



**ANTIFEMINISM  
IN NEW NATIONALIST  
DISCOURSE**

**2020**

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# PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

Antifeminism, as a political phenomenon, is reactionary and is often used as a tool for right-wing radicalization. Antifeminism is often associated with anti-queer sentiments since the main goal of feminist and queer activism is to eliminate the patriarchal social order and the social inequality it causes.

In the Georgian context, we can identify the political actors who take this reactionary position and divide them into three research categories:

## **1) FAR-RIGHT (GEORGIAN MARCH, LEVAN VASADZE, ETC.)**

Their position on the above issues is direct and openly negative, which, in many cases, can also be a source of direct violence. These distinctly reactionary groups do not want to maintain a dominant quo status and seek to return to the mythologized "good old days" where a cis-hetero, Christian, ethnically Georgian man held an absolute dominant position. A necessary condition for the self-expression of their power is the subjugation of women and the destruction of "deviants".

## **2) "PROGRESSIVE" FORCES (GIRCHI, FREEDOM SOCIETY, ANTI-OCCUPATION MOVEMENT)**

In this case, we are dealing with politically relatively variable groups that fall into the range of those with nominally progressive values: libertarians, liberals, and liberals with nationalistic tendencies. They position themselves as advocates of women and queer rights, although their rhetoric often serves to downplay the importance of feminist and queer movements. The frequent disregard for the positions of queer and feminist activists, and the rejection of systemic problems as a concept, only serves to reinforce the existing misogynistic and queerphobic background.

## **3) PSEUDO-LEFTISTS (POSTV)**

It is a political apparatus in the form of media which hinders behind the aesthetics of

critical left-wing analysis. They use rather carefully constructed pseudo-intellectual and pseudo-leftist rhetoric for spreading antifeminism and anti-queer ideas, such as: Advocating for women's rights and, at the same time, portraying feminism as immature and inadequate; Separating the problems of trans people, especially trans women, from general misogynistic problems; Biological determinism, etc.

In doing so, they attract audiences who may have some progressive values and provide them with a misguided model for understanding these issues. A toxic social background is created where feminists and queer people can no longer participate, the group becomes more homogeneous and a favorable environment is created for right-wing radicalization.

Therefore, it is important to analyze the above three political forces and determine their direct impact on feminist and queer activists. This will help us to develop future anti-right and defensive tactics.

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# 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

## 1.1 ANTIFEMINISM

Antifeminism, as a political phenomenon, is a reactionary movement against feminism and women's movements in general. On a conceptual level, it seems simple, however there are many angles to the discussion of the functioning's of antifeminism, due to its origins or ideological differences. In the present study, we discuss antifeminism in the right-wing spectrum, more specifically, between far-right and centrism, with a focus on nationalist narratives and tendencies.

In the political sciences, the term "reactionary" is defined as a person, organization, or movement whose values and goals are focused on restoring pre-existing political status.

"Reactionary" can be positions, values, and goals that are focused on restoring the previously existing political status.

The reactionary position views the existing society as deficient, devoid of old values, or replaced by their negative equivalents. If conservatism wants to maintain an existing status quo, reactionaryism is focused on social transformation. However, conservative ideologies can also be reactionary, and there is even a form of consensus and mutual support between them.

According to Kenneth Clatterbaugh (2007), anti-feminist ideology rejects at least one of the three fundamental principles of feminist theory. The following assumptions are found in all types of feminist approaches:

1. The social relations between women and men are neither natural nor supernatural.
2. The social structure between women and men is favorable for men.
3. Specific collective actions are possible and should be taken to make the existing social structure and interrelationships more just and equitable.

The rejection of the first principle is an essential argument for many anti-feminist movements and rhetoric. Many socio-biological models argue that the hierarchical arrangement between women and men is based on biological differences. Consequently, attempts to transform society are futile because it is a move against nature. For example, the anti-feminist Steven Goldberg (1993) argues that the existence of patriarchy is due to the inevitable biological differences between man and woman. (Clatterbaugh, 2007)

Religious-conservative positions view man as the "head of the family", and the subordination of women to men as a divine order. In their view, the world is so created and to go against it is perceived as blasphemy.

Even self-identified pro-feminist, socially progressive men can go from rejecting any of these three principles. The most common perception in these cases is that the patriarchal social system is equally oppressive towards women and men. The fact that the position of a woman in society is secondary to the position of a man is reduced or out-right ignored.

Researchers Melissa Blaise and Frances Dupuis-Derry (2012) single out "masculinism" (and consider it part of the anti-feminist movement) as one of the main factors in anti-feminism, although there is debate over the legitimacy of the term. One of the arguments is the problem of recognizing masculinity as an alternative, counterbalanced ideology of feminism (Langevin, 2009). The term is specific to French feminist discourse and is rarely used outside of it. For example, its English equivalent is simply used as "patriarchal ideology" (Watson, 1996). In our paper, we will use "masculinism" only to discuss this particular phenomenon, and in the rest of the paper we will refer to "masculinism" as "patriarchal ideology" or "patriarchal values."

Masculinity can be seen as an activist movement whose ideological basis is the struggle against the "crisis of masculinity" - the restoration of idealized masculinity that may not even have existed.

Masculine anti-feminist movements function as social movements and are based on patriarchal values. Members identify themselves as "real" men, stage protests, demand and fight for their "rights", have their own activists.

Antifeminism is often seen as a counter-movement or part of a counter-movement. Counter-movement has two definitions:

The first is the ideological approach - Stemming from social tendencies, the "movement" is associated with progressive social change (hence the feminist movements). "Counter-movement" is seen as a regressive, conservative, and reactionary position, the aim of which is to eliminate any social progress (Touraine, 1973).

The second is the social theory approach, which defines movement and counter-movement from a functional perspective. Political or ideological affiliation is not so important for this approach. What is important, is the existence of the movement (in our case, a feminist one) and its counter-movement (Zald & Usee, 1987; Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996).

Hence, masculinism is seen as a counter-movement based on patriarchal values in the service of men as a class. Its goal is to resist the feminist movement and hinder its progress. Some masculinists target women groups directly and attack them (M. Blais,

F. Dupuis-Deri; 2012: 31).

Despite the widespread discourse that "equality already exists between women and men," that "freedom already exists for all women," or that "feminism has gone too far;" masculine counter-movements still arise and operate firmly in patriarchal societies where male superiority, privilege, and power are immeasurable. Of note are the memberships of the masculine movements and the socio-economic positions of said members. In Quebec, for example, the average statistical men's human rights activist has a privileged social position, more specifically they are usually white, high or middle class, 35-60-year-old heterosexuals. (Bechard; 2005: 178)

Thus, masculinism can be defined as a tendency in the anti-feminist movement in which the counter-movement mobilizes not only against the feminist movement but also in opposition to other egalitarian social and political systems. It is mobilized to defend non-egalitarian systems such as patriarchy, cisheteronormativity, or capitalism.

In her work Faludi (1991) discusses the phenomenon of Backlash. The author explores the ideological and reactionary dimensions in the emergence of anti-feminist counter-movements. The book highlights the connection between backlash as a social phenomenon and anti-feminism as a counter-movement. When the position of the dominant group within society is slightly shaken, or some privileges are restricted or removed, the dominant group perceives this as a restriction of rights. Consequently, a reactionary movement is formed against the oppressed groups, the goal of which is regressive social transformation. More specifically, when it comes to anti-feminist reactionaryism and their target group of women has members with differentiating characteristics (be it characteristics that are inconsistent with prevailing norms of sexuality, identity, or ethnicity), alongside misogynistic rhetoric there always arises queerphobic, chauvinistic elements. (Blais & Dupuis-Derí, 2008: 248-251).

It's worth noting Himmelstein's research on anti-feminist sentiments in society. The author mainly studies the attitudes of women and their underlying causes (Himmelstein, 1986). Himmelstein discusses that there are two main social theories on the causative factors of antifeminism. One approach argues that anti-feminist values are held by conservatives, members of the lower socio-economic strata, while the liberal part of the stable middle-income class advocates for women's rights. Anti-feminist sentiments and political views are directly linked to education and class position.

According to the second approach, the most vulnerable and dependent part of women are the bearers of similar anti-feminist values. Thus, the emphasis is on economic independence. Himmelstein argues that both theoretical models are partially false (Himmelstein, 1986: 2). The socio-economic difference between the groups is often irrelevant, with representatives from both sides having different education and finan-

cial resources. Nor are feelings of insecurity and dependence common in conservative women. Instead, Himmelstein argues that an important distinguishing feature is the degree of religiosity, which is measured by the frequency of attendance at church services. Also, very important is the interpersonal social network and cultural environment (Himmelstein, 1986: 12).

Faludi discusses the events of the 1960s and 1980s in the USA when modern anti-feminist rhetoric has developed and continues to be used to this day. In her book, Faludi describes the women's movement in America and the backlash against it, in which male academics and media representatives created a sort of falsified version of events. According to this version, women have been passive actors throughout history, and modern political activity seems to be an anomaly and "having claims based on nothing" (meaning the period of the 70s, although it fits freely today). The purpose of such falsification of the history of the women's movement is to erase the history of women, to neglect the oppression of women, to undermine the achievements of women, and to restore their infantile social status.

The 60s and 70s in the United States are marked by the struggle for civil rights. In terms of women's rights, anti-discrimination laws were introduced during this period, which regulated equal access to education, mandatory quotas (to eliminate discrimination in employment), and attempts to circumvent the law. The divorce procedure has been simplified and made available to everyone. Unmarried women were allowed to use contraception. It was during this period that social resistance to progress began.

Faludi's book discusses two major media reports circulating at the time: The feminist struggle for equality has largely ended in victory, and now women are in a dire situation amid this newfound equality. There were articles from the perspective of "former feminists" who argued that equality was a mistake. Faludi notes that women are still not equal (obviously, passing laws is only a first step) and that there is social pressure to stop fighting for equality or return to the previous stage where women were secondary citizens - the slave class to men the dominant group.

The information campaigns against the women's movement began with the coverage of statistically inaccurate or false data-based articles that argued for the negative impact of feminism on women. Using similar methods, the media has created a backlash against feminism in women themselves.

There is created a socio-cultural narrative amongst women as if this freedom deprives them of the opportunity for "female happiness". It should also be noted that the stereotype of "female happiness" includes all the oppressive social phenomena based on misogyny. The idea of this "social standard" is based on the stereotype of a woman as a servant of the family. The capitalist and patriarchal societal order has gradually

incorporated this idea into the population as "positive" and "natural".

false narratives of the "infertility epidemic", "male shortage", "burnout of women in the workplace" and "toxic care in kindergartens" arose. None of these events happened in everyday life. None of the legitimate researches or journalistic investigations could find any evidence of these such occurrences.

Also noteworthy are the emerging social resistance trends in America. Historically, the rhetoric against women's movements in the Victorian era is no different from that of the 1970s. The argument always boils down to women lose "femininity". The latter is a concept formed at the intersection of patriarchal and capitalist systems, as mechanisms for controlling and subordinating reproductive ability. From the capitalist point of view, womanhood is the mechanism of labor production, and from the patriarchal point of view, it is an effective way of the control of women's bodily autonomy.

In addition to the news media, the main propagandists of anti-feminist ideas are the entertainment media, and more specifically - movies and TV series (and probably more influential ones as well). 70s movies and TV series portraying lonely women as positive and competent figures were replaced in the 80s by aggressive, emotionally unstable female characters; With women with whom the relationship is risky for men and, often, turns into some form of violence against them. The positive portrayal of a woman is only within marriage.

