

The Georgian Dream's Goebbelsian Propaganda

Joseph Goebbels, the notorious Nazi Minister of Propaganda, crafted a blueprint for controlling perceptions, public opinion, and behavior that has been studied for decades. His cognitive manipulation principles focused on centralized media control, emotional simplification, calculated repetition, enemy vilification, and total message dominance. While Goebbels operated in an era before digital hyperconnectivity, his foundational tactics remain alarmingly relevant today, adapted, expanded, and amplified for the internet-driven communication space. Goebbels's core propaganda principles have long served as the foundational guide for authoritarian regimes around the world, regardless of whether or not those regimes are explicitly genocidal and fascist or not.

This article examines how the Georgian Dream regime employs propaganda tactics that closely follow the principles of Goebbels. In the best tradition of one of the most infamous propagan-

da principles often attributed to Goebbels — *accuse your enemy of what you are guilty of yourself* — the regime's Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze recently [accused](#) critics of the regime's anti-Western and repressive policies of using the tactics Georgian Dream has long relied on itself: "We are dealing with Goebbels-style propaganda methods where you first create an enemy image and then attribute connections to it to your opponent. Such propaganda does not require any facts. The main thing is that the propaganda is total and the message is repeated by as many agents as possible." By applying this very strategy, the Georgian Dream has systematically [reshaped](#) Georgia's political environment, undermined democratic institutions, and attempted to shift the country's geopolitical orientation.

Russian propaganda from the Soviet era through the modern hybrid warfare era closely follows the same playbook. Under Moscow's close [patronage](#), the Georgian Dream's propaganda increasingly



SHOTA GVINERIA
Contributor

Ambassador Shota Gvineria joined the Baltic Defence College as a lecturer in Defence and Cyber Studies in July 2019. He is also a fellow at the Economic Policy Research Center since 2017. Previously, Amb. Gvineria held various positions in Georgia's public sector, including Deputy Secretary at the National Security Council and Foreign Policy Advisor to the Minister of Defense. From 2010-14, he served as the Ambassador of Georgia to the Kingdom of the Netherlands and later became the Director of European Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Amb. Gvineria, with an MA in Strategic Security Studies from Washington's National Defense University, also earned MAs in International Relations from the Diplomatic School of Madrid and Public Administration from the Georgian Technical University.



© GEOPOLITICS

relies on these Goebbelsian methods, especially in response to massive public protests against the regime's openly anti-Western [shift](#) and rapid authoritarian escalation. The regime has intensified its anti-Western rhetoric, denied its repressive actions, and placed blame for unrest on fabricated enemies. This classic authoritarian strategy of denying facts and inverting reality aims to saturate the public sphere with conspiracies, thereby deflecting accountability. Understanding how the Georgian Dream applies these propaganda principles offers valuable insight into the broader phenomenon of modern authoritarian information control, revealing how regimes worldwide exploit digital platforms to sustain power and manipulate public opinion.

A Durable and Adaptable Pattern: Ten Core Principles

The framework of propaganda principles attributed to Joseph Goebbels is derived from a combination of his writings, particularly his diaries, and extensive scholarly interpretation. One of the

most influential analyses is Leonard W. Doob's 1950 article, which [presents](#) a thematic outline of Goebbels's methods rather than a fixed or numbered list. Over time, scholars and commentators have adapted this analysis into simplified versions to make the ideas more accessible for public discussion and teaching. Although there is no universally agreed upon set of principles, these interpretations effectively capture how authoritarian regimes manipulate information to control perception and consolidate power.

This article highlights a widely cited list of Goebbels's ten principles, categorizing them into two groups: structural elements that concern the organization and enforcement of propaganda, and narrative elements that pertain to the actual content. While structural methods have evolved in response to digital hyperconnectivity, the narrative strategies remain strikingly consistent. The following sections examine each principle alongside concrete examples from the Georgian Dream's propaganda, showing how these enduring tactics persist in a new information and technology environment.

