

**THE 9-MONTH PHASE OF THE WEST–GEORGIA DISCORDANCE:  
THE AFTERMATH OF THE ADOPTION OF THE WIDELY DEBATED LAW  
AND THE BACKGROUND OF THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IT**

**Sargsyan V. D.**

*Summary*

*The article presents events that took place in and around Georgia during the period from April to October 2024 (up to the parliamentary elections held on October 26). These include the circulation and adoption of the draft law “On Transparency of Foreign Influence”, the pre-election processes triggered by these actions, and the complex developments surrounding Georgia.*

*All the processes that took place during these 9 months were only seemingly connected to the mentioned bill and later the law. In reality, this complex historical period was significant both in terms of restoring Georgia’s sovereignty and its genuinely Georgian-centric orientation, as well as adjusting the sphere of Western influence in the South Caucasus.*

*Through a comprehensive examination of the realities mentioned in the work, the true goal of the West and the essence of the Georgian authorities’ struggle are revealed. During this fateful period, Georgia’s leadership took another crucial step toward freeing itself from Western influence, which had been entrenched since the time of M. Saakashvili’s rule. As a result, the country ceased to be a pawn in the hands of the West and, most importantly, avoided the dangerous path of becoming a platform for opening a second front against Russia.*

**ԱՐԵՎՄՈՒՏՔ–ՎՐԱՍՏԱՆ ԽՈՐԸ ԱՌՃԱԿԱՏՄԱՆ 9-ԱՄՍՅԱ ՓՈՒԼԸ.**

**ԱՂՄԿԱՀԱՐՈՒՅՑ ՕՐԵՆՔԻ ԸՆԴՈՒՆՄԱՆ**

**ԵՎ ՎԵՐՋԻՆԻՍ ԴԵՄ ՊԱՅՔԱՐԻ ՀԵՏՆԱՊԱՏԿԵՐԸ**

**Սարգսյան Վ. Դ.**

*Սեղմագիր*

*Հոդվածում ներկայացված են Վրաստանում և նրա շուրջ տեղի ունեցած իրադարձությունները 2024 թվականի ապրիլից մինչև հոկտեմբեր ընկած ժամանակահատվածում (մինչև հոկտեմբերի 26-ին կայացած խորհրդարանական ընտրությունները): Դրանք ներառում են «Օտարերկրյա ազդեցության թափանցիկության մասին» օրինագծի շրջանառությունն ու ընդունումը, ինչպես նաև այդ գործողությունների հետևանքով առաջացած նախընտրական գործընթացներն ու Վրաստանի շուրջ բարդ զարգացումները:*

*Այս 9 ամիսների ընթացքում տեղի ունեցած բոլոր գործընթացները միայն առաջին հայացքից էին կապված նշված օրինագծի, իսկ հետո՝ օրենքի հետ: Իրականում, այս բարդ պայմանական ժամանակաշրջանը կարևոր նշանակություն ունեցավ ինչպես Վրաստանի ինքնիշխանության վերականգնման և նրա իսկապես վրացակենտրոն ուղղվածության վերահաստատման, այնպես էլ Հարավային Կովկասում Արևմուտքի ազդեցության ոլորտի ճշգրտման տեսանկյունից:*

*Աշխարհում մանրամասն վերլուծված իրողությունների միջոցով բացահայտվում են Արևմուտքի իրական նպատակն ու վրացական իշխանությունների պայքարի բուն իմաստը: Վերոհիշյալ ճակատագրական ժամանակահատվածում Վրաստանի ղեկավարությունը ևս մեկ կարևոր քայլ կատարեց Արևմուտքի ազդեցությունից ազատվելու ուղղությամբ, որը արմատավորվել էր դեռ Մ. Սահակաշվիլի կառավարման ժամանակներից: Արդյունքում, երկիրը դադարեց Արևմուտքի ձեռքում խաղաքար լինելուց, ամենակարևորը, չգնաց ՌԴ-ի դեմ երկրորդ ճակատ բացելու համար հարթակի վերածվելու վրանգավոր ճանապարհով:*

## **9- МЕСЯЧНАЯ ОСТРАЯ КОНФРОНТАЦИЯ ЗАПАД–ГРУЗИЯ. ПОДОПЛЁКА ПРИНЯТИЯ НАШУМЕВШЕГО ЗАКОНА И БОРЬБЫ С НИМ**

**В. Д. Саркисян**

*Аннотация*

*В работе представлены события, произошедшие в Грузии и вокруг нее в период, длящийся с апреля по октябрь 2024 г. (до парламентских выборов, состоявшихся 26 октября): рециркуляция и принятие законопроекта «О прозрачности иностранного влияния», вызванные этими действиями предвыборные процессы и сложные развития вокруг Грузии.*

*Все процессы, произошедшие в течение этих 9-и месяцев, только на первый взгляд касались упомянутого законопроекта, а затем и закона. Фактически, этот сложный исторический период имел важное значение как с точки зрения восстановления суверенитета Грузии, ее подлинно грузиноцентричной ориентации, так и корректирования сферы влияния Запада на Южном Кавказе.*

*Посредством всестороннего рассмотрения упомянутых в работе реалий раскрывается как реальная цель Запада, так и истинный смысл борьбы грузинских властей. В упомянутый судьбоносный период руководство Грузии сделало еще один важный шаг в сторону избавления от западного влияния, укоренившегося еще со времен правления М. Саакашвили. В результате, страна перестала быть пешкой в руках Запада и, самое главное, не пошла по опасному пути превращения в плацдарм для открытия 2-го фронта против РФ.*

**THE 9-MONTH PHASE OF THE WEST–GEORGIA DISCORDANCE:  
THE AFTERMATH OF THE ADOPTION OF THE OUTRAGEOUS LAW  
AND THE BACKGROUND OF THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IT<sup>2</sup>  
(Part II, see the previous I)**

**Adoption of the bill as reason for boycott by the main part  
of the parliamentary opposition**

After the final adoption of the sensational draft law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*”, the Georgian opposition in the Parliament – United National Movement, “Agmashenebeli Strategy”, “Lelo for Georgia”, “Citizens”, “Eurooptimists”, “Freedom” and other political groups, as well as several independent opposition MPs periodically boycotted the work of the Parliament<sup>3</sup>. And the Deputy of another opposition party “Girchi”, German Sabo announced that they will not join the boycott regime of the opposition, and that it is foolish to declare a boycott, because there is also a veto problem ahead, there are arguments to be voiced, a position to be adhered to, and, in general, it is necessary to use this platform<sup>4</sup>. On the same day, a joint statement by the European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, was circulated, according to which the EU has clearly and repeatedly stated that the spirit and content of the law are not in line with the fundamental norms and values of the EU. “*It will undermine the work of civil society and independent media. ...The adoption of this law will have a negative impact on Georgia’s progress towards the EU. ...We call on the Georgian authorities to repeal the law,*” the statement said<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> PHD in History, researcher at the Department of History of Diaspora and Armenian Communities of the Institute of History of the NAS, RA. Research interests: problems of the Armenians of Georgia, in particular, the Armenians of Javakhk, various issues of Armenian–Georgian relations, problems of the indigenous peoples and national minorities of Georgia. Author of 1 monograph and about 35 articles.

<sup>2</sup> The original article (in Arm.) was submitted to the Editorial office on 12.12.2024.

<sup>3</sup> Commenting on the fact that the above-mentioned opposition circles boycotted the work of the parliament due to political views, the Speaker of the Parliament Sh. Papuashvili stated at the meeting of the Bureau on May 20, that thus the opposition deputies simply avoid responsibility. [see: შალვა პაპუაშვილი ოპოზიციის ბოიკოტზე - არასერიოზულია ბოიკოტი იმაზე, რომ დარბაზში გვერდით მყოფი ადამიანი არ მომწონს და არ მინდა ერთი ჰაერი ვისუნთქოთ! - ეს არის ბოიკოტის გამოცხადება საკუთარი ამომრჩევლისთვის. Interpressnews.ge, 20.05.2024, <https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/800160-shalva-papuashvili-opoziciis-boikotze-araseriozulia-boikoti-imaze-rom-darbazshi-gverdit-mqopi-adamiani-ar-momcons-da-ar-minda-erti-haeri-visuntkot-es-aris-boikotis-gamocxadeba-sakutari-amomrchevlistvis/> (download date: 10.11.2024)]. The fact of the boycott of the work of the Parliament by some opposition members was further discussed by Sh. Papuashvili: at the meeting of the Bureau on June 11, he said that the boycott implies not participating in the meeting because of the issue under discussion, and the opposition, according to the Speaker, unfortunately uses it mostly for vacations. [see: Shalva Papuashvili – The boycott implies no attendance at the meeting because of the issue under discussion, unfortunately the opposition mostly uses it for holidays. (in Rus.), 11.06.2024, <https://1tv.ge/lang/ru/news/shalva-papuashvili-bojkot-podrazumevaet-nejavku-na-zasedanie-iz-za-obsuzhdae-mogo-voprosa-k-sozhaleniju-oppozicija-v-osnovnom-ispolzuet-jeto-dlja-kanikul/> (download date: 10.11.2024)].

<sup>4</sup> A part of the opposition has declared a boycott of the work of the Georgian parliament – a reaction. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 15.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240515/chast-oppozitsii-boykotiruet-dalneyshuyu-rabotu-parlmenta-gruzii---otsenka-deputatov-287923240.html> (download date: 08.11.2024).

