

# MASS COMMUNICATION AS A PART OF A MILITARY STRATEGY: THE MILITARY BASE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION IN OCCUPIED ABKHAZIA AND MANAGEMENT OF LOCAL PUBLIC ATTITUDES

MANON BOKUCHAVA

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU)  
1 Ilia Tchavtchavadze, 0179 Tbilisi, Georgia  
**E-mail address:** [manonbokuchava@gmail.com](mailto:manonbokuchava@gmail.com)  
**ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8329-067X>

SERHIY SHTURKHETSKYY

Department of Journalism, The National University of Ostroh Academy  
Seminarska 2, 35800, Ostroh, Ukraine  
**E-mail address:** [shturkhetskyy@oa.edu.ua](mailto:shturkhetskyy@oa.edu.ua)  
**ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4430-2628>

MARIIA ZUBARIEVA

Educational and Scientific Institute of International Relations and National  
Security,  
The National University of Ostroh Academy  
Seminarska 2, 35800, Ostroh, Ukraine  
**E-mail address:** [mariia.zubarieva@oa.edu.ua](mailto:mariia.zubarieva@oa.edu.ua)  
**ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7178-7849>

NATALIIA VOITOVYCH

Faculty of Journalism, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv  
Universytetska, 1, 79000, Lviv, Ukraine  
**E-mail address:** [nataliya.voytovych@lnu.edu.ua](mailto:nataliya.voytovych@lnu.edu.ua)  
**ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9466-0787>

## ABSTRACT

**Aim.** The aim of this article is to define and analyse the intention and effects of the use of mass communication and media for military purposes. The authors examine the issue on the example of the Russian Federation and the unrecognized Republic of Abkhazia.

**Methods.** The method of the research is a qualitative, discursive analysis of media texts.

**Results.** The study of the content of information platform sputnik-abkhazia.ru, created by the Russian Federation in Abkhazia, allows us to identify the main messages the above-mentioned platform disseminates and tries to enroot in the local community of Abkhazia. In the messages identified during the study an attempt is shown to convince the local audience of the military "invincibility" of the Russian Federation, a clear discredit of the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) - and an open attempt to create an icon of the enemy from Georgia and the United States. In this way we see harmful, threatening cooperation of the means of mass media communication against society, carrying out military tasks.

**Conclusions.** A study of the content of Sputnik-Abkhazia shows a clear example of the use of an information platform for military purposes. Given the current situation, we can argue that the informational efforts that the Russian Federation is making in Abkhazia will soon become a problem, not only for Georgia. Such cooperation between military tasks and information platforms serves to sow fear and mistrust in society, which creates fertile ground to rule the public opinion.

**Key words:** mass communication, media, military purposes, Abkhazia, Russia, NATO, Georgia, influence on the Black Sea.

## INTRODUCTION

The de facto republic of Abkhazia is recognized as an independent state by only 5 United Nations (UN) member states - Russia, Syria, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Nauru. Most UN member states recognize Abkhazia as an integral part of Georgia. The international intergovernmental organizations such as the UN, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, 2018), the European Union (European Parliament, 2018) and the Council of Europe (n.d) have the same position. In their resolutions, they also refer to the de facto republic as part of Georgia and state that these territories are occupied by Russia. International human rights organizations explain that the Russian Federation, as the only state exercising effective control over the territories, is responsible for human rights violations in Abkhazia.

Russia-Abkhazia relations have many interesting aspects, the generalization and analysis of which may help peace-building processes in the world. In this case, we will touch on the most active area of their relationship - the military dimension. This is an issue where it can be said that all the main distinguishing marks are falling apart between Russia and Abkhazia. We see not the same military system, but a single military structure, in which the # 7 military base in Abkhazia (Komakhia, 2017; is an integral structural part of the "Southern Military District" of the Russian Federation.

The military policy of the Russian Federation towards occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia has moved to a new stage after the 2008 Russia-Georgia war. A few weeks after the end of hostilities, Russia recognized both regions (Abkhazia, South Ossetia / Tskhinvali region) as *independent republics*.

lics (President of Russia, 2008). Thus it launched different scale and qualitative military strategy.

