

# Democracy Conference Agenda

GEODEM 30 May 2022



Venue: *Hilton Garden Inn Tbilisi Chavchavadze (Chavchavadze ave. 64a)*

9:30 – 10:00 Registration, welcoming coffee

10:00 – 10:15 **Welcoming remarks**

- **Prof. Kornely Kakachia**, Director, the Georgian Institute of Politics
- **H.E. Heidi Grau**, Ambassador of Switzerland in Georgia

10:15 – 11:45 **Panel 1: Are Georgian political parties ready for coalition partnership?**

Moderator: **Prof. David Aprasidze** – Ilia State University, Konrad Adenauer Foundation

Georgia has been in a deep and protracted political crisis since the 2020 parliamentary election. Amendments to the constitution, together with the reforms proposed by the agreement brokered by the EU, were supposed to shift Georgia towards a coalition government. However, the current relationship between the political parties is anything but cooperative. Many perceive politics as a zero-sum game where the winner takes it all and the losers face the constant threat of political persecutions. In a time of increased polarization in politics and the media, this panel asks whether Georgia is ready for a coalition government, focusing on the following questions:

- Why is it important for parties to understand the need for a coalition government for Georgia’s political future? Do parties’ political strategies contribute to this process?
- What internal and interparty changes are needed to bring about real change?
- To what extent will parties be able to fulfill the public’s expectations for a coalition government?
- How can international experience and international actors help parties strengthen coalition political culture in Georgia?

Speakers:

- **Dr. Fernando Casal Bertoa** – University of Nottingham
- **TBC** – Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia
- **Salome Samadashvili** – Lelo for Georgia
- **TBC** – United National Movement – United Opposition “Strength in Unity”
- **Natia Mezvrishvili** – For Georgia

11:45 – 12:00 Coffee break

12:00 – 13:30 **Panel 2: Internal party democracy. Why don’t we have new leaders?**

Moderator: **Nino Gelashvili** – Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty

Recent elections have highlighted the large number of undecided voters in Georgia. This trend may be caused by the public’s low level of trust in established political parties. Political parties in Georgia lack concrete ideologies and interparty democracy. It is widely perceived that political parties are leadership-oriented and party leaders do not use a transparent and democratic process to make decisions. Public polls also show that voters are ready for a completely new political party, a so-called third power, to emerge. However, even in newly established political parties, voters find “the old players in a new configuration.” In fact, most new political parties are really mergers or splinter

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parties. Despite the growing number of young Georgians educated in the West over the last two decades, only a few new leaders want to join political parties or independently establish new ones.

- Why do young/new leaders not want to participate in Georgian politics?
- What opportunities do new young leaders have to engage in political parties?
- What strategies do political parties have to attract new leaders?
- What could be the role of the international community to promote youth engagement in Georgia's politics?
- What could we learn from international practices/norms?

Speakers:

- **Teona Zurabashvili** – Georgian Institute of Politics
- **David Shervashidze** – International Republican Institute
- **Zaza Bibilashvili** – The Chavchavadze Center
- **David Berdzenishvili** – Republican Party

13:30 –  
14:30

Lunch

14:30 –  
16:00

## Panel 3: Development of public participation and ways to encourage it

Moderator: **Felix Hett**, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Year after year, public opinion polls conducted in Georgia suggest that the majority of respondents do not favor any of the political parties. The important link between political parties and society appears to be broken. Furthermore, despite several new and young faces on the political scene, Georgian politics has been dominated by the same politicians for the last two decades or more. The lack of communication between voters and parties between election cycles—and the slow pace of generational change within the parties— affect the level of public participation in everyday politics. Public engagement with political parties is important as it keeps politicians in check. This panel will present a joint manifesto by young politicians and discuss public engagement with political parties, focusing on:

- What do citizens expect from political parties? What steps can political parties take to encourage more public engagement?
- In what areas could parties cooperate regardless of their ideological/political differences?
- What is the role of civil society actors to promote public in everyday politics?

Introduction: **Shota Kakabadze, Nino Samkharadze** – Georgian Institute of Politics

Speakers:

- **Goga Tchkadua** – Girchi - More Freedom
- **Eliso Bregvade** – Strategy Aghmashenebeli
- **Mikheil Tsverava** – Gakharia For Georgia
- **Tamuna Manvelishvili** – International Black Sea University

Comments by party representatives

16:00

Closing remarks