



## **The Final Push of “Georgian Dream” Toward One-Party Rule: The Georgian Parliament at The Forefront of Legal Authoritarianism**

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Under the Georgian Dream, Georgia is experiencing democracy backsliding at a speed unprecedented in its history as an independent nation. According to renowned international indexes, the country’s democracy indicators are moving closer to an area of concern, where the country could transition from a hybrid regime to various forms of authoritarianism (Freedom House 2025; EIU 2025; V-Dem 2025). The Georgian Dream's one-party rule is actively opposed by the pro-democracy and pro-Western electorate. However, the ongoing repression against "democracy fighters" is worsening daily, and the threats to the country’s Western future are becoming increasingly evident.

One of the battlefields in the clash between authoritarianism and democracy is Georgia’s one-party Parliament, which current is unable to exercise its representative function, lead a legislative process for the state, carry out international activities aligned with national interests, or perform proper oversight functions. On the contrary, all these areas demonstrate the severe erosion of the state institution in the hands of the Georgian Dream— an institution that was once at the forefront of democratization. The following policy memorandum documents how the one-party Parliament is enhancing authoritarianism in Georgia.

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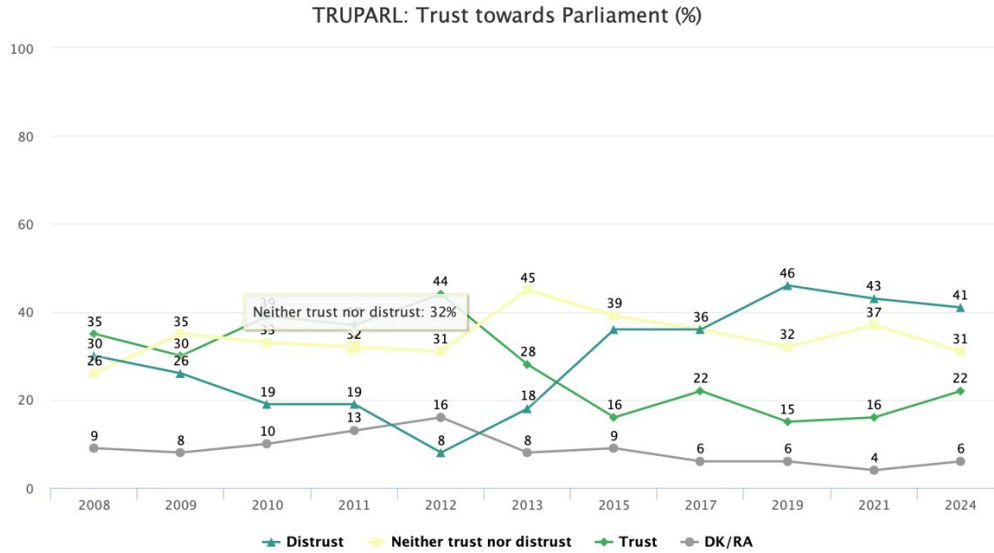
## Authoritarianism, Legitimacy, and the Georgian Parliament

In academic literature, one of the key indicators to identify and classify regimes is elections and the post-election legislative institution its form and essence (Bonvecci & Simison 2017; Levitsky & Way 2002). In other words, the legislative body is often referred as the “black box” of authoritarianism (Wiebrecht 2022), as it fully reveals the mechanisms of the system.

Under the rule of the Georgian Dream, Georgia is rapidly acquiring the characteristics of an authoritarian regime. According to renowned international indices and expert analyses, the country is shifting toward the category of electoral authoritarianism (V-Dem 2025; Tskhadaia 2025; Zedelashvili 2024). Electoral authoritarianism refers to a system, in which formal democratic procedures are maintained, but authoritarian control dominates the political process—power is fully consolidated through electoral manipulation and the erosion of institutional checks and balances. In such regimes, legislative bodies are typically weak, although opposition parties may retain a limited platform to express their agendas (Levitsky & Way 2002). Although Georgia is not yet a fully consolidated authoritarian state, it has already surpassed the thresholds of electoral authoritarianism. The Georgian Parliament has effectively become a "rubber-stamp" institution under the Georgian Dream (Wiebrecht 2021), incapable of exercising oversight over the executive branch. Worse, it has transformed into an active instrument of repression, controlled by elites submissive to oligarchic interests.