Following the "recognition", the Russian Federation and the de facto government of Abkhazia signed a military agreement that will remain in force for 49 years (Radio Free Europe. Radio Liberty, 2010). This agreement is automatically renewed every five years. The signatories stated that according to the agreement, the total military presence of Russia in Abkhazia was estimated at 4,000-5,000 troops. Among them would be land, air and naval forces (Kucera, 2011).

Moscow was also given full control over the airport and railway of Abkhazia. By the same agreement, Russia undertook to build a naval base in the Abkhazian city of Ochamchire. The declared purpose of the agreement is to: strengthen the sovereignty of Abkhazia; taking regional security to a new level; creating a common space for defense and security; developing a coordinated domestic policy to promote recognition of Abkhazia by other states; Joint protection of the "border" between Abkhazia and Georgia. The protection of the maritime border of Abkhazia by the Russian Federation is separately allocated among the goals (Gerrits & Bader, 2016).

Article 5 of the agreement explains that a joint armed group, the "Republic of Abkhazia", and the Russian Federation will be formed - a joint force ( that will repel armed attacks. The military group mentioned also ensures the protection of the land and sea borders of Abkhazia. Article 6 is similar to Article 5 in general terms, stating that an attack on one ally is perceived as an attack on another ally. In the event of an act of aggression, the parties to the agreement are obliged to provide military support to each other. In this article, the Russian Federation indicates that actions will be taken in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations (U.N. Charter art. 51, 1993).

According to the agreement, the joint forces (JAM News, 2019) of Abkhazia and the Russian Federation will be headed by staff assigned by the Russian Federation, during direct aggression and hostilities. And their deputy is appointed by the "government" of Abkhazia. Article 8 obliges the Russian Federation to provide the Abkhazian Armed Forces with modern weapons. Several articles of the "document" are focused on the protection of the so-called "Russia-Abkhazia" and "Abkhazia-Georgia" borders. According to Article 9, engineering works and technical equipment of the "border" sections mentioned will start with the assistance of the Russian Federation (President of Russia, 2014).

In addition to the defense, the Russian Federation "undertakes" to provide material and technical means to the "Internal Forces of Abkhazia", also to provide financial assistance, as well as social guarantees of an employee. The obligation to harmonize the "Abkhazian budget" legislation (with emphasis on customs legislation) with the legislation of the Russian Federation is also mentioned in the agreement. The agreement in the social field includes cooperation in the field of health and education on the part

of the Russian Federation (International Crisis Group, 2010); as well as the gradual increase of salaries for the main category of employees.

Today, the Russian Federation has military bases #4 and #7 in occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In each, according to various sources, there are 4,000 - 5,000 military servicemen. On this issue, according to the latest public statement of the Georgian government, the total number of Russian military representations in both occupied regions exceed 10,000. In addition to military bases # 7 in Abkhazia and # 4 in the Tskhinvali, in both regions, there are dozens of so-called border military bases of the Russian Federation, which fully control the so-called border of the occupied regions at the territories controlled by Georgia (Democracy Research Institute, 2020).

Small and large-scale military exercises are systematically conducted at base #7 of the Russian Federation in Abkhazia. Part of the base is a military town, where, along with the military, there are also civilians who perform various services on the site (Democracy Research Institute, 2020).

In 2013, the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin signed the establishment of a new governmental information platform. The purpose of creating the conglomerate was: "to provide information on Russian state policy and Russian life and society for audiences abroad" (President of Russia, 2013) Today, this platform, which is represented by news portals and radio, is known as "Sputnik" and broadcasts in dozens of countries, both in Russian and in the native language of the local population. The platform is recognized by both the international media and research organizations as the most extensive information-propaganda tool of the Russian government's foreign propaganda (Groll, 2014; Nimmo, 2016; MacFarquhar, 2016; O'Sullivan, 2019; Feinberg, 2017).

Sputnik has three offices in Georgia: Sputnik Georgia, Sputnik Abkhazia and Sputnik South Ossetia. Their editorial policy is not based on international standards of journalism and is an informational supporter of the policy of the Russian Federation. These platforms are not characterized by critical questions, discussions - that in turn creates a space that offers the audience messages sent by the Government of the Russian Federation.

