CAUCASUS RESEARCH RESOURCE CENTER

CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND ANTI-WESTERN ATTITUDES IN GEORGIA

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ABOUT CRRC-GEORGIA

CRRC-Georgia is a non-profit research organization which provides good data for public good. The organization's mission is to promote evidence-based discussions on pressing societal issues by producing reliable, up-to-date, and accessible data and analysis.

DISLCAIMER

This research is supported by the National Endowment for Democracy. The results do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Endowment for Democracy.

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CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND THE GEORGIAN CONTEXT

In May of 2025 the Georgian Dream government's Prime Minister, Irakli Kobakhidze, penned a letter to US President, Donald Trump, expressing their governments' united effort in combatting the "Deep State".[1] The letter, a clear effort to shore favor from the newly elected Trump administration and evade efforts to sanction members of the Georgian Dream government, uses the Deep State conspiracy, a favorite source of America's problems as identified by the US President, as a tool of statecraft. Georgian Dream's utilization of conspiracies is not limited to diplomacy and influencing foreign opinion. Rather, the Georgian Dream party actively weaponizes them against opposition groups and individuals, as a means of manipulating truth and reality in the eyes of the public. Georgian Dream figures regularly accuse the EU and the West of attempting to open a "second-front", in an effort to drag Georgia into war in Russia. Frequently used, in tandem with the term Deep State, is the idea of a "Global War Party", an entity controlled by a hidden global elite intent on bringing war to Georgia.[2] Conspiracies are not limited to war, however, the Georgian Dream party also promotes homophobic rhetoric, accusing the West of degrading traditional values through "LGBT propaganda".[3] The Georgian Dream's weaponization of conspiratorial worldviews goes hand-in-hand with their embracement of authoritarianism and active dismantling of Georgia's democracy.

While conspiracy theories in democracies predominantly circulate among radicalized groups on the political fringes, often reflecting a deep mistrust of domestic government, in non-democratic regimes, conspiratorial thinking is generally adopted by the ruling elites against foreign powers.[4] In other words, "conspiracy theories in authoritarian regimes stand as official truths."[5] This is especially true for modern authoritarian and hybrid regimes, which are often referred to as "informational autocracies", since they heavily rely on the manipulation of information, propaganda, and narrative warfare.[6] In such contexts, conspiracy theories are one of the tools of the broader propaganda machine, where these theories are

[1] Machaidze, Irakli. "Georgian government's 'deep state' bromance with Trump remains unrequited."

[2] Civil.ge. "GD Rails Against 'Deep State', 'Global War Party', Doubles Down on Conspirationism."

[3] Gabritchidze, Nini. "Georgian Dream's Oppressive Anti-LGBT Law Comes into Effect."

[4] Giry, Julien Giry and Doğan Gürpınar. "Functions and Use of Conspiracy Theories in Authoritarian Regimes.", 320.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Guriev, Sergei, and Daniel Treisman. "Spin Dictators: The Changing Face of Tyranny in the 21st Century." 15.

supported with tailored disinformation, i.e. factually distorted and incorrect claims which serve to provide "evidence" for the conspiracy.

Ruling regimes of post-communist countries frequently adopt popular Western conspiracy narratives, or create their own, regarding the EU, Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, and Stalinism; adapting them to local contexts and infusing them into mainstream political discourse.[7] Non-democratic leaders strategically employ conspiracy theories to sustain public legitimacy, often by attributing sensitive political issues to "enemies within", a "deep state", or "foreign agents."[8] One of the main tropes used by such leaders are "covert interventions by foreign actors"[9] through which governments redirect the public's legitimate grievances toward imagined adversaries and opposition forces.[10]

To give the example of Russia, "the conspiratorial worldview became an increasingly important element of the country's political ideology, exploiting people's nostalgia for Russia's past greatness, justifying the authoritarian turn, and providing a basis for social cohesion and popular mobilization."[11] Central to Putin's domestic and international policy has been the denunciation of alleged Western plots to destabilize Russia and undermine its government. This narrative has served to consolidate public support, rally nationalistic sentiment, and legitimize authoritarian measures by framing them as defensive responses to external threats.

This machinery of conspiracy theories was especially active leading up to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. In an effort to justify the invasion, Putin promoted the conspiracy theory that Ukraine was controlled by Nazis who were committing "genocide" against its Russian-speaking population.[12]

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, we have observed a similar tendency in Georgia. The ruling Georgian Dream party utilizes conspiracies to justify its geopolitical shift away from the West, the Georgian government has aligned itself with other post-communist authoritarian states - such as Russia and Hungary - where conspiracy narratives exploit grievances related to the challenges of transitioning

[7] Astapova Anastasiya, Onoriu Colăcel, Corneliu Pintilescu, and Tamás Scheibner. "Conspiracy Theories in Eastern Europe." 10.

[8] Klein, Olivier and Kenzo Nera. "Social Psychology of Conspiracy Theories." 129.

[9] Libman, Alexander, and Björn Vollan. "Anti-Western Conspiracy Thinking in China and Russia: Empirical Evidence and Its Link to Expectations of Collusion." 3.

[10] Klein, Olivier and Kenzo Nera. "Social Psychology of Conspiracy Theories." 129.

[11] Ilya Yablokov, Fortress Russia. "Conspiracy theories in post-Soviet Russia." 188.

[12] Radnitz, Scott. "Why Democracy Fuels Conspiracy Theories." 149.

economies, perceived failings of liberal democracy, believed cultural alienation from the West, and troubled political legacies. Officials of the Georgian Dream party have adopted anti-Western rhetoric that has progressively become more hostile, vocal and harsh, reaching a culmination in 2024, when the government first introduced the "Foreign Agents Law" and "Anti-LGBT Propaganda Law", and then claimed a controversial victory in Georgia's 2024 parliamentary elections.[13] The Georgian Dream then officially disembarked from its Western orbit by removing EU membership negotiations from the government agenda until 2028.[14] These political decisions were backed by orchestrated anti-Western conspiracies and disinformation claims. Particularly, Georgian Dream leaders have been arguing that Western countries - mainly the United States and the European Union, with the assistance of domestic allies such as a "radical opposition" and NGO's have been conspiring to open a "second front" in Georgia. This effort, according to Georgian Dream, is intended to drag Georgia into war, destabilize the government, and disrupt Russia's focus on the ongoing war in Ukraine.[15]

The anti-Western discourse produced by the Georgian Dream is based on conspiracies that a covert entity referred to as the "Global War Party." According to the party's leader, Bidzina Ivanishvili, the Global War Party wields significant influence over Western leaders and actively seeks to incite global conflicts. In his April 29th speech, Ivanishvili claimed that "Important decisions of the world are taken by the Global War Party. It is this global force that first forced the confrontation between Georgia and Russia [the 2008 Russo-Georgian War] and then put Ukraine in even worse peril. NGOs and the radical opposition are acting on their behalf."[16]

While Georgian Dream representatives have drawn on established conspiracy narratives related to the "deep state"[17] and "freemasonry"[18] in order to bolster their claims about the Global War Party, the conspiracy is novel in its form and requires investigating for several reasons. First, unlike similar popular conspiracy theories that circulate in Western countries, such as those regarding Freemasons, a deep state, and the Global War Party theory, are not being propagated by fringe political actors but rather state leaders through official communication channels. This mainstreaming of conspiracies suggests an

[13] Civil.ge "ODIHR Final Report Reiterates Multiple Concerns over October 26 Elections, Calls for Concrete Action."

[14] Civil.ge "GD Aborts EU Accession." 28.

[15] Civil.ge. "GD Chair Kobakhidze Talks 'Second Front,' 'Radical Opposition,' Lavrov's Remarks."

[16] Civil.ge. "Bidzina Ivanishvili Backs Anti-Western Policies, Threatens Repressions."

[17] Civil.ge. "Ivanishvili Denies Targeting U.S., Repeats "Global War Party" Conspiracy, Warns of "Reputational Damage."