In terms of legitimacy, the 11th convocation of the Georgian Parliament is the most controversial in the country’s relatively short political life. Although the Parliament, as a democratic institution, almost never attracted broad public trust (Figure 1), the question of legitimacy of the body has never been so acute. This controversy is primarily caused by the unprecedented irregularities documented in the 2024 elections, given that the primary source of legitimacy of any legislative body is elections (Khmaladze 2024).

**Figure 1: Trust - Parliament, 2008-2024 years**



*Source: Caucasus Barometer, time-series row, available at: <https://caucasusbarometer.org/ge/cb-ge/TRUPARL/>*

Numerous concerns remain about the transparency of the 2024 parliamentary elections, which have yet to be addressed by the electoral administration and the ruling party (TI Georgia 2024b; ISFED 2024; Schiffers 2024). Reports by OSCE/ODIHR and other international observation missions reflected unprecedented irregularities and referred to the elections as “fundamentally flawed” (IRI 2024; OSCE/ODIHR 2024). On these grounds, Western actors continue to question the fairness and legitimacy of elections. Thus, official data released by the Central Election Administration of Georgia (CESKO) – which claim 53% for the ruling party (CESKO 2024)—are not recognized by local opposition parties, civil society, the fifth President of Georgia, and most importantly, the pro-democratic part of the public.

The sheer number of events and facts casts a serious doubt over its legitimacy. Thus, the Parliament’s fundamental legislative functions—representative, lawmaking, and oversight—are compromised. Moreover, in the absence of internal and external legitimacy, and under the full control of the ruling party, the Parliament has transformed into the main instrument of repression against the Georgian public.

## What and Whom Does (Doesn't) Georgia's One-party Parliament "Represent"?

According to the official data published by the Central Election Commission, Georgian Dream received 53.93% of votes, resulting in a parliamentary majority of 79 mandates (CESKO 2024; Parliament.ge n.d.a<sup>2</sup>). However, due to the election's widespread flaws and irregularities, the results have not been recognized by opposition parties, civil society, or critical society. Forty-nine MPs representing three political unions have formally suspended their mandates and do not participate in parliamentary activities (Parliament.ge 2025g). Twelve elected MPs from the Gakharia for Georgia party remain listed on the official parliament website (Parliament.ge n.d.b) because the party has not formally withdrawn its electoral list. However, the MPs are not engaged in parliamentary work.

Three MPs split from Georgian Dream to form the European Socialists and create a "healthy opposition" (Radio Tavisufleba 2025). In addition, People's Power—another offshoot party of the Georgian Dream— continues to exist. According to established practices in Georgian political culture, these groups serve the creation of illusion of opposition (Kakachia & Samkharadze 2025). Moreover, neither the European Socialists nor People's Power participated as independent electoral subjects in the 2024 elections. Thus, these groups— directly affiliated with the ruling party—fail to meet any formal parliamentary criteria for political representation. As a result, by spring 2025, there are 89 non-opposition MPs in the Parliament instead of 150. This indicates that the 11th convocation of the Parliament of Georgia is a one-party body, exclusively controlled by the Georgian Dream.

In addition, gender diversity has significantly deteriorated in Parliament. This is a regression from an earlier Georgian Dream policy, when some progress was observed although significant flaws remained (Samkharadze 2023). Currently, the situation is notably severe: out of 101 formally listed MPs, only 14 are women (Parliament.ge n.d.c), indicating a deliberate marginalization of gender diversity by the Georgian Dream. Moreover, the Gender Equality Council was abolished (Parliament.ge 2025i), a move that was critically assessed by the civil society and international organizations (Social Justice Center 2025d; WISG 2025; CSO Meter 2025).

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<sup>2</sup> No date a

Focused on consolidating power for an indefinite term, the Georgian Dream has shown no formal intention to restore the Parliament's legitimacy or to transform it into a truly representative legislative body. An oligarch-led party, it refuses to share power with opposition parties and displays no concern that the Parliament is not a representative institution. There is no political will for compromise, discussion, or agreement with opposition parties. On the contrary, it seeks to repress the parties with significant electoral votes. In that way, the Georgian Dream not only seeks to maintain power but also tries to neglect opposition-leaning voters and consolidate one-party rule. The current composition of the Parliament is the exact model of this ambition.