<sup>5</sup> Statement by High Representative Josep Borrell with the European Commission on the adoption of the

## The landing of EU diplomats in Georgia is an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of world diplomacy

It was so important for the EU and the West to put pressure on the Georgian authorities and neutralize the law that the very next day after it was passed, on May 15, the foreign ministers of Iceland, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia arrived in Tbilisi to discuss the law. They held talks with the Georgian President S. Zurabishvili, Prime Minister I. Kobakhidze and the Speaker of the Parliament Sh. Papuashvili<sup>6</sup>. A real storm arose in Georgia's socio-political sphere when European officials who arrived in Tbilisi joined the protesters. Thus, the foreign ministers of Iceland, Lithuania and Estonia visited the parliament building and addressed the audience<sup>7</sup>. Another group of European representatives, consisting of the chairpersons of the foreign affairs committees of the parliaments of five EU member-states (Czech Republic, Poland, Germany, Lithuania and Finland), who arrived in Georgia in the same days, also appeared at the rally site and expressed solidarity with the protesters<sup>8</sup>. The Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag Michael Roth at a press conference in Tbilisi called the ruling Georgian Dream party a “Georgian nightmare” and emphasized that the Georgian authorities will not be able to build a bright future without young people who are fighting against the law on “Foreign Agents” and relying only on their main ally – the

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“Transparency of Foreign Influence” law in Georgia. 15 May, 2024, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/fr%5E/statement\\_24\\_2628](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/fr%5E/statement_24_2628) (download date: 08.11.2024).

<sup>6</sup> The Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia Shalva Papuashvili told the foreign ministers of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Iceland that a part of the money received from the EU is not always used for good purposes, therefore a law on transparency of financing is necessary. [see: The Head of the Georgian Parliament told guests from EU countries what European money is used for. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 15.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240515/glavy-mid-stran-es-soglasny-chto-v-gruzii-est-problema-s-prozrachnostyu--papuashvili-287927503.html> (download date: 08.11.2024)].

<sup>7</sup> In Georgia, the heads of the MFA of Iceland, Lithuania and Estonia were criticized for attending the rally. TACC (in Rus.), 15.05.2024, <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/20810773> (download date: 08.11.2024). The statement by the heads of the Foreign Ministries of Lithuania, Estonia and Iceland at a rally organized in the center of Tbilisi against the draft law “On transparency of foreign influence», serves not the peace, but the process of “maidanisation”. This opinion was expressed by the chairman of the committee on procedural issues of the Parliament of Georgia I. Kadagishvili, who added, that they, Georgians, should understand well what independence and sovereignty are. [The speech of the heads of the MFA of the countries of the EU at the actions in Tbilisi serves as “maidanization” – deputy. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 16.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240516/vystuplenie-glav-mid-stran-es-na-aktsii-v-tbilisi-sluzhit-may-danizatsii--deputat-287936493.html> (download date: 09.11.2024)].

<sup>8</sup> Speaker of the Georgian Parliament Sh. Papuashvili called the speeches of German and Lithuanian deputies at the rally in Tbilisi best gloss, and the European officials speaking foreign actors at the anti-government rally, organized by them and sponsored by the NGOs financed by them. [see: Best chandelier – Papuashvili on the speech of deputies of Germany and Lithuania at the actions in Tbilisi. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 15.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240515/luchshaya-lyustratsiya--papuashvili-o-vystuplenii-deputatov-germanii-i-litvy-na-aktsii-v-tbilisi-287932109.html> (download date: 09.11.2024)]. Later in the day, on May 16, the speaker of the parliament also delivered a speech to the foreign ministers of Lithuania, Estonia and Iceland in the center of Tbilisi, noting on his social media page: “*The participation of foreign officials in this protest, ignoring Georgia’s sovereignty and diplomatic practice in the name of “democracy and human rights» is at best a pharisaism, and at worst an attempt to bring about a coup*” [see: It’s a coup attempt – Papuashvili on the speech of heads of EU countries’ MFA at a rally in Tbilisi. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 16.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240516/eto-popytka-perevorota--papuashvili-o-vystuplenii-glav-mid-stran-es-na-aktsii-v-tbilisi---287946288.html> (download date: 09.11.2024)].

Orthodox Church. According to the German official, if the Georgian authorities try to do this, the brain drain will be a complete disaster for Georgia.

It should be noted that it was hard to imagine a better gift for the Georgian authorities than the identification of the Georgian Orthodox Church, which is an absolute authority in Georgia, with the authorities or the opinion about the GOC as the main ally of the authorities. And this serious mistake of M. Roth became a winning card in the hands of the Georgian authorities, which tilted the sympathies of a part of the Georgian public, loyal to the GOC, towards the authorities. Naturally, the reaction was not long in coming. Guram Macharashvili, an MP from the ruling “People’s Power” party accused the Head of the Bundestag Committee on Foreign policy of insulting the GOC and the Georgian people. According to him, M. Roth’s mockery of Orthodoxy is “*sheer insolence*”<sup>9</sup>. The Patriarchate’s assessment was even sharper. Archpriest Andria Jagmaidze, the Head of the Public relations department, said: “*We heard a very shameful statement by the Bundestag, Michael Roth, where he touched the Church very badly, separated it from the youth, from the bright future, and we know about his own lifestyle*”<sup>10</sup>.

### **Use of the presidential veto in the face of resistance to the Western and pro-Western forces**

It should be noted that despite the adoption of the law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*”, protests and actions against the law, which started on April 15, continued in the capital, sometimes turning into clashes with the police. Given the rather tense situation, on May 17, the Prime Minister of Georgia I. Kobakhidze stated that the passions about the law had already subsided, and he invited the young people protesting against the law and two or three adults, whom the young people consider to be authoritative experts, to a public discussion<sup>11</sup>. A day later, on May 18, Georgia’s pro-Western and opposition president vetoed the law, saying that in its essence and spirit it was a “*Russian law*” that could not be changed or improved, and therefore the veto was very simple – the law should be repealed<sup>12</sup>. The

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<sup>9</sup> “Interference in Georgian politics” – reaction to the participation of European politicians in the action. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 15.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240515/vmeshatelstvo-v-gruzinskuyu-politiku--reaktsiya-na-uchastie-evropeyskikh-politikov-v-aktsii-287928438.html> (download date: 09.11.2024).

<sup>10</sup> ანდრია ჯაღმაიძე - მოვისმინეთ მიხაელ როთის სამარცხვინო განცხადება, სადაც ეკლესიას ძალიან ცუდად შეეხო, გამიჯნა ახალგაზრდობისგან, ნათელი მომავლისგან და თავად მისი ცხოვრების წესი ვიცით, რაც არის. [1tv.ge](https://1tv.ge/news/andria-jagmaidze-movisminet-mikhael-rotis-samarckhvino-ganckhadeba-sadac-eklesias-dzalian-cudad-sheekho-gamijna-akhalgazrdobisgan-nateli-momavlisgan-da-tavad-misi-ckhovrebis-wesi-vicit-rac-aris/), 16.05.2024, <https://1tv.ge/news/andria-jagmaidze-movisminet-mikhael-rotis-samarckhvino-ganckhadeba-sadac-eklesias-dzalian-cudad-sheekho-gamijna-akhalgazrdobisgan-nateli-momavlisgan-da-tavad-misi-ckhovrebis-wesi-vicit-rac-aris/> (download date: 09.11.2024).

<sup>11</sup> The Prime Minister is ready for a discussion with young people about the law on “foreign agents. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 17.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240517/premer-ministr-gotov-na-diskussiyu-s-molodezhyu-na-temu-zakona-ob-inoagentakh-287974999.html> (download date: 09.11.2024).

<sup>12</sup> პრეზიდენტმა რუსულ კანონს ვეტო დაადო. 18.05.2024. [https://president.ge/index.php?m=206&appeals\\_id=396](https://president.ge/index.php?m=206&appeals_id=396) (download date: 09.11.2024). The President proposed to repeal the law the day after its enactment. The mentioned article, referenced by S. Zurabishvili, which posits, that the law becomes invalid one day after its entry into force, was characterized by the Speaker of the Parliament Sh. Papuashvili as a mockery by the society. “*As for cancelling within a day of publication, it is a mockery to the society. Mrs Salome has already used every means to show that she does not consider herself a citizen of this country, and the Constitution is not*

leader of the ruling party I. Garibashvili also stated on the same day that the ruling “Georgian Dream” party was ready for a dialog on the draft law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*” and that the president’s veto would be an ideal opportunity for it<sup>13</sup>. Reacting to S. Zurabishvili’s decision, Prime Minister I. Kobakhidze stated that by using her veto right, the President of Georgia has closed the space for a healthy discussion on the draft law under consideration. The Prime Minister also presented the results of the sociological research, according to which more than 60% of the population of the country was for the law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*”, while the very idea of transparency and the transparency of the non-governmental organizations was supported by more than 80% of the population<sup>14</sup>.

