

# Georgia's Great Imitation: How Ivanishvili Is Deceiving Trump's World to Cement His Authoritarian Rule

In recent months, the ruling Georgian Dream party has adopted a strikingly familiar rhetorical strategy: invoking the language of Trumpism. From denouncing the “deep state” and globalist elites to railing against foreign-funded NGOs and a bloated government, Georgian Dream officials have echoed the very terms that have become staples of the America First political movement. They speak of sovereignty, conservative values, media accountability, and bureaucratic reform. On paper, it may seem like Georgia's government has embraced a Trump-style populist awakening, also visible in some European states.

But behind this borrowed language lies a cynical, calculated deception—one that risks fooling American allies, enabling authoritarianism, and handing a key strategic partner in the South Caucasus over

to America's greatest adversaries: Russia and China.

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The truth is this: The Georgian Dream is not fighting the deep state—it is building one. It is not slashing bureaucracy—it is expanding it. It is not defending free speech—it is criminalizing it. It is not protecting national sovereignty—it is surren-



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dering it to Russian influence and Chinese capital. It is not aligning with conservative values—it is embracing a medieval-type dictatorship. And it is doing all of this while cloaking itself in Trumpist rhetoric, hoping that the Trump administration, distracted by language and symbolism, will overlook the regime's betrayal of everything the conservative movement stands for.

## The Illusion Behind the Trump-Like Language

The Georgian Dream's sudden embrace of “deep state” rhetoric—replacing its earlier favorite, the “global war party”—is no coincidence. In late 2024, Georgian Dream leaders began mimicking the language of the American right, hoping to win favor with Trump allies. Kakha Kaladze, the ruling party's secretary general, recently [boasted](#) on TV that Georgia had exposed the “deep state” before Trump, rewriting history to suit the narrative. In truth, the Georgian Dream had long [blamed](#) a vaguely defined “global war party”, not a “deep state” of Western institutions and NGOs for pressuring Georgia into conflict with Russia for electoral purposes, trying to portray itself as pro-peace. So what, that no U.S. or EU official has ever called on Georgia to join the war in Ukraine?

Now, as Trump's influence grows, the Georgian Dream is rebranding its conspiracies under the more familiar label of the “deep state,” even [accusing](#) Nordic and Baltic states of being fully controlled by it—using the English term in Georgian speeches because the concept does not even translate into Georgian. The pitch is simple: once Trump defeats the deep state at home, U.S.-Georgia ties will be “instantly restored.”

This narrative is crafted for a domestic audience worried about Georgia's crumbling relationship with the West and, particularly, the U.S., especial-

ly after the Biden administration [suspended](#) the Strategic Partnership in November 2024. Georgia has long had one of the most pro-American societies in the region - polls consistently [show](#) overwhelming support for U.S. and Euro-Atlantic integration. But the Georgian Dream is weaponizing American domestic political debates in order to justify its own attacks on democracy. When Elon Musk criticizes USAID, ruling party leaders cheer, forgetting that they were once its biggest beneficiaries. They also celebrated cuts to Radio Free Europe, a network that has repeatedly exposed government corruption. The party has turned civil society—NGOs, fact-checkers, investigative outlets—into its enemy, not because they are foreign agents, but because they are domestic watchdogs.

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To reinforce the illusion, the Georgian Dream [created](#) its own Department of Government Efficiency, parodying Elon Musk's DOGE and copying the “drain the swamp” mantra. But instead of shrinking government, it has expanded it—civil service and bureaucratic expenditures [increased](#) significantly since the Georgian Dream came to power while jobs and benefits were channeled to party loyalists. Watchdogs found that every fourth salary is [paid](#) by the state budget and that state welfare recipients are [exploited](#) to support the ruling party. The Georgian Dream's populist gestures are pure performance: [scrubbing](#) the word “gender” from laws they themselves passed, dismantling the Gender Equality Council they created, and flirting with bans on LGBT symbols. Trump never called for these measures—but Russia has. This is not American conservatism. It is authoritarianism in a red hat.

## Georgia's Deep State Exists—And Ivanishvili Runs It

At the center of this carefully staged deception stands Bidzina Ivanishvili—the reclusive billionaire, former prime minister, and undisputed puppeteer of Georgian politics. Although he holds no formal office today, Ivanishvili exercises unchecked power over every branch of government: the judiciary, the parliament, the security services, and the media.

His personal network appoints lifetime judges who now dominate Georgia's High Council of Justice—some of whom have been sanctioned by the U.S., the UK, and the EU for corruption, political interference, and the erosion of democratic checks and balances. These so-called “clan of judges” are not just Ivanishvili's legal enforcers—they are his insurance policy. Through them, political opponents are prosecuted, dissent is criminalized, and civil society is neutered. Recent journalistic investigations have also [revealed](#) that his closest political and business allies, including Irakli Rukhadze, who also runs the domestic propaganda Imedi TV, have ties to Russian oligarchic circles, raising further alarm about the foreign influences shaping his regime.

