The Relevance of the Actual Values of the Political Actors of Georgia with the Ideologies Declared by Them

Dr. Maia Urushadze[1], Dr. Tamar Kiknadze[2]

[1]Caucasus International University
[2]Head of the Doctoral Program in Political Science, Caucasus International University

Abstract

The permanent ideological impact of the propaganda narratives of powerful political entities on the international community is perceived as one of the most important challenges of the 21st century. The international agenda is full of controversial interpretations, produced by powerful international political actors. As a result, the international media agenda is getting like the battlespace for the struggle of interpretations, where the ruthless kind of "frame-games" between the strongest global agenda-setting political entities takes place.

The information field is open for all countries, including the small states, where political parties are not strong enough to have their propaganda to resist the ideological pressure from outside. Due to this, the societies of these countries are still easily influenced by the narratives of global political actors creating a suitable psychological environment for internal conflicts in societies. We consider Georgia among these states.

Therefore, our research aimed to study the relevance of the actual values of local (Georgian) political actors with the ideologies declared by them. In this regard, our primary objective was to understand the specifics of strategic communication of local political actors, then, to compare their narratives with the rhetoric of international actors, and finally, to determine the strength of local society's resistance to these narratives.

We hope that in this way we can assess the long-term impact of global actors' propaganda communication could have on a small country. Since our research can be perceived as a component of research on the impact of foreign propaganda on small countries in general, we think that the indicators we have selected shall be valid for similar studies in other countries. Therefore, we hope that the results of our research will be interesting for other academic studies, e.g. for different fields of social and political sciences, as well as international relations and communication studies.

The research is based on the traditional theoretical basis of political communication - agenda setting and framing theories, and game theory – to measure the weight of different political actors' propaganda, which is permanently penetrating small countries.

Keywords: media; politics; political communication; political parties; propaganda

Introduction

According to the agenda theory, the media has a significant impact on society directly by selecting the topics it covers.[1] As part of the theory, researchers Rogers and Dearing distinguish three types of agenda: public, media, and strategic (influential political actors).[2] In our case, we have analyzed the strategic agenda of the media, society, and political actors. To study exactly which issues are influenced (or revolved over some time) by influential political forces in society, we needed qualitative and content analysis of these agendas to measure the effectiveness of propaganda - quantitative analysis of media target audiences involved in campaigns. And in order to find out the degree of public resistance - in-depth interviews with focus groups were conducted.

To study different agendas, our focus was on the most rated TV channels in the country. A list of these channels is given according to the analysis of the TV advertising revenues for 2012-2017, made by the Georgian National Communications Commission[1] for the annual report 2018. In our case, we found that the agendas of the each of 5 most rated TV channels in the country - Public Broadcaster TV, Imedi TV, Rustavi-2, TV-Pirveli, and Mtavari Channel - were saturated with directly replicated interpretations of political actors, which were controlling these channels. The relatively low-rated but different-content "TV-Obiectivi" operated on the same principle, which attracted our attention because of the different interpretations, replicated by another political actor.

Besides, our focus also has shifted to online media, in particular, information portals with a stable high rating in 2018-2019 according to the Georgian ranking resource[2]: ambebi.ge; primetime.ge; interpressnews.ge; on.ge; netgazeti.ge and palitra.ge. The same portals were monitored in 2021 again.

As a result, we monitored the activities of local political actors in 5 + 1 TV channels, online media, and social networks, studied the narratives of local political actors, their interpretations in the media, and the coincidences of the interpretations of different political actors.

A review of the agenda revealed that the media controlled by the ruling party focused only on positive content, while opposition channels focused only on negative content. At the same time, almost all media resorted to framing[3] through the abundant use of emotional components.

According to Erving Goffman, the concept of framing (so-called "framing", a kind of "media packing"), is a scheme of interpretation, a collection of jokes and stereotypes, that individuals rely on to understand and respond to events. That means, if an individual recognizes a certain event, his reaction is in most cases limited with "primary frameworks", or with the already ready-made schemes of interpretation based on his experience.[4]

In our case, it has become possible to study, whether this or that political actor has resorted to framing, through the method of frame-analysis. This method also helped us to understand what interpretations this or that actor had to offer to the public on a particular issue.

To measure the effectiveness of the framing used by political actors, we used historical and content analysis methods and identified the following indicators of effectiveness:

A) complex result (direct and indirect results);

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[1] https://www.gncc.ge/uploads/other/4/4120.pdf

[2] http://top.ge/

B) Direct result;
C) Indirect result(s);
D) Partially undesirable result(s);
E) Absolutely undesirable result(s).

