

Inside Georgia's Anti-Western Media: Narratives and the Economics Behind Them

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Abstract

This study maps how anti-Western narratives are constructed and amplified by two high-reach, pro-government Georgian outlets—Imedi TV and POSTV, which are closely aligned with the ruling Georgian Dream party—and how economic ties to Russia help sustain those messages. Using mixed-methods content analysis (quantitative coding and qualitative framing) of 16 prime-time TV programs (~25 hours) and ~700 Facebook cards published between 1 June and 20 July 2023, and comparative desk research on Russian media (25 items, 2022–2023), we identified 19 recurring frames that together form a coordinated anti-Western pattern.

The most frequent frames sow nihilism and distrust toward NATO and Western partners (19% of coded TV frames), portray a Western-driven “second front”/war risk, discredit the U.S. ambassador and selected MEPs, depict Ukraine as unfriendly, and attack liberal values and civil society. On Facebook, ~65% of Imedi’s cards were political; 11% (~50) carried explicit anti-Western messages and achieved disproportionately high reach. Within the highest-reach set (31 cards), 58% targeted the U.S. ambassador/administration, the EU, or MEPs. Editorial selection systematically highlighted crises in the West while omitting Russia’s economic troubles, and Georgia-based narratives closely synchronized with Russian outlets over time.

Linking content to political economy, we argue that Georgia’s dependencies—energy and trade exposure, tourism/migration/remittance flows, and a small, concentrated ad market with heavy state/para-state spend—raise the opportunity cost of contradicting Kremlin-aligned frames, making “peace at any price” messaging commercially and politically attractive.

We conclude that as these dependencies intensify, anti-Western framing becomes more prevalent and harder-edged. Mitigation requires economic diversification; transparency and deconcentration of state/SOE advertising; independent audience measurement; robust election-period monitoring of TV and social feeds; and sustained support for fact-checking, plural newsrooms, and media literacy.

Key words: Anti-Western propaganda, Georgian media, Russian media, Economics

Introduction

The Georgian media reflects the agenda of the polarized political environment. Although the country has declared Euro-Atlantic aspirations, anti-Western patterns¹ typical of Russian propaganda are emerging in a coordinated manner in the pro-government media outlets (Imedi TV, Georgian Public Broadcaster - First Channel, Maestro TV, Rustavi 2 TV, POSTV) which have a sizeable audience.

The purpose of this report is to analyze the editorial agenda and message box of Imedi TV and POSTV, exposing the government's stance on Western policies and potential adherence to Russian narratives.

The report answers the following questions: 1) What are the main anti-Western patterns in the media and how do they target different audiences? 2) What is portrayed as the main threat in the pro-government media? Who creates the “enemy image” in the media and how? 3) What is the pro-government media narrative about who should (not) be trusted by the population (West vs Russia)? 4) How do shifts in Georgia's dependence on Russia causally affect the prevalence and tone of Kremlin-aligned narratives in pro-government TV news and their affiliated social media?

1. Methodology and design

Quantitative and qualitative content analysis along with desk research were used for this pilot study. Through the content analysis, the main categories of messages/frames were identified (a total of 19 categories). The coding process enabled the pinpointing of consistently repeated media frames (messages, sources, cards, etc.), creating a uniform pattern/ image that ultimately revealed the editorial policy of pro-government TV channels.

Research period and sampling:

Analysis of TV stories in the Georgian media and social media cards published during two month period (from June 1 to July 20, 2023). A total of 16 television stories were selected for analysis (approximately 25 hours) aired on the main news and analytical programs of Imedi TV and POSTV (programs: *Imedi Week*, *Weekly Post*, *Real Politics with Giorgi Akhvlediani*). As to the social media / Facebook cards posted on the social media page of Imedi TV, approximately 700 such cards were selected for analysis.

Russian media monitoring was conducted based on available sampling and sources of 2022-2023. Available Russian media outlets were selected for comparative analysis: <https://www.1tv.ru/>, <https://lenta.ru/>, <https://regnum.ru/>, <https://iz.ru/>, <https://cominf.org/news>, <https://ria.ru/>, <https://tv.rbc.ru/>, <https://apsnypress.info/ru/>, <https://tass.ru/>, <https://kavkazplus.com/index.php>, <https://vz.ru/>, <https://www.gazeta.ru/>, <https://sputnik.by/>, <https://rg.ru/>, <https://rossaprimavera.ru/>; www.youtube.com was used, a total of 25 materials were processed.

The study's limitation is its analysis of a relatively short time frame (two months) and its exclusive focus on only two pro-governmental media outlets. In the future, it would be valuable to conduct a comparative analysis with a broader and more diverse sample.

¹Pattern – Repeating messages, images, statements in the media that create a consistent frame and image

2. Key findings

The report identified the main categories of anti-Western messages and the so-called media frames. A total of 19 anti-Western categories/frames were identified (see Table 2) that are interrelated. In some TV stories, there is **not only one frame, but a combination of several frames (minimum 4 and maximum 12), which intensifies the effect of the anti-Western narrative**. The media coverage creates an anti-Western pattern (repetitive narrative) that is consistently echoed across various mediums (television, social network / Facebook). This pattern is not only reflected in the statements of the pro-government and its satellite parties, but also in the editorial policies of broadcasting company (in the texts of journalists, selected headlines and sources, topics highlighted during prime time, leads and intros, etc.).

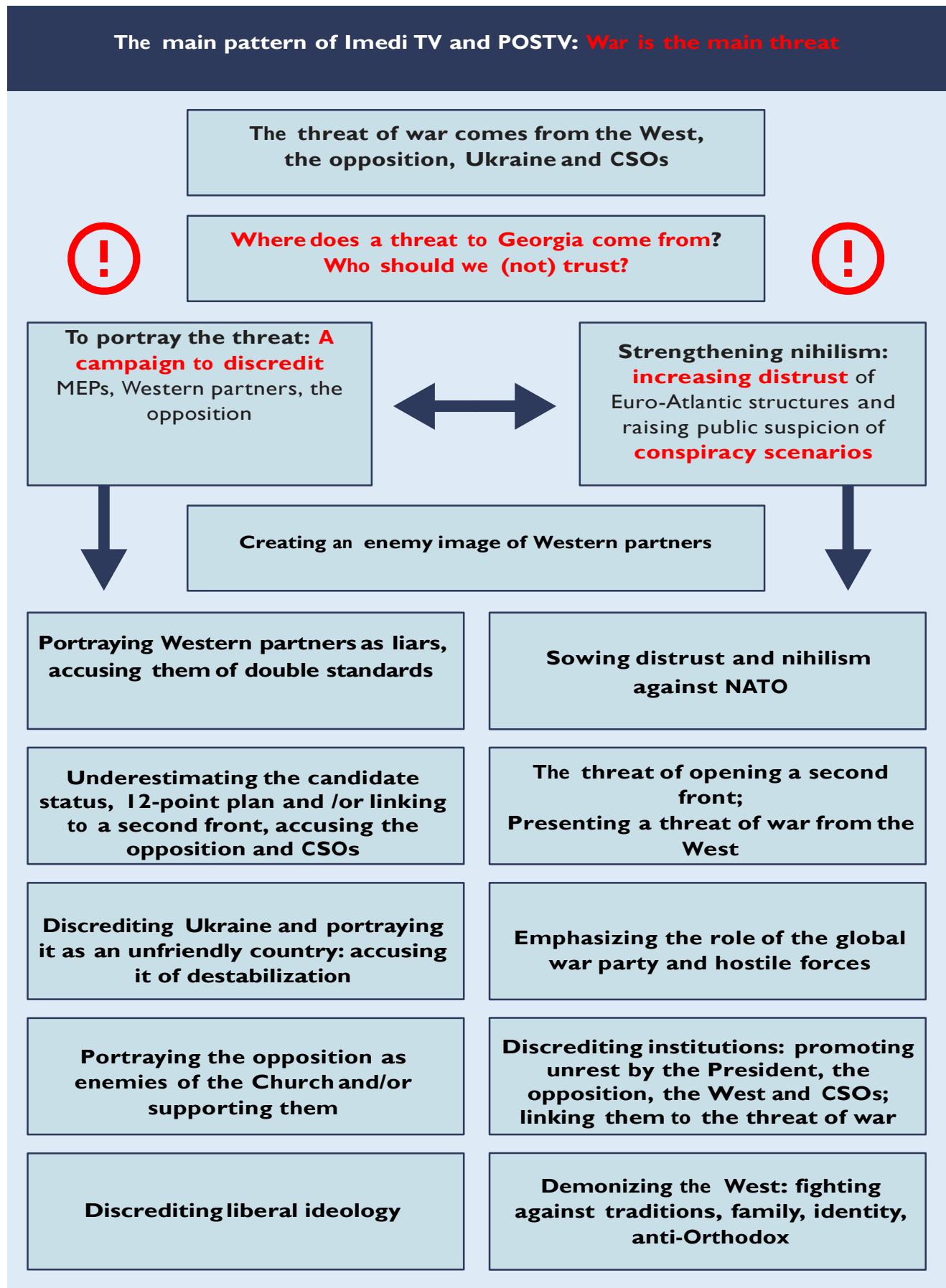
About 65% of the cards on Imedi TV's Facebook platform contain political content. Among the Facebook cards featuring an anti-Western narrative (approx. 11%=50 cards,), whose reach among the users of the Imedi TV page was remarkably high compared to other cards. Among the Facebook cards featuring an anti-Western narrative, whose reach among the users of the Imedi TV page was remarkably high compared to other cards (there are 31 such cards in total: the number of shares is up to 100 and more, and the number of reactions is up to 1000 and more), **58% come to criticize the U.S. ambassador, the U.S. administration, the European Union and the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). These cards may have been sponsored**. Among them, the Facebook cards listed in Table 1 achieved the highest reach (data updated on 22.08.2023).