[18] Politico. "Freemasons and "Global War Party" Conspiring against Georgia, Ruling Party Claims."

attempt to legitimize conspiratorial thinking within the wider public discourse and aims to embed itself in the processes of high-level decision-making and public opinion formation around significant policy issues. Second, whereas many popular Western conspiracy theories primarily challenge domestic political elites, the Global War Party theory has a distinctly geopolitical focus, targeting Western foreign powers and directly challenging Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

In response to this paradigm shift in Georgian politics, CRRC-Georgia, with financial support from the National Endowment for Democracy, conducted empirical quantitative research to assess the receptiveness of the Georgian public to conspiratorial thinking in general and to the Global War Party conspiracy theory in particular. The study also examined the relationship between conspiratorial thinking (general belief in conspiracies and belief in the existence of the Global War Party) and anti-Western attitudes to determine whether the Georgian Dream's anti-Western conspiratorial claims have indeed fostered negative perceptions of the West among the public. These findings are especially significant, given the lack of empirical research on conspiracy thinking in Georgia, despite a long history of their prevalence related to healthcare and vaccination, Freemasons, anti-intellectualism, and anti-Semitic rhetoric targeting George Soros and affiliated organizations.

DEFINING CONSPIRACY

The concept of a conspiracy theory, defined as the belief that a group of powerful individuals is "acting covertly to achieve some malevolent end,"[19] has long permeated both ancient and modern political contexts. The origins of academic attention to conspiracy thinking can be traced to 1930s, described as "anyone who assumes that social relations are governed almost solely by careful calculation and design, the laying of plans against others, may be said to subscribe to the conspiracy theory."[20] The first comprehensive conceptualization of conspiracy theories was introduced by American historian Richard Hofstadter in his influential 1964 essay, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics." Drawing from examples like McCarthyism and Freemasonry, Hofstadter argued that at the heart of conspiracy theories lies the assumption that those in power - be they governmental authorities, economic elites, or cultural influencers - are actively concealing truths from the public. Hofstadter described this core idea as "a gigantic and yet subtle machinery of influence set in motion to undermine and destroy a way of life," underscoring the perceived malevolent intentions of the powerful elites.[21]

As outlined above, the central component of conspiracy theories is the belief in hidden actions and motives, typically attributed to influential minority elites with secretive, often malevolent objectives.[22] These elites are frequently characterized as groups or individuals like Freemasons, Communists, Liberals, Cultural Marxists, Jews, bankers, and bureaucrats.[23] Unlike individual grievances, conspiracy theories often portray these groups as threats to broader societal values or collective well-being.[24] Examples of such theories are claims that the 9/11 attacks were secretly orchestrated by the US government to justify the invasion of Iraq, or that climate change is a hoax invented by scientists in order to gain funding.[25]

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[19] Barkun, Michael. "Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America." 3.

[20] McKenzie-McHarg, Andrew. "Conceptual History and Conspiracy Theory." 25.

[21] Hofstadter, Richard. "The Paranoid Style in American Politics." 61.

[22] Douglas, Karen M., and Robbie M. Sutton. "Why Conspiracy Theories Matter: A Social Psychological Analysis." 266.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Kragh, Martin, et al. "Conspiracy Theories in Russian Security Thinking." Journal of Strategic Studies, 2020, 2.

[25] van Prooijen, Jan-Willem, and Karen M. Douglas. "Belief in Conspiracy Theories: Basic Principles of an Emerging Research Domain." 902.

A defining analytical characteristic of conspiracy theories is their reliance on insufficient or nonexistent evidence, which is often accepted as convincing.[26] Conspiracy claims, therefore, tend to be unfalsifiable. "Conspiracy theories are a worldview based on the fear of 'could-be-true' but 'not yet proven', impossible/unable to prove or fantasied conspiracies."[27] This approach enables conspiracy theories to maintain an appearance of plausibility even in the absence of concrete evidence, fostering a form of reasoning that sidesteps conventional standards of verification. Even more, individuals who subscribe to conspiratorial thinking often view themselves as rational and detail-oriented, believing that "nothing happens accidentally" and interpreting each development as part of a larger, orchestrated plot.[28]

In summary, the concept of a conspiracy theory is rooted in the belief that powerful elites are covertly orchestrating events to serve hidden, malevolent agendas. They are based on the perception of a concealed machinery of influence undermining societal values and attribute blame to specific groups or institutions, positioning them as existential threats to collective well-being. A central feature of conspiracy thinking is its reliance on insufficient or unfalsifiable evidence, enabling the believers to construct plausibility outside traditional standards of information verification.

[26] Kragh, Martin, et al. "Conspiracy Theories in Russian Security Thinking." Journal of Strategic Studies, 31 Jan. 2020, 4.

[27] Giry, Julien and Pranvera Tika. "Conspiracy Theories in Political Science and Political Theory." 114.

[28] Thórisdóttir, Hulda, Silvia Mari and André Krouwel. "Conspiracy Theories, Political Ideology and Political Behavior." 305.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a quantitative approach to assess the prevalence of general conspiratorial thinking among Georgian citizens, their receptiveness to the Global War Party conspiracy theory, and their impact on anti-Western attitudes.

To gather quantitative data, CRRC Georgia conducted a nationally representative phone survey of 1,457 adult Georgian citizens (18+), carried out in the Georgian language from September 20 to September 24, 2024. The survey was conducted in the Georgian language. This report relies on descriptive and inferential statistics based on weighted data which approximates and reflects public opinion. While we use weighted frequencies to describe public opinion on conspiracy beliefs and anti-western attitudes, we apply multivariate and univariate regression models to identify significant correlations of key concepts affecting both conspiracy theories and anti-western attitudes. Regarding model outputs, we report both marginal effects and predictive probabilities.

Research on conspiracies highlights that a range of socio-economic and psychological factors contribute to belief in conspiracy theories. Demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education, employment status, and residence type can influence the susceptibility to conspiracy theories. According to the Caucasus Barometer 2024, 49% of the Georgian population cites TV channels as their primary source of information about the country's current events.[29] This reliance on television demonstrates its significant role in shaping public perceptions and it could also potentially play an important role in the dissemination and acceptance of conspiracies as well. Additionally, a great deal of research demonstrates that public perceptions and beliefs can be inherently biased due to their partisan identity (a phenomenon called "partisan motivated reasoning")[30], therefore it is highly likely that partisan affiliation influences beliefs in conspiracy theories as well. Partisans tend to process information in ways that align with their political preferences and to discredit opposing views, which can be exacerbated in context of political polarization.[31] In highly polarized environments, individuals are less likely to critically evaluate information that supports their preexisting beliefs and more likely to accept narratives that align with their partisan identity, even if these narratives lack evidence, in this case, conspiracy theories.

[29] Caucasus Barometer 2024. "First Main Source of information for receiving news about Georgia's current events?"

[30] Williams, Daniel. "The Case for Partisan Motivated Reasoning."

[31] Bayes, Robin, and James N Druckman. "Motivated Reasoning and Climate Change." 27–35.

Thus, the belief in conspiracy theories in Georgia is likely driven by a complex interaction of demographic, media, and political factors. For this reason, through conducting logistic regression analysis, this research explores how these factors actually influence belief in general conspiracy theories and the Georgian Dream-proposed Global War Party theory.

MEASURING THE CONSPIRATORIAL MINDSET

Research demonstrates that belief in conspiracy theories can be understood as a mode of thinking which exists on a spectrum.[32] When operationalizing the conspiratorial mindset, this study drew on the well-established finding that if a person believes in one conspiracy theory it is highly likely that they believe other conspiracies as well..[33] According to this finding, we hypothesized that if a person tends to consistently believe in several common conspiracy theories, then they are more susceptible to believe a novel conspiracy theory, such as the Global War Party.

