



# Facts vs Manipulation

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## Manipulation # 11

**An Attempt to Rewrite the Historical Damage Inflicted on  
Georgia by the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and the  
Russian Federation**

**19 August 2026**

## The Claims

Irakli Kobakhidze, Prime Minister of Georgia, told a journalist at a briefing on 12 August, in response to a question about whether Russia had violated the Treaty of Georgievsk, that: "The Treaty of Georgievsk was a different situation... Russia was already a huge state back then, it had its own power-based policy and its own interests, and what happened, happened. When Erekle II signed the Treaty of Georgievsk, this document played the most important role in saving our state and country" (Tabula, 12 August 2026).

On 18 August, at a special briefing devoted to this topic for eleven minutes, Kobakhidze reiterated: "In the end, the step taken by Erekle II turned out to be not merely justified, but the only correct, alternative-free decision. Even though every state, including the Russian Empire, acted out of its own interests, and saving Georgia was by no means its starting point... by concluding the treaty, whether the Russian Empire wanted it or not, Georgia nevertheless gained a fundamental benefit — when we stood on the brink of survival, thanks to this step by Erekle II we not only survived as a nation, but ultimately won." The Prime Minister also labelled today's critics of the treaty "pseudo-liberals," who "criticise Erekle II precisely for the decision that preserved Georgia's historical existence and the possibility of subsequent statehood" (Formula News, 18 August 2026).

The same day, Gia Volski, an MP of Georgian Dream, acknowledged that: "After the Treaty of Georgievsk was signed in 1783, Georgia suffered a number of serious blows, in that Russia did not fulfil the terms of this treaty... [However,] ultimately, [the treaty] worked to ensure that Georgia did not become... a vassal of some Muslim-culture and fairly aggressive neighbour, or disappear altogether as a people and a nation" (Metronome.ge, 18 August 2026).

In parallel, over the past two weeks representatives of Georgian Dream have also made statements about the August 2008 war. On 8 August, at the Mukhatgverdi Brothers' Cemetery, Irakli Kobakhidze told journalists: "The Russia-Georgia war began on 8 August... What happened on 7 August was that the Saakashvili regime bombed Tskhinvali" (ipress.ge, 8 August 2026). This statement, which presents the Georgian side's shelling of Tskhinvali as the principal cause of the 2008 war rather than Russia's invasion, reproduces word for word the Russian Federation's official propaganda line — even as the courts in Strasbourg and The Hague have documented Russia's occupation of Georgian territories and the grave crimes committed by its armed forces (sakartvelosambebi.ge, 8 August 2026).

On 11 August, asked directly by a journalist whether he considered Russia an "enemy," Kobakhidze stated: "Your shameful questions, you are ridiculous... You want a headline, even in Russian media, about the fact that I am declaring the Russian Federation an enemy. That is a specific political statement, which must then be followed by specific steps" (JAMnews, 11 August 2026).

## Facts

Under the Treaty of Georgievsk, the Russian Empire undertook the obligation to defend Kartli-Kakheti against external enemies and to leave the Bagrationi dynasty and the autocephaly of the Georgian Church inviolable. In reality, as early as 1784–1786, raids by Ottoman and Lezgin detachments devastated Kartli-Kakheti, and in 1795, during Agha Mohammad Khan's campaign, the Russian garrison failed to provide the promised assistance to Erekle II — Tbilisi was sacked and burned, and thousands of inhabitants were killed or taken captive. In 1801, following Erekle's death, Emperor Alexander I abolished the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti by a unilateral manifesto. In the following decades, Russia went on to systematically absorb the remaining Georgian kingdoms and principalities — Imereti (1810), Guria (1829), Samegrelo (1857), Svaneti (1858), and Abkhazia (1864) — none of which had ever been party to the treaty, so the "national survival" argument does not apply to them at all.

In 1811, the Russian Empire abolished the autocephaly of the Georgian Church: Emperor Alexander I directly demanded that Catholicos-Patriarch Anton II relinquish his authority, after which the Catholicos was exiled to Russia and the Georgian Church was subordinated to an exarch of the Russian Holy Synod — a direct

violation of the treaty's own provision declaring the Church's independence inviolable "in perpetuity." This was an immense injury and a national tragedy, since it cost the country the last bastion of its independence, while Georgia's ecclesiastical treasures and cultural heritage were subjected to brutal plunder and Russification: twenty-four dioceses were gradually reduced to five, Georgian liturgy and its distinctive polyphonic chant were replaced with Russian, and a significant share of ecclesiastical manuscripts and monuments were destroyed or removed to Russia (Vakhtang Guruli, "The Abolition of the Autocephaly of the Apostolic Church of Georgia (1811–1814)").

Tsarist Russia also restricted the use of the Georgian language in state institutions and education. This policy was resisted by the Georgian intelligentsia of the day under the leadership of Ilia Chavchavadze, who in 1879, together with Dimitri Kipiani and other public figures, founded the "Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians" — an organisation that Chavchavadze himself led from 1885 to 1907 and which worked to preserve the Georgian language, establish schools, and spread national education (National Archives of Georgia).

