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Georgian Institute of Politics

EXPERT POLLS

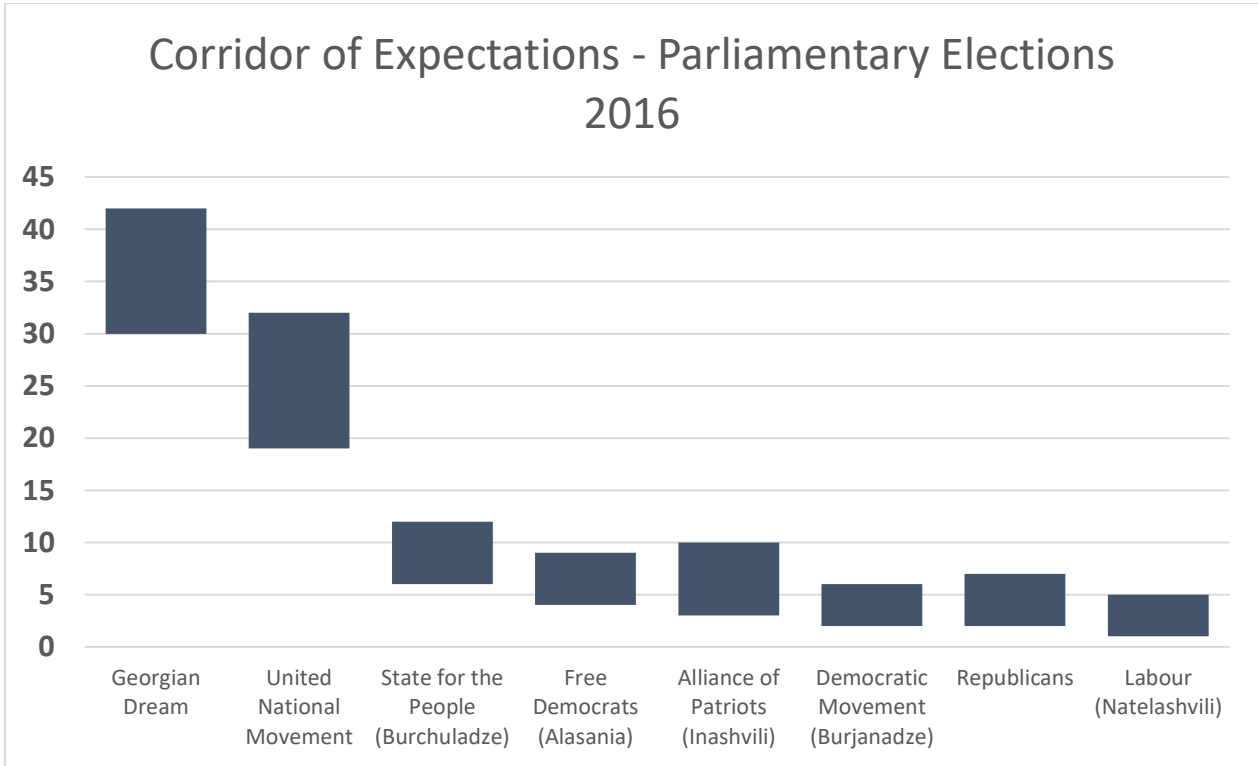
Issue #1

Georgian Dream Ahead, National Movement with momentum, for #Gvote16

The Georgian Dream remains ahead in the run-up to the Parliamentary Election on October 9, 2016, but the United National Movement gained momentum, according to the latest poll of engaged observers and experts. The poll, conducted by the [Georgian Institute of Politics \(GIP\)](#), collected estimates from 33 engaged observers and experts, Georgian and international, whose input was recruited through a variety of means. Taken together, these estimates can form a “corridor of expectations” for the outcome of the upcoming parliamentary elections. Also, it should be noted that the summary of the reasonable corridor of expectations, for the October 2016 parliamentary election in Georgia, focuses on overall vote share. The expert poll does not address the majoritarian candidates who are elected directly and can determine the parliamentary majority.

Poll results: “Corridor of Expectations”

- Georgian Dream 30-42%
- United National Movement 19-32%
- State for the People 6-12%
- Alliance of Patriots 3-10%
- Free Democrats 4-9%
- Republican Party 2-7%
- Democratic Movement 2-6%
- Labour Party 1-5%



Who will win the upcoming election?

