



MUGA PROJECT

COUNTERING INFORMATION THREATS IN MOLDOVA,
UKRAINE, GEORGIA AND ARMENIA

Information Environment Study

GEORGIA

INFO OPS
POLSKA



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Project MUGA

Information Environment Study: GEORGIA

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**Ministerstwo
Spraw Zagranicznych**

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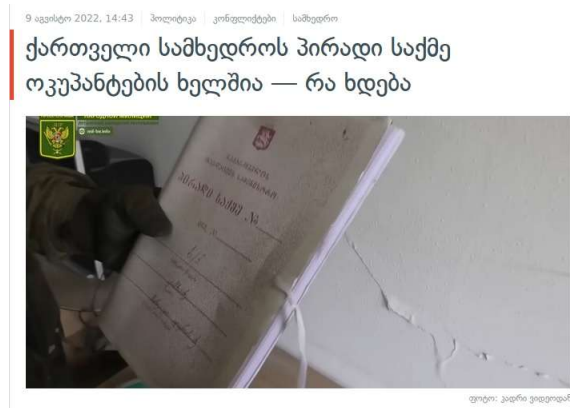
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Introduction

Suspensions about a shift in Georgia's pro-Western political orientation arose immediately after Bidzina Ivanishvili came to power. The previous government placed great emphasis on the coherence of actions and informational messaging, strengthening Georgia's pro-Western course, and every action aimed to build a unified message both for domestic audiences and the international community, supporting the country's aspirations for integration with the West. However, Bidzina Ivanishvili's first foreign visits as prime minister-first to Azerbaijan, then to Armenia-contradicted the previous direction.

During the meeting in Yerevan, Ivanishvili described Armenia as a model to follow in foreign policy. This statement, combined with the nature of the official visit, sparked a debate about Georgia's geopolitical stance. The visit also revived discussions about the potential resumption of transit on the Georgia-Armenia railway line. Ivanishvili claimed that he had discussed this issue with his Armenian counterpart, expressing optimism about resolving the matter. Although the railway line remains closed, the longstanding taboo and media speculation surrounding its reopening appeared to have been lifted. It should be emphasized that the resumption of traffic on this line has broader implications, directly related to Georgia's relations with Russia, occupied Abkhazia, and Armenia. The railway route starts in Russia, passes through Abkhazia, crosses Georgia, and connects with Armenia. Historically, this line has been one of the few bargaining tools available to Georgia in negotiations with Russia, especially regarding the return of internally displaced persons from Abkhazia or other issues of similar importance. Eliminating this form of leverage over Russia would serve only the Kremlin's interests. Shortly after these events, reports emerged about alleged "cooperation" between Georgia and Russian special services, which further intensified existing doubts and suspicions regarding the direction of Georgia's policy. The reports, though still shrouded in secrecy, point to a troubling sequence of events connected to the aftermath of the "Kodori" operation carried out on September 20, 2007. During this operation, Georgian special forces neutralized two Russian intelligence officers, Igor Mozavatnik and Artur

Dvorkin, who were leading a reconnaissance team operating from a base in Tkvarcheli. Despite the strictly confidential nature of the incident, it provoked a sharp and emotional response from the Kremlin, which demanded the prosecution of those involved in the event.



Three years later, as part of an alleged act of retaliation, Russian special services employed methods of a terrorist nature. On May 6, 2010, Dimitri Kordzadze, a participant in the Kodori operation, was killed in a car explosion in Batumi. The investigation indicated links between this incident and the activities of Russian

special services. Giorgi Ivanidze, who decided to emigrate in 2016, pointed out connections between the Kodori operation and the suspicious deaths of five Georgian special forces soldiers, which further deepened suspicions of planned retaliatory actions. Giorgi's brother, Ivane Ivanidze, was among those who died under mysterious circumstances. The car accident in which he lost his life raised numerous doubts—a bullet hole was found on the vehicle, suggesting deliberate action.

According to reports, Ivane, prior to his death, had been interrogated by Russian agents in connection with the Kodori operation. A similar fate befell other participants in this event: Lagvilava's reconnaissance officer was killed in an office explosion, while Archil Mamageishvili was shot dead in 2016 in a public parking lot. These incidents indicate systematic actions by Russian special services aimed at eliminating individuals involved in the Kodori operation. All of this constitutes a clear pattern of retaliatory actions that not only undermine Georgia's national security but also reveal the scale of destabilization operations conducted by Russian services. After a series of mysterious deaths, one of the Georgian soldiers revealed that his personal data appeared in a Russian propaganda film. He expressed astonishment and concern, pointing out that such confidential information should be securely stored within the Ministry of Defense's resources and should not be

accessible to foreign entities. Shortly thereafter, another Georgian soldier who served in Ukraine reported that his personal data had also been made public-this time via the Russian messaging app Telegram. These incidents suggest not only a breach of data security within Georgian institutions but also deliberate propaganda and psychological operations targeted against Georgian military personnel.

In 2022, Soso Gogashvili, former deputy head of the Georgian State Security Service, published a statement on his Facebook page revealing the existence of an alleged "protected system" used to circumvent international sanctions. This system was said to be the result of coordinated actions between Georgian and Russian special services.



According to Gogashvili, networks of air, land, and sea transport were used to smuggle illegal cargo. Key state institutions of Georgia were allegedly involved in the operation, including the State Security Service,

the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Economy. Gogashvili described this mechanism as highly isolated and difficult to identify. "It is very difficult to monitor this movement from the outside; it is such a closed system," he wrote.

The statement sparked widespread controversy, raising questions about the potential involvement of Georgian institutions in activities violating international norms. Many groups began demanding a thorough investigation to verify these allegations and, if necessary, hold those responsible accountable.

During this period, efforts began in Georgia to lay the groundwork for the development of so-called conservative movements, which in fact became the beginning of Georgian neo-fascism. Organizations with pseudo-patriotic names, such as "Georgian Power" and "Georgian March," were established. In the initial phase of their activity, these groups avoided overt anti-Western declarations or open support for pro-Russian political programs.

Instead, they focused on directing their rhetoric against Turkey, aiming to challenge the dominant societal belief that 'Russia is the occupier.' A narrative was introduced suggesting that 'Turkey is also an occupier,' which aimed to change the geopolitical discourse in Georgia. This new ideological current, inspired by elements of neo-fascism, sought to weaken the traditional anti-Russian narrative and to introduce an alternative viewpoint that undermines the existing social consensus on foreign policy and national security issues.

In this context, alarming incidents began to occur in which young people with unusual clothing or appearance became targets of physical attacks by their peers on the streets. The atmosphere in Tbilisi was becoming increasingly tense, and public spaces were no longer perceived as safe for individuals who stood out due to their different style or way of expressing themselves.

These pseudo-patriotic movements were quickly accompanied by a proliferation of messages in the information space, strategically designed to fuel openly anti-Western sentiments. These communications employed narratives aimed not only at deepening social divisions but also at discouraging society from embracing values related to European integration and cooperation with the West.

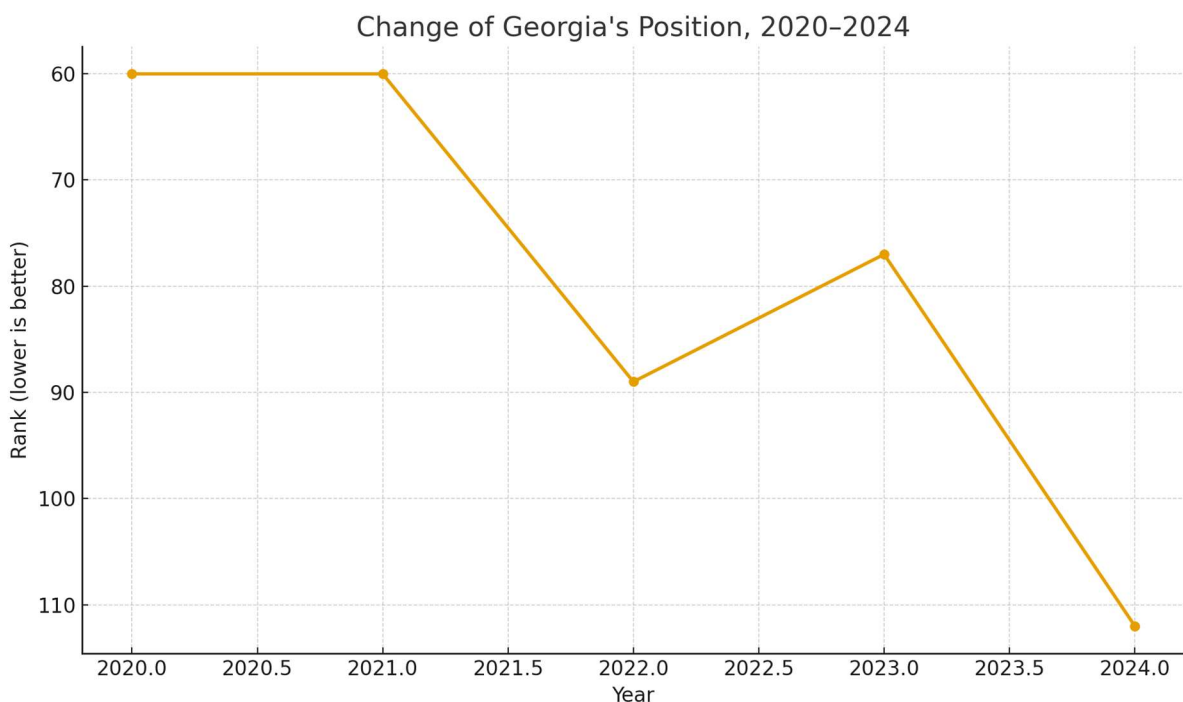
These phenomena, along with the increasing violence against "others" and the escalation of anti-Western rhetoric, signal a troubling direction in which some social groups in Georgia have begun to move. This issue will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections of the report, where the sources, motives, and consequences of these actions will be analyzed.

1. Information environment – characteristics

Since regaining independence, Georgia has struggled with challenges related to press freedom. However, following the "Rose Revolution," the situation slightly improved, although it still remained far from ideal. According to the "World Press Freedom Index

2024" conducted by the organization "Reporters Without Borders," Georgia ranks 103rd out of 180 countries. The media environment in Georgia is characterized by significant diversity but also considerable political polarization.

Georgia's position in global press freedom rankings has undergone significant changes in recent years. In 2020 and 2021, the country held a relatively high rank of 60th place. However, in 2022, Georgia dropped to 89th place, followed by an improvement to 77th place in 2023. Despite this, the situation worsened again in 2024, leading to the current ranking of 103rd place out of 180 countries.



The Georgian media environment is marked by significant polarization and tensions, which became particularly evident in the context of the 2024 parliamentary elections. The intense media period, characterized by strong competition between government-affiliated and opposition media outlets, negatively impacted the quality and independence of journalism. This polarization remains one of the main challenges for Georgia regarding press freedom and access to objective information.

According to the "Freedom House" report, Georgia is classified as a "partly free" country. One of the positive aspects is the relatively free online environment, characterized by

good internet access, limited website blocking, and a low number of arrests related to online speech, which is protected by international human rights standards.

However, the overall media situation in Georgia remains difficult and highly problematic. This is due to close ties between the media and private individuals as well as political parties. As a result, none of the main information providers can be considered completely free from manipulation. This situation further hinders citizens' access to reliable and independent information, which in turn affects their ability to make informed political decisions.

a) Sources of information

Due to the relatively late emergence and limited availability of the Internet in rural areas, traditional media still enjoy greater popularity in Georgia than modern digital media. Nevertheless, in line with the global trend of media digitalization, the growing number of Internet users indicates that, in the long term, using the Internet as a news source is likely to surpass the use of printed press.

An important factor contributing to this phenomenon is the underdeveloped infrastructure for printed press, which is unable to ensure timely delivery of newspapers and magazines to remote rural settlements. As a result, printed press is losing its significance, and it can be safely assumed that newspapers are gradually dying out as a primary source of information in Georgia, especially in rural areas. This process highlights the importance of investing in digital infrastructure and developing online media, which have the potential to bridge the information gap between rural and urban regions in Georgia.

According to the latest data, as of July 2024, over 91% of Georgian households have internet access, representing a 12% increase over the past five years. The increased availability of the internet has significantly influenced the information consumption

habits of society; however, these trends indicate substantial changes in the way digital information sources are used.

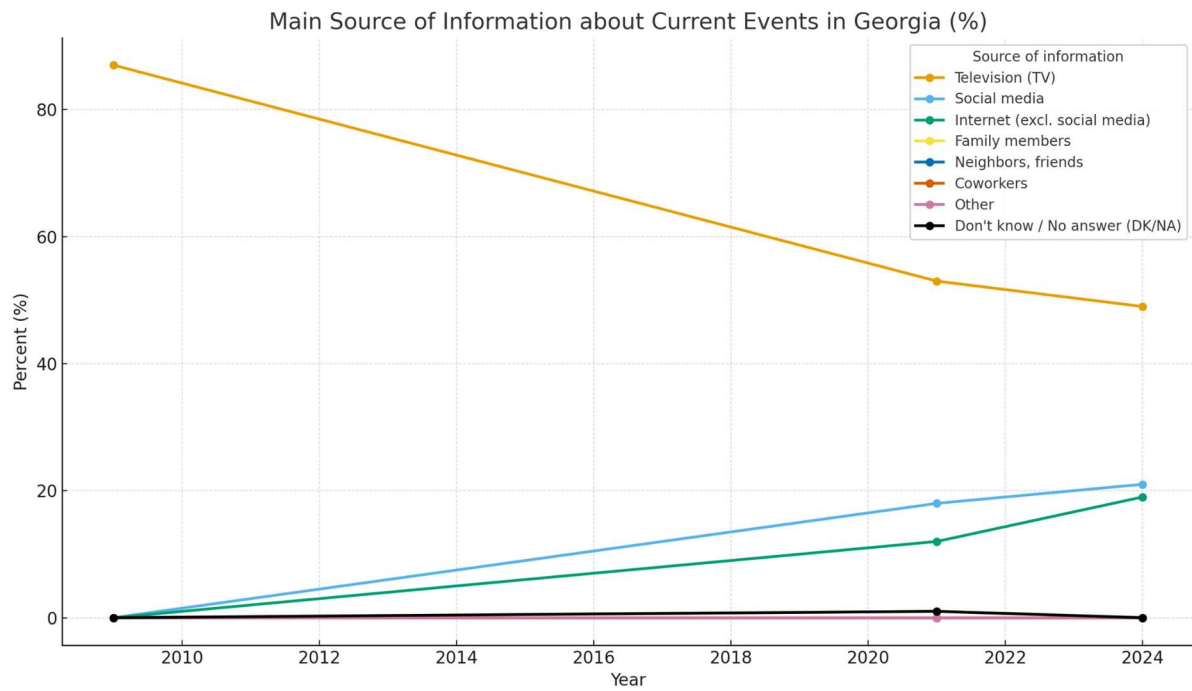
Currently, 94% of the population aged 15 and older use the Internet to access social media, which often serves as a source of unverified and unfiltered information. At the same time, there has been a sharp decline in the number of people using the Internet to access online news platforms. In July 2019, as many as 55.4% of the population reported using the Internet to read online newspapers or news magazines. By July 2024, this percentage had dropped to 46.6%, representing a significant 8.8% decrease in the use of reliable and verified sources of information.

Although the rate of social media usage remains stable, the decreased number of users turning to verified news sources indicates a growing vulnerability of society to unverified and potentially misleading content. This shift may affect the ability of Georgian society to make informed decisions and increase the risk of information manipulation.

These data are confirmed by the Caucasus Barometer surveys, which have been regularly conducted in Georgia since 2009. The results of these studies indicate that the increase in Internet usage is associated with a simultaneous decline in the percentage of the population relying on television as their main source of information. Nevertheless, television remains the dominant information medium for 49% of the population in 2024.

According to the same data, in 2024, 21% of Georgians identified social media as their main source of information, while 19% cited other online sources (excluding social media). These statistics show that although television is gradually losing significance, it still plays a key role in delivering news, while digital media, including social media, are gaining popularity as alternative information channels.

The simultaneous rise in the importance of the Internet and the decline of television's role indicate a gradual transformation of information consumption habits within Georgian society, which may have a significant impact on how events are perceived and public opinion is shaped.



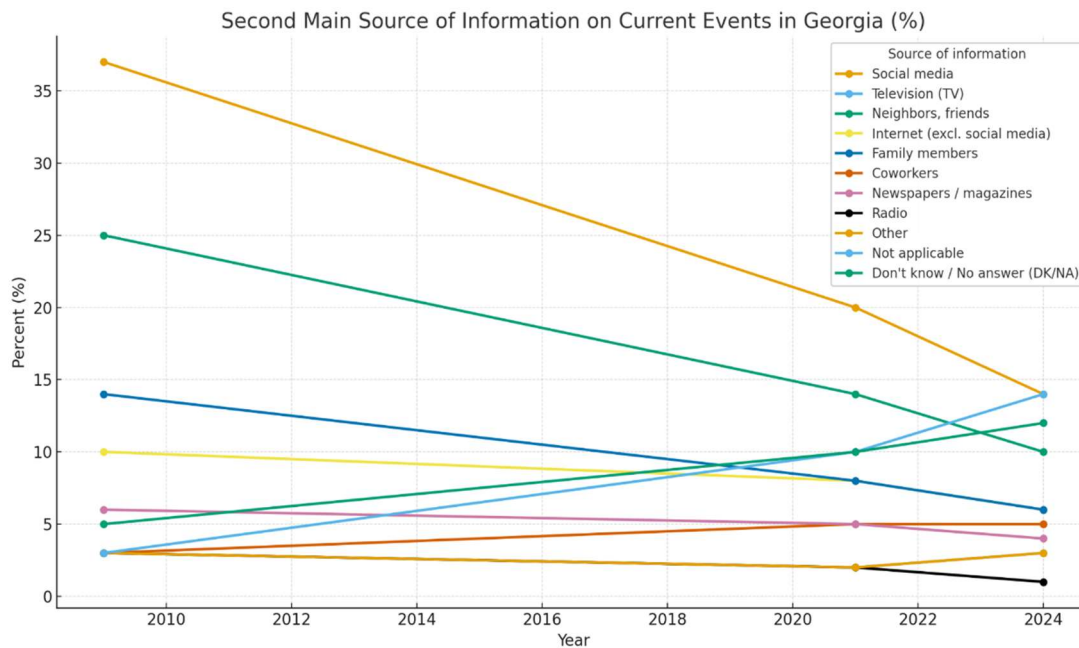
Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

The above chart presents changes in the main sources of information about current events in Georgia in the years 2009, 2021, and 2024.

KEY CONCLUSIONS:

1. Television remains the dominant source of information, although its popularity has declined from 88% in 2009 to 49% in 2024.
2. Social media and the Internet (excluding social media) have gained significance, reaching 21% and 19% respectively in 2024.

3. Other sources, such as family, friends, coworkers, or responses like "don't know," play a marginal role.



The trend indicates a decline in the popularity of traditional media (television) in favor of modern digital platforms.

The situation is different for the second main source of information about current events in Georgia. According to data from 2009, as many as 37% of respondents identified their neighbors and acquaintances as their second main source of information. However, by 2024, this percentage had dropped to just 17%.

At the same time, the role of family members as the second main source of information has remained stable -14% in 2009 and nearly the same percentage in 2024. Traditional print media, such as newspapers and magazines, have virtually disappeared from Georgia's information landscape, losing significance as sources of knowledge about current events.

At the same time, social media have gained tremendous importance and currently serve as the second main source of information for 22% of respondents. This rapid shift from traditional media-which acted as "gatekeepers" filtering potentially harmful or false

content-to unfiltered and unverified information platforms highlights the increasing vulnerability of society to misinformation and manipulation.

This trend reflects global changes in information consumption habits but simultaneously highlights the need for media literacy education to reduce the impact of unverified information on society.

The above chart illustrates changes in the second most important source of information about current events in Georgia in the years 2009, 2021, and 2024.

KEY CONCLUSIONS:

1. Television (TV), despite its decline in popularity, remains one of the main secondary sources of information, although its significance has decreased from 37% in 2009 to 14% in 2024.
2. Social media and the Internet (excluding social media) have gained importance as secondary sources of information, reaching 14% and 12% respectively in 2024.
3. Neighbors and acquaintances, as well as family members, are losing significance as secondary sources, indicating a reduced role of traditional interpersonal interactions in information transmission.

There is a clear trend of increasing importance of digital media alongside the decline of traditional information sources. The situation is different regarding the second main source of information about current events in Georgia. According to data from 2009, as many as 37% of respondents identified their neighbors and acquaintances as their second main source of information. However, by 2024, this percentage had dropped to just 17%.

At the same time, the role of family members as the second main source of information has remained stable-14% in 2009 and nearly the same percentage in 2024. Traditional print media, such as newspapers and magazines, have practically disappeared from Georgia's information landscape, losing significance as sources of knowledge about current events.

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This trend reflects global changes in information consumption habits but simultaneously underscores the need for media literacy education to mitigate the impact of unverified information on society.

Detailed data on information preferences across different age groups reveal significant differences in how Georgians obtain information depending on their age:

Age group 18-34:

In this group, young adults in Georgia clearly prefer social media and the Internet as their main sources of information. Together, these sources account for 65% of information preferences, while only 20% of respondents choose television. This is a clear trend indicating the growing role of digital media among the younger segment of society.

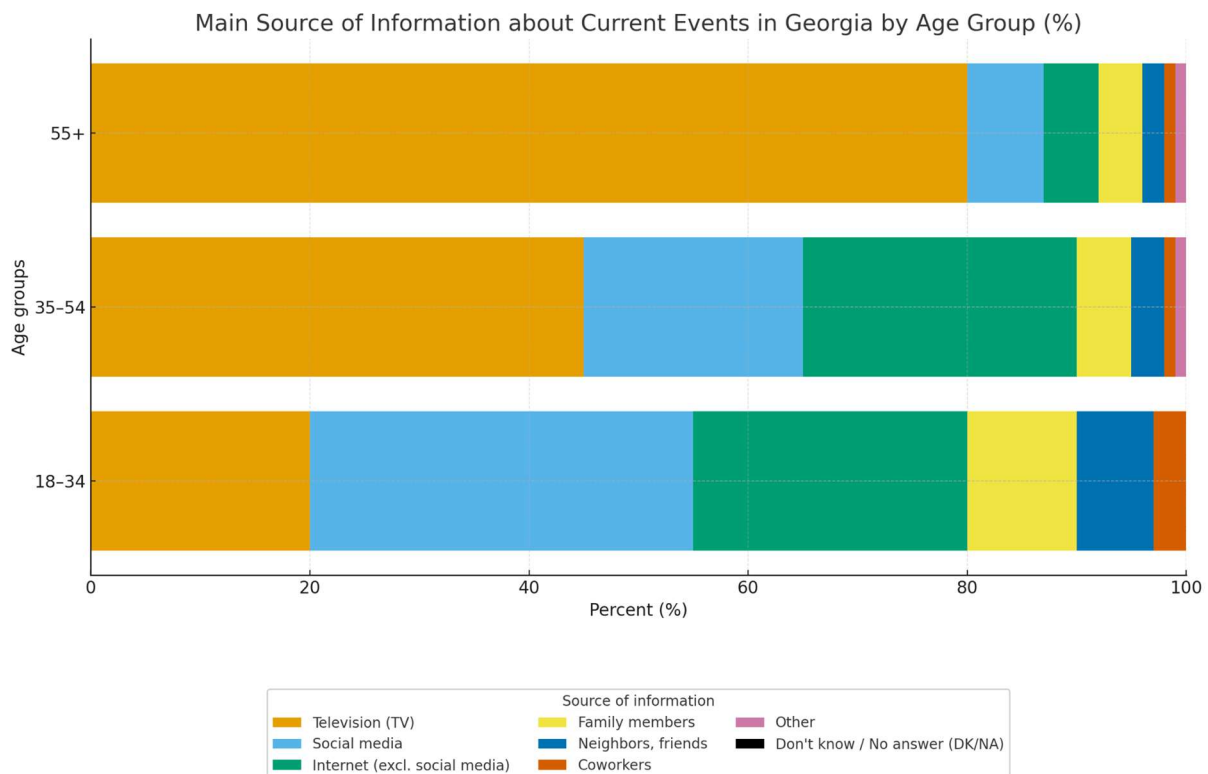
Age group 35-54:

Among middle-aged individuals, television remains the most popular information medium - 43% of respondents identify it as their main source of information. Social media (22%) and other online sources (24%) are also significant, together accounting for 46% of preferences, reflecting their increasing importance in this age group.

Age group 55+:

For people over 55 years old, television clearly dominates as the main source of information, as indicated by 80% of respondents. In this age group, social media and the Internet have marginal significance, reflecting the older generation’s attachment to traditional media.

These differences in information preferences indicate significant changes in media habits related to age. Younger groups increasingly rely on digital media, which brings both benefits and risks associated with access to unverified information. For older generations, traditional media such as television still remain the dominant source of news.



Analysis of the second main source of information by age group:

Age group 18-34:

In this group, the three main sources of information-television, social media, and the Internet-remain the strongest, playing a key role in delivering information. However, new significant sources also emerge: neighbors and friends (17%) and family members (15%). This highlights that despite the dominance of digital media, personal relationships still hold some importance.

Age group 35-54:

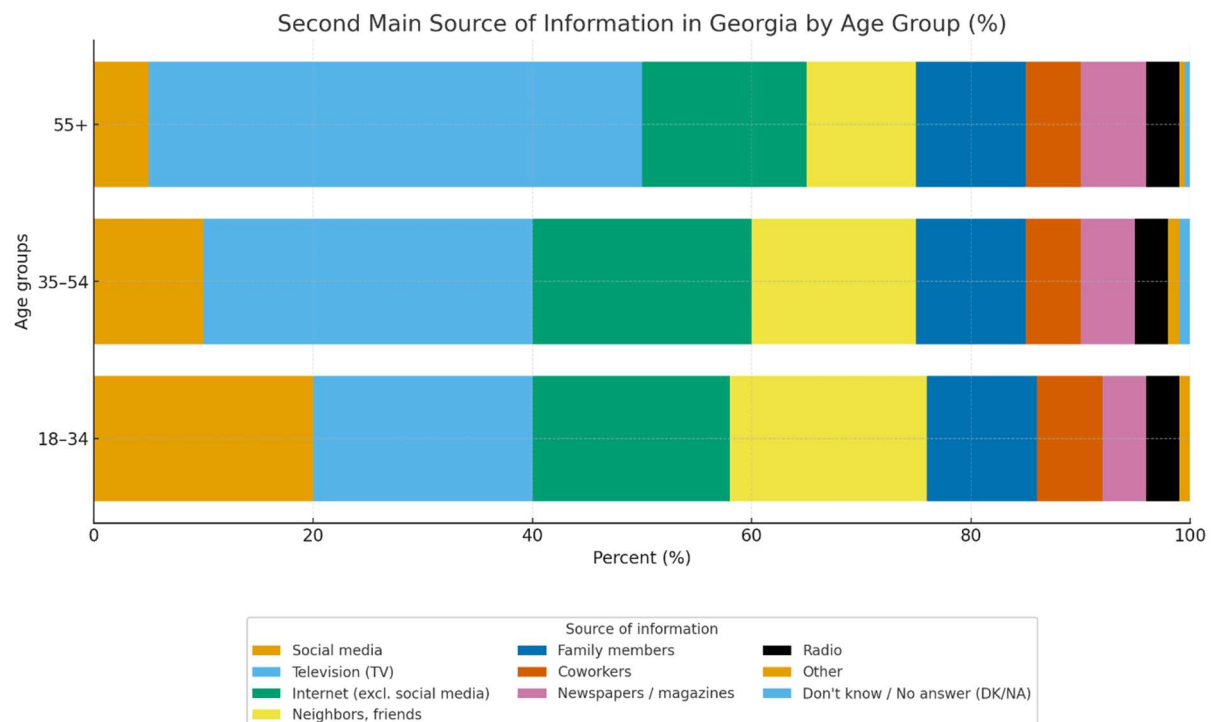
Among middle-aged individuals, the three main sources of information also maintain their dominant position, although the significance of social media and the Internet slightly decreases. Neighbors and friends (12%) and family members (8%) serve as additional important information sources, showing that personal contacts continue to play a vital role, especially in more traditional communities.

Age group 55+:

The older age group stands out with neighbors and friends (22%) becoming the most frequently cited second main source of information. Family members and social media share the second place with 18% each, indicating a greater reliance on interpersonal relationships and more traditional sources of information within this age group.

KEY CONCLUSIONS:

1. Younger age groups rely more heavily on digital information sources such as social media and the Internet, but personal relationships still play an important role.
2. Middle-aged individuals balance the importance of digital media with more traditional forms of interaction, such as neighbors and family.
3. Older generations depend more on neighbors and family as their main channels of information, with limited influence from digital media.