Film and television, like other artistic means, have an impact on people. Although this impact is not direct, the artistic media cannot directly instill an idea (watching violence does not necessitate violence), but it does shape our worldview (attitudes and perceptions of violence change). When movies and TV series portray the image of an independent woman as lonely and destructive, it becomes part of socialization. Our perceptions of gender roles will always be partly influenced by the various media we consume.

The fashion industry trend has changed as well. If in the 1970s the aesthetic focus was professional (for example, business suits for women), in the 1980s the focus shifted to "feminine", impractical nightwear and lingerie, and the sexual objectification of women became the main goal.

Faludi (1991) describes an attempt by the fashion and cosmetics industry to create the image of a "little girl" for women. By infantilizing or sexualizing women, this industry tried creating a niche to place them in. (Faludi 1991: 183)

This backlash was based, on the one hand, on general anti-feminist sentiments and, on the other hand, on the formation of the image of an independent female consumer. Women refused to fit into the already existing narrow esthetic paradigm. The industry has responded by minimizing choice options and trying to infantilize women.

*„In every backlash, the fashion industry has produced punitively restrictive clothing and the fashion press has demanded that women wear them.” [Faludi 1991:184]*

The New Right - a wave of neoconservatives with religious rhetoric - was a political force in the 1980s. Their approach was "pro-family values" and anti-feminism. The Reagan presidency has given legitimacy and power to the New Right their anti-feminist sentiment.

The goal of the New Right was to return the social setup to "1954" (before the Civil Rights Act). Their view that women's equality is responsible for women's misery has become the dominant socio-political narrative. One of their main goals was to discredit feminism and repeal the laws of equality.

Under Reagan, the number of women in federal institutions declined. Funding for federal programs that have promoted women's equality for years has also declined. In the late 1980s, the National Organization for Women (NOW) was an influential political organization. The majority of women believed that NOW represented the best interests of women, much better than the Republican or Democratic parties. There was also the possibility of forming them as a third party (which would be a big change given the American bipartisan system), although aggression and resistance to feminism and women's rights, in general, destroyed the organization's popularity (Faludi 1991: 290).

The pro-family political approach toward women involves two things: the restriction of divorce and abortion rights. According to Faludi, abortion rates have not increased significantly over the past 100 years, but legalization has significantly increased the safety of women undergoing this procedure. As a result of restrictions on the right to abortion in the 1970s and 1980s, the fetus was given more rights than the mother. (Consequently, a woman's life has become secondary to her reproductive ability). In the U.S., at least fifteen American corporations have introduced a "fetal protection policy" that effectively excluded women (pregnant or non-pregnant) from high-paying work positions that had anything to do with chemicals or radiation exposure (Faludi 1991: 437).

## **1.2 ULTRANATIONALISM, FASCISM AND THE RIGHT**

In his essay *Ur-Fascism* (1995) Umberto Eco described the mechanical basis of fascist ideology. While it lacks economic analysis, it describes cultural phenomena and ideas that are significant for fascist ideologies. The title of the essay also points to its content - "Ur-Fascism" is a kind of template of fascist ideologies.

Eco distinguishes fourteen general features of fascist ideology. He argues that it is impossible to organize them into a coherent system. *.....These features cannot be*

*organized into a system; many of them contradict each other, and are also typical of other kinds of despotism or fanaticism. But it is enough that one of them be present to allow fascism to coagulate around it.*" [Eco, Umberto, 1995; 5]

The fourteen features are as follows:

1. "Cult of tradition", which is characterized by cultural syncretism, despite internal contradictions. "Tradition" has already revealed all the truths, there is no new knowledge, only further interpretation and refinement of the existing if possible.
2. The "rejection of modernism," which takes the Enlightenment as its starting point and treats the development of Western culture in the rationalist paradigm as a tendency to fall into decline or perish. The focus is only on the "spiritual" side. At the same time, technological advancement and industrialization are an important part of the fascist self-image. As such, fascism is fundamentally irrational.
3. "Action for action's sake". Action in itself is valuable and must be carried out without thought and analysis. This is associated with anti-intellectualism and irrationality, which is often manifested in attempts to discredit or attack modern culture and science.
4. "Disagreement is Treason." Critical analysis cannot be resisted by any syncretic belief. Hence fascism devalues any intellectual discourse and critical reasoning. Excessive reasoning prevents direct action and leads to ideological resistance.
5. "Fear of Difference", diversity is seen as a form of disagreement. Fascist ideology seeks to achieve consensus in society by stirring up and intensifying xenophobic fears.
6. "Appeal to a Frustrated Middle Class." When the middle-class experiences economic crisis and fear of losing its position because of the demands and aspirations of other social groups, fascism uses that fear to its advantage.
7. The "Obsession with A Plot." When society lacks a solid social identity, fascism offers the simple answer that their common privilege has a common origin and the "true birth" of a common country. Hate is directed at oppressed social groups, they build a narrative as if these socially oppressed groups were deliberately sabotaging society, a clear example of which is anti-Semitism, and in our case, anti-feminism and queerphobia.
8. "The enemy is both very strong and very weak." Fascist groups rhetorically portray their enemy, on the one hand, as socially privileged and in power, and, on the other hand, easy to defeat.
9. "Pacifism is Trafficking with the Enemy." For fascist ideologies, "life is an eternal war" - in order to fight, there must always be an enemy, in real war conditions, or

in social matters.

10. "Contempt for the Weak." Chauvinist-populist elitism is characteristic of all reactionary ideologies. All members of society belong to one, internal group and those left outside are shunned. As society is hierarchically structured, every lower status bearer considers their subordinates to be "weak" and, consequently, a well-deserved target of hatred.

11. "Everybody is Educated to Become a Hero." A social situation is created where every bearer of fascist ideology must be a "hero" and give up their life for higher ideals. A cult of heroism and death emerges simultaneously. *"The Ur-Fascist hero is impatient to die. In his impatience, he more frequently sends other people to death."* [Eco, Umberto, 1995; 7]

12. "Machismo." *"Since both permanent war and heroism are difficult games to play, the Ur-Fascist transfers his will to power to sexual matters."* [Eco, Umberto, 1995; 7] Sex is a sphere of domination and a demonstration of power. They condemn women with masculine aggression and dominance as they express their disgust for them. The strictly cisheteronormative paradigm causes disgust with any "deviation".

13. "Selective Populism." In the fascist concept, people are monolithic, they have a common will, which is superior to any individual point of view. It is impossible for the society to have a consensus on any issue; therefore, a fascist leader is a representative of the "will of the people".

14. Newspeak. The term is taken from the work of Orwell (1949). Fascism uses "new language" and contributes to the impoverishment of vocabulary to limit independent thinking and critical reasoning.

Another definition that agrees with the Eco's criteria of fascism is "Palingenetic populist ultranationalism."

Palingenesis (rebirth) involves motivating a nation to restore the mythological past of greatness. Fascism takes the revolutionary form of nationalism, aimed at the rise of the dominant group, the cleansing of society from "undesirable" elements, and the restoration of the old, mythologized order, hence the rebirth. (Griffin, 1991)

As a result, we focus on ultranationalism and the system of oppression that accompanies it, such as the cisheteropatriarchy. Antifeminism and queerphobia are inevitable elements of an ultranationalist discourse. More radical movements typically use direct and violent attacks, but in the Georgian context ultranationalism is the general cultural background, radical forms of accompanying oppression are normalized and used by other less radical right-wing actors.



### 1.3 PROPAGANDA MODEL, THE FUNCTION OF MEDIA

When discussing the spread of anti-feminist and anti-queer narratives, we consider the media to be the main source. It is the mass media that covers the positions of ultra-nationalists and reactionaries or creates a regressive political platform. To analyze the media methods of dissemination and its internal functioning, we will use the propaganda model of Herman and Chomsky (1988). This model is used to evaluate the multifaceted functioning of the media, and we will use it only in a narrow sense to analyze the anti-feminist and anti-queer elements.

Mass media is a system of communication with messages and symbols, the function of which is to provide information to the public, to entertain, and to divert attention. Mass media is a kind of mechanism for the assimilation and socialization of culture, it shapes the values, beliefs, and patterns of behavior of individuals to some extent. It establishes certain social norms in society, which allows it to operate in institutional structures. Consequently, these public institutions have an active or passive influence on the formation of specific social narratives. Propaganda even functions as a mechanism for controlling public norms.

Rooted in a world of wealth and conflict of social-class interests, systemic propaganda is an essential mechanism for maintaining power dynamics.

In countries where the levers of power are in the hands of the state bureaucracy, monopoly control over the media often acts as official censorship. In this case, it is obvious that the media serves the goals of the dominant elite. It is much more difficult to identify a propaganda system in a private media setting where there is no formal censorship.

This is especially true when the media is competing with and attacking corporations or governments, exposing their socially harmful actions, and aggressively portraying itself as a defender of free speech and public welfare. What is not visible (and not discussed in the media) defines the limitations of criticism. Unequal distribution and monopolization of information resource management in the media determines what is delivered to the public in the form of news. Consequently, this is what determines the wound of the perception of events. (E. Herman, N. Chomsky: 1988)

The propaganda model focuses on the unequal distribution and centralization of wealth, power, and information resources. In addition, it is the unequal distribution of resources that determines the interests of the media and its thematic choices. Accordingly, when analyzing the form or content of coverage of women's rights, feminism, the LGBT + community, queer activism, and the like, these factors must be taken into account.

In the first edition of the book, Herman and Chomsky (1988) distinguish five so-called filters. The paper reads: *"It [the filter] traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public."* [E. Herman, N. Chomsky: 1988]

For our purposes, we consider the control of power structures in a narrow context. Control, on the one hand, involves adapting differences of information and opinion to dominant public institutions built on nationalist values, and, on the other hand, involves the use of information narratives generated by these institutions to marginalize people. Accordingly, we analyze the following filters by focusing on this nationalist, anti-feminist, or anti-queer information.

There are five categories of filters:

- 1) Ownership: The size of a media organization, its concentrated ownership, and profit orientation, the wealth of the owner of the organization, coverage of popular nationalist, anti-feminist and anti-queer narratives for financial gain.
- 2) Advertising as a major source of media revenue. Possible interests of advertisers in supporting specific narratives.
- 3) Sources: Media dependence on information provided by the government, business, and "experts" funded by these primary sources and power agents;
- 4) Flak as a means of "discipline" in the media;
- 5) Fear as a cultural and ideological filter. Originally called "anti-communism" (1988), and after the collapse of the Soviet Union - "Fear" (2002). This is a general mechanism for creating a cultural enemy icon.

The above elements interact and reinforce each other. Information is a kind of raw material that must be consistently passed through these filters. The public is provided with news, reviews, or other final products sanctioned by the mass media. Public and political discourses and their interpretation are predetermined. Power systems, in this case, nationalist and cisheteropatriarchal, primarily decide what is new and noteworthy. These filters define the socio-economic principles by which information is processed and controlled. In this way, the existence of a general nationalist background in the country is determined, which often automatically leads to an anti-feminist and anti-queer narrative.

The domination of the media by the political elite and the marginalization of dissidents, which is the result of the action of these filters, is perceived as a natural process. As a result, people working in the media who can act with complete honesty and

kindness will be able to convince themselves that they are covering events objectively and professionally. Within the limits of the filter, they are considered objective. These restrictions are so strong and so deeply ingrained in the system that in many cases, journalists cannot even imagine that they can have the freedom to choose the news. In order to reveal the mechanisms of manipulation of raw information by corporate, political, or governmental (or all three), micro and macro analysis of media operations are needed to detect the scheme and systemic bias (E. Herman, N. Chomsky: 1988).