The founder of Georgian historiography, Ivane Javakhishvili, in his 1919 monograph "Relations between Russia and Georgia in the Eighteenth Century," gave the treaty an unambiguously negative assessment: "The treaty of 1783 brought Georgia nothing. The damage, however, was immense. The political situation, instead of improving, worsened terribly." In the concluding chapter of the same work, Javakhishvili summed up the essence of Russian policy even more sharply: "Russia's entire conduct and policy toward Georgia was truly dictated by Russian political interests, and was merely a masked, yet crude, realisation of national egoism."

Regarding Agha Mohammad Khan's 1795 campaign, when the Russian garrison failed to fulfil the defensive obligation it had assumed under the treaty, Ivane Javakhishvili wrote that King Erekle "fell into a terrible ordeal, the like of which had not occurred since the time of Shah Abbas" — Tbilisi was destroyed and burned, and thousands of its inhabitants were killed or taken into captivity.

It is notable that even the "lesser evil" theory recorded in "The History of Georgia" (1958) by leading Soviet-era historians, including Niko Berdzenishvili — according to which union with Russia, "despite the violence of tsarism," was the only way to physically preserve the nation — is recognised in contemporary scholarship as a contradictory position shaped under the pressure of Soviet party censorship, rather than a freely expressed scholarly conclusion.

**The Soviet Occupation.** Like the Russian Empire, no less damage was inflicted on Georgia following the Soviet occupation. On 25 February 1921, after five weeks of military operations, the Soviet Russian 11th Red Army seized Tbilisi and overthrew the government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, which had been recognised as an independent state by a number of Western countries and, indeed, by Soviet Russia (the RSFSR) itself. The Soviet occupation lasted until 1991 — seventy years. The occupation was followed by mass political repression, including the Great Terror of 1937–1938, during which thousands of Georgian scientists, clergy, writers, and political figures were executed or deported. This period is documented in the research of the National Archives of Georgia and the Soviet Past Research Laboratory.

In the final years of the Soviet Union's existence, a powerful national liberation movement developed in Georgia. On 9 April 1989, the Soviet Army crushed a peaceful demonstration in Tbilisi using sapper spades and toxic gas, costing 21 innocent lives (Georgian Wikipedia, article "April 9 Tragedy"; JAMnews, 9 April 2026).

**1991 to the Present.** In the very first years after Georgia regained its independence, Russia actively pursued hostile and aggressive actions against Georgia. Russia contributed to the escalation of the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region (1992–1993), and then, in August 2008, carried out direct military aggression, and continues to occupy 20% of Georgia's territory to this day. The courts in Strasbourg and The Hague have documented the crimes committed by Russia and its occupation of Georgian territories. Russia has unilaterally recognised the "independence" of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region, continues its policy of

borderisation, and exerts hybrid pressure — including information and propaganda pressure — against Georgia.

Against this background, the current government's narrative, which seeks to "rehabilitate" the Russian Empire and portray its role in Georgian history in a positive light, is entirely unjustifiable and immoral. This is a manipulative and disinformation-driven act that does not serve Georgia's interests.

## The Key Manipulation

The Georgian government's statements combine several interconnected manipulation techniques. First — selective omission: Kobakhidze's narrative entirely excludes the fact of Russia's threefold violation of the treaty (1795, 1801, 1811) and the subsequent conquest of the remaining Georgian principalities. Second — historical inversion: the ultimate loss of Georgian statehood as a result of the treaty is presented as a "victory" and a "salvation" — an assessment categorically contradicted by Ivane Javakhishvili's own conclusion. Third — coordinated narrative: within a matter of days, a similar thesis was repeated by both the Prime Minister and a ruling-party MP, pointing to an organised communications line rather than mere coincidence. Fourth — semantic evasion: Russia's occupation of 20% of Georgia's territory is acknowledged as a "crime," while at the same time Russia is not called an "enemy" — a substantive contradiction. Fifth — shifting of responsibility: attributing almost all responsibility for the 2008 war to the previous government, while avoiding any direct characterisation of Russia as the aggressor, contradicts Georgia's own official decisions taken in 2008 (severing diplomatic relations, the law on occupied territories) and reproduces Russia's own official propaganda framework word for word.

## Conclusion

On the basis of documented historical sources and the works of Georgian scholars, it is unequivocally established that the Treaty of Georgievsk was repeatedly violated by the Russian Empire and was ultimately used to abolish and annex the Kingdom of Georgia — accordingly, Kobakhidze's claim that the treaty "brought peace" and "saved" Georgia is a falsehood. This statement by the Georgian government is not an isolated episode. It is fully consistent with a broader narrative that has taken hold in recent years, whose aim is to diminish or evade responsibility for the historical damage inflicted on Georgia by the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and the Russian Federation. This damage includes annexation, half a century of occupation and repression, as well as contemporary Russian military aggression and the ongoing occupation of Georgian territories.

**Verdict: False**

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