

Internalized FIMI: How Russian information manipulation became domestic political communication in Georgia

This country paper was written by an **author** who wishes to remain anonymous
July 2026

Executive Summary

There has been a fundamental transformation in foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) in Georgia. Whereas Russian influence operations once relied primarily on external actors, such as Kremlin-run media, openly pro-Russian organizations, and anonymous social media networks, a different phenomenon is increasingly apparent in Georgia's information environment: the internalization of Russian FIMI by influential domestic political actors. This assessment is supported by the European Commission's Georgia Report 2025, which found that the Georgian authorities had systematically engaged in unprecedented hostile anti-EU rhetoric that often echoed Russian-style disinformation¹.

This policy brief argues that the Georgian Dream government, together with its principal media platforms, TV Imedi, POSTV, and Rustavi 2, has increasingly adopted not only the narratives promoted by the Kremlin but also the operational methods, communication strategies, and information manipulation techniques traditionally associated with Russian influence operations. Rather than functioning as independent domestic political communicators, these actors increasingly reproduce Russian strategic messaging within Georgia's information environment through domestic institutions, media, and political language. The European Commission has separately concluded that the Georgian authorities have systematically disseminated anti-EU rhetoric and disinformation².

Evidence of the propaganda machinery operating in Georgia was provided by Meta's Q2 2024 Adversarial Threat Report, which documented a coordinated inauthentic network in Georgia that used fictitious personas and media-style entities to criticize protesters and support the Georgian Dream³. Meta linked this network, which operated across Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, to the Georgian government's Department of Strategic Communications.

¹ European Commission, "Georgia Report 2025," November 4, 2025. https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/b3089ad4-26be-4c6a-84cc-b9d680fe0a48_en?filename=georgia-report-2025.pdf

² European Commission, "2025 Communication on EU enlargement policy," November 4, 2025. https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/eb69a890-40d6-4696-801e-612d51709fdd_en?filename=2025+Communication+on+EU+Enlargement+Policy.pdf

³ Meta, "Adversarial Threat Report," August 2024. <https://transparency.meta.com/sr/Q2-2024-Adversarial-threat-report>

As a result, Georgia now has a hybrid information ecosystem in which foreign influence is no longer wielded exclusively from abroad/by foreign actors. Instead, Russian strategic narratives are localized, legitimized, and amplified by mainstream domestic actors. The Fourth EEAS FIMI Threat Report identifies Georgia as one of the countries targeted by false allegations of EU- and NATO-backed destabilization plots, which is one element of the broader Russian campaign whose narratives are then picked up and reproduced in Georgian domestic political discourse⁴.

This represents an evolution from external influence to internalized FIMI, creating new challenges for the European Union, NATO, democratic institutions, technology companies, and civil society organizations seeking to strengthen democratic resilience.

From Russian propaganda to domestic information manipulation

Russian information operations have targeted Georgia since long before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Russian military operations during the 2008 Russo-Georgian War were accompanied by a coordinated propaganda campaign portraying Georgia and the West as responsible for Russia's aggression. In the years that followed, Moscow invested in the development of local proxies capable of disseminating anti-Western narratives from within Georgia. These included openly pro-Russian media outlets, organizations, political groups, and coordinated anonymous social media networks. The development of these networks and their messaging are documented in the Media Development Foundation's annual reports on anti-Western propaganda and GRASS Disinfo Briefs^{5,6}.

Until recently, however, these pro-Russian actors remained largely on the political margins. Their influence was limited because they were widely perceived as directly representing Russian interests.