### **The similarity of the Venice Commission’s conclusion to the Western position**

At this stage, the Georgian authorities were also waiting for the conclusion of the Venice Commission, which was fast-tracking, the conclusion on the draft law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*” as the Georgian parliament was supposed to discuss it before the final adoption of the law. According to Giorgi Kakhiani, vice-speaker of the Georgian Parliament, it is difficult to imagine what arguments could be made against the transparency of foreign influence<sup>15</sup>. As expected, the Venice Commission, in its opinion published on May 21, recommended Georgia to refrain from adopting the draft law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*” in its current form due to its inevitable negative consequences for freedom of association and expression. “*The Venice Commission strongly recommends that the law be repealed in its current form, as because its fundamental flaws would have significant negative consequences for freedom of association and expression, the right to privacy, the right to participate in public affairs and the prohibition of discrimination*”, the opinion said<sup>16</sup>. Nino Tsilosani, Representative of the ruling force and Deputy Speaker of the

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*its Constitution, and she does not consider these people her own. She mocks people, (saying - red.) that we should adopt the law in one day... We will certainly overcome the veto*”, - said Sh. Papuashvili. It is a good thing to have the law passed. [see: “Georgian Dream» overcomes the veto of the president on “foreign agents” law – Papuashvili. Sputnik Грузия (in Rus.), 20.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240520/gruzinskaya-mechta-preodoleet-veto-prezidenta-na-zakon-ob-inoagentakh---papuashvili-288003864.html> (download date: 10.11.2024)].

<sup>13</sup> Veto on the law of “foreign agents” will be an ideal opportunity for dialogue – Garibashvili. Sputnik Грузия (in Rus.), 18.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240518/veto-po-zakonu-ob-inoagentakh-stanet-idealnoy-vozmozhnostyu-dlya-dialoga--garibashvili-287985793.html> (download date: 09.11.2024).

<sup>14</sup> The President closed space for discussion – Kobakhidze on the veto of the law on “foreign agents”. Sputnik Грузия (in Rus.), 20.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240520/zurabishvili-zakryla-prostranstvo-dlya-diskussii--premer-gruzii-o-veto-prezidenta-288003291.html> (download date: 09.11.2024).

<sup>15</sup> The ruling party is awaiting the conclusion of the Venice Commission on the law on “foreign agents”. Sputnik Грузия (in Rus.), 19.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240519/pravyaschaya-partiya-v-ozhidanii-zaklyucheniya-venetsianskov-komissii-po-zakonu-ob-inoagentakh-287998858.html> (download date: 09.11.2024).

<sup>16</sup> EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW (VENICE COMMISSION), GEORGIA, URGENT OPINION ON THE LAW ON TRANSPARENCY OF FOREIGN INFLUENCE, issued on 21 May 2024 pursuant to Article 14a of the Venice Commission’s Revised Rules of Procedure on the basis of comments by Ms. Veronika BÍLKOVÁ (Member, Czechia), Mr. David A. KAYE (Member, United States of America), Ms. Herdís KJERULF THORGEIRSDÓTTIR (Member, Iceland), Mr. Zlatko KNEŽEVIĆ (Member, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Strasbourg, 21 May 2024, [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-PI\(2024\)013-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-PI(2024)013-e) (download date: 10.11.2024).

Parliament, criticized the conclusion. *“Unfortunately, as we expected, the conclusion of the Venice Commission serves more to increase the accusation of unrest in the country than to provide meaningful comments related to this law’s”*, the deputy speaker noted. According to the majority MP Irakli Kadagishvili, it is clear that there are more political than legal motives behind this conclusion<sup>17</sup>.

### **Georgian Prime Minister’s alarming message of personal threats, the Western reaction**

According to the Georgian officials, the Western pressure on the Georgian authorities’ tough stance on the adoption of the law *“On Transparency of Foreign Influence”* has even taken the form of personal threats. On May 23, the Georgian Prime Minister said that one of the European Commissioners voiced threats reminiscent of an assassination attempt on the Prime Minister of Slovakia during a telephone conversation. *“Even against the background of long blackmail, the threat voiced during a telephone conversation with one of the European Commissioners was striking. In particular, during the conversation with me, the European Commissioner listed a number of measures that Western politicians could take after overcoming the veto of the transparency law and while listing these measures mentioned: ‘You saw what happened to Fico, didn’t you?’<sup>18</sup>, and you should be careful”*, I. Kobakhidze quoted the words of the European Commissioner, adding that the mentioning of the fate of the Slovak *Prime Minister is very* disturbing<sup>19</sup>. The alarm signal voiced by the Prime Minister was followed by a statement of the European Commission Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations Olivér Várhelyi, in which he explained what the European Commissioner meant when he reminded Georgian Prime Minister I. Kobakhidze about the assassination attempt against the Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico. The latter regretted that some parts of his telephone conversation had been taken out of context<sup>20</sup>.

### **New Western sanctions. The American bill “Act of the Georgian people”**

In response to the passage of the law *“On Transparency of Foreign Influence”*, the U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken issued a statement on May 23 saying that the U.S. State Department is implementing a new visa restriction policy for Georgia, applicable to

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<sup>17</sup> Politically motivated – “The Georgian Dream” gave an evaluation of the statement of the Venice Commission. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 22.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240522/politicheskii-motivirovano-mechta-dala-otsenku-zayavleniyu-venetsianskoy-komissii-288036247.html> (download date: 11.11.2024).

<sup>18</sup> Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico has repeatedly spoken out against arms transfers to Ukraine and its NATO membership. The attempt on his life occurred on 15 May 2024 in the city of Gandlov. The Prime Minister was taken to a hospital by helicopter. He was killed in the hospital. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the attacker, 71-year-old Yuray Zintula, had political motives.

<sup>19</sup> Georgian Prime Minister announced threats from EU Commissioner. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 23.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240523/premer-ministr-gruzii-zayavil-ob-ugrozakh-so-storony-evrokomissara-288059877.html> (download date: 11.11.2024).

<sup>20</sup> EU official says remarks to Georgian PM on Slovak assassination attempt ‘taken out of context’. Reuters, 24.05.2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-official-says-remarks-georgian-pm-slovak-assassination-attempt-taken-out-2024-05-23/> (download date: 13.11.2024).

individuals and their family members “*who are responsible for or complicit in undermining democracy in Georgia. This includes those responsible for suppressing civil society and freedom of peaceful assembly through a campaign of violence or intimidation in Georgia*”<sup>21</sup>. A. Blinken also announced a comprehensive review of bilateral cooperation with Georgia. The ruling “Georgian Dream” called Blinken’s statement a continuation of the U.S. anti-Georgian rhetoric that began in 2012 and intensified from 2021–2022, and an attempt to limit Georgia’s sovereignty and independence crudely and cynically. The ruling party called the sanctions an unprecedented phenomenon in world history, “*when an official representative of one country threatens a legislator of another country with sanctions just because he voted in favor of a transparency law. This event will be written in gray letters in the history of world politics*”, – the statement said<sup>22</sup>.

On May 23, the U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen, along with three other senators, introduced a bill in the U.S. Senate entitled “*Supporting Democracy and the rule of law in Georgia, and for other purposes, or the Georgian People’s Act (GPA)*”, and the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee released a statement on the issue. The bipartisan bill sought to hold Georgia government officials and individuals accountable for corrupt activities, human rights violations, and the foreign influence transparency. The bill included a number of measures in response to the recent Georgian government actions and policies, including sanctions on high-ranking Georgian officials, a review of foreign assistance, and a reevaluation of existing bilateral relations. Consisting of two main sections, the “*Georgian People’s Act*” focused on the U.S.-Georgian relationship since Georgia’s independence and emphasized how recent events have undermined the continuity and spirit of that relationship. It cited the re-initiation of the “*Foreign Influence Transparency Act*”, the subsequent large-scale protests, the disproportionate use of force against demonstrators, the expulsion of opposition lawmakers from parliamentary hearings, anti-Western and anti-American rhetoric, and more. The bill says the U.S. should consider travel restrictions or sanctions against individuals responsible for actions that impede Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic integration. “*As a long-time supporter of Georgia and its Euro-Atlantic integration, I am deeply concerned and disappointed by the passage of the ‘Foreign Agents Bill’ and the rapid political changes taking place in the country that run counter to the wishes of the Georgian people*”, – said senator J. Sheikhin<sup>23</sup>. To add, the U.S. Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Jim Risch, who are up for re-election in 2024, announced on October 22, that 10 other senators would join them in supporting the bipartisan “*Georgia People’s Act*”<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of State, Announcement of a Visa Restriction Policy for Undermining Democracy in Georgia and Comprehensive Review of All U.S.–Georgia Cooperation. 23.05.2024, <https://www.state.gov/announcement-of-a-visa-restriction-policy-for-undermining-democracy-in-georgia-and-comprehensive-review-of-all-u-s-georgia-cooperation/> (download date: 13.11.2024).

<sup>22</sup> Gross attempt to limit Georgia’s independence – the “Georgian Dream” about possible sanctions. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 24.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240524/grubaya-popytka-ogranichit-nezavisimost-gruzii--gruzinskaya-mechta-o-vozmozhnykh-sanktsiyakh-288075925.html> (download date: 13.11.2024).

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee publishes statement on Georgian People’s Act. 25.05.2024, <https://1tv.ge/lang/en/news/u-s-senates-foreign-relations-committee-publishes-statement-on-georgian-peoples-act/> (download date: 30.11.2024).

