audiences of the far-right narrative are largely composed of people of (Orthodox Christian) macro-level identity.

Thus, this is the reason why first-sources and agent-distributors of far-right narrative are increasingly appealing to Christian values (along with the attempt to position these out-groups outside the religious macro-level identity). This is conspicuously reflected in their actions, including their attempts to highlight the religious aspects of their activity.

Therefore, those far-right groups that prove more successful and efficient in positioning as a group of Orthodox Christian values and macro-level identity while disseminating their narrative, will gain and expand their influence over target audiences and, in the end, establish monopolised control.[65]

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[65] **Note[20]:** a Christian cross placed in front of the Parliament building during the protest rallies of 5 July was a manifestation of such behaviour.

4.6 METHODS FOR DEALING WITH THE DISSEMINATION OF FAR-RIGHT NARRATIVE

Due to the dissemination of far-right narrative and its influence on target audiences, it is necessary to discuss ways to counter its dissemination.

Based on the information about far-right narrative obtained as part of the research, the recommendations offered in this document are oriented to the restriction of capacity of far-right agents:

02 | **restrict reactiveness of far-right agents** – we have already mentioned above that a major characteristic of far-right agents is their reactiveness. Accordingly, limiting the number of potential reasons that trigger the response of these groups not only reduces the level of their activity but also robs it of relevance. There are several methods to reduce responsiveness of far-right groups;

03 | **counter disinformation on the internet** - countering disinformation and misinformation disseminated on the internet is of vital importance in fight against far-right narrative as far as the agents mentioned in this document are known to intentionally spread incorrect and false information, which then leads to the formation of narrative containing disinformation;

04 | **raise awareness of inadvertent disseminators of [harmful] narratives** – inadvertent disseminators further increase the scale of far-right narrative, making it even less controllable. Raising the awareness of inadvertent disseminators like media, academia, and youth (and not only) will significantly reduce the scale and target audiences of far-right narratives;

05 | **Development of the legislative framework** – the case of legal dispute between Alt-Info and Silknet analysed in this document vividly illustrates the urgency to develop and improve Georgia's legislative framework regulating far-right narrative.

Based on the study of the language, content, and other aspects of violent extremist narrative disseminated in Georgia, an interesting tendency was identified. **Notwithstanding the fact that far-right narrative is more intensively disseminated in Georgia and has a higher frequency of manifestation, Jihadist narrative is seen as a bigger threat by the Georgian society.**

Such anomalous nature may be explained by a suggestion that far-right narrative, though widely spread and violently manifested, is not understood as extremist in its essence.

This part enlists possible explanations for the mentioned phenomenon. Besides, it is important to take into consideration that views offered in this paragraph belong solely to the authors of this research.

5.1 PERCEPTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM AFTER 9 / 11

The terrorist attack of 11 September 2002 against the USA dramatically changed the attitude of the international community towards terrorism. **NATO's Article 5 was invoked once and only time in its history, and Fight Against Terrorism was launched against organisations of the jihadist ideology; this resulted on the concentration of the international effort on countering Islamist terrorist and jihadist organisations, leaving far-right and other kinds of violent extremism beyond attention.**

Coordinated action of the international society aimed at the protection of peaceful population from the jihadist narrative led to the formation of obsessive attitude towards the jihadist narrative, which, in its turn, was reflected on the relative inability of people view far-right narrative with equal caution and seriousness.

This tendency occurred mostly in Western countries, including Georgia.

5.2 RELIGION AND DIVERSE MACRO-LEVEL IDENTITIES

Despite the fact that Georgia was less targeted by Islamist terrorism and the jihadist narrative, the concept of the jihadist narrative entirely absorbed the understanding of violent extremist narrative in Georgia, which is also related to the fact that the far-right groups are successfully appealing to the macro-level identities of the target audience.

Koch's definition of far-right narrative,[66] according to which far-right movement is associated with counter-jihadist movement, suggests the importance of appealing to the religious macro-level identity that is effectively performed by far-right agents functioning in Georgia.

Placing emphasis on the history of Georgia and highlighting the religious aspects conditioned the mitigation of the threat that the far-right narrative poses in general, diverting public attention to the jihadist narrative as the key danger.

This is also facilitated by the non-diverse nature of the jihadist macro-level identity. As far as the jihadist macro-level identity is mostly concentrated around the dogmas of the Sunni terrorist organisations, such narrative is naturally viewed as a rather particularised notion.

Far-right narrative, which may be using Nazism, ultranationalism, religious nationalism, racism, and other similar ideas as a foundation for macro-level identity, prevents the target audience from forming a clear understanding of what far-right narrative actually is.

5.3 APPEALING TO THE TRADITIONAL

Unlike the jihadist narrative, far-right agents (especially those functioning in Georgia) have been successfully positioning themselves as the inherent parts of the public.

Normative nativism mentioned in this document is the underlying reason of the fact that first-sources and affiliated agent-distributors of far-right narrative are continuously viewed by their target audiences as carriers of true Georgian values.