Beyond the courts, Ivanishvili bankrolls an entire parallel media ecosystem—a network of so-called “alternative” outlets designed to mimic independent journalism while spreading conspiracy theories, disinformation and smear campaigns against critics, opposition parties, and the West. These outlets, many of which operate under the guise of patriotic nationalism, have been key tools in reframing civil society organizations and pro-Western voices as “foreign agents.” At the same time, the government harasses or censors actual independent journalists. Investigative outlets like *Publika*, *Batumelebi*, *Formula*, and *Mtavari* have been targeted with lawsuits, advertising boycotts, and

even physical attacks. In 2024 alone, over 90 journalists were detained or injured while covering protests or political events—a staggering figure in a country of 3.7 million people. As international watchdogs like Freedom House and Reporters Without Borders have noted, Georgia is [no longer considered](#) a “free” media environment.

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In short, Ivanishvili has created the very kind of entrenched, unaccountable bureaucracy that the American conservative movement has spent years fighting against—a real deep state. Yet now he dares to speak the language of Trump's America, claiming to battle the same enemies that he himself personifies: elite corruption, captured institutions, and media propaganda. It is the political equivalent of a counterfeit bill—mimicking the surface design while reversing its entire value. This is not just dishonest politics; it is a dangerous illusion. If American conservatives—who rightly distrust entrenched power—are duped by this imitation, they risk legitimizing a regime that fundamentally betrays U.S. values and long-term interests in a vital strategic corridor bridging Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

But this deception is not just a threat to the United States. It is a betrayal of Georgia's national interest. Under Ivanishvili's rule, Georgia has turned from a beacon of reform into a regional cautionary tale. Foreign investment is down. Emigration is rising. The economy is increasingly reliant on remittances and Russian-linked capital. Young professionals are leaving, democracy is shrinking, and corruption is rising—all while Ivanishvili and his inner circle amass more wealth and entrench their grip on power. The Georgian Dream does not stand for “Geor-

gia First.” Its true slogan is “Ivanishvili First”—and that should concern anyone who cares about liberty, sovereignty, or stability in the region.

## Authoritarian *Fait Accompli*

Since the rigged October 2024 parliamentary elections, the pace of authoritarian consolidation has accelerated in Georgia and the one-party dictatorship is all but *fait accompli*. Independent observers described the October 2024 elections as the worst in Georgia’s modern history—marred by fraud, intimidation, and abuse of state resources. Peaceful protesters have been beaten in the streets. Journalists and activists were arrested. New laws are being introduced to control conventional and social media, censor online content, and silence civil society—all under the false pretense of “fighting fake news,” “regulating foreign influence,” and “protecting national sovereignty.”

Perhaps the Georgian Dream government’s most cynical distortion of American policy is the recently passed “Foreign Agents” law—falsely presented as Georgia’s version of the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). While FARA in the U.S. was designed to ensure transparency in cases of foreign lobbying by agents of hostile governments, the Georgian Dream’s draft law is a weapon aimed squarely at Georgia’s civil society. Under the guise of transparency, it seeks to criminalize NGOs, think tanks, fact-checkers, watchdog journalists, and even educational initiatives that Western allies, including the United States, have long supported. The purpose is not to expose foreign interference—it is to silence critics, intimidate activists, and brand pro-democracy voices as “traitors.” This is not a conservative policy. It is Russian-style authoritarianism wearing a MAGA mask.

The irony is that the Georgian Dream claims to be imitating the American model of fighting foreign influence, just as Donald Trump’s own Department of Justice has been moving in the opposite direc-

tion. On 5 February 2025, Attorney General Pam Bondi significantly [narrowed](#) the scope of FARA enforcement, ordering prosecutors to pursue only those cases involving “traditional espionage” or direct action by foreign governments. This rollback was a clear rejection of using FARA as a blunt instrument against NGOs or civil society actors—a trend that had emerged during the Biden administration. Bondi’s directive made it clear: the law should not be used to criminalize transparency advocates or non-profit organizations engaged in public debate. But the Georgian Dream has done exactly that. It has embraced the harshest, most punitive interpretation of the 1938 version of FARA—once aimed at Nazi and Soviet propaganda—and is using it to target election observers, anti-corruption activists, and any organization that challenges the ruling party’s authority.

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This is not the “American approach.” It is the Russian playbook—from labeling NGOs as “foreign agents” to banning critical media to criminalizing dissent under the veneer of legality. And that deception must be exposed—especially to those in Washington who understand the true intent of FARA and who should see through this deliberate distortion.

