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Georgia's 2024 Parliamentary Elections and Their Implications for EU Integration

The 2024 parliamentary elections in Georgia were one of the most important elections for the country since its independence for several reasons, particularly in the context of the country's aspirations for EU integration. These elections mark a critical juncture in Georgia's geopolitical landscape, as they largely determine the direction of the country's foreign and domestic policies, including its relationship with the EU. Georgia's aspirations to join the EU had been a central pillar of its foreign policy, and the EU had outlined nine priorities that Georgia must fulfill before opening accession talks, with a free and fair parliamentary election in October 2024 being a key requirement. Therefore, the outcome of these elections significantly determines Georgia's commitment to these reforms and its readiness to integrate into the EU. Considering these circumstances, the controversy around the election results both inside and outside of the country, these elections therefore have far-reaching implications for Georgia's geopolitical positioning and its prospects for EU membership.

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At the request of the **Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP)**, a selection of experts from different countries responded to the following questions:

- How do the results of the 2024 parliamentary elections in Georgia impact the country's EU integration process
- What can be the way forward for Georgia?



Prof. Lia (Lika) Tsuladze

*Executive Director of the Center for Social Sciences and
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No doubt, the country's parliamentary elections will further stall Georgia's European integration. We have known that Georgia is autocracy though we still believed we could defeat the autocratic regime via democratic elections, which has never been the case anywhere in the world. Now we should expect further democratic decline, attacks on the remaining democratic institutions, new legislative initiatives that will further restrict freedom of speech and human rights, etc. All of this will only further distance Georgia from the EU. The ruling party attempted to restrict freedom of speech and human rights for years. However, the ruling party's divergence from the European course became obvious to the wider society only in June 2019, as a result of "Gavrilov night", while to the EU in July 2021, after GD's withdrawal from Charles Michel's document. This process further escalated after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, when GD refused to join the EU's sanctions against Russia and chose to follow the so-called "pragmatic politics" trying to get benefits from both the EU (e.g. candidate status) and Russia (material gains). These elections clearly show that the ruling party does not intend to follow a democratic path (rather autocracy is going to consolidate), while it won't be able to sit between two stools either, which means that it will openly turn its back to the country's European course.

Only true pressure from the EU and other Western allies can ensure GD's nominal "forceful compliance" with EU requirements. However, the fact is that autocracy cannot really transform into democracy. Therefore, even if certain undemocratic laws are withdrawn after this pressure, it won't ensure the GD's return to a democratic and European path. Only systemic changes can make it possible for Georgia to successfully continue its European integration and the most important instrument for these systemic changes is fair elections that will result in a multiparty parliament, which will firmly continue its approximation with the EU.



Prof. Dr. Andrea Gawrich

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We see that the EU is not planning a substantial change of strategy towards the Georgian government because it would not reach a consensus on this (see Orbán's visit to Georgia, which – only - 15 EU ministers jointly criticised). On the one hand, the EU is, in its enlargement policy, bureaucratically moving ahead, as the regular EU report on Georgia, published shortly after the election, indicates. The report finds that Georgia has regressed in many areas related to democracy and generally made little progress in other fields. It does not indicate any deviation from the EU's previous strategy of pausing the accession process. Thus, the EU is neither taking a step forward nor a step back (e.g. sanctions), but it is also not taking any new steps to the side, such as non-recognition of the elections. The EU seems to be waiting for further proof of electoral fraud and the opposition's more concrete plans on upcoming strategies, which could eventually receive specific EU support.

On the one hand, the opposition's boycott of parliamentary seats has been a powerful momentum. On the other hand, from the perspective of international supporters, this is still not a medium-term strategy, as gaining international attention and support following electoral fraud is much more difficult to develop from the streets than being vocal against autocratic power abuse within the parliament. There is undoubtedly great European sympathy for the Georgian opposition. Unfortunately, gaining international political support also requires strategies to remain seen on the European political agenda.



Prof. Zinaida Bechná

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Studies at Masaryk University*

The EU faces a challenging task in supporting pro-EU Georgians while countering the Georgian Dream government's erosion of democratic norms. For the first time, Georgia adopted a fully proportional system in the 2024 elections, aiming to limit single-party dominance, which is seen as a positive step toward European standards. However, government actions, like passing laws modeled after Russian foreign agent policies and anti- LGBTIQ+ measures, have fueled Eurosceptic rhetoric and delayed EU membership talks. Additionally, Georgian Dream's victory, endorsed by Hungary's Viktor Orbán, signals a shift toward authoritarian alliances.

The EU plays a vital role in shaping Georgia's future by supporting its aspirations for EU membership while addressing democratic concerns. As more Russian citizens settle in Georgia, it becomes increasingly urgent to bolster pro-EU forces who advocate for a democratic direction. Ensuring fair elections and implementing EU-aligned reforms are crucial steps. However, alliances between Georgian Dream and non-Western actors, like China, dilute Western influence, heightening the risk of domestic instability. Strengthening civil society, ensuring transparency, and encouraging constructive dialogue between the government and opposition are essential. The EU's nine-point roadmap remains a key pathway for Georgia's integration, reinforcing the EU's commitment to the aspirations of the Georgian people. Georgia merits a future among democratic nations, necessitating a reciprocal and enduring relationship with the West. While acknowledging Georgia's unique path, it's crucial to emphasize the importance of timely and dedicated support that aligns with the aspirations of the Georgian people.



Prof. Michael Emerson

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Georgia's EU accession process will remain quasi-frozen for the time being. The GD government will no doubt proclaim their continuing commitment to integration with the EU, but this will be a hollow discourse. The idea of sanctioning the GD government and leaders individually encounters the well-known dilemma that this will intensify pro-Russian tendencies. Going forward, the fragmented Georgian opposition political parties have to consolidate with a real, credible and impressive leader.



Dr. Teona Lavrelashvili

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At the moment in Brussels, there is a clear perception that Georgia's EU integration process is stalled on a political level. The European Commission's recently adopted enlargement package confirmed limited progress, particularly in areas related to fundamental rights. However, the Commission does note moderate progress on economic criteria. For the EU, two key preconditions for continuing the process stand out: first, a credible investigation into alleged electoral fraud, and second, the withdrawal of the law on transparency of foreign influence. Overall, the election results have negatively impacted Georgia's EU integration process.

Georgia needs to move forward both domestically and in terms of its foreign policy. Domestically, Georgian political actors need to find ways to engage in political dialogue, likely centered on a credible investigation into alleged electoral fraud with the assistance of international partners. Georgia has no time to lose; essential reforms related to good governance, social security, and addressing youth unemployment are urgently needed. The country is already losing much of its young talent abroad, and a labor shortage is imminent. Rural development should also be a priority. However, if polarization persists, Georgia risks a permanent political crisis, where neither international mediation nor domestic actors can maintain stability, which would ultimately benefit only Russia.



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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.

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