Therefore, to assess a conspiratorial mindset, we adopted a widely used method: survey research in which participants are asked to evaluate their belief in several specific conspiracy narratives.[34] This can include widely recognized conspiracy theories (e.g., the belief that the Moon landing was staged) or context-specific, localized conspiracies (e.g. belief that the Lugar Laboratory in Georgia, which is often the subject of anti-Western conspiracy theories, produces deadly diseases and viruses at the request of the Americans).[35] In either case, the selected statements should reflect underlying beliefs such as "many important events in the world occur without the public's knowledge" and "there are secret organizations that significantly influence political decisions."[36] When selecting the statements, we relied on "the generic conspiracy beliefs scale" (GCBS), which is used as a primary survey instrument for measuring conspiratorial mindsets for research purposes.[37]

[32] Kragh, Martin, et al. "Conspiracy Theories in Russian Security Thinking." 6.

[33] Douglas, Karen M., and Robbie M. Sutton. "Why Conspiracy Theories Matter: A Social Psychological Analysis." 266.

[34] Klein, Olivier and Kenzo Nera. "Social Psychology of Conspiracy Theories." 129.

[35] Civil.ge. "Russia Speaks against Lugar center."

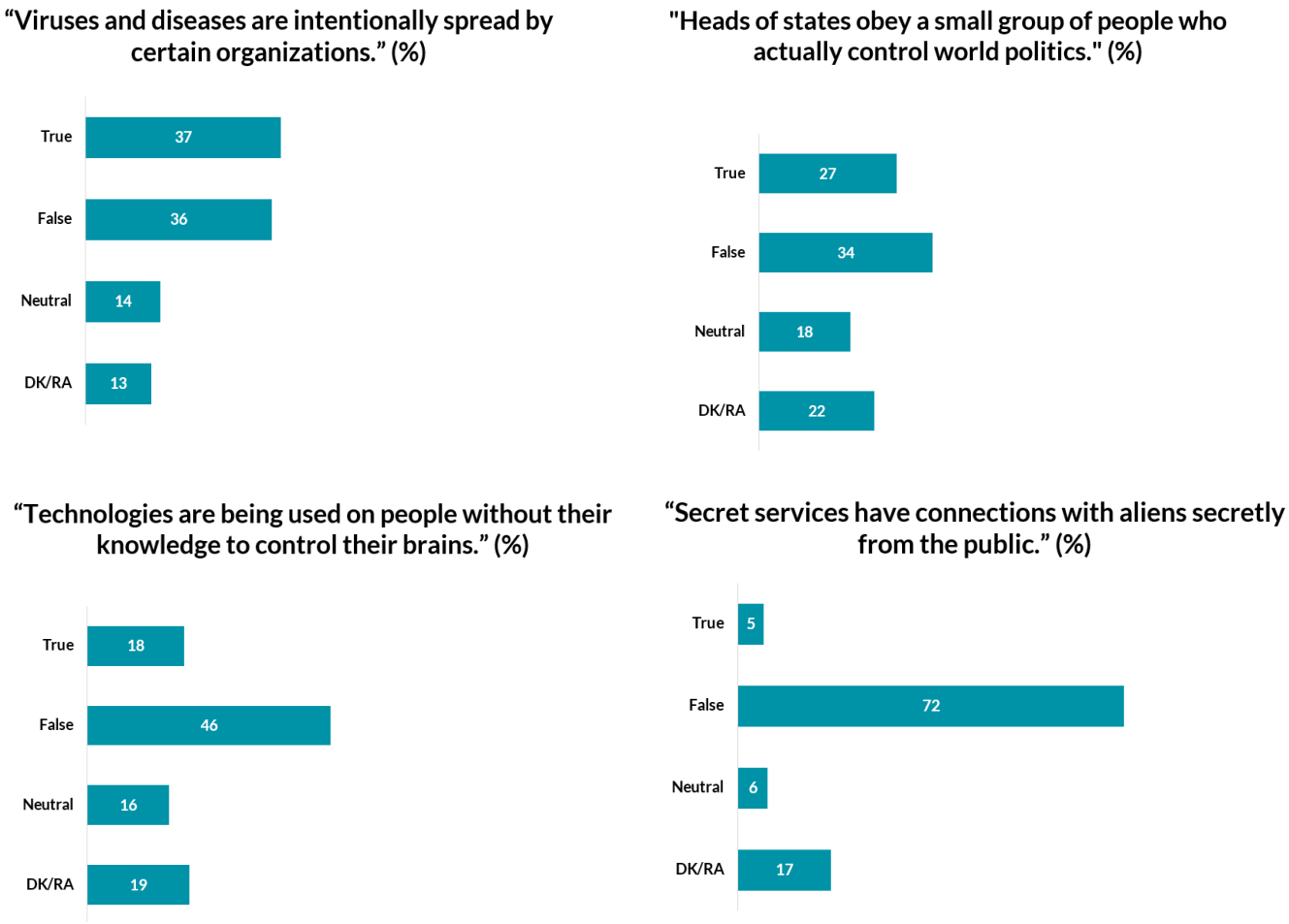
[36] Douglas, Karen M., et al. "Understanding Conspiracy Theories." 5.

[37] Brotherton, Robert, Christopher C. French, and Alan D. Pickering. "Measuring belief in conspiracy theories: the generic conspiracist beliefs scale."

CRRC-Georgia presented participants with four prevalent conspiracy theories selected from a 15-item GCBS survey, asking respondents to evaluate the truthfulness of each statement on a scale from 1 to 5. A score of 1 indicated "absolutely false," while a score of 5 indicated "absolutely true." The statements assessed were as follows:

1. “Viruses and diseases are intentionally spread by certain organizations.”
2. “Heads of states obey a small group of people who actually control world politics.”
3. “Technologies are being used on people without their knowledge to control their brains.”
4. “Secret services have connections with aliens secretly from the public.”

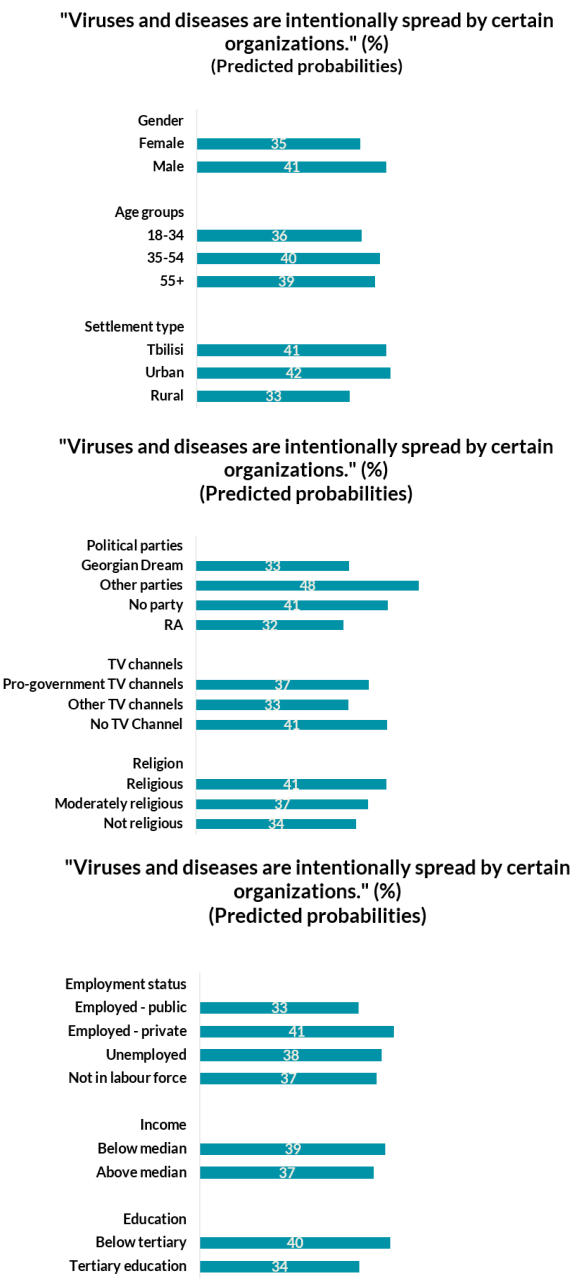
Figure 1: Charts 1-4



As we observed, these statements resonated with the public differently. Thirty-seven percent of respondents believed that viruses and diseases are intentionally spread by certain organizations. Twenty-seven percent of the respondents believed that heads of state obey a small group of people who actually control world politics. Eighteen percent of participants agreed with the statement that technologies are being used on people without their knowledge to control their brains. Only five percent of participants believed that secret services have contact with aliens without public knowledge. These responses highlight varying levels of belief in conspiracy theories among the Georgian population. While some statements, such as those involving contact with aliens, were widely rejected, others, particularly those involving global control of politics and the intentional spread of diseases, garnered a degree of support or neutrality.