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[66] See e.g., Koch, A. (2017). The new crusaders: Contemporary extreme right symbolism and rhetoric. Perspectives on Terrorism, 11(5), 13-24.

CONCLUSION

As part of the study of violent extremist narrative disseminated in Georgia, this document analyses major characteristics of the jihadist and far-right narratives existing in Georgia.

It is noteworthy that the far-right and jihadist narratives are ideologically prevailing in terms of dissemination, while far-left narrative is characterised with lower intensity and less violent nature, which is the reason why this research focuses on the above-mentioned two categories of the extremist narrative.

Following the elaboration of the working definitions of these two narratives, the common characteristic of the jihadist and far-right narratives was identified: division of society into privileged and non-privileged groups.

In terms of content, far-right narrative displays more diversity, which is partly conditioned by diverse macro-level identities of far-right agent-distributors and processes ongoing in the country.

Far-right agents dominate in numbers. Just like the jihadist narrative, far-right narrative also uses affiliated and inadvertent agent-distributors.

These agents are trying to disseminate the narrative through various platforms. In this regard, internet platforms are gradually gaining relevance. However, on the other hand, interpersonal communication remains irreplaceable component of the jihadist narrative.

The target audience of the jihadist narrative disseminated in Georgia is smaller and well identified (Adjarian Muslims, the Kists, and the ethnic Azerbaijanis). They are collectively referred to as marginalised Muslims. The research (during the analysis of narrative dissemination process) identified paradoxical relation between far-right agents and their audiences, which is explained by the concept of macro-level identity.

Forms of dissemination are mostly similar in both types of narratives: face-to-face and virtual (posting textual, photo, video, and audio content to various platforms) communication.

Despite the fact that far-right extremism poses greater danger to Georgia's security architecture, Georgian population still finds it difficult to see far-right narrative as a serious threat, which is conditioned by both side effects of countering Islamist terrorism and the jihadist narrative after 9 / 11 terrorist attack and the efficient activity of far-right agents themselves.

Methods of fighting against both the jihadist and far-right narrative lie in supporting marginalised groups, developing legislative framework, and raising awareness of the target audience.

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Appendix 1. *Transcripts of interviews conducted by ICSVE (International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism) with convicts charged with DAESH membership.*

Interview 1 [an extract]

My Journey Towards Jihad

0:02   In reality, only recently did I start believing in the ideology that promotes fighting

0:08   and jihad to create an Islamic state to set up a shariah land guided by Allah's words.

0:19   When the videos came out about the war in Syria,

0:22   the first hatred towards Assad started in our mosques here in Kosovo

0:26   Imams in our mosques started lecturing about unity during Friday prayers

0:32   and appealed to the masses to go and help those who were being oppressed,

0:36   against Assad and other dictators.

0:37   ABU ALBANI Former ISIS Soldier

0:39   That's how it all started.

0:41   Facebook was the primary source of videos for me.

0:48   Even though I didn't understand the Arabic language at the time.

0:50   I understood nothing actually.

0:53   What's important is that I saw the war

0:54   and I immediately had a feeling for the war…

0:57   a desire to fight.

1:01   Abu Albani connected with people on Facebook who helped explain how he could join the fight in Syria.

1:10   [Before] I believed in traditional Islam and practiced Islam like all others.

1:15   But over time, I came to know more people and got drawn into "extremism."

1:27   To make connections with people,

1:31   I followed Lavdrim Muhaxheri [an Albanian ISIS leader] and other Albanians,

1:36   and [watched] the videos of Albanians in Syria that emerged.

1:39   [They said] the people of Syria need other Muslims to come help them to achieve Allah's will.

see **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vfDzwndvFY&ab_channel=ICSVE**

The Real Jihad

00:00	When [ISIS] first appeared, it looked like they followed Allah's laws [and] Islam.
00.07	It was a real jihad, a real fight.
00:10	I wanted to fight in battles for ISIS and I did. I participated in battles.
00:17	Then I started seeing the negative side of it.
00:18	ABU HAMZA Former ISIS Soldier
00:25	The number [of killed] was huge. Many people died during the battle [against Sunni al-Sheitaat].
00:31	They were lying all over the streets.
00:31	We captured the younger people.
00:37	First, [ISIS] told us that those people are murtadeen [apostates].
00:41	Personally, I wasn't convinced, but I can't say anything.
0:45	We raided the area and took the murtadeen.
0:49	[There were] about 25-30 people.
0:51	[ISIS] took them to court. They judged them.
0:54	They beheaded them.
0:55	The ones who were beheaded, [ISIS] took their belongings
1:00	and sold it in an auction.
1:05	The ones who left, they took their homes, their cows and their lands.
1:10	Everything.
1:12	For the battle of Tadmor, we went to Tadmor. The [Syrian] regime was there, of course.
1:17	We raided, but no one was there.
1:20	There were a few soldiers there.
1:23	When we were about to shoot them, they told us that they were civilians
1:27	and that they had nothing to do with [the war].
1:31	They took them directly to behead them and to spray them with bullets.
1:38	ISIS leaders called Abu Hamza to punish someone who he knew from his village.
1:45	I knew him from before the revolution.
1:47	He is very religious. He prays and fasts
1:54	and he lectures at the mosque.

