

Russia's "Soft Power" in Georgia's Political-Economic Sphere: Historical Dynamics and Contemporary Realities

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SUMMARY

This study analyzes the instruments of Russia's "soft power" influence in Georgia's political-economic sphere. The analysis spans the period from the dissolution of the Soviet Union to the present. Particular emphasis is placed on the tools activated by Russia following the onset of its full-scale war in Ukraine in 2022. Drawing on leading academic and research literature, the paper evaluates the outcomes of these instruments' implementation in Georgia. It also explores Joseph Nye's concept of "soft power" and its evolution within the context of contemporary international relations. The study presents conclusions regarding the effectiveness and consequences of Russia's soft power mechanisms in Georgia's political-economic landscape. Historically and currently, Russia's key soft power levers include cultural ties, the notion of unity based on language and Orthodox Christianity, economic tools, and informational influence. Finally, the paper offers perspectives on strategies for addressing the challenges posed by these influences.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary world, soft power remains a vital instrument in international relations. This is especially true in the post-Soviet space, where historical memory, cultural ties, and economic dependencies continue to shape foreign policy decisions. Within this context, soft power transforms into a powerful political lever.

In this regard, the Russian Federation's use of soft power acquires particular importance in Georgia—a country that, since gaining independence, has strived to institutionalize Western values, while simultaneously facing external and domestic political challenges.

Russia's use of soft power manifests in diverse forms: cultural diplomacy, informational influence, economic instruments, and support for pro-Russian organizations and political parties. In recent years, especially since the outbreak of Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine in 2022—these processes have undergone significant transformation. Georgian public opinion has become increasingly critical of Russia, and solidarity with Ukraine and support for the Western orientation have grown. However, simultaneously, Russia has escalated its use of soft power tools in a more coercive and aggressive manner. The intensification of contradictory dynamics within the country may call into question Georgia's sovereign development trajectory and jeopardize its historic opportunity to join the European Union.

Given the relevance of the issue, this **study aims** to analyze the instruments of Russia's soft power in relation to independent Georgia from the 1990s to the present. It further explores the impact of the developments following the 2022 war in Ukraine on the use of Russian soft power, and synthesizes their outcomes in Georgia based on a review of leading academic and empirical research.

To achieve these objectives, the study addresses the following key **research tasks**:

1. A conceptual analysis and contemporary interpretation of soft power;
2. Examination of Russia's soft power in Georgia: historical dynamics and instruments;

3. Investigation of the operation of Russian soft power tools in Georgia's current political-economic environment;
4. Analysis of the factors contributing to the success or failure of Russian soft power;
5. Conclusions and policy recommendations to address the anticipated implications of Russian soft power in Georgia under current geopolitical conditions.

The research draws on recent Georgian and international academic literature, reports by national and international organizations, and expert observation. It also compares and contrasts assessments presented across various information platforms. The study is interdisciplinary in nature and employs a methodology that integrates analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, and logical as well as chronological/historical approaches.

2. THE CONCEPT OF SOFT POWER AND ITS CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION

The term *soft power* was first introduced into the theory of international relations by the American political scientist [Joseph Nye \(1990\)](#). According to his definition, soft power is a state's ability to achieve desired outcomes not through military or economic coercion, but through the attractiveness of its culture, values, and foreign policy ([Nye, 2004](#)).

According to [Nye \(2004\)](#), the three primary components of soft power include:

1. Culture, arts, and media that are appealing to others;
2. Political values, particularly when these are upheld both domestically and internationally;
3. Foreign policy, which relies on diplomatic relations to forge alliances and reshape international norms.

The theory of soft power emphasizes a nation's ability to influence others through voluntary attraction rather than coercion. This approach gained significant relevance following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet system, when diplomacy emerged as a dominant tool in foreign policy and international relations. Even for smaller or less developed countries like Georgia, soft power can serve as a strategic instrument to shape foreign policy goals and generate unpredictable strategic responses, particularly amid regional complexities. At the same time, countries like Georgia are vulnerable to the external use of soft power, necessitating careful strategic choices.

Although [Nye's](#) original conception of soft power ([1990](#)) focused on attraction through culture, values, and diplomacy, modern scholars have expanded and developed the theory in light of 21st-century challenges. Significant contributions to its evolution include:

- [Stephanie Winkler \(2020\)](#), who critiqued the conceptual clarity of soft power within its historical evolution ([Nye, 2021](#));
- [Jean-Marc F. Blanchard \(2012\)](#), who explored the methodological challenges of empirically studying soft power, especially in the context of emerging powers such as China;
- [Utpal Vyas \(2010\)](#), who applied constructivist theory to soft power, emphasizing identity and perception in shaping international influence;
- [Marco Bettine and Lia Picoli \(2022\)](#), who studied the role of science, technology, and innovation (STI) in strengthening soft power.