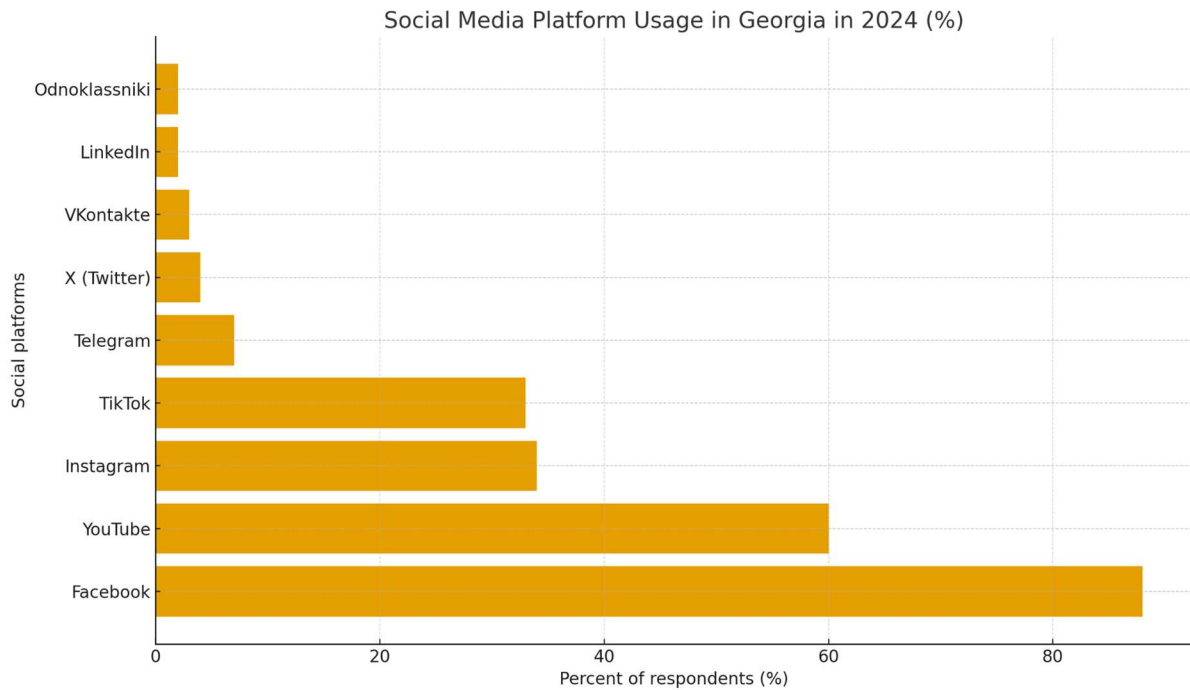
These differences highlight the necessity to tailor communication strategies to the specific needs and preferences of different age groups. In particular, older groups require support in accessing more reliable sources of information to reduce the impact of disinformation.

b) Internet

The rise in the use of the Internet and social media as the main sources of information in Georgia is one of the key trends in recent years. According to data from the Caucasus Barometer 2024 survey, Facebook remains the most popular social media platform, used by as many as 88% of respondents. Following are YouTube (60%), Instagram (34%), and TikTok (33%), reflecting the global trend of growing dominance of visual platforms. Less popular platforms include Telegram (7%), X (Twitter) (4%), V Kontakte (3%), as well as LinkedIn and Odnoklassniki (2% each).

Facebook, as the primary social media platform, plays a key role in delivering information and shaping public opinion. Its popularity means that this platform is most likely

responsible for the majority of cases where social media were identified as the main or second main source of information.



KEY CONCLUSIONS:

1. Facebook as the dominant source of information: With a reach covering 88% of users, Facebook is the main platform for both news delivery and entertainment in Georgia.
2. Growing importance of visual platforms: YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok are gaining increasing significance, especially among younger generations.
3. Limited use of alternative platforms: Platforms such as Telegram, X (Twitter), Vkontakte, and LinkedIn remain marginal in terms of popularity, which may be due to a limited user base or the niche nature of their content.

Facebook remains a central element of Georgia's media landscape and the primary channel through which users access information. Its significance underscores the need

to monitor and analyze the impact of content published on this platform on public opinion, as well as the potential vulnerability to disinformation.

Youngest age groups in Georgia have significantly higher rates of daily Internet use, aligning with global technology usage trends:

Age group 18-34:

As many as 93% of respondents in this age group report daily Internet use. Only a marginal percentage (2%) use the Internet less than once a week or not at all.

Age group 35-54:

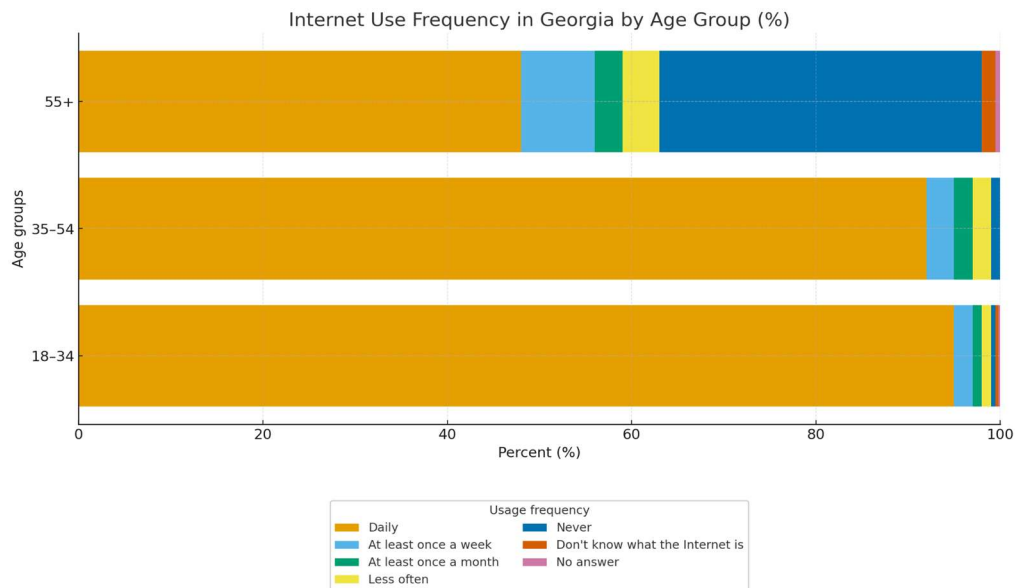
In this group, daily Internet activity is 89%, representing a slight decrease compared to the youngest group. However, the vast majority still remain active online every day.

Age group 55+:

In this group, daily Internet usage is only 47%, which is drastically lower compared to younger groups. Moreover, as many as 35% of respondents claim they never use the Internet. This is a significant indicator pointing to potential technological barriers or lower demand for Internet use among older generations.

KEY CONCLUSIONS:

1. Generational technological gap: Internet usage rates decline with age, indicating a growing digital divide between younger and older generations.
2. Digital exclusion among the older group: A significant proportion of people aged 55+ (35%) never use the Internet, highlighting the need for educational and infrastructural initiatives to improve their access to technology.
3. Younger age groups as the core users: Younger respondents (18-34 years) form the core of daily Internet users, which influences digital media strategies and communication approaches in Georgia.



Data: Caucasus Barometer 2024

Thanks to widespread availability of the Internet and mobile connections, differences in Internet usage frequency between various types of settlements are relatively small. However, the data indicate significant demographic differences that affect the level of daily Internet activity:

Capital (Tbilisi)

83% of respondents living in Tbilisi use the Internet daily. As the economic and technological center of the country, Tbilisi offers greater access to digital infrastructure and jobs requiring technology use.

Cities outside the capital

In urban areas outside Tbilisi, daily Internet use is 77%, slightly lower than in the capital but still significantly higher than in rural areas.

Rural areas

In rural regions, 70% of respondents use the Internet daily, the lowest rate nationwide. This lower usage is linked to the demographic structure, characterized by an aging population often less familiar with modern technologies.

Youth migration to the capital and larger cities, driven by access to employment and education, results in rural areas being increasingly inhabited by older generations. The older population is less active online, which contributes to the lower overall Internet usage rate in rural regions. These data highlight the importance of urbanization and demographics in shaping Internet usage patterns in Georgia.

The data clearly indicate a strong dependence of Georgian audiences on information obtained through social media. These platforms are characterized by a lack of filters and, in most cases, limited regulations, making them one of the main environments conducive to the spread of misinformation and false information. The mechanisms operating within social media enable exceptionally fast and easy dissemination of rumors or conspiracy theories, primarily due to algorithms that create a closed information bubble around the user.

The user primarily sees content that aligns with their preferences and encourages them to spend more time on the platform. This operating model causes content that interests the audience, aligns with their views, and reinforces confirmation bias to be especially prominent and easily accessible.

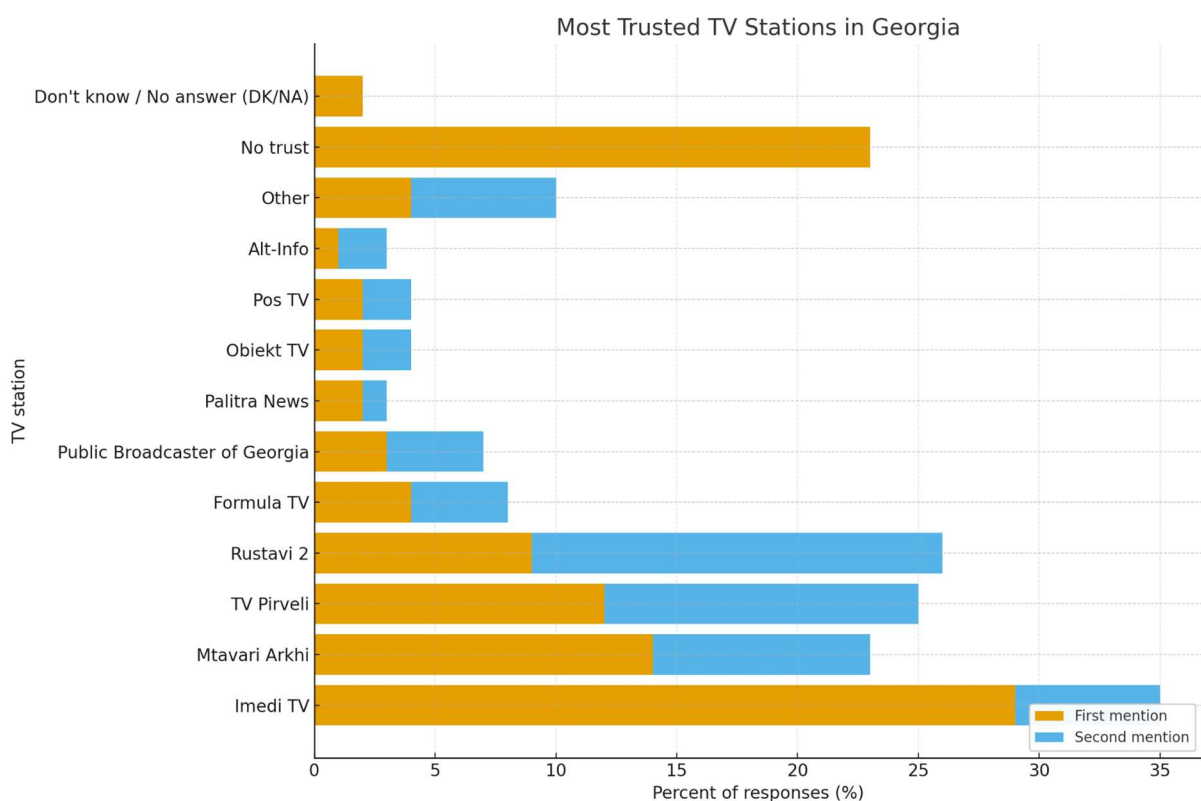
Another important aspect of social media as a primary source of information is the human factor. Users naturally tend to trust people they identify with or like. Combined with algorithms that facilitate finding and connecting with individuals who share similar views, social media become an ideal environment for spreading misinformation and carrying out targeted information manipulation.

c) Television

Television remains the most important source of information for over 49% of the Georgian population. It is the medium with the greatest influence, especially among people aged 55 and older. To fully understand the television habits of Georgians, it is necessary to take a closer look at the channels most frequently watched and those that audiences consider reliable sources of information.

Despite television’s popularity as an information medium in Georgia, access to detailed data on channel viewership remains limited. Most available information comes from research conducted by the television stations themselves for commercial purposes, but the reliability of these data is often questioned. This lack of independent and comprehensive viewership data makes it difficult to obtain a full picture of audience preferences.

To analyze the television habits of Georgians more comprehensively, data from reputable research institutions such as Nielsen, the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the Caucasus Barometer 2024 will be utilized. Special attention will also be given to the results of surveys conducted in March 2023, which can provide additional insights into viewership structures and the information preferences of the Georgian population.



According to the results of a survey conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in February and March 2023, the most trusted television channels in Georgia are the

pro-government Imedi TV and the opposition Mtavari Arkhi, which received 35% and 23% of mentions, respectively. Imedi TV, as a government-supporting channel, plays a key role in shaping public opinion in the country. Meanwhile, Mtavari Arkhi, being the main opposition media outlet, is regarded as a counterpoint to the pro-government narrative, making it the second most trusted source of information in Georgia.

Pro-Russian and Anti-Western Channels: It is worth noting the low yet notable level of trust in channels with a pro-Russian and anti-Western stance. Obiektivi, a channel associated with the political party Alliance of Patriots, received 2% of mentions in the survey. Similarly, Alt-Info, founded by radical right-wing groups supporting a pro-Russian narrative, also garnered 2%. Despite their limited reach, both channels have clear ties to pro-Russian political factions and openly promote narratives opposing Georgia's pro-Western orientation.

These data highlight a distinct division in the information preferences of Georgian society. On one hand, the majority of the population chooses channels representing the main political currents—either pro-government or opposition. On the other hand, there is a smaller but evident interest in media outlets espousing radical, pro-Russian, and anti-Western views. These results may indicate underlying ideological divisions within society and the significant influence of politics and ideology on the choice of information sources.

The year 2024, marked by parliamentary elections in Georgia, brought significant changes in trust and viewership of television channels. According to the *Caucasus Barometer 2024* survey conducted in May, political polarization and intense election campaigns had a substantial impact on the media preferences of Georgian society.

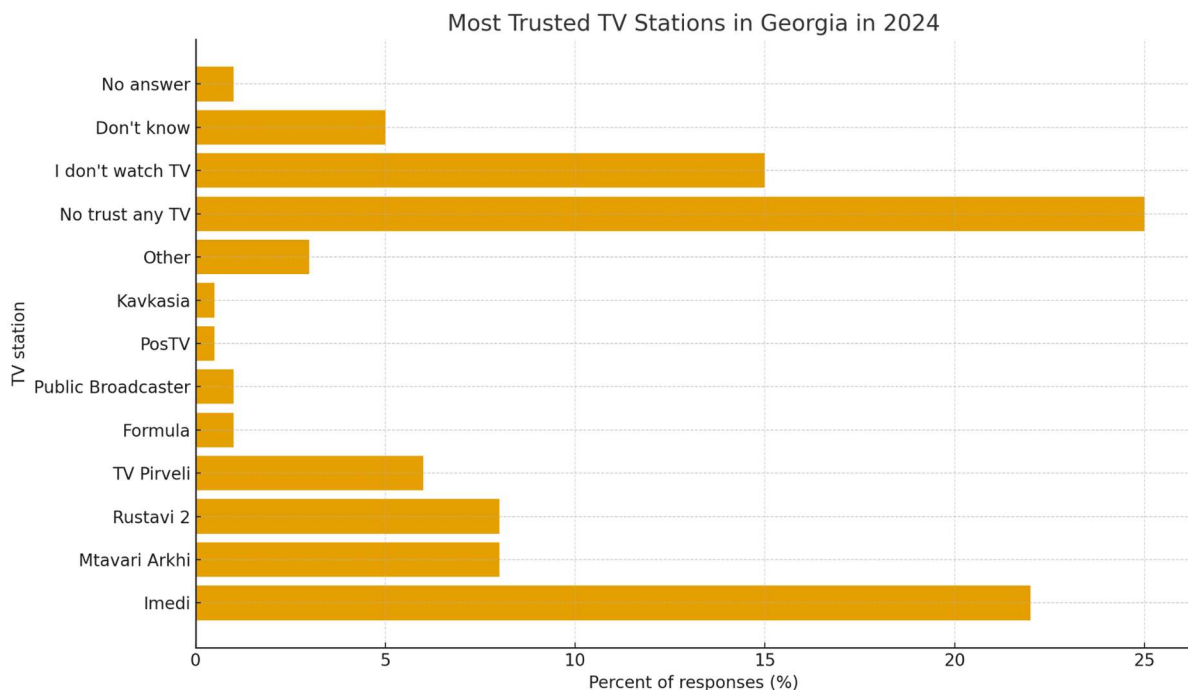
KEY DATA:

- Imedi TV remains the most trusted television channel in Georgia, with 22% of respondents expressing trust. This represents a decline compared to previous years, but the channel still ranks first in the trust ranking.

- Mtavari Arkhi and Rustavi 2 share second place, each receiving 8% trust. Rustavi 2, known for its moderately pro-government and anti-opposition stance, strengthened its position during the election period.
- Channels with an openly pro-Russian character, such as Alt-Info and Obiektivi, received such low support that they did not appear in the official trust ranking.

Both pro-government and opposition television channels in Georgia are clearly engaged in political narratives, which further deepens social polarization. The parliamentary elections have additionally highlighted this dynamic, with channels such as Imedi and Rustavi 2 reinforcing pro-government narratives, while Mtavari Arkhi remained a stronghold of the opposition.

The year 2024 revealed a clear trend of declining trust in the media in Georgia, with Imedi maintaining a dominant, though weakening, position as the leader. At the same time, the marginalization of pro-Russian channels in trust rankings indicates limited support for their narratives within society. Media polarization continues to play a key role in shaping the information preferences of Georgians.



The results of the Caucasus Barometer 2024 survey allow for a deeper analysis of information preferences among different age groups. Of particular importance are the responses indicating a lack of trust in television stations and the decline in viewership of traditional media among younger age groups.

Age group 18-34:

- The largest share of respondents (27% each) indicated the answers: "I do not trust television stations" and "I do not watch television."
- The viewership of the three most popular channels, namely Imedi TV, Mtavari Arkhi and Rustavi 2, is approximately 10% each.
- These data indicate a growing marginalization of traditional television in this age group and an increasing importance of alternative sources of information.

Age group 35-54:

- The most frequently chosen response is "I do not trust television stations" (30%).
- Imedi TV ranks second with 21% of mentions.
- 17% of respondents declare that they do not watch television.
- The results suggest that although there is still some interest in traditional media within this group, a lack of trust remains the dominant trend.

Age group 55+:

- The most trusted channel is Imedi TV, which gathers 32% of responses.
- In second place is the answer "I do not trust television stations" (17%), suggesting that although distrust is lower than in younger age groups, it still persists.
- Mtavari Arkhi ranks third with 11% of mentions.
- In this age group, traditional television still plays a dominant role as a source of information.

Influence of location:

- In regions closer to the capital, a higher level of distrust toward television is noticeable.

- However, the percentage of people who declare that they do not watch television remains stable across the country, which may indicate entrenched information habits.

The survey results reveal clear differences in trust and television viewership across age groups. Younger groups are increasingly abandoning television as a source of information, while older groups continue to show stronger attachment to traditional channels such as Imedi TV. However, a lack of trust in television stations is a common denominator across all age groups, highlighting the challenges faced by Georgian media.

The analysis of trust in television channels broken down by respondents' ethnic groups reveals interesting patterns. Among ethnic Georgians, the largest group (27%) declares a lack of trust in television stations, while 24% identify Imedi as the most trusted channel.

Among the ethnic Azerbaijani minority, it is particularly notable that as many as 45% of respondents claim that they do not watch television at all.

Among Armenians, there is a clear preference for specific television channels. Formula TV enjoys high popularity in this group, reaching 27% viewership. Rustavi 2 holds the second position among Armenians with 17% of mentions.

These results reveal diverse habits and levels of trust in the media among different ethnic groups in Georgia, which may play a significant role both in shaping media policy and in planning social communication strategies tailored to the needs of individual communities.

While IRI and Caucasus Barometer surveys provide data on trust in television channels, Nielsen viewership measurements offer insight into the actual popularity of TV channels without factoring in trust or distrust. Nielsen's weekly ratings reveal a dynamic viewership landscape and the emergence of new players in the television industry.

KEY VIEWERSHIP RESULTS:

1. Imedi TV remains the leader in both trust and viewership, maintaining its position as the most-watched channel in Georgia.
2. Mtavari Arkhi, an opposition channel, holds second place, indicating its significant influence on audiences.
3. Rustavi 2, also a popular pro-government channel, maintains high viewership.
4. TV Pirveli, an opposition-leaning channel, ranks fourth in viewership.
5. The public broadcaster, despite its declared impartiality, occupies fifth place, though its tendency toward pro-government narratives is noticeable.
6. Formula TV, known for its pro-opposition content, ranks sixth.
7. PostTV, an extremely pro-government and anti-opposition channel, holds seventh place, reflecting its limited reach.

Nielsen research also indicates a growing popularity of entertainment channels such as GDS, TVC, and Comedy Channel. These stations primarily focus on entertainment content like movies and TV shows, and their offerings do not include news or political programs. This suggests that a segment of the population is increasingly choosing media centered on entertainment rather than news and current affairs.

Viewership levels differ significantly from trust levels, demonstrating that audiences often watch television stations despite having limited trust in their content. This is particularly evident in the case of pro-government channels like Imedi TV, which dominate viewership even though trust in them is not as widespread. Nielsen data reveal a complex dynamic of media preferences in Georgia, where popularity does not always translate into trust. The emergence of entertainment channels highlights the growing role of non-political content in the daily lives of viewers. These findings can serve as a valuable resource for media policymakers and communication strategists to better understand the needs and preferences of Georgian audiences.

Rural and minority settlements in Georgia

The data indicate that although rural and minority settlements in Georgia show some similarities in terms of media usage, they should not be treated as a homogeneous group. Clear differences in media consumption patterns and levels of trust in television suggest distinct challenges faced by these communities.

Rural settlements are characterized by a higher level of television use and trust in TV as a source of information. This can be seen as a positive aspect, as television provides residents with access to news. However, the limited diversity of media sources remains a significant issue. Furthermore, data indicate that although small, a noticeable portion of viewers of pro-Russian channels in Georgia is concentrated in rural settlements. This fact, combined with the lower diversity of media sources, makes rural communities more vulnerable to disinformation and manipulation, especially in the context of pro-Russian narratives.

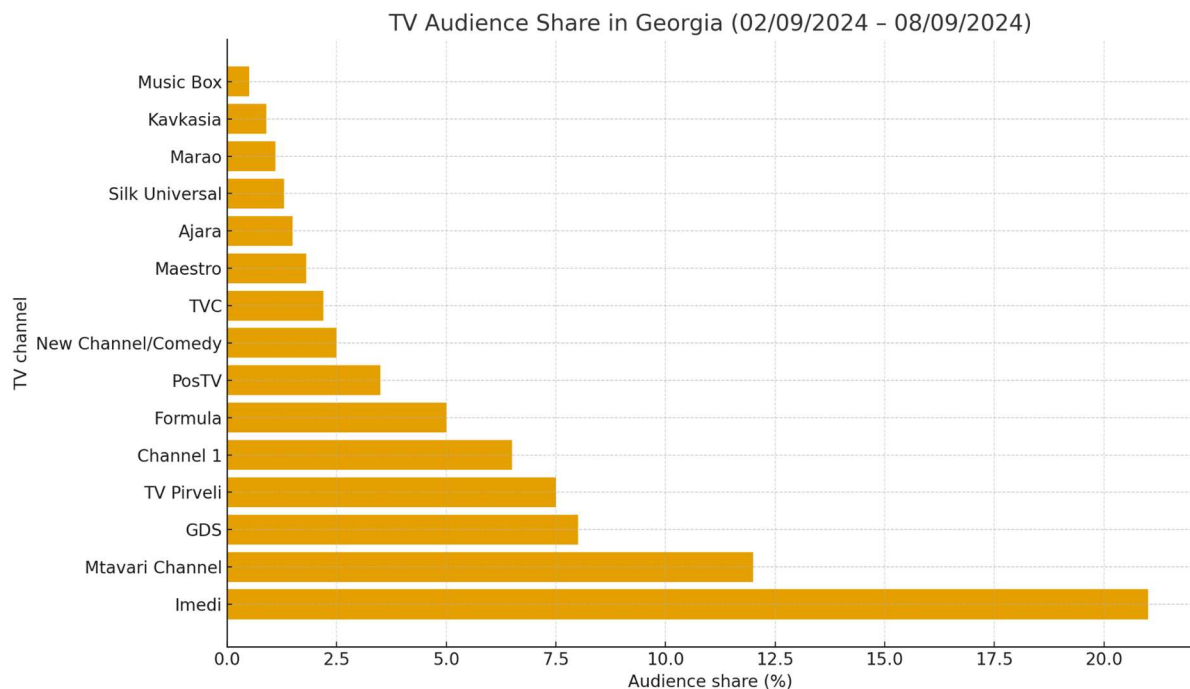
Minority settlements

Minority groups exhibit a significant lack of diversity in media consumption and a low level of trust in traditional media. These factors make them some of the most vulnerable to disinformation and manipulation among all surveyed groups. The absence of alternative and reliable sources of information may lead to a further increase in their susceptibility to external influences.

While rural communities rely on television as their main source of information and exhibit higher levels of trust in traditional media, minority groups are more excluded from a diverse media environment, making them particularly vulnerable to disinformation. These differences demonstrate that strategies to counter disinformation must be tailored to the specific characteristics of these groups, taking into account their unique needs and challenges.

Both rural and minority settlements in Georgia require special attention in the context of media policy and information literacy education. For rural communities, it is necessary

to promote diversity of media sources to reduce their dependence on television, especially pro-Russian channels. For minority settlements, increasing access to reliable and diverse sources of information is crucial, as this will help limit their vulnerability to disinformation and manipulation.



Although traditional television has long served as a cornerstone of the media, providing audiences with daily information, the situation in Georgia markedly deviates from this standard. Data indicate that 25% of Georgians declare a lack of trust in any television channels. The primary reason for this is the strong political polarization permeating Georgian television media. In the public debate, TV channels are commonly classified as either pro-government or pro-opposition, which significantly affects not only their programming but also the narratives they promote.

Bias in television media leads viewers to perceive content as aimed at advancing specific political agendas, resulting in a loss of faith in the impartiality of information. Such polarization weakens television's role as a reliable source of news and contributes to growing skepticism toward the media overall. The lack of trust in television in Georgia not only undermines its position as a traditional medium but also highlights the need for

a shift in the approach to producing and distributing news content. Promoting media pluralism and editorial independence could help rebuild public trust in the media.

In the spring of 2024, the ruling political party Georgian Dream once again introduced and subsequently passed a controversial draft law on foreign agents, referred to by Georgian civil society as the "Russian law". This law imposes the obligation to register as "foreign agents" on civil society organizations and media outlets that receive more than 20% of their budget from foreign sources, such as:

- embassies,
- international organizations,
- international funds,
- other legal entities registered or financed by foreign governments.

The draft law, perceived as anti-Western, has sparked widespread controversy and opposition both domestically and internationally due to its negative consequences for media freedom and the independence of civil society organizations.

The introduction of the foreign agents law sparked strong reactions within Georgian civil society, political parties, and the media. The law particularly impacts opposition media organizations, which largely rely on international grants that enable them to operate in a challenging and hostile media environment. The decision to enact the law caused serious tensions between the Georgian government and Western partners, who view it as a step backward in the country's democratic development. The policies of Georgian Dream have become the subject of open criticism from international political actors, further straining relations between Georgia and the West. A series of political tensions and the rhetoric used by Georgian Dream during the election campaign contributed to the perception of the party as pro-Russian. The opposition and some Western political analysts argue that the ruling party's campaign was based on anti-Western, conspiratorial, and undemocratic messages. These narratives often echoed, and at times even mimicked, those promoted by Russian propaganda. The enacted law and its consequences highlight deep political divisions in Georgia as well as the difficulties faced

by independent media and civil society organizations. Political polarization and escalating tensions with the West may have long-term effects on Georgia's international image and its further democratic development.

The ruling Georgian Dream party has introduced the term "global war party" into its rhetoric, which is a Georgian adaptation of the Russian term "collective West." The ruling party blames the West for attempting to drag Georgia into conflict with Russia by allegedly "forcing the country to open a second front." As part of their political actions, Georgian Dream leaders have repeatedly accused the West of being responsible for the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, claiming that it was the West, not Russia, that initiated the conflict. Georgian leaders have emphasized that the Ukrainian government failed to prevent the conflict and have promoted the narrative that Russia cannot be defeated, portraying Ukraine as merely a pawn sacrificed by the West. Politicians from the ruling party increasingly depict the West as a threat to Georgian cultural and religious identity.

These narratives include:

- claims about LGBT propaganda supported by the West,
- accusations of attempts to destroy Georgian religion, culture, and ethnic identity,
- rhetoric about the "lack of morality" and "lack of family values" in Western societies.

The rhetoric of Georgian Dream appears aimed at strengthening the pro-Russian electorate and weakening support for Georgia's integration with Western institutions such as NATO and the European Union. These narratives not only align with Russian propaganda but also seek to polarize Georgian society and undermine the opposition. Such narratives may have long-term consequences, including weakening democratic institutions in Georgia, limiting support for the country's pro-Western course, and further isolating Georgia on the international stage. Introducing anti-Western elements into public discourse also deepens societal divisions, which can be exploited to restrict media freedom and the independence of civil society organizations.

Anti-Western rhetoric promoted by the Georgian Dream party has begun to influence the programming of Georgian television channels, particularly pro-government ones. As a result, their messaging has been completely transformed, shifting away from traditional news to spreading anti-Western disinformation, conspiracy theories, and myths. Before 2024, anti-Western narratives were mostly confined to channels like Obiektivi and Alt-Info, which together reached about 4% of the Georgian audience. However, in 2024, these same messages started appearing in major pro-government media outlets, affecting both their content and public reception. The introduction of radical anti-Western rhetoric into television programming has had significant consequences for the viewership of these channels, altering audience trust and engagement.

- In 2023, Obiektivi and Alt-Info together accounted for 4% of viewership, but by 2024 their popularity had declined so much that they were no longer included in surveys as separate entities¹.
- Alt-Info, struggling with lack of funding and low audience numbers, announced its closure on October 28, 2024, just two days after the parliamentary elections

The inclusion of radical anti-Western messages in the programming of pro-government television channels may suggest that the Georgian Dream party aims to strengthen its electorate by marginalizing alternative, pro-Western voices.