The impact of socio-demographic characteristics is moderate for all four statements, but when comparing predicted probabilities, some trends can still be observed. Men (41%) are 6 percentage points more likely than women (35%) to believe that viruses and diseases are intentionally spread by certain organizations. People in the age group of 18-34 (36%) are slightly less likely to support this claim compared to people in the age group of 35-54 (%) and 55+ (39%). Education emerges as a relatively more important factor. Individuals with a tertiary education (34%) are 6 percentage points less likely to support this statement compared to those without a tertiary education (40%). Religion also plays some role: religious people (41%) are more likely to support this statement than moderately religious people (37%) and non-religious people (34%). Media consumption influences opinions as well. Consumers of pro-government TV channels (37%) are more likely to believe in this conspiracy than those who

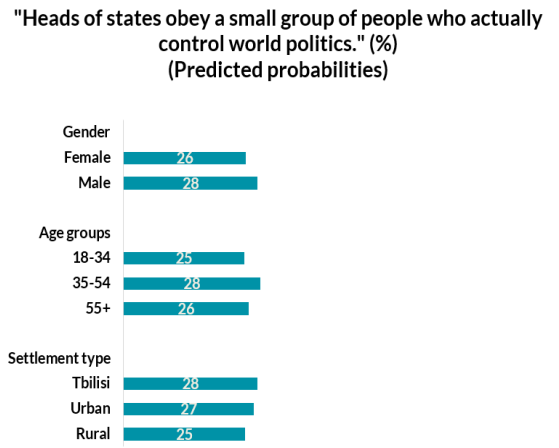
Figure 2: Charts 5-7 (Only the marginal effects of having tertiary education, living in rural area and party identities are statistically significant (p<0.05)

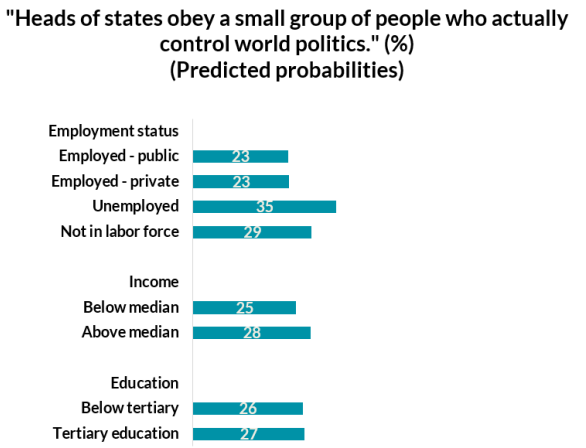


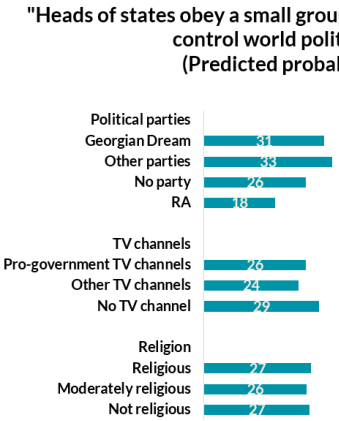
watch other TV channels (33%) but less likely than who do not watch any TV channel (41%). Partisan identity demonstrates a somewhat fuzzy effect: supporters of Georgian Dream (33%) are less likely to agree with this statement than the supporters of other parties (48%) and people with no partisan affiliation (41%).

Men (28%) are again slightly more expected than women (26%) to believe that heads of states are controlled by a small, covert group of individuals, with a difference of 2 percentage points. Similarly, settlement type plays a moderate role. In Tbilisi (28%) residents are 3 percentage points more likely to subscribe to this belief compared to their counterparts in rural areas (25%). Stronger difference in predicted probabilities comes from employment status. Unemployed individuals (35%) are 12 percentage points more likely to agree with this statement compared to those employed in the public (23%) and private (23%) sectors, suggesting that economic insecurity may amplify susceptibility to this narrative. The probability of supporting this statement is 31% among the supporters of the Georgian Dream, 33% among supporters of other parties and 26% among those who do not support any party. People who watch pro-government TV channels are slightly more likely (26%) to support this statement than those who watch other TV channels (24%) but slightly less likely than those who do not watch any TV channel (29%).

Figure 3: Charts 8-10 (Only the marginal effects of being unemployed and party identities are statistically significant (p<0.05)

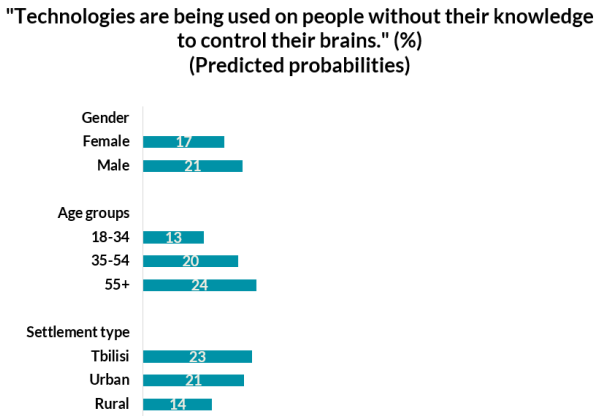


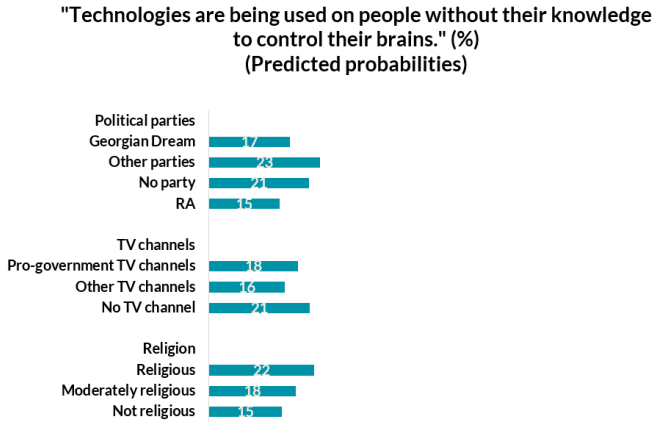


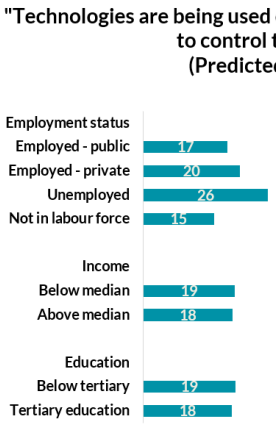


The belief that technologies are secretly used on people in order to control their brains reveals several sociodemographic divides. Men (21%) are slightly more expected to believe this statement than women (17%). Age exerts some influence, as respondents aged 55+ (24%) are 4 percentage points more likely to agree than those aged 34-54 (20%) and 11 percentage points more likely than the 18-34 age group (13%). Economic factors also play a role, with unemployed individuals (26%) more likely to support this claim than those employed in the public sector (17%) or in private sector (20%). Religion also plays some role: religious individuals (22%) are somewhat more likely to believe in this conspiracy than those who are moderately religious (18%) or not religious (15%). Similar to other statements, media consumption shapes opinions, consumers of pro-government TV channels (18%) are slightly more expected to support this theory than those who watch other TV channels (16%) but less expected than those who do not watch any TV channel (21%). Political dynamics also come into play, with supporters of Georgian Dream (17%) being a bit less likely to agree than supporters of other parties (23%) and those without party affiliation (21%) to support this claim.