Principle	Short Description
Centralized Authority	Propaganda must be controlled by a single organization to ensure consistency and total message dominance.
One-sided Messaging	Only present information that fits the official narrative; float theories of conspiracies to drown out the facts.
Media Control	Exercise aggressive media manipulation to dominate all communication channels and suppress alternatives.
Use of Technology	Leverage modern media and technology to maximize reach, attention, and message saturation.
Simplicity	Use rallies, slogans, symbols, and emotionally charged simple messages to quickly move audiences.
Vilification of Enemies	Create enemies and blame them for all problems, brand dissenters as anti-national to unite society against them.
Continuous Criticism	Constantly and relentlessly attack and discredit political opponents and dissenting voices.
Repetition	Repeat lies until accepted as truth; constant repetition embeds ideas until they are accepted by the public.
Adaptation to Events	Quickly justify every act in the name of the nation and adjust messaging to current developments.
Truth as a Tool	Use truth or lies flexibly, whichever is more credible or useful; float conspiracy theories - convince or confuse.

Structural Elements: Adapting to the Internet-Driven Communication Space

Having established control over most state resources, institutions, and the machinery of government, the Georgian Dream regime has [achieved](#) an advanced form of [state capture](#) that is deeply [rooted](#) in Georgia's post-Soviet political culture. Yet, even this dominance does not translate into full command of the modern communication space. In today's Georgia, where the ruling party is just one actor within a hybrid environment heavily influenced and orchestrated by the Kremlin, the information ecosystem is too fragmented and the spread of independent voices is too persistent for an outright informational monopoly.

Rather than striving for total control, the Georgian Dream and its Kremlin mentors focused on dividing society into hostile camps, flooding the arena with noise, and leveraging sophisticated technology and administrative power to amplify their narrative while stifling genuine debate.

Instead, the regime adopted propaganda tactics best suited for the digital era by nurturing deep polarization and constructing an environment where competing narratives become virtually irreconcilable. Rather than striving for total control, the Georgian Dream and its Kremlin mentors focused on [dividing](#) society into hostile camps, flooding the arena with noise, and leveraging sophisticated technology and administrative power to amplify their narrative while stifling genuine debate. This approach is rooted in the foundational structural principles of Goebbels' propaganda machine, reimagined for an era of global connectivity, diminished democratic institutions, and ongoing ideological subversion.

A notable, Orwellian example of this machinery in action is the so-called Tsulukiani temporary investigative commission of the Georgian Dream Parliament [Framed](#) as an inquiry into the wrongdoings of the previous government, but functioning as a regime spectacle, the commission reliably produces content crafted explicitly for state-aligned propaganda channels. Its public hearings and dramatic accusations not only serve to create enemies and fabricate convictions against opposition figures but also provide a steady stream of "official" narratives and talking points used and recycled by TV, online media, and individuals loyal to the Georgian Dream. The Commission thus functions as a content farm, orchestrating spectacles while driving top-down messaging not only across the government's entire power vertical but also entire pro-governmental echo chambers.

Below, each of the structural elements is examined in detail with Georgia-specific examples illustrating how old authoritarian logic is translated into new methods of command and confusion:

Centralized Authority - The Georgian Dream regime sustains a highly centralized propaganda apparatus, tightly controlling major TV broadcasters (Imedi, Rustavi 2, POSTV), synchronizing narratives through editorial briefings and directives. These same narratives are amplified online through internet sources, including official party and party leaders' pages, coordinated Facebook networks, and swarms of bots and trolls, which flood social media with regime talking points, crowd out dissent, and manufacture a fictional consensus.