## Ivanishvili’s Game: Fool Trump, Consolidate Power

Ivanishvili and his party know that their popularity inside Georgia is dwindling. They know that they have alienated the European Union and the U.S. administration. So now, they are placing their hopes in Trump’s presidency—hoping that by mim-

icking his language, flattering his worldview, and vilifying his enemies (the media, the “deep state”, NGOs), they can win favor or at least indifference from Washington.

But this is not an ideological alignment. It is a transactional trick. Ivanishvili is betting that the Trump movement is superficial—that its leaders will not look beyond the slogans. He is betting that Trump allies will ignore Georgia’s political prisoners, overlook China’s growing foothold in the Caucasus, and accept flattering talk as a substitute for real reform.

He is wrong.

America First does not mean America Fooled. Supporting allies who merely imitate our language while enacting policies that betray our values is not just morally corrosive—it is strategically reckless.

It is clear that the Congress, especially the Helsinki Commission, is not fooled by Ivanishvili’s cronies’ mimicking language. It is also clear that the State Department has not been fooled either. Congressman Joe Wilson has been actively [exposing](#) the Georgian Dream’s anti-democratic turn and ringing alarm bells in Washington about the growing influence of Russia and China in Georgia.

On 2 April, in a sharply worded statement, the U.S. State Department [warned](#) Georgian Dream that it “cannot win a democratic mandate by censoring or jailing opponents,” calling recent actions by the ruling party anti-democratic. The message, delivered in response to questions about arrests of peaceful protesters, disputed elections and jailed journalists, emphasized that the U.S. remains committed to Georgia’s sovereignty but is reevaluating its approach.

It is noteworthy that once the stern statements started coming from the Trump administration, the tone of the Georgian Dream’s propaganda

changed. All of a sudden, ruling party propagandists started [spinning](#) the message that Trump is failing to defeat the “deep state” and is still “a hostage of a deep state.” Once a bluff is called, folding is the only option.

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## Why Georgia Still Matters

Many in the U.S. might ask why the Trump administration should pay attention to Georgia—a small, distant country seemingly insignificant compared to other global hotspots. But Georgia is not just another post-Soviet state. It is a frontline in the 21st-century struggle between freedom and authoritarianism, between Western-led democracy and Eurasian kleptocracy. If Georgia falls, it will be a strategic victory for the Kremlin and Beijing—and a profound loss for the United States and its allies.

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And the inverse is also true. If Washington supports the Georgian people—not the regime currently in power—then Georgia can once again become a model of democratic reform, economic freedom, and strategic partnership in a hostile region. For decades, Georgia has been one of America’s most loyal and credible allies. Its soldiers have fought and died alongside American troops in every major U.S.-led conflict since the early 2000s—without NATO protection or formal treaties, but

out of conviction and loyalty to the cause of freedom. Per capita, no other non-NATO country has contributed more.

Georgia is not just a moral ally—it is a strategic one. Located within hours of Tehran, Moscow, Kyiv, Istanbul, and Tel Aviv, Georgia sits at the crossroads of Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Its ports, pipelines, and energy routes are essential for the West's continued presence in Eurasia, particularly for U.S. engagement with Central Asia. U.S. trade with the region is expanding: in 2024 alone, Kazakhstan recorded USD 3.4 billion in bilateral [trade](#) and over USD 3.1 billion in U.S. investment, mostly in energy and raw materials. Uzbekistan [followed](#) with USD 423 million in trade and nearly USD 3.9 billion in FDI. The region is vital to American interests as a counterweight to China and Russia, offering access to key resources, emerging markets, and strategic leverage.

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Georgia plays a pivotal role in this dynamic. As the lead transit country on the Middle Corridor connecting Central Asia to Europe, its Black Sea ports—especially the forthcoming Anaklia Deep Sea Port—could secure alternative trade routes that bypass both Russia and Iran. Undermining Georgia's role through internal instability or foreign control over key infrastructure would weaken U.S. access to Central Asia and limit its geopolitical reach. Preserving Georgia's pro-Western trajectory and logistical capacity is thus vital to America's long-term economic and strategic presence in the wider region.

Yet under the Georgian Dream government, all of this is slipping away. Anaklia, initially earmarked for American investors, is now on track to be [handed over](#) to a Chinese firm linked to the Chinese Communist Party. In 2019, Secretary Pompeo [warned](#) Georgia against ceding control of strategic assets to Beijing—a warning that was ignored. On April 2, 2025, the Helsinki Commission [declared](#) that Anaklia's transfer to a CCP-backed, U.S.-sanctioned conglomerate threatens not only Georgia's sovereignty and democracy but also America's long-term influence in the region.