A significant contribution to the empirical and conceptual development of soft power has been made by [MacDonald and Murray \(2024\)](#), which has conducted comparative studies across 18 countries. Their findings highlight the transformation of soft power theory in the digital age and how nations are adapting their strategies to a multi-polar and technology-driven global environment.

Thus, the diversification of soft power theory spans from constructivist and empirical critiques to intersections with innovation, digital diplomacy, and geopolitical strategy.

Modern informational and technological developments have transformed both the substance and instruments of soft power. Digital tools have acquired growing relevance, enhancing the role of *digital soft power*. Nations now utilize social media, digital diplomacy, and online cultural exports to shape global narratives. Platforms such as TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube allow for direct engagement with foreign audiences, while simultaneously posing risks such as disinformation and algorithmic bias.

Later, [Nye \(2021\)](#) the concept of *smart power*—a strategic combination of “soft” and “hard” power. This approach acknowledges that attraction alone may not be sufficient in a complex geopolitical environment. Smart power, as conceptualized by Nye, involves the strategic integration of military, economic, diplomatic, and cultural instruments to achieve foreign policy goals.

In sum, while Nye's initial concept of soft power emphasized attraction through culture, values, and diplomacy, contemporary theoretical developments have expanded its scope to reflect the influence of technological, communicational, and geopolitical transformations.

3. RUSSIA'S SOFT POWER IN GEORGIA: HISTORICAL DYNAMICS AND INSTRUMENTS

In the modern world, where the information space plays a critical role, the significance of soft power has grown substantially. Unlike Western interpretations, however, Russia's soft power is not limited to attraction alone; it encompasses targeted information campaigns, economic leverage, and humanitarian policies that often transform from legitimate means into instruments of political pressure.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia gained sovereignty and the opportunity to pursue an independent foreign policy. However, internal crises, separatist conflicts, and Russia's political agenda significantly complicated the country's development (Rondeli, 2001). As the central power of the former socialist union, Russia sought to maintain its influence through cultural, economic, and military tools.

In the early years of independence, Georgia joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which led to the continued presence of Russian military bases and limitations on national sovereignty (MIF of Georgia, 2006). Georgia's accession to the CIS coincided with the civil war and the conflict in Abkhazia. Later, the Kremlin began emphasizing shared history and religious-cultural ties as part of its policy toward Georgia, reinforcing soft power influence.

After the „Rose Revolution“, President Saakashvili sought to enhance economic cooperation with Russia, yet embargoes and politicization of energy supplies by Russia exacerbated bilateral tensions (Devdariani, 2006). Notably, after the withdrawal of Russian military bases from Georgian territory, the Kremlin intensified its soft power efforts to maintain influence. Historically, Russia's main soft power levers in Georgia have included cultural ties, the idea of unity based on language and Orthodox Christianity, economic pressure, and informational influence.

Georgia's strategic location has made it vulnerable to regional conflicts, including Russian occupation and pressure following the 2008 August War. Consequently, Georgia's Constitution and National Security Strategy clearly reflect Euro-Atlantic integration as the most realistic mechanism for ensuring national security.

The August 2008 war, during which Russia occupied 20% of Georgia's territory, demonstrated that the Kremlin's traditional soft power instruments were insufficient (Kintsurashvili & Gelava, 2019). Russia's policy expanded to include disinformation, anti-Western narratives, and hybrid influence strategies (Kintsurashvili & Ratiani, 2024). While Russia initiated a new phase of engagement with Georgia after the war, including partial dialogue and cultural projects, military and political pressure continued unabated (Phkhaladze, 2010). The war resulted in an estimated direct economic loss of \$1.7 billion for Georgia—roughly 15% of GDP at the time. Foreign direct investment fell by 58% in the second half of 2008. Additionally, perceptions of the security of the Trans-Caspian and South Caucasus energy corridors deteriorated, weakening trust among potential international partners (NBG, 2024).

This period saw increased Russian geo-economic pressure on Georgia. Russia actively utilized economic levers such as:

- Trade embargoes (2006, 2013);
- Manipulation of energy prices;
- Suspension of tourism flows, among others.

