

From Illusory Balance to Manipulation: Sources and Behavior of Government Media on Social Networks

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On 9th of July, the European Parliament adopted a critical resolution on Georgia.² This was the European Parliament's first report on Georgia since the country was granted candidate status. The rapporteur for the issue was Lithuanian MEP Rasa Juknevičienė of the European People's Party.

The resolution,³ adopted by 490 votes to 147, strongly condemns the democratic backsliding and repression in Georgia. The document highlights the parliamentary elections of 26 October 2024, which it states did not meet international standards and were described as fraudulent. It also criticizes the Georgian government's decision to postpone EU accession negotiations until 2028, a move that sparked large-scale pro-European demonstrations across the country. The report condemns the violent suppression of peaceful protests, citing the excessive use of police force, torture, and arrests. It further stresses the systemic persecution of civil society, independent media, and political opponents, including the arrest of journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli and opposition leaders. The European Parliament declares that it does not recognize the legitimacy of Georgia's current ruling force, referring to it as an "illegitimate" and a "regime."

Against this backdrop, the report calls on EU executive bodies to take various actions. These measures include reviewing Georgia's Association Agreement and visa-free status with the EU, imposing personal sanctions against officials as well as the country's informal ruler, Bidzina Ivanishvili, and his family, and reconsidering the EU's relations with the current Georgian administration. At the same time, the report supports increasing EU financial assistance for Georgian civil society and independent media. Finally, according to the document, new, free, and fair parliamentary elections are necessary to resolve the ongoing political and constitutional crisis and allow Georgia to return to its pro-European path.

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² Nino Chichua (July 9, 2025). The European Parliament adopted a critical resolution on Georgia. *Netgazeti.ge*. Via link: <https://netgazeti.ge/life/779603/>

³ European Parliament. Report - A10-0110/2025. Via link: <http://bit.ly/3GhFDg9>

As noted, this resolution was adopted on 9 July. Before its adoption, debates had taken place in the European Parliament regarding the text of the resolution and the situation in Georgia more broadly. Georgian media, including outlets loyal to "Georgian Dream", naturally devoted significant attention to the process. In this context, the activity of the TV company Imedi, particularly its Facebook page,⁴ is noteworthy. The page has a large audience with 1.1 million followers. It is also important to observe the website from which Imedi's news is shared on Facebook (imedinews.ge).⁵ According to Top.ge statistics, this website receives, on average, up to 275,000 unique visitors per month. Studying Imedi's behavior online is significant because, on the one hand, it has access to a very broad audience, while it is the most pro-government media outlet, on the other. This is confirmed by observation, numerous studies, and even by the channel's own managers. Through the example of this media, it becomes clear how the illusion of balance is created, manipulative sources are selected, information is filtered, and messages aligned with the government's anti-Western narrative are disseminated in a coordinated way. Therefore, Imedi represents a kind of model for how a government-controlled media outlet can be used to manipulate public opinion.

In its coverage of the European Parliament's debates on Georgia, imedinews.ge presented, on the one hand, critical statements directed at "Georgian Dream," and, on the other, the positions of a minority of MEPs who argued that the European Union was grossly interfering in Georgia's internal affairs, echoing Georgian Dream's main strategic message.

Negative statements about "Georgian Dream" on imedinews.ge:

1. [Rasa Juknevičienė](#): *The 2025 elections cannot be considered free and fair, due to the imprisonment of key opposition leaders.*
2. [Marta Kos](#): *The government continues to adopt new repressive legislation. The changes in the laws negatively affect our ability to provide financial assistance.*
3. [MEP Małgorzata Gosiewska](#): *Recently, opposition leaders were arrested. Former president Saakashvili is in prison illegally. We need the political isolation of the "Georgian Dream" government.*

⁴ TV Imedi's Facebook Page - <https://www.facebook.com/tvimerdi>

⁵ TV Imedi's news webpage - <https://imedinews.ge/ge/>

4. [Rasa Juknevičienė on Mzia Amaghlobeli](#): She was first arrested and then beaten, and now her health is deteriorating. She is losing her eyesight. She does not have adequate medical care.