The representative of this pseudo-media family is [sputnik-abkhazia.ru](http://sputnik-abkhazia.ru), which is considered to be the most popular information platform in Abkhazia at the local level. Sputnik materials are being copied by various web portals in Abkhazia, and so-called governmental information platforms of Abkhazia actively prepare reports based on this resource.

This article is based on the study of military content of the Sputnik-Abkhazia information platform.

In order to identify the main messages of the information platform, we have studied the content of Sputnik-Abkhazia, from March 1, 2018, to March 1, 2020, all the informational and analytical publications regarding military topics; and we have outlined their main messages. For research/analysis, we will use the existing scientific knowledge on various types of propaganda and the theory of mass communication framing, which helps

us to understand in depth the main messages on military topics created by the information platform for the audience. According to this theory, the media selects only a few specific angles of the event to represent (Entman, 1993). Framing shows how issues are structured and what content load is assigned to them (Reese, 2007). From 307 publications on military topics prepared during the study period, we have examined and substantively outlined the main messages of Sputnik-Abkhazia to prepare the research article.

### SERIES OF PUBLICATIONS OF SPUTNIK-ABKHAZIA ON THE MILITARY COOPERATION OF RUSSIA-ABKHAZIA

Sputnik-Abkhazia publishes only publications with positive content about Russian-Abkhazian military cooperation. The information platform focuses on the military support of the Russian Federation to Abkhazia, and writes about the importance of the federation's military base # 7 in Abkhazia for the security of the local population. Published materials with military content convey the message that the "Federation is the only guarantor of Abkhazia's security." The military exercises conducted in Abkhazia are presented exactly in this context. The titles of such materials refer to the so-called threats which were overcome by the Russian military forces in Abkhazia. For example, we meet the following content structured titles: *The military troops of the Southern Military District of the Russian Federation neutralized the "saboteurs" in the mountains of Abkhazia* (Rossiyskie razvedchiki unichtozhili diversantov v gorakh Abkhazii, 2021); *evacuation under fire: In Abkhazia, the forces of the Southern Military District of Russia withdrew "bombed" equipment from the battlefield* (Evakuatsiya pod ognem: voennye YuVO v Abkhazii vyveli podbituyu tekhniku s polya boya, 2020); *Found and besieged: soldiers of the Southern Military District of the Russian Federation "destroyed" the enemy camp in Abkhazia* (Naydeny i okrugeny: boytsy YUVO RF unichtozhili vrazheskiy lager' v Abkhazii, 2019); *"Favorite" protected the Russian military base in Abkhazia from "airstrikes"* («Favorit» zashchishchal rossiyskuyu voyennuyu bazu v Abkhazii ot aviaudarov, 2019); *They fought: Forces of the Russian Southern Military District repulsed an "attack" in the mountains of Abkhazia* (Dali boy: motostrelki YuVO otbili ataku v gorakh Abkhazii, 2020); *The Russian and Abkhazian military forces lured the "opponent" into the "bag of fire" and destroyed it* (Rossiyskie i abkhazskie voennye unichtozhili protivnika zamaniv v ognenny meshok, 2019); *The enemy could not enter: the Russian and Abkhazian armies repulsed the "saboteurs" attack* (Vrag ne proshel: rossiyskie i abkhazskie voennye otrazili napadenie diversantov, 2019).

Published materials with similar titles have the potential to arouse fear in the audience since Abkhazian society is war-torn and still has war-related traumas. It is true that the news platform with similar headlines attracts the attention of the reader, but in addition to this intent, it makes a

reasonable assumption that the main purpose is to emphasize military support of Russia and demonstrate its importance.

In the materials published during the study period, the news platform writes that Russia is increasing its military “support” in Abkhazia. According to existing publications, in 2018-2019 only in Abkhazia hundreds of different mass military exercises were held.