In line with [reports](#) about strategic narratives being jointly developed with or adapted from Moscow and then locally tailored by the regime's talking heads, the recent EU statement finally [acknowledged](#) that the Georgian Dream is involved in spreading Russian-style conspiracy theories and divisive narratives. Indeed, the regime's well-integrated, hierarchical vertical ensures that the

state-aligned, malign messaging reaches Georgians simultaneously via television, online news, and social platforms, reinforcing the dominance of the regime's perspective and leaving little room for independent or factual counter-narratives in the state-controlled communication space.

The epistolary [letters](#) from the Georgian Dream's political council and Bidzina Ivanishvili's [statements](#) leave no space for interpretation and define the message in stunning detail. The latest letter from the political council sets the tone for the key narrative of the momentum, instructs the subordinated channel about the nuances of the key message: "So, what is it that Georgia has failed to do that continuously subjects us to blackmail? Soon, our political team and Georgian society provided the answer themselves: "we did not get involved in the war, nor did we open a second front against Russia on our soil. It is precisely because of this stance that the then administration, led by the Global War Party, the same Deep State, decided to punish Georgia."

One-sided messaging remains central to the Georgian Dream's strategy. Pro-government TV and online media push uniform narratives, systematically excluding dissenting voices and omitting inconvenient truths that challenge regime interests. Manipulation of public outlook is evident in the regime's ferocious anti-Western rhetoric, passed alongside the work of the aforementioned parliamentary commission, effectively codifying Georgia's blame for the August War. This effort aligns the official storyline with Kremlin talking points, paving the way for the restoration of official ties with Russia.

A telling example of this approach is historical revisionism, notably the government's [rewriting](#) of school textbooks to recalibrate national values and reframe political interests through education. In addition to distorting facts and downplaying major scandals such as election rigging and Rus-

sia's creeping borderization, both of which are ignored or actively misrepresented, the Georgian Dream regime notably demonizes former President Mikheil Saakashvili and his administrations, even at the expense of national interests. This demonization goes beyond simply blaming him for starting the war; it seeks to rebrand his entire period of governance as anti-national and harmful to Georgia's national interest, [arguing](#) that it was a period of submission to the foreign influence of Western stakeholders. A striking instance of this is the same parliamentary investigative commission that goes beyond distorting reality by attempting to legally blame Saakashvili for starting the war. This maneuver serves a dual purpose: it strengthens the Georgian Dream's image as the guardian of peace while simultaneously creating a convenient scapegoat to blame for the country's problems. Meanwhile, critics of the regime continue to be branded "enemies" or "foreign agents," further consolidating the authoritarian narrative.

The Georgian Dream has long refused to engage in debates with opponents, boycotted opposition media, and restricted opposition figures from appearing on outlets under its control. These measures have crystallized societal silos and fostered a state of perfect polarization with two irreconcilable echo chambers dominating public discourse.

To reinforce its echo chamber, the Georgian Dream consistently presents only information that aligns with the official narrative and disseminates conspiracy theories to drown out facts, going so far as to deny even the most vivid and documented evidence that contradicts its propaganda. A recent example is Kobakhidze's outright [denial](#) of thousands of instances of proof regarding the regime's pro-Russian alienation, instead shifting blame onto the West and opposition for spreading "fake

news.” Denying anything that challenges the regime’s version of reality is a central tactic in their messaging. To facilitate such an environment, the Georgian Dream has long refused to engage in debates with opponents, boycotted opposition media, and restricted opposition figures from appearing on outlets under its control. These measures have crystallized societal silos and fostered a state of perfect polarization with two irreconcilable echo chambers dominating public discourse. This classic authoritarian strategy not only shields the regime from criticism but also ensures that only the ruling party’s narrative prevails unchallenged.

Media control remains crucial for the Georgian Dream, which now dominates TV, radio, and expanding online channels through regulatory pressure and economic leverage. New laws empower the Communications Commission to sanction and throttle independent media while government-linked outlets receive privileged access and funding. Numerous targeted [crackdowns](#) on critical journalists during the recent protest rallies demonstrate the regime’s ongoing effort to stifle dissent. As a result, despite pervasive online fragmentation, fear, self-censorship, and legal harassment restrict critical voices, allowing pro-government messaging to saturate Georgia’s information space and further marginalize alternative perspectives.