## **Oversight in Authoritarianism: One-party Parliament as Schrödinger's Cat**

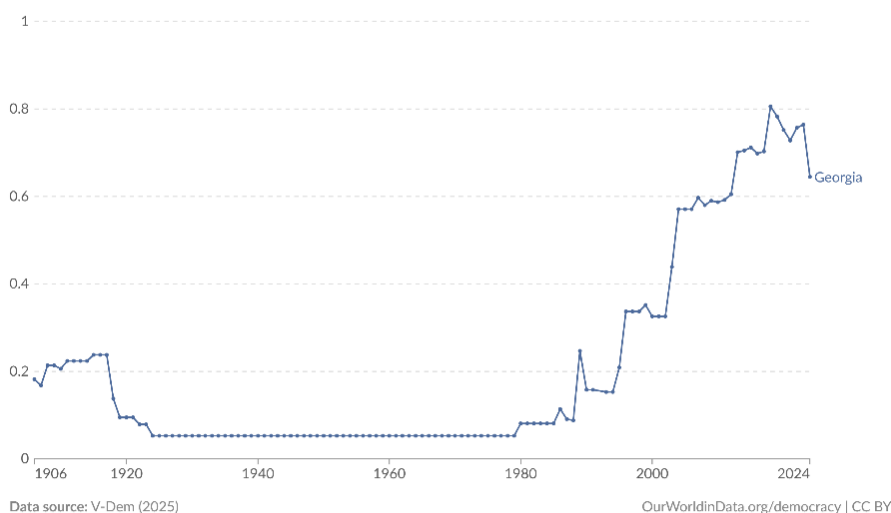
Since the beginning of its term under the shadow of contested legitimacy, the current Parliament has adopted a series of regulatory amendments that have significantly undermined the legislative body's oversight capacities and accountability mechanism. Beyond procedural amendments, repressive reorganizations have further restricted critical and operational spaces, causing additional challenges. One of the key examples is the abolition of the Parliamentary Research Center (Radio Tavisufleba 2025b). Given the sharp decline in Georgia's parliamentary oversight index during the last tenure of the Georgian Dream (Figure 2), the combination of procedural constraints and organizational amendments has paralyzed Parliament's oversight functions.

**Figure 2: Legislative constraints on the executive index, 1906-2024**

### Legislative constraints on the executive index, 1906 to 2024



Based on the expert estimates and index by V-Dem<sup>1</sup>. It combines information on the extent to which the legislature and government agencies can question, investigate and oversee the executive. It ranges from 0 to 1 (most constrained).



1. V-Dem: The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project publishes data and research on democracy and human rights. It relies on evaluations by around 3,500 country experts and supplementary work by its own researchers to assess political institutions and the protection of rights. The project is managed by the V-Dem Institute, based at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. Learn more: Democracy data: how do researchers measure democracy? The 'Varieties of Democracy' data: how do researchers measure democracy? The 'Varieties of Democracy' data: how do researchers measure human rights?

**Source:** V-Dem, available at: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/legislative-constraints-on-the-executive-index?tab=chart&country=~GEO>

One of the most significant amendments was the abolition of Minister’s Hour. Ruling party MPs argued that “[the Minister’s hour] is not a constitutionally mandated oversight instrument and, as the practice shows, it was not an effective mechanism of parliamentary control” (Parliament.ge 2025a). As a result of these changes, ministers are no longer required to submit annual reports to the Parliament or answer MPs’ questions. Shalva Papuashvili claimed that the mechanism of interpellation would be strengthened to replace Minister’s House. However, monitoring reports indicate that Georgian Dream MPs never use interpellation either for critical questions or for genuine oversight function (TI Georgia 2024a, Samkharadze 2024). Moreover, ministers’ responses to MPs’ questions lack substance. Taken together, these developments reveal a full dismantling of the Parliament’s oversight function.

However, while the government’s oversight mechanisms have been weakened, a new and more repressive dimension of oversight gained momentum: the Georgian Dream Parliament’s temporary investigative commission, tasked with examining the “regime’s and

its political representatives' activities in 2003-2012" (Parliament.ge 2025c). Given the contested legitimacy of the current Parliament, the majority of the individuals summoned by the commission have declined to participate. According to the assessments, this is a commission with "conclusions in advance" (Kuntchulia 2025), aimed not at uncovering the truth about the critical issues of the state but rather at preparing the legal foundations for the Georgian Dream's rapprochement with Russia (Kakachia & Kakabadze 2025). If the commission concludes that Georgia started the 2008 August War, the Georgian Dream will be able to restore diplomatic relations with Moscow—the party's long-standing aim in recent years. In addition, the Georgian Dream clearly seeks to dismantle opposition parties through legislation, thus clearing the field of opposing opinions (Tsutskiridze 2025). The commission was scheduled to conclude its work on May 5, 2025, but Georgian Dream MPs claim the "regime's trial" must be extended for a month as they "received so many testimonies" (Mdinaradze 2025; Zarkua 2025). This extension period and its aftermath could provide the Georgian Dream with arguments—especially for the Constitutional Court—to pursue its strategic goals.