## **FIRST FILTER: OWNERSHIP**

The size of media corporations and the profit-oriented imperative create bias. Herman and Chomsky (1988) tell how a radical British press was formed in the early nineteenth century amid workers' dissatisfaction. But due to the taxes imposed by the documents, the ownership of the newspapers passed into the hands of the rich, who were considered "worthy" by the society. Nevertheless, a certain degree of media diversity was maintained. In Britain after World War II, radical or labor rights newspapers such as The Daily Herald, News Chronicle, Sunday Citizen, and the Daily Mirror regularly published articles criticizing and condemning the capitalist system (all destroyed, disappeared, or swallowed up in the corporate media space after the 1970s). The authors suggest that these early radical publications were not limited to corporate property, hence they were free to criticize the capitalist system.

Herman and Chomsky (1988) argue that as long as the mainstream media outlets are now part of large corporations or conglomerates, the information provided to the public is biased in their interests. The influence of such conglomerates often extends beyond the traditional media and therefore they have wide financial interests, which, if certain information is made public, may be jeopardized. News that threatens those who own the media and those who have corporate financial interests will face the greatest bias and censorship. If increasing profits means sacrificing the objectivity of the news, then we have at our disposal a fundamentally biased media.

In our context, media ownership and political affiliation should be considered: Rustavi 2 TV as a supporter of the National Movement, Imedi as a supporter of the Georgian Dream. Ownership of PostTV Shalva Ramishvili and his affiliation with the Georgian Dream; Levan Vasadze's resources and programs financed by him.

## **THE SECOND FILTER: ADVERTISING**

The second filter of the propaganda model is the funding received from advertising.

Most media and social media outlets have to attract advertising to cover costs, without which they would have to restrict access by raising taxes or turning a free platform into a paid one. There is a lot of competition in the media space to attract ads. Consequently, less advertised media platforms and programs are less lucrative. Survival in the face of this competition depends on the availability of funding. Highly funded, high-income media can overwhelm the low-income, which increases the risk of its disappearance.

In such a layout, the media-watchers the product and business become the real consumers. The interest in placing advertisements in the dissemination of specific topics is taken into account.

### **THIRD FILTER: SOURCING**

The third filter is media news sources. *“The mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest.”* [E. Herman, N. Chomsky: 1988]. Even media conglomerates cannot run anywhere and distribute their own journalists.

“Strategic information points” are defined - what geographical location, institutions, and social events should be considered. The political and cultural background, the interests of the government or business conglomerates are taken into account. Sources are selected according to the rules established by the power structures.

Also important are the “experts” - who are considered experts in overcoming these power factors. For example, why does Inga Grigolia invite members of Girch and Georgian Marsh to discuss LGBTQ + issues; Why they cover the positions of the Church and the fascists on issues related to homophobia; Why are men invited to talk about women’s rights, and so on?

When the media covers feminist and queer issues, it is noteworthy who is speaking on the subject and who is not being allowed to speak.

### **FOURTH FILTER: ROUGH CRITICISM (FLAK)**

The fourth filter is “harsh criticism,” which Herman and Chomsky describe as a negative reaction to a media broadcast or statement. This can take the form of letters, telegrams, phone calls, petitions, lawsuits, requests for changes to bills, or public speeches. A function of such criticism is the suppression of counter-narratives, threats, and other punitive actions in the prevailing public discourse. Like the above filters, “harsh criticism” can be easily controlled.

The main function of this filter is to discredit the media and individuals opposed

to the prevailing narrative; In our context - feminists and queer activists, human rights activists, victims of misogynistic and queerphobic violence, etc.

## **FIFTH FILTER: FEAR**

The fifth and final information filter is fear. Its function is to demonize political, social, or other types of movements and organizations. Instead of criticizing specific cases, they demonize general ideological structures and values. They create a counter-narrative that does not necessarily correspond to reality, the main goal is to culturally generate anti-ideology. The latter sows public fear and hatred towards groups that pose a potential threat to the dominant cisheteropatriarchal and nationalist order. It does not matter if the threat is real, exaggerated, or imaginary, the main thing is to address aggression towards these groups.

It should be noted that the real views of these groups are seldom discussed, false narratives arise (e.g. feminists do not want equality, they want to deprive men of their rights), thus discrediting the positions of these groups and imposing a supposedly “rational” counterpoint to these false positions.

## **1.4 SUMMARY**

Several important factors have been identified in the discussion of antifeminism. (1) Rejection of the basic tenets of feminism is an essential component of antifeminism. (2) It is important to distinguish between general anti-feminist sentiments and anti-feminist groups. Anti-feminist sentiments are driven by the dominant capitalist cisheteropatriarchal set-up and create a hostile cultural environment for women and stony rights, while anti-feminist groups use anti-feminism as an instrument of attack and to spread right-wing or ultranationalist values. (3) There is a significant difference between the progressive forces in Georgia, the pseudo-leftists, and the radical right-wing groups. Progressive forces and pseudo-leftists are nominally proponents of women and queer rights, but only in a patriarchal context. The goal of radical right-wing groups is to completely subjugate women to real or mythological standards and eliminate queer people from society. Ultranationalism is a constant cultural background within Georgia, the country was built by ultranationalist forces, and local politics always revolves around these concepts. Where ultranationalism and nationalism in the Western space are largely considered part of the right-wing political course, we have a constant background that broadens the political arena for them. While not every of Eco's principle of

the description of fascism fits all the political groups we have discussed, but with consideration of a radical nationalist background, certain characteristics still emerge. The criteria of Eco's "Ur-Fascism" are often used to analyze xenophobic elements, and we use them to observe misogyny and queerphobia. In analyzing the propaganda model, we consider not the mass political course, but the demonization of oppressed groups for specific political purposes. We highlight which groups speak in the media with anti-feminist rhetoric, what goals drive them, and how they create a cultural background. We highlight as much as possible the political and ideological tendencies and goals of the platform owners who spread similar anti-feminist and anti-queer narratives.

# 2. METHODOLOGY - CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (CDA)

## 2.1 SCIENTIFIC, SOCIAL RESEARCH METHOD

According to Norman Fairclough, critical discourse analysis, as a method of scientific, social research, focuses on selected aspects of a particular object of research. For example, what kind of language works in the new capitalism. ("Critical Discourse Analysis" is hereinafter referred to as "CDA").

Norman Fairclough believes that CDA is a theoretical perspective on both languages and sign symbols in general (be it "visual language", "body language", etc.). CDA, as a theoretical perspective, is one element or one "moment" of the material social process. It offers a mechanism for analyzing the language and symbols of a multifaceted social process.

The analytical framework of this version of the CDA considers language and sign-symbols (semiotics) as an integral element of the material social process. Semiotics, in turn, encompasses all forms of meaning production.

Social life can be seen as an interconnected network of different types of social practices (economics, politics, culture, etc.). Each practice has its own semiotic elements. A focus on social practices helps us in a combined analysis of structure perspectives and action perspectives. Practice, on the one hand, is a relatively permanent path of social action, conditioned both by its position in a structured network and by its sphere of social action and interaction, which in turn reproduces the structure and has the potential for its transformation. All practices are the arena of the production of social life, be it the sphere of daily life, economy, politics, culture.

Each practice consists of the following elements:

- Production;
- Means of production;
- Social relations;
- Social identities;
- Cultural values;
- Awareness;
- Language of signs and symbols.

These elements are in a dialectical relation. They may include but are not limited to, the importance of each other.

CDA is an analysis of dialectical relationships, relationships between semiotics, and other elements of social practice. He is particularly concerned with the radical changes that are taking place in modern social life and is interested in what semiotics are like in the processes of change.

In social practice, semiotics is widely represented in three directions. First, it is found as a practical part of social action. On the other hand, it is manifested in the practical representation of social actors, which is the social construction of practices. The third expression is the performance and implementation of specific positions in this practice.

Semiotics, as part of social action, consists of genres. Genres are different forms of action and production of public life in a semiotic mode. Semiotics generates discourses through representation and self-representation. Discourses are different representations of social life that are inherent in positions - social actors in different positions view and represent social life differently. Semiotics generates styles when performing and exercising positions.

Social practices related in some way form a social order - e.g. The neoliberal global order of the new capitalism, or more locally, the social order of education in a particular society at a particular time. The semiotic aspect of the latter can be called a discursive order. In this way, different genres and discourses are linked to each other. Discourse order is the social structure of semiotic difference. One aspect of this order is domination: some ways of producing meaning are predominant or widespread, while others may be marginal, oppositional, or alternative.

The political concept of "hegemony" can be useful in the analysis of the discourse order (Fairclough, 1992; Forgacs, 1988; Laclau and Mouffe, 198) - a certain social structure of semiotic difference can become part of the legitimacy of a hegemonic "common sense" that maintains dominant relations. However, hegemony is constantly involved in hegemonic struggles of a certain scale. A discourse order is not a closed or rigid system, it is an open system that is at constant risk with what is happening in the relation to it. (P.124)

## **2.2 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS**

The analytical framework for critical discourse analysis below is modeled on critical



theorist Roy Bhaskar's concept of "explanatory critique" (Bhaskar, 1986; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). The stages of analysis are:

1. Focus on a social problem that has a semiotic aspect.
2. Identify the obstacles that prevent you from dealing with this problem. To do this, we need to analyze the following aspects:
  - A) the network of practices in which it is located;
  - B) the relationship of semiotics to other elements of these particular practices;
  - C) Discourse (semiotics itself): 1. Structural analysis: Discourse order; 2. Interactive analysis; 3. Interdisciplinary analysis; 4. Linguistic and semiotic analysis
3. Consider, at least to some extent, if the social order (a network of practices) "needs" this problem.
4. Identify possible ways of overcoming obstacles.
5. Critically evaluate the past stages of analysis (1-4).

A key feature of this framework is that it combines relational (2) and dialectical (4) elements (negative critique to diagnose a problem and positive critique to solve it) through the identification of as yet unrealized possibilities.

The first stage shows that this approach to CDA is problem-based. CDA is a form of critical social science that, on the one hand, exposes social problems and, on the other hand, helps to develop ways to solve these problems. Of course, the question is heard: Whose problem? Like the social sciences in general, CDA has emancipatory goals and focuses on dealing with the problems faced by "losers" in social life - the poor, the excluded from society, the objects of gender or racial oppression, and so on. But it does not provide a clearly defined set of social problems. What is problematic and requires change is a contentious and controversial issue, and CDA engages in social controversy or debate and makes the choice to define a certain characteristic of social life as a problem and to investigate this very problem.

The second stage of the critical approach offers the diagnosis of a problem indirectly when the question arises as to what obstacles exist to deal with this problem - how is social life structured and organized in such a way that it makes the problem resistant to simple solutions? Diagnosis involves how social practices are interrelated; How meaning is attached to other elements of social practice and to the characteristics of the discourse itself. Since the latter is a specific focus on discourse analysis, we will discuss it in more detail.

We discussed above the variations in CDA between focusing on structure and focusing on the action - focusing on the structuring of orders of discourse and a focus

on what goes on in particular interactions. In this case, problem-solving obstacles are partly related to the semiotic differences of social structuring in the discourse order (e.g., how management discourse colonizes public service sectors such as education).