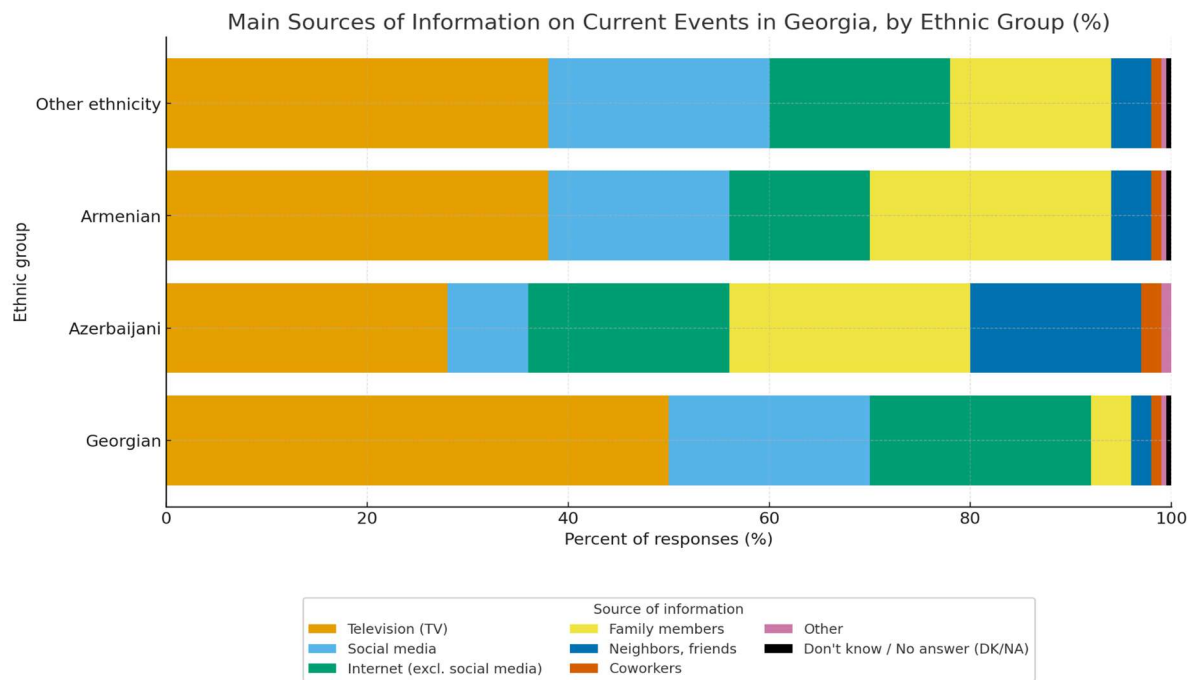
Strong political polarization, overt and direct anti-Western rhetoric from the Georgian government, and the popularity of pro-government television channels mean that the Georgian public is highly exposed to anti-Western content. Such messages are regularly promoted by leading politicians, prominent public figures, and numerous pro-government experts, which further deepens the influence of these narratives on society.

This situation underscores the need to take measures aimed at supporting independent sources of information, promoting media pluralism, and educating society on recognizing disinformation and propaganda.

d) Whispered information

Despite strong interest in both traditional and new media, public opinion surveys reveal several surprising findings regarding sources of information in Georgia. After television and the Internet, the main channels through which Georgians obtain news about current events are family members, neighbors, friends, and colleagues. This means that the respondent's closest social circle plays a key role in information transmission.

If we compare the primary source of information about current events in Georgia with the ethnic background of respondents, we get an insight showing that the answers “family members” and “neighbors and friends” are extremely popular among Georgian ethnic minorities. Specifically, for the Azerbaijani ethnic minority, this is the most trusted source of news, with 30% of respondents indicating so. Adding neighbors and colleagues to this, approximately 48% of Azerbaijanis receive most of their information about current events in Georgia from informal sources. The Armenian ethnic minority prefers to obtain most of their information from television, as suggested by 38%, but the second most popular response, at 29%, is neighbors and friends. Overall, 31% of the Armenian ethnic minority claim that they primarily receive information from informal sources. This trend indicates that social communication strategies in Georgia must consider not only traditional and digital media but also social channels of transmission. There is a need to raise awareness about disinformation within local communities, especially among minority groups, to reduce the impact of unverified information shared within close social circles.



Data: Caucasus Barometer 2024

An analysis of information sources among respondents based on their preferred interview language provides interesting insights, especially in the context of differences in the use of informal and unfiltered communication channels.

Respondents speaking Armenian:

- 51% of respondents indicated neighbors and friends as their main source of information about current events in Georgia, highlighting the importance of the closest social circle within this group.
- Overall, 54% of Armenian-speaking respondents obtain information from informal and unfiltered sources.

These results point to limited access to traditional media and a clear reliance on local, social communication channels among Armenians.

Respondents speaking Azeri:

- Among Azeri-speaking respondents, family members are the main source of information, indicated by 32% of those surveyed.
- Neighbors and friends serve as the source of information for 16%, and colleagues for 12% of respondents.
- In total, 59% of respondents participating in the survey in Azeri obtain information from unverified, informal sources.

Both Armenian- and Azerbaijani-speaking respondents rely heavily on informal and unfiltered channels of information, indicating limited penetration of traditional media within these communities.

- Armenian-speaking respondents more often rely on neighbors and friends, which may be related to strong social ties within this group.
- Azeri-speaking respondents prefer information from family members, suggesting a more closed and family-centered nature of their information networks.

Limited access to media in minority languages can lead to greater reliance on informal sources and increased vulnerability to disinformation.

This is important information about the Georgian information environment. The above data highlight key challenges related to ensuring minority communities in Georgia have access to objective and reliable information. The dominance of informal sources, such as social networks encompassing family, neighbors, and friends, increases the risk of spreading unverified and manipulated content.

Information transmitted within social circles is heavily filtered through personal beliefs and limitations in understanding. This makes recipients more susceptible to disinformation that aligns with their biases or reinforces existing views. Social networks, where information is spread by “word of mouth,” can become an ideal tool for propaganda, rumors, and gossip. Such an environment fosters the strengthening

of anti-Western narratives and pro-Russian messages, which may find fertile ground within minority communities.

Based on available data, it can be assumed that minority settlements are particularly vulnerable to the effects of disinformation. Limited access to diverse and independent sources of information in minority languages increases the likelihood that pro-Russian and anti-Western narratives will take root effectively within these communities.

The Georgian information environment, especially in minority settlements, faces serious challenges related to access to objective information. While social networks are important sources of information, they can also amplify propaganda and reinforce disinformation. This underscores the need for coordinated efforts to improve the quality of communicated content and to raise awareness among audiences.

e) Religious institutions – influence of religious narratives and connections in Georgia

Russia actively presents itself as a defender of Christian values and ethics, while simultaneously portraying the West as a source of corruption and perversion. To this end, the Kremlin conducts smear campaigns against the West, focusing on topics such as homosexuality, pedophilia, anti-Christianity, anti-capitalism, and accusing the West of destroying national values and transforming them into a non-religious, distorted society.

Emphasizing the shared Orthodox values and Christian beliefs that unite Georgia and Russia, these narratives are actively supported and promoted by representatives of the Georgian Orthodox Church. These ties are further reinforced by clear physical and institutional connections between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Georgian Orthodox Church, making these narratives even more effective and influential within Georgian society.

These actions highlight the key role of religion as a soft power tool in implementing Russia's strategy of influence over neighboring countries and strengthening pro-Russian narratives in the region.

The Georgian Orthodox Church under scrutiny after document leak

The Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) came under scrutiny following a leak of State Security Service documents on September 12, 2021. The disclosed materials contained personal data of clergy and indicated potential links between the GOC and Russia. Previous research suggested that the Church might have been used as a tool of Russian influence. Some clergy, including high-ranking members of the Holy Synod, were identified as promoters of pro-Russian sentiments and narratives.

The disclosed documents further suggest the existence of close relations between the Georgian clergy and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), as well as potential cooperation of some clergy members with Russian special services. One of the most controversial cases involves Metropolitan Nikolai Pachuashvili, accused of passing information to the Russian side in exchange for \$30,000. Although the metropolitan denied these allegations, he admitted to contacts with a Russian citizen, raising additional questions about the extent of Russian influence within the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC).

Some clergy have expressed the opinion that the selection of the successor to Patriarch Elias II, Shio Mujiri, may have been made under pressure from Russia. These allegations also include supposed connections between the new patriarch and the Russian businessman Levan Vasadze. Despite these accusations, a public relations representative of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) firmly denied the contents of the leaked documents, emphasizing the diversity and autonomy of the Church.

The controversy surrounding this issue further highlights the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) on the position of the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) in key matters, such as the recognition of the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

To illustrate the relations and views of the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) clergy regarding Russia and its politicians, here are several examples of attitudes expressed by high-ranking members of the Holy Synod toward that country:

- **Metropolitan Seraphim:** Titular Metropolitan Seraphim Dzhodzhuia, a member of the Holy Synod, based on alleged documents from the State Security Service, expressed the opinion that the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) demonstrates greater spirituality than the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC).
- **Metropolitan Ioanne:** Metropolitan of Kutaisi and Gaenati, Ioanne, is known for his pro-Russian sympathies. In his publications, he has repeatedly portrayed Europe as a source of evil, while regarding Russia as good. In 2014, he published an article in the newspaper *Sam Saunje* titled “The Path of Georgia,” in which he argued that the period of coexistence between Georgia and Russia had positive aspects.
- **Archbishop Spyridon:** Archbishop of Skhalte, Spyridon, like Metropolitan Ioanne, actively fuels anti-Western sentiments. He claims that the policy pursued by Vladimir Putin towards Georgia is "ordained by God." He also believes that Putin's statements are "a result of our sins." In one interview, Archbishop Spyridon stated that Georgia is the land of the Mother of God, while Russia is her home, which places an obligation on both countries to help each other.
- **Metropolitan Gerasim:** Metropolitan of Zugdidi and Tsaishi, Gerasim, is one of the more notable examples of pro-Russian attitudes within the Georgian Orthodox Church. On July 18, 2014, the day after the Malaysia Airlines plane was shot down by pro-Russian separatists, he participated in a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

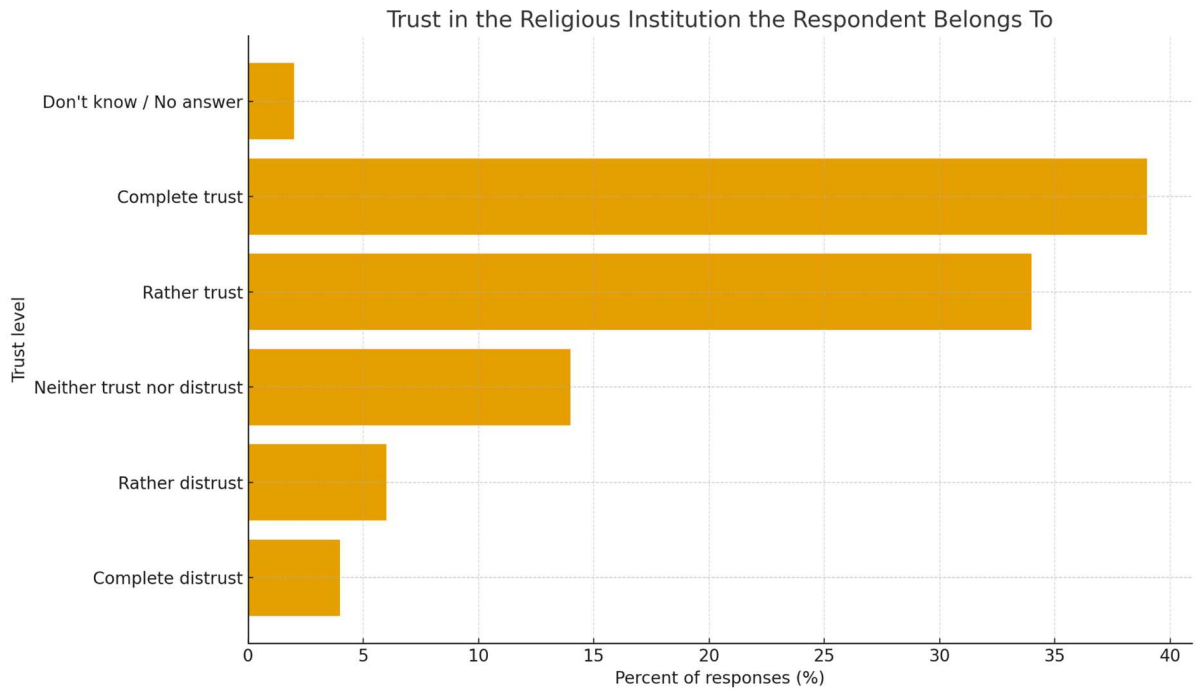
In his statements, Metropolitan Gerasim often refers to Georgia's relations with Russia. He says: “We are threatened by our northern neighbor – Russia – and they tease us, saying: ‘Russia will do this and that to you.’ A country that in the past has done much harm to our nation will in the future embitter us even more, claiming that Russia did this and

that to us. Russia has a history of relations with Georgia that spans at least two centuries. Previously, these relations were episodic.”

Metropolitan Gerasim regularly holds meetings with high-ranking clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), including the former head of the Department for External Church Relations, Hilarion Alfeyev.

The presented attitudes reveal the pro-Russian sympathies of some high-ranking clergy within the Georgian Orthodox Church. Relations with Russia, both at the political and ecclesiastical levels, are particularly significant in the geopolitical context and carry numerous implications. They indicate the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church on religious policies and narratives in Georgia.

The Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) plays a significant role in relations with Russia, serving as a bridge between the two countries. Its established position in Russia allows for informal information exchange and facilitates the promotion of shared religious and political narratives. Through common religious themes and anti-Western messages tailored to the Orthodox Christian worldview, Georgian Orthodox clergy become effective carriers of pro-Russian narratives within Georgia. Their messages are credible to the audience, making the GOC one of the most important tools of Russian influence in the region. Russia’s interest in maintaining strong influence over the Georgian Orthodox Church also stems from its high standing in Georgian society. Over the past decade, the GOC has been one of the most trusted institutions in the country, rivaled only by the Georgian military in terms of public confidence. The high trust in the Georgian Orthodox Church, its close ties with Russia, and its ability to reinforce pro-Russian narratives among Georgian society make it a key element of Russia’s soft power strategy in the region.



An analysis of the level of trust in religious institutions by age groups reveals predictable patterns. The results indicate stronger trust among older age groups and greater skepticism among younger respondents.

Youngest age group (18–34 years):

- Distrust towards religious institutions is highest in this age group.
- Despite this, the combined trust level (“somewhat trust” and “completely trust”) amounts to 64%, indicating a relatively high level of trust compared to other social institutions.

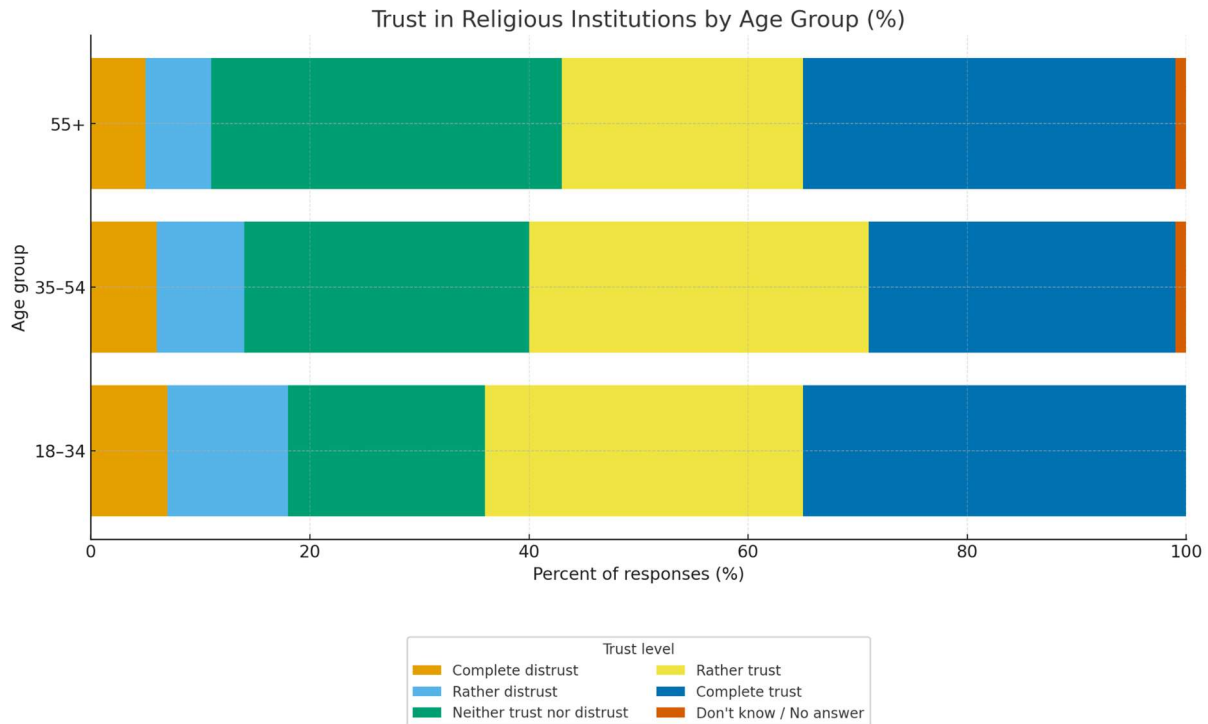
Age group 35–54 years:

- Responses indicating trust (“somewhat trust” and “completely trust”) amount to 76% in this group.
- Distrust is lower than in the younger group, and trust levels are closer to those observed in the oldest age group.

Oldest age group (55+):

- Trust in religious institutions is strongest within this age group.

- 79% of respondents declare “somewhat trust” or “completely trust,” indicating the highest level of acceptance and credibility of the Church in this group.



Analysis of trust in religious institutions by type of settlement:

A study of trust in religious institutions in Georgia, depending on place of residence (capital city, towns, rural areas), reveals an unusual pattern that deviates from common assumptions.

Strongest distrust in the capital: In the capital city, trust in religious institutions is the weakest, while distrust is the highest. Only 66% of respondents indicated that they “somewhat trust” or “completely trust” religious institutions, which is the lowest result compared to other areas.

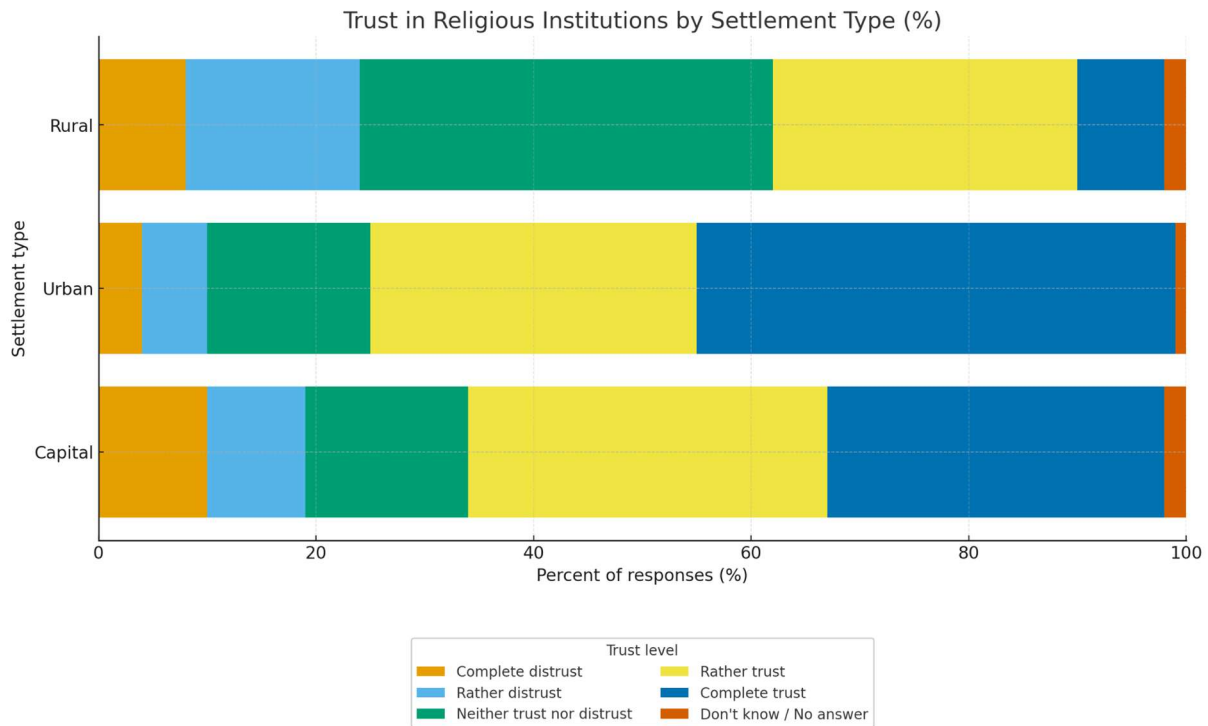
Strongest trust in towns: Contrary to expectations, the highest level of trust in religious institutions was observed in urban areas excluding the capital. As many as 84% of respondents in these areas expressed trust in religious institutions.

Moderate trust in rural areas: In rural areas, 71% of respondents declare trust in religious institutions. This result is lower than in towns, which deviates from the typical pattern that usually predicts the highest trust levels in rural communities. The data suggest that these differences may stem from religious diversity and varying levels of trust toward different faiths.

Muslim minorities: among Sunni Muslims, 11% and among Shia Muslims, 8% declared a lack of trust in their own religious denominations. Since Muslim communities are primarily concentrated in rural areas, this may influence the overall level of trust in religious institutions in those regions.

Towns as centers of religious diversity: in towns, trust in religious institutions may be higher due to greater social diversity and a lesser influence of minority groups that may exhibit lower levels of trust. This diversity can foster a more balanced perception and acceptance of religious institutions among urban populations.

This analysis indicates that the level of trust in religious institutions is not solely a function of the type of settlement but also depends on the religious composition of the population. Higher trust in cities may result from the dominance of Georgian Orthodoxy, while in rural areas, the presence of Muslim communities-among whom trust is lower-reduces the overall trust level. The capital city, on the other hand, is characterized by greater secularization and a more critical attitude toward religion, which explains the highest level of distrust observed there.



Such high levels of trust in the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) make it an attractive target for political actors seeking to control the narratives disseminated by the Church. Despite this, the popularity of the Church, and especially its Patriarch, enables the GOC to maintain its status as an independent player on the political stage.

The most striking example of such an attempt was the move made by the Georgian ruling party, Georgian Dream, during the 2024 parliamentary election campaign. The party proposed establishing Christianity as the official state religion. This proposal was perceived by analysts and Church representatives as a potential attempt to subordinate the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) to state authority. By rejecting this offer, the Church clearly asserted its position, choosing to maintain its autonomy.

The Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) exhibits clear weaknesses in its activities, which manifest through its support for anti-Western and anti-EU narratives. One of the most dominant and controversial topics, especially active following decisions by some Western countries to legalize same-sex marriages, concerns LGBT rights.

A significant part of information exchange among parishioners takes place during religious ceremonies. During these gatherings, clergy often share private guidance and express personal opinions that significantly influence the attitudes of the faithful. There have been reports of priests using their platform to encourage parishioners to vote for or support specific political parties or interest groups.

Anti-Western narratives highlight challenges faced by the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) in fulfilling a neutral and purely religious mission. At the same time, the active support of radical narratives and actions undermines its authority as an institution that unites society. The Church's effectiveness in shaping public opinion through religious ceremonies demonstrates how significant a role the GOC continues to play within Georgia's information space.

The influence of the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) on society and politics is clear and undeniable. During the parliamentary election campaign, both ruling and opposition parties organized public protests aimed at demonstrating their strength and social support.

Political demonstrations:

- The pro-European opposition attracted some of the largest crowds in Georgia's recent political history, successfully mobilizing citizens to participate in their events.
- The ruling parties showcased their organizational and logistical capabilities by transporting thousands of supporters from various urban and rural areas using a fleet of buses.
- Church demonstrations: however, the most impressive display of social power was the demonstration organized by the Georgian Orthodox Church. On May 17, 2024, under the leadership of Orthodox clergy, thousands of Georgians-representing both pro-government and opposition forces-participated in the celebrations of the "Day of Family Purity." This event highlighted the Church's

unique ability to unite diverse segments of society around shared cultural and religious values.

The celebrations of this day served as a symbolic reminder of the strength and role of the Church in Georgian society. At the same time, they highlighted the Georgian Orthodox Church's (GOC) ability to mobilize large social groups regardless of their political affiliations. Once again, the Church demonstrated that it is one of the most powerful social institutions in Georgia, capable of influencing public opinion and shaping narratives in the public sphere.

The Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) plays a key role in Georgian society, where Orthodoxy is the dominant religion. The Church enjoys immense trust and broad support from the population, stemming both from its historical significance in shaping national identity and its important role throughout the country's turbulent history over the centuries. The ties between the Georgian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church are clear and controversial. The Church's natural inclination toward conservatism, combined with its vast social influence, makes the GOC one of the main sources of anti-Western narratives, especially regarding LGBT rights. High trust in the Church is often leveraged by individual clergy members or ideological groups within the Church to promote anti-Western messages. Such actions not only weaken Georgia's integration with the West but also make the Georgian population more susceptible to information influence and propaganda.

Mutual support between pro-Russian state politics and the narratives promoted by the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) has become increasingly visible during recent debates on Georgia's Western political orientation. In this context, a particularly notable statement was made by one of the Church's senior clergy, Father Iakob, who addressed the Georgian public: "We must determine our own fate; we do not want to join Russia or anywhere else - I tell you, most of us, out of 2 million, are sane. Now that they have gathered, there can be at most 2,000–3,000 of them. I appeal to them: do not take the path of betrayal!"

This statement fits within the pro-Russian “neutrality” narrative, which superficially promotes Georgia’s balance and independence from both Russian and Western influences. In reality, however, this narrative operates manipulatively by reinforcing arguments in favor of policies aligned with Russia’s strategic interests.

Such statements, though seemingly apolitical, can effectively weaken Georgia’s pro-Western aspirations by appealing to national emotions and fostering distrust toward the West. Messages calling for “self-determination” and warning against “betrayal” may contribute to building a strategic neutrality that, in practice, favors Russia’s political goals in the region. Clergy statements like

მეუფე იაკობი - ჩვენი ბედი თვითონვე უნდა განვსაზღვროთ, არც რუსეთში გვინდა შესვლა და არც სადმე - გეუბნებით, 2 მილიონიდან უმეტესობა ჯანსაღ აზრზე ვართ, ახლა რომ შეიკრიბნენ, მაქსიმუმ 2000- 3000 იყვნენ, იმათ მივმართავ, ნუ მიჰყვებიან ღალატის გზას!



those of Father Iakob highlight the Georgian Orthodox Church’s role in shaping public opinion and promoting political narratives. While they appear to advocate independence and neutrality, their actual impact often supports pro-Russian policies in Georgia, posing significant challenges for society in safeguarding its sovereignty and pro-Western orientation.

f) Traditional media

i. State media

Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) is the national public broadcaster of Georgia, established to provide society with a diverse range of television and radio programs. Its creation was regulated by the Law on Radio and Television, adopted in 2004. According to this law, the main objectives of GPB are: "Providing society with diverse programs free from political and commercial influences, responding to the public interest".

- Legal entity under public law: GPB was established as an independent legal entity under public law, tasked with broadcasting programs in the public interest.
- State property: the activity of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) is based on state property, in accordance with Georgian legislation.
- Public financing: GPB is funded from public funds, which aims to guarantee its independence from commercial and political interests.
- Lack of subordination to state agencies: the public broadcaster theoretically operates autonomously, not subordinated to any state agency, which is intended to ensure its "independence and objectivity" in fulfilling its public mission

Management of the Georgian Public Broadcasting Company (GPB)

The Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) is managed by a Board of Trustees consisting of 11 members. The selection process for trustees follows rules established by the Parliament of Georgia and includes the following nominations:

- 2 trustees elected by the Parliament of Georgia based on nominations from the Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia;
- 3 trustees elected from nominations by the parliamentary majority faction;
- 3 trustees elected from nominations by the largest parliamentary opposition faction;
- 3 trustees elected from nominations by the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara.

The GPB is led by a General Director, who is selected by the Board of Trustees through an open competition. Currently, this position is held by Tinatin Berdzenishvili. The public broadcaster Adjara TV and Radio is also overseen by a Board of Trustees. In charge of the institution is a Director, chosen in a similar manner by the Board of Trustees. Currently, this role is held by Wladimer Tatishvili.

Scope of Activities of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB)

The Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) operates a variety of television and radio channels that play a significant role in delivering informational, educational, and entertainment content to the people of Georgia.

- **First Channel of Georgia (1TV):** The flagship GPB channel, broadcasting news, cultural, and entertainment programs.
- **First Educational Channel (until 2023):** Until 2020, GPB operated the Second Channel of Georgia. In 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the channel was transformed into the First Educational Channel, which broadcast educational programs for students learning from home. The channel was closed on December 1, 2023.
- **First Sports Channel (since 2024):** GPB's newest project, offering sports content including live broadcasts of sporting events and thematic programs.
- **Georgian Radio:** The main radio station of the broadcaster, providing news, music, and cultural programs.
- **Georgian Music Radio:** A specialized radio station focusing on music and culture.
- **Adjara TV (public broadcaster):** A regional television channel focused on local issues and programs dedicated to the residents of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara.
- **Adjara Radio (public broadcaster):** A radio station aimed at listeners in the Adjara region, offering local news and content.



Scope of Activities of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB)

The Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) operates a variety of television and radio channels that play a vital role in delivering informational, educational, and entertainment content to the people of Georgia. GPB undertakes diverse media projects, continuously adapting its offerings to the changing needs of society.

Over the years, the broadcaster has adjusted its channels to meet emerging challenges, such as launching the First Educational Channel in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and introducing the new First Sports Channel in 2024. Regional stations like Adjara TV and Adjara Radio highlight the broadcaster's importance in providing diverse content across the entire country.

ii. Private

The Obiektivi Media Union: Profile and Political Connections

The Obiektivi Media Union (Obiektivi) is a private media organization based in Georgia. Founded on August 2, 2010, it has been linked from the very beginning to pro-Russian political circles. Among the founders of Obiektivi was Irma Inashvili, the former Secretary General of the pro-Russian political party "Alliance of Patriots." Irma Inashvili, who served as a member of the 9th and 10th sessions of the Georgian Parliament, ceased officially managing the station in 2014 when she began her political career.

The Obiektivi Media Union was founded by 11 members, some of whom remain active supporters or members of the "Alliance of Patriots." For example, Giorgi Korkotashvili, one of the original founders, was number 10 on the "Alliance of Patriots" candidate list in the 2024 parliamentary elections. Obiektivi is often viewed as the media or ideological arm of the "Alliance of Patriots" party. The media organization dedicates a significant portion of its activities to promoting members of this political party. Its programs and

content largely focus on advancing narratives aligned with the views and interests of the "Alliance of Patriots".

Media Union Obiektivi plays a role clearly connected to pro-Russian politics in Georgia, serving as a platform to promote the "Alliance of Patriots" narratives. The organization's ties with the founders and activists of this political group make Obiektivi perceived as a tool supporting their ideological and political goals.