<sup>24</sup> Bipartisan Support Grows for Shaheen, Risch Legislation That Would Hold Georgian Officials Accountable for Corruption, Human Rights Abuses and Anti-Democratic Efforts. 10.22.2024, ARVAK | ARMENIAN ANALYTICAL CENTER | [arvak.am](http://arvak.am)

## **“The MEGOBARI Act”. Another package of U.S. sanctions**

On May 24, 2024, the Helsinki Commission of the U.S. Congress, officially called the Committee on Security and Cooperation in Europe, welcomed A. Blinken’s statement of May 23, and issued a statement on the “*MEGOBARI Act*” and its main provisions (MEGOBARI - Mobilizing and Enhancing Georgia’s Options for Building Accountability, Resilience, and Independence Act. Translated as “*Act on Mobilizing and Enhancing Georgia’s Options for Building Accountability, Resilience, and Independence*”)<sup>25</sup>, and the acronym “MEGOBARI” is consonant with the Georgian word “megaburi” – “მეგობარი” (“friend”). The bipartisan “*MEGOBARI Act*” was introduced in the House of Representatives by the *Republican Congressman Joe Wilson, Chairperson of the U.S. Helsinki Commission. The Act provides for sanctions against the ruling “Georgian Dream” party if the law “On Transparency of Foreign Influence” is passed, as well as military and economic cooperation packages “if the country returns to the path of democracy”*. According to the Helsinki Commission, the bill aims to strengthen democratic practices, human rights and the rule of law in Georgia and reaffirms the U.S. commitment to supporting Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic integration and countering the influence of authoritarian regimes, particularly Russia.

When considering the main provisions of the “*MEGOBARI Act*”, it becomes clear that the main and key concern of the U.S., expressed under the guise of condemning the above-mentioned law, concerns not only the improvement of Georgian-Russian relations, but also the deepening of Georgian-Chinese cooperation and the strengthening of China’s influence on Georgia. In our opinion, all the sanctions imposed by the “*MEGOBARI Act*” against Georgia, and especially the Georgian authorities, appeared precisely for this latter reason, and the law was just a pretext and a cover for the application of all this. Thus, the adopted law requires numerous reports to ensure accountability, including assessments of Russian intelligence penetration into Georgia and possible cooperation with China. The main points of the “*MEGOBARI Act*” described in the Helsinki Commission statement also noted that “*in response to the decline of democracy in Georgia, the Act calls for a closer examination of the actions of the Georgian government and its ties to Russia and other authoritarian regimes*”<sup>26</sup>.

Looking ahead, we note that this bill on sanctions against Georgia – the “*MEGOBARI Act*” – was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee on July 11<sup>27</sup>. In 2024, the bill was mentioned at a hearing of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee

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<https://www.shaheen.senate.gov/bipartisan-support-grows-for-shaheen-risch-legislation-that-would-hold-georgian-officials-accountable-for-corruption-human-rights-abuses-and-anti-democratic-efforts/> (download date: 30.11.2024).

<sup>25</sup> See Act here: <https://joewilson.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/joewilson.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/MEGOBARI%20Signed.pdf> (download date: 28.11.2024).

<sup>26</sup> Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, U. S. Helsinki Commission, Wilson, Cohen, Hudson, Veasey Introduce MEGOBARI Act. 24.05.2024, <https://www.csce.gov/press-releases/wilson-cohen-hudson-veasey-introduce-megobari-act/> (download date: 28.11.2024).

<sup>27</sup> აშშ-ის წარმომადგენელთა პალატის საგარეო საქმეთა კომიტეტმა საქართველოსთან დაკავშირებით „მეგობარი აქტი“ მიიღო. 11.07.2024, <https://www.csce.gov/press-releases/wilson-cohen-hudson-veasey-introduce-megobari-act/> (download date: 29.11.2024), *сравни*: House Foreign Affairs Committee, HFAC Markup on Various Measures. 10.07.2024. <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/markup/hfac-markup-on-various-measures-8/> (download date: 29.11.2024).

on September 12. Eka Gigauri, Executive Director of the Western organization *Transparency International–Georgia*, who spoke at the hearing on the “*Laws against NGOs and other instruments of democratic repression*”, expressed gratitude to the American and European allies for supporting Georgians, stressing that they also support the “*MEGOBARI Act*” and the “*Georgian People’s Act (GPA)*” initiatives<sup>28</sup>. On November 15, it was announced that 10 more U.S. Senators have endorsed the bipartisan “*MEGOBARI Act*”. As of the period under review, 19 senators, including 9 Republicans, 9 Democrats, and one independent member of the U.S. Senate, have supported the bill<sup>29</sup>. On November 23, the Republican Congressman Joe Wilson – the Chairperson of the Helsinki Commission and one of the sponsors of the “*MEGOBARI Act*” bill – announced that he was working to introduce the bill in the U.S. Congress and get it passed<sup>30</sup>. On July 31, referring to the “*MEGOBARI Act*”, imposing sanctions against Georgian politicians and their family members in connection with the adoption of the law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*”, the Head of the Georgian Government I. Kobakhidze said that this was a pure blackmail and that this is not a step that will help to restore relations between Georgia and the USA., which had deteriorated over the past 3-4 years. “*You cannot call this act ‘MEGABURI’* (he means the meaning of the translation of the abbreviation into Georgian – “friend” – V. S.) *and blackmail the main goal of this act*”, – I. Kobakhidze said<sup>31</sup>.

### **The overcome of the president’s veto as the reason for even more toughening of the West’s position**

European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell’s statement on May 24 was relatively mild: “*We are deeply concerned about the ‘Law on Foreign Agents’. It really will not help Georgia on its European path, and we are telling them that, but at the same time, we have to be very careful not to hurt their national feelings*”, J. Borrell said, adding, that “*it is necessary to use soft language*” and at the same time to have a clear position on what is compatible with the European path and what is not<sup>32</sup>. The softening of the EU High Representative’s tone was probably due to a *fait accompli*. The law had already been passed, the West could not prevent it, and threats were now useless and could further alienate Georgia from the Western orbit. Moreover, the normalization of Georgia’s relations with Russia, especially the strengthening of economic ties and the

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<sup>28</sup> აშშ-ის სენატში საქართველოს არასამთავრობო ორგანიზაციების საწინააღმდეგო კანონების შესახებ მოხმენა გაიმართა. 12.09.2024. <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/623860> (download date: 29.11.2024).

<sup>29</sup> More US senators back Megobari Act targeting Georgian officials over Democracy violations. 15.11.2024, <https://jam-news.net/more-us-senators-back-megobari-act-targeting-georgian-officials-over-democracy-violations/> (download date: 29.11.2024).

<sup>30</sup> კონგრესმენი უილსონი: „მეგობარი აქტის“ დადებითად გადასაწყვეტად ვმუშაობთ. 27.11.2024, <https://www.amerikishma.com/a/congressmen-on-georgia/7873993.html> (download date: 29.11.2024).

<sup>31</sup> Blackmail in direct form – the Prime Minister of Georgia on a bill before the US Congress. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 31.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240731/shantazh-v-pryamoy-forme-premer-gruzii-o-rassmatrivaem-om-kongressom-ssha-zakonoproekte-289266159.html> (download date: 29.11.2024).

<sup>32</sup> EU’s Borrell: Georgia’s ‘Foreign Agents’ Law incompatible with European aspirations. 24.05.2024, <https://itv.ge/lang/en/news/eus-borrell-georgias-foreign-agents-law-incompatible-with-european-aspirations/> (download date: 13.11.2024).

reduction of financial and economic dependence on the West, created a situation in which the West needed Georgia more than vice versa.

On May 27, the Legal Committee of the Georgian Parliament overcame the President's veto of the sensational draft law *"On Transparency of Foreign Influence"*, but the President's Parliamentary Secretary, Giorgi Mskhiladze, stated that the entire law was unacceptable, contradicted 4 Articles of the Constitution, and should be repealed. From the ruling party, G. Mskhiladze objected, stating that *"...the President has sent to the Parliament a 'piece of paper' contains insults completely devoid of any arguments and logic and in some cases"* (MP Davit Matikashvili). Members of the ruling party also insisted that G. Mskhiladze should *"substantiate the allegations by indicating specifically which article restricts or somehow directly or indirectly may cause problems or may cause restrictions for the media or non-governmental organizations?"* ("Georgian Dream" MP Aluda Gudushauri)<sup>33</sup>.

On the eve of the final veto overcome, on May 27, the U.S. Vice President K. Harris stated in a letter to the Georgian President S. Zurabishvili that she and President Joe Biden *"have been following developments in Georgia with concern and welcome president Zurabishvili's initiative to veto the law, and that the United States supports the President of Georgia and all Georgians in their pursuit of a better future"*<sup>34</sup>. Commenting on the letter received from the U.S. Vice President the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament Sh. Papuashvili stated: *"The Parliament of Georgia acts on the mandate of the Georgian people, not on the mandate of the people or authorities of other countries. The Georgian people are the only ones who give us instructions and mandate to pass the law. ...What upsets me the most is that in no statement by the US or various EU officials could I read a promise to the Georgian people that the money received from America and the EU will be transparent and that they are ready to demonstrate accountability"*, Papuashvili said, adding that 80% of the Georgian people are in favor of transparency and 60% are in favor of passing the law *"On Transparency of Foreign Influence"*<sup>35</sup>. On the eve of the veto override, there was also another signal from the West, with EU High Representative Josep Borrell again coming to the fore, warning that the EU would start discussing appropriate measures at the next meeting of the Council on Foreign Relations in June if the *"Transparency of Foreign Influence"* law comes into force in Georgia. According to him, some EU countries said that the issue of adopting the law *"On Transparency of Foreign Influence"* in Georgia is not so important, while others said that it contradicts EU norms and values<sup>36</sup>. Tbilisi has reacted to

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<sup>33</sup> The Parliament of Georgia's Jurist Committee overcame the president's veto on the law on "foreign agents". Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 27.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240527/yurkomitet-parlament-gruzii-preodolel-veto-prezidenta-na-zakon-ob-inoagentakh-288113367.html> (download date: 13.11.2024).