Figure 4: Charts 11-13 (only the marginal effects of age groups, living in rural area and being not religious are statistically significant (p<0.05)

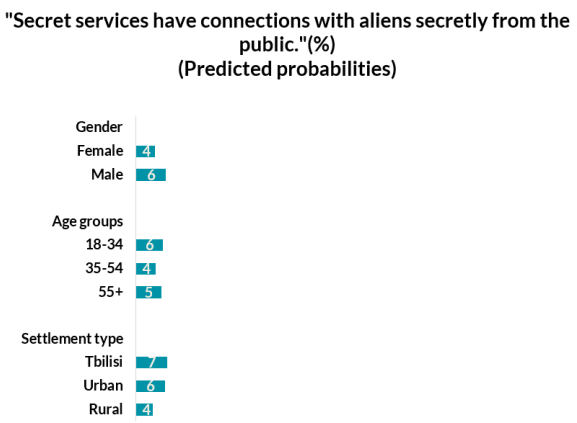


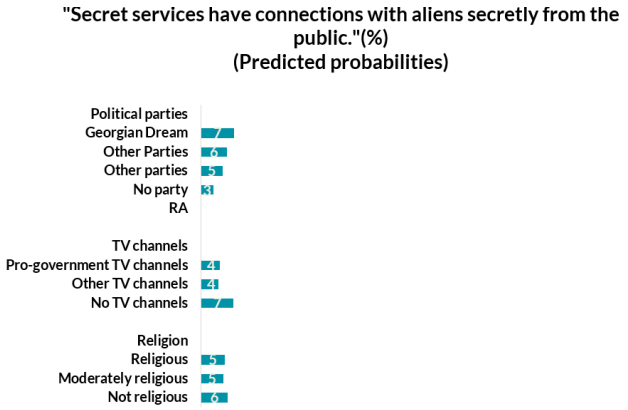


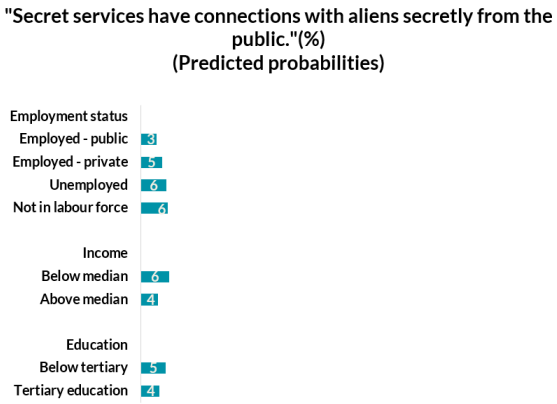


The idea that secret services have connections with aliens, but they conceal it from the public, finds little support among the Georgian population. Nevertheless, subtle sociodemographic tendencies emerge. Men (6%) are slightly more likely than women (4%) to believe this theory, with a difference of 2 percentage points. Unemployed individuals (6%) and people out of labor force (6%) are slightly more likely to support this theory than those employed in public (3%) and private (5%) sectors. Supporters of Georgian Dream (7%) are slightly more likely to believe this claim than supporters of other parties (6%) and those who do not support any party (5%). People who do not watch any TV channel (7%) are moderately more likely to agree with this conspiracy than those who watch pro-government TV channels (4%) and other TV channels (4%).

Figure 5: Charts 14-16 (Only the marginal effects of party identities are statistically significant (p<0.05)





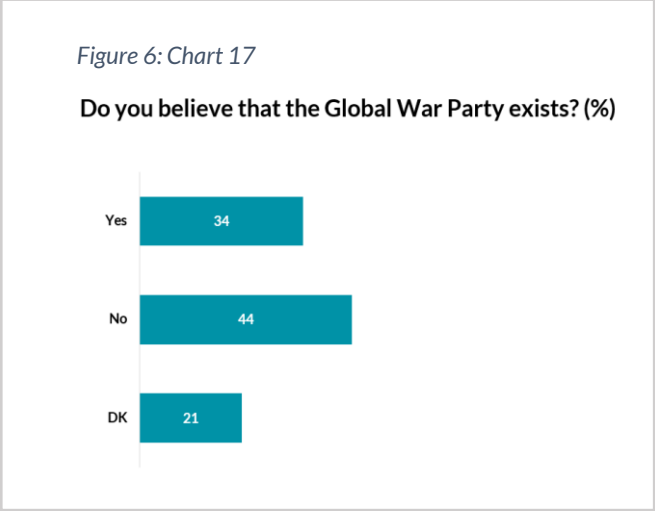


Thus, belief in conspiracy theories varies significantly across different narratives. While effects of sociodemographic factors are moderate, we can still observe some stable tendencies: men are more inclined toward belief in conspiracy theories than women; unemployment amplifies belief in conspiracies, possibly due to economic insecurity; pro-government media consumption correlates with greater susceptibility with conspiracies and lastly, partisan affiliation intensifies beliefs in conspiracies, with opposition supporters often showing stronger agreement with conspiracies.

BELIEF IN THE "GLOBAL WAR PARTY"

After measuring the general receptiveness of conspiracy theories in Georgia, CRRC-Georgia explored public perceptions of the Global War Party. The results demonstrate a divided landscape: 34% of respondents believed in the existence of the Global War Party, while 44% dismissed the theory. Meanwhile, 21% were either undecided or neutral.

Figure 6: Chart 17



Among those who believed in the existence of a Global War Party, further questions revealed deeper concerns about its perceived influence. A substantial 72% of believers were convinced that Global War Party plays a significant role in Georgian politics, and an overwhelming 77% viewed this influence negatively. When asked about potential allies of the Global War Party within Georgia, responses varied widely: 21% identified opposition parties as collaborators, 6% pointed to the NGOs as an ally, and 4% believed the Georgian Dream party was aligned with the Global War Party.

Believers were also asked about the Global War Party's influence on international affairs, particularly within the European Union. Here, 73% believed that the Global War Party had a significant influence on EU politics, with 58% perceiving this impact positively.

To better understand what drives belief in the Global War Party, a multinomial logistic regression (mlogit) analysis was conducted. The results shed light on the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics associated with this belief: Men (39%) were 7 percentage points more likely to believe in the Global War Party's existence than women (32%). Those 18-34 were 2 percentage points more likely to believe than those 35–54 (36%) and those 55+ years of age and older (31%). Employment status emerged as an important factor. People out of labor force (40%) and unemployed individuals (37%) were more likely to believe in the theory than those who were employed in the public (30%) or private (33%) sector. Partisan identity and media consumption habits emerged as most influential factors: consumers of pro-government TV channels (37%) were 12 percentage points more likely to support this theory than those who watch other TV channels (25%), supporting the hypothesis that pro-government media sources might be one of the spreaders of the rumors related to the Global War Party. Interestingly, those who do not watch TV channels (39%) showed the highest likelihood. Similar to the possible impact of the

media consumption, supporters of the Georgian Dream (47%) showed higher likelihood (19 percentage points) to believe in the existence of Global War Party than the supporters of other parties (28%). Also, people with no party affiliation (33%) are slightly more inclined to believe this theory than the supporters of other parties and those that do not disclose their partisan identity (26%).