This landscape has changed significantly since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Anti-Western narratives, once confined to fringe pro-Kremlin organizations, have increasingly migrated into mainstream political communication. Rather than openly advocating closer relations with Moscow, domestic political actors began framing Russia's strategic narratives through the language of Georgian sovereignty, peace, Christianity, traditional values, and national identity. This localization made the messages substantially more persuasive as made it seem that they originated from domestic political debate rather than foreign propaganda. As the European Commission concluded, Georgian authorities have "systematically engaged in hostile anti-EU rhetoric, manipulative narratives and conspiracy theories, often mirroring Russian-type disinformation."⁷ The

⁴ European External Action Service, 4th EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats, March 2026.
https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2026/documents/EEAS%204th%20Threat%20Report_web%20version_1.pdf

⁵ Media Development Foundation, "Research." <https://mdfgeorgia.ge/en/publications-2/research/>

⁶ Georgia's Reforms Associates, "Publications - Grass Disinfo Brief." <https://grass.org.ge/en/publications/245-dezinformatiis-brifi>

⁷ European Commission, "Georgia Report 2025," November 4, 2025.
https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/b3089ad4-26be-4c6a-84cc-b9d680fe0a48_en?filename=georgia-report-2025.pdf

European Parliament has also confirmed that the government-affiliated media regularly spread manipulative narratives and conspiracy theories that emulated Russian-inspired propaganda⁸.

The defining characteristic of today's Georgian information environment is therefore not the volume of Russian propaganda entering the country, but the extent to which influential domestic actors themselves reproduce Russian narratives.

Internalization of Russian strategic narratives

The convergence between Kremlin messaging and Georgian Dream communication is visible across virtually every major strategic narrative that the Kremlin has promoted since 2022.

The first such narrative concerns the claim that the West seeks to drag Georgia into a war against Russia. Russian officials have repeatedly argued that the United States and NATO aim to expand the conflict in Ukraine by opening additional fronts against Moscow. Georgian Dream gradually adopted the same message domestically through a "second front" narrative, claiming that the European Union, the United States, opposition parties, civil society organizations and independent media were attempting to force Georgia into military confrontation with Russia⁹.

Closely connected is the "Global War Party" conspiracy. Georgian Dream leaders claim that there is an undefined network of Western political elites that controls European and American institutions, finances Georgian NGOs and media, organizes protests, and seeks regime change in Tbilisi¹⁰. Although presented as a domestic political concept, this narrative closely mirrors long-standing Russian conspiracy theories describing a collective Western "war party" that is determined to weaken Russia through proxy conflicts and externally orchestrated revolutions.

Similarly, the notion that Georgia is facing an externally organized attempt to implement a "colour revolution" follows an almost identical trajectory. Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) repeatedly issued statements throughout 2024 warning that Washington was preparing a "Tbilisi Maidan" involving NGOs, election observers, youth organizations and Western governments¹¹. Shortly before and after these statements were released, Georgian Dream representatives, TV Imedi, and POSTV presented nearly identical allegations, claiming that demonstrations, election monitoring, and civic activism formed part of a Western plan to overthrow the government¹². Georgian Dream leaders often claim that five colour revolutions have been organized in the last several years, all foiled by authorities' vigilance¹³.

⁸ Official Journal of the European Union, "European Parliament resolution of 9 July 2025 on the 2023 and 2024 Commission reports on Georgia." <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52025IP0158>

⁹ European Digital Media Observatory, "Global War Party," "Second Front," "Unprecedented election meddling" from the West, and other propaganda narratives dominating Georgian information space in the run-up to the key 2024 elections," October 25, 2024. <https://edmo.eu/publications/global-war-party-second-front-unprecedented-election-meddling-from-the-west-and-other-propaganda-narratives-dominating-georgian-information-spa/>

¹⁰ Civil Georgia, "Global War Party." <https://civil.ge/archives/tag/global-war-party>

¹¹ TASS, "В СВР заявили о подготовке США цветной революции в Грузии," August 26, 2024. <https://tass.ru/politika/21686217>

¹² Imedi, "Georgian PM: artificial attempts to spark revolution have failed and will continue to fail," July 13, 2026. <https://info.imedi.ge/en/politics/10352/georgian-pm-artificial-attempts-to-spark-revolution-have-failed-and-will-continue-to-fail>