Negative statements regarding the European Union on imedinews.ge:

1. [MEP András László](#): This report on Georgia is shameful - you are not treating Georgia as a partner, you are treating Georgia as a colony.
2. [MEP Danilo Della Valle](#): This is already the sixth time we are discussing Georgia's issue. It seems like someone cannot sleep, constantly thinking about Georgia.
3. [MEP Hans Neuhofer](#): For months now, the European Parliament has been discussing the fact that in October 2024 Georgians did not allow the government that the EU had planned to come to power.
4. [MEP Ondřej Dostál](#): Georgians chose a government that is not against Europe - the Georgian government is just defending its own country.

Other news about the resolution from the European Parliament on imedinews.ge:

1. The debate on the draft resolution on Georgia is taking place in an empty [chamber](#).
2. By 490 votes to 147, the European Parliament adopted the resolution on Georgia with amendments. Some MEPs rejected the resolution, [pointing out](#) interference in the country's internal affairs.

General EU-related news (parallel to the resolution debate) on imedinews.ge:

1. András László [called](#) the debates on impeaching Ursula von der Leyen an "absurd show."
2. Viktor Orbán [supports](#) Ursula von der Leyen's impeachment.
3. MEP Fidias Panayiotou [supports](#) von der Leyen's impeachment.
4. [MEP Petr Bystron](#): We discovered that for four years the EU financed NGOs engaged in activities contrary to what the EU is supposed to defend.
5. [MEP Petr Bystron](#): Exactly because there are many questions, historic debates were held on Ursula von der Leyen. She has not apologized and still refuses to show us what she wrote to the head of Pfizer.

If we sum up the behavior of Imedinews.ge in its coverage of the European Parliament debates, a quantitative balance between negative and positive statements about the "Georgian Dream" party

becomes obvious at first glance. However, the platform also actively features news items designed to create an impression of internal contradictions within the European Union. Such news can overshadow the negative aspects concerning Georgia if the reader concludes that "the EU itself is facing crisis, conflicts, and corruption problems, while at the same time Georgia's issue is being discussed in an empty chamber. Therefore, this resolution is not particularly significant." This perception is reinforced by the intensified rhetoric of the "Georgian Dream" party. For example, one of the party's leaders and the Mayor of Tbilisi, Kakha Kaladze, stated: "These resolutions are worthless, filled with lies; people are simply paid to write them. They tell us that white is black, and of course, this is very concerning."⁶

As noted, the activity of Imedi's Facebook page is especially interesting, considering the information shared with its audience of 1.1 million followers. Firstly, it is important to highlight what information did not appear on this platform: (1) the actual voting results of the resolution, how many MEPs supported it and how many opposed it, and (2) majority of the critical statements mentioned earlier, such as those about repressive laws, the imprisonment of opposition leaders, and calls for the international isolation of "Georgian Dream."

On the Facebook page, only one critical statement was shared about the "Georgian Dream" party, related to the case of Mzia Amaghlobeli. However, Imedi headlined it as a "[lie](#)."

⁶ Kakha Kaladze. (July 10, 2025). Resolutions are worthless, filled with lies; people are simply paid to write them. They tell us that white is black, and this, of course, is very concerning. *Interpressnews*. Via Link: <http://bit.ly/4f0M8kp>



Moreover, following the adoption of the resolution, Imedi's Facebook page highlighted only the points that referred to the release of Mikheil Saakashvili, and [naming](#) Salome Zurabishvili as the legitimate president. A follower of the page would not encounter information about other parts of the resolution, such as: the excessive use of force by the police, the arrests and torture of activists, repressive laws, pressure on the media and civil society, the labeling of "Georgian Dream" as illegitimate, the possible review of visa-free travel with the EU, or the call for personal sanctions.