Figure 7: Charts 18-20 (Only the marginal effects of gender, education, not being in labor force, party identity and consumption of TV channels are statistically significant (p<0.05)

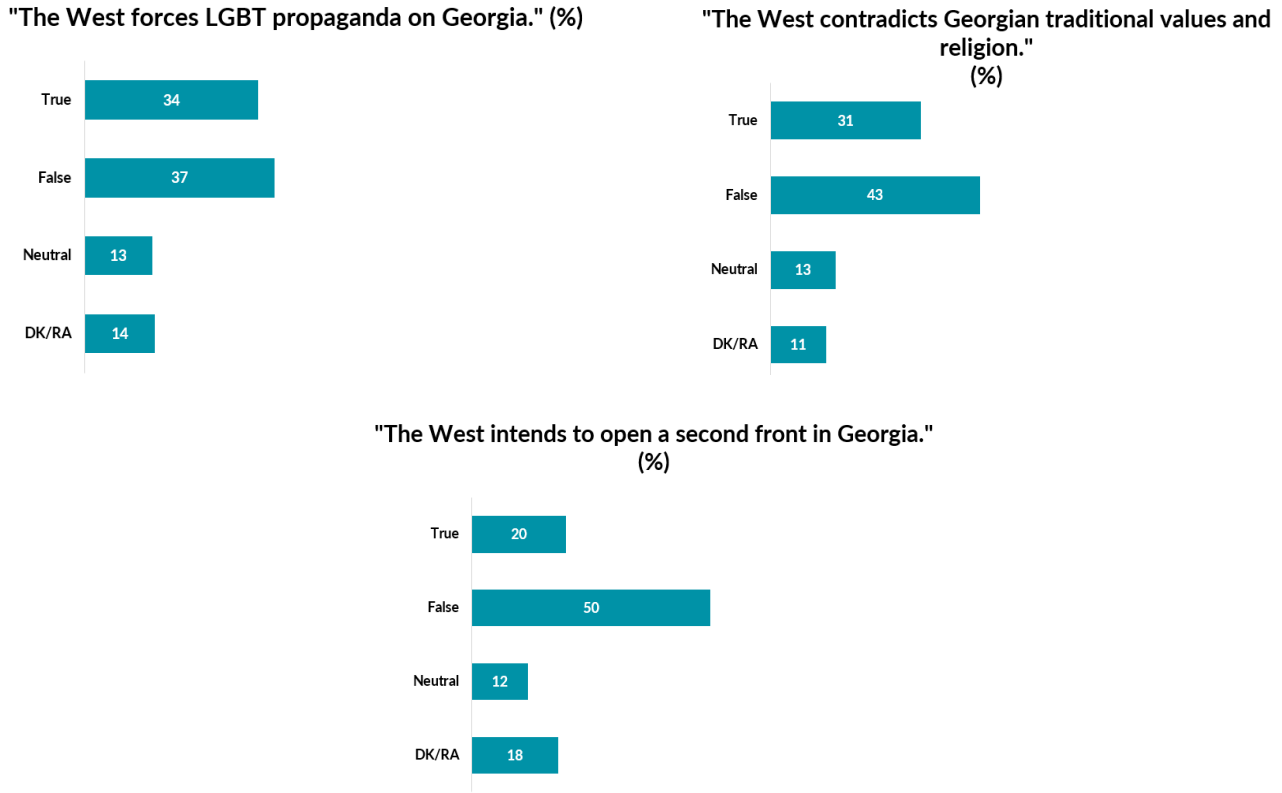
Thus, belief in the Global War Party is influenced by a combination of various factors. Men, unemployed individuals, and those not in the labor force are more inclined to believe in the entity. Pro-government media consumers and supporters of the Georgian Dream show a stronger tendency toward believing. Conversely, opposition supporters, politically unaffiliated individuals, and viewers of non-pro-government TV channels exhibit greater skepticism.

DETERMINANTS OF ANTI-WESTERN ATTITUDES

The study also explored anti-western attitudes among the Georgian public. To measure these sentiments, participants were asked to evaluate three statements on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicated "absolutely false" and 5 indicated "absolutely true":

1. The West forces “LGBT propaganda” on Georgia.
2. The West contradicts Georgian traditional values and religion.
3. The West intends to open a second front in Georgia.

Figure 8: Charts 21-23

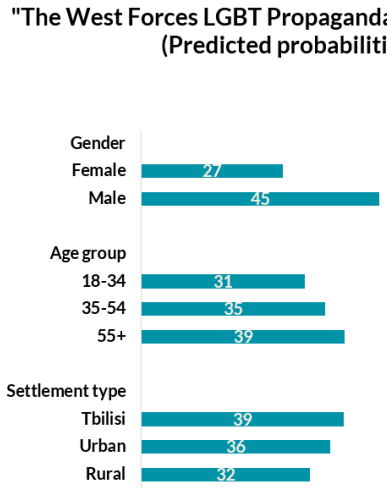


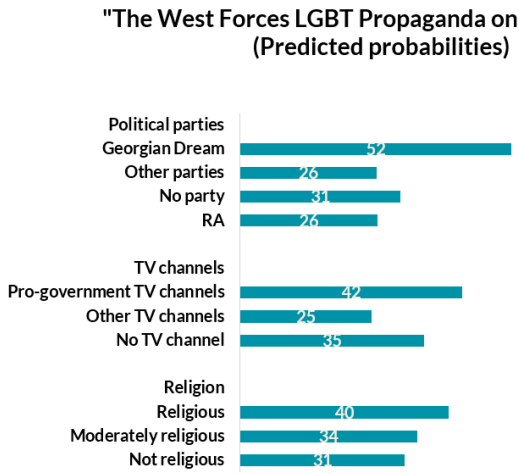
As observed, 34% believes that the West forces “LGBT propaganda” on Georgia, 31% believes that the West contradicts Georgian traditional values and religion and 20% believes that the West intends to open a second front in Georgia. Certain demographic and behavioral patterns also emerged among those who endorse these statements.

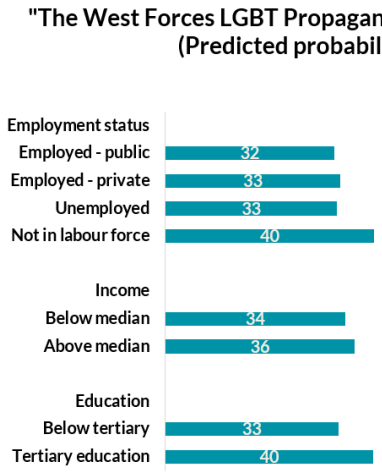
Men (45%) are more likely to endorse the claim that the West Forces “LGBT propaganda” on Georgia with an 18-percentage-points higher likelihood than women (27%). Age also plays a role, with individuals

aged 55+ (39%) being more likely to agree than 35–54-year-olds (35%) and 18–34-year-olds (31%). Religion also has a moderate influence. Religious people (40%) are slightly more expected to support this statement than moderately religious (34%) and non-religious people (31%). Media consumption is a relatively more powerful factor: those who watch pro-government channels (42%) are 17 percentage points more likely to support the claim than those who watch other TV channels (25%). Those who do not watch any TV channel (35%) are 10 percentage points more prone to this narrative than consumers of other TV channels. Political alignment shows the strongest influence. Supporters of the Georgian Dream (52%) are 26 percentage points more likely to believe in this narrative than supporters of other parties (26%) and those who do not disclose their party affiliation (26%). Georgian Dream supporters are also 21 percentage points more likely to support this claim than people with no party affiliations (31%).