¹³ 1TV, "PM Kobakhidze: Georgia survived five attempts at violent revolution; we shall not allow it to happen again," April 14, 2026. <https://1tv.ge/lang/en/news/pm-kobakhidze-georgia-survived-five-attempts-at-violent-revolution-we-shall-not-allow-it-to-happen-again/>

The same convergence is visible with respect to the attitude towards NGOs, independent media, and election observation. Organizations traditionally understood as institutions of democratic accountability are now systematically portrayed as foreign agents, revolution organizers, and instruments of Western intelligence services. These narratives provided political justification for the legislation restricting foreign funding of civil society and independent media passed by the Georgian Dream in the 2024–2026 period. In its opinions on Georgia's Foreign Influence Transparency Law and other restrictive laws, the Venice Commission concludes that these laws threaten freedom of association, independent media, and civil society, and recommends their repeal¹⁴.

Another important area of convergence involves identity politics. Rather than criticizing European integration primarily on institutional grounds or arguing over legitimate issues, such as the speed of integration and the EU's inflexibility, Georgian Dream increasingly frames the European Union as a civilizational threat: as seeking to undermine Georgian identity, Orthodox Christianity, and traditional family values by promoting LGBTQ rights, undermining the Orthodox Church, infringing on sovereignty, and interfering in domestic affairs^{15,16,17,18,19}. This framing directly reflects one of the Kremlin's principal geopolitical narratives, which portrays liberal democracy as incompatible with national identity and traditional civilization.

Finally, the Georgian Dream propaganda machinery often uses comparative propaganda, or what could be dubbed "comparaganda", that is, propaganda amplifying stories from the European Union and the USA that lend themselves to use domestically to justify the party's anti-democratic steps²⁰. For instance, if a Western state arrests opposition politicians, passes legislation limiting human rights, or cracks down on demonstrators, stories on the subject are widely disseminated with the aim of showing that action of that kind is perfectly normal, even in Western democracies. This comparaganda sometimes goes too far, with the Georgian Dream leaders actually attacking Western democracies for democratic backsliding, as was recently the case with Denmark²¹.

TV Imedi, Rustavi 2, and POSTV: domestic infrastructure of internalized FIMI

The localization of Russian strategic narratives became possible due to the transformation of Georgia's mainstream media landscape into a polarized media space. On one side, there are dominant state-controlled media channels, which are over-resourced and pampered, on the other, struggling independent media channels, which are subject to legal constraints, monetary fines and regular demonization, as well as harassment in the form of physical threats, arrests and violence. The broader deterioration of media pluralism has been documented by the European Commission,

¹⁴ Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, „Georgia.“ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/venice-commission/georgia>

¹⁵ Civil Georgia, „Georgian Patriarchate Slams EU's Call to Repeal Anti-LGBT Law,“ July 21, 2025. <https://civil.ge/archives/693549>

¹⁶ Beka Chedia, „Georgian Dream Weaponizes LGBT-Related Conspiracy Theories,“ Jamestown, September 23, 2025. <https://jamestown.org/georgian-dream-weaponizes-lgbt-related-conspiracy-theories/>

¹⁷ Civil Georgia, „Papuashvili Denounces EU Parliament, PACE Resolutions, Says They 'Crossed Red Lines Set by Georgian People',“ June 25, 2026. <https://civil.ge/archives/742537>

¹⁸ Civil Georgia, „Georgian Dream: „Today Georgia is Sovereign as Never Before,““ Oktober 1, 2022. <https://civil.ge/archives/510201>

¹⁹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, „Tbilisi Accuses EU Of Political Interference After Damning Enlargement Report,“ November 05, 2025. <https://www.rferl.org/a/tbilisi-accuses-eu-political-interference-damning-enlargement-report/33582199.html>

²⁰ Sergi Kapanadze, „Rosyjska propaganda Gruzijnskiego Marzenia,“ Mieroszewski Centre, September 4, 2025. <https://mieroszewski.pl/en/blog/rosyjska-propaganda-gruzynskiego-marzenia>

²¹ Jam News, „The Copenhagen Protest and Georgian Dream's New Attack on the European Union,“ May 19, 2026. <https://jam-news.net/georgias-prime-minister-accuses-denmark-of-democratic-backsliding-in-open-letter-to-the-eu/>

Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, Human Rights Watch, and Media Freedom Rapid Response, and is described in considerable detail in the OSCE Moscow Mechanism 2026 report on Georgia^{22,23,24,25,26,27}.