The government’s aggressive use of repressive legislation to muzzle criticism includes the recent move to freeze the accounts of independent media outlet Batumelebi, whose founder, Mzia Amaghlobeli, has become a symbol of the state’s orchestrated repression against critical media voices after her Illegal incarceration.

The government’s aggressive use of repressive legislation to muzzle criticism includes the recent move to [freeze](#) the accounts of independent media outlet Batumelebi/Netgazeti, whose founder, Mzia Amaghlobeli, has become a symbol of the state’s orchestrated repression against critical media voices after her Illegal incarceration. At the same time, government-controlled media, such as Imedi TV and the public broadcaster, are allowed to continue uninterrupted operations while [accumulating](#) budgetary debts.

Exploiting modern technology has moved beyond Goebbels’ use of radio to encompass digital tools, social media algorithms, and targeted advertising. These advancements enable rapid dissemination of messages to vast, diverse audiences, often in tailored forms that significantly increase emotional and cognitive impact. This technological leap allows for precision propaganda that was unimaginable in the twentieth century.

In Georgia, this is clearly illustrated by the regime’s extensive use of Meta platforms to promote official narratives and discredit critics. Between January and April 2025 alone, just a handful of official government and pro-government media pages, including those of Irakli Kobakhidze, the Georgian Dream party, POSTV, and the Government of Georgia, collectively spent over USD 190,000 on Meta advertising for their official pages. The exact figures, [available](#) through Meta’s public Ad Library, reflect only a portion of total expenditures and show how digital platforms are systematically used to saturate the information space with regime messaging. By paying to push content into users’ feeds while presenting it as ordinary political communication, the government blends modern influence techniques with algorithmic targeting to distort public perception and suppress dissent.

Narrative Elements: Enduring Strategies for Message Development

Developing propaganda messages and their dissemination are inherently intertwined within a centralized process. However, unlike the structural adaptations required by today's digital landscape, the underlying principles related to message content and framing have remained remarkably consistent over time. These narrative strategies tap deeply into fundamental aspects of human psychology and are applied in almost identical ways today as they were decades ago.

The Georgian Dream regime understands that complete ideological control is impossible in today's information environment. Instead, it focuses on behavioral control, ensuring that citizens refrain from protesting or supporting opposition parties, regardless of their beliefs or the information they hear.

The essential focus is not on controlling what people believe but on shaping how they behave. Even Goebbels acknowledged that Nazi propaganda did not fully control the narrative or convert everyone's beliefs. His goal was to ensure that, regardless of their beliefs, people acted in accordance with the regime's expectations. Despite harsh penalties for listening to foreign broadcasts during the Nazi era, many Germans still consumed outside news. Similarly, the Georgian Dream regime understands that complete ideological control is impossible in today's information environment. Instead, it focuses on behavioral [control](#), ensuring that citizens refrain from protesting or supporting opposition parties, regardless of their beliefs or the information they hear.

To enforce this, the regime has taken repression to a new level. Leaders of all major opposition parties remain [imprisoned](#) for reasons such as refusing to attend parliamentary committee hearings, which have become a tool for repression and propaganda. Additionally, charges against civil activists are [pushed](#) without any evidence presented, solely based on the testimony of the police officers, and disproportionate fines are [imposed](#) on anyone who publicly criticizes the government or participates in protests. Through these tactics, the regime seeks to neutralize dissenting behavior even if it cannot fully control private beliefs.