Figure 9: Charts 24-26 (Only the marginal effects of gender, age, education, not being in labor force, religiosity, party identity and consumption of TV channels are statistically significant (p<0.05)



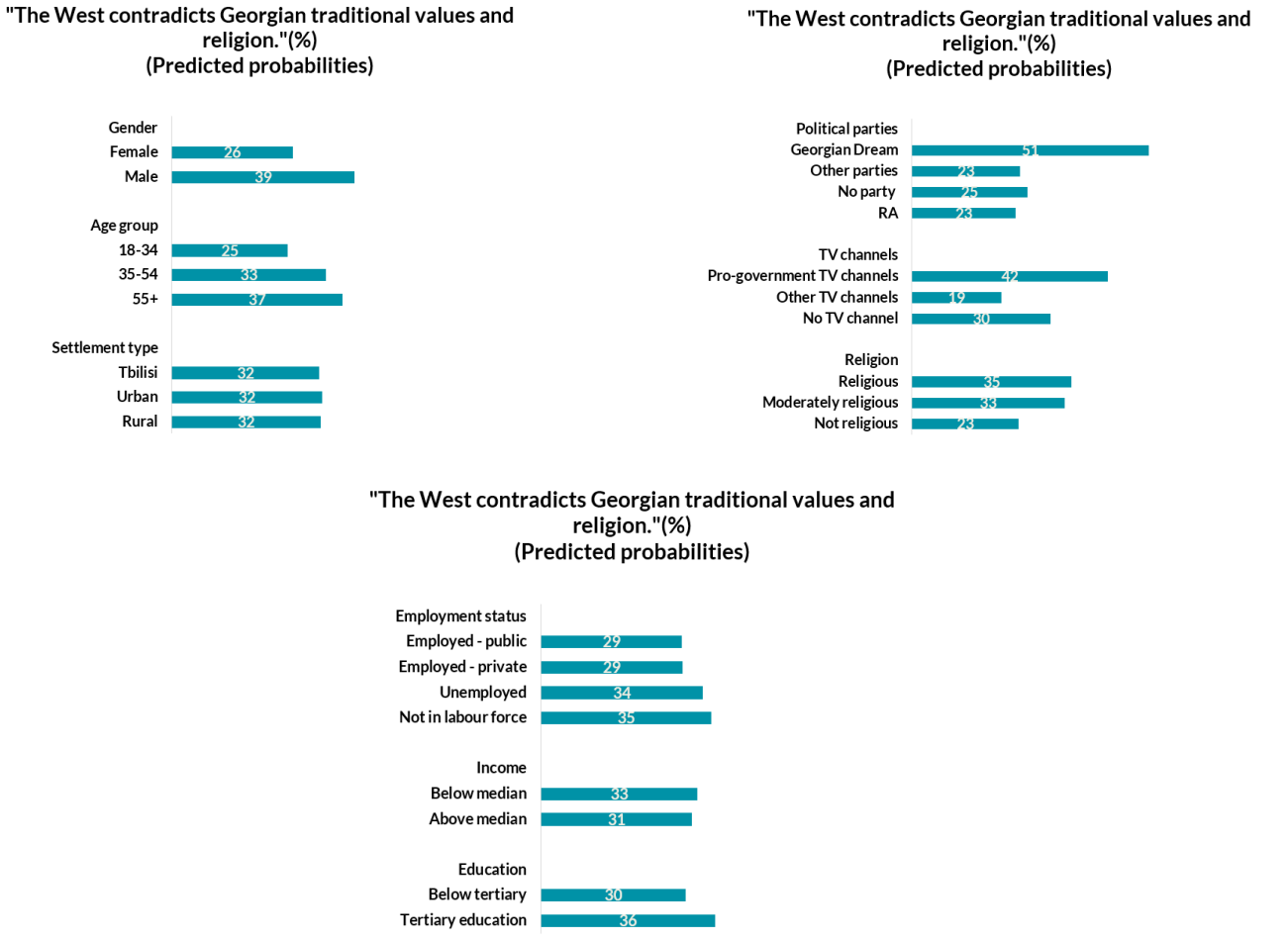




As with the first statement, men (39%) are more likely to agree, with a 13-percentage point higher likelihood than women (26%), that the West contradicts Georgian traditional values and religion. Age also plays a role here, with individuals aged 55+ (37%) being, respectively, 8 percentage points more likely than those aged 35-54 (33%) and 12 percentage points more likely than those aged 18-34(25%) to endorse this view. Religion is also a contributing factor. Religious people (35%) are slightly more like than those who are moderately religious (33%) and significantly more likely than non-religious people (23%) to believe this statement.

Media consumption patterns have a demonstrated impact, as those watching pro-government channels (42%) are 23 percentage points more likely to support this statement than those who watch other TV channels (19%) and 12% percentage points more likely than those who do not watch any TV (30%). Partisan affiliation exhibits as the most influential variable. Supporters of the Georgian Dream (51%) are 28 percentage points more likely to agree with the statement than supporters of other parties (23%) and those who don't disclose their partisan identity (23%).

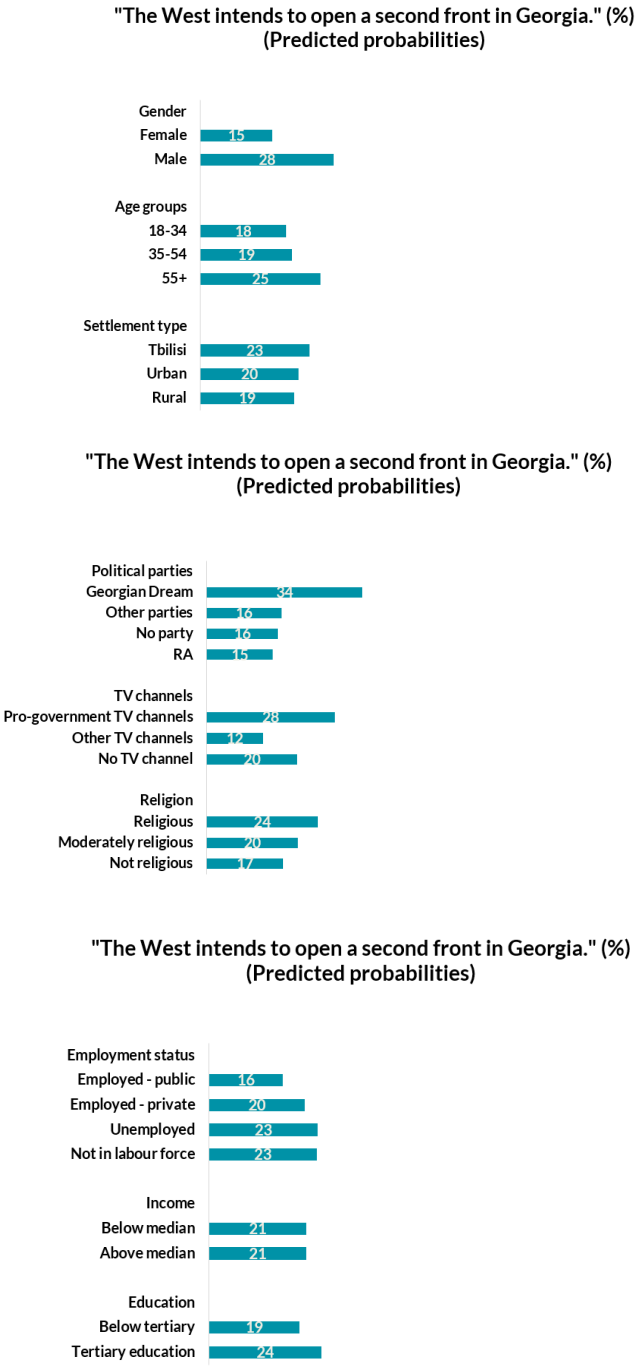
Figure 10: Charts 27-29 (Only the marginal effects of gender, age, education, being not religious, party identity and consumption of TV channels are statistically significant (p<0.05)



Similar tendencies were observed regarding the third statement: Men (28%) are more inclined to believe that the West intends to open a second front in Georgia than women (15%). This belief is also more prevalent among older individuals, with those aged 55 and above (25%) being more likely to support the statement than those 35-54 (19%) and those 18-34 (18%). Employment status also plays some role, as both unemployed individuals (23%) and those outside the labor force (23%) are more likely to agree than those employed in the public (16%) and private (20%) sectors. Religiosity also contributes - religious people (24%) are more likely to support this claim than moderately religious (20%) and non-religious individuals (17%). Media consumption reveals a strong influence, those who watch pro-government TV channels (28%) are 16 percentage points more likely to support this narrative than the consumers of other TV channels (12%) and respectively 8 percentage points more likely than those who do not watch any TV channel (20%). Political affiliation also significantly shapes these beliefs. Supporters of Georgian Dream (34%) parties are 18 percentage points more likely to agree with this statement than supporters of other parties (16%) and people with no party affiliation (16%).