TV Imedi, Rustavi2 and POSTV increasingly serve as central nodes in the domestic information ecosystem that supports Georgian Dream's political communication. Although legally these broadcasters are privately owned, all three channels maintain close political and economic ties with influential figures connected to the ruling party²⁸.

The propaganda is further amplified and further supported by the Georgian Public Broadcaster, which is under the Georgian Dream party's control and is staffed by party loyalists. Despite being state-funded, the GPB does not enjoy high ratings. It often propagates the official party line and denies airtime to the opposition leaders and critically minded experts²⁹.

That the pro-government media have been evolving into propaganda mouthpieces has been particularly noticeable since 2022. Their coverage has increasingly focused on portraying Western governments as hostile actors, delegitimizing civil society organizations, accusing opposition parties of serving foreign interests, questioning European integration, and amplifying conspiracy theories concerning the "second front," the "Deep State," and foreign attempts to organize revolution. These narratives have systematically reproduced strategic messaging that has long been promoted by Russian state institutions and Kremlin-controlled media.

The convergence in messaging with Russia received unprecedented international recognition in February 2026, when the United Kingdom imposed sanctions on TV Imedi and POSTV under its Russia sanctions regime, identifying both broadcasters as entities involved in spreading Russian disinformation concerning Ukraine³⁰. The UK's Sanctions Notice asserts that the broadcasters disseminated deliberately misleading information portraying the Ukrainian government as illegitimate, Ukraine as a puppet of the West, and alleging that Ukraine and Western governments were attempting to destabilize Georgia.

The imposition of these sanctions marked the first time a Western government had formally designated major Georgian television broadcasters as participants in Russian information

²² European Commission, "Georgia Report 2025," November 4, 2025.

https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/b3089ad4-26be-4c6a-84cc-b9d680fe0a48_en?filename=georgia-report-2025.pdf

²³ Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2025: Georgia." <https://freedomhouse.org/country/georgia/freedom-world/2025>

²⁴ Reporters Without Borders, "World Press Freedom Index: Georgia." <https://rsf.org/en/country/georgia>

²⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Georgia." <https://www.hrw.org/europe/central-asia/georgia>

²⁶ European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), "Georgia: Independent Journalism and Media Pluralism on the Brink." <https://www.ecpmf.eu/georgia-independent-journalism-and-media-pluralism-on-the-brink/>

²⁷ Patrycja Grzebyk, "Report on Developments in Georgia in Respect of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms since Spring 2024," Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), February 24, 2026. https://odhr.osce.org/sites/default/files/documents/official_documents/2026/03/odgal0009c1%20ODIHR%20NV%2082-2026%20report_Moscow%20Mechanism%20invoked%20in%20respect%20of%20Georgia_0.pdf

²⁸ Natiko Taktakishvili, "Who Owns Georgia's Television Channels? A Breakdown of Media Ownership and Finances in 2025," Business Media, July 7, 2025. <https://bm.ge/en/news/who-owns-georgias-television-channels-a-breakdown-of-media-ownership-and-finances-in-2025>

²⁹ Agnes Jakobson, "Interview: How Georgian public broadcaster was distorted into a government mouthpiece," International Press Institute, February 4, 2026. <https://ipi.media/interview-how-georgias-public-broadcaster-was-distorted-into-a-government-mouthpiece/>

³⁰ Gov.uk, "UK Sanctions List: IMEDI TV." <https://search-uk-sanctions-list.service.gov.uk/designations/RUS3393/Entity>

operations³¹. The measures included asset freezes in the United Kingdom and restrictions on economic activities involving the designated entities. It is noteworthy that Imedi TV used to be owned by a London-based company, but the owners of that company sold its shares just weeks before London announced the sanctions^{32,33}.