Category A - that is, we consider the result as a complex result when the news dedicated to one specific event by one particular media simultaneously achieves at least three goals out of five, namely it:
• Offers the public a convincing interpretation of the event;
• Establishes the belief that a political entity with a similar assessment would provide the government with the fairest and efficient staff;
• Introduces the values corresponding to the values of the political system, in favor of which system the author of the interpretation is positioned in the political spectrum;
• The beliefs embedded by the message will be valid for a long time;
• The beliefs embedded by the message do not contradict the core values that are the cornerstone of state security[3].

Category B - that is, we consider the result directly when the news dedicated to one particular event by one particular media simultaneously achieves two specific goals from three, namely it:
• Offers the public a convincing interpretation of the event;
• Establishes the belief that a political entity with a similar assessment would provide the government with the fairest and efficient staff;
• Introduces the values corresponding to the values of the political system, in favor of which system the author of the interpretation is positioned in the political spectrum;

Category C - that is, we considered the result as an indirect result when the news dedicated to one specific event by one particular media simultaneously achieves one specific goal out of three, namely it:
• Introduces the values corresponding to the values of the political system, in favor of which system the author of the interpretation is positioned in the political spectrum;
• The beliefs embedded by the message will be valid for a long time;
• The beliefs embedded by the message do not contradict the core values that are the cornerstone of state security.

Category D - that is, we consider the result as an indirect result when the news dedicated to one specific event by one particular media achieves one or two specific goals, namely it:
• Offers the public a convincing interpretation of the event;
• Establishes the belief that a political force with a similar perception would staff the government with the most eligible and capable human resources;
But at the same time, it:
• Introduces the values opposite to the political system, in favor of which the author of the interpretation is positioned in the political spectrum;

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[3] Each country sites its core values in their constitutions or/and national security conceptual documents

• The beliefs embedded by the message cannot be valid for a long time;

• The beliefs embedded by the message contradict the core values that are the cornerstone of state security.

Category E - that is, we considered the result to be absolutely undesirable, when the news dedicated to one specific event by one particular media does not achieve any specific goal, namely it:

• Cannot offer a convincing interpretation of the event to the public;

• fails to establish the belief that a political force with a similar assessment would provide the government with the fairest and efficient staff;

• Introduces the values opposite of the political system, in favor of which the author of the interpretation is positioned in the political spectrum;

• The beliefs embedded by the message cannot be valid for a long time;

• The beliefs embedded by the message contradict the core values that are the cornerstone of state security.

Using content analysis, we identified specific 'order–>reaction' chains in the communication texts of media and political actors, and analyzed the interaction of propaganda narratives and sensitive "frames" using frame-analysis (qualitative, comparative, and content-analysis).

However, measuring just the effectiveness of framing would not be sufficient to determine how well the narratives of a particular political entity fit its declared ideology. Therefore, we needed to use additional indicators to answer this question.

In particular, to determine the relevance of political parties' rhetoric to the ideologies declared by them, we have compiled a simple map of political ideologies (see Fig. 1), on which the relatively heavy subjects in the Georgian political spectrum were arranged according to their declared ideologies (see Fig. 2).

Collectivism		Authoritarianism		Inviolability of Private Property	
	Radical Statism (Totalitarism)	**Classic Statism**	**Classic Conservatism**	**Radical Conservatism**	
Left	**Economic Statism (Totalitarism)**	**Moderate Statism**	**Moderate Conservatism**	**Economic Conservatism**	**Right**
	Economic Socialism (Planning Economics)	**Moderate Socialism**	**Moderate Liberalism**	**Economic Liberalism**	
	Radical Socialism (Communism)	**Classic Socialism**	**Classic Liberalism**	**Radical Liberalism**	
Denial of Private Property		**Libertarianism**		**Individualism**	

Fig 1. Map of the political ideologies in Georgia.

Of course, this map is conditional, as it is becoming rarer and rarer for political parties to assess the political situation in the frame of one particular ideology. Even more rare are cases where a particular country operates according to a classical ideological model. Because of this, we focused on the self-esteem of the parties and considered the classic versions of the ideologies declared by them as the starting point.

In fact, we expected to face some difficulties in the project implementation process. In particular, the lack of desire for sincere cooperation from political actors could become a hindering factor. In this case, we also discussed the issue of media involvement in the research process to get direct answers from political actors about their position on this or that issue. However, in reality, the need for this did not even arise. The fact is that our first research coincided with the pre-election period of 2018, and the second research – with the Elections 2020. That's why the country's agenda was quite rich in political events. So, the media, without communication with us, asked political actors "necessary questions"[4] and their answers to these questions were available in open sources and social networks.

