

## **Discursive Shift towards the “Politics of Fear” and Localization of the War in Ukraine in Georgia**

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### **Abstract**

After the Kremlin authorized full-scale war in Ukraine, the far-right groups localized disinformation narratives and led the coordinated ‘politics of fear’ in the country. The latter, orchestrated via governmental, media and illiberal/far-right groups’ platforms, have soon become the main framework of political discussions including and beyond the issue of the war. Even though the public surveys depict the main issues of concern to be socio-economic across the Georgian society (CRRC Georgia, Caucasus Barometer Dataset 2021), the politics shift towards the issues of identity and foreign relations where the war in Ukraine appears central. Scrutinizing the political narratives in Georgia one year into the war, such ‘politics of fear’, we argue, encompass three main interconnected discursive fields as they evolve in media: identity (rethinking ‘Georgianness’ in relation to the West), economics (rethinking ties with Russia vis-à-vis the sanctions), and security (in relation to the war trauma and attitudes towards the West as a guarantor of the peace).

Vis-à-vis the overwhelming pro-Western/pro-EU attitudes in Georgian society, the political discourse constructed around the fear centered on Ukraine being “abandoned by the West” and implied ways of rethinking Georgia’s policies on Western integration. Discursive strategies of casting doubt, *heteronomisation*, and discontinuation (Wodak, et.al., 2009) dominate the political discourse. Within the network of communication, the pro-government media play a connecting as well as disseminating role across the far-right, governing executives, and the wider society via not only displaying but also constructing the narratives. Thus, the war appeared as a new reference point for legitimizing the previously veiled narratives regarding Georgia’s foreign orientation toward Russia, as seen by its far right. Moreover, narratives related to the war enabled instrumentalizing of the local trauma of the war via ‘politics of fear’. Interpreting and referring to the disinformation narratives around the war in Ukraine exacerbated the bigger informational weapon of Russia regarding its invincibility used in the region for years.

### **Keywords**

War, Ukraine, Georgia, Politics of Fear.

### **Bio**

**Nino Gozalishvili** is a PhD candidate at Central European University (CEU) pursuing Nationalism Studies and Comparative History joint doctoral program. She is leading the Nationalism and Ethnicity Studies Center at the University of Georgia. Nino's [publications](#) deal with the Soviet history of Georgia, the issues of right-wing populism and nationalism, democratization and disinformation, as well as the trends in soft power policies deployed towards Georgia.

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