Beyond their symbolic significance, the sanctions brought potentially important practical consequences. Because Georgian banking regulations require Georgian financial institutions to implement UK sanctions regimes related to Russia, legal experts argued that Imedi and POSTV could face restrictions in relation to domestic banking services, advertising revenue, financial transactions, as well as to access to Western commercial partners. The sanctions also substantially increase reputational and compliance risks for businesses, advertisers, and international companies that cooperate with the broadcasters³⁴.

In addition to activities mentioned, these two pro-Georgian Dream broadcasters are also increasingly providing platforms for international commentators whose views are regularly amplified by Russian state media, including Jeffrey Sachs, Larry Johnson, Thierry Mariani, Mick Wallace and Glenn Diesen^{35,36,37,38,39}. Although these individuals differ in their political views, each consistently advances narratives blaming NATO expansion for the war in Ukraine, criticizing Western support for Kyiv, questioning democratic movements in Georgia, or portraying Western institutions as destabilizing actors.

Operational convergence: adoption of Russian information techniques

Internalization of Russian FIMI extends beyond the dissemination of Russian narratives.

³¹ Reuters, „UK sanctions two Georgian TV channels over 'Russian disinformation',“ February 24, 2026. <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/uk-sanctions-two-georgian-tv-channels-over-russian-disinformation-2026-02-24/>

³² Daniel Boffey, O'wner of Georgian broadcaster called country's 'propaganda megaphone' is based in London,“ The Guardian, September 21, 2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/sep/21/owner-of-georgian-broadcaster-called-countrys-propaganda-megaphone-is-based-in-london>

³³ OC Media, „Key Georgian pro-government media outlet Imedi to be sold,“ February 7, 2026. <https://oc-media.org/key-georgian-pro-government-media-outlet-imeri-to-be-sold/>

³⁴ Transparency International Georgia, „What problems will UK sanctions create for pro-government Imedi TV and POSTV broadcasting Russian propaganda?,“ February 27, 2026. <https://www.transparency.ge/en/blog/what-problems-will-uk-sanctions-create-pro-government-imeri-tv-and-postv-broadcasting-russian>

³⁵ IMEDI, „Jeffrey Sachs expresses strong impression after meeting with Georgian Prime Minister, praises realistic assessment,“ July 2, 2026. <https://info.imeri.ge/en/politics/10221/jeffrey-sachs-expresses-strong-impression-after-meeting-with-georgian-prime-minister-praises-realistic-assessment>

³⁶ IMEDI News, „CIA-ს ყოფილი ჩინოსანი ლარი ჯონსონი: ზელენსკი მაღალანაზღაურებადი მსახიობია, რომლის საკმევ ფულის ნაკადის უზრუნველყოფა,“ December 29, 2025. <https://imerinews.ge/ge/msofli/418458/cias-kopili-chinosani-lari-jonsoni-zelenski-magalanazgaurebadi-msakhiobia-romlis-saqmets-pulis-nakadis-uzrunvelkopaa-ramdenime-miliardi-chaido-jibeshi-ar-gamikvirdeba-tu-agmochndebe-rom-kaia-kalasma-amit-mogeba-nakha>

³⁷ IMEDI News, „ტიერი მარიანი: მაღიან საშიში ვითარება,“ July 5, 2026.