These actions were intended to influence Georgia's foreign policy orientation. After 2010, Georgia experienced marked economic growth, partly due to the partial reopening of the Russian market and export diversification in the region. Despite the 2008 war and Georgia's clear pro-European political course, Russia and other CIS countries remained important trade partners, reflecting the enduring economic inertia rooted in historical ties between post-Soviet states. In parallel, Georgia signed the Association Agreement with the European Union, which led to a significant increase in exports to the EU and initiated energy independence strategies.

During this time, the Kremlin continued using Gazprom—a state-owned company—as a policy tool (Toroshelidze, 2008). Although Georgia partially succeeded in reducing its dependency on Russian energy resources, attempts at cooperation exposed the country to increased manipulation risks (Goldthau, & Belyi, 2015). To this day, Russian state and commercial ownership of strategic energy assets in Georgia remains a significant challenge (Lekashvili, 2024).

Since 2012, following the rise to power of the Georgian Dream coalition, there have been efforts to normalize relations with Russia, including visa liberalization, cultural and sporting exchanges, and the appointment of a special representative (Kapanadze, 2015). In 2012, then-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili declared that “confrontation with Russia is a thing of the past” and that “normalizing trade and cultural relations is realistic and should be achieved in the near future” (Civil Georgia, 2012). Specific steps were taken, such as abolishing the visa regime with Russia, participating in the Sochi Olympics, and granting amnesty to Russian spies in 2013 (Kapanadze, 2015, p. 163). Nevertheless, Russia did not reciprocate with goodwill and continued pursuing imperial interests. Simultaneously, the Kremlin deepened ties with occupied territories, erected barbed wire along administrative boundary lines, and maintained a creeping occupation, alongside other soft power mechanisms.

One of Russia's soft power tools in Georgia remains the labor market and employment opportunities for Georgian citizens in Russia, which continues to drive economic emigration. Remittances sent by nearly one million Georgians living in Russia have had a considerable impact on Georgia's economy (Kapanadze, 2015). Other economic levers include trade, energy, and investment, which provide Russia with additional influence over Georgia's economy (Kapanadze, 2014). From

2013, Georgian exports to the Russian market increased, reaching 10% of total exports in 2014, further deepening Georgia's dependency on Russia (Kapanadze, 2015).

The Kremlin also employs its "protection of compatriots" policy, which includes passportization, funding of social programs, and cultural initiatives (Phkhaladze, 2010). The promotion of the Russian language and culture through media and pro-Russian organizations supports the dissemination of anti-Western narratives and influences public attitudes (Kintsurashvili & Ratiani, 2024; Kapanadze, 2015). Of particular significance is the influence of the Georgian Orthodox Church, historically linked to the Russian Orthodox Church under the notion of shared faith. The Church often serves as a channel for disseminating conservative and anti-Western messages, and it is frequently used by the Kremlin as a key instrument of its soft power strategy.

4. CONTEMPORARY IMPACT OF RUSSIA'S SOFT POWER INSTRUMENTS ON GEORGIA'S POLITICAL-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Since 2016, Russia's soft power strategy in Georgia has become increasingly active, particularly in the information and media space. Anti-Western and anti-liberal narratives have become more widespread across Georgian media and social networks, aiming to reduce public trust in the European Union and NATO (Kintsurashvili & Gelava, 2019; Kintsurashvili, 2021). These efforts are supported financially and organizationally by Russia, increasing the influence of pro-Russian organizations (Kintsurashvili & Ratiani, 2024).

Economic tools remain a critical component of Russia's influence strategy. While Georgia has made strides toward energy diversification, Russia continues to be a significant trade partner, contributing to the country's economic vulnerability (Kapanadze, 2020). For example, the steady increase in Georgian wine exports to Russia has led to a growing concentration of trade with the Russian market. In 2024, wine exports totaled approximately \$263.3 million, 67% of which was directed to the Russian Federation—demonstrating Georgia's heightened exposure to external shocks emanating from that market. However, according to preliminary data from the National Statistics Office of Georgia for the first quarter of 2025, Russia's share in total exports dropped from 12.1% to 9.3%, potentially reflecting ongoing diversification efforts and an awareness of geopolitical risks.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 significantly altered the regional security landscape and affected Georgia as well. This development enhanced pro-European sentiments in Georgian society and increased support for a Western foreign policy orientation (CRRC, 2024). Nevertheless, Russia has intensified its use of soft power instruments in an attempt to preserve and expand its influence in Georgia.

One of Russia's main tools has been support for pro-Russian media outlets and online platforms that disseminate anti-Western and anti-liberal messages. These narratives aim to diminish trust in NATO and the EU, while swaying segments of the population toward pro-Russian positions (Kintsurashvili & Ratiani, 2024; ISFED, 2024).