As a result, our 2018 study found that platforms of political parties in Georgia largely had been coincided with the ideological values of the right and the center-right ("third way") ideological values. For example, as a result of studying the ideologies of the Georgian party spectrum we have determined that the classic rightist views were shared by the "National-Democratic Party" (Christian Democracy), "Freedom" (conservatism), "the National Forum" (moderate conservatism), "the Movement for Just Georgia" and "the Conservative Party"; while the center-rightist ideas were shared by "the New Rightists", "the Industry Will Save Georgia", "United National Movement" (liberal conservatism and civil nationalism), "Georgia's Way" (national-democracy), "Democratic Movement - United Georgia" (nationalist state, Unitarianism, traditions), "the Patriotic Alliance" (conservatism), "Georgian Republican Party" (liberalism, individualism), "Free Democrats" (liberalism), "Girchi (pinecone)" (classic liberalism, libertarianism). The spectrum of the parties with the leftist ideologies was much more humble - here, among the center-leftists (social democracy) were the "Labor Party", "People's Party", "Social Democrats for the Development of Georgia" and one of the most potent and formidable power, "the Georgian Dream". There were only two parties with the classic leftist ideology in Georgia: "Independent Georgia" and the "Green Party".[5]

Visually, the parties on our map in the Georgian political spectrum, openly considering their ideological vectors declared in their doctrines, from 2018 until 2020, positioned as follows (see Fig. 2):

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[4] The questions that we ourselves wanted to ask to the political actors.

Authoritarianism		Statism		Conservatism	
Left		1. Labor Party; 2. People's Party; 3. Social-Democrats for Development of Georgia; 4. Georgian Dream.	1. National-Democratic Party; 2. Freedom; 3. National Forum; 4. Movement for Fair Georgia; 5. Conservative Party; 6. The New Rights; 7. Industry Save Georgia; 8. United National Movement; 9. Way of Georgia; 10. Democratic Movement – United Georgia; 11. Patriot Alliance;		Right
		1. Free Georgia; 2. Green Party;	1. Republican party; 2. Free Democrats; 3. GIRCHI		
Socialism		Libertarianism		Liberalism	

Fig. 2. Positioning of the political parties of Georgia according to the ideologies declared by them by 2018.

As can be seen in the picture, most of the powerful parties were concentrated around the ideologies of the classical rightists. This means that before 2020, in the Georgian reality the political agenda was mainly set by subjects with moderate right-wing and right-centrist views, most of which, in their essence, inclined towards conservative and/or liberal ideas.

After elections 2020, the spectrum of the political actors was slightly changed. Nowadays, one of the main opposite actors "The United National Movement" was split into a few political entities. The reason for the division was not ideological issues but internal party disagreements. As a result, in the political arena, we have three political unions with practically the same ideology instead of one. However, for the 2020 elections, two new political parties had been founded in Georgia, one of which filled a niche in the left, even though its rhetoric largely coincided with that of right-wing parties.

As a result, in 2020, when we checked again the platforms of political parties in Georgia, we found that their rhetoric largely coincided with the ideological values of the right and the center-right ("third way") thinking. We have determined that the conservative rightist views are shared by 12 parties: The "United National Movement" (Civic nationalism, Populism, Liberal conservatism, Atlanticism, Pro-Europeanism, political position: Centre-right to Right-wing); The "State for the People" (Christian democracy, Conservatism, Pro-

Europeanism, political position: Centre-right); The "European Democrats" (Pro-Europeanism, political position: Centre); The "Progress and Freedom" (Pro-Europeanism, political position:

Centre); The "European Georgia - Movement for Liberty" (Conservative liberalism, Pro-Europeanism, political position: Centre-right); The "Strategy Aghmashenebeli" (split from UNM – liberalism, progressivism, reformism, pro-Europeanism, political position: Centre-right); The "Law and Justice" (split from UNM – Pro-Europeanism, Civic nationalism, political position: Centre-right); The "Citizens" (established in 2020 - Pro-Europeanism, political position: Centre); The "Democratic Movement – United Georgia" (Conservatism, Economic nationalism, Pro-Russian rhetoric, political position: Centre-right to right wing); The "Patriot Alliance" (National conservatism, Social conservatism, Right-wing populism, Christian democracy, political position: Centre-right to Right wing); The "Republican Party of Georgia" (liberalism, pro-Europeanism, political position: Centre-right) and the "GIRCHI" (Classical liberalism, Libertarianism, Minarchism, Pro-Europeanism, political position: Right-wing). As we can view in figure 3, most of these 12 parties – namely, 8 of them share the Centre-rightist ideas, 4 of them are strongly conservative, 4 of them share ideas of nationalism and just 2 of them are closer to libertarianism. Also, in 2020, the spectrum of the parties with leftist ideologies narrowed more. Here, among the center-leftists (social democracy) are just 3 political actors: the "Labor Party" (Populism, Social democracy, Pro-Europeanism, political position: Centre-left), the new political actor "Lelo for Georgia" (established in 2019 - Liberalism, Social-liberalism, Pro-Europeanism, political position: center to center-left) and the ruling party "Georgian Dream" (Pro-Europeanism, Social democracy, Third Way, Social liberalism, Conservatism, political position: Centre to Centre-left).