<https://imerinews.ge/ge/msofli/444961/tieri-mariani-dzalian-sashishi-vitarebaa--27-sakhelmtsipo-romelits-evrokavshirshia-upro-da-upro-mchidro-martsukhebshi-egtseva-da-utsevs-iseti-nabijebis-gadadgma-romlebits-mat-erovnul-interesebshi-ar-shedis>

³⁸ IMEDI, „მიკ ვოლასი საქართველო-უკრაინის შესახებ,“ June 7, 2023. <https://www.imeri.ge/ge/video/129146/mik-volasi-saqartveloukrainis-shesakheb>

³⁹ TV IMEDI, „პასკალ ლოტასი და გლენ დისენი გადაცემაში „იმედი LIVE“,“ Facebook, June 3, 2026. <https://www.facebook.com/tvimeri/videos>

TV Imedi, Rustavi 2, and POSTV, as well as broader pro-government messaging, including through the public broadcaster, are making increasing use of operational techniques commonly associated with Russian FIMI.

First, major information campaigns are frequently characterised by synchronized dissemination across television broadcasters, online media, and anonymous social media accounts. Similar stories often appear across multiple outlets within minutes of each other, creating an artificial impression of independent confirmation.

Second, evidence suggests an increasing use of coordinated inauthentic behaviour. Meta has repeatedly dismantled networks linked to Georgian Dream actors that operated fake Facebook pages, anonymous accounts, and coordinated amplification campaigns⁴⁰. More recent cases involved the simultaneous publication of identical content by television broadcasters and anonymous accounts, suggesting the pursuit of coordinated dissemination strategies similar to those employed in Russian influence operations⁴¹.

Third, staged and manipulated audiovisual content is increasingly appearing in domestic political communication. During protests against the foreign agents law, broadcasters disseminated videos that discredited protesters, individual politicians, and activists. These attacks often included selectively edited recordings that spread at viral rates on Facebook and TikTok.

Fourth, Georgia witnessed probable AI-assisted information manipulation during the 2025 local elections and the protests of 4 October 2025. Anonymous pro-government accounts distributed audio recordings allegedly including the voices of opposition figures and government critics⁴². Independent technical analysis indicated high probabilities that the content was AI-generated in several cases, and the authorities never confirmed the authenticity of the recordings. The widespread dissemination of these recordings in the run up to politically significant events demonstrates how synthetic media is being integrated into domestic political communication.

Why this matters

The Georgian case illustrates an important evolution in modern FIMI. Traditional responses to foreign information manipulation have sought primarily to identify external actors: foreign governments, foreign state media, troll farms or coordinated influence networks operating across borders. Once these actors have been identified, the idea is to mobilize local government and employ a whole-of-society approach to counter the FIMI.

The FIMI model seen in Georgia is quite different. In Georgia, it is, increasingly, domestic political institutions, mainstream broadcasters and local political actors who are advancing Russian strategic objectives. This significantly complicates attribution because it means that influence operations

⁴⁰ Civil Georgia, „Meta Deletes Dozens of Accounts Associated with Georgian Government,” May 3, 2025. <https://civil.ge/archives/540605>

⁴¹ Ani Kistauri, “45 Trolls Against the BBC Investigation,” Myth Detector, January 23, 2026. <https://mythdetector.com/en/45-trolls-against-the-bbc-investigation/>

⁴² Myth Detector, “What Do AI Detection Tools Reveal About the Audio Allegedly Featuring Akhalaia and Burchuladze?”, October 5, 2025. <https://mythdetector.com/en/featuring-akhalaia-and-burchuladze/>

become embedded within legitimate domestic political communication. Thus the distinction between external propaganda and internal political messaging is becoming increasingly blurred.

This development carries serious implications for democratic resilience.

When conspiracy theories become normalized through mainstream broadcasters, public trust in democratic institutions erodes. When NGOs and journalists are portrayed as foreign agents, independent accountability mechanisms weaken. When election observers are depicted as instruments of foreign intelligence, confidence in electoral integrity declines. When peaceful protests are framed as externally orchestrated coups, civic participation itself is delegitimized. More importantly, though, when the European Union is presented as an enemy and Russia is presented as a protector of Christian values, the line between enemy and friend is blurred. This blurring will inevitably cause severe security problems for a small country that has undergone repeated attacks by Russia on its sovereignty and territorial integrity and whose prosperity and safety largely depends on its prospects of integration into the Western political and security institutions, like the EU and NATO.