Russia's soft power also extends to economic relations between Georgia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), where Russia remains the dominant player. In 1995, Georgia's exports to CIS countries totaled \$97.9 million; by 2024, this figure had surpassed \$4.5 billion. Imports from CIS countries rose from \$161 million in 1995 to nearly \$3.3 billion in 2024. Russia's role in shaping these figures remains substantial. Between 2022 and 2024, these trade levels remained consistently high—possibly due to the redirection of imports through Georgia following the imposition of international sanctions on Russia. Russia ranks third among Georgia's export countries in 2025 (see Table 1), and in the first quarter of 2026, Russia ranks second among importing countries of Georgia (see Figure 1), which confirms the growing trend of Georgia-Russia trade relations.

Table 1

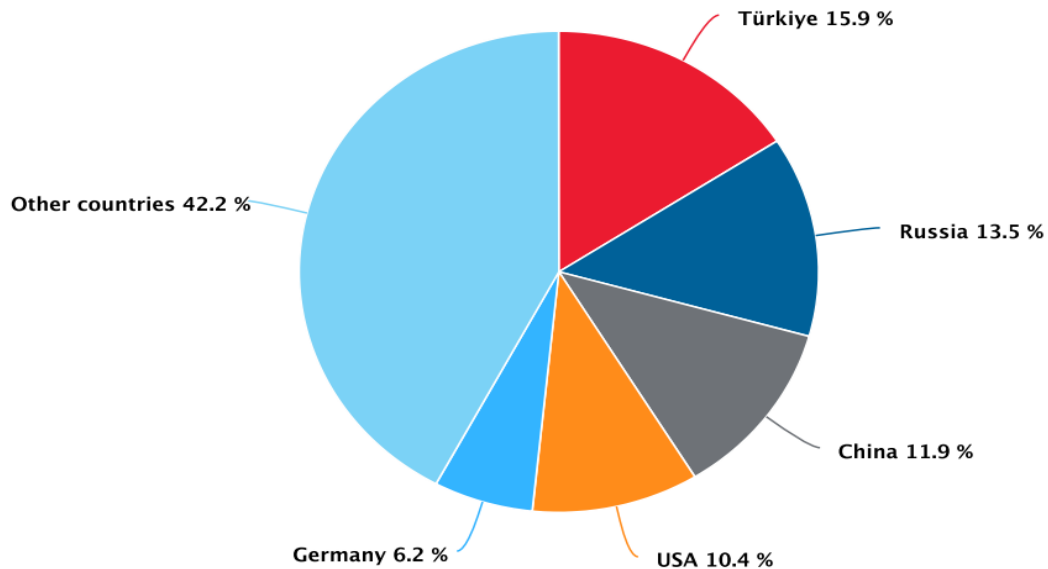
Georgia's export countries in 2025

Georgia Exports by Country	Value, \$
Kyrgyzstan	1 508 M
Kazakhstan	909.99 M
Russia	749.30 M
Azerbaijan	697.26 M
Armenia	552.93 M
Turkey	332.91 M
China	332.58 M

Source: Tradingeconomics, <https://tradingeconomics.com/georgia/exports-by-country> (Accessed 12.06.2026)