Authoritarianism	Statism	Conservatism
Left	1. Georgian Dream; 2. Labor Party.	1. United National Movement; 2. State for the People; 3. European Democrats; 4. Progress and Freedom; 5. European Georgia — Movement for Liberty; 6. Strategy Aghmashenebeli; 7. Law and Justice; 8. Aleko Elisashvili – Citizens; 9. Democratic Movement – United Georgia; 10. Patriot Alliance.	**Right**
	1. Lelo for Georgia.	1. Republican Party of Georgia; 2. GIRCHI.	
Socialism	Libertarianism	Liberalism

Fig. 3. Positioning of the political parties of Georgia according to the ideologies declared by them by 2020.

However, despite the ideological divergence, the struggle of interpretations in the information field between political entities is still mostly based on the mix of the approaches which characterize authoritarian rule, socialist ideas, conservative notions, and libertarian thinking.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that conservative ideas are not only voiced by parties with conservative ideologies. Neither socialist ideas sound only from the socialist camp, nor do liberal ideas sound only from the tribunes of liberals or libertarians.

How does this situation affect the open informational space of the country? The relevant example is political parties' general rhetoric towards the most important issue for the country at this moment - European and Euro Atlantic integration. The point is that most of the political entities in Georgia are concentrated around conservative and liberal ideology, and mainly they support the way of Euro-and Euro-Atlantic integration of the country. On the other hand, their general rhetoric is focused on adapting agendas of the powerful European and Euro-Atlantic political entities, and as a result, they are abundantly saturated with the ultraliberal ideas that are on the agenda of most European countries today. In particular, along with the issue of human rights and freedoms, the topics of the discourse are the integration of the economic system of the country with the rest of the world and the need for economic reforms. However, these ideas are fundamentally at odds with the conservative vector, which, in the classical[6] definition is characterized by a commitment to traditions, duties, authorities, and inviolability of private property. At the same time, due to the social situation in the country, the agenda of these political entities are abundantly saturated also with social problems. Here, the post-soviet mentality appears once again: these parties often produce narratives of classical socialist ideology, such as imposing strict state controls on the economy and resource allocation. Naturally, these narratives are popular in the whole post-Soviet society and they bring election dividends to political entities. As a result, harassment of businesses is not yet considered a serious crime in the eyes of a large part of the general public. The direct result of the above mentioned is that the culture of stable business functioning and subsequently the transmission of business to the next generation has not become a tradition yet. Therefore, SME-s have not been able to acquire a stable pace of development without support from the government or international donors.

It is common knowledge that no ideology in the world can be found in the classical form today. But, in the analysis of politics, it is necessary to consider the essence of the transformations that distinguish contemporary ideologies from classical ones which perhaps bring them closer to opposite ideologies. At the same time, we must keep in mind that for the elections, the parties of different ideologies come to one platform and form coalitions, which, naturally, requires the adaptation of their rhetoric. Of course, in this situation, the narratives of the electoral subjects are far beyond their natural ideological vectors and leave a sense of inconsistency, uncertainty, and divergence in society.

As a result, we have a situation when a large part of political parties fills in the agenda with current issues that, according to our indicators, are focused on the results of category C and category D. It means that their narratives mainly serve to support the ideas supporting which are not the direct goal of these political entities. In cases where the country's internal political actors regard world leaders as unwavering authorities, thus they often liken their agendas to those of world leaders. Moreover, their narratives are often repeated. This means

that local actors are deliberately or unintentionally replicating the propaganda narratives of world leaders.

Before we go directly to the results of the research, here we must clearly define what we mean when we speak about propaganda. By definition acceptable to us, **propaganda is a favorable interpretation for a propagandist of fact, opinion, argument, idea, or value, including intentionally distorted information, which forms a public opinion and can be used to mislead the public**. Propaganda is presented wherever there is an opinion, an opportunity to interpret it, and a means of communication. The mechanism of action of different methods is different but they have one thing in common: all methods directly affect human consciousness and cause reactions, "ordered" by the author of the propaganda. Some of the methods cause a long and less visible reaction-action, while others, on the contrary - a quick and noticeable response.