It seems that Georgian Dream (GD) and United National Movement (UNM) will continue to dominate the political landscape, contrary to some expectations following earlier polls that had indicated that 57% of the population was undecided, right until June 2016. This is also because no new political force has managed to enter political arena and attract the part of undecided electorate prior to the elections.

For the GD, the likely vote share at the elections will be between 30-42%. Out of all estimates, 75% fall into this 30-42% range, suggesting it as the most likely result. For the UNM, the most likely result is between 19-32%.

According to the collective estimates, it is possible, though not likely, that the UNM could arrive at a similar vote share to GD, or even slightly surpass it. The UNM has shown momentum in this September 2016 poll. The median estimate of the UNM's vote share went up by 4%, compared to the previous June/July 2016 poll, suggesting that the party may have gained ground over the summer.

Who will make it into parliament?

From the smaller parties, the Alliance of Patriots seems poised to make it into parliament, according to the collective estimate, with a likely vote share of 3-10%.

State for the People (Paata Burchuladze's election bloc) also did well in the estimates, with 6-12%. However, the estimates were collected September 22-29, i.e. mostly before State for the People/Burchuladze split from New Political Centre/Girchi. Before this split the bloc was also abandoned by several close allies of Burchuladze and by significant part of party's young wing. These events will likely have negative impact on bloc's rating. With departure of Girchi party will probably lose many voices of UNM sympathizers. On the other hand, it cannot gain support of the UNM-critical voters since UNM's another split-off – Giorgi Vashadze's New Georgia is still a part of the bloc.

A reduction of votes for State for the People may benefit several smaller parties that skirt the 5% threshold. Potential beneficiaries include the Free Democrats, with an estimated result between 4-9%, and the Republicans with 2-7%. The Democratic Movement (Nino Burjanadze)

is tipped to receive between 2-6% of votes, giving them a small chance of making it into parliament. Labour, according to this estimate (1-5%), most likely will not surpass the 5% threshold.

Experts' recommendations for political parties

Next to party ratings the expert polls also asked experts to provide their opinion and recommendation about the pre-electoral climate and party campaigning's. The most frequently mentioned challenges were low political culture and strengthening of pro-Russian forces as well as often misguided political marketing and election campaigning by Georgian political parties. In particular, the experts underlined inability of some of the main political parties to campaign in the regions which will probably negatively affect their chances on a polling day. Another challenge may be weak programmatic profiles of the parties, their focus on negative message-box and ignoring the key issues which are important to electorate. According to experts, due to these reasons, many parties missed a chance to capitalize on a high share of undecided electorate.

About the polls

Expert Polls, an innovative initiative by the Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP) collects views from 30-50 experts, and presents these views and opinions to the public in an accessible way. The initiative started on October 1, 2016. The expert polls are based on methodology developed by American pollster Nate Silver. His aggregation of polls has regularly yielded accurate results of US elections (<http://fivethirtyeight.com/>). With the help of experienced international consultants, we are adapting this model to the Georgian context. The project is currently funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

Compared with sociological surveys, the expert polls have a few significant advantages. With regards to vote share, this expert poll is likely to provide more plausible results than last-week surveys, due to the high percentage of voters who are not willing to reveal their preferred choice, a problem that is further compounded by the difficulty of estimating which voters will go to vote (median estimate at 58%), on election day. The problem of nonresponse cannot be resolved by spending more money and interviewing more voters. Even the most expensive last-week survey would thus require interpretation.

This expert poll nevertheless builds on existing surveys, and provides an aggregate interpretation of the likely results. Many of the people who entered their estimates have more than 10 years of experience in working with polls and Georgian elections. These engaged observers and experts were approached in a number of different ways, and the GIP team cleaned the collected data based on established principles.

By providing corridors of expectations, the poll helps to focus the discussion on likely scenarios and how to prepare for them. It is possible, but not particularly probable, that results will significantly deviate from the ranges suggested in this poll. One caveat is that last-minute events (such as the Girchi-split and the release of the audiotape, and future events) can have an impact. Moreover, the assumption is that the vote is largely free and fair.

GEORGIAN INSTITUTE OF POLITICS (GIP)

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.