Perhaps most importantly, this environment makes the attribution of and response to FIMI far more difficult. While it is clear that Georgian domestic actors employ the same methods, techniques, tactics, and behavioural patterns, and their messaging and strategic communication closely mirror Kremlin narratives, it is becoming increasingly difficult to identify those responsible, establish their links to Moscow, or demonstrate any formal chain of coordination or subordination. This, in turn, raises questions such as whether these actions are simply a coincidence or are directly controlled by and subordinated to Moscow.

Policy recommendations

The European Union and its Member States should recognize internalized FIMI as a distinct category of hybrid threat, especially in countries in which pro-Russian anti-democratic governments are in power. This is currently the case in Georgia; had the Moldovan and Armenian elections been won by pro-Russian forces, it would have happened there as well.

Second, the assessments of foreign information manipulation should not focus exclusively on Russian state actors but should also examine domestic political and media actors that systematically reproduce and amplify the Kremlin's strategic narratives. In many countries, these actors are more dangerous for national security – in terms of making the local societies vulnerable to Russian pressure – than the Moscow-orchestrated trolls and state propaganda attacks.

Support for independent media and investigative journalism should remain a strategic priority for the West if it wishes to seriously counter homegrown pro-Russian propaganda and Russia's influence operations. Strengthening resilient domestic information ecosystems represents one of the most effective long-term responses to internalized FIMI. The adoption of a whole-of-society approach is impossible in Georgia, since the Government is the agent of the FIMI. Therefore, other actors at the forefront in protecting European values and countering FIMI should be empowered more.

Technology companies should adopt frameworks for the detection of coordinated inauthentic behaviour to improve the identification of synchronized campaigns involving traditional broadcasters alongside anonymous online networks. Existing moderation systems often treat television

broadcasters and coordinated social media activity separately, despite the increasing operational convergence among them. Greater empowerment of the fact-checking community by tech giants and greater EU oversight of these social media corporations should be made an integral part of the EU-wide response framework towards the Russian FIMI.

Future sanctions frameworks against Russia should consider not only individuals who directly coordinate with Moscow-based propaganda machinery, but also those who systematically facilitate and amplify foreign information-manipulation campaigns within domestic political systems. As it can sometimes be impossible to establish links between the latter and Moscow, especially if the government is in charge of covering up, any evidence to that effect, the use of the same standard for sanctions that is used vis-à-vis Russia Today or other propaganda outlets that are clearly run by the Russian government is neither effective nor practical.

Finally, democratic resilience initiatives related to Georgia should increasingly focus on identifying the localization of anti-European and pro-Russian narratives rather than solely on monitoring propaganda coming directly from foreign countries. As the Georgian experience demonstrates, modern FIMI often succeeds not because foreign actors speak louder, but because domestic actors have begun speaking with their voices.

Conclusion

Georgia represents one of the clearest contemporary examples of the way in which foreign information manipulation can evolve into a domestically sustained political communication system. Russian strategic narratives, operational techniques, and influence methodologies have not only entered the Georgian information space but also increasingly been internalized by influential domestic political actors and mainstream media institutions.

This transformation fundamentally changes the way that democratic societies should understand and respond to FIMI. The principal challenge is no longer exclusively external propaganda originating from Moscow. It is also the normalization of Russian influence methodologies within domestic political discourse itself.

Recognizing this evolution is essential for the development of effective democratic resilience policies. To be successful, efforts to counter Russian FIMI in Georgia will therefore have to address not only foreign influence operations but also the domestic political and media infrastructures that have adopted, localized, and legitimized them. However, even if this infrastructure is targeted via various restrictive measures, it will not be possible to counter the success of Russian FIMI in Georgia without regular steps to empower the major domestic actors – resisting it – independent TV media, news and online media, fact-checking community, civil society organizations and universities –, even if the local legal environment does not permit such empowerment.



Federal Foreign Office



**CIVIL
SOCIETY
COOPERATION**