In addition, they are partly related to dominant or influential interactions and ways of using language in those interactions. This means that we need to analyze the interactions. "Interaction" is used herein a broad sense: a conversation is a form of interaction, but it is also an article in a newspaper, even though the participants in the interaction are far apart in space and time. Also, for example, TV or email texts, in this extended sense, are interactions.

Interactive analysis has two aspects. First of all, this is an inter-discourse analysis: How do specific types of interactions articulate different genres, discourses, and styles? In this case, it is suggested that the interaction (or text) is usually a hybrid of genre, discourse, and style. One aspect of the analysis is to identify a specific combination of characteristics of a particular type of interaction; The second aspect is other forms of linguistic and semiotic analysis (for example, visual image analysis). Let us say a little about linguistic analysis as well.

One problem for those who are not a linguist is that there are many different aspects of interaction language that may be relevant to critical analysis. However, there are various lists of linguistic features that are usually quite useful to use in a critical analysis (e.g. Fairclough, 1992: Chapter 8; Fowler et al., 1979: Chapter 10). This version of CDA is based on a specific linguistic theory - systemic-functional linguistics (Halliday, 1994). This theory considers and analyzes language as constructed (even grammatically) according to the social functions it serves. It is thus relatively easy to understand how categories of social analysis relate to categories of linguistic analysis (for this type of linguistic analysis, see Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: Chapter 8,).

The third stage of the analysis, which determines whether this problem "needs" the social order, is an indirect way of relating "is" and "wants". If we can base our critique on the fact that social order inherently poses a number of important problems that it "needs" to sustain itself, it helps to substantiate the need for radical social change. The question of ideology also arises here: discourse is ideological insofar as it contributes to the maintenance of specific relations of power and domination.

The fourth stage of the analysis shifts from negative to positive criticism. This stage involves identifying previously unrealized or incompletely realized opportunities to change the current situation. This can be a manifestation of contradictions, shortcomings, or failures (e.g. inconsistencies in the dominant type of interaction) in areas of domination of public order or a revelation of resistance.

Finally, in the fifth stage, the analysis reflexively returns to itself and asks ques-

tions such as how effective its critique is, whether it can contribute to social emancipation, whether it is compromised by its position in academic practice that is so closely linked to the market and the state today.

# 3. MEDIA ANALYSIS — ALT-INFO, GIRCHI, AND POSTV (GURISMS)

## 3.1 CONTEXT

In recent years, the tendency to intensify and radicalize anti-feminist and anti-gender political discourse in Georgia can be explained, on the one hand, by our recent history - political transformations, political forces or opposition to the social changes; And on the other hand, under the influence of globally current events and geopolitical relations.

The search for and construction of new political identities in the process of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the formation of an independent state since the 1990s, be it Georgian, pro-Western, and pro-Russian labels, creating enemy icons and instrumentalizing issues to separate identities in the political space.

In general, groups operating in the Georgian political space are characterized by a certain level of conservatism and use different degrees of conservative-populist rhetoric regarding both women and gender, as well as ethnic and religious issues. Such political positions are used at different times by the Georgian Dream, the National Movement, or other parties, as well as newly formed political groups.

In a political field that is largely artificially divided into parties of liberal and conservative value systems, each political actor is assigned to one side or the other. In times of political crisis, turbulence, and change, new discourses of nationalism are formed and new political agencies emerge.

In 2012, after the change of government, the ultranationalist discourse has come up more on the surface. After the events of May 17, 2013, new ultra-conservative groups became more active, characterized by more reactionary, aggressive, and spontaneous actions, and were less ideological and organized. Later, from 2016-17, a more consistent organization of this process can be observed, the introduction of ideological elements begins and a form of theoretical and intellectual work is carried out. In recent years, these groups have become even more proficient in the Internet, social networks, and

various online media.

Topical anti-feminist and anti-gender issues in the local context are mainly built on issues such as the fight for women's rights, the right to abortion, sex education, May 17 - the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia, LGBTQ+ marriage and childbearing, all forms of discrimination. Legislation on Elimination and Sexual Harassment.

It is noteworthy that in many cases, the above-mentioned issues are discussed and exaggerated by the anti-gender groups themselves, while the feminist activists and the members of queer communities may not have discussed and agreed on these issues themselves. This tendency suggests that ultranationalist activism cannot be seen as merely a response to local emancipatory policies, as it seeks to capitalize on its own political identity, self-organize, and instrumentalize these issues, often independently of emancipatory groups.

## **IDEOLOGY, INTERESTS, DISCOURSE**

All three groups we have selected are online media platforms for current or future actors in party politics. The stated goal of their active, reactionary, and populist rhetoric is to establish and strengthen a stable ideological group of voters and supporters.

The ideological palette of these groups, in terms of values, seems to fit into the extreme points of the political map of ultra-right conservatism, ultra-right libertarianism, and pseudo-social democracy. However, the difference between their function and effectiveness as political actors is debatable, and the connection with the political elites in power is quite vague.

It was interesting for our research, on the one hand, to observe and analyze anti-feminist and anti-gender discourses in the rhetoric of these groups. And on the other hand, a brief overview of how their discourses affect the activities of women's rights activists, queer activists, and human rights defenders.

## **3.2 ALT-INFO**

Shota Martinenko registered in the public register of Alt-Info Ltd was registered by Shota Martinenko on January 28, 2019. And through the youtube channel created in 2017, he appeared on the Internet on April 1, 2019, with their first video blog. The members of the group have the topics of the internet video blogs divided and they talk about their domestic and foreign policy visions, discuss political events, current issues, announce

rallies and gatherings, call on supporters to self-organize, and actively lobby for Levan Vasadze's politics.

The Alt-Info group seems to try to show some solid, conservative, right-wing alternative. At the same time, there is clearly a need to instrumentalize social issues and colonialism issues by gaining public support. But very artificially, because for example, Trump is a good guy for them, while on some American imperialism is also criticized. (Resp. 1)

The Alt-Info group defines their political identity in confronting and criticizing liberalism and communism. On the one hand, with the argument of the "collapse of communism", and on the other hand, with the argument of the "crisis of liberalism", it offers the public a solution in the formula: "Justice equals hierarchy".

What is justice?! My answer is simple - justice is a hierarchy. [...] We simply say - whoever works as much, owns as much. That is, if you do a lot for something, you get a lot, if you do less, you get less. (Nov 27, 2019 - *What Alt-Info Group Really Needs. Part - 1*)

According to them, today's society lives in such a hegemonic hierarchy of cultural liberalism, where the "Georgian Orthodox Christian" is at the lowest level of the hierarchy.

If you are wondering why it is permissible for you to be called an "unenlightened Georgian" and to call a "pidarast" (Georgian slur for gay people) a member of the "Elgibiti Community" - hate speech, the answer is simple: within the hierarchy, we actually live in, you are at the bottom according to the rules set by the dominant group. (Dec 4, 2019 - *What Alt-Info Group Really Needs. Part - 2*)

Alt-Info's interaction with the audience is a constant, direct, or indirect call to support the future ultra-right Conservative party and to form an electorate with their political ideology that will oppose liberal and left-wing political entities. The group reveals the mission and goals of its online media platform, which is to take a conservative niche in the political-ideological struggle of the media - "We are the bearers of conservative, traditionalist, pro-Georgian ideology" (Jan 16, 2020 - *Anna Garden Media Apocalypse*)

It can be said that for Alt-Info's anti-feminist, and anti-gender, openly homophobic rhetoric is one of the most important aspects of political positioning. The topics are divided among the group members when talking about a number of issues, the video

blogs recorded on these issues are quite numerous and almost all the group members do it consistently with each other. They position themselves as the defenders of the Patriarchate<sup>1</sup> and the Georgian nation from the “liberals”, mobilize and march against the image of the enemy of feminists and stony people.

Like other anti-feminist and anti-gender discourses, for Alt-Info, feminism and queer politics are uniquely a Western phenomenon, and they try to intimidate Georgian society through the image of a mythological, “depraved” society in the West. At the same time, they often draw parallels with the activism of the ultranationalist groups in Western society and view themselves as comrades.

The signs of liberal fascism in Georgia are already obvious, but the most graphic illustration of this problem is the example of the West, where liberals no longer even avoid repression, censorship, and violence of dissent. The answer to this gay dictatorship is such colossal popularity of right-wing forces in the West. (*May 3, 2019 - May 17 and Double Standards for Liberals*)

## **ANTI-GENDER DISCOURSE**

The International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia, which was first publicly celebrated in Georgia on May 17, 2011, has over time become a sacred date for the confrontation of ultra-right and emancipatory forces. On the one hand, for the queer community and their supporters, this date is associated with a very traumatic experience and has become a symbol of hatred, space grabbing, violence, and the fight against this violence. For the ultra-right, on the other hand, this date is a day of self-organization, mobilization, fighting, and hunting down “enemies”.

The date is associated not only with physical confrontation, violence, and seizure of space but also with symbolic and discursive confrontation. On May 17, 2013, after the worst experiences of attacks and repressions on the queer community, on May 2, 2014, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, the same year

Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia 17th May as “Day of family purity and respect for parents”. On May 17, 2016, Levan Vasadze host the World Family Congress on behalf of “Demographic Society XXI”.

Like all other ultranationalist groups and media outlets, this date is very important and frequently mentioned by the Alt-Info group. As this day approaches, homophobic rhetoric, the number of videos that call for violence, and works to create a fighting

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1 Ruling institute of the Georgian Orthodox Church

mood are intensifying.

In their opinion, the conservative part of the Georgian society is a victim of the “LGBT and Liberal dictatorship” and that is why they are reacting to the “threat of the liberals”. According to them, there is a “gay lobby” in the country, which creates career obstacles for public figures due to homophobic statements. The stories of the “victims of the dictatorship” are repeated several times, including the story of opera soprano Tamar Iver, whose “performance in Australia was disrupted by the gay lobby” for expressing her views; Artists who are blocked in other areas due to their participation in the May 17 events planned by the Patriarchate; Salome Gogiashvili and Davit Katsarava, who left television “because of a joke about Elton John’s gay family”.

If May 17 is “Elbegete” Day for them and Family Purity Day for us, then they will do their best to make it costly for people to stand by us, be expelled from society, and serve. *(May 3, 2019 - Liberal Freedom of Expression and May 17)*

On May 17, 2019, for the “Family Purity Day,” Alt-Info Group announces a campaign together with the political organization - “Alternative for Georgia”. They called on the “normal” part of the society to come out to defeat the liberal threat. They try to motivate the audience by strengthening the image of the enemy and insistence on the inevitability of danger.

The stage will begin when they come out on an aggressive attack. They will harass and create problems for anyone who will take a different position from them. [...] The more power they have, the more aggressive their behavior will become.” *(May 2, 2019 - On May 17, we are holding a rally against LGBT propaganda!)*

To justify the threat of a “dictatorship of liberalism,” he cites Western experiences and attacks on nationalist rallies by anti-fascist groups.

Not to mention direct physical attacks on nationalists and conservatives by libertarian activists in the West. [...] As expected, it’s as if these violent, oppressed, stray sheep are themselves trying to become abusers. *(May 2, 2019 - On May 17, we are holding a rally against LGBT propaganda!)*

Alt-Info Group, on the one hand, does not shy away from openly calling for violence and, on the other hand, cites the facts of violence against queer people in recent history as a normalized, adequate, and correct practice. They say that everyone has the right to go



to the Georgian Chancellery on May 17 and express a similar position, and if the police restrict their right to express themselves, it will be another demonstration of the existence of a “liberal dictatorship in Georgia.”