Sputnik-Abkhazia offers publications to the audience with the following content: *Intensive training: the troops of the Southern Military District of the Russian Federation carried out up to 40,000 training shootings in Abkhazia (Intensivnaya podgotovka: voyska YUVO RF proveli v Abkhazii do 40 000 uchebnykh strel' b, 2019)* ; *Flights day and night: Unmanned aerial vehicles of the Southern Military District of the Russian Federation spent 500 hours in the sky of Abkhazia (Polety dnem i noch'yu: Bepilotnyye letatel'nyye apparaty YuVO RF proveli v nebe Abkhazii 500 chasov, 2019)*; *The Russian military forces has spent 25,000 pieces of ammunition for military exercises in Abkhazia (Na ucheniya v Abkhazii rossiyskiye voyennyye izraskhodovali 25 tisyach yedinitz boyepripasov, 2018)*.

The news platform actively dedicates the tribune to emphasize the importance of Russian-Abkhazian military cooperation to both pro-Russian politicians and individuals with similar narratives, who are present as an analyst to its audience.

Roland Djojua, Head of the Press Service of the De facto Ministry of Defense of Abkhazia: “The agreement between Russia and Abkhazia, first of all, provides for the financing of expenditures related to the modernization of the Abkhazian army” (*Dzhodzhua o finansirovanii Rossiej Abhazskoj armii* , 2019).

The de facto Minister of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia assesses the so-called border protection issue and participation of Russia in this affair as follows: “If we look at the statistics, in the last nine years, since the soldiers of Russian Southern Federal Service joined us in the protection of the state border, crimes such as kidnapping, robbery and terrorist attacks have been significantly decreased” (*Dzhodzhua o finansirovanii Rossiej Abhazskoj armii, 2019*).

The coverage of military issues with only positive content and context by Sputnik Abkhazia goes beyond the core principles of journalism and creates an alternative reality, the aim of which isn't impartial information of public, but convincing it that the presence of Russian military forces in Abkhazia is vital to the local society.

### SERIES OF PUBLICATIONS OF SPUTNIK-ABKHAZIA ON “RUSSIAN MILITARY SUPERIORITY / INVINCIBILITY”

Sputnik-Abkhazia covers/writes about such issues that have no direct connections with Abkhazia at all. Accordingly, we have separated a series of materials on similar topics and analyzed their main messages. During the



study period, military publications on the Russian Federation had only positive content and convinced the audience of the unconditional military superiority of Russia. For the perception of main messages, we offer the titles of several articles: *Russia did not leave the World Arms Race: it simply won this battle* (Rossiya ne vyshla iz mirovoy gonki vooruzheniy: ona prosto vyigrala etu bitvu, 2019); *Impressive obsession: training footage with MiG-31 participants in Kamchatka* (Vpechatlyayushchaya oderzhimost': kadry trenirovok s uchastnikami MiG-31 na Kamchatke, 2020); *The Yak-130 training-combat helicopter will be presented to the public for the first time in Dubai* (Uchebno-boyevoy vertolet Yak-130 pervyye budet predstavlen publike v Dubaye, 2019); *Rosatom has published a secret document on the first cruise missile* (Rosatom opublikoval sekretnyy dokument o pervoy krylatoy rakete, 2019); *Missiles, Corvettes and "Bastion": What Capabilities Does the New Baltic Fleet Have* (Rakety, korvety i «Bastion»: «kakimi vozmozhnostyami obladayet novyy Baltiyskiy flot», 2019); *"Iskander" will wake up many: the Russian army has been rearmed* («Iskander» razbudit mnogikh: rossiyskaya armiya perevooruzhena, 2019); *Stable instability: who does not want peace in Syria* (Stabil'naya nestabil'nost': kto ne khochet mira v Sirii, 2019); *Russian aircraft managed to prevent militants entering in Palmyra* (Rossiyskoy aviatsii udalos' predotvorit' proniknoveniye boevikov v Pal'miru, 2018); *Expert about the clashes at the Syrian base: these are attempts to put pressure on the Russian troops* (Ekspert o stolknoveniyakh na siriyskoy baze: eto popytki davleniya na rossiyskiye voyska, 2019); *Localization and Liquidation: Joint Russian-Syrian Exercises in the Mediterranean* (Lokalizatsiya i likvidatsiya: sovmetnyye rossiysko-siriyskiye ucheniya v Sredizemnom more, 2019); *Why Europe is afraid to compare the situation in Crimea and Palestine* (Pochemu Yevropa boitsya sravnivat' situatsiyu v Krymu i Palestine, 2020).