It is worth mentioning that this issue revealed the opposition parties' fragmentation and lack of coordination: the majority of opposition party leaders summoned by the commission refused to participate, even when faced with legal fines. However, Giorgi Gakharia, the head of the Gakharia for Georgia party and a former Georgian Dream interior minister and prime minister, appeared before the commission. His decision caused widespread criticism among the public and opposition spectrum. The lack of a unified position weakens the opposition and paves the way for the Georgian Dream to consolidate one-party rule.

## **(Non)existence of the 11th Convocation: Law as the Unconditional Guarantee of Authoritarianism**

Parliamentary activity has become one of the key instruments for the Georgian Dream to consolidate one-party authoritarianism. Over the past five months, the actions of Georgian Dream MPs show a clear tendency by the oligarch-led ruling party.

During this period, Georgian Dream MPs have adopted numerous repressive laws against the democratic part of the society. These includes the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) (Parliament.ge 2025d); a law that significantly simplifies dismantling of political parties (Parliament.ge 2025j); amendments to laws regulating broadcasting, grants, police,

and civil service; and additional amendments to assembly and manifestation laws that limit the form and scale of protests (Parliament.ge 2025e,f,g). In addition, the Georgian Dream announced the possible criminalization of treason (Georgian Dream 2025), a strict drug policy (Civil.ge 2025), and other legal mechanisms that directly indicate the party's aim to strengthen repression "within the law." With these legal amendments, the one-party Parliament divided parties, civil society, and independent media. Taken together, the Georgian Dream laws effectively stifle cooperation between these three actors.

The work of the Georgian Dream-led Parliament continues to face constant criticism from both the Venice Commission and local civil society organizations. The Venice Commission released an ad hoc statement that the amendments to the Administrative Offences Code and Law on Assembly and Manifestation require revision due to numerous flaws and ambiguities (Venice Commission 2025). Besides, civil society actors consistently argue that the laws adopted by the Georgian Dream are incompatible with the Georgian Constitution and fundamental international human rights (Social Justice Center 2025a; TI Georgia 2025c).

Thus, the 11th convocation of Georgian Parliament—composed exclusively by GD representatives—has turned into an instrument for legitimizing authoritarianism and a mechanism against the actors that are essential for democracy. This is showcased by increased repressions against civil society, independent media, opposition parties, dissenting civil servants, and individuals involved in the widespread public protests.

## **Georgia's Geopolitical Isolation and the Parliament**

Parliamentary diplomacy is a key dimension that reflects the geopolitical priorities of Georgia— a country on an authoritarian path. Under Georgian Dream rule, the Parliament's international relations illustrate a clear shift from the democratic club toward illiberal geopolitical spaces. One of the Parliament's first foreign engagements was a visit to Hungary and memorandum with the National Assembly of Hungary (Parliament.ge 2025). Subsequent international visits included the Philippines, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Serbia, India, Japan etc. (Parliament.ge 2025 n.d.d).

While Georgia has long-standing bilateral relations with these countries, the Parliament's current diplomatic engagements indicate a deviation, an unusual tendency: an absence of the visits or meetings with the states that traditionally support Georgia's democratic and

European aspirations. As a result, these tendencies, coupled with the domestic repressions enacted by the Georgian Dream Parliament, reinforces country's geopolitical isolation.

## **Legislative authoritarianism - the Georgian Dream's One-party Ruling Comfort Zone**

Under the current Georgian Dream administration, Georgia—once a beacon of rapid democratization—has transformed into a prominent example of democratic backsliding among hybrid regimes. The early activities of the one-party Parliament, formed after the controversial October 26, 2024 parliamentary elections, created a solid legal ground to allow the ruling party to consolidate power. The dynamics, form, and substance of these legislative activities undermine any lingering hope that the country may still function as electoral autocracy. Currently, the Georgian Parliament fails to carry out its core—representation, oversight, and lawmaking—functions, while its limited international relations activities speak to the country's geopolitical isolation. Moreover, each of these trajectories is aimed at repression and isolation of the state to rid political and public spaces of critical opinions.

The current state of play critically undermines foundational democratic principles—criticism, control, opposition, balance of power among institutions, and freedom of will for voters. Accordingly, repressive actors have clearly eliminated opportunities to save Georgian democracy.

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