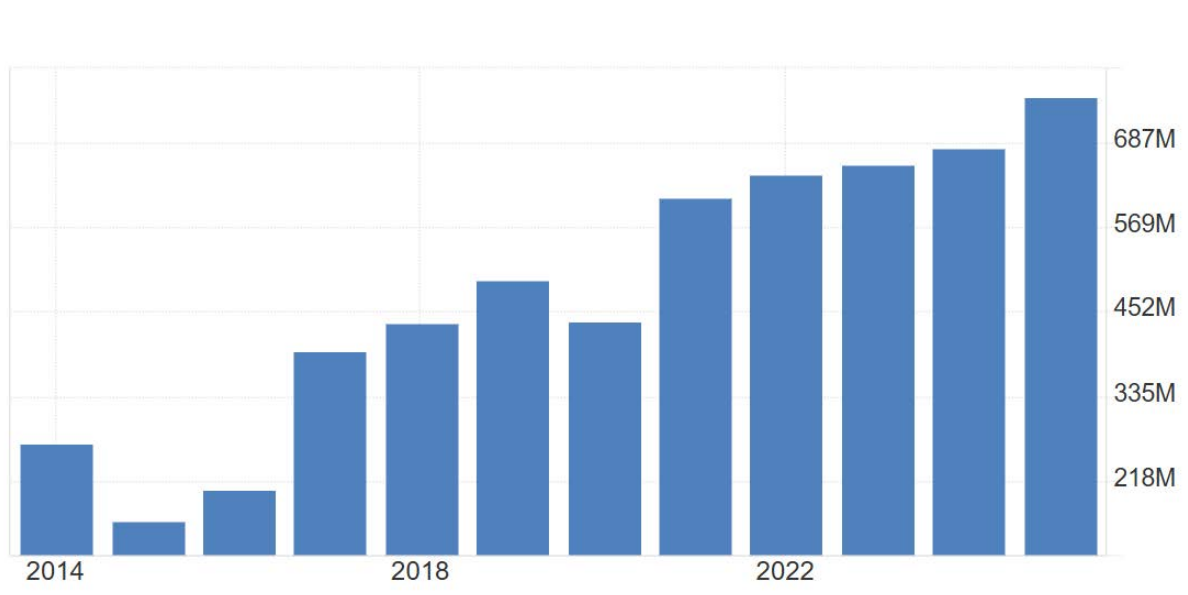
In addition, the dynamics of Georgia's exports to Russia in 2014-2024 is characterized by a constantly growing trend (see Figure 2). Only in 2015 was the lowest level of export volume recorded, which can be explained by geopolitical factors: the conclusion of the Association Agreement between Georgia and the European Union (which also includes a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area- DCFTA) was signed on June 27, 2014, and entered into full force on July 1, 2016) and the results of the 2014 Russia-Ukraine war.

Following the outbreak of war in Ukraine, Georgia experienced an unprecedented influx of Russian citizens. In 2022 alone, approximately 1 million Russian nationals entered the country, with around 100,000 staying long-term (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2022). According to the National Statistics Office of Georgia, more than 1.2 million visitors from Russia entered the country in 2023—an increase of 35% compared to 2022. A significant portion of these arrivals involved individuals who opted to settle in Georgia for extended periods.



Source: Geostat, <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/638/import> (Accessed 12.06.2026)

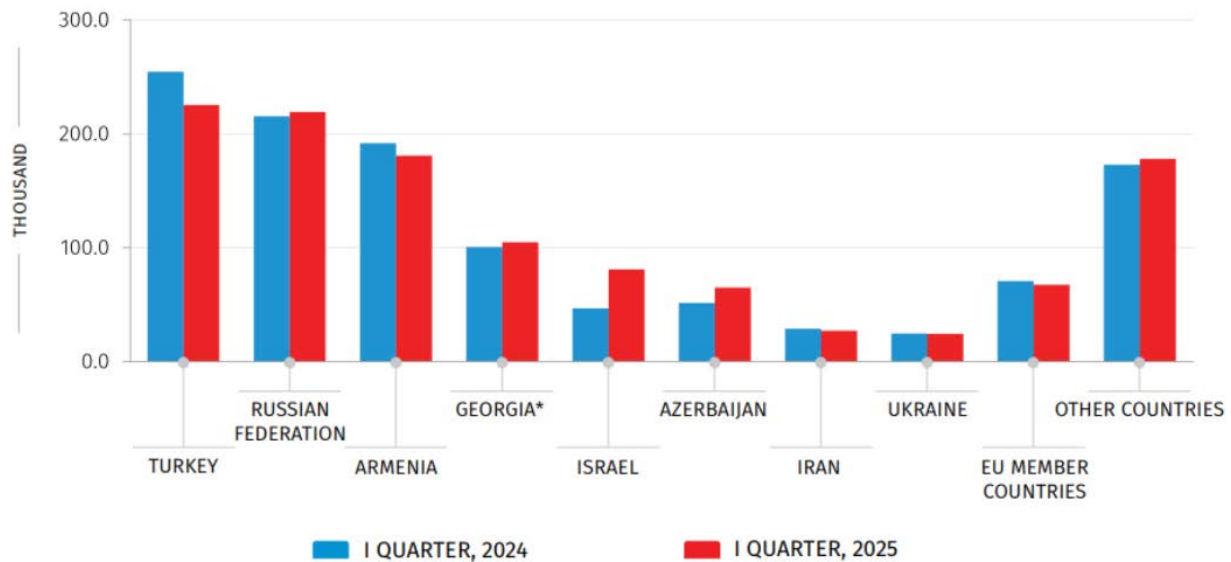
Figure 1: Share of the top trading parties in total Imports in January – April 2026



Source: Tradingeconomics, <https://tradingeconomics.com/georgia/exports-by-country> (Accessed 12.06.2026)

Figure 2: Georgia Exports to Russia

According to the Georgian Statistics Service, in the first quarter of 2024-2025, the Russian Federation is leading in the number of incoming visitors and the process is growing. Their number amounted to 19.3% of the total number of visitors (187,700 visitors) (see Figure 3). By 2025, Russian citizens will also be leading in the issue of obtaining Georgian citizenship (see Figure 4). This trend has led to considerable social and economic changes, influencing demographic dynamics and expanding the space for Russian soft power influence.