We are directly saying that support for the pidarast movement is waning, and the people who attacked the NGO-Liberal Trainer on May 17, 2013, are the most normal part of society. [...] Sergei Kakachia, who came to the rally last year and hit the flag that insulted Christians, and also the fact that a very large number of young people on the Internet supported Kakachia, shows that a very large part of the new generation is in a normal position and based on optimism exists. *(May 2, 2019 - On May 17, we are holding a rally against LGBT propaganda!)*

According to the Alt-Info group, the aggression against the queer community is completely justified “from a scientific point of view”. They cite pseudoscientific biological arguments and equate different orientations with different psychological disorders. According to them, if gender identities are normalized, there is a danger that the number of LGBTQ + people will increase.

For example, in the UK education system, with the advent of LGBT propaganda for children, the rate of such psycho-sexual disorders among minors has increased dramatically. We can also cite historical examples, even in ancient Greece, where similar pathological conditions were very common in society. *(May 7, 2019 - Why is aggression against LGBT propagandists a completely justified reaction)*

Alt-Info also practices actions used by far-right groups over the years, such as disrupting emancipatory movements and group demonstrations, arranging contracts, and occupying space. They are distinguished by their call to war and heroic spirit and often exaggerate the number of people who have contracted and the “victory” they have achieved in seizing space.

Our side managed and forcibly took the public space from the Soros-NGOers and told them that we do not care and do not recognize the freedom of expression of the ass-lovers and if necessary, we will forcefully defend this view of ours. *(Jun 15, 2019 - Yesterday's rally against LGBT propaganda and unbridled hysteria of liberals)*

Alt-Info's anti-feminist and anti-gender discourse are dangerous because it becomes

a source of legitimacy for violent practices and aggressive behavior for other groups as well. And it is noteworthy that they do not shy away from calls for breaking the law, which encourages violent, criminal behavior.

The national-conservative majority of the society has no choice but to ignore the law of the state and self-organize, even by forming groups that resort to violence. [...] Therefore, the creation of squads by Levan Vasadze from the national-conservative part of the society, who are ready to defend their views even by force, is a completely moral and justified step. (*Jun 17, 2019 - Why is it completely justified for Vasadze to create troops*)

The group prompts their supporters to action by highlighting issues sensitive to the public that has never been on the agenda of the queer community and various emancipatory groups in the Georgian reality (for example, the issue of same-sex marriage and the right to adopt a child).

They insist on legalizing gay marriage and giving them the right to adopt a child. You must come on May 17 for a homophobic rally in front of the Chancellery. [...] All liberals are, in fact, our ideological enemies. Their hatred is the most adequate position a patriot can have. (*May 15, 2019 - On May 17, at 6 pm, we will hold a rally in front of the Chancellery against LGBT propaganda*)

In their view, the real goal of the fight against discrimination is to normalize homosexuality and transgenderism, because without full normalization it is impossible to eliminate discrimination.

Normalizing homosexuality and transgender people means that they should have the right to marry, adopt children, work with children in kindergartens and schools, and give LGBT lessons. (*May 9, 2019 - The fight against the LGBT movement is a defense against inadequate ideological dogmas*)

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND MISOGYNY**

A real man does not look into a woman's past - that is the wisdom of a whole woman. (*Oct 9, 2019 - "A real man does not look into a woman's past"*)

Alt-Info refers to feminists in similarly hateful language and does not shy away from

misogynistic rhetoric. They are critical of the adoption of the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination by the Parliament of Georgia on May 2, 2014, and the Gender Council Law on Sexual Harassment on May 23, 2019, and are fighting for their abolition.

In addition, they accuse women's human rights defenders of having double standards because, for example, they did not have enough feedback on the fact of violence against women by Nika Gvaramia<sup>2</sup>.

Imagine how many-colored hairs the feminists would have torn from their progressively unshaven armpits, if someone else, instead of "Elgebete" Gvaramia, had harassed this woman. [...] There is also complete silence among principled feminists who almost demand the arrest of men because of the male gaze. (*May 3, 2019, May 17 and Liberals Double Standards*)

In their view, the problem of violence and sexual harassment against women will be reduced to the individual responsibility of women. The cause of violence is the negligence of women, free behavior, and provocative clothes.

Many girls wear shorts that are shorter than the underwear was 15 years ago. And in this situation, when some man comes up to them and asks "how much", it will create hysteria like "How dare you, do you think I am some kind of whore?!" (*Feb 19, 2020 - Prostitute uniform*)

They indirectly justify the acts of violence against the wives and murder of the wives. While reviewing Quentin Tarantino's film "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" (2019), the host justifies the protagonist who murdered his wife and accuses the feminist ideology of harassing him.

Cliff Booth hasn't been able to work as a stuntman for years because his wife was killed for feminist hysteria. And in the film industry, everything is already ruled by feminist idiots, and their enslaved castrated men. All these feminist masses do not like men who murder their hysterical, idiot wives. (*Jan 23, 2020 - Once Upon a Time in Hollywood - The Most Anti-Liberal Movie*)

According to them, the director is trying to return to the national-conservative path by creating these "patriarchal and anti-feminist cultural works" because the "crisis of liberalism" in the West has caught his eye.

<sup>2</sup> former head of "Rustavi 2" TV, founder of "the Main" channel

The group is concerned about allegations of violence against MP Ilia Jishkariani by Tamta Todadze. They say similar allegations in the absence of evidence pose a threat of repression and slander against the men.

Doesn't matter if Jishkariani really wanted to rape Todadze, or if Todadze invented all this to make money from allegations, this is a problem. *(Oct 9, 2019 - MP is accused of sexual violence against a woman)*

According to the group, the risks of violence exist in all circumstances, and in this case, too, the responsibility lies with women who find themselves in a risky situation, such as walking in a dark street in the middle of the night or working in a place where they are more at risk of violence.

You can't put a man in jail just for your words or your bloodied knees! What do I know, under what circumstances did those knees bleed?! That is, the solution is to work in a place where there is less risk of being harassed. *(Oct 9, 2019 - MP accused of sexually abusing a woman)*

They see the threat in feminists demanding that men be punished solely based on victim testimony. They say that in this case, women are given the opportunity to accuse men of sexual violence, prosecute them, destroy their careers and lives.

Feminists basically are demanding segregation based on gender and the provision of political and career gaining power to women in the form of false allegations of sexual violence. *(Oct 9, 2019 - MP accused of sexually abusing a woman)*

According to them, while in general the facts of domestic violence occur in the Georgian society, the percentage of these facts and murders of women is normal for our country. In our specific setup, the fight against domestic violence and femicide is aimed at the disappearance of the institution of the family as a whole.

Since you are still trying to reduce the risk to zero, the next thing that comes out is that you are trying to stop the process. The end result of your efforts is the destruction and disappearance of the family institution because only in this way is risk aversion possible. *(Jun 19, 2020 - False propaganda about domestic violence against women and femicide)*

They contrast the statistics of murders of women with the number of abortions and argue that the existing problems in this regard should be more noticeable to the public.

If no one is killed at all, would be preferable for me, but if 11 women out of a million nine hundred thousand women are killed every year, it is not objectively a catastrophic figure. [...] If you really care about the problem of mass murder, then I recommend you focus on the catastrophic scale of murders committed on unborn children by women. (*Jun 19, 2020 - False propaganda about domestic violence against women and femicide*)

## **ABORTION AND CHILD RIGHTS**

The group also actively comments on the issue of the right to abortion and cites pseudoscientific arguments, thus equating abortion with murder regardless of pregnancy stage and circumstance of conception. The group says that in the context of the “demographic crisis”, abortion statistics in Georgia are alarming and that this will lead to the end of the nation. They cite a liberal-feminist ideology as the reason for such an abortion rate, which they believe promotes the free behavior of women on the one hand and the proliferation of irresponsible feminine men on the other.

In fact, all this is the result of a liberal-feminist ideology that drives people to live irresponsible, selfish lives. With the slogans “Your body is your choice”, “Your pussy is your choice”. [...] Your cowardly and unmanly sex partner is also your choice, as a result of which you got pregnant and then killed your own child through abortion. (*Jun 29, 2020 - About Abortion*)

The only way out they see is to ban abortion on a moral and legal level. A successful example for them is the legislative changes in Poland.

Recently, there has been a heated debate in the media and social networks over the issue of adding or not adding sex education lessons in schools. Conservatives believe that lessons of this content should not be in schools. And liberals believe that such lessons should not only be in schools, but that they should be compulsory for all children, and that conservative parents should not even have the right to prevent their own children from attending these lessons. [...]

Still, I will explain why people oppose sex education lessons for children and what the logic behind this opposition. The fact is that sexuality is a topic in which im-

proper development and improper psycho-social impact on the child can lead to many types of psycho-sexual disorders in humans. All these very severe psycho-sexual perversions, be it pedophilia, coprophilia, gerontophilia, zoophilia, homosexuality, gender identity disorders, etc. All these pathological conditions are largely the result of an improper psycho-social impact on a person's sexual nature in childhood. [...] All their teaching methods are based on completely illogical conclusions, which are uniquely dangerous for children. Sex education in children is an extremely delicate topic, the mistake of which can have very serious consequences for the psyche of children, and therefore until there is unmistakable knowledge about this issue, which does not yet exist in nature, hence the introduction of some training courses in ignorance of the issue is categorically unacceptable. (*Apr 6, 2019 - What are the dangers in sex education lessons (Shota Martinenko's blog)*)

As you know, the Parliament of Georgia is actively discussing the new Code of the Rights of the Children, which is of great interest to the public. At the initiative of the conservatives, in particular, Koba Davitashvili and the political movement "Alternative for Georgia", in this code appeared, I will say directly and not shy away from the words "unenlightened, patriarchal-aggressive, virtually anti-Soros", which prohibits the Gay-NGOers giving sex ed to children without permission of the parents (*Apr 3, 2019 - Restriction of sexual upbringing and soul-crushed liberals (Giorgi Kardava's blog)*)

You need to repeal the anti-discrimination law, which, by the way, you yourself have adopted. [...] You should also tear down and throw in the trash the Liberal Code of Children, drafted by your own team, which catastrophically deprives the family of autonomy and gives the state the right to punish a parent for even a mere yelling at a child. (*Sep 7, 2019 - National Dream or Pre-Election PR?*)

## QUOTAS

The group responded to a code developed by the National Bank of Georgia to impose gender quotas on commercial banks, calling it "gender liberals dictated by Western liberals."

According to gender ideology, there are actually no physiologically defined dif-

ferences between the sexes in intellectual and psychological skills [...]. The differences that are present in today's society, in their view, are conditioned by the influences characteristic of a patriarchal society and must be changed. (*Dec 11, 2019 - The state has set gender quotas*)

The group appeals to the natural difference between women and men, which is denied by liberal ideology.

So, what if the results of research or the results of the competition in the business and technical fields indicate serious differences in skills between the sexes? [...] The breaking down of natural boundaries between the sexes must begin right from the kindergartens. The introduction of gender-neutral upbringing. (*Dec 11, 2019 - The state has set gender quotas*)

### 3.3 GIRCHI

The New Political Center Girchi was formed after the departure of four MPs from the United National Movement - Zurab Japaridze, Pavle Kublashvili, Giorgi Khachidze, and Giorgi Meladze. The party was registered with the National Agency of Public Registry of Georgia on May 18, 2016, and held its founding congress on April 16 of the same year.