To conclude, demonstrated is that men, older individuals, and religious groups show slightly higher agreement with the anti-western narratives. However, consumers of pro-government TV channels and supporters of the Georgian Dream are most strongly tended to exhibit greater susceptibility towards anti-western attitudes.

Figure 11: Charts 30-32 (Only the marginal effects of gender, not being in labor force, being not religious, party identity and consumption of TV channels are statistically significant ($p<0.05$)

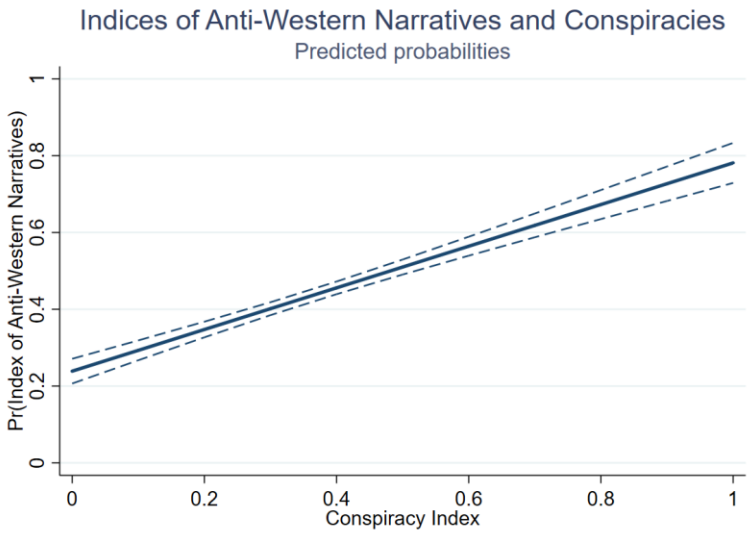


LINKS BETWEEN CONSPIRACIES AND ANTI-WESTERN ATTITUDES

The primary aim of this study was to observe how belief in conspiracy theories influences anti-western attitudes among the Georgian population. In order to answer the question and better observe the relationship, we developed an "Index of Conspiratorial Thinking". The index is derived from responses to the four conspiracy-related statements described above. Each participant's responses are scored on a scale of 0 to 20, which is then normalized to a 0 to 1 range for ease of comparison. With a similar methodology, we also developed the Index of Anti-western narratives based on the provided anti-western narratives.

The analysis of the relationship between belief in conspiracies and belief in anti-western narratives demonstrated a very strong positive relationship. Particularly, with each one-unit increase in the Conspiracy Index, the predicted anti-western narratives score rises by roughly 5.4 percentage points relative to the maximum possible score of 1, culminating in a predicted value of 0.781 at a maximum score 1. This interpretation means that each additional unit on the Conspiracy Index is associated with a steady rise in the level of anti-western narratives, suggesting that more conspiratorial thinking is associated with higher susceptibility to anti-western narratives.

Figure 12: Chart 33

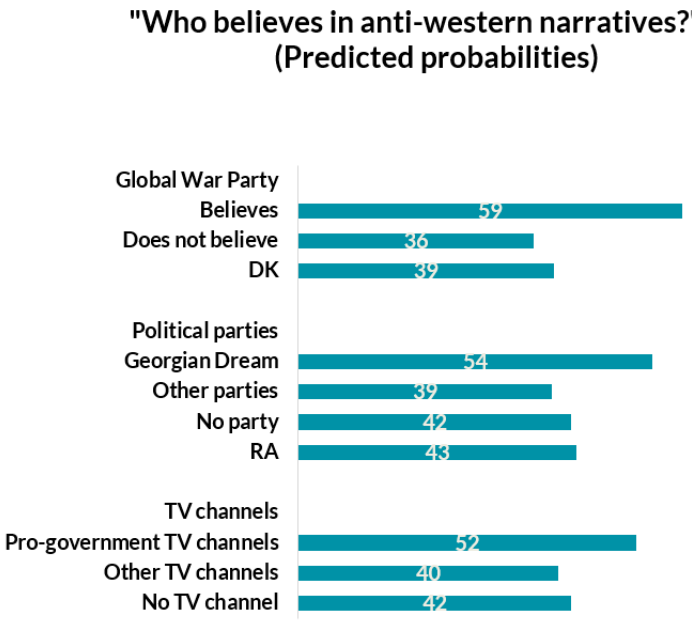


Following this, we measured how the belief in the Global War Party influences anti-western attitudes. Statistical analysis showed that those who believe in the Global War Party theory (59%) are 23 percentage points more likely to support anti-western narratives than those who do not believe that the Global War Party exists (36%). This relationship demonstrates that conspiratorial thinking and proximity

to the Global War Party theory has potential to influence attitudes towards western countries, thus damaging public support for Georgia's pro-western geopolitical aspirations.

Political parties and TV channels again emerged as strong predictors of anti-western narratives: Supporters of the Georgian Dream (54%) are more likely to believe in anti-western narratives than supporters of other parties (39%), those who do not support any party (42%) or those who refuse to answer (43%). Similarly, those who watch pro-government TV channels (52%) are generally more prone to anti-western narratives than those who watch other TV channels (40%) or those who do not watch any TV channel (42%).

Figure 13: Chart 35 (The marginal effects of conspiracy index, Global War Party, party identity and consumption of TV channels are statistically significant (p<0.05)



CONCLUSION

This research generated valuable insights about the tendencies and driving factors related to conspiratorial thinking in Georgia, belief in the conspiracy theory of the Global War Party and their influence on anti-western attitudes of the Georgian population.

With regard to general conspiratorial thinking, we observed that roughly one third of the population endorses some conspiracy theories. While sociodemographic characteristics were only slight indicators, men, older individuals, and the unemployed were more likely to hold conspiratorial beliefs. Pro-government media consumers were also more susceptible to these narratives.

Concerning conspiracy theories regarding the Global War Party, we found that roughly one third of the public believes in its existence. Demographic patterns mirrored those seen in general conspiracy thinking: men and unemployed individuals were slightly more likely to believe in the theory. Viewers of pro-government media were considerably more susceptible. Georgian Dream supporters also showed a significantly higher likelihood of endorsing this theory compared to opposition supporters or politically unaffiliated individuals.

Relating to anti-western narratives, the study found that 34% believed that the West forces LGBT propaganda on Georgia, 31% agreed that the West contradicted Georgian values and religion and 20% believed the West intended to open a second front in Georgia. Anti-Western sentiments were more common among men and older individuals. Georgian Dream supporters and viewers of pro-government TV channels were also more likely to endorse these views, while opposition supporters and independent media consumers were less inclined.

Regression analysis showed that people who believed in common conspiracy theories, were highly likely to believe in the theory of Global War Party as well. Both the overall belief in conspiracies and belief in the Global War Party significantly increased the likelihood of supporting anti-Western attitudes. Consumption of the pro-government media and the support of the Georgian dream were also strongly associated with proximity to anti-western attitudes.

These findings clearly demonstrate that general conspiratorial thinking is deeply ingrained in Georgian society, providing fertile ground for more specific conspiracies, such as the Global War Party, to take root and flourish. The research reveals the dangerous potential of these conspiracy theories to amplify anti-Western attitudes, foster distrust toward Western institutions and undermine Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. Therefore, conspiracy theories, while often dismissed as fringe or irrational, indeed have the power to shape public opinion in ways that can influence national policy and international relations. Recognizing and addressing these challenges is critical for safeguarding Georgia's democratic future and its path toward Western integration.

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