Table N1: Facebook cards with the highest reach

Links	Headline/lead	Number of comments	Number of shares	Number of reactions
Card N15:	“Europeans are becoming poorer. Life on the continent is rapidly losing its shine”	2600	382	5600
Card N23:	“People’s Power” about Kelly Degnan	749	188	4700
Card N14:	The EU Empire is about to dissolve	2000	196	4000
Card N17:	Irakli Kobakhidze’s statement about a specific ambassador [referring to the U.S. ambassador]	134	41	2800
Card N 32:	Mamuka Mdinardze criticizes internal and external forces that “are against peace and stable development”	152	121	2800
Card N39:	Irakli Kobakhidze: „In 2008, Saakashvili was summoned and ordered to do something.”	481	26	2400
Card N33:	Shalva Papuashvili slams MEPs	84	38	2200
Card N41:	Zaza Shatirishvili: “The American Special Services are behind everything, demanding that Ivanishvili ... drag Georgia into the war.”	265	69	2100

The pro-government Imedi TV uses different mediums (television, Facebook) to disseminate different types of information and targets different users. The anti-Western messages on these mediums are coordinated and complementary. The anti-Western editorial pattern of Imedi TV and POSTV is shown in **Figure N1**.

Figure N1: Editorial pattern of Imedi TV and POSTV



The agenda of the main analytical programs of the week selected for analysis and the selection of Facebook cards are part of the editorial policy. It is important not only what the media space is devoted to, but also what the media **does not cover**. For example, in the coverage of crime and unrest in the world, during the research period, none of the Facebook cards are devoted to the economic crisis in Russia, while crisis, crime and unrest in the West appear constantly in the cards of Imedi TV.

Pro-government TV channels repeat such Russian clichés that were born in the Russian political space. These main Russian clichés include:

1. Distrust towards the USA, its ambassador, the European Union, and European parliamentarians.
2. The belief in double standards in Western policies, leading to skepticism and mistrust.
3. Suspicions of Western intentions, including the perception of potential chaos and a hidden agenda, often referred to as a “second front.”
4. Concerns about the potentially hazardous activities of various organizations.

The campaign to discredit MEPs and politicians in Brussels is systematically carried out in the Georgian media in the context of accusations of trying to drag Georgia into the war, which is another anti-Western category discussed in the report. Anti-Western narratives are further supported by conspiracy theories about the global war party, dragging Georgia into the war and “opening the second front.”

The report revealed that the anti-Western pattern (in journalists’ texts and government statements) is synchronized with Russian media coverage. The messages complement each other, creating a continuous and reparative narrative. This coincidence is systemic, which is confirmed by the fact that the same anti-Western messages are repeated in the Georgian and Russian media with an interval of months and sometimes years. **For example, both during and after the research period, the Russian media cited the statements of the Georgian government as evidence of the call to open the “second front”.** During the research period, significant resources (proved with number of cards and reach to the audience) were spent on the campaign of Imedi TV’s Facebook cards regarding the “opening of the second front.”

An important line in the strengthening of nihilism and distrust towards the West is the discussion of the prospect of Ukraine joining NATO, which, according to the Georgian government statements and Imedi Facebook cards, is unrealistic. An important line in the TV stories and Facebook cards is the portrayal of Ukraine as an unfriendly country in which not only politicians, but also high-ranking clergymen are involved.

The discrediting of the public and CSO resistance campaign against the adoption of the Russian-style law in March 2023 and its association with the “opening of the second front” and the demonization of the West is a continuation of the anti-Western rhetoric. Although several months have passed since the March rallies, the attempts to discredit the civil society sector and to keep the discussions about the Russian-style law alive continue through the Facebook cards of Imedi TV.

As Georgia’s economic reliance on Russia intensifies, Kremlin-aligned messaging becomes more prevalent and harder-edged—organized around a “war/second front” master frame and synchronized across pro-government TV and affiliated Facebook inventories.

The link is mediated by money and markets: a small, concentrated ad market (with heavy state/para-state spend), sector exposures (energy/trade), and flows (tourism, migration, remittances). When these run “hot,” the cost of contradicting Kremlin-friendly frames rises; content shows selection bias—Western-crisis cards dominate while Russia’s economic troubles are omitted.

TV’s dominance plus tight ad conditions and price pressure make fear-forward, “peace at any price” packages land hardest; a chilled EU track supplies fresh cues. Diversifying economic levers and deconcentrating the media-advertising spine expands space for alternative agendas.

The main anti-Western pattern of Imedi TV and POSTV can be summarized as follows: Georgia faces threats from the West, the opposition, Ukraine and civil society organizations (CSOs); the war in Georgia is considered the main danger; the West is accused of having double standards, it is discredited and demonized: according to the narrative, the West cannot be trusted and Ukraine is an unfriendly country; also, the U.S. Ambassador and MEPs are unfriendly, they lie, etc.

The threat is portrayed through a campaign to discredit MEPs, Western partners, the opposition and CSOs; nihilism is used as a tool to present the threat, which is reinforced by increasing distrust in Euro-Atlantic structures (for example, the constant focus on the economic crisis) and raising suspicions in society regarding conspiracy scenarios.

Along with the threat, the TV stories provide a solution and an answer to the question:

Who should we trust? The leading message in this case is that **only the government deserves to be trusted**. The frames are outlined in three directions:

1. Peace policy vs the second front
2. Highlighting the deteriorating economic and social situation in Europe;
3. Demonstrating distrust in European institutions and creating an alternative backdrop: presenting Russia as a lifeline.

3. Analysis

During the research period (01.06.-20.07.2023), about 20 anti-Western frames/categories were identified in the analyzed TV materials in the Georgian media (Imedi TV, POSTV), which are interconnected and repeated in a coordinated manner. In individual TV stories, there is **not one, but a combination of several (at least 4 and at most 12) frames, which increases the effect of the anti-Western narrative**. The quantitative and percentage distribution is shown in Table N2.

Table N2: Ranking of anti-Western frames

N	Media frames: Imedi TV, POSTV	N	%
1	Sowing distrust and nihilism against NATO	28	19
3	Encouraging unrest by the West, the opposition and CSOs	15	10
4	A threat of opening the second front	12	8
5	Portraying European partners as liars and accusing them of double standards	11	8
6	Creating an enemy image of European partners	11	8
7	Demonization of the West (including anti-Orthodox/Christian rhetoric; portrayal of the struggle against traditions, identity and the family institution)	10	7
8	Diminishing the candidate status, the 12-point plan and/or linking it to the second front, shifting the blame to the opposition and CSOs	8	6
9	Discrediting Ukraine and portraying it as an unfriendly country	7	5
10	Discrediting the opposition (with emphasis on the National Movement), linking it to the threat of war, calling it the party of war and radicals	7	5
11	Use of ambiguity and disinformation in describing this or that event	7	5
12	Emphasizing the role of the global war party and hostile forces	6	4
13	Presenting Saakashvili as part of a conspiracy plan	6	4
14	Discrediting and reducing confidence in institutions (i.e. presidency, media and civil society sector)	5	3
15	Accusing Ukraine of destabilizing Georgia	4	3
16	Pointing out the threat of war from Europe	3	2
17	Discrediting the campaign against the Russian-style law	2	1
18	Portraying the opposition as enemies of the Church	2	1
19	Discrediting liberal ideology (liberal drug policy with a negative connotation)	2	1

Anti-Western messages are emphasized not only in the statements of the pro-government and its satellite parties, but also **in the texts of anchors and journalists, in the headlines and leads of TV reports**. It is also noteworthy that the editorial policy of a media outlet is highlighted when an anti-Western message appears as the main message on the screen, or a journalist emphasizes it in his/her text. A summary of anti-Western headlines and leads (with hyperlinks) is presented in Table N3.

Table N3: Anti-Western headlines

Television, date	Headlines of TV stories
Imedi, July 16, 2023	<u>Enemies of the Church</u>
Imedi, June 25, 2023	<u>Enemies of the candidate status</u>
Imedi, July 9, 2023	<u>Supporters of the second front</u>
Imedi, June 18, 2023	<u>CSO fraud of the century</u>
Imedi, June 18, 2023	<u>Defenders of the policy of executioners</u>
Imedi, June 11, 2023	<u>The face of Western indifference</u>
Imedi, June 11, 2023	<u>Horse trading with Euro status</u>
POSTV, June 19, 2023	<u>The law on de-oligarchization lost in the walls of European structures</u>
POSTV, June 4, 2023	<u>Why do our partners demand from us what they often do not fulfill themselves?!</u>

The analysis of **694 Facebook cards** published on Facebook during the research period revealed the trends with relevant categories/trends shown in Table N4.