Ideologically, Girchi is a variation of right-wing libertarianism, which implies pseudo-progressive rhetoric, rejection of systemic oppression, an emphasis on individual responsibility and freedom, maximum market deregulation, and the weakening of state structures.

The “progressive” look of right-wing libertarianism is based on the tradition of libertarian socialism. The typical model of libertarian socialism is anti-capitalist and views problems thru a systemic lens, while its right-wing version borrows only superficial rhetorical elements and name from it. For simplicity, we will refer to right-wing libertarianism as “libertarianism” from here on.

There are no workers, poor, women, men, homosexuals, transgender, etc. rights. There are only individual rights. There are no vulnerable and oppressed groups, there are only vulnerable and oppressed individuals who may be more or less represented in different groups. (*Feb 24, 2020 - Giorgi Lominadze<sup>3</sup>; Identity Politics and Pseudofeminism*)

Such a statement directly and explicitly conveys a kind of libertarian ethos - a

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<sup>3</sup> Member of Girchi, political pundit

complete denial of the form and nature of systemic oppression. Each act of violence and oppression is individualized. The responsibility is always on the individual, be it the abuser or the victim. The delegitimization of the victim of systemic oppression is a direct part of Girchi's political rhetoric.

The differences in strategies of Alt-Info and Girchi are of note. From Alt-Info's fascist worldview, vulnerable groups are unacceptable and "weak" to them. In contrast, Girchi's libertarian position does not directly or publicly state such assumptions. Instead of asserting their position, they create a false image of queer-rights activists, feminists, and other individuals or groups involved in the struggle for social justice. Such action has two additional functions. One, they provide the public with their own definition of feminism, and secondly, it is difficult to fight such accusations in public - the process of simultaneously denying and correcting the false narratives.

Disguised as an identity politics and preacher of gender hatred, neo-Marxism has taken on the false role of liberating women, with the Labor Code, voting, gender quotas, legalization of abortion, the false-rights built on violence and stifling of competition - such is the deception which at times managed to charm women. In addition to hindering the enrichment of the entire population, first of all, brought enormous losses to the women themselves and hindered the process of their liberation. (*Feb 24, 2020 - Giorgi Lominadze; Identity Politics and Pseudofeminism*)

Lominadze's article "Identity Politics and Pseudofeminism" published on Girchi's official website is an interesting example of a libertarian approach. First of all, Marxism is viewed as a socio-economic theory or a kind of political ideology, but as "cultural Marxism", as defined by the right-wing conspiracy theory. In this theory, Marxism is seen as an external force, powerful and invisible, whose main function is to destroy the Western world. In modern right-wing political discourse, "neo-Marxism" or "cultural Marxism" is seen as an invisible force behind any progressive political platform, movement, or activism. The model of this conspiracy theory is based on anti-Semitism (a variation of the "Jews rule the world" conspiracy) and can be said to be a variation on Nazi Germany's "cultural-Bolshevism", which was in turn anti-Semitic and anti-communist propaganda. Anti-Semitism is overtly exposed in radical right-wing circles, though not so pronounced in more "lighter" right-wing ideologies. Normalizing your own phraseology is often part of fascist tactics. However, it is easy to say that the fear of "strangers" and "external influences" uses a kind of xenophobic tinge. (SPLC, "Cultural Marxism" Catching On 2003)

Feminism is "foreign" because it is a movement artificially created by the "neo-Marxists" to spread "the evils of collectivism" to overthrow individualism.



Lominadze and Girchi create an absurd, non-historical version of feminism controlled by a foreign power and whose function is to sow discord.

What most people today call “feminism” has long since ceased to be a movement for the equal rights of men and women. Instead, this movement has degraded into a pseudo-feminism, which in fact fights against the individual - both women and men - and at the same time parades itself as a struggle for women’s rights. Pseudofeminism, as a form of collectivism, seeks to grant privileges to a certain group of individuals at the expense of depriving other individuals of their freedom. (*Feb 24, 2020 - Giorgi Lominadze; Identity Politics and Pseudofeminism*)

In addition to presenting it in its specific form and content, the text itself is misogynistic and antifeminist. The author denies the autonomy of the body, saying, “Instead of combating the causes of artificial abortion, pseudo-feminism has sought to dehumanize unborn children and legalize their killing.” The mother’s body and her life are secondary and priority is given to the potential child. Alternatively, Girchi offers to have a child and put it up for adoption in exchange for money.

In the article “Transgenderism”, the author views transgenderism as a deliberate act of eliminating homosexuality.

There exists an opinion that transgenderism is largely the result of the inadmissibility of your own homosexuality: if your homosexual sexual orientation causes severe distress, instead of accepting and embracing this orientation, you may think that you are in a wrong the body of the opposite sex and that is why your real you likes people of the same sex. Especially if your immature consciousness is constantly being bombarded with information that this is a completely normal and expected event. (*March 8, 2020 - Giorgi Lominadze; Transgenderism*)

In addition, the article calls into question the competence of the World Mental Health Organization.

In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association removed the diagnostic title “Gender Identity Disease” from the Fifth Edition of the Classification of Psychiatric Diseases and replaced it with “Gender Dysphoria,” which refers to the “Distress caused in people by the incongruity between their gender identity and gender assigned at birth.” These people are considered transgender (*March 8, 2020 - Giorgi Lominadze; Transgenderism*)

It would seem that Lominadze and Girchi in general find the classification transgender people as a “mental ill” acceptable, which clarifies their position on this issue. Libertarians question authority only when it contradicts their narratives.

In addition to the transphobic absurdity in this article, which we will analyze below, there is context that Lominadze does not discuss which is important.

Ray Blanchard and his theory of Autogynephilia. Psychologist Ray Blanchard has developed a model that describes trans women as “confused homosexual men” and “self-loving bisexual and heterosexual men.” Trans men’s existence is ignored completely, and it is superfluous to even mention other gender identities. According to Blanchard’s model, transgenderism is a disorder that is treatable. He was such an important figure in that the section on “Gender Identity Disorder” in the DSM was developed by him. (The DSM is a statistical and diagnostic guideline for mental disorders, established by the American Psychiatric Association) Blanchard is clearly a transphobic psychologist whose research was built on rather dubious assumptions and falsified indicators, yet he has been considered an expert on gender identity for years; Psycho-pathological methodology based on his model of autogynephilia was the standard. The change in the transgender classification and the realization that the previous classification of the Mental Health Institution was oppressive towards trans people happened quite late.

I do not use violence, but I do not support punishing those who use violence. The negative is that all this goes to the black market and we get a much worse result than not only in terms of child mortality but also in terms of maternal mortality. [...] I have a conservative argument that it is a family affair and families have traditionally settled it themselves and it is not a matter for the State to get involved. The topic of abortion is very controversial and, in general, I do not like to argue about such a topic, because I actually know all the arguments on one side and the other. [...] You go to the street and there is a hungry man. Do you have to have a positive commitment to feed that person?! If you do not feed him, should the state punish you?! A person on the street is dying of starvation, should a person have an obligation to feed him and if you do not give food, should the state punish you?! To save him [...] You can also look at the topic of abortion in the sense that the unborn child depends on the mother’s body and it can be decided by the mother whether she feeds the child or not. You can consider abortion in such a way that the mother simply decided not to feed the other person and continued to live for herself. You can look at it philosophically like that. I do not like what I am saying now, but philosophically you can look at it as well. These are not arguments used

by feminists, feminists have idiotic arguments that often justify abortions, and I do not use such arguments. Now, this is the first I mentioned this argument on air, with you. [...] In my opinion, abortion is horrible. I have three children and I cannot imagine how the decision to have an abortion could be made." (Jul 13, 2019 - Zurab Japaridze is a guest of Alt-Info; Libertarianism is the topic of conversation)

- I think Girchi is a very dangerous organization, because by using some of these popular methods ... using modern creative methods, they win over many young people's hearts. This nonconformity, radicalism [is manifested] more in language and aesthetics than in content. It wins the hearts of many young people, but it is really just a completely extremist political organization that recognizes no other opinion beyond individual freedom and has justified a lot of problematic content [...] A state without any regulations, without social responsibility, rejecting the idea of solidarity, something like a mechanical unity of these atomized individuals, where simply by some police force we do not attack each other. Where we have no responsibilities towards each other. (Rep. 1)

Girchi is characterized by frequent anti-feminist rhetoric. The organization takes a kind of centrist position, as if "considering all sides the arguments", although, in reality, their platform is aggressively anti-feminist, anti-queer, and misogynistic.

A good example of this is the online debate held by Girchi, where the right to abortion was discussed by 4 right-wing libertarian cisgender men. Noone who is directly affected by this particular issue of body autonomy and reproductive rights was present. (Aug 7, 2019 - Girchi; should abortion be legal?)

In general, Girchi does not recognize patriarchy and sexism as concepts. Violence is considered only in the context of "individual action and responsibility".

- In the case of Girchi, perhaps the main problem is that they reject oppression altogether as a concept because there exists only individual freedom for them. There is already an existing free market where you can achieve something, free yourself, and so on. And where the law or the police may hinder, but social structures as a source of oppression, and oppression as a systemic fact, are not recognized at all, not even as a concept. It is therefore natural that their sensitivity and understanding of these issues is quite problematic. For example, I remember Girchi, which opposed the enactment of anti-discrimination law and said that un-

til a crime is committed, violence on the grounds of hatred, then there is nothing else and no discrimination, moreover, it was said that individuals cannot be held accountable and if one does not want to let in gay or black people in a shop or cafe, it is an extension of their property rights and the individual freedoms associated with it. So, this framework very often does not recognize social structures, because for them there only exists some abstract individual and their freedom and some sort of police state. nothing else. The economy is depoliticized, it is fully free and autonomous. Self-determination is also an autonomous field. Media, education ... is completely individualized and depoliticized. Therefore, for them, on a very small scale, how to say, in very few cases, some problems become political. This framework, I think, drastically reduces their sensitivity. [...] Girchi, I think is some kind of culmination of radical neoliberal ideas, which, as far as I know, is even reconsidered in many Western political groups, and in principle, such parties are not even influential in the West. Therefore, I think these being in the periphery influenced us. Something that was marked as progressive by Girchi is no longer progressive at all - I put everything in quotes - including "in the West." (Resp. 1)

- For example, during the adoption of the law on sexual harassment, if you remember, Girchi came out and made baffling comments. [...] Girchi directly wrote, that if a person wants to "jerk off", he should "jerk off" and no one can prevent it ... I mean... we are already tired of Girchi's freedom, but of course, I will react to that. And I will write the status and, of course, I will do everything, but from a more official point of view, we always react to certain actions by issuing a statement. (Resp. 2, 33)
  
- Girchi is one of the examples, on the one hand, with a high degree of freedom, which is captivating, but on the other hand, how they see freedom in relation to different groups. For example, they talk about why children cannot be sold, that is, it is so difficult for you, a citizen, to choose, because people do not have a consistent and very uniform vision. If I agree with one part, some statements are really correct, for example, let's take a simple one, the issue of marriage, people have a very open ordinary position [of being pro-gay marriage] that I respect, but simultaneously they are saying that why should not we sell children, as in why buying and selling of children is hindered here. There was talk of economic gains, that is, it is very difficult for me as a voter to cooperate with them because I know for sure that their policies are volatile and hurtful. (Resp. 3, 33)