Source: Geostat, <https://civil.ge/archives/678792> (Accessed 12.06.2026)

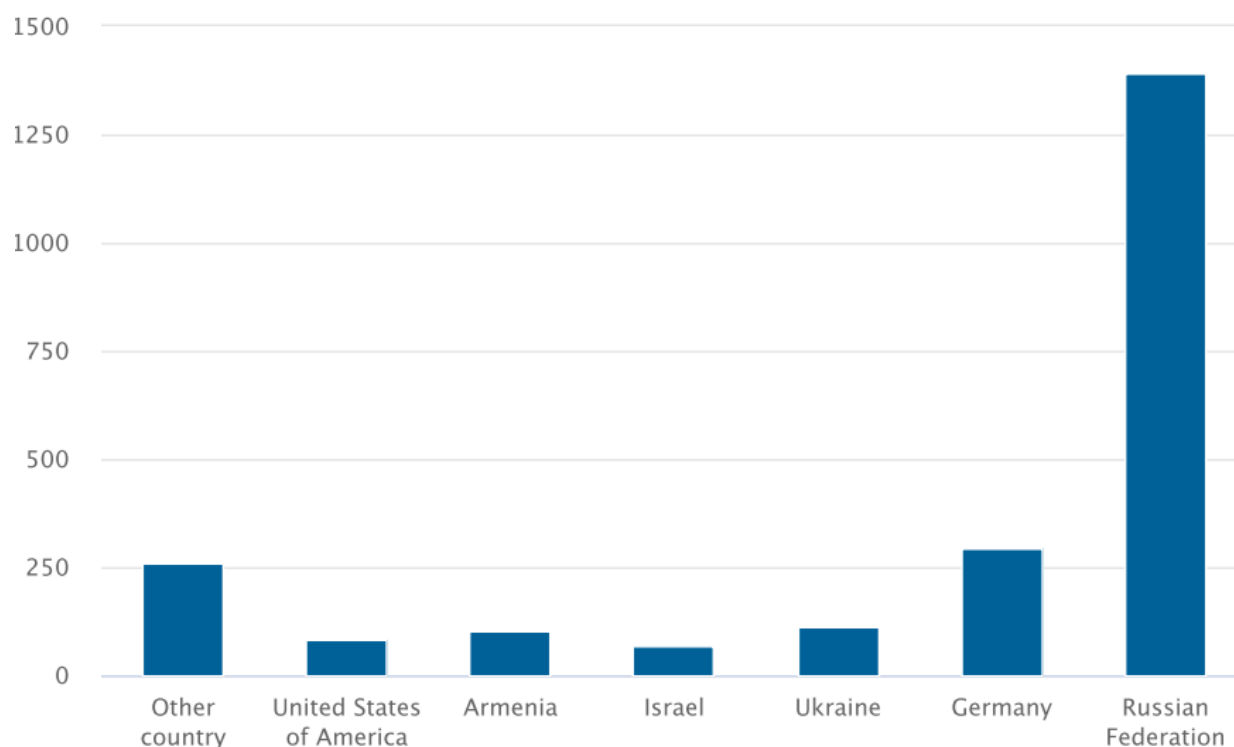
Figure 3: Distribution of the number of visits made by inbound visitors by country of citizenship in the I quarters of 2024-2025

A particularly critical challenge linked to this migration is its effect on the housing market. The massive influx of Russian citizens has driven up real estate prices, making housing less affordable for the local population (Babych, 2023). While migrants have had a positive impact on Georgia's current account balance, their influence on the property market and, over the long term, on national sovereignty and security warrants serious analysis and potential revisions to migration policy. Inflation—especially in food and fuel—continues to pose a key economic risk, affecting food security and poverty levels (Babych, 2023).