Table N4: Frames of Facebook cards

Frames of Imedi TV's Facebook cards	N
About advertising the government activities	147
About Saakashvili, pardoning Gvaramia, opposition, SCOs	154
Conspiracy scenarios, discrediting and demonization of the West (about the U.S. and the U.S. Ambassador, Russian-style law, global war party, double standards of the West, etc.)	50
About Ukraine, NATO and sanctions	47
About obtaining candidate status	32
Other: science, sport, art, literature, current developments, etc.	264

Cards with political content on Imedi TV's Facebook platform account for about 65%, with every fifth card (N=50, 11%) dedicated to discrediting the West. **This category deserves special attention.**

3.1. Sowing nihilism and reducing trust in the West

One of the main categories (with the highest number of frames: 19%) is aimed at sowing nihilism in society and reducing trust in the West. TV stories and cards were prepared in this direction.

⇒ During the research period, the story headlined “[Horse-trading with Euro status](#)” prepared by Imedi TV (date: June 11, 2023) helps to sow nihilism and reduce trust in the West. Number of anti-Western frames in the material: 10.

In the footage, the host emphasizes the West's double standards: “**The August war really showed the double standards of the West.** We saw together that quite soon after the worst days of 2008, the talks with Moscow about the reset policy and close economic relations began, and this was an open statement that the war in Georgia meant nothing...”

I “**The double standards of the West**” is a Russian cliché that is often used by the Russian media and Russian speakers, and that “fits” various topics in the Russian media. An example of this is the [article](#) published by Tass (11.07.2023) “МИД РФ заявил, что ООН проявляет двойные стандарты к оказанию гуманитарной помощи Сирии” (the Russian Foreign Ministry stated that the UN applies double standards in providing humanitarian aid to Syria). The same media outlet published another [article](#) (24.09.2022) on “double standards of the West”, quoting Lavrov, headlined “Лавров заявил о двойных стандартах Запада в отношении референдумов” (Lavrov announced about double standards of the West regarding referendums). Another Russian outlet “Pikabu” talks about double standards of the West in the context of color revolutions. In the [article](#) “Двойной стандарт или двойная мораль Западного мира” (Double standards or double morals of the Western world), the Russian media outlet criticizes the U.S., Great Britain and international organizations for sanctioning the Russian propaganda media.

⇒ Another TV story aired on Imedi TV called “[The Face of Western Indifference](#)” (date: June 11, 2023) targets the West, the opposition, European partners, Mikheil Saakashvili, Ukraine. The number of anti-Western frames in the material is 12.

The journalist says in the story: “**The finger-wagging policy [of the European partners] continues.** Georgia is criticized for not imposing individual sanctions on Russia, which would have caused the economy to fall within 10-18%, leading to a complete economic collapse. Georgia is being asked to do what no Western country has done to stop Russia since the August war. On the contrary, on the second anniversary of the August war, the European leaders posed with Putin on Red Square. **The double standards of the West** and a lesson from which, unfortunately, Europe has learned nothing. Our country has joined all international sanctions, which for some reason **does not satisfy the radicals' patrons.** The goal is declared, **the second front, which could not be realized, and peace, whose defenders in this country turned out to be more than those who wanted war...**”

The journalist says in the text: “...**what did the West do in 2008 to provide real, effective help?** What did it do to prevent Russia's annexation of Crimea? And what is it doing today, when several Russian military bases are stationed in two occupied regions of Georgia, and almost every week our citizens are kidnapped from the divided villages along the occupation line, which is always witnessed by the representatives of the EU Monitoring Mission.”

The same story includes anti-Western quotes from the government and its satellite parties:

- Sozar Subari: "...a similar action [Ukraine's bombing from Belarus] took place in 2008 against Georgia from the territory of Ukraine. The notorious cruiser "Maskva" left the territory of the Sevastopol military base for the Black Sea, from where the Kodori gorge was shelled with missiles."
- Petre Mamradze: "As always, after August 2008, the West put its interests much higher than the interests of Georgia or other regional interests, and acted consistently in this regard."
- Sozar Subari: "It is clear that neither the cruiser "Maskva" nor the military base obeyed Ukraine, but it was the territory of Ukraine, it was not the occupied territory... That is, if a military ship left Poti and bombarded Ukraine, something like this happened. Not only did Ukraine not try to interfere, it did not even make a statement that this was unacceptable to it."
- Petre Mamradze: Saakashvili tells Vice President Dick Cheney: "Dick, we do not want war, but if Russia comes against us, we will fight to the end, we will not run away like the Menshevik government did, we will defend our homeland." Cheney's response: "Mr. President, we do not want war either, but you should know that if you have to defend your country, the whole free world will be with you." This is more than enough for a person with psychics like Saakashvili. By the way, Cheney arrived in September and supported him in this way, but there was no real support."
- Shalva Papuashvili: "... I do not think that the bureaucrats in Brussels should decide from their warm offices whether Georgia should choose the path of escalation or not (a separate card was prepared for this statement)."

I The above discussed narrative is synchronized with the messages of Russian politicians. In the article published by the Russian news agency RIA Novosti (18.01.2023) „Лавров рассказал о способности Грузии противостоять Западу” (Lavrov talks about Georgia's ability to oppose the West), Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says that the Georgian government deserves respect because it opposes the West.

Most of the cards published on Imedi's Facebook page are aimed at sowing nihilism and reducing trust in the West. **The West is once again accused of double standards; it is discredited and demonized.** The cards question the West's willingness to help Ukraine, and the war waged by Russia is presented as a dead end in which Ukraine has no chance and should not count on Western help. This is an attempt to discredit the West as a strong and reliable friend in Georgian society.

The ranking of comments, shares and reactions on the cards is shown in Table N5, where clicking on the numbering takes us to the Facebook page.

Table N5: Reach ranking for Imedi TV cards (updated on 22.08.2023)

Cards: date, links	Headline/lead
Card #1: July 20, 2023	The Telegraph: Ukraine and the West are on the verge of a devastating defeat
Card #2: June 13, 2023	The Ukrainian army lost half of its Leopard R battle tanks in the counterattack.
Card #3: June 19, 2023	Documents obtained by Politico show that the sanctioned Russian military industrial enterprises “Промтехнология”, “ORSIS T-5000” and “ТЕТИС ППО” purchased hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition from the American company Hornady.
Card #4: June 19, 2023	Liga.net: Western equipment manufacturers help Russia bomb Ukrainian cities
Card #5: June 9, 2023	POLITICO: The U.S. may cut military aid to Ukraine if its counteroffensive is not successful.
Card #6: June 3, 2023	The Insider: 25 European companies continue to supply the Russian army
Card #7: June 15, 2023	New York Times: The U.S. nuclear power companies mainly use cheap uranium produced in Russia and pay billions of dollars to the Russian nuclear agency
Card #8: July 20, 2023	Lithuanian Public Broadcaster: “Despite the sanctions, expensive cars are being transported to Russia via Lithuania”
Card #9: July 12, 2023	Global Peace Index 2023: 65% of men aged 20-24 in Ukraine have fled the country or died during the hostilities
Card #10: July 6, 2023	U.S. presidential candidate Robert Kennedy Jr.: Ukraine has lost about 350,000 troops. This data is being concealed by the Ukrainian government. Both Kyiv and Washington are lying about the losses
Card #11: June 30, 2023	The United Nations: France should seriously address the problems of racism and racial discrimination in its law enforcement agencies
Card #12: June 30, 2023	Polish Prime Minister: Looted shops, barricades in the streets, it is happening now in the center of Paris. We do not want to see such scenes in the streets of Poland
Card #13: June 8, 2023	In France, a man armed with a knife wounded several children

Facebook cards N1, N2, N3, N4 had the most comments, shares and reactions in this category

The selection of cards is part of the editorial policy. The analysis shows that out of 700 cards about the crime situation in the world, not a single card is devoted to news about Russia, while crisis, crime and unrest in the West are constantly on the cards of Imedi TV (see cards N11, N12, N13). A part of the cards is devoted to the crisis in Europe, which further intensifies nihilism.

I Table N6 presents four cards, of which cards N14 and N15 have a rather high reach rate. The emphasis on the crisis in Europe is typical for the Russian media. A simple Google search can show this trend. Lenta.ru's [article](#) (19.07.2023) “Европе предрекли усиление кризиса. МЭА: спрос на электроэнергию в Европе упадет до самого низкого уровня с 2002 года” (Europe was predicted to face a worsening crisis. IEA: Electricity demand in Europe will fall to the lowest level since 2002) is followed by a video clip about the economic crisis in Europe. In the same period, Izvestia publishes an [article](#) about the economic crisis of the West (27.07.2023) „Назад в рецессию: европейская промышленность в остром кризисе“ (Back into recession: European industry in acute crisis). It is enough to type the words “crisis in Europe” in the search field of a particular Russian media outlet to get dozens of articles on this topic.