The coverage of military operations of Russia in different countries without any criticism and without presenting different positions is outlined. The Russia-Ukraine military confrontation had also been placed on the agenda of Sputnik-Abkhazia, where the information platform showed a biased attitude in favor of the Russian Federation. It didn't offer the position/arguments of the international organization and Ukrainian officials on the issue.

Petr Akopov, author of Sputnik-Abkhazia / Columnist: "Crimea left Ukraine as a result of the referendum - which in its turn occurred in Kyiv as a result of the coup" (Akopov, 2018).

Sputnik-Abkhazia actively gives its tribune to "experts" and "analysts" who, in their reasoning, develop exactly the views that official Russia has. There are also active publications on military topics, which talk about the creation of new military equipment and the rearmament of the Russian army and navy.

During the study period, the critical discourse was not revealed in the coverage of such topics, and no problematic issues became the focus of the information platform.

PUBLICATIONS SERIES OF SPUTNIK-ABKHAZIA ABOUT NATO,  
GEORGIA, AND THE UNITED STATES - CONFLICT  
OF INTEREST ON THE BLACK SEA

A study of military coverage by Sputnik-Abkhazia showed that the news platform covers military issues about Georgia, the United States and NATO with similar messages. In particular, it considers issues related to Georgia, NATO and the United States in the context of the threat, both for Russia and Abkhazia. It also pays special attention to the influence of the Black Sea. The news platform publishes hate speech against Georgia, the United States and NATO, creating an image of the enemy with its content. All activities of NATO in the Caucasus and the Black Sea are a threat for Abkhazia. The tribune is dedicated only to those "experts" and "analysts" who develop the same narrative. Coverage of military issues related to Georgia, NATO and the United States during the study period created sharply negative messages. This tendency of coverage has the potential to evoke fear and distrust in its audience regarding Georgia, NATO and the United States.

A tendency of Sputnik-Abkhazia to actively cover the war was also outlined. The cycle of materials prepared on the issue shows Georgia as solely guilty in the conflicts. This type of systematic coverage of war-related issues also has the potential to permanently traumatize the already war-torn society of Abkhazia.

Sputnik-Abkhazia dedicates a series of publications to the ongoing Georgian-NATO-led exercises. Both the information platform and its respondents unequivocally negatively assess the activities of NATO in Georgia.

Titles of the materials prepared on the mentioned topic by Sputnik-Abkhazia: *Koshkin: America frightens European population with NATO exercises* (Koshkin: *Amerika pugayet yevropeyskoye naseleniye ucheniyami NATO*, 2020); *Minister of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia About Exercises in Georgia: They threaten the Security of All Neighboring Countries* (*Ministr inostrannykh del Abkhazii ob ucheniyakh v Gruzii: Oni ugrozhayut bezopasnosti vsekh sosednikh stran*, 2019); *Defender of Europe 2020: For what America needs military training in the "Cold War" scenario* (*Zashchitnik Yevropy 2020: Dlya chego Amerike nuzhna voyennaya podgotovka v stsensarii «kholodnoy voyny»*, 2020); *Marching move to the East: How NATO Starts a "Rehearsal" of War with Russia* (*Marsh na Vostok: kak NATO nachinayet «repetitsiyu» voyny s Rossiyei*, 2019).

In coverage of military issues regarding the US, NATO and Georgia one of the main focus was made on the Black Sea. Active coverage of these topics for the audience may have been caused due to the fact that Abkhazia is a border area of the Black Sea and the local community considers the issue of security in the context of the distribution of influence on the Black Sea. The information platform discussed and provided the reader with information on the activities of the United States, NATO, Georgia and Ukraine on the Black Sea in the context of the threat.