Instead, the Facebook page shared content from [imedinews.ge](https://www.imedinews.ge), presented as "cards" or videos,⁷ that included all statements accusing the European Union of acting unfairly toward Georgia and violating the country's sovereignty, as well as the aforementioned quotes that indirectly portray the EU in a negative light.

⁷ Videos shared on TV Imedi's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1441035780548000&rdid=uVOKFO7GtKpmOVYp>
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1074913878075857&rdid=qtEGtgromxbMqJTO>
<http://facebook.com/watch/?v=1985471045600691&rdid=08Q8NRJcMyjRI1zR>

TV Imedi's post



TV Imedi's post



TV Imedi's post



TV Imedi's post



TV Imedi's post



Who are the most frequently cited MEPs in TV Imedi's coverage of the resolution?

MEP András László is a Hungarian politician and a member of Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party,⁸ elected in the European Parliament in 2024.⁹ László has been particularly active regarding Georgia, often making statements supportive of "Georgian Dream". He was among the "international observers" who claimed that the 2024 parliamentary elections in Georgia met European standards.

According to research by the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab),¹⁰ which exposed the use of biased international observers to legitimize Georgia's 2024 elections, 23 "fake observers" were identified, including András László. His positive but misleading statements about the elections having been

⁸ Johnson, K. (11 July, 2024). How Orban Became Putin's Pawn. *Foreign Policy*. Via link: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/07/11/orban-putin-hungary-russia-war-politics-eu/>

⁹ András LÁSZLÓ, MEPs – European Parliament. Via link: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/256860/ANDRAS_LASZLO/home

¹⁰ The Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab) at the Atlantic Council – About. Via link: <https://dfrlab.org/about/>

held in a free and ideal environment were amplified by pro-"Georgian Dream" media outlets. These statements were later disseminated in a coordinated way on social media to foster a positive perception about the elections.¹¹

During debates on the European Parliament's resolution on Georgia, László was quoted not only by Imedi TV, but also by the Georgian Public Broadcaster (First Channel)¹² and the Facebook page Грузия и соседи¹³ ("Georgia and Neighbors"), which frequently cites Russian politicians and representatives of "Georgian Dream." This page also has a presence on Instagram, YouTube, and Odnoklassniki.

Danilo De La Valle is an Italian politician and a member of the Five Star Movement (*Movimento 5 Stelle*), serving as an MEP since 2024.¹⁴ The Five Star Movement is a populist party that has, to a significant extent, embraced Kremlin narratives, portraying Russia as a model for sovereignty and national interest protection.¹⁵ Investigative reports have shown that its information network was linked with Kremlin media and often spread Russian propaganda messages.¹⁶ Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, internal divisions emerged within the party. One faction opposed arms supplies to Ukraine, while another supported them. Ultimately, Luigi Di Maio's pro-Ukraine faction broke away.¹⁷ Today, the Five Star Movement opposes Ursula von der Leyen's European rearmament plan,¹⁸ initiated in response to threats from Russia, and does not exclude cooperation with the Russian Federation in the energy sector.¹⁹ Within the European Parliament, these positions are actively promoted by Danilo De La Valle, who blames

¹¹ Eto Buziashvili, "Politically biased observers attempted to legitimize fraudulent elections in Georgia," Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab), January 13, 2025, <https://dfrlab.org/2025/01/13/fake-observers-georgia/>

¹² András László. (9 July, 2025). EP wants to see puppet government in Georgia, looks at Georgia as colony. *Georgian Public Broadcaster (in English)*. Via link: <https://1tv.ge/lang/en/news/mep-andras-laszlo-ep-wants-to-see-puppet-government-in-georgia-looks-at-georgia-as-colony/>

¹³ Грузия и соседи. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1J4ZRoWCgJ/>

¹⁴ Danilo DELLA VALLE, MEPs – European Parliament. Via link: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/257155/DANILO_DELLA+VALLE/home