Table N6: Cards aimed at portraying a crisis in Europe and reducing confidence in Europe

Cards: date, links	Headline/lead
Card N14: June 1, 2023	The Telegraph: The EU empire is crumbling; due to the unconvincing response to the Ukraine crisis, the issue of the EU's credibility is on the agenda, and deep divisions have emerged between the EU member states regarding the issue of Ukraine.
Card N15: June 9, 2023	The Wall Street Journal: Europeans are becoming poorer. Life on the continent is rapidly losing its shine
Card N15a: June 9, 2023	In the first quarter of 2023, the eurozone entered a recession. According to Eurostat, the European statistics agency, GDP in the eurozone fell by 0.1% in the first quarter of this year.
Card N16: June 21, 2023	Politico: EU capitals want media law carve-out to spy on reporters

3.2. Campaign to discredit the United States and the U.S. Ambassador

POSTV's story about the de-oligarchization law lost in the walls of European structures (date: June 19, 2023), where the number of anti-Western frames is seven, is part of the campaign to discredit the U.S. Ambassador. The story includes a quote from Irakli Kobakhidze: “It is very bad that the Ambassador misled the public when she said that the Ukrainian law was supposedly withdrawn from the Venice Commission. It is unfortunate, I do not know who lied to the Ambassador... **This is not the only case; you remember that she [the U.S. Ambassador] also spread false information about the U.S. law, etc.**”

The 12-point plan is underestimated in the same story, namely in the journalist's text: “The main intrigue of this process is still unresolved, because if one of the main demands of the 12 points – de-oligarchization - is not necessary, then can the rest of the demands also be conditional? In other words, all these points and tasks are only tools of the political game. Therefore, what is part of the political game can only be lost in the political labyrinths, such as the 5th point of the 12-point plan - the law on de-oligarchization.”

In the article of RIA Novosti (21.08.2023) “Вы вредитель”. В Грузии обрушились на покидающего страну посла США / Депутат от “Грузинской мечты” Ираклий Заркуа назвал покидающего страну посла США вредителем” (“You are harmful.” In Georgia, the outgoing U.S. ambassador was attacked / Georgian Dream MP Irakli Zarkua called the outgoing U.S. ambassador as harmful”), the Ambassador is blamed for increasing polarization and creating a revolutionary wave. It also includes a quote from the Russian Ambassador to the United States that the U.S. should not try to interfere in the normalization of relations between Georgia and Russia.

Anti-American messages are systemic in the Russian media. An illustrative example is the story in which Russian experts’ assessments refer to the fact that donors are financing the falsification of election results. The U.S., which traditionally fights the Russian authorities, is blamed; embassy staff discuss revolutionary scenarios. The “color revolutions” in the countries of the former Soviet Union and the Middle East are cited as examples. Sweden’s interest is also explained in the story. Sweden is acting in the interests of its strategic partner - the U.S. A discrediting campaign in the Russian media is directed against the activities of the embassies, targeting Sweden and the United States. In the TV [story](#), the democracy-supporting projects implemented by the donors are presented as the activities of agents, the process of creating a network of agents and the practice of recruiting citizens. The trainings organized by them with the participation of the opposition and Russian bloggers are held to stage “mass unrest”. Here’s a quote from Putin: “We know that during the election period, representatives of some foreign countries organize those who are paid, those who receive grants, instruct them, prepare them to do certain things in order to influence the electoral process.”

During the research period, Imedi TV’s Facebook cards containing negative connotations about the United States and the U.S. Ambassador were identified. A significant portion of the cards are aimed at discrediting the United States, in general. The LGBTQ+ issue is also highlighted in the style of Russian propaganda, while gender equality is presented as a threat to national identity, Christianity, family and traditions. All the cards in this category that contain a quote from a Georgian politician use the statements of Irakli Kobakhidze, the chairman of Georgian Dream. In addition, we find the card with the statement of “People’s Power”, the satellite party of Georgian Dream, about the U.S. Ambassador. The ranking of the cards with the quotations of Irakli Kobakhidze, the chairman of the Georgian Dream party, about the U.S. ambassador, is presented in Table N 7.

Table N 7: Cards with the quotes of Irakli Kobakhidze, the chairman of the Georgian Dream party about the U.S. Ambassador

Cards, date, links	Headline/lead
Card #17: June 30, 2023	Irakli Kobakhidze: There was the clearest statement that directly implied support for foul language, i.e. support for polarization - a certain ambassador made this statement.
Card #18: June 15, 2023	Irakli Kobakhidze: It is fundamentally unacceptable to us when certain diplomats encourage polarization in Georgia. They need to look at the polarization that is fueled every day in their own country – they do not need to fuel polarization here.
Card #19: July 13, 2023	Irakli Kobakhidze on Kelly Degnan’s criticism of the Interior Ministry: It is not the ambassador’s business to give orders to arrest someone, a diplomat should not talk about it.
Card #20: June 28, 2023	Irakli Kobakhidze: When an influential ambassador comes out and says that swearing and foul language is civic activism and freedom of expression - that is certainly an encouragement of violence

Card #21: July 14, 2023	Irakli Kobakhidze: How can flights in Georgia somehow become the basis of risks? These are empty speculations, lies. How can the ambassador or any politician dare to do such a thing?
Card #22: June 21, 2023	Irakli Kobakhidze: I hope that under the next U.S. ambassador, the funding of such organizations, which are engaged in the implementation of revolutionary plans in the country, will be completely prevented.

The same category includes the cards with the negative opinions of other people about the U.S. administration and the ambassador (see Table N8). It is noteworthy that the Facebook card against the U.S. ambassador with the quote of People's Power, a satellite party of the ruling team, has the most reactions (N=4700).

Table N8: Cards with the negative opinions of other people about the U.S. administration and the ambassador

Cards, date, links	Headline/lead
Card #23, June 20, 2023	People's Power to Kelly Degnan: Why do not you leave this country alone? Why are you funding anti-national, anti-church and aggressive liberal-fascist organizations? Why are you funding and fueling polarization?
Card #24, July 17, 2023	Žygimantas Pavilionis: After the Vilnius Summit, we all learned that our biggest problem is not France and Germany, but Washington, the administration of the "Democrats"

3.3. Campaign to discredit MEPs

Imedi TV and its program "Imedi Week" devote significant resources to criticizing MEPs (members of the European parliament).

⇒ Imedi's story titled "**Politics of the Main Radical**" (date: July 16, 2023) combines six anti-Western frames and targets European partners, opposition and critical media.

The TV story includes anti-Western quotes from the government:

- **Irakli Kobakhidze:** These **odious MEPs have nothing to do with friendship with Georgia**. In fact, they are acting at the behest of forces that do not wish our country well. This is the reality.
- **Irakli Kobakhidze:** They are probably preparing him [referring to Nika Gvaramia] to be the leader of the radical opposition, or one of the leaders, which is also good. The more odious figures are brought to the fore in the radical opposition, the better.

- **Irakli Kobakhidze:** I do not think that Gvaramia will be able to make any significant contribution to the scenario that **the ill-wishers of this country have in mind**. As for who could be the mastermind, of course we are not talking about the level of MEPs, **these MEPs are also under the influence of certain forces**. After all, **there are forces that we call the global war party that are interested in destabilizing the country**.

- **Kakha Kaladze:** This [referring to the pardon of Nika Gvaramia) encourages polarization and such statements will have damaging and severe consequences, **even the actions of particular MEPs** at the rally.

There is also anti-Western rhetoric in the journalist's text: "... [MEPs] summoned Gvaramia to Strasbourg, made joint statements and even said that the country must be protected, describing Gvaramia as the so-called savior. The country really needs to be protected, but from radicals who are busy deepening polarization instead of depolarization, **discussing with individual MEPs how to destabilize domestic policy. A new scenario of destruction has already been written**. Anuki Gumbaridze will tell you what Viola von Cramon and others are preparing Nika Gvaramia for."

⇒ Imedi TV story (date: July 16, 2023) "**Enemies of the Church**" targets European partners and opposition, and the number of anti-Western frames is five.

Text of the journalist: "The archive contains many interesting episodes about the main radical [Nika Gvaramia]; it is impossible for him to betray the politics of hate that he has been building for years and not to continue it with the same success. **That is why some MEPs see in him a new opposition leader** who will conquer the peaks of polarization instead of depolarization. It is largely due to him that **the unprecedented attack on the Church and the Patriarch** by the radical wing continues to this day..."

⇒ Another [story](#) of Imedi TV (date: June 25, 2023) with the headline "**Zourabichvili – Patron of Media Sonder**" is a continuation of the same line. The story targets European partners, opposition, President Salome Zourabichvili. The number of anti-Western frames is three.

The TV story contains anti-Western government quotes:

- **Irakli Kobakhidze:** One agent was forced to pardon another agent. The President of Georgia considers herself accountable not to the Georgian society, but to **the odious MEPs and their patrons**. This shows under whose dictates the President of Georgia is acting.

The host of the program does not shy away from insulting epithets addressed to the MEPs: "**What Zourabichvili was hiding was revealed by Viola von Cramon**. The President decided to pardon the media sonder three weeks before the pardon, and it seems that she gave this promise to some MEPs... Who forced the President to take this step and pardon the prisoner who had used the most insulting labels against her since the first day of her presidential campaign and... [during the briefing on the pardon] the Georgian President did not consider herself accountable to her own people; instead, we learned about it from [Mikhail] **Saakashvili's pocket MEP**, namely Viola von Cramon..."