<sup>34</sup> აშშ-ის ვიცე-პრეზიდენტი კამალა ჰარისი სალომე ზურაბიშვილს წერილით მიმართავს. 27.05.2024, <https://itv.ge/news/ashsh-is-vice-prezidenti-kamala-harisi-salome-zurabishvils-werilit-mimartavs/> (download date: 13.11.2024).

<sup>35</sup> "We are given instructions only by the Georgian people – in the "Georgian Dream" they responded to the criticism of Biden" Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 27.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240527/nam-daet-ukazaniya-lish-gruzinskiy-narod--v-gruzinskoy-mechte-otvetili-na-kritiku-baydena-288122627.html> (download date: 13.11.2024).

<sup>36</sup> Foreign Affairs Council: Press remarks by High Representative Josep Borrell after the meeting. 27.05.2024, <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/foreign-affairs-council-press-remarks-high-representative-josep-arvak> | ARMENIAN ANALYTICAL CENTER | [arvak.am](http://arvak.am)

J. Borrell's latest revelations. According to Giorgi Kakhiani, a Member of Parliament from the ruling "Georgian Dream" party, J. Borrell's statement shows that not all states have the same position on the issue of Georgia, and not all states equally believe that the adoption of this law will be an obstacle for Georgia on its European path. The MP emphasized that the adoption of this law is a matter of national security of Georgia<sup>37</sup>.

On May 28, the Georgian Parliament overrode the presidential veto of the notorious draft law "On Transparency of Foreign Influence" to the chants of protesters gathered in front of the parliament building on Rustaveli Avenue, as well as in front of the building's service entrances<sup>38</sup>. Commenting on the event, the Prime Minister I. Kobakhidze stated that the Parliament has created important legal bases for strengthening the state sovereignty of Georgia<sup>39</sup>.

The "traditional" regretful reaction of the West was not long in coming. According to the statement of the High Representative of the European Commission: *"The European Union deeply regrets that the Georgian Parliament has decided to override the presidential veto of the 'Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence' and to ignore the detailed legal arguments of the Venice Commission set out in its recommendation to repeal this law. The EU has repeatedly emphasized that the law adopted by the Georgian Parliament contradicts fundamental EU principles and values. Its adoption fails on at least three of the nine steps (on disinformation, polarization, fundamental rights and participation of civil society organizations) set out in the Commission's recommendation on candidate status"*<sup>40</sup>. On the same day, the Georgian President S. Zurabishvili in a video message to the participants of the rally against the draft law "On Transparency of Foreign Influence" in the center of Tbilisi expressed her support for them and called on them to prepare for the upcoming parliamentary elections on October 26<sup>41</sup>.

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[borrell-after-meeting-14\\_en](#) (download date: 13.11.2024).

<sup>37</sup> This is a question of national security - in the "Georgian dream" answered to Borrell's statement. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 28.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240528/eto-vopros-natsionalnoy-bezopasnosti--v-gruzinskoy-mechte-otvetili-na-zayavlenie-borrellya-288127379.html> (download date: 14.11.2024).

<sup>38</sup> პარლამენტმა „უცხოური გავლენის გამჭვირვალობის“ კანონზე პრეზიდენტის ვეტო დაძლია. itv.ge, 28.05.2024, <https://itv.ge/news/parlamentma-uckhour-i-gavlenis-gamchvirvalobis-kanonze-prezidentis-veto-dadzlia/> (download date: 14.11.2024). 84 deputies voted in favor of overcoming the veto and adoption of the initial version of the law voted, while against – 4.

<sup>39</sup> საქართველოს მთავრობა, პრემიერ-მინისტრ ირაკლი კობახიძის პრესკონფერენცია. 29.05.2024, [https://www.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=GEO&sec\\_id=596&info\\_id=88614](https://www.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=596&info_id=88614) (download date: 14.11.2024).

<sup>40</sup> Statement by the High Representative with the European Commission on the final adoption of the law on transparency of foreign influence in Georgia. 28.05.2024, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement\\_24\\_2945](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_24_2945) (download date: 14.11.2024).

<sup>41</sup> "I am You, You are me" the President of Georgia addressed to the rally in Tbilisi. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 28.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240528/ya---eto-vy-vy---eto-ya---prezident-gruzii-obratilas-k-mitinguyuschim-v-tbilisi-288153445.html> (download date: 14.11.2024). The president also called on protesters against the bill, which has not yet entered into force, to collect signatures for the referendum on Georgia's foreign policy and bring them to her so that she can sign the relevant document. The president's proposal was received with mixed feelings even among the opposition. Member of the largest opposition party in Georgia "United Nazi Movement" Zurab Chiaberashvili: *"In 2008 a plebiscite was held, the will of the people was expressed. Article 78 is already written in the Constitution, and Georgia already has the status of a candidate country for EU membership, so are we starting to revise it? Who's happy with that?"* One of the leaders of the opposition "Unified National Movement" party, MP Khatiya Decanoidze: *"I listened to the president today; honestly, I did*

The day after the veto was overturned NGOs issued a joint statement expressing their defiance of the “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*” law, which obliges NGOs and media outlets that receive more than 20 percent of their annual income from foreign funding to register with a Registry of organizations pursuing the interests of foreign powers and fill out an annual declaration. The groups that have been organizing mass protests since April 15, have also said they will fight to have the law overturned in Georgian and international courts<sup>42</sup>. The statement of the German Ambassador Peter Fischer that as long as the law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*” is in force, they will not start negotiations with Georgia on joining the European Union also caused a great uproar in Georgia. Commenting on the German Ambassador’s statement, the Prime Minister I. Kobakhidze noted that an ambassador who makes anti-Georgian statements cannot be of any value to the country<sup>43</sup>.

On 30 May, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) also issued an opinion stating that “*Georgia’s recently adopted Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence contains serious flaws that make it incompatible with international human rights standards and the country’s obligations as an OSCE participating State and should be repealed*”<sup>44</sup>. Assessing the document, from the ruling “Georgian Dream” party MP R. Ionatamishvili stated that the OSCE–ODIHR’s conclusion on the law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*” does not inspire confidence, is impartial and prejudiced, since the group of experts that prepared the document included Mikheil Saakashvili’s lawyer Jeremy McBride, who defended the interests of the former Georgian President in the Strasbourg court. According to the MP, this conclusion was undoubtedly dictated by the rhetoric of the “*United National Movement*”, Georgia’s largest opposition party, founded by Saakashvili at the time<sup>45</sup>.

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*not understand the idea of a referendum*”. [see: The opposition still does not understand why the president of Georgia should held a referendum. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 28.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240529/v-oppozitsii-tak-i-ne-ponyali-zachem-prezidentu-gruzii-provodit-referendum-288162773.html> (download date: 14.11.2024)]. According to the Electoral Code, the President of Georgia has the right upon request of the Parliament and the Government of Georgia or at least 200,000 voters to call a referendum within 30 days after receipt of the request for his appointment. The Speaker of the Parliament Sh. Papuashvili called the initiative of S. Zurabishvili on holding a referendum on foreign policy of Georgia a speculation that does not coincide with the will of the Georgian people. According to him, such plans do not appear on their own, and “*are whispered by foreign patrons*” [see: “This is speculation” – Papuashvili on the initiative of the President of Georgia to hold a referendum. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 29.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240529/eto-spekulyatsiya--papuashvili-ob-initsiative-prezidenta-gruzii-provesti-referendum-288163677.html> (download date: 14.11.2024)].

<sup>42</sup> The non-governmental sector of Georgia refuses to register in the registry of “foreign agents”. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 29.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240529/nepравitelstvennyy-sektor-gruzii-otkazyvaetsya-registrirovatsya-v-reestre-inoagentov-288163253.html> (download date: 14.11.2024).

<sup>43</sup> Anti-Georgian Statement – the Prime Minister of Georgia criticized the German ambassador. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 30.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240530/antigruzinskoe-zayavlenie--premer-gruzii-raskritikoval-posla-germanii-288175576.html> (download date: 14.11.2024).

<sup>44</sup> Georgia’s “transparency of foreign influence” law incompatible with democratic standards and human rights law: international human rights office, ODIHR. 30.05.2024, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/569925?fbclid=IwARon-HUKH36mksFKD3ZwVO3hPD9OMmVM1BA7uDCaGB21kSH2UwdVb2n46k> (download date: 19.11.2024).