¹⁵ De Maio, G. (2018). Russia, Euroskeptic Parties, and Italian Elections. *The German Marshall Fund of the United States*. Via link: <https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/Russia%252C%2520Euroskeptic%2520Parties%252C%2520and%2520Italian%2520Elections%2520edited.pdf>

¹⁶ Dal Zotto, E. (2017). Populism in Italy: The case of the Five Star Movement. *Barcelona Center for International Affairs (CIDOB)*. Via link: <https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/populism-italy-case-five-star-movement>

¹⁷ Bull, M. (2022). Whatever happened to the Italian Five Star Movement? *The Loop - European Consortium for Political Research*. Via link: <http://bit.ly/40IJaLa>

¹⁸ Chichua, N. (March 4, 2025). Eu Commission presented Europe's rearmament plan. *Netgazeti.ge*. Via Link: <https://netgazeti.ge/news/766174/>

¹⁹ La Presse. (23, June, 2025). EU, M5S resolution: 'Collaborate with Russia on gas, no subordination to the US and Israel'. Via link: <https://uk.lapresse.it/politics-en/2025/06/23/eu-m5s-resolution-collaborate-with-russia-on-gas-no-subordination-to-the-us-and-israel/>

European leaders for military escalation.²⁰ During debates on the Georgia resolution, De La Valle was cited by Imedi as well as the Georgian Public Broadcaster.²¹

Hans Neuhoﬀ is a German politician from the far-right party Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland* - AfD), elected to the European Parliament in 2024.²² He belongs to the smallest and most radical group in the Parliament, Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN),²³ whose declared position is: "We do not consider Russia an enemy." From its founding, ESN has supported the "Georgian Dream" party. **This group has also registered a resolution in the European Parliament opposing Georgia's EU accession. In the German Bundestag last year, AfD members tabled a resolution calling for paving the way for the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and halting Georgia's European integration.**²⁴ Moreover, the party is known for manipulative rhetoric, advocates for lifting sanctions on Russia, and supports restoring relations with Moscow. Russian propagandists, in turn, portray the AfD as Germany's only "anti-fascist" party, backing an end to aid for the "Kyiv Nazi regime."²⁵ As for Neuhoﬀ's recent statements regarding Georgia, they were quoted by the Georgian Public Broadcaster²⁶ in almost the same style as by TV Imedi.

Ondřej Dostál is a Czech politician and a member of the left-wing populist coalition STAČILO ("Enough"), serving as an MEP since 2024.²⁷ The coalition was formed in 2023 and brings together so-called anti-mainstream actors, including members of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia. Its members are vocal opponents of EU policies and have called for a referendum on whether the Czech Republic should

²⁰ Eunews. Via links: <https://www.eunews.it/en/2025/03/11/no-more-money-for-weapons-conte-and-m5s-in-strasbourg-against-rearm-europe/>;
<https://www.eunews.it/en/2024/09/19/ukraine-european-parliament-urges-lifting-restrictions-on-using-weapons-on-russian-territory/>;

<https://www.eunews.it/en/2025/04/22/eu-commission-amends-budget-to-boost-defense-spending/>

²¹ Danilo De La Valle. (July 9, 2025). You can sleep in peace, because we have been voting for resolutions on Georgia for nine months and nothing on a genocide in Palestine. *Public Broadcaster's First Channel*. Via link: <http://bit.ly/3U3X9aC>

²² Hans NEUHOFF, MEPs – European Parliament. Via link:

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/256944/HANS_NEUHOFF/home

²³ Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN) – Members. Via link: <https://esn-group.eu/members>

²⁴ Radio Liberty. (July 9, 2025). "Georgian Dream"'s supporter group in the European Parliament opposes Georgia's European Integration. Via Link: <http://bit.ly/3IoEvrB>

²⁵ EuvsDisInfo. (20 February, 2025). Pro-Kremlin outlets drool over German elections. Via link: <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/pro-kremlin-outlets-drool-over-german-elections/>