⇒ The same rhetoric is promoted by POSTV. In the [story](#) (date: June 25, 2023) titled "**Why did Salome Zourabichvili pardon Nika Gvaramia?**" the journalist says: "... Georgian society did not know anything about the President's thoughts on pardoning Gvaramia, nor does it know after his release what made the President decide to pardon him. But what Salome Zourabichvili hid from the Georgian people, she did not hide from the MEPs. **Zourabichvili's decision to pardon Gvaramia came as a surprise to her constituents, but not to Viola von Cramon.**"

The same story includes the statement of Irakli Kobakhidze: "In fact, something like this happened, that one agent was forced to pardon another agent, and this proves one more thing that there are forces that want to incite polarization in Georgia, and this is an unfortunate development."

I President Zourabichvili is also a target of the Russian media. In the program broadcast by the Russian media (date: May 25, 2023) headlined “Саломе Зурабишвили. Французская засланка” (Salome Zourabichvili. French undercover agent), Salome Zourabichvili is portrayed not as a representative of Georgian citizens, but as a representative of the West and the United States and a defender of their interests in Georgia.

⇒ The TV program of POSTV (date: July 16, 2023) with the headline “**The old mission of the main polarizer with new elements**” targets European partners, the opposition, the West, civil society organizations. The number of anti-Western frames is seven.

The journalist says: “...Those who criticize the Georgian Dream sometimes from Strasbourg, sometimes from Kyiv and sometimes even from Brussels are losing their patience, they are not used to failure, they fight so much, spending money, making statements, sometimes fanning the Georgian opposition and sometimes openly supporting it, but still they fail to yield a desirable result; so they have changed their target again with Nika Gvaramia becoming their revolutionary choice... First, they forced Salome Zourabichvili to pardon him, then they received him with applause in Strasbourg, and finally they sent him to Kyiv to gain more political weight. Let’s be clear, **we are talking only about Kubilius, Von Cramon, Fotyga and some others... There are not many of them, but they are working out radical scenarios, making noise and threatening the Georgian Dream.**”

⇒ The story aired on Imedi TV (date: June 4, 2023) headlined “**Who is in favor of the economic tsunami**” contains 10 anti-Western frames and targets the West and European partners, the opposition and civil society organizations.

The host of the program says: “**Radicals, CSOs supporting their interests and individual MEPs who support the destruction** are tirelessly asking questions – why Georgia, taken separately, did not impose its own sanctions on Russia, while Europe itself could not give up Russian diamonds and trade cooperation with the aggressor even during the heaviest and bloodiest war on the European continent. They know the answer, they have analyzed the consequences and the dramatic social background that would have been created in the country. This would have been the easiest way to weaken the government elected by the people and to pursue their own interests.

At the same time, a significant part of Imedi TV’s Facebook cards is aimed at discrediting certain MEPs. All the cards of this category contain the statements of the high-ranking officials of Georgian Dream (the chairman of the ruling party, Irakli Kobakhidze, MP Mamuka Mdinardze, Parliament Speaker Shalva Papuashvili). Imedi TV’s Facebook cards of this category are presented in Table N9.

Table N9: Cards discrediting MEPs

Date, links	Headline/lead
Card #32: June 8, 2023	Mamuka Mdinaradze: Unfortunately, there are certain forces or people inside and outside the country, who do not want peace and stable development of this country and are concerned about it.
Card #33: June 15, 2023	Shalva Papuashvili: I think MEPs should get serious - there are several MEPs who appear every other day as commentators in the opposition-owned media.
Card #34: July 14, 2023	Irakli Kobakhidze: What these odious MEPs are doing is not only absurd, but shameful - there is a specific purpose behind all this: to incite polarization, to create chaos in the country, a second front, we certainly will not allow all this.
Card #35: June 15, 2023	Shalva Papuashvili: We demand a serious, honest, fair approach to Georgia from everyone - the opposition, the European Union - the country cannot be played with like this
Card #36: July 13, 2023	Irakli Kobakhidze: it has become clear who ordered Salome Zourabichvili to pardon Nika Gvaramia - it is logical that Nika Gvaramia comes to the European Parliament and meets exactly those odious MEPs who are involved in the anti-state campaign against Georgia
Card #37: June 5, 2023	Mamuka Mdinaradze: It has been more than a year and a half since Bidzina Ivanishvili's letter was published, and that letter had much more power than the fake resolutions, dozens, hundreds, thousands of statements published after that!
Card #37a: July 19, 2023	Irakli Garibashvili: The public has seen how hostile Saakashvili's family and simulator Saakashvili himself are to our state - it was a shameful campaign in which, unfortunately, former politicians and Europeans bribed by them were involved.

The discrediting of MEPs and politicians in Brussels is systematically carried out in the context of allegations regarding the calls to drag Georgia into the war, which is another anti-Western category discussed below.

3.4. Demonization of the West: the call to drag Georgia into the war and open a “second front”

Anti-Western sentiments are supported by conspiracy theories about the global war party, the call to drag Georgia into the war and “open the second front.”

⇒ A story by POSTV (date: June 4, 2023) with the headline “**Why do our partners demand from us what they often do not fulfill themselves?!?**” aims to discredit and reduce confidence in MEPs, accusing them of double standards. The story uses 10 anti-Western frames, and it targets European partners, the opposition, civil society organizations, and NATO.

The government’s anti-Western quotes:

Irakli Kobakhidze: In view of the second front, this would be a very risky decision and the Georgian economy would have lost billions of Lari.

Shalva Papuashvili: We have no guarantees of protection, we are alone, and the Russian troops are deployed on our territory; so, we look at all decisions from this point of view.

The text of the journalist: “When the European Union asks us to impose sanctions on flights, and **itself uses the Russian products obtained through bypassing its own sanctions, it is at least embarrassing.** It is also unfair for the European Union, which is protected by a strong economy and strong security, to ask a small Georgia to do what it does not do for its own well-being... **The whole drama of relations between Georgia and the West is that they ask us to be tough with Russia, but they give us no guarantees that will protect us from Russia’s response, nor do they offer us an alternative.**”

⇒ Imedi TV’s weekly analytical program aired a [story](#) (date: July 9, 2023) with the headline “**Supporters of the Second Front.**” The story targets Ukraine and its government; the number of anti-Western frames is four.

The journalist says: “... Echoing [Volodymyr] Zelenskyy’s rhetoric, his adviser, Mykhailo Podolyak tried to mislead and convince the public that calls for the opening of the second front in Georgia had never been heard from Ukraine. Zelenskyy’s inner circle is trying to make the public believe that these statements were allegedly invented by the leaders of the Georgian Dream, but there is an archive that stores a number of dangerous calls from high-ranking Ukrainian officials and MPs... Sandro Gamsakhurdia will tell you about one-sided friendship [...] and a deliberate campaign to discredit the state...”

⇒ In the story of Imedi TV (date: July 9, 2023) headlined “Saakashvili - the Main Source of Destabilization,” Ukraine and the Ukrainian government, Mikheil Saakashvili, the opposition and civil society organizations are linked with the “second front” in combination with six anti-Western frames. In the story, the journalist says: “... I will remind you of the path that he [Saakashvili] secretly traveled from Ukraine to Georgia only **to cause uncontrolled processes in the country and fulfill the task called the second front.**”

⇒ In the [story](#) of Imedi TV (date: June 25, 2023) with the headline “**Threats of Pseudo-Liberal Ideology**”, containing 10 anti-Western frames, the journalist says: “How should Georgia counter the forces that consider the truth less important than who has more means to spread information and control public opinion? As experts note, it **should not fall under the influence of the global war party**, should not become part of a monotonous world, should preserve national traditions, diversity and values that define the identity and individuality of our nation.

⇒ The accusation that the opposition is ready to “open a second front” can be seen in the [story](#) of Imedi TV (date: June 25, 2023) headlined “**Opposition becomes light-minded after Prigozhin**”, where the host of the program says: “The radical part of the Georgian opposition has become light-minded after Prigozhin. Their statements and positions against the background of the developments in Russia indicate only one thing - **the desire to open a second front**, a provocation against their own country and the Russian boot in Tbilisi. Part of the radicals - at least according to their Facebook posts, consciously supported Prigozhin, Putin’s chef who has the blood of Ukrainians on his hands. The passions of the opposition, that if Prigozhin moved towards Moscow, we should move towards Sokhumi, is a **provocative statement against their own country, people and peace policy...**”

⇒ The author of the POSTV [program](#) (date: July 15, 2023) “Political Reality with Giorgi Akhvlediani” says: “...the MAP requirement was removed from Ukraine because it is at war; **it seems that we should have been at war too and our opposition would be happy** with the removal of the MAP. In other words, if you ask our intellectual radicals, it is acceptable to involve the country in a war with Russia in order to get some new promises from NATO.” Number of anti-Western frames in the program: 9.