<sup>45</sup> In the “Georgian Dream” doubts about the objectivity of the conclusion of the OSCE ODIHR. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 31.05.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240531/v-gruzinskoj-mechte-somnevayutsya-v>  
ARVAK | ARMENIAN ANALYTICAL CENTER | [arvak.am](http://arvak.am)

## **The most debated law of modern Georgia has entered into force**

Nevertheless, the non-governmental organizations and forces that, at the behest of the West, had been raising a wave of protests for about a month and a half<sup>46</sup> and using a variety of different, often criminally punishable methods, this time again failed to seize the opportunity to carry out a color revolution in Georgia. Moreover, the Georgian authorities managed not only to take control of the extremely tense situation and prevent mass clashes, but also to reach the stage of final adoption of the bill. Despite the veto of the Georgian President and the fierce pressure from the West, on June 3, 2024, the Speaker of the Parliament Sh. Papuashvili signed the bill into law<sup>47</sup>, which came into force the next day, June 4<sup>48</sup>. At the government meeting on June 3, the Prime Minister again reacted to the processes related to the *Transparency law*, noting that with the adoption of the law the sovereignty and security of the country won, and only the evildoers of the country lost. *“There were unnecessary emotions that had only an artificial basis, but now the law has come into force, and we all need to act pragmatically, with a cold head and throw away unnecessary emotions. This is especially true for those who try to hide the frustration caused by the failure of the protest, liberal-fascist actions. Liberal fascism is no less dangerous ideology than classical fascism and bolshevism, which for many years have been artificially introduced into our country, Georgia, through opaque finance. This is completely incompatible with the Georgian culture”*, – said I. Kobakhidze<sup>49</sup>. On the same day, the Speaker of Parliament stated that, *“...starting from June 4, within 60 days the Ministry of Justice will develop all foreign regulatory acts, as well as create an electronic portal for organizations, and after 60 days those organizations that have significant*

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[obektivnosti-zaklyu-cheniya-obsebdipch-288201165.html](https://www.arvak.am/obektivnosti-zaklyu-cheniya-obsebdipch-288201165.html) (download date: 20.11.2024).

<sup>46</sup> It is interesting to note that the authorities of Georgia, who are constantly accused of preventing peaceful assemblies or using violence against participants in rallies, on July 23, 2024, announced that Georgia has entered the top 50 countries in the world according to the index of freedom of peaceful assembly. According to a study published by an internationally renowned organization, Georgia scored 3.5 points on the 4-point rating system. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia also reported that in 2012, Georgia, along with Russia and Belarus, became one of the three most dangerous countries in Europe. It took the 99<sup>th</sup> place in the world. In the next 11 years, Georgia rose to 49 positions in the world rankings and took 50<sup>th</sup> place in the world. According to the *Freedom of Peaceful Assembly Index 2023*, Georgia has surpassed the U.S., the Great Britain, Switzerland, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Latvia, South Korea, Singapore, Turkey and other countries. [see: მშვიდობიანი შეკრების თავისუფლების ინდექსით, საქართველო მსოფლიოს საუკეთესო 50 ქვეყანას შორის დასახელდა. itv.ge, 23.07.2024, <https://1tv.ge/news/mshvidobiani-shekrebis-tavisuflebis-indeqsit-saqartvelo-msoflios-sauketeso-50-qveyanas-shoris-dasakhelda/> (download date: 20.11.2024)].

<sup>47</sup> „გამჭვირვალობის შესახებ“ კანონი: როდის დაიწყება ორგანიზაციების რეგისტრაცია, 03.06.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.com/20240603/rodis-daiwyeba-specialur-portalze-registracia-288238047.html> (download date: 20.11.2024).

<sup>48</sup> „უცხოური გავლენის გამჭვირვალობის შესახებ“ კანონი დღეს შევა ძალაში. itv.ge, 04.06.2024, <https://1tv.ge/video/uckhouri-gavlenis-gamchvirvalobis-shesakheb-kanoni-dghes-sheva-dzalashi/> (download date: 20.11.2024).

<sup>49</sup> საქართველოს მთავრობა, პრემიერ-მინისტრ ირაკლი კობახიძის განცხადებები მთავრობის სხდომაზე. 03.06.2024, [https://www.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=GEO&sec\\_id=596&info\\_id=88636](https://www.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=596&info_id=88636) (download date: 20.11.2024).

foreign funding (more than 20% - ed.), must register on this portal and then declare finances for 2023”<sup>50</sup>.

The reaction of the West was swift. The U.S. State Department Representative M. Miller said that the USA had warned of a new sanctions policy but had not yet announced individual sanctions. “*But we made it clear that we would not hesitate to apply them*”, – added M. Miller<sup>51</sup>. The reaction of official Tbilisi was again sharp. I do not think that talking to the Georgian people with such language for the benefit of anyone... It is wrong to talk to a strategic partner in the language of sanctions and threats. And second, it does not matter to the Georgian authorities”, – said Speaker of the Parliament Sh. Papuashvili<sup>52</sup>. Estonian parliamentarians also opposed the Georgian authorities in those days. The MP Eric–Niels Krus on behalf of 44 MPs presented at the hearings in Riigikogu a draft statement entitled “*Crisis of democracy in Georgia*”, in which the parliamentarians called on the authorities to block the process of Georgia’s accession in the EU until the controversial law is revoked, to freeze the visa-free regime and to impose sanctions on the founder of the “Georgian Dream” billionaire B. Ivanishvili. In response to the initiative, the Head of the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights Protection and Civil Integration R. Ionatamishvili stated that no one has the right to interfere in Georgia’s internal affairs<sup>53</sup>. Georgian Prime Minister I. Kobahidze called the betrayal of statements by former Ambassador to the EU, and then Senior Researcher of the British analytical center “*Chatham House*” Natalia Sabanadze and the head of the European integration programs of the George Soros “*Open Society–Georgia*” Foundation “*Open Society–Georgia*” Vano Chhiqidze in the U.S. Congress on the need to impose sanctions against representatives of the government of Georgia for the adoption of the law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*”. The Prime Minister compared the latter to Bolshevik revolutionary Sergo Ordzhonikidze<sup>54</sup>. One of the options of the EU’s response to the adoption by Georgia of the law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*”, according to EU Ambassador to Georgia P. Herczynski, could be suspension of visa-free regime for citizens of Georgia introduced in 2017. The EU Ambassador also reported that one option is to limit annual funding of €100 million<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> When will the registration of “foreign agents” begin in Georgia? Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 03.06.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240603/kogda-v-gruzii-nachnetsya-registratsiya-inoagentov-288235082.html> (download date: 20.11.2024).

<sup>51</sup> U.S. Department of State, Department Press Briefing – June 3, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-june-3-2024/> (download date: 20.11.2024).

<sup>52</sup> Papuashvili called nonsense talk about sanctions against Georgia. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 04.06.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240604/papuashvili-nazval-bessmyslennymi-razgovory-o-sanktsiyakh-protiv-gruzii-288248530.html> (download date: 20.11.2024).

<sup>53</sup> Not allowed to interfere in the affairs of Georgia – a deputy on the initiative of Estonian parliamentarians (in Rus.). 05.06.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240605/ne-imeyut-prava-vmeshivatsya-v-dela-gruzii---deputat-ob-initsiative-estonskikh-parlamentariyev-288269650.html> (download date: 20.11.2024).

<sup>54</sup> At the meeting of the Helsinki Commission in the US Congress, where the law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*” adopted in Georgia was discussed, Congressman Joe Wilson, former US Ambassador to Georgia William Courtney and others spoke with sharp criticism of the Georgian authorities. They all talked about Georgia’s renunciation of a pro-Western foreign policy. [see: Treason of Georgia – the Prime Minister’s statements in the US Congress Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 05.06.2024, [https://sputnik-georgia.ru/2024\\_0605/predatelstvo-gruzii--premer-o-zavavleniyakh-v-kongresse-ssha-288280329.html](https://sputnik-georgia.ru/2024_0605/predatelstvo-gruzii--premer-o-zavavleniyakh-v-kongresse-ssha-288280329.html) (download date: 20.11.2024)]:

<sup>55</sup> ჰერცინსკი: ევროკავშირი შეამოწმებს კვლავ მოქმედებს თუ არა საქართველოსთვის სავიზო რეჟიმის ლიბერალიზაციის პირობები. Civil.ge, 05.06.2024, <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/611634> (download date:

Two days after the law came into force, on June 6, the U.S. State Department Representative M. Miller announced that the U.S. has decided to impose visa restrictions on dozens of Georgian citizens and their families who are responsible for “*undermining democracy*” in the country<sup>56</sup>. According to the Deputy Prime Minister of Georgia, Minister of culture and sports Thea Tsulukiani, the introduction of visa restrictions on deputies of the Parliament of Georgia, members of the ruling “Georgian Dream” party, law enforcement officials and individuals is another U.S. mistake in dealing with a strategic partner<sup>57</sup>. According to the Deputy Prime Minister, these sanctions were aimed at creating and deepening a gap between the power and the people, and when it happens, such power will be easily overthrown<sup>58</sup>. Secretary-General of the “Georgian Dream–Democratic Georgia” ruling party, the mayor of Tbilisi K. Kaladze also said that no one is afraid of these sanctions, and everything that happens is not serious and brings a smile<sup>59</sup>.

The Presidents of the United States and France J. Biden and E. Macron after the visit of the American leader to Paris issued a joint statement calling on the ruling “Georgian Dream” party to respect the wishes of the public and “*return to the Euro-Atlantic path*”<sup>60</sup>.