1:57	He is honest, trustworthy. He fasts. He is a Sunni.
2:02	We got information that he was [alleged to be] a secret agent working for the Free Syrian Army.
2:14	If someone says anything [against ISIS], they would behead him.
2:18	They brought him.
2:21	We formed a circle and blocked people from getting close.
2:26	We closed the whole street. They brought a piece of wood to cut his head.
2:34	[The executioner] took out the sword to behead him.
2:40	[But] the guy turned his head away, one time and then again.
2:44	Then another ISIS guy took him by the hair and kept it secure.
2:50	He took his sword and hit him with his sword. The sword's handle broke.
3:03	[Finally] the guy dropped.
3:05	He fell on the floor and started to flail around.
3:08	A guy with us came forward.
3:13	He loaded his gun to shoot him and kill him completely because he was suffering.
3:19	The executioner said, 'No.'
3:20	He took his sword again and tried to cut they guy's head off, but it didn't work.
3:27	He then went to his car. In front of everyone, he got a knife and beheaded him
3:35	I was affected by this.
3:41	[When I saw beheadings], my conscience [said] 'This is not Islamic.'
3:45	The Messenger (Peace be upon Him) says about prisoners that
3:49	one should teach ten Muslims to read and write, then let them go.
3:56	ISIS will brainwash you with houri [virgins in Paradise], Islam, Paradise.
4:04	Then they want to behead a Sunni or someone else in front of you.
4:14	The Truth Behind the Islamic State
4:17	Sponsored by the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism www.ICSVE.org **www.ICSVE.org**
4:23	See more at: TheRealJihad.org

see **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDzW7QKifW8&ab_channel=ICSVE**

Interview 3 [an extract]

The Promises of ad-Dawlah to Women

0.2   it was my first love, and I loved him very strongly.

0.5   When he left with another woman, he abandoned me and he let me down.

0.11   I became very, very, very depressed.

0.12   At that time, I thought that only religion that can save me.

0.17   I decided to make a second Facebook account, slightly more religious,

0.21   to communicate with religious people.

0.24   That's when this ISIS recruiter added me on Facebook.

0.30   He said that women could be nurses and help the orphans.

0.34   He said women had status there and were considered precious.

0.44   We women could go join ISIS to enjoy paradise there.

0.49   He said I would have a villa, that I would have horses, that I would have everything I wanted in fact.

0.54   He said I would be rich, even with diamonds.

0.57   He really sold me a dream, that I would have all I wanted in Syria.

1:02   So we went on a cruise.

1:05   And this cruise, in fact, it stopped in Turkey, so we got off the boat there in Izmir.

1:11   Then we went from Izmir to Adana to Gaziantep.

1:13   And in Gaziantep, there were the Islamic State smugglers who took us into Syria.

1:21   I just wanted one thing: to go to Syria and find my new "brothers and sisters" of Islam.

1:27   The recruiter put a lot of hatred in me, even towards my parents, society and all of that.

1:33   So for me, I had turned the page on Belgium and my life was going to be in Syria.

Appendix 2. *An extract from the Interview of Muslim Abu Valid Al-Sishan (Murad Margoshvili) with Turkish version of Al-Jazeera.*

Journalist: Is this not the Syrian War? Why have you come to Syria?

Respondent: Major reason why we came here [to Syria], is the Prophet's Hadith on Sham [Syria], and the chaos that was wreaked on Syrian people. This is no strange to us. We have been suffering for years. We are the nation that best understands the Syrian people. And in this we resemble one another. And as stated in Hadith, we met those people, for whom we shall fight and die.

Journalist: What do you think, why did Russia engage in this war?

Respondent: I shall recall the Hadith: „the unbelievers are swarming around you like hungry men are flocking around food." This is what is happening now. Russia is one of these hungry men. Russia is the one that wants to maintain the current regime in Syria more than anyone does. And that is why they are bombing the country so intensively. For example, if the coalition forces are bombing once, Russia is bombing ten times a day.

Journalist: The series of air strikes by Russia on the entire territory of Syria are often accompanied by conspiracy theories, according to which Russia is justifying itself by claiming that it is targeting North Caucasians on the Syrian territory.

Respondent: When the unbelievers are willing to do something, they shall think of many reasons [to justify their actions]. The argument about the Caucasian Mujahids makes no sense. Before that they invaded Ukraine. Were there any terrorists from the Caucasus? Were we the reason of their invasion of Afghanistan? Russians want to reclaim their lost international standing. Syria is a chance for Russia to demonstrate its strength at the international level. But we are sorry for the difficulties that the locals have to endure due to these air strikes, because they [the Syrians] are the ones that suffer the most.

Appendix 3. *DAESH's outdoor social advertisement*

Image #1

Image #2

Image #4