⇒ In the [story](#) aired by POSTV (date: June 4, 2023) with the headline “**The Price of Peace in the War-torn Country,**” the journalist says: “**Maintaining peace is sometimes more difficult than certain wars, especially when the opposition in the country is a face of radicalism**, they do their best to fuel tensions in the country and **hinder European integration through foreign lobbyists on international platforms**. They go from door to door to MEPs and say that our country does not deserve to be a candidate, but fortunately the Georgian people understand everything - they know that the denial of candidate status was a political and unjust decision, and they also know that **there is no alternative to peace and the peaceful restoration of territorial integrity.**”

The story includes anti-Western quotes from the government and its satellite parties:

- Sozar Subari: It was unbelievable, and today many people cannot even imagine that the call to drag Georgia into the war was so harsh and categorical. There were direct requests to the top officials of the government in this regard, and this was done mainly by the ambassador of a concrete country. Despite her repeated denials, she actually did it. These included meetings behind closed doors, meetings in the office, meetings where Georgia was categorically urged to join the war, as they were asking, then why are we assisting you, why are we equipping you, you are no longer what you were in 2008, you have efficient troops and you can fight. The Georgian opposition and NGOs clearly advocated for the same stance.
- Mamuka Mdinaradze: We also remember the blackmail against Bidzina Ivanishvili, demanding his return to politics and involvement in the war. We remember the direct calls from specific Ukrainian officials to open a second front; no matter where we go and no matter what logic we develop, what we say or not, we will still go there – Georgia will only receive appreciation if it joins the war and sacrifices itself for global objectives. Great countries can fight, great countries can make great sacrifices and still survive physically, and Georgia cannot and will not get involved in this great war, because in addition to human losses, there may be a risk and danger of destroying the country. We will not and cannot risk it, and this peace will cost us dearly, because we know for sure that they will only appreciate us for war.

There is an identical pattern in the Russian media, where the statements of the Georgian government are cited as evidence for the call to open a “second front.”

I In its [article](#) (November 18, 2022) headlined „«Второй фронт против России». Что говорят об этом в Грузии; Премьер Грузии Гарибашвили рассказал о призывах из Киева открыть «второй фронт» против РФ“ (Second front against Russia. What they say about it in Georgia; Georgian Prime Minister Garibashvili spoke about calls from Kyiv to open a “second front” against Russia), the Russian media outlet Gazeta.ru quotes Garibashvili as speaking about a “second front.”

I Another Russian media outlet also quotes Garibashvili in the [article](#) “Премьер Грузии пообещал не допустить открытия в стране «второго фронта» (Georgian Prime Minister promised not to allow the opening of a “second front” in the country (March 12, 2023)), who says that he will not allow the opening of a “second front” in Georgia.

I In its [article](#) headlined „Американский офицер раскрыл, где США откроют новый фронт против России“ (U.S. officer reveals where the U.S. will open a new front against Russia) (March 13, 2023), reports that the United States wants to open a second front in Georgia and is using USAID funds of 40 million for this purpose. The same publication, in the [article](#) “В Грузии рассказали о просьбах Киева открыть против России второй фронт” (Kyiv’s request to open a second front against Russia was disclosed in Georgia (May 24, 2023)) quotes Irakli Kobakhidze, the chairman of the Georgian Dream party, regarding calls to open a “second front.”

I The Russian media outlet Sputnik writes in its [article](#) (April 14, 2023) “Нарышкин: Запад убеждает Грузию открыть “второй фронт”” (Naryshkin: The West is convincing Georgia to open a “second front”) that the Russian intelligence chief is in talks with the Belarusian President regarding the West’s demand for a “second front” to be opened in Georgia.

I When assessing the March rallies, in its article headlined “**Лавров оценил попытки Запада создать второй фронт в Грузии и Молдавии**” (Lavrov assessed the West’s attempts to create a second front in Georgia and Moldova (dated 14.04.2023)), RIA Novosti [links](#) the developments with the Western support and a “second front.” At the same time, Lavrov praises the Georgian government for not opening a second front.

■ In its [article](#) “В МГУ заявили о желании США открыть в Грузии второй фронт против России” (MSU announced about the willingness of the U.S. to open a second front against Russia in Georgia (May 12, 2023)), the Russian newspaper Izvestia talks about the desire of the West to open a “second front”, sanctions and criticizes the position of Salome Zourabichvili.

■ In the [program](#) entitled “Мишико. Оно не тонет” (Mishiko. It is not sinking (date: April 6, 2023)) the Russian media presents Mikheil Saakashvili as a part of another Maidan, second front and coup plan in Georgia; according to the program, the West needs Georgia to multiply the front and to create another zone of tension for Russia.

According to the same program, Saakashvili had bariatric surgery before arriving in Georgia and was in good health. However, he became ill shortly after his arrival, which was part of a pre-planned scenario as repeatedly claimed by Georgian government officials.

⇒ On the same channel, Irakli Garibashvili is quoted in the [material](#) “Премьер Грузии рассказал о причинах возвращения в республику Михаила Саакашвили” (Georgian PM spoke about the reasons for Mikheil Saakashvili’s return to the republic (April 27, 2023)) as saying that Mikheil Saakashvili returned to Georgia to start a war with Russia and open a “second front.”

■ Lenta.ru quotes Irakli Kobakhidze in its article “В Грузии рассказали о просьбах Украины открыть второй фронт против России” (Kyiv’s request to open a second front against Russia was disclosed in Georgia (date: May 24, 2023)) as saying that Ukrainians are asking the Georgian government to open a “second front.” An important context to consider here is that the Russia media has been using the statements of de facto authorities from the occupied regions for years to illustrate the risks associated with opening a “second front.” Below are some links to this material:

- ▶ Article by the RES news agency – “Цхинвал ответил на планы оппозиции Грузии открыть «второй фронт» в случае успеха мятежа Пригожина” (Tskhinvali responded to Georgian opposition’s plans to open a “second front” if Prigozhin’s rebellion succeeds (July 3, 2023));
- ▶ Article by the RIA Novosti news agency “Американский офицер раскрыл, где США откроют новый фронт против России” (U.S. officer discloses where the U.S. will open a new front against Russia (March 13, 2023));
- ▶ Article by РБК “Премьер Абхазии заявил о попытках открыть в Грузии «второй фронт»” (Abkhaz Prime Minister spoke about attempts to open a “second front” in Georgia (December 11, 2022));
- ▶ Article by TASS news agency “Секретарь Совбеза Абхазии считает, что Запад подталкивает Грузию открыть «второй фронт»” (Secretary of the Security Council of Abkhazia believes that the West is pushing Georgia to open a ‘second front’ (November 9, 2022)).

During the research period, significant resources were spent on Imedi TV’s Facebook card campaign regarding the call to “open the second front.” Table N10 shows examples of these cards.

Table N10: The global war party and the call for a “second front”

Cards, dates, links	Headline/lead
Card #38: July 14, 2023	Irakli Kobakhidze: What these odious MEPs are doing is not only absurd, but also shameful - there is a specific purpose behind all this: to incite polarization, to bring chaos to the country, a second front, of course, we will not allow all this.
Card #39: July 10, 2023	Irakli Kobakhidze: In 2008, they summoned Saakashvili and instructed him to do something. Today, Georgia is a sovereign state, so unlike the previous government, nobody can summon the Prime Minister of Georgia, and nobody can set a timer.
Card #40: June 4, 2023	Mamuka Mdinardze: This peace will cost us dearly, because we know for sure that they will only appreciate us for war.
Card #41: July 18, 2023	Zaza Shatirishvili: The notion that Credit Suisse was impeding transfers due to financial difficulties has been discredited. The American special services take the lead, insisting on Bidzina Ivanishvili's political resurgence and Georgia's involvement in the war.
Card #42: June 22, 2023	Zaza Shatirishvili: The pseudo-liberal ideology created by the global war party is being promoted in Georgia by foreign agents and relevant parties, CSOs, and TV stations.
Card #43: July 11, 2023	Irakli Kobakhidze: There is a global war party that has an interest in keeping Saakashvili out, the goal here is the same as in the case of Gvaramia - to further incite polarization - we have the opposite interest.
Card #44: June 9, 2023	Shalva Papuashvili: I do not think that the bureaucrats from Brussels should decide from their warm offices whether Georgia should escalate or not.
Card #45: June 14, 2023	Irakli Kobakhidze: People who used to lobby on the issue of de-oligarchization got scared... those people who are agents of the global war party - for example: Kezerashvili, Chuta, etc.
Card #46: July 15, 2023	Irakli Garibashvili: Our main task is to maintain peace, rapid development of our country, and most importantly, we should ensure the security of our country, our people need peace, development
Card #47: July 19, 2023	Mamuka Mdinardze: Georgia upholds its position as a matter of principle, with the Government of Georgia continuing to maintain its peace policy and national policy on principle. This will persist.
Card #47a: June 13, 2023	Andria Gvidiani: It is a coordinated effort by both foreign and domestic forces to impede the development of the country, sow confusion and place Georgia in the same difficult situation as Ukraine is today. The recent developments around the National Bank are also closely tied to this coordinated effort.

The issue of the “opening of a second front” remains relevant even after the research period. For example, the Russian media immediately (09.08.2023) reacted to the official visit of EU High Representative Joseph Borrell to Tbilisi on September 8, where at [the press conference](#) he described the calls for “opening of a second front” as disinformation and propaganda.

I The Russian media immediately responded to the issue with an [article](#) “Боррель ответил на вопрос об открытии ЕС “второго фронта” в Грузии” (Borrel responded to a question about the EU opening a “second front” in Georgia), linking it with the statements of the Georgian government about the “opening of a second front:” “Члены грузинского правительства считают, что украинские чиновники желают открыть в Грузии “второй фронт”, чего они не допустят. Радио Sputnik также сообщало, что, по мнению спикера грузинского парламента Шалвы Папуашвили, власти Украины “нечестно” относятся к народу Грузии” (Members of the Georgian government believe that Ukrainian officials want to open a “second front” in Georgia, which they will not allow. Radio Sputnik also reported that according to the Georgian Parliament Speaker, Shalva Papuashvili, the Ukrainian government is “unfair” to the Georgian people).