The Executive Secretary of the “Georgian Dream” party M. Mdinaradze asked a rhetorical question on this issue - how can the law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*” undermine democracy in Georgia, while similar laws strengthen democracy in the USA and France?<sup>61</sup> The Prime Minister of Georgia I. Kobahidze made the best use of the fact that the Senate of Canada had approved a bill aimed at countering foreign interference, and once again declared to the world that the campaign against the law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*” in Georgia is a complete farce, and the example of Canada is another clear one<sup>62</sup>.

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20.11.2024).

<sup>56</sup> U.S. Embassy in Georgia, U.S. Department of State, Matthew Miller Press Briefing, June 6, 2024, <https://ge.usembassy.gov/u-s-department-of-state-matthew-miller-press-briefing/> (download date: 20.11.2024).

<sup>57</sup> Visa restrictions are another US mistake, said the Vice Prime Minister of Georgia. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 07.06.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240607/vizovye-ogranicheniya---ocherednaya-oshibka-ssha-skazala-vitse-premer-gruzii--288308100.html> (download date: 20.11.2024).

<sup>58</sup> Why did the US impose sanctions? The Vice Prime Minister of Georgia gave a real reason. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 07.06.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240607/pochemu-ssha-vveli-sanktsii-vitse-premer-gruzii-nazvala-realnyu-prichinu-288312551.html> (download date: 20.11.2024).

<sup>59</sup> Raises a smile – “Georgian Dream” Secretary General on US sanctions. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 07.06.2024, [https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240607/vyzvaet-ulybku--gensek-gruzinskoy-mechty-o-sanktsiyakh-ssha-2883148\\_41.html](https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240607/vyzvaet-ulybku--gensek-gruzinskoy-mechty-o-sanktsiyakh-ssha-2883148_41.html) (download date: 20.11.2024).

<sup>60</sup> The White House, June 08, 2024, French-American Roadmap, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/06/08/french-american-roadmap/> (download date: 20.11.2024).

<sup>61</sup> The leader of the “Georgian Dream” responded to criticism by Biden and Macro. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 07.06.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240610/lider-gruzinskoy-mechty-otvetil-na-kritiku-baydena-i-makrona-288345197.html> (download date: 20.11.2024).

<sup>62</sup> The Senate of Canada passed a bill on June 19, to counter foreign interference. The bill provides for the registration in the federal register of persons acting in the interests of foreign states and companies. At the same time, covert and fraudulent actions will be penalized. [see: The campaign against the law on “foreign agents” was a farce – the Prime Minister of Georgia. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 21.06.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240621/kampaniya-protiv-zakona-ob-inoagentakh-bylo-farsom--premer-gruzii-288532580.html> (download date: 20.11.2024)].

## **Definitive suspension of Georgia's accession process to the EU by West**

On June 24, for the second time in a row, EU foreign ministers discussed “*worrying political developments*” in Georgia, including the already adopted law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*”. As the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Joseph Borrell, has stated, this law and all the negative developments around it are distancing Georgia from the EU, a view shared by 26 out of the 27 EU countries. “*Today the overwhelming majority [of the EU foreign ministers] have clearly stated that the government of Georgia will withdraw the country from the EU. And if the government does not change course, Georgia will not advance on the way to the EU*”, – said the High Representative of the EU, adding that the possibility of withdrawing financial assistance to the government of Georgia was discussed at the meeting of the EU foreign ministers because of the adopted law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*” and disinformation about the EU disseminated by officials<sup>63</sup>. Despite all this, the leaders of the ruling “Georgian Dream” party insist that Georgia will become a member of the EU and that it will happen in 2030. The leader of the parliamentary faction “Georgian Dream” M. Mdinardze stated that it was during the “Georgian Dream” that a provision on Georgia’s integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures appeared in the Constitution<sup>64</sup>.

On June 27, the law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*” was discussed at the highest level – in the European Council. The structure “*calls on the Georgian authorities to clarify their intentions – to change the current course of action, which jeopardizes Georgia’s path to the EU, leading de facto to the suspension of the accession process*”<sup>65</sup>. The only EU country that supported Georgia was Hungary, whose Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told journalists before the European Council Summit: “*Things are going well in Georgia, I mean that the path to EU membership has been laid out, the government is working well, the economy is improving, I think you’re on the right track*”<sup>66</sup>.

On July 9, reflecting on this turning point and the decisions taken in the EU, the EU Ambassador to Georgia P. Herczynski stated that Georgia’s EU accession process has been stopped for now. The Ambassador also expressed hope that after the elections, the newly formed government will again start serious work on EU integration. “*On June 27, exactly 10 days ago, EU leaders, presidents and prime ministers of the EU countries made very important decisions in Brussels. ...I very much regret that they agreed to suspend the*

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<sup>63</sup> Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, HR/VP Josep Borrell’s comments on Georgia made at the press conference following the EU Foreign Affairs Council. 24.06.2024, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/hrvp-josep-borrell%E2%80%99-comments-georgia-made-press-conference-following-eu-foreign-affairs-council\\_en?s=221](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/hrvp-josep-borrell%E2%80%99-comments-georgia-made-press-conference-following-eu-foreign-affairs-council_en?s=221) (download date: 20.11.2024).

<sup>64</sup> European integration through the eyes of the authorities of Georgia and the EU – opinions differ. Sputnik Грузия (in Rus.), 24.06.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240625/evropeyskaya-integratsiya-glazami-vlastey-gruzii-i-es---mneniya-raskhodyatsya-288576431.html> (download date: 20.11.2024).

<sup>65</sup> Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, Extracts on Georgia from the Conclusions of the European Council. 28.06.2024, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/extracts-georgia-conclusions-european-council\\_en?s=221](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/extracts-georgia-conclusions-european-council_en?s=221) (download date: 21.11.2024).

<sup>66</sup> Prime Minister: it is the Georgian Dream” that has achieved the main results on the way to the EU. Sputnik Грузия (in Rus.), 28.06.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240628/premer-imenno-gruzinskaya-mechta-dobilas-glavnykh-rezultatov-na-puti-v-es-288675470.html> (download date: 21.11.2024).

*process of Georgia's accession to the EU. ...The intentions of Georgia's current government are not clear to the EU leaders. The law "On Transparency of Foreign Influence" is a clear step backwards, and anti-Western, anti-European rhetoric is also completely incompatible with the declared goal of joining the EU. So, unfortunately, the process of Georgia's accession to the EU is still on hold. This is really sad and disappointing, because at the same time we are making rapid progress with other candidate countries. As you know, the day after this decision, the European Union began accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova", - said EU Ambassador P. Herczynski<sup>67</sup>. The ambassador also announced the "first swallows": the EU leaders decided to freeze €30 million, which should have been handed over to the Georgian Ministry of Defense. Reacting to the EU decision to freeze said amount, the member of the ruling party Beka Davitoliანი said that this is detrimental to the interests of the West, for whom Georgia is an important point on the geopolitical map<sup>68</sup>. The Georgian Foreign Minister I. Darchiashvili called the €30 million freeze "a decision taken at the micro level", which in no way will hinder Georgia's European integration<sup>69</sup>. According to the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament Gia Volsky, the redirection of funds from the defense sector to the non-governmental sector, which does not intend to maintain the principle of transparency, does not reflect EU values for which Georgia seeks to unite<sup>70</sup>. The Secretary-General of the ruling party "Georgian Dream", the Mayor of Tbilisi K. Kaladze said that the Georgian authorities will do everything to ensure that the country's army does not need anything and does not feel the consequences of the decision of the EU leaders to freeze €30 million allocated to the Ministry of Defense<sup>71</sup>. It should also be recalled that on July 5, a month after the law "On Transparency of Foreign Influence" came into force, the USA announced the indefinite postponement of the planned military exercises in Georgia "Reliable Partner-2024" ("Noble Partner") for an indefinite period. Against the background of the EU's decision to suspend Georgia's integration into the Union and the freezing of €30 million for the Ministry of*

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<sup>67</sup> პაველ ჰერჩინსკი - საქართველოს ევროკავშირში გაწევრიანების პროცესი შეჩერებულია, ვიმედოვნებ, არჩევნების შემდეგ ახლად შექმნილი მთავრობა დაიწყებს სერიოზულ მუშაობას ინტეგრაციის მიმართულებით. itv.ge, 09.07.2024, <https://itv.ge/news/pavel-herchinski-saqartvelos-evrokavshirshi-gawevrianebis-procesi-shecherebulia-vimedovneb-archevnebis-shemdeg-akhlad-sheqmili-mtavroba-daiwyeb-seriozul-mushaobas-integraciis-mimartulebit/> (download date: 21.11.2024).

<sup>68</sup> The EU's decision to freeze €30 million for the Georgian Defense Ministry is detrimental to the interests of the West – a deputy. Sputnik Грузия (in Rus.), 09.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240709/reshenie-es-zamorozit-30-mln-evro-dlya-minoborony-gruzii-vredit-interesam-zapada--deputat-288927695.html> (download date: 21.11.2024).

<sup>69</sup> ილია დარჩიაშვილი - არ გამოვიყენებდი ისეთ მკაცრ შეფასებას, როგორც ევროკავშირის ელჩმა გააკეთა, ვფიქრობ, ესაა მიკროდონეზე მიღებული გადაწყვეტილება, რაც ევროინტეგრაციისკენ სწრაფვას ვერ შეაფერხებს. itv.ge, 09.07.2024, <https://itv.ge/news/ilia-darchiashvili-ar-gamoviyenebdi-iset-mkacr-shefasebas-rogoric-evrokavshiris-elchma-gaaketa-vfigrob-es-aris-mikrodoneze-mighebuli-gadawyvetilebebi-da-ver-sheferkhebs-saqartvelos-swrafvas-evro/> (download date: 21.11.2024).