The principle of [simplicity](#) is paramount. Propaganda appeals directly to emotions, avoiding rational complexity to ensure messages are easily understood and remembered. By stripping away nuance, propaganda exploits cognitive shortcuts, effectively influencing large populations. The Georgian Dream frequently employs emotionally charged slogans and symbols, such as portraying itself as the protectors of Georgian sovereignty against "foreign threats" or "external interference"—messages repeatedly broadcast through various campaigns. For example, during election cycles, the party's core slogans revolve around false dilemmas such as choosing peace over NATO or preserving traditions over progress in EU integration. Those dilemmas are deliberately vague and simplify complex political realities in order to achieve emotional resonance. These narratives, coupled with pseudo-nationalist slogans, rally supporters who may not engage deeply with policy details but respond strongly to these straightforward emotional appeals.

By identifying clear internal and external adversaries, the regime redirects public frustrations and fears, uniting audiences against perceived threats and justifying harsh actions against opponents.

Vilification of enemies continues to serve a critical psychological function within the Georgian Dream's propaganda. By identifying clear internal and external adversaries, the regime redirects public frustrations and fears, uniting audiences against perceived threats and justifying harsh actions against opponents.

The Georgian Dream relentlessly pushes narratives framing the West as actively interfering to destabilize Georgia, reinforcing the regime's portrayal of foreign enemies orchestrating internal dissent. Opponents—especially the United National Movement and Mikheil Saakashvili—are not only depicted as political rivals but as agents of a so-called “global party of war” and part of a deep state conspiracy responsible for every problem facing the country. This portrayal unites the regime's supporters against a constructed enemy both inside and outside Georgia, deepening societal polarization.

For instance, Shalva Papuashvili's recent [claim](#) that Brussels “invented Saakashvili's dementia” and sought to free him through diplomatic pressure illustrates how the West is framed as actively meddling in Georgia's affairs. Alongside these political accusations, the Georgian Dream repeatedly condemns the West for promoting an obscene lifestyle and values that are portrayed as incompatible with Georgian traditions, further fueling cultural anxieties and justifying the regime's authoritarian measures. By constantly invoking these themes—the global war party, the deep state, and moral decay—the government creates a pervasive atmosphere of external threat to explain away its failings and rally its base around nationalist and anti-Western sentiments.

Continuous criticism is a key tactic in the Georgian Dream's propaganda arsenal. The regime ruthlessly attacks political opponents and dissenting voices in order to undermine their credibility and discourage others from speaking out. This

sustained assault effectively clears the space for the regime's narrative to dominate. The strategy also involves bombarding Western stakeholders with accusations, blaming them for problems that the regime itself has caused. By constantly attacking challengers with aggressive narratives, such as one of the Georgian Dream's officials [warning](#) that “Ukraine has visa-free travel and candidate status but no longer has millions of young people or territories,” urging Georgians to reject “those who take a step against their own country,” the regime maintains control over political discourse and deters meaningful opposition.

Repetition remains a cornerstone of the Georgian Dream's propaganda strategy. The constant reiteration of key slogans and accusations normalizes these ideas and embeds them deeply in the public consciousness, making them resistant to counter-arguments. This article has presented many variations of one of the most relentless narratives of the regime, accusing opposition parties and Western actors of seeking to drag Georgia into war and threaten its identity. This central message has been saturating Georgia's communication space since Russia's full-scale war began in Ukraine. On 7 July 2025, in response to the EU's [concerns](#) over authoritarian consolidation in Georgia, illustrating the scale and intensity of orchestrated propaganda, this message is repeated *ad nauseam* across all channels with every official and messenger reinforcing it to instill fear and loyalty in the Georgian public's mindset.

The principle of **adaptation to events** reflects the dynamic nature of propaganda. Effective messaging is never static; it evolves rapidly to accommodate new developments, shifts in public sentiment, or external pressures. This flexibility helps maintain the propaganda's relevance and influence. The Georgian Dream quickly justifies every action in the name of the nation while adjusting its messages to fit current events. For example, in response to the European Union's recent conditioning of

visa liberalization on democratic reforms such as releasing political prisoners and repealing repressive laws, the regime doubled down on anti-Western propaganda. Mamuka Mdinardze [claimed](#) that protests and EU skepticism stemmed from “authoritarian governance” and described the EU’s stance as failed “blackmail,” signaling a need for new, presumably more repressive, laws and tactics without abandoning core narratives. This example illustrates how the regime adjusts its propaganda to unfavorable developments while maintaining its core messaging.