Although the “opening of the second front” is a current topic on Imedi TV’s Facebook cards, Joseph Borell’s message went unnoticed by the channel.

3.5. Growing mistrust in the West: context of Ukraine and Georgia

An important factor in fueling nihilism and mistrust in the West is the prospect of Ukraine joining NATO, which according to the government statements and Facebook cards is unrealistic (see Table 11).

Table N11: NATO membership skepticism

Cards: date, links	Headline/lead
Card #48: July 12, 2023	Mamuka Mdinardze: When over half of the country's population lives away from their homes... how many thousands of people have been killed by the Russian occupation; unfortunately, despite beautiful words spoken on this issue, citizens of Ukraine still have no idea when they will be accepted into NATO.
Card #49: July 15, 2023	Irakli Garibashvili: It was made clear at the NATO summit that Ukraine cannot join NATO until it defeats Russia. If Ukraine were to defeat Russia, what purpose would NATO membership serve?!
Card #50: July 18, 2023	Rikard Jozwiak (RFE/RL Europe Editor): "...The United States is still considering a future status of Ukraine as a neutral, non-NATO country to be a useful bargaining chip with the Kremlin in future talks.
Card #50a: June 6, 2023	Irakli Garibashvili: Peace has no alternative. We see no real attempts to end this war, or calls for negotiations, on the contrary.

An important trend in the TV stories and Facebook cards is to portray Ukraine as an unfriendly country, featuring politicians and high-ranking clerics. The cards are also used to present their statements (as seen in Table N12).

Table N12: Facebook cards portraying Ukraine as an unfriendly country

Date, links	Headline/lead
Card #50: July 19, 2023	Irakli Garibashvili: I know that Ukraine was among those who opposed our receiving candidate status last year; unfortunately, this is a reality, a lot of European leaders have confirmed this to me.
Card #51: July 12, 2023	Bishop Jakob- they have decided to support Zelenskyy - if you are Georgian and love Georgia, how can you side with someone who treats you wrongly? - Who are you? A betrayer of God and country.
Card #52: July 19, 2023	Irakli Garibashvili: 20% of Ukraine's territory is already occupied, the country has already lost more than a trillion dollars, tens of thousands of people have died, 20 million Ukrainian citizens have emigrated; against the background of this tragedy and challenges, when you have time and comment on a loser, a simulator, certain question marks arise.
Card #53: July 19, 2023	Irakli Garibashvili: We are not seeking gratitude, yet this action violates the principles of friendship, diplomacy and etiquette. When Kyiv was being bombed, our ambassador was the last one who stayed in Kyiv until the last minute. Such a man was sent to Tbilisi as if for "consultation."
Card #54: June 14, 2023	UNIAN: Ukraine supported the election of a representative of Russia, an employee of "Gazpromneft" in the international organization.

⇒ According to the [story](#) aired on POSTV (date: July 9, 2023) entitled “**What role did the Ukrainian authorities play in Saakashvili’s return**”, while Georgia’s conduct towards Ukraine was no different than of many other countries, **Kyiv only accused us, resulting in numerous allegations. Conversely**, it had no complaints regarding a member of the CIS, Moldova.

3.6. Campaign to discredit liberal values and Civil Society organizations

Anti-liberal propaganda and its ties to the United States and Europe are components of a negative campaign. Homophobic comments have been made by Irakli Kobakhidze, Bidzina Ivanishvili, Kakha Kaladze, Mamuka Mdinardze, representatives of the People’s Power party and journalists.

⇒ A [story](#) aired on Imedi TV (date: June 25, 2023) entitled “Threats of pseudo-liberal ideology” (182,000 views) contains 10 types of anti-Western frames. The story targets the West, European partners and the opposition. In addition, the anchor’s text is alarmist, portraying liberalism as the primary threat: “The threats are obvious, uncontrolled surrogacy, the fight against values, the abuse of history, the insatiable desire to erase identity and the fight against the church - this is the harsh reality that the nation must fight against; nevertheless, for many, this is the comfort zone and vital ground for the re-emergence of **liberal fascism** [...]”.

⇒ POSTV in its [program](#) “**Political Reality with Giorgi Akhvlediani**” (date: July 15, 2023) combines 9 anti-Western frames, **targeting the West**, European partners and the opposition.

A campaign to discredit the public and CSO opposition to the adoption of the Russian-style law in March 2023 and to link it to the “opening of the second front” and the demonization of the West is simply a continuation of the anti-Western rhetoric.

⇒ In the [story](#) of Imedi TV (date: June 18, 2023) headlined “**CSO Fraud of the Century**”, the host of the program says: “... certain civil society organizations are doing their best to prevent the purpose of the millions transferred to them from being revealed, and one of the clear examples of this is **the draft law on foreign agents whose appearance lustrated them**. The public saw who was trying and why to brand the American FARA law as a Russian one. Although the bill did not become law, the majority of society knows who is behind the fraud of the century and **which CSO is behind the financing of which party**. Tsotne Gegechkori will tell you about **the millions of wealthy CSOs, which are used not to develop the country, but rather to foment tensions in the country**.”

⇒ The Imedi TV [story](#) (date: June 18, 2023) headlined “**Defenders of the Policy of Executioners**” combines 11 anti-Western frames.

The host of the program says: “Those people, who actively participated in the fraud of the century, **were not left beyond the attention of the masterminds**. Some who advocated for the second front received a prize for protecting human rights, others secured new positions in embassies or international organizations, or were appointed as project managers. For example, Giorgi Tugushi, the former public defender, who replaced the Saakashvili-era prison system minister after the prison footage was released, became number 6 on the party list and received an MP mandate in the Parliament, it has recently been revealed that Tugushi will lead a special project being implemented by the European Union. Within the framework of this project, the former public defender will assist and strengthen the current public defender. From the prison footage to the willingness to control the Public Defender’s Office.

The story uses anti-Western quotes from the government and its satellite parties:

- Giorgi Tsagareishvili: Do not you have any questions about Mr. Tugushi's activities [addressing Western partners]? What did this person do when people were dying? When the rallies were dispersed in the streets? When the elections were completely falsified, when political opponents were persecuted... How can I believe that you knew nothing about this? I do not believe it, and if you knew and you still want to bring Tugushi, a person who embodied the spirit of this regime, as an advisor to the Public Defender, why are you doing it, I wonder...
- Mikheil Kavelashvili: In itself, these recent developments, especially the March rallies, showed that the CSO sector is the main stronghold of the West. At least four wealthy CSOs are already quite involved in state affairs.
- Mikheil Kavelashvili: These rallies were mainly led by the civil society sector, which called the Georgian authorities cowards. The heads of these wealthy CSOs and their representatives came to the forefront of these developments.

⇒ In the Imedi TV [story](#) (date: June 25, 2023) titled “**Enemies of Candidate Status**”, the presenter says: “... **against Georgia has already begun**, with the **National Movement and its European allies** taking the lead; initially, it appeared to be just typical campaign rhetoric from the party rather part of a larger effort, because with appeals and announcements, expectations were created that Georgia would also receive the candidate status, which soon turned out to be a fake expectation, and this disappointment brought dissatisfied people to the streets, which soon turned into a persistent call by radicals to overthrow the government... [footage of the rallies about the formation of a government of national consent]... At this point, **the opposition, which had already lost confidence, was replaced by representatives of civil society organizations**, while hidden messages were replaced by open calls. These calls were made before we received a candidate status update, and focused on Georgia's need to be more supportive of Ukraine, for example, by **diverting Russia's attention to the occupied territories of Georgia, which would ultimately lead to war in our country.**”

It is noteworthy that the Russian media outlets associate the protests against the adoption of the Russian-style law in March 2023 with the opening of a “second front.”

I Kavkaz Plus [covers](#) the rallies (date: March 10, 2023) in an article headlined “Откроет ли Грузия «второй фронт» против России” (Will Georgia open the second front against Russia), in which Margarita Simonyan links the March rallies to the opening of the “second front” and voices threats.

I In its [article](#) (date: May 14, 2023), Vzgliad online media discusses the March rallies and Western pressure, along with the potential for opening a “second front”: „Несмотря на все давление, которое на них оказывается, грузинские власти весьма умело пользуются своими преимуществами. И ожидать, что Грузия откроет против России «второй фронт», конечно, не стоит“ (Despite facing immense pressure, the Georgian authorities display remarkable skill in using their advantages. And it is futile to anticipate Georgia opening a “second front” against Russia”, according to the article.

The discrediting of CSOs becomes relevant in the context of elections.

I The similarity is observed not only in the structure of Georgian and Russian messages, but also in the structure of TV stories and the use of specific terminology and labels. For example, in the

context of civil society organizations, the term “radical opposition” was actively used in Russia 11 years ago to discredit the opposition and the civil society. The [program](#) “ЧП.Расследование - Голос ниоткуда” (02.12.2011) of the TV company HTB is a good example. In particular, this story carries out a campaign to discredit the monitoring association Golos, which, according to the authors of the TV story, helps the “radical opposition.” The source of funding (U.S., Sweden) is discredited, and the donor funding is linked to conspiracy plans: “secret clubs” and “foreign special services”, fraudulent recruitment of young people. The story discredits the election monitoring procedures. The TV story is accompanied by alarmist background music, designed to induce a psychological trance (rhythm, repetition, monotony).