Titles of publications of Sputnik-Abkhazia: *Expert on NATO-Ukraine military exercises on the Black Sea: it is a good opportunity for the Russian military* (Ekspert po voyennym ucheniyam NATO-Ukraina v Chernom more: eto khoro-shaya vozmozhnost' dlya rossiyskikh voyennykh, 2019); *NATO Secretary-General made a statement on expanding/strengthening the Alliance's presence in the Black Sea* (General'nyy sekretar' NATO sdelał zayavleniye o rasshirenii/ukreplenii prisutstviya Al'yansa v Chernom more, 2019); *NATO prepares a package of measures against Russia on the Black Sea; Chennick* (NATO gotovit paket mer protiv Rossii na Chernom more, 2019); *NATO exercises on the Black Sea serves to cover/disguise a reconnaissance vessel* (Chennik: Ucheniya NATO v Chernom more sluzhat dlya prikrytiya/maskirovki razvedyvatel'nogo korablya, 2019); *Naval battle: The United States has predicted the outcome of the naval battle with Russia* (Morskoye srazheniye: SShA predskazali iskhod morskogo srazheniya s Rossiyey, 2019)

Sputnik-Abkhazia offers publication on the issue of military influence in the Black Sea to its audience, in which the Russian Federation is presented as a state with a strong navy and effective control over the Black Sea.

Titles of publications of Sputnik-Abkhazia: *"Crazy Ivans": How Russian submarines deceive NATO sailors* («Sumasshedshkiye Ivany»: Kak rossiyskiye podvodnyye lodki obmanyvayut NATOvskikh moryakov, 2019); *Washington is excited: America has thought of how to "restrain" Russia in the Black Sea* (Washington vzvolnovan: Amerika pridumala, kak «sderzhivat'» Rossiyu v Chernom more, 2019); *Russian ships performed maneuvers in the Black Sea during NATO's exercises there* (Rossiyskiye korabli vypolnyali manevery v Chernom more vo vremya ucheniy NATO, 2019); *Korotchenko: NATO must understand that its presence in the Black Sea is controlled by Russia* (Korotchenko: NATO dolzhno ponyat', chto yego prisutstviye v Chernom more kontroliruyetsya Rossiyey, 2019); *For balance with NATO: Russian naval ships equipped with missiles entered the Black Sea* (Dlya balansa s NATO: korabli VMF Rossii, osnashchennyye raketami, voshli v Chernoye more, 2019).

To the titles of the publications the assessments and named events presented in the military-themed materials by the journalists and respondents of Sputnik-Abkhazian are important for the analysis of the main messages. Together with pro-Russian experts and analysts, the information platform actively gives tribune to military officials of various ranks. Mostly there are messages about Lugar Laboratory in Georgia in the discrediting publications against Georgia and the United States.

Titles of Publications of Sputnik-Abkhazia publications: *Onishchenko: OSCE forgot to point out / mention the threat from the laboratory in Georgia* [Onishchenko: OBSE zabyła ukazat'/upomyanut' ob ugroze so storony laboratorii v Gruzii, 2019); *Lugar Biolaboratory in Georgia continues to pose a threat to neighboring countries* (Biolaboratoriya Lugara v Gruzii prodolzhayet predstaolyat' ugrozu dlya sosednikh stran, 2019); *Nurgaliyev linked the spread of brown marmorated stink bug [marble bug] to the activities of Lugar laboratory* (Nurgaliyev soyazal rasprostraneniye burogo mramornogo klopa s deyatel'nost'yu laboratorii Lugara, 2019); *Onishchenko spoke about why Russia is afraid of Lugar Laboratory in Georgia* (Onishchenko rasskazal, pochemu Rossiya boitsya laboratorii Lugara

*v Gruzii*, 2019); *What Lugar is preparing: Biosafety issues were discussed at the Ministry of Defense of Abkhazia (Chto gotovit Lugar: Voprosy biobezopasnosti obsudili v Minoborony Abkhazii*, 2018); *Putin about Lugar Laboratory in Georgia: Very Dangerous (Putin o laboratorii Lugara v Gruzii: ochen' opasno*, 2018).

Lugar Laboratory has been a major topic of Russian anti-Western propaganda for years. The federation systematically spreads disinformation about the laboratory and demonizes it (Myth Detector, 2019).

In addition to Lugar Laboratory, perceptions of Georgia, NATO and the United States in a hostile context are presented in relation to other topics.