Amid the ongoing war in Ukraine, Georgia has seen a sharp increase in capital inflows from Russia, which has had a dual impact on the economy. On the one hand, this surge has positively influenced macroeconomic indicators, including a rise in private remittances, which represent a major source of foreign currency inflows. The tourism sector has also grown, driven by visitors from Russia, Belarus, and neighboring countries—resulting in a notable increase in service-sector revenues. According to the National Bank of Georgia, remittances from the Russian Federation exceeded \$2 billion in 2023, nearly double the 2021 figure. These transfers played a critical role in strengthening Georgia's current account balance and accelerating economic growth: the real GDP growth rate reached 7.5% in 2023 (NBG, 2024). Increased consumption and growth were largely fueled by this inflow. In 2022, for example, remittances were a key driver behind Georgia's 10.4% GDP growth. However, the subsequent decline in remittances from Russia in 2023 contributed to a deceleration of growth, which averaged around 7% (Shamugia, 2024).

The increase in air travel between Georgia and Russia suggests a strategic policy choice by the Georgian government to maintain a degree of independence in its external relations (European Commission, 2024). However, this development may also be interpreted as a facilitator of Russia's soft power strategy.

Russia's war in Ukraine has fundamentally reshaped the regional economic and political context, directly and indirectly influencing trade and investment flows in Georgia (Ormotsadze & Evgenidze, 2025). Georgia has seen an increase in re-export activity to Central Asia through its territory, partly due to sanctions on Russia. While this has driven short-term economic growth, it is also accompanied by uncertainty—stemming from both global political processes and Georgia's evolving domestic political landscape and foreign economic orientation.



Source: Geostat, <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/322/migration> (Accessed 13.06.2026)

Figure 4: Acquisition of Georgian citizenship by previous country of citizenship, 2025

In sum, Russia's soft power strategy in Georgia has undergone a transformation since the onset of the 2022 war. It has become more multifaceted and assertive, encompassing informational manipulation, economic levers, migration flows, and cultural influence—including via the Church. The overarching objective of this strategy is to weaken Georgia's Western trajectory and advance Russia's strategic interests in the region.

5. FACTORS DETERMINING THE SUCCESS AND SETBACKS OF RUSSIA'S SOFT POWER

The strengthening of Russia's soft power influence in Georgia has been facilitated by the ruling party, *Georgian Dream*, through its reassessment of the country's pro-Western orientation and the intensification of anti-Western narratives. In the October 26, 2024 parliamentary elections, *Georgian Dream* officially declared victory with the support of approximately 54% of the population. Although the elections were technically well-organized according to the OSCE/ODIHR final report, significant systemic violations were recorded, including the misuse of administrative resources, vote buying, violations of ballot secrecy, and other irregularities that impacted the overall fairness of the process (Civil Georgia, 2024).

In recent years, a clear trend has emerged in Georgia: the ruling elite increasingly employs anti-Western narratives derived from Russian propaganda to consolidate its political power and discredit opposition forces. While Georgia officially maintains a pro-Western course, on several occasions the government has echoed messages similar in style to Russian propaganda for internal political gains (Kintsurashvili & Ratiani, 2024).

One of the key mechanisms involves sowing public distrust toward Western institutions and NGOs, using state-aligned and pro-Russian media channels (ISFED, 2024). Anti-Western rhetoric serves to mobilize segments of the population that are skeptical of the West, allowing the ruling party to portray itself as a "sovereign power" defending national interests.

In addition, Eurosceptic statements occasionally surface in the rhetoric of government officials, signaling a defense of "national interests" amid Western criticism. This strategy aligns closely with a central narrative of Russian propaganda—that the West threatens Georgia's traditions and identity, while the government protects national values (Kintsurashvili & Gelava, 2019).

These messages are often accompanied by smear campaigns targeting civil society activists and critical media, portraying them as "foreign agents." Such strategies not only undermine democratic processes but also contribute to

societal polarization, enabling the government to strengthen its control and maintain power amidst internal division (CRRC, 2024).

A notable factor is the strategic use of the Orthodox Church's influence. Government officials often reproduce conservative narratives that mirror Russian propaganda, focusing on the defense of traditional values, the "threat of liberalism," and the reinforcement of national identity.

Although the Georgian government has publicly expressed support for Ukraine, it has refrained from joining Western sanctions against Russia—sending mixed messages in the international arena (Salomé, 2024).

The adoption of Russia-style propaganda narratives by the Georgian government represents a deliberate political technology aimed at power consolidation, opposition marginalization, and the consolidation of public support under the guise of defending national identity and traditional values.

Russia's soft power strategy in Georgia remains a major political challenge, with its primary goals being the weakening of Georgia's Western alignment, the strengthening of pro-Russian sentiments, and the erosion of trust in democratic institutions. Both international and local research indicate that, despite the Georgian public's increasing pro-European orientation, the Kremlin employs a range of instruments—often reinforced by internal political dynamics.