Kenterelidou (2012) believes that three important actors - the government, corporations, and the media - can influence the daily consciousness of society in the political arena of a country. The author specifies that public information and communication is not only a mere fixation of facts but also a competition between frames in a game of political communication. She says: "The Media are now playing an active part in the political field. They compose a societal institution for the political management of the public sphere, and the media-centric logic emerges. Governments, to comply with the forenamed commitments and these newly coming trends, employ new communication policies and strategies. Furthermore, they set off modern public information tools such as "infoganda" (information+ propaganda)."[7]

However, in the case of small countries, all of these three actors (government, corporations, and the media) may conduct not only their narratives but those of international organizations and as many outside actors as powerful actors are struggling to gain influence in the region. This is the key point where external propaganda pressure might come into conflict with national interests.

The dual role of the media should also be mentioned here. The more the media agenda is filled with the content dictated by the government, political parties, corporations, and external actors, the less space there is for the media to function as a "fourth power". That means, there is less space for setting its agenda and saturating the information space with simple social issues. However, the independent media[5] itself regulates the balance between the agendas and decides for itself which actors to gain influence over the public consciousness. But absolutely independent media doesn't exist, especially in small countries. The control of the media brings to establishing political interests which are useful for this or that political actor. Even in cases of public media, they are subjected to the directives of board and editorial, where are people who share their political interests with someone and, consequently, make propaganda, not information.

The importance of propaganda in the United States was well understood even during the formation of the state. The need for resistance to propaganda increased especially during the period of confrontation with the Soviet Union when the propaganda of Soviet ideology against the US state was perceived as a significant challenge. During this period, Harold Laswell wrote that Soviet propaganda formed the ideological core of the future leadership of the minority in the target countries at an early stage. According to him, "the strategy of

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[5] Since in our estimation there are absolutely no free media, we mean more or less free media, where the management structure ensures to protect the balance of interests of the public and political actors.

propaganda at the stage of gaining power is a strategy of demoralization, which is used synchronously with terror." [8] According to him, Soviet propaganda had a comprehensive purpose, and it disseminated to any audience information, useful for its propaganda (including false), through any available channels.

Nowadays, the West is increasingly paying attention to raising public resistance to propaganda. Education and the development of individuals' analytical skills and critical thinking from an early age are considered to be the main tools in this case.

The Russian School of Propaganda in the theoretical part relied on European researches of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Later, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian School of Propaganda expanded its propaganda arsenal based on The Game Theory and Nash's Equilibrium[6], or the latest theories of cognitive psychology and adopted a powerful propaganda mechanism that at the start of the 21st century became a threat for other world powers.

In today's Russian reality, where the post-Soviet frame-struggle with Western liberal-democratic ideology is active, it is extremely important for the Kremlin to keep the main core psychological anchors of the Soviet era in the public consciousness until the process of transforming these anchors into a single national ideology reaches a logical conclusion. That is why the Kremlin uses the technique of full-fledged information warfare and puts the resources at its disposal at full capacity.

Modern Russian propaganda has been interestingly analyzed by Russian journalist and media expert Alexey Kovalyov[9], who concluded that Russia has managed to keep pace with technological progress, and today it conveniently uses both traditional media and social networks in its propaganda arsenal. At the same time, a wide arsenal of propaganda methods is well suited to the target audience. Kovalyov believes that "if Soviet propaganda was propaganda in the literal sense, now Russian narratives, replicable abroad, is more like an information war aimed at not persuading the enemy, but confusing and demoralizing him, make the rift between the allies." Because of this, replication of Kremlin narratives by local actors of the small country can lead to provoke challenges to the security of the state.

Conclusion: In small countries, where local actors are consciously or unintentionally replicating the propagandistic narratives of different world leaders, society is splitting and radicalizing, and the struggle of interpretations due to political views itself becomes so strong that expulses from the agenda any other, more important issues for the country realities. Consequently, the need for healthy and safe information space is a key issue for the internal security of any small country.

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[6] In game theory, the Nash equilibrium, named after the mathematician John Forbes Nash Jr., is a proposed solution of a non-cooperative game involving two or more players in which each player is assumed to know the equilibrium strategies of the other players, and no player has anything to gain by changing only their own strategy. – Osborne, Martin J.; Rubinstein, Ariel (1994). A Course in Game Theory. Cambridge, MA: MIT. p. 14.

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info@ics21.org   www.ics21.org