A bipartisan group of U.S. Senators recently [introduced](#) the *Strategic Ports Reporting Act* to counter China's growing grip on key global infrastructure. The bill mandates a comprehensive assessment of ports vital to U.S. military and economic security—particularly those influenced by Beijing. Georgian ports, especially Anaklia, must be part of that strategic review if the current government proceeds with handing over the project to a Chinese state-linked entity.

Georgia is also part of a broader regional chessboard, where Russia and China work in tandem to checkmate the West. Whether Georgia slips back into Russia's orbit will likely be decided in the coming months—and if it happens, it will occur under Trump's watch. On March 4, 2025, President Trump [claimed](#) that under Bush, Russia “got Georgia.” While Russia did invade in 2008, it failed to change the regime or fully subjugate the country. Georgia retained its independence and Western trajectory. But if Georgia now falls under Russian or Chinese control, it will not be a historical footnote—it will be a present-day failure to be ascribed to President Trump.

Since November 28, 2024, Georgians have taken to the streets for over 130 consecutive days, protesting their government's abandonment of the pro-Western path. The people of Georgia still [fly](#) American flags at demonstrations. They over-

whelmingly support Euro-Atlantic integration and look to the U.S. as a symbol of hope. Reagan is revered for helping bring down the Soviet Union, which allowed Georgia to regain its independence. In a world increasingly skeptical of American leadership, Georgians still believe in it.

Yes, Georgia is far away. But it is a test of whether American leadership still matters—whether the U.S. can still stand by its allies, defend democracy, and counter authoritarian influence in one of the world's most strategic crossroads. The cost of indifference would not just be Georgia's future—it would be America's credibility.

## America Must Act on Georgia

If America—especially its current leadership—fails to stand with Georgia's people now, it will send a clear signal: Authoritarian regimes can co-opt American rhetoric, trample American values, and still get a pass.

The Georgian Dream is betting that language is all that matters—that by parroting “deep state” and “sovereignty,” and “USAID is bad,” they can dupe Washington. But the Trump team must see beyond that. The United States must become serious about stopping Georgia's slide into authoritarianism and preserving its role as a frontline ally. For this, Washington must act with purpose and precision.

First and foremost, President Trump should publicly call for new elections in Georgia. The Georgian Dream clings to one last bastion of legitimacy: the hope of recognition from Trump and his team. If that illusion is shattered, their external credibility collapses—and with it, their internal grip on power will face a significant backlash. A single statement from Trump—calling for free and fair elections—could have more impact than a dozen EU declarations or diplomatic notes.

Alongside that, the U.S. administration must ratchet up targeted sanctions against the corrupt circle surrounding Ivanishvili. The existing sanctions are a good start, but they are not enough. Further financial pressure—especially State Department-led measures—can effectively paralyze the regime's economic lifelines. These sanctions must be clearly tied to the repeal of draconian foreign agent laws, media censorship policies, and rigged electoral rules. The message should be unmistakable: Georgian leaders will be sanctioned for behaving like Russian satellites. The aforementioned propagandist Rukhadze, who is also a U.S. citizen, publicly boasts that he can not be sanctioned because of his citizenship. The U.S. can still find ways how to hold him responsible for championing Russian interests instead of American ones.

***Washington must draw a red line around Georgia's strategic infrastructure. The quiet handover of the Anaklia port to a CCP-linked conglomerate should not be ignored.***

At the same time, Washington must draw a red line around Georgia's strategic infrastructure. The quiet handover of the Anaklia port to a CCP-linked conglomerate should not be ignored. Georgia is not just drifting from the West—it is selling off its sovereignty to America's adversaries. A public warning from the U.S. government that creeping Chinese or Russian control over Georgia's economy will trigger further sanctions is essential. The administration should also accelerate legislative efforts in Congress, including the [MEGOBARI Act](#) and the [Georgian Nightmare Non-Recognition Act](#). Even a single, well-placed endorsement from the State Department or the Vice President would give these bills momentum and show that the U.S. is not bluffing.

Beyond pressure, renewed support for Georgia's democratic forces is urgently needed. U.S. assis-



tance to Georgia's democracy defenders—civil society groups, independent media, and grassroots organizers—has been a key force for good and should be reinvigorated in coordination with the EU. Unlike other places where such funding went astray, it helped protect liberty and American interests alike in Georgia. With the demise of USAID and American withdrawal from the global democracy support project, U.S. interests have suffered. Nowhere is it more visible than in Georgia.

Finally, Washington must send a loud, unequivocal message: Georgia is not for sale, not to Russia, not to China, and not as a bargaining chip in a future Ukraine settlement. This is not Russia's backyard—it is a sovereign nation fighting for its future. And the United States must stand with the Georgian people and not the regime that betrays them ■