The Obiektivi Media Union is managed by a board consisting of four members, each of whom plays a significant role in the organization's activities and its political connections. The composition of the board is as follows:

- Irakli Tsilikishvili – Chairman of the Board and company director, openly participates in political debates. He was one of the signatories of a letter sent on February 21, 2022, by pro-Russian organizations from Georgia to Vladimir Putin. The letter advocated for the military neutrality of Georgia and Ukraine, just days before Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The letter was also signed by Irma Inashvili, one of the founders of Obiektivi.
- Zurab Gogishvili – Member of the Board.
- Dimitry Parsmani – Member of the Board. In the 2024 parliamentary elections, he held the 71st position on the candidate list of the "Alliance of Patriots," highlighting his close ties to the pro-Russian political group.
- Ilia Khachibaia – Member of the Board.

The entire organizational structure, including its founders, board members, and frequent guests, is directly linked to pro-Russian and anti-Western activities. Obiektivi's programs and the leadership's actions clearly support pro-Russian narratives, which often conflict with Georgia's pro-Western orientation. Letters and initiatives, such as the

aforementioned appeal to Vladimir Putin, further emphasize the organization's ideological ties to Russian interests.

The Obiektivi Board, led by Irakli Tsilikishvili, plays a key role in promoting pro-Russian narratives. Close ties with the "Alliance of Patriots" and participation in initiatives supporting Russian policies position the organization as one of the main propagators of anti-Western messages in Georgia.

The Obiektivi Media Union operates through the following channels:

- TV Obiektivi
- Radio Obiektivi 105.1 FM

According to the organization's regulations, The Obiektivi Media Union declares the fulfillment of the following objectives:

- Protection and implementation of the principles set forth in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Protection and implementation of the requirements arising from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- Protection and implementation of the requirements arising from the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- Special commitment to: protecting freedom of speech and expression, ensuring objectivity, and promoting transparency and fairness in electoral processes at all levels.

Although the organization's regulations define noble goals, Obiektivi's media activities often contradict these principles:

The organization's pro-Russian stance overlooks key rules outlined in its charter. Experts regularly featured on Obiektivi TV have been repeatedly criticized for inciting violence against minorities, engaging in smear campaigns, and spreading disinformation. For many years, Obiektivi struggled with low viewership. A shift occurred when the ruling

Georgian party adopted anti-Western narratives, influencing the entire Georgian media landscape. Paradoxically, instead of gaining prominence, Obiektivi lost the majority of its audience and its ability to effectively pursue its goals. While the Obiektivi Media Union officially declares its commitment to protecting human rights and ensuring transparency in democratic processes, in practice it engages in activities contrary to these values. Changes in the Georgian media environment and the shift toward anti-Western narratives did not improve Obiektivi's market position; rather, they contributed to its further decline in significance.

LLC Alt Info is a private media organization based in Georgia, founded on January 28, 2019, by two partners: Shota Martinenko and Tsiala Morgoshia, each holding a 50% stake in the company.

Original Structure (2019): Shota Martinenko was appointed the first director of the organization. Ownership and Management Change (March 2022): Tsiala Morgoshia became the sole owner of the organization, acquiring 100% of the shares, while Tamar Kacharava took over as director. Subsequent Ownership Change (April 2022): Aleksandre Kardava acquired 50% of the shares in the organization and was appointed director. Tsiala Morgoshia retained ownership of the remaining 50% of the shares.

Two days after the parliamentary elections held on October 26, 2024, LLC Alt Info announced the cessation of its operations due to financial difficulties. Despite its relatively short period of activity, LLC Alt Info experienced numerous ownership and management changes. The final closure of the organization following the 2024 parliamentary elections highlights the financial and operational challenges faced by this media company in Georgia's dynamic information environment.

Controversies surrounding Alt Info's financing and owners' links to Russian funds

Analysis of Alt Info's ownership sheds light on its potential sources of funding, crucial for understanding the organization's activities, especially in connection with the pro-Russian political movement "Conservative Movement." Tsiala Morgoshia, a retiree and

owner of 50% of Alt Info's shares since 2022, is not a well-known figure in Georgian politics or media. Her links to the far-right environment stem from family relations – she is the aunt of Konstantine Morgoshia, a leading far-right, anti-Western, and pro-Russian activist in Georgia. Konstantine Morgoshia was sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department in 2024 before the parliamentary elections due to suspicions of cooperating with Russia and receiving Russian funds. There are allegations that funds transferred by Konstantine Morgoshia were used to finance Alt Info through Tsiala Morgoshia. In 2022, Tsiala Morgoshia contributed over 1 million Georgian lari (approximately 350,000 USD) to Alt Info. Analysts suggest these funds originated from Konstantine Morgoshia, who reportedly registered his assets under his aunt's name to evade sanctions. Konstantine Morgoshia publicly claimed to personally finance Alt Info, reinforcing suspicions that Tsiala Morgoshia acted as an intermediary. This strategy of registering assets under third parties like Tsiala Morgoshia appears to be an attempt to circumvent international sanctions and sustain the organization's operations, which promote a pro-Russian narrative. In 2021, Alt Info leaders founded the far-right, militant political party known as the Conservative Movement, which quickly became a significant tool for spreading pro-Russian narratives and undermining Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations.

Alt Info served as the media and ideological backbone for a violent extremist organization that, between 2019 and 2024, evolved into a political party known as the "Conservative Movement/Alt Info." In 2024, the Conservative Movement/Alt Info attempted to participate in the parliamentary elections. However, the Georgian Ministry of Justice annulled the party's registration, citing procedural irregularities. This decision prevented the organization from running independently in the elections.

In response to the ban, Alt Info established cooperation with the pro-Russian political party "Alliance of Patriots." Utilizing the existing registration of the "Alliance of Patriots", Alt Info and its affiliated political structures participated in the 2024 parliamentary elections by forming a consolidated political list. As the media arm of the extremist organization, Alt Info played a key role in promoting narratives aligned with the interests

of the "Conservative Movement" and in consolidating its political activities. Despite the Ministry of Justice's decision to annul the party's registration, Alt Info effectively circumvented this ban by joining forces with the "Alliance of Patriots" and continued pursuing its political goals in the 2024 parliamentary elections.

Alt Info operates through the following channels:

- Alt-Info TV.
- Alt-Info internet television, serving as a complement to television activities in the online space.

Traditional viewership:

Alt Info recorded low viewership over the years, reaching a maximum of 2% audience share.

The online activity of Alt-Info was marked by significant social media engagement that often created an illusion of greater influence and popularity than was actually the case. Their coordinated and inauthentic actions in the digital space have been extensively studied by NGOs and experts, who identified manipulation techniques aimed at constructing an image of Alt-Info's strength.



After government-controlled media adopted anti-Western narratives that came to dominate Georgia's information environment, Alt Info and similar media organizations lost a significant portion of their audience. Despite its low traditional media viewership, Alt Info continues to play an important role in shaping and promoting conservative values through coordinated online activities.

Imedi TV is one of the largest and most popular television stations in Georgia, currently a private, pro-government media platform. Its turbulent history has led to the transformation of this private company into one of the main propaganda tools of the Georgian government. Date of establishment: March 15, 2003; founder: E-Media Holding, which included:

- Imedi television station
- Publishing companies
- Radio stations
- Television program production enterprises

Until 2008, Imedi TV was owned by Georgian billionaire Badri Patarkatsishvili, who was born in Tbilisi but amassed his fortune in Russia. In Russia, Patarkatsishvili owned the publishing house Kommersant, which published an influential business newspaper. He died in London in February 2008 from heart failure. Investigations and toxicology tests found no evidence of third-party involvement. Patarkatsishvili had close ties with Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky, also exiled in London and the target of multiple assassination attempts. Both were accused of fraud by Russian authorities in 2002, which forced Patarkatsishvili to leave Russia. He was a known opponent of Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili.

In 2007, as part of efforts to curb Patarkatsishvili's influence, Georgian authorities shut down Imedi TV. Shortly thereafter, the station was taken from the I-Media group and handed over to News Corp to silence opposition voices. Imedi TV remained under News Corp ownership until the Georgian Dream coalition defeated Saakashvili's United National Movement in the 2012 parliamentary elections. In October 2012, following the change of government, Imedi TV and its affiliated radio and publishing companies were returned to the Patarkatsishvili family.

Since the family's takeover, Imedi TV has shifted its political stance and currently operates as a private, pro-government media platform in Georgia.

The change of ownership in 2012 marked a significant shift in the political character of Imedi TV. After years of serving as a propaganda tool for the pro-government United National Movement, the station adopted a narrative that was extremely critical of Mikheil Saakashvili and his party, reflecting the current political tensions in Georgia.

Acquisition of Imedi TV by Irakli Rukhadze and its impact on the station's independence:

In 2021, businessman Irakli Rukhadze, who heads the investment holding Hunnewell Partners known for its ties to the Georgian government, became the owner of the television company Imedi. This takeover significantly influenced the character of the station, which, already pro-government, became even more biased.

Irakli Rukhadze is a controversial figure, frequently accused of fraud. Besides Imedi, he also owns Liberty Bank, the third-largest bank in Georgia. Liberty Bank has been accused of exploiting Georgian pensioners through predatory loans. A lawsuit regarding this matter, filed in court, has been stalled since February 2021 without any scheduled hearing date. There is widespread suspicion that the Georgian government has supported Rukhadze in securing favorable court dates and rulings in exchange for pro-government narratives broadcast by Imedi, the most-watched television channel in Georgia. Following Rukhadze's acquisition, Imedi TV, already known for its pro-government stance, further intensified its editorial line. This development has deepened concerns about the lack of media pluralism and independence in Georgia.

The role of Imedi in anti-Western propaganda in 2024:

In the first half of 2024, Imedi TV played a central role as the main tool of government propaganda in Georgia, especially amid the government's revival of a Russia-inspired foreign agent law and open criticism of the West. The channel became the primary platform for spreading narratives promoted by the ruling Georgian Dream party, not only

broadcasting official government messages but also actively producing content that reinforced and expanded anti-Western narratives.

As a result of these actions, Imedi - the largest television channel in Georgia - became in 2024 the main voice of anti-Western propaganda in the country. Its reach and popularity made it a key tool in shaping public opinion in line with pro-government and anti-Western interests.



Imedi operates through the following outlets:

- Imedi TV: Its flagship television channel.
- Radio Imedi: An affiliated radio station.



In 2024, leveraging its dominant position in the media market, Imedi became a pillar of government propaganda in Georgia while simultaneously amplifying anti-Western narratives. As the largest and most-watched

television channel in the country, Imedi TV plays a key role in shaping public opinion. Whereas anti-Western disinformation had previously been marginalized and confined to radical channels and news services, its presence on Imedi's programs has significant consequences for society.

Expansion of the reach of anti-Western narratives:

- **Unprecedented reach**

Broadcasting anti-Western content on TV Imedi-a channel perceived as a credible source of information-increases its accessibility and influence over a significant portion of the Georgian population.

- **Normalization of messages**

The frequent presence of these narratives in a popular medium leads to their gradual acceptance as part of the mainstream public debate.

Impact on society:

- **Effects of disinformation**

Constant exposure to biased, unverified, and deliberately manipulated information leads to increased skepticism toward Western values and institutions.

- **Weakening of the pro-Western movement**

Imedi TV's image as a trusted source of information reinforces anti-Western messages, causing lasting damage to the pro-Western movement in Georgia and undermining public support for integration with the West.

The presence of anti-Western narratives on TV Imedi not only expands the reach of disinformation but also changes the way it is perceived in society, making it more acceptable and credible.

PosTV is a private media station linked to the state, known for disseminating government propaganda and promoting consistent anti-Western narratives. Founded in 2017 as an online broadcasting platform, the station has from the outset played a key role in the ruling party's strategy to intensify anti-Western messaging in Georgia.

Founders and ownership structure:

- Shalva Ramishvili: A prominent government propagandist and vocal supporter of the ruling party. He owns 20% of the shares in PosTV. He has publicly admitted that his role is to conduct state propaganda, openly disregarding the issue of truth in his activities. He frequently reinforces government narratives through his programs broadcast on the station.
- Zaza Shatirishvili is a pro-government commentator and propagandist who also owns 20% of the shares in PosTV. From the outset, his activities have been linked to promoting pro-government content and supporting the ruling party's communication strategy.

PosTV plays a significant role in consolidating pro-government messages and presenting them as mainstream public opinion. The anti-Western narratives broadcast by the station are a key element of the ruling party's information strategy, aimed at shaping public opinion in a way that favors pro-government and pro-Russian policies. Established in 2017, PosTV is closely linked to the ruling elites of Georgia and operates as a propaganda tool, promoting narratives aligned with the interests of the ruling party. Key figures in its operation are the founders, Shalva Ramishvili and Zaza Shatirishvili, who openly admit their propaganda mission, making PosTV one of the main pillars of the anti-Western information campaign in Georgia.

PosTV gained significant popularity in 2019 when it transitioned from an online broadcasting platform to a television channel. By 2022, the station had become the media arm of the “People’s Power” movement, openly supporting its agenda and narratives. The PosTV team officially declared that their platform aligns with the vision and values of the “People’s Power” movement. “People’s Power” was formed after its members split from the ruling Georgian Dream party. According to members of the movement, the split was due to Georgian Dream’s unwillingness to openly criticize the alleged Western interference in Georgia’s politics.

Leading narratives include, among others:

- Defamation of the West, including accusing Western country ambassadors of attempting to drag Georgia into the war in Ukraine.
- Promoting pro-Russian conspiracy theories aimed at attracting the pro-Russian electorate.
- Support for pro-government narratives, while simultaneously criticizing Georgian Dream for a lack of openness in attacks against the West.

Victor Dolidze and Control over PosTV

Victor Dolidze, a key figure in the “People’s Power” movement, acquired 52% of the shares in PosTV, further strengthening the ties between the station and the movement.

The cooperation between PostTV and “People’s Power” has been clearly directed toward achieving shared political goals, including conducting the “dirty work” for the ruling party—such as running smear campaigns against the West and reaching out to the pro-Russian audience to consolidate its support.

PostTV, through its cooperation with the “People’s Power” movement, has become a key tool in promoting pro-Russian narratives and anti-Western propaganda in Georgia. The station, with the majority of its shares owned by Victor Dolidze, functions as the media extension of the movement, while simultaneously supporting the government’s agenda and conducting campaigns directed against the West. This activity significantly impacts Georgia’s media and political landscape, strengthening pro-Russian sentiments within society.

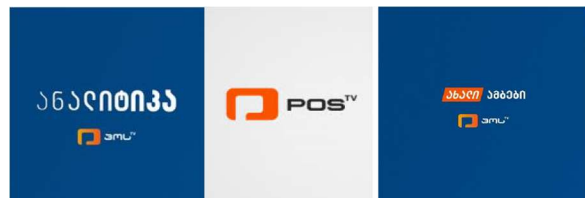
One of the most important elements of PostTV’s schedule is an analytical program that stands out for its openly pro-government and anti-Western character. The program features three declared propagandists:

- **Bacho Odisharia:** Known for regularly supporting pro-government narratives, he often criticizes the West and promotes pro-Russian conspiracy theories.
- **Shalva Ramishvili:** One of the most influential propagandists in Georgia, he owns 20% of the shares in PostTV, which further strengthens his influence over the direction of the content broadcast by the station.
- **Guri Sultanishvili:** Actively supports pro-government messages and criticizes the West. He co-creates content aimed at strengthening anti-Western and pro-Russian narratives in Georgia.

The content presented in the program often relies on manipulations, unverified information, and exaggerations, which further support the anti-Western agenda. The analytical program, hosted by the trio of declared propagandists, plays a key role in PostTV’s strategy by reinforcing anti-Western and pro-Russian narratives. Thanks to their involvement, PostTV consolidates its position as a propaganda tool within the Georgian media landscape.



PostTV, allied with the Georgian government, plays an active role in discrediting campaigns targeting journalists, civil society groups, and political opponents. Its programs and activities include spreading anti-Western rhetoric, disinformation, and fear-inducing content, especially in the context of the war. PostTV operates both as a television station and a news agency but also maintains an active presence on social media, managing popular Facebook pages such as:



- PostTVtv Analytics.
- PostTVtv News.

Although PostTV has never achieved significant results in television viewership ratings, its activities on social media and targeted campaigns have a substantial impact on shaping public opinion.



Leadership and ideology

Zurab Makharadze – appointed chairman of the Conservative Movement at its inception. He openly advocated for the normalization of relations with Russia, which included organizing frequent visits by movement members to Russia. These visits aimed to meet with high-ranking politicians and experts to strengthen cooperation and pro-Russian narratives.

Konstantine Morgoshia is a prominent leader of the Conservative Movement and Alt Info, known for maintaining close ties with Russia and planning business ventures there. He has been crucial in financing both Alt Info and the Conservative Movement, which has been essential for their operations.

The Conservative Movement actively worked to weaken pro-Western sentiments in Georgia by promoting pro-Russian ideas and narratives. Through contacts with Russian politicians and businessmen, the group reinforced pro-Russian attitudes within Georgian society. Regular visits to Russia served to build the movement's image as a "bridge" between Georgia and Russia. These Russian connections enabled the acquisition of funds that were crucial for conducting political and propaganda campaigns. Founded by leaders of Alt Info, the Conservative Movement became an important player in Georgia's political scene, leveraging its ties with Russia to undermine Georgia's integration with the West. The actions of the movement's leaders, such as Zurab Makharadze and Konstantine Morgoshia, reveal a deliberate strategy aimed at strengthening pro-Russian sentiments and destabilizing the country's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

The Conservative Movement undertook efforts to expand its influence across Georgia by opening regional offices in various cities. This expansion beyond the capital aimed to reach communities in regions more susceptible to pro-Russian narratives, particularly in areas where nostalgia for the Soviet era is more pronounced. Establishing offices in these regions enabled more effective dissemination of pro-Russian messages and increased the movement's presence in less urbanized areas. However, the Conservative Movement's expansion faced strong social opposition in many Georgian cities. Residents

organized demonstrations against the opening of these offices, expressing their dissatisfaction with the movement's activities and its pro-Russian narratives. In some cases, protests were intense enough to force the Conservative Movement to close regional offices. While opening regional offices allowed the Conservative Movement to more effectively reach communities vulnerable to pro-Russian narratives, the expansion encountered significant social resistance. The protests in numerous cities and the closure of offices under pressure from local residents demonstrate that the movement's activities are highly controversial and not accepted by all social groups in Georgia.

The Conservative Movement, ideologically allied with the ruling party, played a key role in promoting pro-Russian narratives and employing brutal tactics that reinforced the Georgian government's policies. These actions significantly contributed to Georgia's departure from the Euro-Atlantic path. The violent clashes during the Equality Parade on July 5, 2021, revealed strong links between pro-Russian groups such as the Conservative Movement and the ruling party. The lack of consistent action against the perpetrators, along with ideological support from Alt Info and other pro-Russian organizations, raises concerns about the instrumentalization of radical movements to suppress opposition and advance pro-Russian interests in Georgia. On the day of the March of Dignity, brutal clashes occurred, resulting in:

- 19 people injured, including participants and journalists.
- One journalist died as a result of injuries sustained.

The streets of Tbilisi were blocked by crowds fueled by ideological and informational support from Alt Info and the Conservative Movement. Non-governmental and international organizations criticized the Georgian government for its failure to protect march participants and for its inability to identify and punish the perpetrators of violence. Suspicions suggest that the authorities deliberately used radical groups, such as the Conservative Movement, to carry out the "dirty work" against political opponents and pro-Western circles.

Before the 2024 parliamentary elections, the Conservative Movement formed an alliance with the Alliance of Patriots, emphasizing shared ideological goals and aligned values. However, seven months prior to the elections, the Anti-Corruption Bureau launched an investigation into the legality of the registration of both groups, which resulted in the annulment of their registrations by the Public Registry¹. The decision to cancel their registrations sparked confusion and outrage among the parties' leaders and supporters. Numerous videos began circulating on social media showing:

- Burning of Georgian Dream flags, during which slogans such as "No to the feudal regime of Dream!" were chanted.
- Expressions of disappointment with the ruling party, which, according to many supporters, owed its political position to the earlier support of the conservatives.

Konstantine Morgoshia, one of the leaders of the Conservative Movement, accused Georgian Dream of attempting to appropriate conservative ideology in order to present it as part of its own political agenda. He described this as a political war against the Conservative Movement aimed at marginalizing its influence and reducing competition on the political scene. The controversy surrounding the deregistration of the Conservative Movement and the Alliance of Patriots, along with tensions with Georgian Dream, highlights deep divisions among conservative groups in Georgia. The decision to annul their registrations was met with sharp criticism and became a flashpoint in relations between the ruling party and conservative factions, undermining the unity and stability of pro-Russian narratives in the country.

Despite previous setbacks, the alliance with the Alliance of Patriots enabled the Conservative Movement to participate in the 2024 parliamentary elections. However, the group failed to surpass the electoral threshold, resulting in a defeat. Following the elections and the failure of marginal pro-Russian groups, reports emerged about the closure of TV Alt Info and its associated political group. Nevertheless, as of the time this report was prepared, no official actions or decisions have been taken to confirm the cessation of activities of Alt Info and the Conservative Movement.

The 2024 parliamentary elections marked a turning point for pro-Russian groups in Georgia, such as the Conservative Movement and Alt Info. Electoral defeat, financial difficulties, and sanctions imposed by the United States effectively weakened their operational capacity. Although there are reports about the cessation of these organizations' activities, the lack of official confirmations leaves some uncertainty regarding their ultimate fate.

g) Non-governmental organizations and other entities influencing public opinion

The Primakov Center *Грузино-Российский общественный центр им. Е.М. Примакова*); The Primakov Center was registered by the Gorchakov Foundation and the Georgian Institute of International Relations about a year after Georgian Dream came to power in Georgia.

First leadership:

The organization was initially led by Zaal Abashidze. Among the founders were individuals holding Georgian citizenship, as well as two citizens of the Russian Federation: Natalia Burlinova and Maria Liantseva. Since 2022, the Center has been led by Dimitri Lortkipanidze, and there are other citizens of the Russian Federation there, such as Daria Lobanova and Anastasia Kotova.

The Primakov Center has strong ties with Russian institutions and citizens, both in the initial phase of its activity and in the current leadership composition. Changes in the structure and the addition of new citizens of the Russian Federation as founders indicate an increase in Russian involvement in the functioning and control of the organization.

The Primakov Center was led by Zaal Abashidze from its founding until December 2015. He was succeeded by Bezhan Churcidze, who served as director from December 2015 to June 2016. Churcidze was a four-term member of parliament and director of the Georgian Institute of International Relations, one of the founding organizations of the Center.

Following Churcidze, Uruzmag Karkusow became director from June 2016 to March 2018. Karkusow's career includes serving as Deputy Minister of Economy during the "National Movement" government (2007–2010) and membership in the Georgian Dream party. Since March 2018, the Center has been directed by Dimitri Lortkipanidze, a former member of the United Democrats party. From its inception, the Primakov Center has been managed by individuals with extensive political experience involving cooperation with both the "National Movement" and "Georgian Dream" parties. The leadership changes reflect a broad political spectrum among the leaders involved, highlighting the organization's significance in Georgia's political and social landscape.



Activities of the Gorczakow Foundation and its connections with the Primakov Center

The Gorczakow Foundation was established in 2010 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation by decree of then-President Dmitry Medvedev. The main goal of the Foundation is to promote Russian "soft power" on the international stage. These activities (ostensibly) aim to build a positive image of Russia and strengthen Russian influence through cultural, educational, and social initiatives. The Foundation began operations in 2013 in Kyiv, but after two years-in 2015-its activities were shut down due

to the deterioration of Ukrainian-Russian relations (the illegal annexation of Crimea and Russia's destabilization of Donbas). The "Gorczakow Foundation" played a key role in establishing the "Primakov Center" in Georgia. As one of the founders of the Center, the Foundation supports its activities aimed at strengthening pro-Russian narratives in the region. One of the original co-founders of the "Primakov Center" was Natalya Burlinova,



who lives in Russia and serves as president of the NGO "Creative Diplomacy." The FBI is seeking Burlinova for conducting illegal activities on U.S. territory. According to the FBI, Burlinova, together with Russian intelligence officers, attempted to recruit U.S. citizens to participate in an event organized in Moscow.

Maria Liantseva, the second co-founder of the Primakov Center, is a specialist in public diplomacy. She worked as an editor for the website of the Gorczakow Foundation in Russia and periodically participated in conferences organized by the "Center for Political Studies".

The Primakov Center operates in three main areas, which are focused on strengthening pro-Russian narratives and influence in Georgia.

The activities of the Center include:

- **Promoting the Russian language in Georgia:** The Center regularly organizes Russian language courses, mainly targeting young people. On October 1, 2024, enrollment was announced for another free Russian language course intended for young people aged 17 to 35.
- **Strengthening and Supporting the Pro-Russian Expert Community:** The Center carries out activities aimed at supporting experts and specialists who promote pro-Russian views in Georgia. It organizes conferences and academic events that

bring together pro-Russian experts and activists. The support also includes funding influence operations.

- **Identifying and engaging pro-Russian youth:** The Center actively seeks out young people with pro-Russian views and involves them in its activities. Young people are attracted by offers to participate in international conferences and internships at institutions managed by Russian security services.
- **Internships in Moscow as part of the InteRussia program:** in July 2024, an announcement regarding the InteRussia program appeared on the Center's Facebook page. The organizers were: the Gorchakov Foundation, Rossotrudnichestvo, and the Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations. The program offered an internship in international relations, which took place in Moscow. The Center regularly invites young people to various educational and training events aimed at promoting pro-Russian "values" and increasing Russian influence in the region.

In 2024, the "Primakov Center" Facebook page shared information about another event organized by the Gorchakov Foundation, in which experts from Georgia were invited to the conference "Kavkazsky Dialog (Caucasian Dialogue) – 2024." The scientific chair of the conference was the well-known Russian expert (analyst) Dmitri Trenin, who is associated with Russian special services. The event took place in Vladikavkaz, the capital of North Ossetia.



Communication strategy and activities of the “Primakov Center”

The social media channels of the “Primakov Center” employ a communication strategy that closely follows the methodology of the Russian “Sputnik” to gain favor and social support in Georgia.

The Center uses publications aimed at building positive emotions among society. For example, on their social media pages, the following regularly appear:

- Information about the successes of Georgian athletes, for example during the Olympic Games.
- Materials about outstanding figures in Georgian culture and art.
- Religious holiday greetings that strengthen the sense of community.
- Memories of famous Georgian athletes from the past, which build sentiment and a sense of national pride.

Dimitri Lortkipanidze, director of the “Primakov Center,” actively promotes pro-Russian narratives in the Georgian media space, emphasizing the notion that Moscow is the key to Georgia’s territorial integrity. Lortkipanidze presents Russia as the only possible solution for Georgia to regain full territorial integrity.

Euro-Atlantic integration as a threat: He claims that Georgia's accession to Euro-Atlantic structures poses a serious threat to its cultural and religious identity.

NATO membership as a risk of war: He emphasizes that integration with NATO means a new war with Russia, which raises concerns in society.

Lortkipanidze also plays a significant role in Russian media outlets that fuel anti-Western sentiments. Through Lortkipanidze's statements, they promote Kremlin policy in Georgia and propagate pro-Russian narratives—using his position and message to strengthen negative attitudes toward the West in Georgian society. The “Primakov Center” effectively employs communication strategies borrowed from Russian propaganda institutions to build pro-Russian sentiment in Georgia. The Center's director, Dimitri Lortkipanidze, is a key figure whose actions reinforce anti-Western narratives and promote Kremlin policy, both in local Georgian media and on the international stage.

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The Primakov Center operates in correlation with the information activities of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR). There is a clear connection between the Center's information campaigns and the narratives imposed from the Kremlin, as reflected in the statements of Sergei Naryshkin. The evolution of Russian disinformation efforts – including accusations of US interference in destabilizing Georgia – has progressed over recent months. Russia's disinformation campaign regarding the situation in Georgia is part of a broader strategy to maintain Russian influence in the Caucasus, particularly in response to the pro-Western aspirations of a segment of Georgian society. Rising

tensions and protests in Georgia are unfolding against the backdrop of the disinformation campaign conducted by the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR). According to Russian narratives, the United States is allegedly carrying out a destabilization campaign aimed at overthrowing the ruling Georgian Dream party. Such accusations are part of a large-scale disinformation operation aimed at presenting Western countries, especially the United States, as manipulators of Georgia's internal affairs. The goal of these activities is to weaken Georgia's relations with the West and to encourage the radicalization of attitudes among selected social groups in Georgia, particularly those with anti-Western leanings. The narrative regarding US interference in Georgian elections began to take shape in early spring 2024, and since June, the SVR has systematically escalated its "claims," primarily intended to undermine trust in Georgia's democratic electoral process in the period leading up to the elections.

The "Color Revolution" scenario: The SVR first accused the Joe Biden administration of preparing a propaganda campaign aimed at absolving Russia of blame for Georgia's internal problems. According to this narrative, the West was supposedly preparing a "Hollywood-style" scenario. The goal of this narrative was to stoke fears of a possible "color revolution"—a term used in Russian propaganda to describe protests by societies against pro-Russian regimes. In this way, the SVR sought to convince the public that political unrest and social polarization in Georgia are the result of foreign interference, rather than evidence of genuine social discontent.

Preparations for social unrest: In August, the SVR's narrative gained momentum, focusing on the image of the pro-Western opposition in Georgia. The campaign to discredit the pro-Western opposition included narratives referring to the then-unknown results of the Georgian elections. These claims suggested that, despite the alleged influence operation carried out by the West, the opposition was weak and divided, which would ensure a decisive victory for the Georgian Dream party. According to the SVR's narrative at the time, such an outcome was supposed to trigger a process of destabilization in Georgia orchestrated by Western intelligence agencies, including supposed plans to organize mass post-election protests. In this version, the United

States would allegedly support the opposition and NGOs gathering evidence of what the SVR deemed “election fraud,” and then arrange clashes with law enforcement. In this way, the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service created false justifications and disinformation narratives for the foreseeable social protests that broke out after the elections.

Strengthening the narrative: Sergei Naryshkin, the head of Russian foreign intelligence, reinforced this message by claiming that Russia is striving to prevent a “color revolution” in Georgia. In an interview with the state news agency TASS, Naryshkin accused not only Western intelligence services but also the US State Department of conducting “hostile actions” in Georgia, allegedly aimed at overthrowing the government. From this perspective, Russia was narratively positioned as the supposed guarantor of stability and peace in Georgia.