Colonel-General of the Russian Joint Armed Forces Anatoly Sidorov:

The main threat to the CSTO members in the Caucasus region is the Georgian leadership, which seeks not only to cooperate with the United States and NATO but also to openly position its country as a springboard for action against Russia (*Sidorov: deyatelnost SShA i NATO v Gruzii sposobstvouet napryazhennosti na Kavkaze*, 2019).

Major-General Sergei Lipovoi has been presented as a military expert of the non-governmental organization "Russian Officials" by Sputnik-Abkhazia in its publication: "NATO needs a huge military contingent in Eastern Europe and the Baltic states to conduct real military operations with Russia, for the mentioned it has no money" (*Lipovoi, Sergei: Marsh na vostok*: 2019).

Sputnik-Abkhazia actively dedicates its tribune to the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, Army General Valery Gerasimov:

Military activity is intensifying in the Baltic States and Poland, in the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea waters, the intensity of military exercises by the military bloc is increasing. "Their scenario indicates that NATO is deliberately preparing to deploy its forces in a large-scale military conflict. (Gerasimov, 2019)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov: "I am sure that they (NATO and Georgia) will not be able to penetrate anywhere with their battalions" (*Lavrov o NATO v Gruzii: ne dopustim napadenija na Abchaziju i Juzhnuju Osetiju*, 2019).

The protection of Abkhazia's land and sea "border" is the main topic of prepared materials during the study period of by Sputnik-Abkhazia. Such publications show messages that Abkhazia is in danger, both from land and sea. NATO, Georgia and America are presented as its (Abkhazia) opponents. In this scenario, the Russian Federation is in the role of a defender, a strong state.

## CONCLUSION

The messages that Sputnik-Abkhazia creates with its content fully correspond to the military policy of the Russian Federation. We can assume that their systematic and purposeful dissemination in Abkhazian society has the power to influence local public opinion. Due to the fact that Abkhazia

exists today beyond the international arena and the situation in the site is dangerous, it is difficult for us to conduct research directly on the site and study public attitudes. Therefore, we can judge the real impact of Sputnik-Abkhazia activities on the level of assumption. It is also worth mentioning the great popularity of the information platform in Abkhazia - it is often quoted and directly copied in various media outlets in Abkhazia.

A study of the content of Sputnik-Abkhazia shows that in terms of military issues, the information platform creates and disseminates the following key messages:

- Russia is the most powerful state in the world in military terms;
- NATO and the United States pose a threat to the Caucasus region;
- Georgia is a threat for Abkhazian society;
- The NATO-Georgia partnership is dangerous for the region;
- # 7 military base of Russia is a guarantee for the security of Abkhazia;
- Abkhaz military cooperation with Russia is a guarantee of security;
- NATO is trying to gain control over the Black Sea, which is dangerous for Abkhazia;

Creating an icon of the enemy from NATO and the United States gives the Russian Federation the opportunity to have a loyal public attitude in Abkhazia. A similar attitude in the site is needed to maintain the # 7 military base without any criticism. This base is one of the guarantees for the federation to maintain its influence in the Caucasus. Managing local public opinion is an important task for the Russian military forces to operate and live safely at both military bases and throughout Abkhazia. The Russian Federation by constant appellation about the threat from Georgia, NATO and the United States, is creating the image of "survival" by its military forces. Sputnik-Abkhazia also serves this purpose with its messages.

While the Russian Federation, with the help of both military and information weapons, creates hostile attitudes towards NATO and the United States in Abkhazia, these actors (NATO, America) to a large extent can't oppose this challenge. For their part, cooperation with Georgia is more or less active; however, no direct efforts have been made to prevent Abkhazia from becoming a cozy area for the implementation of aggressive intentions for NATO and the United States. Neither the Alliance nor the United States perceives Abkhazia as a springboard - territory that will sooner or later be used against it. For many large actors in the world, the conflict in Abkhazia is still perceived as a challenge only for Georgia. This is when ongoing events in Abkhazia directly affect the whole area of the Black Sea waters, together with the Caucasus region.

We are facing the creation and purposeful dissemination of propaganda frames. And a society that is systematically fed misinformation, manipulation of facts, may become a facilitator of military action aimed not at fulfilling humanly valuable/useful tasks but to restore old glory, former emperors at all costs.

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