An identical [story](#) was broadcast on “Imedi’s Kvira” (Imedi Week, 25.09.2022) with the headline “A Clan of Wealthy CSOs.” The structure of discrediting CSOs is identical to the Russian model. The story is aimed at discrediting the heads of civil society organizations (Transparency International - Georgia and ISFED). They are labeled as “wealthy CSOs”, “agents of influence” who act against the state, question the elections held without major irregularities and fight against the country’s institutions. The story notes that a certain civil society organization [ISFED] fulfilled the order for money, questioned the legitimacy of the election and created a political crisis. In the story, interviewee Goga Khaindrava promotes a conspiracy theory that some donor-funded organizations are “intelligence units and camouflaged organizations that serve the interests of some countries and corporations.” Importantly, Khaindrava does not name specific countries. Being ambiguous in this regard is a tactic used to disseminate disinformation and sway the audience.

Although three or four months have passed since the March protests, the discrediting of the civil society sector and discussions on the Russian-style law persist through Imedi TV’s Facebook cards (see Table N14).

Table N14: Discrediting civil society organizations and the campaign against the Russian-style law

Cards: date, links	Headline/lead
Card #55: July 20, 2023	Mamuka Mdinaradze: The American law, the initiation of the Georgian analogue of which caused great excitement in Georgia, yesterday completely exposed the real intentions of the radical opposition. The evidence proves that they are trying to destroy the international reputation of Georgia and therefore, are particularly hostile to the European future of the country at this time!
Card #56: July 15, 2023	Irakli Kobakhidze: When vandalism and violence took place on March 7-8, people behaved shamefully, on the contrary, these people were praised, the double standard is unacceptable - we always condemn any kind of violence, unlike our opponents and their patrons.
Card #57: July 19, 2023	Mamuka Mdinaradze: Documents have been submitted to FARA, which prove that they [the lobbying company] wrote draft resolutions to the MEPs, they tried to sanction Georgia, but we should not be complacent about this issue that only these people are working; unfortunately other people are also working on this issue, trying to undermine Georgia.

3.8. Follow the money: How Georgia's Economy Shapes Russian Influence in the Media

Study answered a research question N4 *“How do shifts in Georgia's dependence on Russia causally affect the prevalence and tone of Kremlin-aligned narratives in pro-government TV news and their affiliated social media?”*

The editorial pattern mapped in current analysis is the connective tissue: present **war** as the main threat; attribute that threat to the **West/opposition/CSOs**; demand **distrust** of Euro-Atlantic partners; **and flood social feeds with cards about Western decay while avoiding Russian economic bad news**. This is not episodic—it's systematic and synchronized across TV and Facebook inventory, including costly, high-reach pushes around the “second front.” Study is the backbone for understanding the patterns—what's repeated, what's omitted, and how social cards scale the message. It shows: (a) a coordinated anti-Western pattern across TV + Facebook, (b) “war/second front” as the master frame, and (c) synchronization with Russian media messaging over time.

We suggest that Georgia's economic ties and pressures might create very specific “transmission channels” for Russian influence in the media, that include: advertising money and state spending that favor pro-government and anti-Western broadcasters; energy and trade dependencies that become talking points (and leverage); migration, tourism and remittance flows from Russia that might shape both audiences and narratives; and EU-accession headwinds that reprice political risk and investor sentiment. When these channels run “hot”—for example, when gas imports or Russian-origin tourism surge, or when government/para-state budgets dominate TV ad markets—the cost of contradicting Kremlin-friendly frames might rise. When they cool—e.g., as remittances from Russia fall or EU support conditions tighten—the space for alternative agendas might widen, though not automatically.

Television remains the most powerful agenda-setting medium in Georgia. The ad market is small, concentrated, and—critically—tilted toward pro-government channels that frequently echo Russian narratives or frames. When the ad market is tight and government/para-state budgets loom large, newsroom leaders might face higher opportunity costs for carrying content that contradicts Kremlin-aligned frames. The “supply side” of media might become economically primed for those narratives. Market concentration and budget-financed messaging skews incentives in the newsroom and ad-sales floor alike. Georgia's economy is open and trade-dependent. Shifts in who sells key commodities to Georgia (e.g. gas, fuel) quickly become both pocketbook stories and geopolitical talking points. When price spikes, shortages, or exchange-rate wobbles happen, pro-government outlets can present cooperation with Russia as pragmatic “peace and stability economics,” a frame your report shows is already embedded in editorial patterns around war risk and a “second front” (see cards N38-47a). As we see, economic narratives don't land in a vacuum; they're priced by geopolitics. Pro-government outlets already cultivate distrust toward EU/US actors, recycle “double standards,” and push “they want to drag us into war” frames; a chill in EU ties supplies fresh facts to drape over those frames.

Price pressure is the oxygen of doomsday messaging. Study shows the power of omission: crises in the West are spotlighted; Russia's economic pain is invisible: e.g. cards Western-crisis cards (see cards N14,15, 15a,16) vs. 0 Russia-crisis cards shows that bias. Considering Georgia's current economic indicators, fear-forward packages contribute in creating a content hook (“chaos in Europe,” “recession in the West”) which resonate more when wallets are tight. Your report documents the systematic selection of cards about Western crises—and the studied omission of Russia's own troubles—precisely to drive cynical, anti-Western mood. Also, Ad hook contributes and In stressed times, public-sector and para-state advertising becomes relatively more important, reinforcing the tilt toward outlets that amplify the “peace at any price” line.

In addition, post-2022 flows reshaped Georgia's customer base for both consumer businesses and media. Russians have been either the top or one of the top sources of visitors. That expands the market for Russian-language content and for travel-industry advertising aligned with “normalization” narratives. Media that serve advertisers in tourism/real estate/consumer finance have commercial reasons to de-emphasize stories that deter Russian clients or unsettle Russian capital—again overlapping with the “peace first” lens.

In tight ad markets where public and para-state budgets matter most, carrying content that contradicts that frame gets costlier; when prices wobble and wallets are thin, fear-forward packages land harder; when Russian

visitors and remittances surge, the commercial case for “peace at any price” strengthens. In sum, money is not just background context—it is the mechanism that contributes in tuning the volume on Kremlin-aligned messaging. The pattern is not episodic but synchronized across TV and social, with anti-Western packages tying security anxiety to “pragmatic economics” and distrust of Euro-Atlantic partners.

Because shifts in Georgia’s reliance on Russia drive the prevalence and tone of Kremlin-aligned narratives—via a concentrated ad market and sectoral exposures that feed editorial agendas—the way to move the narrative equilibrium is to diversify energy, trade, tourism, and remittances and to deconcentrate the media-advertising spine.

Conclusion

Despite Georgia’s declared Euro-Atlantic aspirations, a discernible undercurrent of anti-Western sentiment, reminiscent of Russian propaganda, has emerged within certain pro-government media outlets, such as Imedi TV and POSTV, which possess a substantial viewership.

The findings of this report underscore the prevalence of various anti-Western themes and narratives, intricately woven into the fabric of mainstream media content. These narratives are not isolated incidents but rather part of a repetitive pattern consistently disseminated across multiple platforms, including television and social media. These systemic approach of disseminating narratives across different platforms is alarming. The patterns are not only discernible in the rhetoric of pro-government political figures and their affiliated parties but also within the editorial decisions of these media outlets (seen in headlines, lead sentences, intros, etc.). Notably, a significant portion of these narratives centers on undermining trust in Western entities, particularly the USA and its ambassador in Georgia, European Union, and European parliamentarians.

The research further highlights the synchronization of these anti-Western narratives with Russian media coverage, indicating a systemic alignment of interests. Historically, Georgia has experienced instances where Russia attempted to influence public opinion and meddle in its domestic affairs, especially during election cycles. Against this backdrop, the emergence of anti-Western narratives within pro-government media outlets, such as Imedi TV and POSTV, was even more concerning in 2024. These narratives, systematically disseminated across media platforms with significant amount of audience, reflected a deliberate effort to sow mistrust and nihilism within the Georgian population regarding Western institutions, including the USA, European Union, and European parliamentarians.

Russia’s outsized role in Georgia’s energy, trade, tourism, and capital flows creates commercial incentives that tilt parts of the media—especially pro-government outlets—toward “peace-first,” Kremlin-aligned narratives. As these dependencies deepen, critical coverage becomes costlier and omissions more frequent; economic diversification and transparent, competitive ad markets can blunt this leverage.

Taken together, the evidence points to a coordinated and durable pattern: pro-government outlets with large reach routinely recycle anti-Western frames that mirror Russian talking points, eroding trust in Euro-Atlantic partners precisely as Georgia enters a high-stakes electoral cycle. To blunt this influence, Georgia needs practical guardrails rather than rhetoric—full transparency over state and SOE advertising buys, independent audience measurement, robust election-period monitoring of TV and social feeds, and sustained support for fact-checking and plural, independent newsrooms. Media literacy campaigns and prompt platform enforcement against orchestrated disinformation can further reduce the payoff of repetition-based propaganda. None of these steps censors debate; they simply raise the cost of manipulation. In a tight information market, sunlight, standards, and competition are the most reliable protections for democratic choice.

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