Discrediting the OSCE: the next stage of the disinformation campaign involved accusations against the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which, according to the SVR, was allegedly being used by the West as a tool for destabilization. The Russians anticipated that the process of Russian interference in Georgian elections would carry a high risk of exposure; to preemptively discredit any potential findings, the SVR claimed that ODIHR observers were preparing a report in advance that would question the fairness of the elections in Georgia. This, according to the Russian narrative, was intended to give the opposition a tool to challenge the results and incite protests. Such attacks are aimed at discrediting the OSCE as an observer and at portraying the organization as an instrument of Western interference. This action also served to create an informational backdrop for destabilizing the internal situation in Georgia and undermining the electoral process.

The “Eurasia Institute” has operated as an open supporter of Russia in Georgia since 2009, which is directly after the Russian aggression of August 2008. According to information from public records, the organization was formally registered in 2009, and since that time, Gulbaat Rtskhiladze has remained its chairman.

According to research conducted in Georgia, one of the partners of the “Eurasia Institute” is the Russian organization “Lev Gumilev Center,” established in 2011 by the “Eurasia Center” in Moscow. This organization promotes the ideology of “Eurasianism,” presenting it as a method for resolving ethnic conflicts. Since its founding, the “Eurasia Institute” has actively implemented Russian “soft power” policies in Georgia. The main objectives of this organization are information activities targeting Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic integration and participation in anti-Turkish campaigns. As a result, both the organization itself and its chairman have been included in research reports concerning hate speech in Georgia.



Gulbaat Rtskhiladze’s father, Viktor Rtskhiladze, was once a dissident and was considered a close associate of the first president of independent Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia. The launch of an anti-Turkish campaign in Georgia is viewed as part of a Russian information operation aimed at creating a new image of an enemy in Georgian society and diverting attention from crimes committed by Russia against Georgia. In this narrative, Turkey is portrayed as an occupier, which finds justification in the historical context.

Gulbaat Rtskhiladze actively collaborates with media outlets that support pro-Russian policies in Georgia, including the online news agency “Georgia and the World” (www.geworld.ge). He is also regularly featured on the websites and in materials published by the Russian media outlet “Sputnik.”

Rtskhiladze frequently participates in programs broadcast by Georgian media outlets with an anti-Western orientation. An example is his appearance on a program by the television company “Obiektivi” in 2023. The topic of discussion during this program was: “Restoring relations between Russia and Georgia is inevitable” (screenshot).

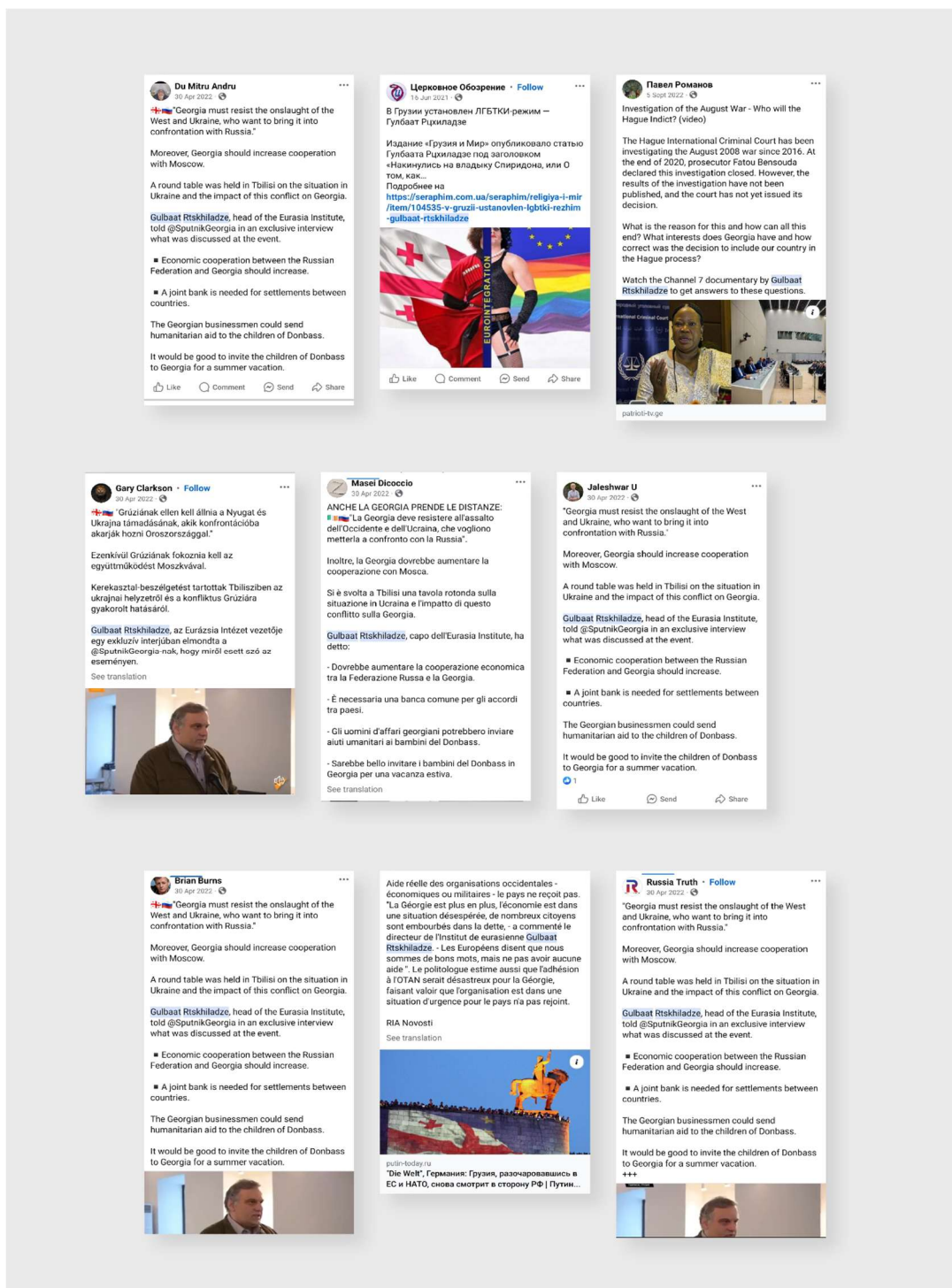


During the aforementioned broadcast, Gulbaat Rtskhiladze reiterated his main messages, stating that Georgia should abandon rhetoric related to joining NATO. In the same year and month, Rtskhiladze appeared again on a program by the same channel, this time addressing the topic of “biological security.” During this discussion, he attacked the so-called “Lugar Laboratory,” claiming that Georgia should establish state control over it.

The Lugar Laboratory has for years been at the center of Russian propaganda both in Georgia and in Russia. This propaganda often makes false accusations, alleging that the ultra-modern laboratory built by the United States in Tbilisi is being used to produce biological weapons and deliberately spread dangerous insects for subversive purposes.

For clarification: construction of the “Lugar Center” began in 2004 under a framework agreement signed between the US and Georgian governments in 1997 and an additional agreement concluded in 2002 between the US Department of Defense and the Georgian Ministry of Defense. This agreement concerned cooperation in preventing the spread of technology, pathogens, and expertise related to the development of biological weapons.

The activities of Gulbaat Rtskhiladze and his organization, including the conferences they organize, are actively supported by unattributed information campaigns on Facebook, carried out in various national languages.



Gulbaat Rtskhiladze and his organization are active organizers of the Russian “Immortal Regiment” campaign in Georgia. For example, on May 9, 2019, Rtskhiladze and his colleagues participated in an “Immortal Regiment” rally held to commemorate the end of World War II (in Georgia, this date carries particular historical significance). In this way,

Rtskhiladze took part in a Russian propaganda event utilizing so-called soft power in Georgia (the Russian name for the campaign: “Бессмертный полк” / “Bessmertny Polk”).

During this march, participants traditionally carry photographs of their relatives who died in the war. The rally is organized in many post-Soviet countries and aims to strengthen Russian influence in the region by referencing a shared history. The event has also been attended by the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, which further underscores the campaign’s importance in Russian propaganda strategy.



In addition to organizing pro-Russian events, Gulbaat Rtskhiladze is actively involved in defending the rights of Russian citizens living in Georgia. An example is an incident that took place on May 26, 2019, during Georgia’s Independence Day. As part of the international folklore festival “Golden Dolphin,” the Russian delegation, together with representatives from other countries, marched through the streets of Batumi holding the Russian flag. This situation caused controversy and led to the dismissal of some individuals involved in the event.

A significant part of Georgian society strongly opposed the participation of the Russian delegation in the festival. In response, Rtskhiladze’s organization issued a statement and

took action to support the Russian community in Georgia. Rtskhiladze called on ethnic Russians living in the country to “unite in order to jointly defend their rights” and pledged organizational support to achieve this goal. These actions fit into the broader context of promoting Russian interests in Georgia.

According to civil.ge, in April 2024, the Russian National Institute for the Development of Communications Research (NIIRK), managed by former foreign intelligence and FSB employees, organized a discussion in Tbilisi titled “Traditional Values as a Unifying Factor for Countries and Peoples.” Information about the event’s agenda was published by NIIRK, but details regarding the meeting location remain unknown. The event was hosted by two organizations linked to the Kremlin and active in Georgia: the “Eurasia Institute” led by Gulbaat Rtskhiladze, and the SIKHA Foundation (which we will discuss in more detail below).

Among the speakers at the Tbilisi meeting were:

- Valentina Komleva – Deputy Director of NIIRK,
- Yevgeny Minchenko – President of the Russian Public Relations Association,
- Alexander Yakovlev – Leading Researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences,
- Yevgenia Goryushina – Researcher at the Center for Complex European and International Studies.

About a month after the aforementioned event, Gulbaat Rtskhiladze organized another meeting in Tbilisi, this time under the slogan: “The Revival of Georgia within the Russian Empire.” During the discussion, participants analyzed the historical ties between Georgia and the Russian Empire, stating, among other things, that “Georgia gained more than it lost by joining Russia.” This meeting fit into the narrative promoting a pro-Russian interpretation of Georgia’s history and emphasizing the benefits of close relations with Russia.



Georgian March

The xenophobic group "Georgian March" was founded in 2017. Its members are known for extreme aggression, spreading hate speech, inciting violence, and promoting anti-Western rhetoric. The group's first demonstrations and protests took place in the summer of 2017 and were initially directed against the alleged immoral actions of an Iranian citizen toward minors. Soon, the group also began protesting against the presence of foreigners in Georgia, demanding stricter immigration policies. Their posts and slogans frequently featured phrases such as "Georgia for Georgians".

"Georgian March" has organized numerous violent protests, and its members have regularly attacked individuals with differing political views or sexual orientations. Key figures in the movement are Sandro Bregadze and Gia Korkotashvili.

It is important to note that Sandro Bregadze has ties to the ruling Georgian Dream party. From 2014 to 2016, he served as Deputy Minister for Diaspora Issues, and previously as Deputy Minister for Refugees and Resettlement. Moreover, Bregadze is listed as a donor to the party.

The actions of “Georgian March” have been widely criticized both domestically and internationally due to their extreme positions and the promotion of intolerance toward minorities and foreigners.

There is a strong likelihood that Georgian March was a project of the ruling party, Georgian Dream, used as a tool to divert attention from sensitive issues or to overshadow specific political problems. By hiding behind the facade of defending traditional values and the Georgian Orthodox Church, Georgian March has attracted international attention.

In the 2019 report by Estonian foreign intelligence, attention was drawn to the increasing propaganda of “traditional” values in Georgia, highlighting the significant role of Georgian March in this phenomenon. According to the report, the group’s main objective is to hinder Georgia’s integration with Euro-Atlantic structures. The report also emphasized the movement’s links to key Russian figures.

Over time, the ultranationalist Georgian March movement expanded its ambitions, transforming into a political party in 2020. Sandro Bregadze was chosen as its chairman, and the party’s ideology was based on the famous quote by Georgian poet and writer Ilia Chavchavadze: “Homeland, Language, Faith”. Notably, the position of General Secretary of the party was taken by Irakli Shikashvili, a former member of Georgian Dream. This choice further highlighted the ideological and personal links between Georgian March and Georgian Dream.

Such connections and activities suggest that the movement is being strategically used by the ruling party to influence society and manipulate public opinion on key political issues.

During the campaign leading up to the 2024 parliamentary elections, the Georgian Dream party repeatedly invoked the famous quote by Ilia Chavchavadze, which clearly mirrored the rhetoric used by Georgian March. Like the ruling party, Georgian March also identified the United National Movement as its main opponent, accusing it of planning a revolution in Georgia.

In the 2020 parliamentary elections, Georgian March failed to pass the electoral threshold, which led to protests by its members. The group accused Georgian Dream of sabotaging its campaign and even attempted to picket the ruling party's headquarters. Nevertheless, the protests quickly died down, and the elections ended in failure for Georgian March as a political force².

After this defeat, there were numerous mutual accusations between Georgian March and other anti-Western groups, such as Alt-info, with each blaming the other for the electoral failure. As a result of these events, Georgian March did not participate in the 2024 parliamentary elections, withdrawing from nationwide political competition.

2. Identification and analysis of selected techniques and tactics of manipulation, linguistic mechanisms of persuasion, and the actions and psychological effects

Russia operates in Georgia on multiple levels, using media manipulation, pressure on religious institutions, support for extremist groups, and the spread of fear and disinformation. These actions are aimed at weakening the country's pro-Western aspirations, destabilizing society, and keeping Georgia within the sphere of Russian influence.

The techniques and tactics of psychological operations in Georgia take on a somewhat different context due to the high involvement of the government and pro-Russian circles. Many actions that can be classified as favoring Russia have their roots in domestic dynamics rather than being solely the result of external pressure.

At this logical level, the engagement of TTP (Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures) PSYOPS (psychological operations) primarily serves to maintain and strengthen anti-

Western and pro-Russian meta-narratives that exist not only as a result of external influence operations but also due to the activities of domestic actors.

Russia, through skillful influence management, has created vulnerabilities within Georgian psychology that are convenient to exploit and control.

Polarization and disinformation in the media

Disinformation in the media exploits deep social and cultural divisions within Georgia. Russia directs its messaging both at conservative religious circles and at young, frustrated Georgians who lack opportunities, aiming to reinforce feelings of alienation from the West.

Utilization of religious institutions

The Church as a Tool to Strengthen Pro-Russian Cultural Identity in Georgia: The church is used as a tool to reinforce pro-Russian cultural identity in Georgia. Thanks to its high level of social trust, religious narratives reach a broad audience, shaping anti-Western opinions within conservative communities.

Examples of Church Propaganda:

- Metropolitan Ioane of Kutaisi: in a 2014 article titled “Georgia’s Path”, published in the newspaper *Sama Saunje*, Metropolitan Ioane praised the historical period of Georgian-Russian cooperation, claiming it brought “stability and development”.
- Archbishop Spyridon: in 2023, Archbishop Spyridon publicly stated that Putin’s policy toward Georgia is “in accordance with the will of God”. This statement was widely publicized in pro-Russian campaigns.
- 2024 Anti-LGBTQ+ Campaign: in 2024, the Georgian Orthodox Church organized a campaign against the legalization of LGBTQ+ rights, which was partially funded by the Russian Orthodox Church.

During this campaign, clergy promoted false narratives claiming that the adoption of Western values leads to “moral decline”.

Support for extremist and pseudopatriotic movements

Extremist movements are used by Russia to sow chaos, undermine faith in democratic institutions, and spread hatred toward minorities. These groups also serve as a tool for diverting attention away from Russia’s occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Georgian March: In 2017, this group organized protests against the alleged excessive presence of foreigners in Georgia. The slogan “Georgia for Georgians” was used to spread hatred toward migrants and ethnic minorities. In 2021, members of Georgian March attacked participants of the Equality March, assaulting journalists and activists. The Georgian authorities took no action against the perpetrators.

Conservative movement / Alt-Info: In 2024, Alt-Info attempted to enter parliament with a pro-Russian electoral list, using anti-Western rhetoric. Funding came from Russian organizations linked to the FSB, as revealed by international investigations.

Manipulation in political narratives: Russia exploits internal political narratives to create the illusion that Georgia faces a choice: either war with Russia (under pressure from the West) or peace and “neutrality” (supported by Russia).

“Neutrality” as Georgia’s choice: Statements by Georgian Dream politicians, such as Irakli Kobakhidze, suggest that Georgia should avoid conflicts with Russia by abandoning integration with NATO. This narrative has been repeated in pro-government media as a “reasonable policy of peace”.

Conspiracy theories about the West: In 2022, pro-Russian media accused the US embassy of funding the opposition and non-governmental organizations in order to orchestrate a “color revolution” in Georgia.

Supporting pro-russian influence centers: Russia is building a network of influence centers intended to maintain its sway in Georgia. By supporting young experts and academics, the Kremlin is cultivating a pro-Russian “elite” capable of shaping the country’s policy.

Primakov Center: In 2024, the center organized the “Caucasian Dialogue – 2024” conference in Vladikavkaz, during which narratives about the “historical benefits of Georgia’s inclusion in the Russian Empire” were promoted. The center also offers young people free Russian language courses and internships in Moscow as part of programs supported by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Eurasia Institute: Regularly publishes in pro-Russian media outlets such as Sputnik, where it promotes conspiracy theories about the American Luger Laboratory in Tbilisi, claiming it is allegedly a center for the production of biological weapons.

Limiting Western Influence: Attacks on civil society are intended to weaken independent institutions and create conditions for the promotion of pro-Russian narratives without resistance from pro-democracy organizations. A prime example is the “foreign agent” law: in 2024, Georgian Dream introduced a law on the “transparency of foreign influence”, modeled after Russian legislation. This law requires non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that receive foreign funding to register as “agents of influence.” At the same time, pro-government organizations and media outlets (such as Imedi) regularly smear NGOs, accusing them of “serving foreign interests”.

Supporting Violence and Intimidation – March for Dignity in 2021

Members of Alt-Info and Georgian March violently attacked LGBTQ+ activists, journalists, and participants of the march, while the police remained passive. Pro-Russian media portrayed the event as a “Western provocation”. In 2024, independent journalists reported on harassment campaigns conducted by pro-Russian groups on social media. Alt-Info published videos accusing journalists of “national betrayal”. The use of both physical and psychological violence is intended to instill fear among political opponents

and to marginalize pro-democracy movements. In such an environment, psychological operations techniques and tactics are largely based on reinforcing and maintaining already established effects.

Linguistic Mechanisms of Persuasion and Their Impact on Georgia

Linguistic mechanisms of persuasion are rhetorical and communicative tools used to shape public opinion, influence decisions, and evoke specific emotions in audiences. In the context of anti-Western narratives in Georgia, these mechanisms are employed to build distrust toward the West, polarize society, strengthen pro-Russian sympathies, and delegitimize the actions of the opposition and pro-democracy organizations. Below is a detailed analysis of the techniques used and their impact on Georgian society.

Emotional Manipulation

Emotional manipulation exploits people's natural tendency to respond to emotional stimuli more quickly than to logical arguments. By leveraging fear, anger, a sense of threat, or even hope, it is possible to steer public opinion in a rapid and effective manner. Through monitoring the Georgian information environment, we have identified a range of persuasive mechanisms specifically designed to inspire and sustain emotions within targeted groups – especially in the context of anti-Western narratives.

Emotional manipulation amplifies fears of change and external interference, thereby weakening support for pro-Western reforms. Society becomes more inclined to support authoritarian political forces that promise protection against perceived threats.

Fear: Fear is one of the most powerful propaganda tools used in Georgia. This mechanism is employed by pro-Russian political parties, media outlets, and other actors to manipulate public opinion, heighten social uncertainty, and hinder the country's integration with the West.

- **The “Second War Front” narrative:** this narrative portrays the West as a force seeking to destabilize the region by dragging Georgia into a war with Russia.

An example is the statement by Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, who claimed that “the European Union is one of the victims of the global war party”, whose goal is to pull Georgia into an armed conflict. This chosen example was intended to evoke fear of military conflict and to present the Georgian Dream government as the sole guarantor of stability.

Pro-Russian narratives frequently emphasize the risk of Georgia being drawn into an armed conflict as part of the “global strategy of the West”. The fear of war is exploited to portray integration with NATO or support for Ukraine as threats to the country’s security.

- **Statements by Politicians of the Ruling Georgian Dream Party:** Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze and other government representatives have claimed that “the West is seeking to open a second war front in Georgia”. This narrative has been reinforced by pro-government media outlets such as Imedi TV and PostTV.
- **Information Operations Also Include Manipulation of Statements:** For example, excerpts from the remarks of Ukrainian advisor Oleksiy Danilov, in which he suggested the possibility of Georgia regaining its occupied territories, were taken out of context and presented as evidence that the West wants to use Georgia as a battlefield.

The purpose of this mechanism is to evoke fear of war, which in turn strengthens support for the government’s so-called “neutrality” policy and weakens backing for NATO integration. As a result, society comes to perceive cooperation with the West as a potential source of destabilization.

- **Fear of “collapse of national values”:** Pro-Russian narratives exploit fears about the loss of traditional cultural, religious, and family values to portray the West as a destructive force imposing a “foreign” ideology on Georgia. The LGBTQ+ community is depicted as a tool of “Western propaganda” that threatens “traditional Georgian values.” For example, media campaigns against the Equality March in Tbilisi saw pro-Russian outlets suggesting that the West aims to “destroy

the family.” Claims are made that the West is “attacking Christianity” by promoting secularism and LGBTQ+ rights. Statements by clergy of the Georgian Orthodox Church have emphasized that religion is under threat from “immorality imported from the West.” This approach is designed to foster hostility toward pro-Western social movements and liberal reforms, while mobilizing conservative social groups around pro-Russian narratives.

- **Fear of “political destabilization”:** Pro-Russian narratives emphasize the risk of internal chaos, revolution, and destabilization as a result of actions by the opposition, non-governmental organizations, and civil society groups supported by the West. The Georgian Dream government and pro-Russian media accuse NGOs and opposition parties of planning a “color revolution” inspired by the West. They claim that such a scenario would lead to chaos, similar to the events in Ukraine in 2014. They further assert that organizations funded from abroad are a “threat to state stability”, justifying the introduction of restrictive regulations targeting NGOs. Society is discouraged from supporting pro-democracy organizations and the opposition, while the government strengthens its power by presenting itself as the only force guaranteeing stability.
- **Fear of international isolation:** Pro-Russian narratives exploit fears that Georgia could be rejected by the West, emphasizing that the West “disregards” Georgia in the integration process. The refusal to grant Georgia candidate status to the EU in 2022 was portrayed as a “punishment” for Georgia’s independent policy. In this way, the message that the West cannot be trusted was reinforced. Media narratives suggested that other countries were given preferential treatment despite “not meeting the criteria that Georgia fulfills”. An assessment of the information environment in this context has shown that by sustaining fear through persuasion, anti-Western sentiments in society are amplified and support for European integration policies is diminished.

- **Fear of Russia as an “invincible enemy”:** Pro-Russian narratives emphasize Russia’s power as an opponent that cannot be defeated, reinforcing the message that confrontation with Moscow must be avoided. Pro-Russian politicians argue that Georgia should “accept geopolitical realities” and adjust to Russia’s dominance in order to avoid economic or military reprisals. Pro-Russian media often recall the 2008 war, suggesting that confrontation with Russia always ends in disaster. Such actions are part of a broader persuasion strategy that promotes the idea of “Russia’s inevitable dominance,” fostering attitudes of resignation and submission toward Russia, and rejecting any policy of resistance or confrontation with Moscow as “suicidal”.
- **Anger and outrage:** Anger and outrage are emotions that can be effectively employed in linguistic persuasion as tools for mobilizing people, deepening social divisions, and directing attention toward specific political or ideological goals. These emotions have a unique ability to capture audiences’ attention and motivate them to act, often without deeper reflection. In Georgia, pro-Russian narratives consistently make use of anger and outrage to fuel conflicts, mobilize conservative social groups, and weaken the country’s pro-Western aspirations.
- **Narratives of western moral degradation:** The spread of manipulated information about the “Sexual Jesus-Gay” exhibition in the European Parliament, presented as evidence of the “moral corruption” of the West. This selected example was intended to provoke anger toward the West and its values, mobilizing conservative circles around pro-Russian ideologies.

Mechanisms for harnessing anger and outrage in persuasion

The West as a “moral threat”: Anger is directed at specific individuals, social groups, or institutions that are portrayed as responsible for existing problems. The goal is to dehumanize the opponent and create the impression that they pose a threat to society. Liberal communities are depicted as a “threat to the family” and as tools of “Western propaganda.” A notable example is the rhetoric used against the Equality March in Tbilisi,

when pro-Russian media and clergy emphasized that the West was “imposing immorality on Georgia”.

Language: “Propagators of immorality”, “attack on the family”, and “Western decadence”.

Demonization of the opposition: Opposition politicians are labeled as “traitors” and “foreign agents” who act against Georgia’s interests. Language: “fifth column” and “agents of the West”.

Fostering Hostility Toward the West

Anger toward the West is amplified by portraying it as responsible for social and political problems in Georgia. Narratives focus on the alleged imposition of foreign ideologies and values on the country.

Examples in Georgia:

- **Claims of “Western colonialism”:** The EU and NATO are portrayed as structures that impose their values on Georgia, forcing the country to abandon its independence. Language used includes: “The West’s colonial approach,” “The West is destroying our identity”.
- **Allegations of discrimination against Georgia:** statements claim that the EU will “punish Georgia” by denying it candidate status, even though the country supposedly meets the requirements. Language used includes: “The European Union unfairly punishes Georgia”, “The West ignores our efforts”.

Emphasizing the “External Threat”

Anger toward external forces – such as NATO, the EU, or even Ukraine – is amplified by narratives suggesting that Georgia is being used as a pawn in a global power struggle.

- **The “Second War Front” Narrative:** Claims that the West wants to drag Georgia into conflict with Russia. Language used includes: “The West wants to sacrifice Georgia”, “pulling Georgia into war.”
- **Accusations against Ukraine:** Ukraine is portrayed as a force attempting to “drag Georgia into a conflict,” which is intended to foster hostility toward the country and weaken international solidarity. Language used includes: “Ukraine is pressuring to open a second front”, “Ukraine is using Georgia for its own purposes”.

Stoking internal conflicts

Anger is used to deepen social divisions, especially between conservatives and liberals or between different ethnic and religious groups. Anger toward liberal values promoted by the West leads to greater support for conservative and pro-Russian forces, which promise to protect tradition. Narratives of “moral outrage” further widen the gaps between various social groups, weakening unity and the ability to act together. Outrage over social reforms, such as minority rights, results in the rejection of pro-Western changes and the strengthening of authoritarian narratives. Portraying the opposition, NGOs, and the West as sources of threat fosters distrust toward these actors, diminishing their influence and capacity to act.

Persuasion techniques aimed at provoking anger and outrage are employed in Georgia as a tool to strengthen pro-Russian narratives, weaken pro-Western aspirations, and mobilize conservative social groups. These mechanisms work through:

- Demonizing political and social opponents.
- Creating narratives of “moral outrage” toward Western values.
- Deepening internal and external conflicts.

Hope: As an emotion is an effective tool in persuasion – especially in social and political contexts. In Georgia, it is used to promote pro-Russian attitudes through promises of

stability, peace, economic benefits, and the protection of traditional values. These narratives offer an alternative to the challenges of pro-Western reforms, presenting Russia as a more predictable and friendly partner.

The promise of peace and stability: Pro-Russian narratives present cooperation with Russia as a guarantee of peace, in contrast to the alleged threats posed by integration with NATO and the EU. The promise of maintaining stability is especially appealing in a country that has experienced traumatic armed conflicts and economic difficulties.

- **The “neutrality” narrative for Georgia:** the authorities and pro-Russian media promote the idea that Georgia can avoid conflict with Russia by remaining neutral and abandoning its aspirations to join NATO. Statements by Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, such as “a neutral Georgia can be a bridge between Russia and the West”, reinforce this message.
- **Comparison with Ukraine:** narratives are created claiming that Ukraine’s integration with the West led to war, while Georgia’s “neutrality” can protect it from a similar fate.

Society perceives cooperation with Russia as a way to avoid potential armed conflicts and to maintain internal stability. The hope for peace weakens support for integration with NATO, which is portrayed as a risky path.

The promise of economic benefits: Russia is portrayed as a key economic partner for Georgia, capable of ensuring economic development and prosperity – in contrast to the EU, which is depicted as demanding difficult and burdensome reforms.

- **Trade cooperation with Russia:** Persuasive narratives emphasize the importance of the Russian market for Georgian exports, such as wine and mineral water. Pro-Russian media and politicians often cite statistics showing growth in exports to Russia as evidence of the economic benefits of cooperation with Moscow.

- **Criticism of European trade regulations:** The West is portrayed as a partner that imposes “complicated and costly” regulations, making it difficult for small businesses to access the European market.

The hope for economic improvement strengthens pro-Russian attitudes, especially in rural communities and small towns where exports to Russia are of key importance. Society perceives the West as a more demanding and less beneficial economic partner.

- **Defense of traditional values:** Russia is portrayed as a defender of Christian and conservative values, which inspires hope for the preservation of Georgia’s cultural identity in a world that is allegedly succumbing to the “moral decay” of the West.
- **Narrative of shared religious values:** Russia and Georgia are portrayed as Christian countries with a duty to defend tradition against the “decadent” influences of the West. Statements by clergy of the Georgian Orthodox Church emphasize that Russia supports family and religious values.
- **Opposition to “Western decadence”:** Russia is promoted as an alternative to liberal social reforms, such as minority rights. Claims are made that integration with the EU entails “promoting immorality”.

Persuasion based on the hope of protecting national values strengthens support for pro-Russian narratives, especially in conservative regions of Georgia. Society is more inclined to reject social reforms promoted by the West.

The “easy path” myth of development: In contrast to the demands of the EU and NATO, Russia is portrayed as a partner that offers Georgia the possibility of development without the need for difficult political and economic reforms.

- **Comparison of EU and Russian requirements:** Persuasive narratives claim that Russia does not impose “unnecessary demands” regarding democratic reforms or human rights protections. The message is that cooperation with Russia is based on “pragmatism” rather than “ideology”.

- **No need for social reforms:** Russia is promoted as a country that does not require its partners to adopt liberal social values.

Hope for development without social or political costs: The hope for development without social or political costs weakens support for the long-term reforms required by the West. Society begins to perceive integration with the EU as overly complicated and not worth the effort.