Since the 2008 war, Russia's toolkit has expanded to include disinformation, hybrid warfare, and the systematic spread of anti-Western narratives. Its soft power activity has intensified since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, though the effectiveness of some instruments has declined. According to recent research (CRRC, 2024; ISFED, 2025; Kintsurashvili & Ratiani, 2024; Chedia, 2026), Russia's key levers include cultural and religious influence, economic dependency, media, and information campaigns.

Through cultural and religious instruments, Russia attempts to amplify pro-Russian attitudes in segments of Georgian society by promoting shared historical memory, Orthodox Christian values, and the Russian language. Segments of the Georgian Orthodox Church are often critical of the West and reinforce Kremlin-aligned narratives (Kintsurashvili & Ratiani, 2024).

Economically, Russia uses trade, energy, and tourism to increase Georgia's vulnerability. For instance, in 2023, the mass influx of Russian citizens into Georgia expanded Russia's presence in Georgian markets (Chedia, 2026). Russian energy companies also maintain key positions in Georgia's strategic sectors (CRRC, 2024).

Media and information campaigns are among the Kremlin's most effective tools for spreading anti-Western rhetoric. According to Kintsurashvili and Ratiani, (2024), such campaigns aim to discredit the West and portray Russia as the defender of traditional values. ISFED (2025) reports a particularly strong narrative suggesting that the West promotes "color revolutions" and threatens national identity.

Political influence through pro-Russian NGOs and minor political parties is another significant tactic. These actors oppose Western integration and foster skepticism toward the EU and NATO (Chedia, 2026; ISFED, 2025).

However, recent surveys (CRRC, 2024; NDI, 2023) show that a majority of Georgians still support European integration. Although support for the EU and NATO increased after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there has been a slight decline—due in part to internal political developments and disinformation campaigns. For example, CRRC (2024) reports that support for EU membership stands at 68%, approximately 5–7% lower than in 2022, while NATO support remains between 66–67%.

The Orthodox Church remains a key actor in propagating anti-Western messages, reinforcing conservative discourse, and supporting Kremlin objectives. Government representatives often echo such rhetoric, contributing to polarization (Kintsurashvili & Gelava, 2019; CRRC, 2024).

The 2024 parliamentary elections confirmed that domestic political developments can align with Russia's propaganda interests. While the OSCE/ODIHR deemed the elections technically well-organized, they noted irregularities such as the misuse of administrative resources and vote buying (Civil Georgia, 2024). ISFED (2025) monitoring reports that Russian disinformation campaigns became more sophisticated and intensified particularly during the pre-election period.

Following the 2024 elections, a statement by the Prime Minister signaling a shift in Georgia's foreign policy away from the West triggered mass protests. Despite government use of force and arrests of opposition leaders, public demonstrations have continued for ten consecutive months—demonstrating the Georgian public's strong commitment to the country's European path (CRRC, 2024; Transparency International Georgia, 2024).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Thus, Russia's soft power policy in Georgia has evolved over time: initially focusing on historical ties and economic–energy dependence, and later shifting toward information manipulation and public opinion shaping. Russia's soft power strategy remains flexible and multidimensional. Nevertheless, a significant portion of Georgian society continues to support the country's pro-European orientation.

In order to achieve Georgia's strategic goals, it is essential to enhance information security, support democratic institutions, and strengthen civic education and media literacy across all levels of the educational system to reduce the influence of external propaganda.

From an economic standpoint, Georgia's strategic imperative is to diversify trade routes, deepen ties with Western partners, and minimize economic dependence on Russia, thereby mitigating associated risks (Ormotsadze & Evgenidze, 2025). It is also crucial to restrict Russian companies from exerting influence over Georgia's energy infrastructure, as well as from freely operating in the real estate sector or engaging in opaque financial and economic relations—at least until fair, transparent, independent, and accountable governance structures are fully established in the country (Lekashvili, 2024).

On the external front, the EU's and NATO's cautious approach to enlargement, combined with Russia's ongoing pressure and regional instability, creates a dual strategic squeeze. This situation necessitates diplomatic agility and an acceleration of domestic institutional reforms.

In addition, Georgia can leverage digital platforms to globally amplify its democratic values and cultural identity. It has the potential to balance these efforts with strategic security partnerships.

By emphasizing constructivist diplomacy, Georgia can also contribute to shaping regional narratives centered around peace, cooperation, and resilience—particularly in the South Caucasus.

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Supervision: Eka Lekashvili 40%; Ketevan Mukhiguli 60%

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Writing – original draft: Eka Lekashvili 50%; Ketevan Mukhiguli, 50%

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