²⁶ Hans Neuhoﬀ. (July 9, 2025). European Parliament is bothered with the fact, that in October 2024 Georgians did not choose the government which the EU was planning for, and now they are thinking how to punish them. *Public Broadcaster's First Channel*. Via Link: <http://bit.ly/4eJvhSE>

²⁷ Ondřej DOSTÁL, MEPs – European Parliament. Via link:

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/256851/ONDREJ_DOSTAL/home

remain in the EU and NATO.²⁸ On 9 May 2025, Ondřej Dostál, together with four other MEPs, attended the military parade in Moscow marking the anniversary of the victory in the Second World War.²⁹

As the present analysis demonstrates, the coverage of the European Parliament's critical resolution on Georgia by the government-aligned media outlet TV Imedi constituted a deliberate strategy of public opinion manipulation. In the first stage, on the website imedinews.ge, alongside criticism of "Georgian Dream", the positions of a small group of MEPs, populists with known ties to Russia, were given equal visibility. This created an illusion of balance. These MEPs propagated the narrative that the European Union was grossly interfering in Georgia's sovereignty and treating the country as a "colony." In parallel, TV Imedi actively highlighted internal divisions within the EU, with the clear aim of discrediting European institutions and, consequently, diminishing the significance of the resolution in the eyes of readers. It is worth noting that the statements of this group of MEPs were also widely circulated in other Georgian-language online outlets and Facebook pages long associated with the dissemination of anti-Western messaging.

The second and most decisive stage of the strategy was carried out through TV Imedi's Facebook page, which has 1.1 million followers. Here, information was selectively filtered. The audience was entirely deprived of access to the most critical aspects of the resolution: the voting results (490 in favor, 147 against); the condemnation of police violence, torture of activists, and the repression of media and civil society; the labeling of "Georgian Dream" as illegitimate; and the calls for personal sanctions and the review of Georgia's visa-free regime with the EU. In contrast, all resources were devoted to amplifying quotes from MEPs who framed the resolution as interference in Georgia's internal affairs and a violation of sovereignty. The identity of these sources is particularly significant. The MEPs cited by TV Imedi

²⁸ Zachová, A. (2 July, 2025). Czech socialists court anti-establishment alliance, stirring internal backlash. *EURACTIV*. Via link: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/czech-socialists-court-anti-establishment-alliance-stirring-internal-backlash/>

²⁹ Radio Prague Internatioanl. (08.05. 2025). Чешский депутат Европарламента примет участие в праздновании окончания Второй мировой войны в Москве. Via link: <https://ruski.radio.cz/cheshskiy-deputat-evroparlamenta-primet-uchastie-v-prazdnovanii-okonchaniya-8850497>

Genovese, V. (26.05.2025). EU Parliament's Conservatives expel Luxembourgish MEP for trip to Moscow. *Euronews*. Via link: <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/05/26/eu-parliaments-conservatives-expel-luxembourgish-mep-for-trip-to-moscow>

represent figures closely linked to populist forces and Kremlin-aligned ideological currents: a member of Viktor Orbán's party who acted as a biased observer during Georgia's 2024 parliamentary elections and sought to present manipulated elections as ideal; a representative of an Italian populist party associated with spreading Kremlin propaganda; a member of Germany's AfD, who openly supports "Georgian Dream" and calls for restoring relations with Russia; and a Czech politician who attended Moscow's Victory Day parade.

Ultimately, the fabricated narrative of sovereignty defense, reinforced by this group and actively disseminated by TV Imedi on social media, reflects a core line of Russian propaganda. It is a classic tactic rooted in the concept of "sovereign democracy", which frames any criticism or reference to democratic standards as hostile interference, serving to justify the government's own anti-democratic actions.³⁰

³⁰ Kutidze, D. (2024). "Georgian Dream's" Sovereign Democracy" - Propaganda to Deceive Public. *Research Institute Gnomon Wise*. Via Link: <https://gnomonwise.org/ge/publications/opinions/197>