“Return to a stable past”: Pro-Russian narratives appeal to an idealized past when Georgia was part of the Soviet Union, suggesting that renewed close cooperation with Russia would bring similar benefits.

- **Memories of the Soviet Era:** Russia is portrayed as a partner with whom Georgia historically had stable economic and political relations. Persuasive narratives recall the “good old days” when Georgian products were exported to the Soviet market.
- **Nostalgia for the “Stability” of the USSR:** These narratives suggest that relations with Russia offer greater predictability than the challenging reforms required by the West.

The hope for economic and political stability and predictability leads a part of society to support pro-Russian narratives. Society becomes more susceptible to manipulation based on an “idealized past”.

Hope is an effective tool of persuasion that, in Georgia, is used to build trust in Russia as a partner who offers benefits without the risks and costs associated with integration with the West. This approach mobilizes conservative social groups by promising the protection of traditional values and stability, while discouraging pro-Western reforms, which are portrayed as expensive, unnecessary and externally imposed.

Hope, though seemingly positive, can – when skillfully incorporated into planned persuasion campaigns – become a tool of manipulation. In such processes, it may lead to the loss of opportunities for democratization and integration with the West.

Russia has for years conducted complex influence operations in Georgia, employing a variety of psychological warfare techniques as part of its hybrid warfare strategy. Assessing the methods of influence on Georgia requires a medium-term analysis, which reveals a range of classic destabilization and influence techniques implemented over the years through various active means.

Tactics and techniques

Narrative control: Russia employs fear-based narratives, suggesting that the West seeks to drag Georgia into a conflict with Russia. An example is the spreading of theories about “opening a second front” in Georgia during the war in Ukraine.

Portraying the West as a threat: Statements by leaders of the Georgian Dream party, claiming that NATO and the EU plan to use Georgia for military purposes. Remarks by politicians such as Irakli Kobakhidze, accusing the “global war party” of destabilizing the country.

Use of religion and culture: Narratives focus on promoting the shared Orthodox values of Georgia and Russia, while at the same time portraying Western liberal values as a threat to Georgian culture and tradition. The Georgian Orthodox Church – especially its senior clergy—plays a key role in disseminating pro-Russian messages.

Use of local media: Pro-government media serve as channels of propaganda. Outlets such as Imedi TV and PosTV actively support pro-Russian and anti-Western narratives, broadcasting disinformation and conspiracy theories. These media normalize anti-Western narratives by presenting them as objective information. Alt-Info and Obiektivi, though less popular, function as platforms for more radical content.

Manipulation in Social Media and the Russian model of influence in cyberspace

Social media algorithms are used to create “information bubbles,” exposing users to one-sided and often manipulated content. In Georgia, many websites operate as channels for content directly sourced from Russian outlets. This tactic aims to spread pro-Russian messaging and persuasion, while creating a distributed yet widely accessible content ecosystem within Georgia’s information space. The primary tool for introducing Russian disinformation into Georgia’s infosphere is Russian “news” portals, which serve as conduits for narratives aligned with Moscow’s interests. Their purpose is the implementation of manipulative persuasion. These portals serve exclusively as primary sources, supplying material for further multiplication on other websites and – very often – for citation by pro-government Georgian “media.” Russians widely employ a model of anonymous threats and create an “atmosphere of hunting” for pro-Western environments using a network of blogs, in which pro-Western activities are stigmatized and portrayed in a false context of national betrayal or acting as agents.

Targeting vulnerable communities: Marginalization of ethnic minorities and rural populations

Ethnic minorities and rural communities often rely on informal sources of information, such as family and neighbours, which makes them particularly susceptible to disinformation. When propaganda—deliberately targeted at these groups – is disseminated through these informal channels, it spreads via word-of-mouth, making it even more dangerous and difficult to counter (for example, 48% of the Azerbaijani minority primarily use unverified sources of information).

Intimidation and destabilization: Murders, intimidation, and terror are examples of the use of violence as a tool of intimidation. Russia sends a signal that any opposition to its interests will be harshly punished. The inspiration and support provided by Russia – including financial backing – for pro-Russian groups in Georgia are escalating. This model of action and tactics of influence result in the transfer of influence operations into the physical domain through marches, demonstrations, or direct intimidation and terror

against pro-Western environments, often with either the tacit acceptance or active participation of Georgian security structures. The violence during the “March of Dignity” in 2021 demonstrates how pro-Russian groups manipulate social sentiments, reinforcing anti-Western narratives.

Deepening polarization: The media environment in Georgia, much like society as a whole, is polarized and tied to political interests. This weakens public trust and increases susceptibility to manipulation. Sustaining polarization allows Russian propaganda to employ tactics of segmenting the information environment into smaller target groups, enabling profiling and the delivery of tailored messages or persuasion strategies that more effectively play on the specific sensitivities of recipients. This type of tactic is further facilitated by the high percentage of the population – especially in smaller towns – that relies on unverified information, which makes it easier for disinformation to spread.

3. Information activities targeted at the West

In Georgia, pro-Russian political parties, politicians, far-right groups, clergy, media, and other actors actively spread anti-Western propaganda through various communication channels. The aim of these activities is to misinform and mislead Georgian society, to incite panic, and to sow chaos. Disinformation campaigns are intended to destroy the image of the West, discredit its values, and present it as an adversary of Georgia.

These propaganda activities often focus on attacking opposition political parties, experts, and individuals who promote Western values. Organized campaigns are orchestrated against them with the aim of discrediting and weakening their influence in society.

Over the years, numerous propaganda narratives have circulated in Georgia. Some of them aimed to fuel divisions and mistrust between Georgia and its neighbours, while others sought to undermine Georgia’s relations with its key allies. However, after Russia’s

invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the information environment in Georgia underwent radical changes.

Currently, the government of Georgia has become the main source of disinformation in the country. Unlike in previous years, when anti-Western narratives were mainly spread by fringe media, now the entire propaganda apparatus and the government's security structures have become the primary vehicles for these messages. Such actions significantly increase the reach and impact of anti-Western narratives, further destabilizing the domestic situation and Georgia's international relations.

In recent years, the ruling Georgian Dream party has played an increasingly active role in spreading anti-Western propaganda. Prominent politicians and affiliated actors regularly promote anti-Western narratives, pushing them into the public discourse. A comparative analysis of Russian and local messaging reveals striking similarities in both the content and tone of these narratives.

As a result, the ruling party has received public praise from Russian President Vladimir Putin, as well as from high-ranking Russian officials and leading propagandists¹. This situation stands in clear contradiction to the expectation that Georgian state institutions should actively combat anti-Western narratives and set an example for Georgian society in supporting integration with Euro-Atlantic structures. Instead, Georgian institutions have become part of the propaganda machine, supporting disinformation and fueling anti-Western sentiments.

Politicians from Georgian Dream never openly declare pro-Russian leanings, which creates an atmosphere of ambiguity. This stance misleads a significant part of society, which continues to believe that the party supports Georgia's integration with the West and its aspirations to join Euro-Atlantic structures. As a result, the party's rhetoric

¹ <https://tass.ru/politika/22526139>

effectively undermines trust in Western values while simultaneously strengthening pro-Russian influence in the country.

a) The narrative: The West is seeking to open a second front in Georgia

After the start of Russia's war on Ukraine, a new wave of anti-Western narratives emerged in Georgia. The political leaders of the ruling party, satellite parties, media outlets, experts, and clergy began actively instilling fear among the Georgian public regarding the prospect of war. This narrative was reinforced by statements from Oleksiy Danilov, Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, and Oleksiy Arestovych, advisor to the head of the President's Office of Ukraine, which suggested that Georgians should reclaim territories occupied by Russia. The ruling party exploited these remarks, turning them into an anti-Western narrative and claiming that the West seeks to open a "second front" in Georgia.

Within this rhetoric, the political leaders of the ruling coalition introduced the term "global war party," which became part of a conspiracy theory aimed at strengthening the position of the Georgian Dream government and sowing confusion and distrust in society. It is worth noting that politicians avoid naming specific members of this alleged "party", yet attribute to it the intention of dragging Georgia into war. Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili described this "global war party" as follows: "The European Union is one of its main victims, but this party exerts a decisive, critical influence on official structures both in the US and the EU".

It comes as no surprise that many representatives of the ruling party repeat similar messages. For example, in 2023, during the presentation of the annual report, Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili stated: "One of the main goals of the destructive 'war party' was to open a second front in Georgia". Meanwhile, Mamuka Mdinardze, the parliamentary leader of Georgian Dream, claimed that more than ten Members of the European Parliament allegedly wanted to open a second front in Georgia.

This narrative is intensively promoted by media outlets linked to the ruling party, such as Imedi and PostTV, which give a platform exclusively to politicians, experts, clergy, and others associated with the Georgian Dream party. In their appearances, the topic of the “second front” regularly arises, blaming Ukraine and the West, while presenting the government as advocates of peace. These kinds of messages are part of a broader disinformation campaign aimed at weakening Georgia’s relations with the West and increasing pro-Russian influence in the country.

The television station Imedi actively supports the anti-Western narrative by using statements from little-known Western figures to lend it an air of credibility. An example of this is quoting political scientist Glenn Diesen, who stated: “The West knows exactly what it wants. At this stage, a second front in Georgia is what they need most. The West believes that opening a second front in Georgia will weaken the Russian Federation”.

Such systematic dissemination of anti-Western narratives clearly demonstrates the links between the ruling party and disinformation campaigns. These actions not only undermine Georgia’s relations with its Western allies but also endanger the country’s democratic path, weakening its ability to integrate with Euro-Atlantic structures and strengthening pro-Russian influences in society.

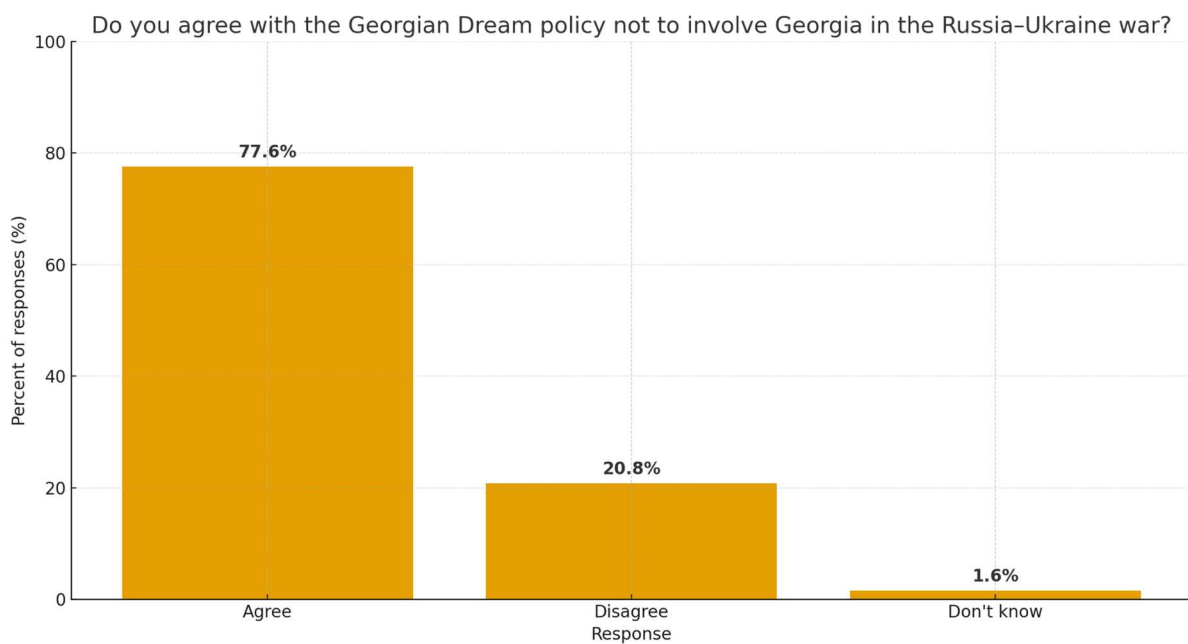
To further reinforce its narrative, the ruling party commissioned a public opinion poll from GORBI, a company closely linked to the Georgian Dream party. The results of this survey were published by Imedi TV on June 13, 2022.

The survey included a manipulative question: “Do you agree with Georgian Dream’s policy of not involving Georgia in the war between Russia and Ukraine?” This type of wording suggested a clear-cut answer, which could have influenced the survey results. According to the published data, as many as 77% of respondents expressed support for the ruling party’s policy.

Such actions indicate an attempt to shape public opinion in a way that benefits the ruling party, while simultaneously manipulating the message in order to legitimize its policies and reinforce anti-Western narratives.

By means of this survey, the Georgian Dream party sought to strengthen its position both in the eyes of the Georgian public and towards its Western partners, presenting results that suggested a significant portion of society supports its policies.

It is important to emphasize that Georgian Dream relies exclusively on the results of surveys conducted by GORBI, while expressing distrust toward research carried out by organizations such as NDI (the National Democratic Institute) or other international research institutions. This selectivity in choosing data sources indicates an attempt to control the narrative and manipulate the message in order to legitimize its policies both domestically and internationally.



Source: Imedi TV

The chart above shows the results of the survey with the question: “Do you agree with Georgian Dream’s policy of not involving Georgia in the war between Russia and Ukraine?” The results are as follows:

- 77.6% of respondents agree with Georgian Dream's policy;
- 20.8% of respondents do not agree;
- 1.6% of respondents chose the answer "I don't know".

The propaganda channel Post TV actively reinforces anti-Western narratives on social media, using statements from both officials of the ruling party and lesser-known citizens. An example is Ucha Chikovani, founder of the Chateau Chikovani hotel complex, who in his public appearances analyzed the prospect of Georgia being drawn into war, considering its potential advantages and disadvantages.

Chikovani also publicly praised and expressed admiration for the founder and honorary chairman of Georgian Dream, Bidzina Ivanishvili, for his decisions. Such actions indicate a consistent propaganda message that, through media platforms like Post TV, reaches a wide audience and builds the image of the ruling party as the only force capable of ensuring stability and peace in the country.

As mentioned earlier, Russian and local anti-Western narratives display nearly identical content, which has earned Russian officials' approval for Georgian Dream politicians. In 2023, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson stated: "Kyiv, encouraged by Washington, dreams of opening a second front against Russia and seeks to unleash war in the Caucasus and in Transnistria." Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov unequivocally repeated the message of Georgian Dream, claiming that the West is seeking to open a second front in Georgia.

A similar stance was expressed by the self-proclaimed authorities of the occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, who stated: "The USA and Europe want to overthrow the Georgian government and open a 'second front'." This thesis was further reinforced by statements such as: "Western overseers are pushing Georgia to open a second front, which could have catastrophic consequences for its population".

The convergence of positions between Georgian Dream, Russian narratives, and the views expressed by the self-proclaimed governments of the occupied territories clearly

illustrates how the Georgian government has used the issue of war against its own population. This kind of rhetoric has instilled fear and fostered confusion in society. As a result, some Georgians have expressed gratitude to the government for not allowing the country to become a battlefield.

At the same time, this narrative has deepened polarization and divisions in Georgian society. Western entities have firmly rejected these claims. The European Union has described Georgian Dream's statements regarding the opening of a second front in Georgia as baseless and disinformation. The EU High Representative, Josep Borrell, stated: "The notion of opening a second front is noise, propaganda, and disinformation. It is absurd to think that anyone in the EU wants war in Georgia – do not listen to such nonsense".

A similar position was expressed by former U.S. Ambassador Kelly Degnan, who repeatedly emphasized that the United States does not seek to involve Georgia in war and that such claims are completely false.

The Georgian Dream party intensively used the "second front" narrative in the period leading up to the 2024 parliamentary elections. During numerous public appearances, the honorary chairman of the party, Bidzina Ivanishvili, repeatedly echoed the alleged accusations that the West was seeking to open a "second front" in Georgia.

A particularly significant moment in this campaign was an interview with Ivanishvili, broadcast on the pro-government channel Imedi just a few days before the elections. During the interview, the honorary chairman confirmed the party's narrative line, stating, among other things: *A high-ranking Western representative suggested to former Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili that guerrilla warfare should be continued in the forests.*

Portraying the elections as a choice between war and peace – based on propaganda and misinformation – resonated with certain segments of Georgian society. To further strengthen this narrative, the Georgian Dream party launched an election campaign based on elaborate visualizations of fear and contrasts.

Posters placed throughout Georgia were captioned with the slogan: *No to war, choose peace!*

These propaganda materials juxtaposed two contrasting images: destroyed Ukrainian cities, including churches, schools, and other buildings, and an idyllic vision of Georgia - prosperous, with thriving cities and well-maintained temples. Such a campaign was intended to instill fear and persuade Georgians to choose what the government presented as “peace”, while at the same time reinforcing the message that only Georgian Dream is capable of ensuring stability and security.

These actions, based on emotions and fears, highlight the extent to which the ruling party uses disinformation and manipulation to influence society and shape the outcome of elections.

b) Narrative: Using homophobia and LGBT issues as a weapon

Georgia, as a country with deeply rooted conservative traditions, struggles with accepting new ideas and adapting to global changes. This resistance is particularly visible among older generations and those strongly connected to Orthodox Christianity. As a result, these groups are more susceptible to influence and more likely to embrace homophobic narratives. This kind of rhetoric, regularly employed by the Kremlin’s propaganda machine, has become more prominent in Georgia since the Georgian Dream party came to power.

Under the pretext of promoting “Georgian identity”, religious values, and traditional family norms, the ruling party subtly but effectively reinforced messages targeting the LGBT community. At the same time, it criticized the West for allegedly undermining these values and imposing foreign, degenerate ideologies. This rhetoric, framed within the context of “Georgian values”, was regularly used to discredit the West by portraying it as a threat to Christian principles and national traditions.

Such actions not only deepened the divide between generations – older people, attached to conservative norms, and younger generations, more open to change – but also heightened tensions between liberal and conservative social groups.

Such developments illustrate how issues related to Western liberalism have been used as tools to manipulate public opinion, strengthen conservative national identity, and deepen social divisions. By leveraging this topic, the ruling party seeks both to consolidate its support among conservative groups and to weaken Georgia's pro-Western aspirations by portraying the West as a threat to traditional values.

Restrictions on freedom and the escalation of violence against the LGBTQ+ community in Georgia

In the following years, members of the LGBTQ+ community in Georgia experienced increasing restrictions on freedom of speech and self-expression. They were regularly classified as a high-risk group, which in practice led to stigmatization and marginalization. The situation worsened when the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia declared May 17 – International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia – as the Day of Family Purity and Strength, elevating it to the status of a national holiday. This decision, which pitted one observance against another, deepened social divisions and intensified conflicts.

Climax of Violence

The situation reached its climax on July 5, 2021, when the Dignity March organized by Tbilisi Pride was brutally disrupted. Aggressive groups attacked participants of the march, journalists, and supporters of the LGBTQ+ community, while also vandalizing the offices of Tbilisi Pride and the Shame Movement. The police, operating under the leadership of the ruling party, failed to ensure the safety of participants, which in practice enabled the escalation of violence.

Ambiguous Position of the Church and Its Role in Inciting Violence

The Georgian Orthodox Church adopted an ambivalent stance toward these events. While officially condemning acts of aggression, it simultaneously blamed the organizers of the march, suggesting that they were provoking conflict. Statements by church leaders and government officials ahead of the march encouraged hostility toward the LGBTQ+ community.

The Patriarchate called for gatherings on July 5 to “pray and demonstrate to the world the protection of dignity.” Meanwhile, the Ministry of Internal Affairs suggested to the organizers that the event in public spaces be canceled, which clearly indicates a lack of willingness to ensure security.

Inciting Violence and Organizing Counter-Demonstrations

On the eve of the march, July 4, 2021, the Chokhosani Association of the Patriarchate published a video titled “Everyone to Rustaveli on July 5,” calling on society to oppose the march. Among the opponents of the event were members of the Society for the Protection of Children’s Rights and the youth wing of the Georgian Idea party. The society’s representative, Guram Palavandishvili, openly declared that they would not allow the march to take place “under any circumstances”.

These actions were further fueled by businessman Levan Vasadze, known for his homophobic statements, who called on the government to ban the march and to pass laws against “the promotion of immorality”. Leaders of the Alt-Info group, particularly Zurab Makharadze, were also involved in organizing violence; Makharadze publicly announced plans for violent acts and actively incited hatred.

Inciting Violence by Clergy: The Patriarchate’s role in encouraging violence is undeniable. A particularly egregious example was the statement by Father Spiridon Tskipurishvili, who said: “Not only refraining from violence—you are obligated to use violence for your homeland, for God, and for holiness”.

The events of July 5, 2021, and the narratives surrounding the Pride March highlight the deeply rooted social divisions in Georgia, in which the Church, political parties, and radical groups play a key role in maintaining and deepening conflicts. The lack of effective protection of human rights and the stigmatization of the LGBTQ+ community cast a shadow over the country's democratic aspirations and threaten its social development.



Top: Radio Svoboda

Bottom: interpressnews

An analysis of the events of July 5, 2021, reveals that both members of the clergy and leaders of conservative and pro-Russian groups were involved in the violence against members of the LGBTQ+ community. They displayed particular brutality toward journalists, accusing them of promoting so-called “LGBTQ+ propaganda” in Georgia.

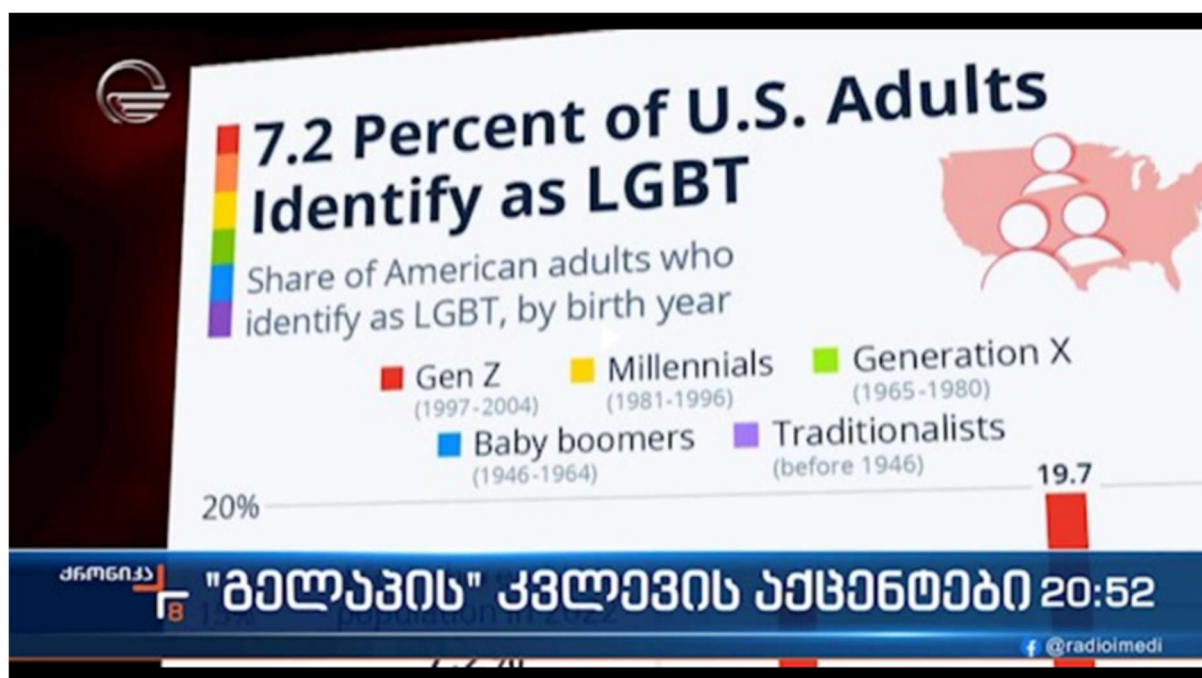
Authorities’ response: Lack of accountability and blame shifting

Two years after these incidents, in 2023, Irakli Garibashvili, then chairman of the Georgian Dream party, stated that “the violent events had no legal organizer and were spontaneously organized.” Such a statement not only downplayed the scale of the violence but also avoided assigning responsibility to groups and leaders who actively incited hatred.

Government propaganda and media campaigns

Meanwhile, government-linked media outlets such as Imedi launched extensive propaganda campaigns on social media, focusing on the allegedly harmful influence of “LGBTQ+ propaganda” on Georgian society. For example, Imedi, citing Gallup poll results, emphasized that LGBTQ+ identification among teenagers in the U.S. reached 7.2% and had doubled over the past decade.

Such narratives were designed to instill fear in Georgian society and to justify actions against the LGBTQ+ community by portraying it as a threat to traditional values. These campaigns reinforced existing social divisions and deepened hostility toward sexual minorities and those supporting their rights.



The satellite political faction of the ruling party, “People’s Power”, immediately responded to the above-mentioned events, claiming that they represented a planned attack on the younger generation of Georgians. The faction called on the state to take strict measures to limit LGBTQ+ propaganda and to protect “traditional values”.

Manipulations related to an exhibition in the European Parliament

As part of the propaganda campaign, the Imedi channel published a so-called “card” on social media, claiming that the European Parliament had hosted an exhibition titled “Sexual Gay Jesus”. In reality, it was an exhibition of works by Swedish photographer Elisabeth Ohlson, presenting biblical themes in the context of diversity and equality.

The propaganda outlet Post TV reinforced this narrative by sharing the same image on social media with the caption: *The leftists in the European Parliament are organizing an exhibition of ‘Sexual Gay Jesus’.*

This was another attempt to convince Georgian public opinion that the West supposedly corrupts traditional values and actively promotes the spread of LGBTQ+ propaganda.

Exploitation of Joe Biden's statements in propaganda

Both media outlets, Imedi and Post TV, actively used statements by the U.S. President, Joe Biden, to divide Georgian society and marginalize LGBTQ+ individuals. Imedi published another “card” on social media featuring a quote from Biden: “I want to send a message to LGBTQ+ people, especially transgender children – you are loved, you are understood, you are seen”.

A propagandist linked to the ruling party, Shalva Ramishvili, devoted an entire program to this topic entitled “Joe Biden's LGBT Propaganda”, in which he accused the United States of actively promoting LGBTQ+ ideology in Georgia.

The purpose of the narrative and its consequences

Such actions by the media and politicians were aimed at strengthening anti-Western sentiment, emphasizing the alleged threat to traditional values, and further marginalizing the LGBTQ+ community in Georgia. This propaganda deepened the polarization of society, isolated LGBTQ+ individuals from public discourse, and intensified hostility toward the West as “degrading traditional values”.

These narratives are part of a broader strategy aimed at limiting Western influence and undermining trust in Western institutions, while at the same time maintaining the conservative wing of society as the main electorate of the ruling party.



Source: PosTV analytica

სებ-ის კურსი

მსოფლიო

imedi / 11 ივნისი 2023, 17:54 / სანდო წყარო

ჯო ბაიდენი: მინდა გავუგზავნო მესიჯი ლგბტქი+ საზოგადოებას, განსაკუთრებით ტრანსგენდერ ბავშვებს - თქვენ უყვარხართ. თქვენი ესმით. თქვენ გიგებენ

ჯო ბაიდენი

ფოტო: Twitter

On September 17, 2024, the Georgian Dream party used an intense homophobic narrative and related media campaigns to lay the groundwork for the adoption of a controversial legislative package. A key element of this package was a law titled “On Family Values and Protection of Minors”, which introduced provisions regarding:

- marriage;
- adoption and foster care,
- medical procedures related to gender transition,
- gender designation in state documents,
- restrictions on the organization of public assemblies and demonstrations.

International reaction

The adoption of the law was met with strong opposition from Georgia’s Western partners. The Venice Commission issued recommendations calling on the Georgian parliament to halt work on the law, emphasizing that its content could violate fundamental human rights. The spokesperson for the High Representative of the European Union, Peter Stano, sharply criticized the law, stating: “This package undermines the fundamental rights of the people of Georgia and risks increasing stigmatization and discrimination against part of the community”. Despite this international criticism, Georgian Dream continued to promote narratives supporting this law, using them as a tool during the pre-election period in 2024.

Political Use of Homophobic Narratives: This narrative served not only as an element of anti-Western rhetoric but also as a weapon against the pro-Western opposition. Georgian Dream organized a series of discussions in various cities, during which the adopted legislation was promoted as a defense of Georgia’s traditional values.

At the same time, the mass protests that erupted after Georgian Dream announced its decision to halt the EU accession process were portrayed by some pro-government

media as gatherings of LGBTQ people. This was yet another element of propaganda aimed at delegitimizing these protests and marginalizing the participants through stigmatization.

The adoption of the homophobic legislative package and the way it was used in Georgian Dream's political narrative illustrate deeply rooted problems in Georgia's domestic politics. Such actions not only threaten human rights but also undermine Georgia's democratic aspirations and its relations with Western partners. The intensification of homophobic narratives and their instrumental use in political struggle further polarize society, while at the same time weakening its ability to act collectively for a democratic future.

c) Narrative: Western funding, agents of influence, and Georgia's candidate status

Another widely circulated anti-Western narrative focuses on funding from the United States and the European Union, which the ruling Georgian Dream party claims supposedly supports the creation of a network of agents in Georgia and lays the groundwork for a revolutionary scenario. According to this narrative, this network includes opposition political parties and non-governmental organizations that are allegedly plotting a coup together.

In response, Georgian Dream intensified its criticism of Western partners, blaming them for supporting anti-Western narratives. The Georgian information space was flooded with a wave of hate speech targeting the US, the EU, opposition parties, and the non-governmental sector.

To understand this phenomenon, it is worth recalling that in 2012, Georgian Dream promised voters the construction of a free, democratic, and European Georgia, gaining the trust of many citizens. Moreover, it was the ruling party itself that initiated the introduction of Article 78 into the constitution, which states: "Constitutional bodies shall

take all measures within their competence to ensure the full integration of Georgia into the European Union and NATO”.

However, over the past 12 years, Georgian Dream has gradually moved away from this pro-Western path, distancing itself from Western allies and increasingly criticizing them. In 2022, the party’s rhetoric became particularly aggressive, and attacks intensified against Members of the European Parliament, US senators, and the ambassadors of the US and the EU.

Irakli Garibashvili, the chairman of Georgian Dream, went so far as to accuse certain Members of the European Parliament of lobbying for the opposition party United National Movement and maintaining close ties with it. In his statements, he called these politicians “disgusting MEPs”, claiming that their statements always align with the line of the United National Movement.