- Girchi is such a very harmful group for me, which spreads a lot of negative ideas... what is it called, because their last speech, for example, yes, their pro [gay] marriage, but there is a so-called article based on some horrible and absolutely wrong concepts about trans identities. This is a very bad thing in a nutshell and for me, they are in the spectrum of Alt-Info and Gurisms.” (Resp. 4, 34)
- The guys talk about gay marriage as being acceptable and normal for them, and on the other hand, they tell you that if I am a homophobe and I have a restaurant or a hotel, I have every right and I cannot let you in, it is my free will. If I want to swear at you, I will do whatever I want. When someone shows you their genitals on the street, it turns out that they are just impudent and nothing more. What can I say, to tell you the truth, for me, this is fascism hiding behind progressivism. Sadly, it happens that quite a few queer community members support it, no matter how sad it may be, but it is a fact. This label of progressiveness seems to work very well. (Resp. 5, 30)
- I find the story of Girchi and Gurisms less challenging because in Guri’s case the Georgian Dream is being vindicated and at the same time trying to gain some ground with the Left. So to say it has made it very difficult for other left-wing groups, to confront the Georgian Dream, to create something astute, some movement or a position. Therefore, at some point, I was specifically observing Guri, when, so-called Georgian Dream ... Leftists found it difficult to sever association with Guri, to criticize Guri, as if they had this ideological alliance. And I think it has created a kind of loyalty to the Georgian Dream in the Left. Do you know what I mean?! Because Guri was radicalizing that “the National Movement is bad” is a thing of the past and something like that. Which always invalidated the leftists. “Remember who the National Movement and the nine-year-old regime are.” Which, of course, is a big problem. We constantly criticize the Nationalists, and even now we see the result of their policies, including one of the reasons for the rise of conservatism. But it somehow was caused by Guri as well and it was contagious..
- Girchi has sort of occupied this whole space of progressive politics in young people who do not see ideological differences ... But something this cool, active, creative, free, non-conformist space has very much been occupied by this group. And very often more effective than the leftist groups. (Resp. 1)

### 3.4 POSTV

The show “Gurizmebi” (PostTV) or “Gurisms”. Host: Guri Sultanishvili<sup>4</sup>.

When analyzing “Gurisms” it is important to analyze the rhetoric of the show host. He positions himself as a left-wing progressive philosopher and cultural researcher. The discussions are often based around class struggle and the comprehensiveness of the capitalist system. However, the analysis of the show reveals that it is a facade. The class analysis becomes farcical in the context of PostTV, a media organization that operates to support the Georgian Dream.

The aforementioned pseudo-anti-capitalism is used as a weapon against emancipatory movements (in our case, we focus on feminism). The host seeks to create a discourse in which feminism is perceived as a game played by the elite class, which hinders real class struggle.

It is important to note that, in contrast to the stated rhetoric of the two groups analyzed above, the rhetoric of the “Gurisms” is obfuscated, characterized by indirect hints and ambiguity. It is also interesting to note when topics related to women’s rights and feminism are brought up, attempts of verbal degradation occur: rude language, offensive epithets, and so on.

The host of the program speaks with the aesthetics of intellectualism, in a simplified and easily understood, but still, academic language, quoting various authors and discussing various philosophical, cultural, or political concepts. The main function of such aesthetics can be considered to create the illusion of authority over the issues discussed in the show.

Analysis reveals that this intellectualism is just a facade. The host often distorts historical facts and ideas that he does not like, falsifies events, or discusses them out of context.

The function of “Gurisms” is to covertly disseminate anti-feminist narratives to people who may not have access, knowledge, or solid political positions on these issues. Such pseudo-progressive and pseudo-intellectual positioning helps Sultanishvili and PostTV to spread their toxic messages.

### THE VICIOUS SIDES OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

The main topic of the program: Britain offered the UN an initiative to replace the term “pregnant woman” with “pregnant people”. While this simple rhetorical change would help create a trans-inclusive language, the host opposes this idea and sees it as a prob-

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<sup>4</sup> A self-proclaimed philosopher and researcher of culture

lem of political correctness. It is of note that the Sultanishvili in one sentence expresses two seemingly incompatible ideas: 1) such words have nothing to do with trans rights; 2) Similar words restrict women's rights. However, such a logical set-up has its function: it portrays incompatibility between trans rights and women's rights, giving the viewer a misconception about the antagonistic interdependence of these two groups. A narrative emerges as if "trans people are invading women's spaces," which is a widespread right-wing transphobic narrative in recent years.

To discuss in detail, the phrase "has nothing to do with trans rights" is an interesting rhetorical statement. On the one hand, we can read a subtext that the show host does not reveal out loud - in trans people it only refers to trans women. The argument that "pregnancy has nothing to do with trans people" is built on transphobia, which manifests itself in the following: A particularly kin focus is on the body of trans women and their position in society, ignoring the existence of trans men, non-binary and inter-sex people.

Here the host is playing with rhetorics: on the one hand, he implies that pregnancy does not apply to trans women because it is biologically impossible for them, and on the other hand, he ignores people outside cis-heteronormative standards who still are subject to pregnancy and gynecological services. People in one specific group are portrayed as inadequate in their demands, attacked, and ignored from a certain discourse. The resulting negative attitude (perception of inadequacy) will still be targeted towards these neglected groups.

Political correctness originated in America, and philosophically it bears some signs of schizophrenia, instead of solving problems, it has solved descriptions of that problem. It fought not against causes but consequences. Proponents of political correctness, for example, no longer use the word 'woman' because it is rooted in 'man' and is derived from 'woe man' or 'wife man' and created 'womyn' instead. They also challenged the word 'history', here the problem was the prefix His-story and created an alternative to Her-story. In reality, the Greek or Latin etymology of the word has no gender implication at all. (Oct 26, 2017 - *PosTv \* Analytics. Gurisms - Vicious aspects of political correctness*)

Here we have a play with words and concepts, as well as intellectual dishonesty.

1. "Philosophically bears the marks of schizophrenia" does not say anything, there is no philosophical concept of "schizophrenia", it is just a mental health problem used as an insult, packaged in a pseudo-intellectual format.

2. Womyn/woman framed as part of modern political correctness. Word “womyn” emerged in the 60s and 70s, in the radical feminist and lesbian movements, and has a specific political context that existed before the wave of American liberal political correctness (the 1990s). We are dealing with the decontextualization of the word, a kind of simple falsification of history, and an indirect attack on feminism because the focus is on the word woman (woman/womyn).

3. Herstory. No one is trying to replace the word “history”, “herstory” is a simple play on words used in popularization campaigns. No one thinks that the word “history” has a masculine connotation, it is just a play on words built on the similarity of the prefix. It should also be noted that “Greek or Latin etymology of the word” is an interesting method of establishing intellectual authority and, at the same time, an absurd phrase because Greek and Latin are different language groups.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Devaluation of the concept of sexual harassment. In discussing this issue, the focus is on “the destruction of life because of old sins,” “accusations without evidence,” and so on. This is a typical impairment of the problem and a shift to the legal aspect.

... From where this campaign started, from Hollywood, where we see the games of the elite, some glamorous madness, where old sins no longer allow people to go on with their lives to the fullest. Moreover, the accusations have not been confirmed by anyone yet. (*Nov 11, 2017 - PosTV \* Analytics. Gurisms - Sexual Harassment*)

Here we find an attempt to completely delegitimize allegations of sexual harassment, focusing on a specific campaign and not on the causes and context. An association is formed that the artificial resistance of the “Hollywood elite” is a reaction to a fictional or exaggerated problem and is not a resistance to a real problem.

The focus is on the “old sins” and the “confirmation of guilt”, which completely ignores the systemic side of sexual harassment. The show host presents this event as insignificant, and, at the same time, ignores the available facts related to sexual harassment. It is ignored how often victims aren’t believed, how often they are silenced, and how often sexual harassment cases are not investigated properly. Especially when there is a power imbalance between the attacker and the victim.



In addition, the host views the Western liberal approach from a rather strange angle. According to Guri Sultanishvili, the Western liberal world is characterized by a compensatory policy - the “compensatory nature of the West” gives privileges to previously oppressed groups.

Such a political and historical analysis misrepresents reality. Liberalism, as a political force, is characterized by superficial egalitarianism and complete disregard for systemic oppression, so “overcompensation” is a fictitious phenomenon, and talking about the privilege of oppressed groups is absurd in the unequal conditions of systemic sexism, racism, queerphobia, classism.

The author calls the confrontation with the patriarchal system of violence “paranoid”, the ultimate goal of which is to destroy the cultural product created by men.

It is also worth noting the discussion of the “male gaze” not from a feminist perspective, but from the perspective of male authors who sexualize women’s bodies.

The particular focus on Hollywood when it comes to women’s rights again shows that the host aims to blur the distinction between feminism and elitism and to make the viewer view them as interchangeable concepts in critical understanding.

## **WOMEN’S QUOTA IN PARLIAMENT**

The argument is built on left-wing rhetoric. The host discusses the limitations of quotas as a political mechanism. However, he asserts that feminists seeking quotes are unaware of the functional limitations of this mechanism. The problem may not be directly apparent in the text, but the general model and techniques of the “Gurisms” point to reactionary tendencies. Feminism and liberal feminism are used interchangeably. As a result, criticism of a specific form of feminism extends to the entire movement.

The host suggests that “we need a feminism that takes all forms of oppression to heart and does not talk, for example, about the forms of discrimination learned in training sessions.” In this case, Guri Sultanishvili proposes to create intersectional feminism that has existed since the 1970s. Such a one-sided representation of history and the portrayal of the feminist movement as incompetent is not worthy. Criticism of quotas within this show, given the context outlined above, can be viewed as an indirect attack on feminism.

The tale of PostTV-Gurisms, is a tale of the Left being sold-out in favor of the Georgian Dream, and this is some kind of completely artificial and inadequate leftist views in order to justify the Georgian Dream. And at the same time, very often these are quite problematic interpretations of leftism, in theoretical terms.