The principle of **truth as a tool** captures the strategic and instrumental use of information in the Georgian Dream’s propaganda. In this model, factual accuracy is secondary to political utility. What matters is not whether a statement is true but if it serves the regime’s immediate objectives. As a result, truth, distortion, and outright fabrication are all used interchangeably, depending on what best supports the desired narrative at any given moment.

One of the most revealing aspects of this approach is the routine circulation of contradictory conspiracy theories. For instance, the Georgian Dream often claims that the so-called “global war party” or “deep state,” usually a euphemism for the collective West, will abandon Georgia if it provokes Russia by opening a second front, just as they claim the West deserted Ukraine once the war began. At the same time, they insist that these very same Western powers are responsible for “arming Ukraine to the teeth” and deliberately fueling the war, accusing them of escalating the conflict for their geopolitical interests.

This dual messaging exposes the core inconsistency in the regime’s communication. If the West is portrayed as having abandoned Ukraine, how can it simultaneously be held responsible for sustaining and escalating the conflict? If Western actors

are considered a threat intent on dragging Georgia into war, why does the government continue to claim that European Union integration remains its central foreign policy goal after 2028? These mutually exclusive narratives are often circulated simultaneously, sometimes even within a single news cycle or official statement.

The Georgian Dream’s propaganda does not seek to convince the public through consistent logic or evidence. Instead, it aims to shape perception, deflect criticism, and shield the regime from accountability by blurring the line between fact and fiction.

The purpose is not to offer a coherent worldview but to exploit different fears and resentments within the population. This strategy enables the regime to emotionally resonate with multiple audiences while disorienting and demoralizing critical thinkers. Confusion itself becomes a tool of control. In this context, the Georgian Dream’s propaganda does not seek to convince the public through consistent logic or evidence. Instead, it aims to shape perception, deflect criticism, and shield the regime from accountability by blurring the line between fact and fiction.

How to Reverse the Tide?

The propaganda tactics employed by the Georgian Dream illustrate how Goebbels’s legacy remains alarmingly relevant in today’s digitally connected world. Through centralized control, emotional messaging, relentless repetition, enemy vilification, and strategic adaptability, the regime has reshaped Georgia’s political landscape and eroded democratic institutions. These techniques are not relics of the past but active tools that have been repurposed and amplified by modern technology to dominate the public sphere. The Georgian

Dream's approach shows how propaganda continues to manipulate perception, sow division, and consolidate power.

Looking ahead, both domestic and international pro-democracy actors must acknowledge a brutal truth. Authoritarian regimes enjoy a structural advantage. Free from the constraints of democratic norms and accountability, they can deploy propaganda and repression without hesitation or oversight. In contrast, democratic responses have too often been slow, fragmented, and predictable. Despite substantial Western investment over the past two decades, efforts to counter authoritarian consolidation of disinformation in Georgia have had limited impact.

To effectively challenge these regimes, democratic actors must shift from a reactive to an initiative-based approach. International partners should design their strategies based on a deep understanding of how authoritarian systems operate.

To effectively challenge these regimes, democratic actors must shift from a reactive to an initiative-based approach. International partners should design their strategies based on a deep understanding of how authoritarian systems operate. Long-term support for independent media must be ensured through sustainable funding. At the same time, investment in digital resilience should remain a priority for equipping citizens with the skills to recognize and resist manipulation. However, the focus must be on developing and implementing strategies for responding to propaganda while consistently engaging in the modern-day cognitive warfare imposed on the democratic world by authoritarian actors without self-imposing artificial bureaucratic limitations ■