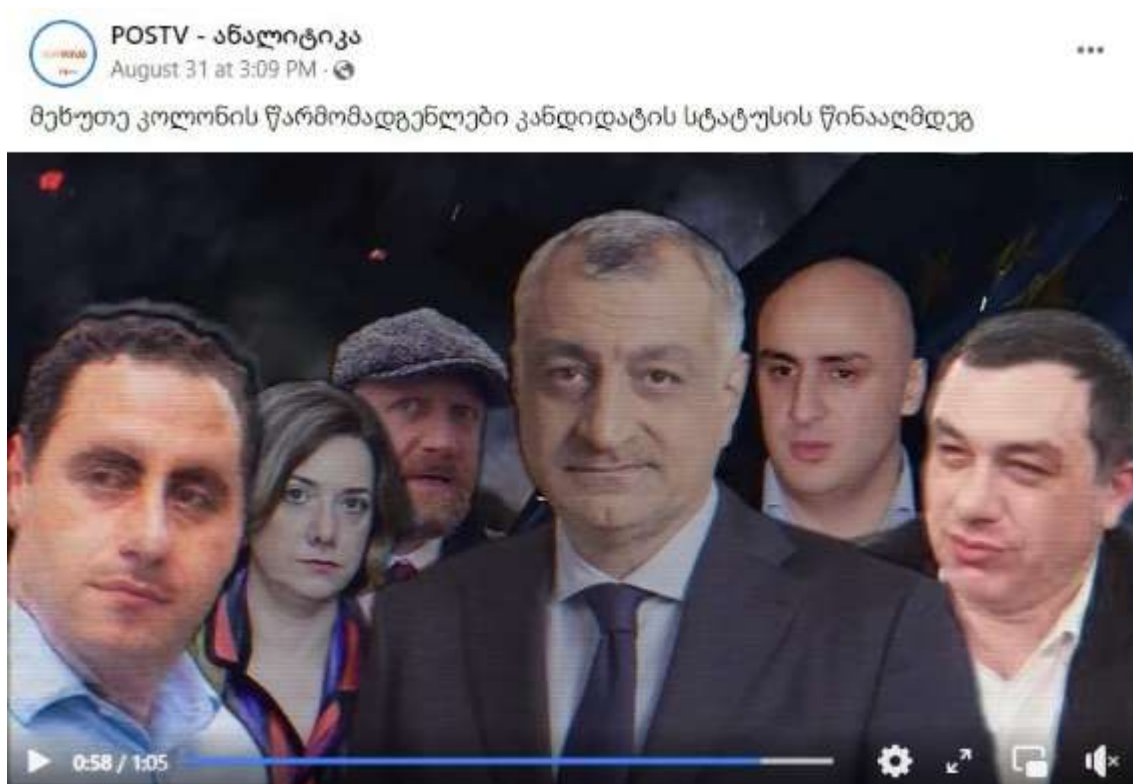
These actions and narratives illustrate a significant shift by Georgian Dream away from its earlier pro-Western declarations toward a policy that is critical of the West. This kind of rhetoric not only weakens Georgia’s relations with its Western partners, but also strengthens anti-Western sentiment in society, which poses a threat to Georgia’s democratic and European future.

Anti-Western rhetoric reached its peak in June 2022, when Georgia was denied candidate status for the European Union. Instead, the EU presented Georgia with a list of recommendations to implement, which provoked a sharp reaction from the ruling party. Kakha Kaladze, the mayor of Tbilisi, stated that “the EU punished Georgia”.

Officials from Georgian Dream maintained that Georgia had done more than Ukraine and Moldova to meet the criteria required for candidate status, yet it was unfairly denied this recognition. At the same time, the ruling party blamed the opposition, accusing them of lobbying against Georgia’s candidacy in the European Parliament.

In this context, the Georgian Dream-affiliated television channel Post TV actively supported the government’s narrative, attempting to shift the blame for the failure onto

the opposition. On social media, the channel published a video titled “Representatives of the Fifth Column Oppose Candidate Status”, in which members of the opposition were depicted as responsible for this situation. Such actions illustrate an attempt to divert society’s attention from the real reasons for the EU’s refusal and to redirect public anger toward the opposition. At the same time, these narratives reinforced anti-Western sentiment, undermining trust in the European Union and its intentions toward Georgia.



Source: Post TV Analytica

Post TV and other media outlets affiliated with the Georgian Dream party also published comparative graphics intended, as they claimed, to highlight the alleged numerous shortcomings of Ukraine and Moldova. These materials pointed to supposed deficiencies of both countries in various areas, such as political stability, levels of corruption, or the state of the economy, which – according to the narrative – nevertheless did not prevent them from receiving candidate status for the European Union.

By contrast, the graphics portrayed Georgia as a country that meets the EU requirements to a greater extent, yet was unfairly overlooked. Such comparisons were intended to reinforce the narrative of an “unjust EU decision” and to mobilize society against the West, suggesting that Georgia was wrongfully treated in favor of other countries.

These actions not only deepened anti-Western sentiment, but also intensified polarization within society, directing anger both against the opposition and Georgia’s Western partners. Such manipulative messaging was used as a propaganda tool to divert attention from the government’s shortcomings in implementing EU recommendations.



Ultimately, on December 14, 2023, the European Union granted Georgia candidate status, but made its maintenance conditional on fulfilling nine commitments. Despite this, the current political situation clearly demonstrates that the Georgian Dream party is

not showing determination to fulfill these commitments and continues to engage with the EU in a tone of pressure, attempting to negotiate on its own terms. As part of its narrative, the party has adopted the slogan: “Action Instead of Blackmail”, which emphasizes its unyielding stance toward the EU’s requirements.

Moreover, on November 28, 2024, Georgian Dream further worsened the situation by announcing that “the issue of opening negotiations with the EU will not be raised until the end of 2028”. This controversial statement triggered mass protests in Tbilisi and other Georgian cities. Demonstrators – including representatives from various social and political circles – are persistently defending Georgia’s European future, firmly opposing the decision of the ruling authorities.

The ongoing protests demonstrate that a significant part of society does not accept the pro-Russian political shift and strongly supports Georgia’s integration with the European Union. These events highlight the growing polarization in the country and the widening gap between the aspirations of citizens and the policies of the ruling party. Georgian determination to defend European values and ambitions sends a clear signal to the West that Georgian society does not want to abandon its pro-European path of development.

d) Criticism by Georgian Dream towards the United States as a strategic partner

The Georgian Dream party did not spare criticism toward Georgia’s most important strategic partner, the United States, with such criticism intensifying particularly during the tenure of U.S. Ambassador to Georgia, Kelly Degnan. The ruling party’s rhetoric was interpreted as a message to the U.S. to refrain from interfering in Georgia’s internal affairs. Furthermore, as Ambassador Degnan’s term approached its end, Georgian Dream sought to send a signal to the incoming ambassador by underscoring its position on bilateral relations

The criticism from the ruling party became particularly intense following Ambassador Degnan’s statement, who, in the context of protests against the arrival of a cruise ship

from Sochi, remarked: *The Georgian people have made it abundantly clear that no one should expect them to welcome people from a country that occupies 20 percent of Georgia's territory.*

This comment was met with a sharp reaction from Georgian Dream. The then-chairman of the party, Irakli Garibashvili, dismissed the protest as an action organized by the United National Movement, arguing that Georgian society does not oppose the entry of Russians and that the issue is mainly about financial benefits.

The Controversial “Foreign Agents” Law: Ambassador Degnan was also a vocal critic of the controversial “foreign agents” law, emphasizing that its adoption would restrict freedom of speech, which is of particular importance in the context of the upcoming 2024 parliamentary elections. In response, Mamuka Mdinardze, the parliamentary secretary of Georgian Dream, accused Ambassador Degnan of running a “hysterical campaign” against the law and compared her actions to those of the so-called “Global War Party”.

Impasses in Georgia-U.S. Relations: the negative rhetoric and actions of Georgian Dream have led to a serious impasse in U.S.-Georgian relations, which had been built over 32 years. Although the United States remained Georgia's main strategic ally, it suspended over \$95 million in aid, citing democratic backsliding, human rights violations, a corrupt judiciary, and other issues.

Termination of the Strategic Partnership: the crisis reached its climax on November 30, 2024, when the United States announced the complete termination of its strategic partnership with Georgia. In response, Georgian Dream expressed hope for improved relations after Donald Trump's inauguration as U.S. president, claiming that the tensions had been a result of the Biden administration's interference in Georgia's internal affairs. The ruling party argued that the Biden administration had attempted to open a “second front” in Georgia, which Georgian Dream consistently portrayed as a threat to the country's stability.

This situation highlights the dramatic deterioration of relations between the two strategic partners, while also revealing deep tensions between the aspirations of a significant part of Georgian society and the policies of the ruling party.

e) Attacks on the NGO Sector

The Georgian Dream party directed its rhetoric against the non-governmental sector, which pro-government media outlets such as Imedi labeled as the "wealthy NGO clan." Non-governmental organizations were accused by the ruling party of establishing networks of agents and laying the groundwork for revolution. In order to weaken civil society, the satellite party of Georgian Dream, People's Power, introduced the draft "Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence" in 2022, which was supported by members of Georgian Dream.

The proposed law was met with massive protests, and many argued that its passage would suppress the voice of civil society and create an information vacuum similar to that found in Russia. Faced with public pressure and demonstrations, Georgian Dream withdrew the draft law, declaring that it would not attempt to reintroduce it.

However, after Georgia was granted candidate status for European Union membership in 2023, the draft law was reintroduced and ultimately enacted. Shalva Papuashvili, the Speaker of Parliament, defended the law, stating: *We need transparency to understand political motivations. Citizens should know whether this money is funding Molotov cocktails or something else.*

In the revised version of the draft, the term "foreign agent" was replaced with the phrase "organization promoting the interests of foreign powers." Despite these changes, protests and demonstrations against the law continued, and Western analysts emphasized that its adoption moves Georgia closer to the authoritarian model of Russia.

President of Georgia, Salome Zurbichvili, strongly condemned the law, stating: *This law is Russian, and no argument – no 'what exactly is Russian about this law' – will change that fact. This law is Russian.*

The controversies surrounding the law, as well as the reactions from both society and the international community, indicate a deepening democratic crisis in Georgia and mounting tensions between the government and its citizens, as well as between Georgian Dream and the West

f) Propaganda campaign in support of the controversial law

The ruling party, together with its satellite parties and affiliated media outlets, launched a large-scale propaganda campaign to defend the controversial “Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence.” On social media, especially on Post TV channels, posts appeared aimed at justifying the law by comparing it to regulations in democratic countries. For example:

- *Canada has a law similar to the one that our radical opposition calls a Russian law.*
- *The French Parliament has adopted a law strengthening the fight against foreign interference.*

Such content was intended to downplay the controversial aspects of the law, presenting it as consistent with practices used in democratic countries, and thereby diverting attention from domestic and international criticism.

Additionally, the same media used a statement by the EU High Representative, Josep Borrell, in a way that misled the public. In one of the posts, it was quoted as follows: “Regarding the events surrounding the ‘Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence’ in Georgia, some member states consider it insignificant or regrettable.”

Such phrasing was intended to convince the public that EU member states are not deeply concerned about this legislation, in an attempt to reduce the impact of international criticism on the perception of the law within the country.

g) Central narratives of Georgian Dream

The narratives presented above form the foundation of the Georgian Dream government's actions at the time of this report's preparation. Through its satellite parties and affiliated media outlets, the ruling party not only promotes the controversial law but also consistently supports anti-Western rhetoric.

These actions contribute to deepening societal divisions, reinforce distrust toward Western partners, and evoke fear, especially by exploiting sensitive issues such as war and peace. This strategy allows Georgian Dream to control the public narrative while weakening critical voices from civil society and international institutions.



Source: Post TV Analytica

Irakli Kobakhidze's decision, announced on November 28, to suspend all talks and actions related to Georgia's accession to the European Union until 2028 sparked a wave of public dissatisfaction and intensified protests across the country. As public outrage grew, the narratives and accompanying rhetoric of the Georgian Dream party became even more extreme, further polarizing society.

Crisis Around Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB): the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) has also found itself at the center of criticism, accused of lacking neutrality and openly supporting the ruling party's narratives. Protests outside the broadcaster's headquarters were a response to what was perceived as biased coverage of events. The GPB administration's reaction, characterized by overt rhetoric in support of Georgian Dream, further escalated the situation and met with widespread social condemnation.

Intensification of Georgian Dream's Messaging: from November 28, Georgian Dream's messaging, while thematically consistent, became more intense, direct, and polarizing. The party's narratives have focused on challenging Western partners, fueling anti-Western sentiment, and portraying the opposition and non-governmental organizations as responsible for destabilizing the country. The decision to suspend accession talks was justified as a step to ensure Georgia's "political independence," but many observers see it as a deliberate move to distance the country from European integration. This policy has not only been met with domestic condemnation but has also strained Georgia's relations with its international partners, undermining trust in the ruling party's actions. These events highlight the growing tensions between the government and society, as well as the widening gap between the aspirations of Georgians and the policies of Georgian Dream. As a result, the risk of further political and social destabilization in Georgia is increasing, which may have long-term consequences for its democratic and European future.

4. Information operations targeting Poland

Below are the results of media monitoring and analysis of the Georgian information environment. The monitoring covers the period from September 1, 2024, to December 31,

2024. Most of the propaganda attributed to FIMI operations is based on the redistribution of content through websites openly linked to Russian propaganda and does not produce original content. The majority of articles are translations from Russian state media outlets such as RIA, TASS, or Komsomolskaya Pravda, as well as content redistributed directly from pro-Russian Telegram channels. The language used in these articles is often unclear, containing grammatical and stylistic errors, which suggests the use of automated tools such as Google Translate. Additionally, there are articles originating from Georgian pro-Russian news agencies, such as Sputnik Georgia and News Front.

Analysis of more than 80 articles concerning Poland and Polish-Georgian relations shows that the propaganda aggregator lacks a specific policy or strategy targeted at Poland or Georgian audiences. Instead, it serves as an aggregator of pro-Russian content, designed to align with Russia's internal and external communication objectives. Numerous opinions from various pro-Russian Telegram channels on the same topic are often published, further highlighting its role as an aggregator website rather than a traditional news outlet.

Information related to Poland and Polish-Georgian relations can be divided into two main threads:

a) Parliamentary elections in Georgia

Propaganda related to Poland's image intensified two days after the parliamentary elections in Georgia, at a time of heightened emotions and allegations of electoral fraud. It is worth noting that these early articles misrepresented an interview with Polish President Andrzej Duda on Radio Zet, suggesting that he had questioned the opposition's claims about election interference. In reality, President Duda was simply recounting his conversation with Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili. This narrative, taken from RIA.ru and other Kremlin-linked Telegram channels, appears to focus more on denying Russian interference in the elections than on directly attacking Poland. Nevertheless, such manipulation can influence perceptions of Poland, especially among Georgia's pro-Western opposition.

Another significant event that was reported on was the visit of a European delegation to Georgia, during which Polish Senator Michał Kamiński called for the release of former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili. Mikheil Saakashvili is currently a widely unpopular former president of Georgia and one of the most polarizing topics in current Georgian politics. Demands for his release could easily undermine opposition unity and serve the government's goal of marginalizing protests. Of course, pro-Russian and pro-government media presented this as a demand from the West, discrediting the opposition and portraying the protests as pro-Saakashvili demonstrations. The articles rarely singled out Poland, instead presenting its actions as part of broader EU and Western initiatives.

Quantitatively, the majority of information activities concerning Poland and Polish-Georgian relations focus on the parliamentary elections in Georgia. Over 50 articles address Poland's position on the elections and its support for street protests. None of these articles distorted the facts or had significant potential to harm Poland's image in Georgia, but they were incorporated into a broader cycle of actions with an anti-Western tone. Additionally, the articles generally avoid presenting Poland as a sovereign actor, instead portraying its actions as part of the broader approach of the West or the EU.

b) War in Ukraine

The second topic under which news about Poland and Polish-Georgian relations can be grouped is the war in Ukraine. This theme can be divided into two aspects. The first is the narrative concerning Polish mercenaries in Ukraine.

The Russian influence apparatus redistributes material directly from various Russian or pro-Russian Telegram channels, websites, and blogs into the Georgian information space, focusing on the number of mercenaries in Ukraine's International Legion. In the propaganda, it is often emphasized that the three countries with the largest participation are Poland, Georgia, and the United States. The fact that Georgia is mentioned alongside Poland is the main reason why Gruzinskaya Pravda publishes this information on its website. Furthermore, considering the relatively large group of Georgians fighting in

Ukraine and the fact that those who have fallen are buried with military honors, it suggests that Georgians are not negatively disposed toward mercenaries fighting against Russia in Ukraine. This means that if the news is intended to influence the attitudes of the audience, Georgians are not the main target of such messages.

The second aspect is Polish-Ukrainian relations. Russian propaganda has made significant efforts to undermine Polish-Ukrainian relations, often portraying both countries as adversaries. This narrative highlights any critical moments in bilateral ties, including issues related to arms supplies, grain trade, and historical matters (Volhynia). Gruzinskaya Pravda follows these narratives, making them broadly and generally available in Georgia. The activity of Gruzinskaya Pravda in this context is directly based on the promotion of pro-Russian narratives. As a result, Georgian audiences may perceive Poland as a vengeful and untrustworthy partner.

Monitoring and analysis of the Georgian information space has shown that Russia employs a regular cycle of interference via websites that primarily serve as channels for promoting pro-Russian propaganda, without a precisely targeted narrative about Poland or Polish-Georgian relations, in line with the Kremlin's broader objectives. In the short term, these goals include denying Russian interference in Georgian elections, undermining Western solidarity, and reinforcing divisions between Poland, Ukraine, and Georgia. Although Poland's image is not directly attacked, the promotion of biased narratives and selective framing has the potential to influence public opinion in Georgia, especially among polarized audiences.

Georgian-Russian Cooperation in Propaganda Activities

Another media outlet known for its anti-Western and pro-Russian narratives has been monitored, especially regarding Poland. To begin, we would like to provide some background on this specific medium. The newspaper Georgia and the World and its online platform, www.Geworld.ge, were founded by the company Historical Heritage, whose owner since its establishment has been Taras Gagnidze. Historical Heritage was registered in the public registry on January 28, 2009, and since that year, Georgia and the

World has been published. According to research titled "Russian Influence on Georgian NGOs and Media" conducted by Damoukidebloba.com, the initiative to establish Historical Heritage was personally welcomed by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. A founding member of Geworld.ge and a member of the public council of Historical Heritage is political scientist Alexander Khachia, who in July 2008 was awarded by Medvedev "for significant contributions in the field of friendship and cooperation with the Russian Federation," receiving a state order. Historical Heritage is also a partner of the pro-Russian NGO Eurasian Institute.

Anti-Polish Information Activities of Geworld.ge (“Poland Does Not Want Peace in Ukraine”)

Another example of anti-Polish information activities is a publication from the Geworld.ge portal. The political tone of the text is overtly anti-Polish and anti-Western, deeply rooted in the context of Russia’s ongoing conflict with Ukraine and its broader, false framing as a “geopolitical struggle with NATO and the European Union.” The main message is an attempt to discredit Poland by portraying it as a potential destabilizing force in the region. The propaganda accuses Warsaw of “expansionist aspirations toward Ukrainian territory.” Additionally, the propaganda is legitimized by quoting Naryshkin, who presents Poland’s actions as “motivated by a deeply rooted nationalist ideology that it cannot abandon, making any peace agreement with Ukraine or resolution of the conflict difficult”. The discussed example reflects the hostile perspective of Geworld.ge on Polish policy, presenting Poland as a selfish and harmful country for Ukrainian sovereignty. The narrative also contains a hidden suggestion of Poland’s territorial ambitions, which are portrayed as a threat to Ukraine and its people, with Naryshkin describing Poland’s interference as “intensifying the suffering of the Ukrainian population”.

Poland in the propaganda and persuasion used in FIMI operations plays the role of a provocateur acting on behalf of the United States. (<http://geworld.ge/ge/poloneti-sheertebuli-shtatebis/>) — this is the title of a Georgian-language article published in

2023, but it is still regularly referenced to legitimize propaganda claims on the website www.geworld.ge. The moral of the article can be summarized as a warning about Poland's increasing use of historical grievances and nationalist sentiments as tools to manipulate its position in European geopolitics. The text suggests that Poland is using its demand for reparations as a bargaining chip in a broader geopolitical game, rather than focusing on actual resolution or reconciliation. It is worth noting that this narrative closely corresponds with the disinformation messaging of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and Sergey Naryshkin. Additionally, the narratives used to promote this theme suggest that Poland's close ties with the USA may come at the expense of long-term European unity, especially with Germany, and could lead Poland into a "state of uncertainty" – a situation in which it would be forced to wage wars on multiple fronts, both in terms of economic and military conflicts. In summary, the political tone of the aforementioned information activities is highly critical of Poland and its foreign policy.

As it turns out, information activities harmful to Poland's image and reputation have been carried out via the mentioned media platform since 2022 and continue to this day. The propaganda portrays Poland as increasingly aggressive in its actions, positioning itself as a key player in the broader European and Eastern European political landscape. It is suggested that Poland is both a beneficiary and a "manipulator in the war" between Russia and Ukraine. The Polish political class is depicted as preparing for broader military involvement, not only in order to support Ukraine, but also to pursue "territorial ambitions". Political relations between Poland and Ukraine are portrayed as highly transactional. While Poland continues to support Ukraine in the war against Russia, the propaganda suggests that Poland is also using this support for its own benefit, including territorial claims and political influence. Within the Georgian information space, materials are available that directly spread disinformation, claiming that President Andrzej Duda and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy have signed an agreement under which Poland "secures Ukrainian territories as compensation for Polish military and financial support", further emphasizing the transactional nature of Polish-Ukrainian cooperation.

“Poland Prepared to Conquer Western Ukraine” is another narrative promoted by the same media outlet. In contrast to most other cases, Geworld.ge also promotes compilations of texts from media outlets (mainly Russian and/or pro-Russian Ukrainian-language publications) that are consistent with the editorial goals. The narrative about Poland being prepared to conquer Ukraine primarily concerns the possibility that Poland will use its “historical sentiments, territorial claims”, NATO support, and the ongoing war in Ukraine to annex its territory. It presents an image of Poland seeking to reclaim its historical territories under the guise of providing military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine. It is worth noting that many of these disinformation claims are based on narratives from Russian intelligence sources.

“Poland is trying to annex Ukraine”- a Russian-language interview with Suzdaltsev, promoted in Georgia, focuses on a critical view of Poland’s growing economic influence in Ukraine and combines this with the disinformation that Ukrainian authorities have allowed this process for transactional (territorial) purposes. The narrator suggests that Poland is opportunistically exploiting Ukraine’s instability by purchasing Ukrainian land, factories, and agricultural products at exceptionally low prices, which are then resold at great profit in Europe. This alleged economic dominance is portrayed as part of a broader strategy to take control over Ukraine and secure long-term Polish influence over its resources.

Monitoring results show that the mentioned portal has published up to 900 materials directly or indirectly related to Poland throughout its existence online (from 2009 to the present). The highest number of these materials appeared during the last two years, following the start of Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine.

Monitoring of the Georgian information space has shown that the spread of lies about Poland is mainly linked to propaganda aimed at discrediting the West in the eyes of Georgian society. In this regard, the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine has particularly activated pro-Russian media operating in Georgia.

Propaganda targeting Poland, analyzed based on publications from social media services, poses a threat to Poland's image on the international stage. The systematic use of disinformation, demonization, and manipulative techniques aims to weaken Poland's position as a stable and responsible partner in the context of regional conflicts and international alliances.

To effectively counter such actions, it is essential to undertake measures on multiple fronts, including public education, supporting independent media, strengthening international coalitions, and actively promoting one's own narratives. Only through a coordinated and comprehensive approach will Poland be able to effectively counter propaganda attacks and protect its sovereignty and image on the global stage.

Main Themes and Narratives

Propaganda targeting Poland in the analyzed media focuses on several key topics:

- **Polish Interference in the Security of Other States:**
- **Partition of Ukraine:** articles suggest that Poland is planning the partition of Ukraine by creating proxy states on its territory (July 3, 2021, April 3, 2023).
- **Interference in Georgia:** publications portray Poland as a country interfering in Georgia's internal affairs, for example through sanctions against the Georgian Dream party (December 16, 2024, October 29, 2024).

Criticism of Polish Foreign Policy

- **Russophobia and Anti-Russian Policy:** Poland is portrayed as a state driven by Russophobia, which allegedly leads to economic crises and international isolation (July 26, 2022, December 20, 2024).
- **“Ukrainization” of Poland:** the narrative of the alleged “Ukrainization” of Poland claims to increase crime and the presence of “Banderist ideology” (December 2024).

- **Support for Ukraine:** Poland is accused of direct involvement in the conflict in Ukraine by allegedly sending mercenaries and supplying weapons (June 17, 2022, December 20, 2024).
- **Relations with NATO and the USA:** criticism of the presence of American troops in Poland and the portrayal of Poland as a tool of the USA in the region (June 7, 2023 to December 24, 2024).

Historical Disinformation:

- **Claims about Nazi Poland:** articles suggest that Poland could have collaborated with Nazi Germany, which aims to discredit Poland historically.
- **Social issues and crime:** crime among Ukrainians in Poland. Narratives highlighting high crime rates among Ukrainians living in Poland, intended to create a negative image of this group (December 20, 2024).

Propaganda aims to portray Poland as an aggressive, interfering, and irresponsible state on the international stage:

- **Alliances and Support for Ukraine:** criticism for supplying weapons and providing support to Ukraine is presented in the context of “proof” of direct involvement in the war. This narrative is used to portray Poland as an active participant in the conflict rather than as a supportive ally.
- **Relations with NATO and the USA:** Poland is portrayed as a tool of the USA, implementing a provocative policy.

Objectives of the Identified Propaganda Narratives:

- Shaping the image of Poland as an aggressive and interfering state that meddles in the affairs of other countries.
- Stigmatization of Polish politicians and institutions (e.g., President Andrzej Duda: Criticized for frequent visits to Ukraine, which is presented as evidence of Poland’s direct involvement in the conflict; Minister Radosław Sikorski:

Portrayed as a key decision-maker regarding sanctions and foreign policy, often in the context of interfering in the affairs of other countries).

- Highlighting Poland's relations with the USA and NATO as a threat to Poland's sovereignty and regional security.
- Presenting Poland as the source of social problems in Georgia (economic context).
- Portraying the European Union as divided and incapable of action, using the example of manipulated situations involving Poland as an EU member.

5. Case Study – analysis of narratives targeting Poland based on the DISARM Model

History of the DISARM RED Framework

DISARM RED (DISinformation Analysis & Risk Management RED) is an analytical model designed to describe offensive actions in the information space (infosphere). One of the main challenges accompanying their analysis is the significant conceptual heterogeneity. Entities involved in researching and countering threats in this domain have developed their own vocabularies and semantics to describe such activities. With the steadily increasing intensity of multi-domain information operations since the mid-2010s – operations that also include influence campaigns – the need for reliable information exchange between organizations involved in identifying and combating these threats has emerged. DISARM RED was developed to address this need, providing a common framework for describing, analyzing, and managing disinformation and information risk.

At the turn of 2017 and 2018, Sara-Jayne “SJ” Terp, together with a group of cybersecurity specialists, began work on adapting existing tools for describing strictly digital threats to the reality of hybrid operations. Their aim was to develop methodologies that could effectively address the growing complexity of threats that combine cyber, information,

and influence activities². Soon afterwards, the prototype of DISARM – the AMITT (Adversarial Misinformation Influence Tactics & Techniques) framework – was developed and began to be used by NATO, the EU, WHO, and the UN. The current version of DISARM RED is the result of merging AMITT with the SP!CE model created by MITRE Corporation, which is modeled on the classic cybersecurity framework MITRE ATT&CK (used to identify and describe tactics and techniques used in offensive cyber operations)³.

DISARM is a fully open-source project, maintained by the DISARM Foundation, compatible with the STIX language and the MISP platform, and regularly updated to better describe the evolving information environment and to increase compatibility with other models, such as Meta Kill Chain.

Basic Characteristics of the DISARM RED Framework

The DISARM RED framework is divided into several parts, arranged in a specific hierarchy, which describe the various stages and tools used in influence operations. The model begins with "phases" (tagged with codes starting with the letter "P"). These phases are assigned to tactics (tags starting with "TA"), which in turn include a variety of techniques (tags starting with the letter "T").

The “P” tags describe the 4 main phases of information operations: planning, preparation, execution, and evaluation. The tactics labeled with “TA” indicate the objectives that are part of each phase, which are achieved by employing various tools – the techniques labeled with “T”. Descriptions of these phases, techniques, and tactics are publicly available on the project’s website.

Example uses of the DISARM RED framework

The DISARM RED framework is a particularly useful tool for sharing information about incidents. It enables an easy and standardized way to describe the observed reality,

² <https://github.com/DISARMFoundation/DISARMframeworks?tab=readme-ov-file#whos-responsible-for-disarm-and-a-little-history>

³ <https://www.disarm.foundation/brief-history-of-disarm>

leaving no room for ambiguity. The framework performs especially well at the initial stage of reconnaissance – identifying actions in the information space – as well as during attribution analysis, where it serves as a tool for describing characteristic and repeatable techniques that can be useful in identifying the author of an influence operation. Its advantage is its compatibility with the STIX syntax, which enables its use on platforms such as Open CTI.

An example of DISARM usage is a situation where an analyst identifies a network of inauthentic accounts on a social media platform that are spreading the same meme, which is intended to legitimize a narrative previously present in another medium, such as a website. Using the framework, the analyst can precisely define, name, and classify the techniques used, assign them to specific tactics, and then share this information with another analyst, who can further enrich the intelligence product as part of the intelligence cycle.

Limitations of the DISARM RED framework

The DISARM RED framework is a precise and useful tool, but it is important to be aware of its limitations. While it works well for describing and reporting individual incidents in the information space and for classifying digital evidence collected during OSINT investigations, it lacks elements that more accurately describe the psychological effects caused by a given activity. Additionally, it is still too far removed from the analytical models used to assess psychological operations.