(Rep. 1)

In this seeming opposition liberal political correctness of the Guriasms, it will often lead to the attacks on specific groups and I will definitely agree with that. The problem is that in criticizing liberalism and identity politics, it completely excludes and loses the opportunity to talk about, say, women and LGBT people and their oppression. This may be vulgarly expressed by Gurisms, but it is also a problem for some left-wing groups as a whole, who speak only on the axis of distribution and forget the axis of recognition or participation. In short, this orthodox approach poses certain challenges. (Rep. 1)

In itself, PostTV is nothing, not even a media. It is a unity of people created for another purpose, created in the format of media, whose goal at the moment is, in my opinion, the support of the state, but in an unhealthy sense. Support, where the state wants it and actually uses media influence for all this and, unfortunately, as I said before, does not want support to strengthen human rights, but vice versa. (Resp. 3, 33)

Specifically, I had contact with Guri Sultanishvili before, because that was the period when this person was actively trying attach himself [...] to queer activists, because he used to hang out in Identity and, if I am not mistaken, it was 2013. The 13-14-year period, something like that, and then just moved on to something very confusing. I mean, I cannot guess in short, but they are very well-funded, the stench of a message box, but here, I cannot understand what drives these two or three people. Besides that, they quite clearly [...] like Dugin's works and all this Eurasianism [...] it is superfluous to talk about common sense. But the messages are very, so to speak confusing to me and to many. The rhetoric is confusing, at the same time it's anti-emancipatory, interestingly similar to Alt-info's positions, they have an approach, that the West pushing their ideas on us. That is to say, it's supposed to protect the sovereignty of the country, because this is a very interesting phenomenon, because anti-gender groups, this wide range of these groups, use the theme of this sovereignty often. This isn't about sovereignty against seizure of land or armed conflict, this is about ideological sovereignty, and here we see just how these two groups, within their ideology, defend the sovereignty of the country... (Resp. 4, 34)

In the beginning PostTV, once or twice has accidentally said something good, that

is, they sent some messages in the form that when the neutral viewers would see, the rotten ideology which they spread would not be read. But mainly from what I've seen and what was shared on social media, these people are harmful socially, politically, ideologically, they are completely under no political conjuncture, they claim the idea of justice in their new [...] as if they create a good illusion that they are in the right... (Resp. 8, 27)

## 4. OBSERVATIONS OF RESPONDENTS

### 4.1 CASES OF HARASSMENT AND SHRINKING OF SPACE

● I remember once, on May 17, 2012, there was a rally and I was in Kutaisi and ... Of course, I do not compare the intensity of the rallies in 2013 and 2014, but we went to the parliament with a few people, about 10 or 12, We were standing with posters ... and very quickly some group came, which was, of course, the opposition, with some priests and the militant parish, and suddenly we did not leave by taxi ... I saw a very real danger that these people would come at us with that aggression. Well, we really got out of there very quickly and, of course, now I do not compare it to a yellow minibus ... what happened in Tbilisi. (Resp. 2, 33)

● I We have studied a number of cases where violence, pressure, threats, and so on are committed against a female ombudsman. There have been a lot of cyber threats lately. That is because we are in the age of the Internet, someone does not even meet someone in front of their home and scares them, no, the threats are online, also blackmailing. And this is a challenge because law enforcement officers do not have the knowledge to identify it and then take appropriate measures. They do not take it very seriously, that is, you realize, they have no experience in this field and it is one of the usual cases, that is, the police do not perceive it as a systemic problem and at the same time these anti-gender groups became very active in Georgia - Korkota and Palavandishvili and Vasadze and so on Then. [...] These cases are put on the shelf year after year and there are no results, this is the situation. (Resp. 2, 33)

● Women's human rights activists are even more vulnerable in this case, just to compare what the discussions are like, let's call them the discussions to be polite, what the feedback on women activists and men activists, you will see the biggest differences and it is professional harassment if I ask me, which of course, in turn, affects the quality of work and it stems from ideological differences. A female human rights activist is, to put it simply, a bad person and a male human rights activist is a selfless fighter, roughly speaking such are the perceptions, including among people who, in theory, support human rights. That is, we all are hated by politicians equally, but we are talking about the people who are basically our field of work. (Resp. 3, 33)

- There are fascist groups in Kutaisi, for example, the National Movement (Erovnuli Mozraoba). They have some pages currently, called "White Race" where they throw in children, boys and do the brainwashing. They also confessed to me that they took money to beat up some people, call some people pro-Russians, call some - Soro owned, me amongst them. Because wherever I go, even in this "Love Garden", with my drinks and cigarette, with my friends, They come to us and (they smoke your cigarette, drink your drink - you share it, you think you share it with those who don't have it) and then insult you as- an NGOer, a feminist, an LGBT money eater who does nothing in life and takes money from others oppressions - horrible stuff, Then they will sexually harass you - "Come kiss me on the cheek then", "Ok calm down" and it all happens in an intense mode and you have to repel it and it is very tiring and really takes up space before you change things and start doing things, before you can form a small group. (Resp. 6, 25)

- At first, I was very sincere and I explained everything and I had no hesitation and did not think that they might be perceiving me as a woman and something. Then I realized slowly that these harassments, the hand touching during talks, and that you are not listened to. That they are not quite as safe types as you might think and how much resources and time they take, because wherever I go, I have to resist, I have to fight to just sit peacefully in any space, fight and shout and swear to make them go away - and that is the cost for just moving. (Resp. 6, 25)

- I do not have a feeling of fear, but I have a feeling that I have to prove something, it is insecurity in principle, because before there I had resources, to follow it to the end, now I cannot handle it and then I get hysterical and I want to cry alone. I have a feeling that how long I can live like this, that I no longer want to fight or do anything, but they don't allow you to do so. They call you in the streets and say, "Are you a feminist?" Are you this and that?" Or even if you want to talk about leftist ideas, they will not let you, these guys will make it difficult for you, coz you are a woman and you are fighting for women's rights. Not insecurity, as much as I feel anxious that I really have to fight every man... and that I do not want to, but they don't leave you any other way. (Resp. 6, 25)

## 4.2 STRATEGIES

- I was also caught up in the identity politics in the beginning, that we might need to not go outside (as in: protests in the streets) but to say something out loud - that we exist. Today all this representation politics I think is very insignificant.

But we can't approach it the anarchist way, we cannot make this all go away, we live in this situation and yes, we have to talk about it. But at the same time, we have to follow it up as to why we have to talk about it, who is the common enemy, be it someone specific or generalized capitalistic system, which profits from us being this divided. And when confronting some and falling victim to political homophobia, you are only left with reaction and you are fighting windmills, at that point real problems are left behind.

- These days whenever I try to talk to someone, be it our beneficiaries or our comrades, we always come out of the fact that there are common battles and points of contention, and identity alone is not enough to oppress and how all this is constructed, generally, it's criticism of the West. The critique of colonialism and imperialism on which all this is built and what we are forced to live in... (Resp. 6, 25)

- All kinds of people live in Kutaisi, including Nazis, fascists, socialists, anarchists, punks, queers, gays, MSM, old boys, grandchildren of thieves. It's a very large palette in short. No one has a job, no one has the opportunity to study and no one has the space to socialize, which simply does not exist. The only space is the Love Garden, where all the representatives of these subcultures gather and sit together and drink 4 GEL chacha every day. In fact, they do not fight each other at all and are united by their poverty. But with these ideologies, they pollute each other's brains and all these wars are going on. So far, I have been trying to spend energy on such people and not on NGOers and activists sitting in Tbilisi, talking about training and team building, and planning what kind of future we'll have. [...] (rep. 6, 25)

- I have not called the police for the last 4 years and I have decided to deal directly with these men who are fighting me. I and my girlfriends often have hand-to-hand fights with them. There really is no other way and the most horrible thing is that they start this physical confrontation themselves and suddenly they don't give a shit that you are a woman. And then you confront them, that if you are a man and you have such attitudes, then why are you hitting me? I cannot call the police often because I think about what I am doing them, and sometimes the only choice left is a physical confrontation. (Resp. 6, 25)

- We are a left-wing organization and our main goal is to talk not only about economic oppression but also about cultural, political, and social oppression, so we see the issue of oppression intersectionally and want to show it in many ways. On the one hand, by describing these systems of oppression and, on the other hand, showing the

connection between them as well. [...] While we are clearly critical of this conservative policy, rhetoric, and discourse. At the same time, however, we criticize liberal policies and discourse, including, say, the visibility/representation politics of LGBT and women issues, the identity politics which these groups as separate from social structures, as sterile. As if, increasing their visibility will lead to more loyalty than changing of consciousness. They do not see the reasons that can sometimes lead to such conservative cultural contradictions; Also, the socio-economic challenges that specific social groups themselves face may be the same for LGBT people. Therefore it is very artificial and superficial and often misses the social reality. (Rep. 1)

- There are orthodox Marxists and leftists who think that economic oppression is the main axis and all other things are byproducts, artificially built, and secondary. And dealing with economic oppression will lead to an end to racism, patriarchy... We do not think so and we think that because of racism and patriarchy, certain groups that are economically vulnerable, so to speak, are harmed by capitalism, they may be in a situation two or three times worse. Therefore, we think that this approach, on the one hand, is a description of reality and also creates more strategic potential for solidarity. (Rep.1)

- At some point, it is very important to talk more about the ways of resistance more actively because we also recently did a review of the Eastern Partner countries, ie the bigender movements, and there I actually asked the respondents about the ways of resistance. Strategies are not so well thought out because, on the one hand, too many people believe and quite rightly so that what they do daily in itself resistance and it really is, but there is another segment of people who think that more targeted approaches are needed against these narratives one way or another... The messages of these groups emerge from a wide range of conservative rhetoric. It is even more acceptable, including for those conservative people who are not aggressive anyway... But for them, it is more acceptable than what we say. That is, we are in a losing position regardless, and we are always in a defensive, and how we can turn this into something more proactive and preventive is very important to think about. On the other hand, it is understandable that the fact that resources are scarce, people are on the verge of burning out and stuff... This side is constantly extinguishing fires here - the other side is very much hindering it, but I think it is necessary to start talking about it between them. (Resp. 4, 34)

- Due to the fact that today the queer, feminist narrative has left the academy, it has a very academic language that is very often incomprehensible to the general public. Therefore, we have to change things, deliver somethings more comprehensively, and

so on. Mostly what I think is a good approach, at least I try to do it, when I have a face-to-face dialogue with someone, I try to explain that certain problems are not just the problems of queer people, but affect everyone, every citizen of the country. Starting with poverty, ending with the right to education, health care, or decent housing - which I think is most important in this case, and doubly affects the members of the queer community, it's a policy flaw. Rather, we have to change somethings, and I think it is very right that we should do some changes and not just talk about something from the perspective of the LGBT community. No, we have to talk about it, but in this system, which is fundamentally oppressive and fundamentally does not work for any citizen, except the privileged, I think it is very important to raise these issues that affect us all and not only - the queer community... (Resp. 5, 30)

- I also think that [Tbilisi] Pride is quite problematic for me personally, as a queer and green activist, not because I do not want Prides, etc. But given the current situation, I think Pride is quite conducive to the fact that these queer topics, topics related to women's issues, become the subject of political instrumentalization very often. It portrays a polarized society where progressives, which may include several politicians and some party members, as well as Girchi, who will also say that gay marriage is OK, and those on the other side who are dubbed as underdeveloped and backward crowds, and the media contribute to that. I think this is quite problematic because every time something happens, I personally experience it, e.g. I cannot go out on the street, starting with personal insults, ending with the fact that the taxi may not stop for, that I may not be able to come home peacefully. (Resp. 5, 30)

### 4.3 MEDIA

- The media is the biggest, what is it called, the biggest ally and also, the biggest bane because as the media covers a particular issue, be it femicide, violence against women, transgender problems or so, it is such a big problem from the media in general - sexism and of misrepresentation various types of bullying, I thought a lot before, that there should be regulation for the media that will regulate this situation, but to regulate the media is an issue of democracy and free speech. It might get worse in [our] reality and you can go as far as what it is called, as far as North Korea. Then I concluded that we should not even impose regulations, but the media have itself self-regulation should. (Resp. 2, 33)



- As an activist, I perceive the media as the biggest threat, first of all, which often turns very sensitive topics into spectacles, while it has access to the parts of the population that we cannot get to, and mainly, these topics - be it women's rights, queer rights, Activism - is replicated and adapted for sale and show. By the way, this media even often causes increased aggression in society. (Resp. 5, 30)

- If we look at the media environment today, I do not really want to call it on the side of the people, because when I talk about the media, I want it to come from the people and not some other, that just sides with the people. People's Media - we do not have such and we have very little if we do not include some online publications, which, unfortunately, there are such political-ideological decisions, unacceptable to my ideologically, etc. What I would criticize and dislike, but more or less cover and have a vision for an equal future, we have a few, but they work on a much more limited scale, they have much less coverage than, for example, national broadcasters, where critical opinion is scant and they represent the interest of businesses, parties, government and not the interests of the people. (Resp. 8, 27)



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