



January 2021

Georgian Institute of Politics

EXPERT COMMENT

Issue #14

## The perspective of the far-right political parties in Georgia after 2020 elections

Up to [ten](#) right-wing conservative parties participated in the 2020 Parliamentary elections of Georgia, but according to the official reports of the Central Election Commission (CEC), only one of them – Alliance of Patriots of Georgia managed to cross the minimal threshold with [3.14%](#) (60,480 votes). Similar to other opposition parties, two of the most prominent right-wing political parties - Alliance of Patriots of Georgia, whose representatives were the members of the previous parliament (with 88,097 votes, 5.1% in 2016 elections) and newly-established Georgian March (with 4,753 votes and hence [0.5%](#) in 2020 elections) questioned the results announced by CEC. They [blamed](#) the ruling Georgian Dream Democratic Georgia party for rigging the elections. The Alliance of Patriots of Georgia, which gained four seats in the Parliament, first refused to enter the legislative body with other opposition parties that managed to cross the threshold. The same party leader - Irma Inashvili also [attended](#) the meetings along with other political parties with the US ambassador after the elections, while Georgian March tried to [picket](#) the headquarters of the Georgian Dream a week after the elections. However, unlike other opposition parties that could or could not cross the threshold, the protest expressed by these two parties gradually died down and for them 2020 elections turned out to be a mere set-back. Finally, some of the members of the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia decided to [accept](#) the mandates but at the same time they left the political party, since their views diverged from the views of the party leaders.

1. In your opinion, what determined the [low support](#) to right-wing conservative parties reflected in official results announced by CEC?
2. Considering that right-wing political parties were rather active during the pre-election campaign, what could be the reason of their passive role in public discussions in the post-election period?
3. Elections and the post-election environment illustrated that right-wing groups struggle to maintain relevancy in Georgia's political domain. In your opinion, how sustainable is this tendency? (Should we expect this tendency to continue in the future, or is this a one-time event?)



**Levan Tsutskiridze** *Executive Director, The Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy (EECMD)*

One of the reasons ultra-right wing parties receive insignificant numbers of electoral votes, is that these groups, despite loud and widely discussed mass demonstrations, are simply not effective campaigners. Additionally, the issues which were of focus in the pre-election period did not have relevance to the platforms of ultra-right wing political parties. Combine that with increasingly obvious ties to Russia and support for these organizations diminish further.

The pre-election agenda in 2020 was considerably different from previous years, and these organizations had neither the expertise, nor preparation to comment on topics such as electoral reform or the pandemic response. In general, these organizations lack the understanding of basic governmental policy. True, their anti-democratic demonstrations can attract attention, and perhaps some part of society even sympathizes with them when they incite riots against LGBTQ, or other liberal organizations. However, society does not believe they are able to deal with serious problems. They are simply the, “wrongdoers,” “who can spoil something,” they are not those who create something constructive.

It will be hard for any ultra-right group to stay politically relevant in the Georgian political space without a new, clever and charismatic leader, and in parallel, a weakening of pro-democratic forces. The existing leaders are inept politicians and it is hard to imagine that changing.

---

**Salome Dundua**, *Associate Professor, Tbilisi State University*

Georgian political parties based on conservative (in the classical understanding of the word) values are either weak or nonexistent. The groups which are usually defined as conservative have almost nothing in common with traditional conservatism, or any other traditional political ideology for that matter. These groups largely follow a pro-Russian narrative according to which liberal democracy, and its respective, “anti-traditional” values are associated with the West, while the, “protection of national values” is connected to anti-liberalism and tacitly or directly linked to a pro-Russian orientation. None of the right-wing conservative parties save the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia has ever received wide electoral support. Moreover, only a small part of society is even aware of most of these groups’ existence.



While the antiliberal ideas voiced by the Alliance of Patriots and the Georgian March appeared to gain support upon arrival, in the end, this support has not been reflected at the ballot box. The recent election

once again demonstrated that the extreme polarization of the political space leads to extreme polarization of votes. Simply said, the Georgian Dream vs. National Movement dichotomy has divided voters with even a marginally positive attitude towards conservatism between themselves. As for the post-election protests and activities, the number of votes the right-wing parties received was so small that it left little space for legitimate protest.

At this point there seems to be no threat of ultra-right-wing groups in Georgia becoming stronger and endangering democratic development. The fact is, despite this part of society criticizing the liberal worldview, it is not reflected at the ballot box. In other words, conservative values may prevail in one part of society, but not enough to support ultra-right-wing forces. When it comes to elections, an openly pro-Russian, anti-Western platform does not have a future in Georgia.



**David Darchiashvili**, *Professor, Ilia State University*

While ultra-right groups attempt to court the electoral support of those with conservative values, there are two other social-political players which already meet the expectations of the conservative part of society. These forces are the Church and the party in power. We must also mention that other opposition parties often dabble in conservatism and therefore ultra-right groups have to deal with serious competition in the field.

The second reason for the weakness of far-right groups is that their leaders are neither very charismatic nor independent. The phases of their activation are related to the will of more influential players - internal or external. These players are still the government and the church. Additionally, ultra-right groups both coordinate with, and receive moral or material incentives from, institutions and parties in Russia. This support, or absence of, plays an important role in the behavior of these groups. This is evident both in the similarity of discourse and ideology between Georgian ultra-rightists and Russian conservatives (i.e. the Georgian March-Russian March), and accusations that the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia is financed from Russian sources. The Russian business and ideological links of one ultra-right, figure Levan Vasadze, is well known to Georgian society.

**Hans Gutbrod**, *Associate Professor, Ilia State University*

In general, it is better to be very cautious while making interpretations based on the 2020 elections. These were extraordinary elections during a pandemic, which constrained topics, debate, campaigning, and even voting. Around the world, it was widely visible that these elections tended to favour governments that had mustered a coordinated response. In this way, 2020 elections are not a comprehensive guide enough to assess the overall political landscape.



During these extraordinary times, the post-election period was dominated by the surge of the pandemic. Where we will be in a year's time, when other topics will come to the fore, is very hard to tell. The disruptions - demographic, political, economic - are likely to continue, and such dislocations can help fringe groups to gain broader followings.

The elections primarily showed that this was an extraordinary moment in time. In spite of significant discontent, the opposition parties did not manage to mobilize breakthrough momentum. It is important to bear in mind that while the big pain with human losses is being suffered now, there will be much societal and economic pain still ahead. In that regard, this is not a time for "tendency" or "continuation". The future is rather wide open, in risky and potentially good ways.

---



საქართველოს პოლიტიკის ინსტიტუტი  
GEORGIAN INSTITUTE OF POLITICS



Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP) is a Tbilisi-based non-profit, non-partisan, research and analysis organization. GIP works to strengthen the organizational backbone of democratic institutions and promote good governance and development through policy research and advocacy in Georgia.

This publication was produced with the financial support of the **Open Society Georgia Foundation**. The views, opinions and statements expressed by the authors and those providing comments are theirs only and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Foundation. Therefore, the Open Society Georgia Foundation is not responsible for the content of the information material.

#### HOW TO QUOTE THIS DOCUMENT:

*“The perspective of the far-right political parties in Georgia after 2020 elections”,* Expert Comment #14, Georgian Institute of Politics, January 2021.

© Georgian Institute of Politics, 2021  
13 Aleksandr Pushkin St, 0107 Tbilisi, Georgia  
Tel: +995 599 99 02 12  
Email: [info@gip.ge](mailto:info@gip.ge)  
For more information, please visit  
[www.gip.ge](http://www.gip.ge)