DISARM RED limits the description of psychological impact to a dozen or so techniques in phase 1 – planning. The framework describes these as ways to achieve a given objective at the tactical level, when in reality the above-mentioned techniques are both a tool and an objective in themselves—contained within a much broader spectrum of psychological influence employed by actors who are the attacking side in influence operations.

Russian Influence Operation in Georgia's Information Space: Creating a False Image of Poland and the West as Aggressors Seeking to Annex Ukrainian Territories

Analysis of the Russian Influence Operation in Ukraine's Information Space According to the DISARM RED v1.6 Framework

Introduction

From the outset of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, the Kremlin has consistently used disinformation as one of the key tools to "legitimize" its policy of aggression. Russian propaganda, especially in the context of the war in Ukraine, is based on a carefully constructed narrative structure aimed at manipulating audiences by mixing facts with fiction, using emotional appeals, and creating a false historical background.

The analysis reveals current disinformation techniques and narrative mechanisms being used in this specific infosphere. One of the most recent examples is the widely disseminated narrative about alleged Western plans to partition Ukraine.

The Russian propaganda apparatus continues its disinformation operation, the leading narratives of which are based on claims about plans for the annexation of Western Ukraine by Poland, Hungary, and Romania.

Monitoring of Georgia's information space has revealed elements of a wide-ranging, long-running Russian influence operation aimed at discrediting Poland and portraying it as a country planning to restore the territory of the Second Polish Republic. According to this narrative, Poland would allegedly seek to seize part of Ukrainian lands – especially western regions such as Volhynia.

TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES USED ACCORDING TO DISARM v1.6

Phase	Tactic	Technique	Description
P01 - Plan	TA02 - Plan Objectives	T0066 - Degrade Adversary	Russia uses narratives that portray Poland in a negative light, aiming to destroy its reputation and credibility.
		T0079 - Divide	An attempt to evoke negative emotions toward Poland by portraying it as a country that wants to “restore its lost empire.”
		T0138 - Motivate to act	
		T0135 - Undermine	An attempt to create the impression that Poland is an insincere and untrustworthy ally of Ukraine, secretly seeking to take over part of its territory.
P02 - Prepare	TA07 - Select Channels and Affordances	T0152.004 - Website Asset	Websites with Russian or pro-Russian affiliation (such as Sputnik Georgia, Tabula.ge) sputnik-georgia.ru/20231219/285070597.html, sputnik-georgia.ru/20231031/politolog-polsha-gotovitsya-ne-tolko-k-voyne-s-rossiey-no-i-k-stolkoveniyu-s-ukrainoy-283813116.html tabula.ge/ge/news/704450-putini-ircmuneba-rom-polonets-ukrainis-okupatsia

		T0151.004 - Chat Platform	The Telegram messaging platform
		T0151.001 - Social Media Platform	Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram
		T0151.008 - Microblogging Platform	X (former Twitter)
	TA14 - Develop Narratives	T0003 - Leverage Existing Narratives	An attempt to prove that Poland wants to take over the western territories of Ukraine.
		T0022 - Leverage Conspiracy Theory Narratives	Suggesting that Poland has imperial ambitions and is a false ally of Ukraine. Attempting to insinuate that Poland owes something to Russia and that its attempts at territorial expansion ended with World War II.
	TA06 - Develop Content	T0023 - Distort Facts	Publishing fake articles on websites, and to a much lesser extent, on social media platforms.
		T0085 - Develop Text-Based Content	
	TA15 - Establish Assets	T0095 - Develop Owned Media Assets	Utilizing Russian propaganda platforms.
	TA16 - Establish Legitimacy	T0097.102 - Journalist Persona	Citing “experts,” “analysts,” and Russian “political technologists” in order to create a conviction in Georgian society

		T0097.108 - Expert Persona	about Poland's bad intentions. Citing representatives of the Russian Federation government, in particular Vladimir Putin.
		T0097.111 - Government Official Persona	
		T0097.202 News Outlet Persona	
P03 - Execute	TA09 - Deliver Content	T0115 - Post Content	Dissemination of false narratives in the form of articles on websites.

Summary

The current phase of this campaign suggests that Poland, Hungary, Romania, and other Western countries are already “planning” the partition of Ukraine into specific territories. By attributing alleged preparations for annexation to NATO, the propaganda aims to discredit Western support for Ukraine and embed these claims within broader disinformation about NATO’s supposed offensive plans.

These messages are simultaneously used for propaganda activities that portray Russia in the false light of a state defending itself, rather than being the one launching armed aggression against Ukraine (a strategy of reversed logic).

Russia consistently employs rhetoric that compares Ukraine and the West to Nazism. Such references are intended to provoke an emotional reaction and to “legitimize” Russian disinformation about the aggression against Ukraine as a “denazification” operation or, more broadly, as a defensive operation against the West – suggesting that Western actions are provocative and offensive and that they are leading to conflict.

Understanding these mechanisms allows not only for better analysis of propaganda but also for more effective defense against it.

6. Case Study – protests in Georgia

Shaping the protests against the foreign agents law by Georgian mainstream media.

The study, conducted for the MUGA project, aimed to analyze the relationship between the protests that took place in Georgia in the spring of 2024 and the accompanying media coverage distributed by mainstream television channels. Reports from pro-government and opposition mainstream media differed significantly, with opposition media outperforming pro-government media in terms of online engagement.

The “foreign influence” law⁴ has been announced again⁵ on April 3, 2024, by Mamuka Mdinaradze, the chairman of the ruling Georgian Dream party. Its aim is to oblige media outlets and non-governmental organizations that receive at least 20% of their funding from abroad to register as “foreign agents.” Despite sharp criticism of the law from Western partners, who argued that the law would undermine Georgia’s process of integration with the European Union (EU), the Georgian Dream party voted to override the veto of President Salome Zourabichvili and adopted the law on May 28, 2024. As a result, the United States imposed travel bans on “dozens” of Georgian Dream officials and their family members for “complicity in undermining democracy in Georgia.”

The mainstream media environment in Georgia exhibits a dichotomous nature, with news coverage reflecting the country’s divided political system and media organizations aligning themselves with existing political parties. This media environment both results from and contributes to political polarization. A study conducted in 2023 by researchers

⁴ <https://civil.ge/archives/591175>

⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/georgias-ruling-party-says-its-reintroducing-draft-law-foreign-agents-2024-04-03/>

from Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University indicates that Georgian mainstream television stations present conflicting interpretations of political events. Another study by Deutsche Welle in the same year found that 70 percent of the Georgian population believes local news lacks objectivity. This is notable because 84 percent of Georgians get their news from television broadcasters, and 72 percent receive news from social media.

Methodology

Due to the lack of the most recent data on viewership of Georgian television stations, the analysis focused on content published on the Facebook profiles of the stations between April 3 and May 31. The analysis included both television stations considered pro-government (TV Imedi, PosTV, Rustavi 2) as well as stations critical of the government (Mtavari Arkhi, Formula, TV Pirveli). Additionally, engagement on Facebook and traffic to the websites of the mentioned television channels were analyzed.

Analysis

The television channels examined distributed messages presenting opposing perspectives, both regarding the protests, the law, and the potential consequences of its adoption. Media considered pro-government primarily sought to discredit the protests and to present the law as crucial from the perspective of state transparency. The message from opposition and government-critical stations was based mainly on detailed coverage of the protests and the dissemination of negative opinions about the law itself.

For example, based on the activity of government-critical channels, it can be stated that they supported the protests by engaging in the dissemination of information about the demonstrations and their logistics. These channels also distributed commentary critical of the law from Western partners, and in their messages, they referred to the law as the "Russian law" – a term that gained popularity in 2023 due to the law's similarity to the foreign agents legislation in force in Russia.

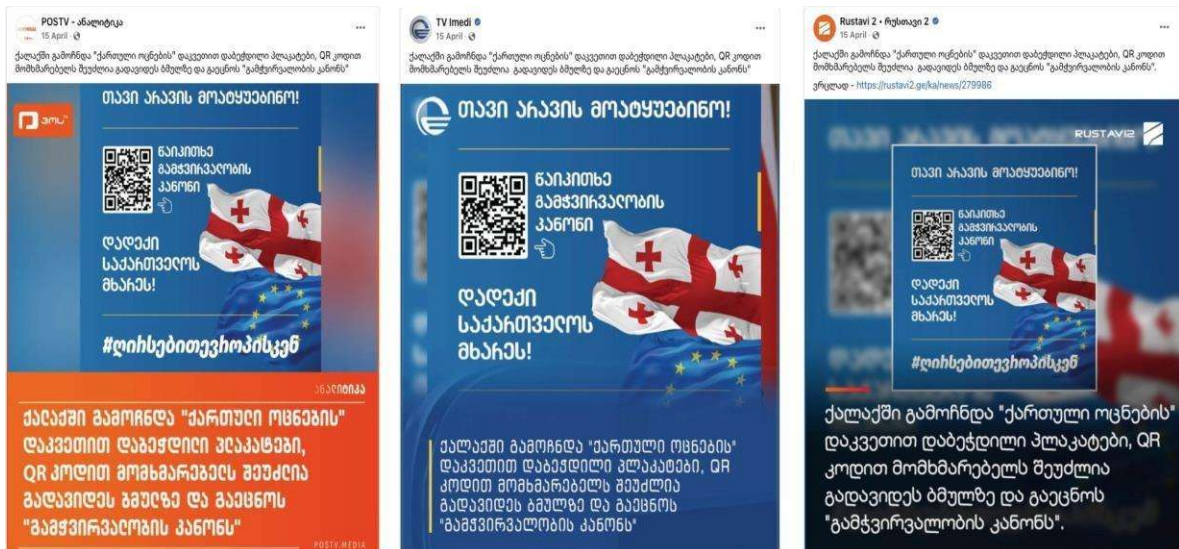


Top: screenshots show the use of Russian symbolism by Mtavari TV in posts informing about the parliamentary vote on the foreign agents law.

Bottom: screenshots show television channel profiles promoting the main protest slogan “No to Russian law” during live broadcasts from the demonstrations.

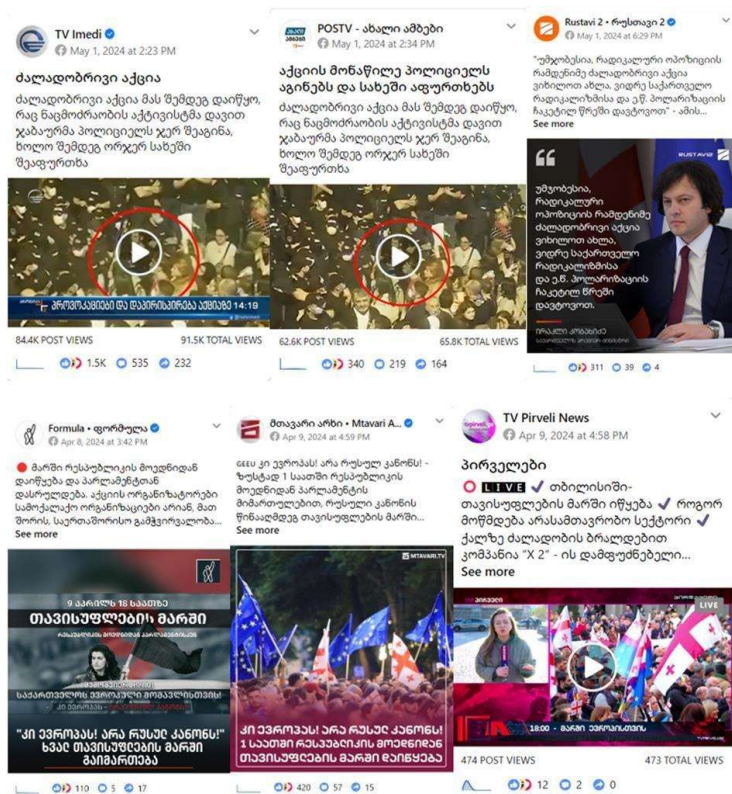
Coverage of the demonstrations by opposition and government-critical media openly criticized the law, using slogans such as: “No to Russian law!” or “No to the Russian regime”. An analysis of over 3,000 Facebook posts containing the keywords “Russian” and “law” showed that as many as 1,576 of them included the protest slogan “No to Russian law”.

The message distributed by pro-government media consistently presented the law as the “Georgian law” or the “transparency law”, accompanied by statements from politicians of the ruling party, who emphasized that the law serves Georgian interests and is crucial for ensuring transparency. The published statements also strongly echoed a narrative presenting the law as being in line with European values, or even with EU recommendations, and the slogan “Yes to Georgian law” – created in response to the protests – was promoted.



Screenshot of posts with identical captions published by three pro-government television stations.

Pro-government channels sought to portray the demonstrations as violent and organized by “radical groups,” including opposition parties, in order to undermine their legitimacy. The narratives used included claims that protesters were attacking the police, whereas in reality, Georgian police were being accused of using excessive force against protesters. Additionally, pro-government commentator Levan Nikolaishvili stated on Imedi TV that the US Embassy in Georgia had instructed opposition leaders on how to conduct more “radical protests.”

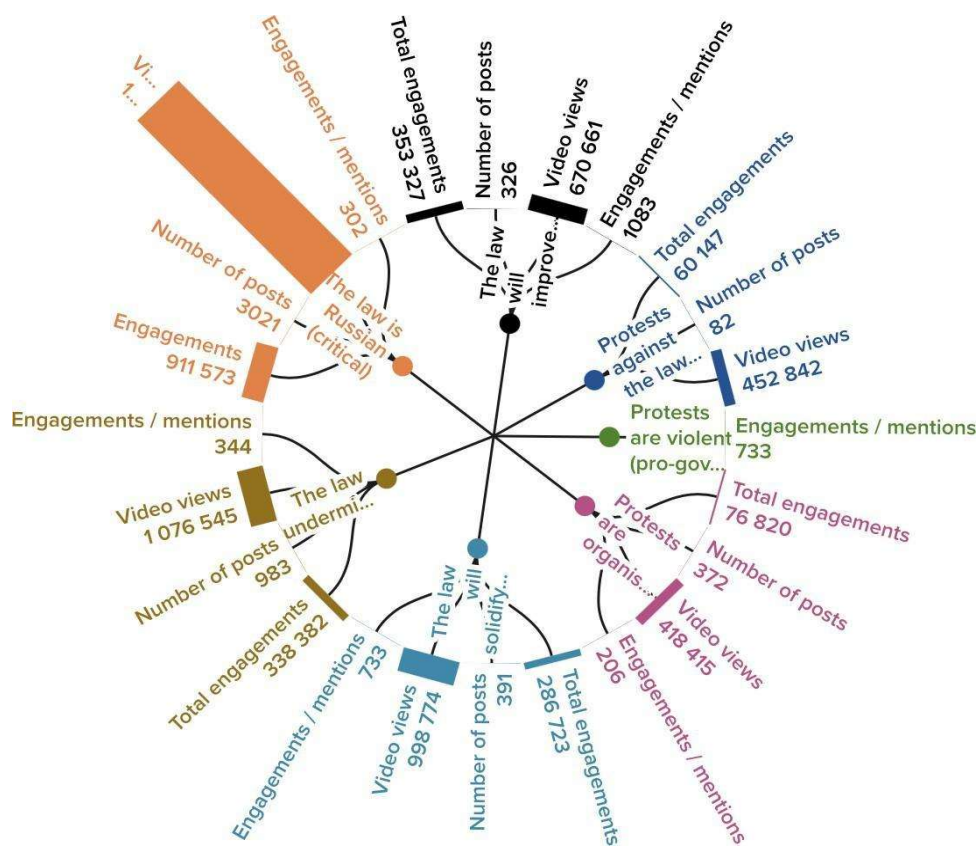


Top: pro-government media discredit the protests; video and statements are presented as evidence of their radical nature.

Bottom: critical media distribute logistical information related to the protests.

From the analysis of activity on the Facebook platform, a picture emerges indicating greater activity by opposition television channels—they published posts more frequently and generated higher engagement than pro-government media. Between April 3 and May 31, 2024, the law was referred to as “Russian” in over 3,000 posts, which together received more than 900,000 engagements. For comparison, pro-government channels mentioned the law only 320 times in the context of transparency, and these posts received over 353,000 engagements. During the analyzed period, media favorable to the authorities published 82 posts portraying the protests as violent and/or organized by “radicals”, while critical channels published 372 posts about protests organized by young people and students. In addition, 391 posts from pro-government channels discussed the law as strengthening Georgia’s sovereignty and independence, attracting over 280,000 engagements. On the other hand, 983 posts from critical television stations

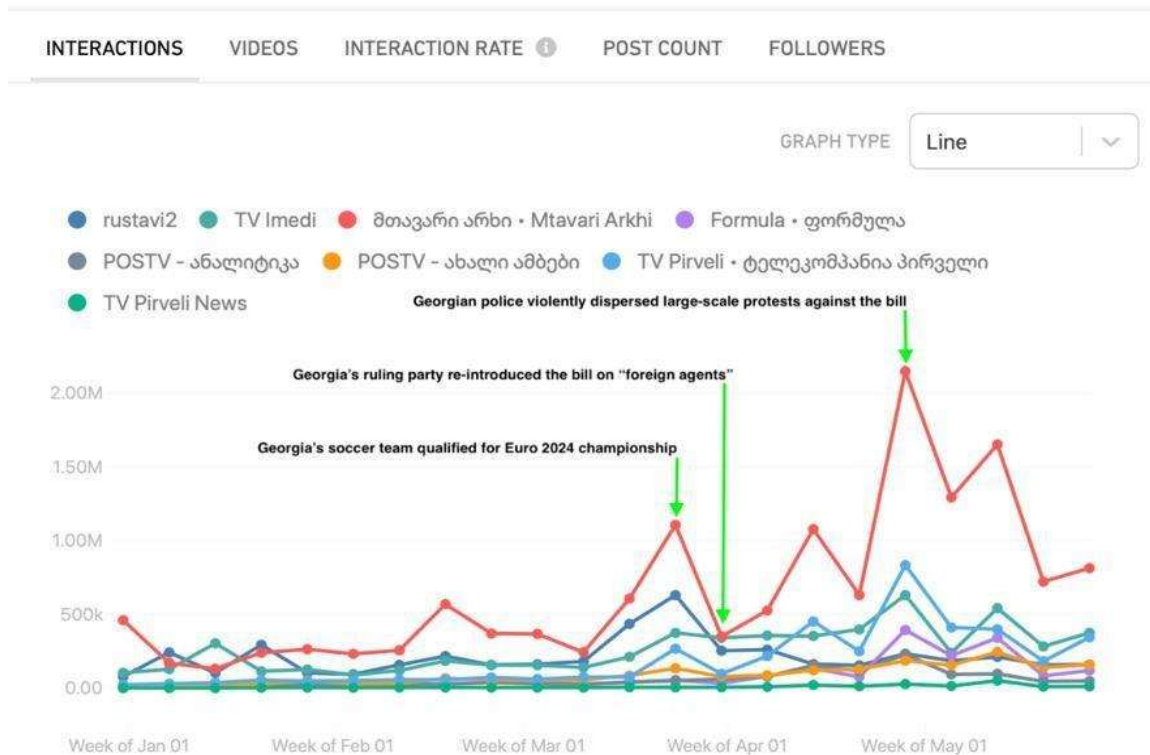
argued that the law could undermine Georgia's aspirations to join the European Union, and these posts received over 330,000 engagements.



The diagram illustrates key indicators of posts published by the examined television channels.

It should be emphasized that only channels considered pro-government used paid promotion of their content as advertisements, which indicates that the engagement accompanying the coverage by opposition media was entirely organic – unlike the results achieved by pro-government outlets. In total, over 1,800 Facebook ads were identified, aimed at distributing narratives regarding the protests. These data correspond with the observed significant increase in engagement for content from opposition television channels during the protests. Between April 3 and May 4, government-critical television channels gathered over 14.2 million engagements, while pro-government channels achieved only half that—7.4 million. For example, the channel Mtavari Arkhi exceeded 2 million interactions between April 24 and May 4, and TV Pirveli ranked second. For comparison, between January 1 and April 3,

opposition channels collectively received 5 million engagements, while pro-government channels received just over 4.6 million.



Interactions with content published by selected TV stations' Facebook pages.

7. Recommendations / Suggestions

Georgia, as a key country in the South Caucasus region, faces intense challenges in its information environment. Over recent years, a strong polarization of the media has been observed, with outlets divided into pro-government and opposition camps. Trust in traditional media, such as television, is systematically declining, especially among younger age groups. Television, while still dominant, is losing ground to social media, which is now one of the main sources of information – particularly for young people.

Anti-Western, pro-Russian narratives and disinformation concerning social, political, and geopolitical issues are widely disseminated. Russia remains the main source of disinformation, employing various propaganda techniques to weaken Georgia's pro-Western aspirations and destabilize society. Many websites spread Russian

disinformation. These portals (linked to Russian sources) serve as primary sources, providing material for further multiplication. Poland is portrayed as a country interfering in the affairs of other states, and relations with the US and NATO are emphasized as a threat to the sovereignty and security of the region.

a) Summary of the information environment

Digital transformation is changing society's information habits, which has a significant impact on the way events are perceived and public opinion is shaped.

Main characteristics of Georgia's information environment

Traditional Media: television remains the dominant source of information, especially in rural areas, although its popularity is declining. Print media is losing importance, particularly in rural regions where access to newspaper and magazine distribution is limited. Radio plays a significant role in delivering news, educational, and entertainment content.

Media linked to political groups: channels such as Imedi TV and PosTV are associated with the ruling party and promote government propaganda. Obiektivi is linked to the Alliance of Patriots and openly supports pro-Russian narratives. Alt-Info, established by radical right-wing groups, also promotes pro-Russian narratives.

Social Media: social media have gained enormous importance and constitute the second main source of information for 22% of market research respondents. They are the main environment for the spread of disinformation due to the lack of filters, limited regulations, and algorithms that create information bubbles.

Trust in the Media: 25% of Georgians say they distrust any television channels. The political polarization that permeates Georgian media is a major reason for this. Rural communities have higher levels of television use and trust, while minority groups have lower trust in traditional media.

Informal Sources of Information: family members, neighbors, friends, and colleagues play a key role in information sharing, especially among ethnic minorities. Respondents who speak Armenian and Azerbaijani largely rely on informal and unfiltered channels of information.

Vulnerability to Disinformation: the increasing use of the internet and declining trust in traditional media heighten vulnerability to unverified and potentially misleading content. Rural and minority communities are particularly susceptible to the effects of disinformation due to limited access to diverse sources of information.

b) Strategic analysis – The impact of the regional situation on Poland's strategic objectives

The information situation in Georgia is of significant importance for Poland's strategic objectives in the region. As an active promoter of democracy, freedom of speech, and European integration, Poland can use its experience to support Georgia in the fight against disinformation. The stability of Georgia and its resilience to external influences, including Russian propaganda, are crucial for ensuring the security of NATO's eastern flank and for building a broader alliance of pro-Western states.

Threats posed by disinformation may weaken Georgia's integration with the European Union and NATO, which is contrary to Poland's interests. Additionally, Poland's experience in combating disinformation and developing democratic media can become a valuable resource for strategic cooperation with Georgia.

c) Trainings

To enhance competencies in combating disinformation, we recommend implementing the following training programs:

Training for Journalists:

- **Workshops on fact-checking** and recognizing disinformation, which will strengthen journalists' skills.
- **Training on journalistic ethics** and responsible information dissemination.
- **Training on using digital tools** for monitoring and analyzing social media.

Training for Public Officials:

- **Training in information security** and recognizing disinformation threats such as FIMI.
- **Training in source analysis** and information verification.

Training for NGOs:

- **Training in media literacy** and building resilience to disinformation.
- **Workshops on social communication** and local community engagement.
- **Training in media monitoring** and disinformation analysis.

Training for Opinion Leaders and Influencers:

- **Training on the responsible use of social media** and avoiding the spread of disinformation.
- **Workshops on recognizing disinformation campaigns** and manipulation techniques.

d) Implementation

To ensure the knowledge contained in the report is used effectively, it is recommended to implement the following actions in areas such as:

Strengthening Independent Media:

- **Financial and technical support** for independent media in Georgia, enabling them to compete with pro-government and pro-Russian media.

- **Building digital infrastructure**—developing regional media centers and strengthening independent news channels to increase diversity and the quality of information access.
- **Support for the development of digital media** and internet access, especially in rural areas and among minority communities.
- **Media literacy initiatives** for society to increase resilience to disinformation.
- **Implementation of social media regulations**—cooperation with global platforms to increase responsibility for content published online.

Monitoring and Analysis of Disinformation:

- **Creation of local analytical centers (think tanks/NGOs)** – dedicated research teams should monitor and analyze disinformation in Georgia, identifying key threats and trends.
- **Establishment of a media and social media platform monitoring system** for the identification and analysis of disinformation campaigns.
- **Development of analytical tools** to track the flow of disinformation and identify its sources, **using the DISARM framework**.
- **Regular publication of disinformation analysis reports** that will be available to the public and policymakers.

International Cooperation:

- **Building coalitions** with other countries and international organizations working to combat disinformation.
- **Exchanging information and experiences** with foreign partners who have expertise in fighting disinformation.
- **Supporting intercultural dialogue** and youth exchange programs to build bridges between societies.

Targeted Actions for Vulnerable Groups:

- **Development of communication strategies** tailored to the specific needs and preferences of different age and ethnic groups.
- **Support for social initiatives** and local leaders to reach rural and minority communities.
- **Creation of informational content** in minority languages to increase their access to reliable sources of information.

Responding to Information Crises:

- **Creation of an alert system** – development of mechanisms for rapid response to disinformation campaigns that could destabilize society.
- **Development of protocols for responding** to crisis situations where disinformation could be particularly harmful.

e) Communication actions

To effectively counteract disinformation, the following communication actions are recommended:

Promoting Reliable Information:

- **Supporting independent media** in creating trustworthy informational content.
- **Providing alternative sources of information** for the public, including in minority languages.
- **Developing online platforms** and mobile applications that will promote reliable information.

Building Public Awareness:

- **Educational campaigns** about recognizing disinformation and manipulation techniques.
- **Organizing public debates** and informational meetings to raise social awareness.

- **Creating informational materials** in various formats (video, audio, infographics) tailored to the needs of different audience groups.

Responding to Disinformation:

- **Rapid and decisive response** to disinformation campaigns, including debunking false information and exposing sources of disinformation.
- **Collaboration with social media platforms** to combat disinformation and remove fake accounts.
- **Promotion of positive narratives and values** that counteract disinformation and strengthen pro-Western sentiments.

Utilizing Influencers and Opinion Leaders:

- **Collaboration with trusted opinion leaders** and influencers to reach various social groups and strengthen positive messaging.
- **Engaging them in informational and educational campaigns** to increase the reach and effectiveness of these initiatives.

f) (R&D) Development

The advancement of research and technological innovation (R&D) is a key element in countering disinformation and FIMI (Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference). Recommended actions targeting Georgian NGOs should include:

Development of Analytical Tools:

- **Creating tools** to track the flow of disinformation and identify its sources.
- **Utilizing artificial intelligence and machine learning** to analyze large datasets and identify patterns of disinformation.

Research on Disinformation:

- **Conducting scientific research** into the mechanisms of disinformation and its impact on society.
- **Analyzing the effectiveness of various strategies** for combating disinformation and adapting these strategies to the specific conditions in Georgia.
- **Examining the factors** that make groups or individuals vulnerable to disinformation and developing methods to strengthen societal resilience.

Development of Fact-Checking Technologies:

- **Creation of platforms and applications** for fact-checking and identifying false information.
- **Development of tools** for automatic detection of image and video manipulation.
- **Support for fact-checking initiatives** and public education on information verification.

Cooperation with Universities and Research Institutes:

- **Establishing cooperation with universities and research institutes** in Georgia and abroad to conduct joint research projects on disinformation.
- **Organizing conferences and academic seminars** on disinformation and information security.
- **Supporting scholarship programs** for young researchers interested in the topic of disinformation.

Knowledge and Technology Transfer:

- **Organization of training sessions and workshops** for Georgian NGOs on new technologies and tools for combating disinformation.
- **Supporting the exchange of knowledge and technology** between NGOs in Georgia and foreign organizations.
- **Creation of open platforms** for sharing data and information on disinformation.

Implementation of the above actions and adoption of the outlined strategies will enable a more effective fight against disinformation in Georgia, increase societal awareness, and strengthen the country's pro-Western aspirations. As a strategic partner, Poland can play a key role in building a stable and resilient information environment in Georgia by supporting both pro-democratic political groups and non-governmental organizations in achieving these goals.

Recommendations for Poland

- **Strengthening pro-Polish narratives**
 - **Active Presentation** of Poland's Contribution to Regional Development and Stability
 - **Emphasizing the Positive Aspects** of Polish-Georgian Relations and Strengthening Ties Between Societies
 - **Countering Anti-Polish Propaganda** and Clarifying False Narratives
- **Supporting Pro-Democratic Forces:** active Support for Pro-Democratic Political Forces, Media, and Non-Governmental Organizations in Georgia
- **Strengthening Resilience to Disinformation:** Cooperation with International Partners to Combat Disinformation, Building Societal Resilience to Manipulation, and Investing in Educational Media
- **Supporting Civil Society Development:** Supporting Non-Governmental Organizations, Educational Projects, and Activists Who Promote Democratic Values
- **Communication Diversification:** Adapting Communication to Different Audience Groups in Georgia, Including Rural and Minority Communities
- **Cooperation with the EU and NATO:** Collaboration with international partners to monitor the situation in Georgia and take coordinated actions for regional stabilization.
- **Monitoring and Analysis of the Situation:** Maintaining ongoing monitoring of the situation in Georgia, especially in the context of disinformation campaigns and upcoming elections.

- **Financial Support:** Supporting pro-Western projects and independent media financially, especially those under pressure from the government.
- **Increasing Societal Awareness:** Building awareness among Georgian society about the threats posed by disinformation and strengthening critical thinking skills.
- **Active Diplomacy:** Conducting active diplomacy with Georgia to strengthen cooperation and ensure that the country does not drift away from its European path.

Poland has a strategic interest in promoting the stability and integration of Georgia with European and Atlantic structures, and the above-mentioned actions are crucial for achieving this goal.

To summarize, combating disinformation and FIMI (Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference) in Georgia requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach based on cooperation, education, and support for technological development. Poland could take on a strategic role in this process, as it still retains institutional – and even personal – memory of emerging from the Russian sphere of influence and building democratic standards. As a partner to Georgia, Poland has a significant role to play in this process.