<sup>70</sup> Vice Speaker: The decision to give money to NGOs instead of Georgia's Defense Ministry is a blow to the EU's credibility. Sputnik Грузия (in Rus.), 09.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240709/vitse-spiker-reshenie-dat-dengi-npo-vmesto-minoborony-gruzii--udar-po-avtoritetu-es-288936982.html> (download date: 21.11.2024).

<sup>71</sup> The Georgian army will not need – Kaladze about the EU decision to freeze €30 million. Sputnik Грузия (in Rus.), 10.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240710/gruzinskaya-armiya-ne-budet-nuzhdatsya--kaladze-o-reshenii-liderov-es-zamorozit-10-mln-evro-288944715.html> (download date: 21.11.2024).

Defense, it is now known that the Georgian government has decided to increase the state budget by GEL 519 million, of which 100 million will be directed to the Ministry of Defense. Commenting on the Western sanctions against Georgia, the Speaker of the Parliament Sh. Papuashvili said on July 12 that after the August 2008 war, NATO member states refused to sell weapons to the Georgian Armed Forces for 6 years. According to the Parliament Speaker, representatives of the former ruling “*Movement for National Unity*” party were hiding behind this<sup>72</sup>.

### **Events in Georgia after the suspension of the EU accession process**

On June 28, 2024, the permanent representatives of 36 countries to the UN office at Geneva issued a joint statement on the law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*” and the current situation in Georgia. They called on the Georgian authorities to repeal the law because it “*is a serious threat to civil society, human rights and the rule of law in Georgia*”<sup>73</sup>. Tbilisi’s reaction was the same as before. According to the Secretary-General of the ruling “*Georgian Dream–Democratic Georgia*” party, the Mayor of Tbilisi K. Kaladze, Georgia was not presented any arguments why the law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*” is problematic<sup>74</sup>. A few days later, on July 8, K. Kaladze again raised this issue, using the example of the “*Franklin Club*” NGO, founded in 2021 to show how important it is to adopt the law on transparency. The reason for this was the statement of the co-founder of the club, Alexander Zibzivadze on the “*Pirveli*” TV channel, according to which NGOs have helped the opposition as much as they could, and now it is their turn and the time for the civil sector and the opposition to enter the election campaign. “*NGOs were founded as political parties, although they have kept their name as non-governmental organizations*”, – said K. Kaladze, asking journalists whether they could imagine a developed country where an organization called non-governmental, would interfere with political processes. K. Kaladze further opened the brackets, saying that the Georgian authorities often received incorrect information about why NGOs actually conduct training courses. “*For example, when we were told that they should conduct training for parents of children with severe illnesses, they were actually talking about the revolution. In order to avoid this embarrassment, it was therefore important to adopt the law on transparency*”, – noted K. Kaladze<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> NATO members refused to sell arms to Georgia after the 2008 war. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 12.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240712/chleny-nato-otkazyvalis-prodavat-oruzhie-gruzii--glava-parlamenta-raskryl-pravdu-288971134.html> (download date: 21.11.2024).

<sup>73</sup> Permanent representatives of 36 countries at UN Geneva office issue joint statement on Georgia. itv.ge, 28.06.2024, <https://itv.ge/lang/en/news/permanent-representatives-of-36-countries-at-un-geneva-office-issue-joint-statement-on-georgia/> (download date: 21.11.2024).

<sup>74</sup> There are no arguments – the mayor of Tbilisi on criticizing the “foreign agents” law. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 29.06.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240629/net-nikakikh-argumentov--mer-tbilisi-o-kritike-zakona-ob-inoagentakh-288705628.html> (download date: 21.11.2024).

<sup>75</sup> Kaladze: NGOs in Georgia are formed as political parties. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 08.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240629/net-nikakikh-argumentov--mer-tbilisi-o-kritike-zakona-ob-inoagentakh-288705628.html> (download date: 21.11.2024).

On July 10, the German Ambassador to Georgia P. Fischer also stated that Germany is revising its relations with Georgia as part of the suspension of the process of Georgia's membership in the EU. *“Together with the USA we are one of the largest donors of the development cooperation to Georgia. We have decided not to make any new commitments to Georgia at the moment, so at present Germany has no new financial commitments to Georgia”*, – said the ambassador in a conversation with journalists<sup>76</sup>. On July 11, opposition and independent MP Theon Akobardi said that after the decision of the EU leaders to freeze €30 million for the Georgian Ministry of Defense, the Danish authorities decided to freeze GEL 27 million which the Georgian army was to receive within 4 years. They are convinced that the reason was the law *“On Transparency of Foreign Influence”* adopted in Georgia<sup>77</sup>. The Georgian Defense Minister I. Chikovani called the decisions of the U.S. and the EU on the suspension of financing *“sad and incomprehensible”*, because, according to him, in recent years Georgia has achieved a number of successful results in the field of defense and security<sup>78</sup>.

### **Appeals to the Constitutional Court and new revelations concerning NGOs and media**

On July 11, 2024, the Georgian press reported that three lawsuits were being prepared for recognition of the law *“On Transparency of Foreign Influence”* as unconstitutional. They were planned to be transferred to the Constitutional Court. About 100 NGOs prepared a petition; the second one should be submitted by the President of Georgia and the third – by the opposition parties<sup>79</sup>. On the same day, France's Ambassador to Georgia, Sedar Gasri, stated that France *“had decided to temporarily suspend direct aid to the Georgian budget and to increase assistance to civil society and the media”*<sup>80</sup>. According to the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament Sh. Papuashvili, this move by France is yet another proof that money is driven by interests and as soon as they saw that the Georgian government might not pursue specific interests of another government, the funds were directed to those who pursue their

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<sup>76</sup> გერმანია საქართველოსთან ურთიერთობების გადახედვას აწარმოებს - პეტერ ფიშერი. 10.07.2024, <https://bm.ge/news/germania-saqartvelostan-urtiertobebis-gadakhedvas-atsarmoebs-peter-fisher> (download date: 21.11.2024).

<sup>77</sup> Will Denmark also suspend funding for the Georgian army? MP's comment. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 11.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240711/daniya-tozhe-priostanovit-finansirovanie-armii-gruzii-kommentariy-deputata-288955759.html> (download date: 21.11.2024).

<sup>78</sup> The defense minister called it a sad decision of the West to suspend aid from the Georgian army. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 11.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240711/ministr-oborony-nazval-pechalnym-reshenie-zapada-priostanovit-pomosch-gruzinskoy-armii--288961268.html> (download date: 21.11.2024).

<sup>79</sup> The Constitutional Court of Georgia is preparing 3 lawsuits against the law on “foreign agents”. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 11.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240711/v-konstitutsionnyy-sud-gruzii-govitsya-triska-protiv-zakona-ob-inoagentakh-288966365.html> (download date: 21.11.2024).

<sup>80</sup> საფრანგეთის ელჩი - გადაწყვეტეთ, დროებით შევაჩეროთ ჩვენი პირდაპირი დახმარება საქართველოს ბიუჯეტში და დახმარება გავუძლიეროთ სამოქალაქო საზოგადოებასა და მედიას. Itv.ge, 11.07.2024, <https://itv.ge/news/safrangetis-elchi-gadavvyvitet-droebit-shevacherot-chveni-pirdapiri-dakhmareba-saqartvelos-biujetshi-da-dakhmareba-gavudzlierot-samoqalaqo-sazogadoebasa-da-medias/> (download date: 21.11.2024).

interests<sup>81</sup>. The following day, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Civil Security, Democracy and Human Rights Uzra Zeya, summarizing up her visit to Georgia, said in Tbilisi that the U.S. had frozen the aid to Georgia after the postponement of the Georgian-American military exercises “Noble partner–2024” indefinitely<sup>82</sup>.

On July 15, the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of Georgia Giorgi Mshkiladze stated that Georgian President S. Zurabishvili had applied to the Constitutional Court for the suspension of the law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*”. “*This law is unconstitutional: it violates Article 78 of the Constitution of Georgia*”<sup>83</sup>, – said G. Mskhiladze in a briefing<sup>84</sup>.

On that day it became known that the Public defender of Georgia Levan Ioseliani along with about 100 non-governmental organizations and opposition parties, intends to appeal to the Constitutional Court to cancel the law<sup>85</sup>. On the same day, the ruling “*Georgian Dream*” party published the results of a study on the transparency of funding and activities of public and media organizations. The “*Georgian Dream*” studied the availability of basic information about 474 NGOs and media organizations, which after the dissemination of the draft law “*On Transparency of Foreign Influence*” in April signed a joint statement against the bill. Givi Mikanadze, a Member of Parliament from the ruling party who presented the study, said that 51% of the mentioned organizations did not have an official website at all, 97% did not publish an annual report, 89% did not provide data on grants under these programs, 80% did not provide data on the duration of programs/grants, 70% did not provide team data, and only 68% provided project names (implemented and ongoing), and 62% provided the name/donor logo. Only 8 organizations met all the requirements<sup>86</sup>. Using these and many other arguments, the Georgian authorities continue to claim that NGOs interfere in politics by hiding their sources of funding and goals. The foreign donors have also come under attack from the authorities. This became particularly evident when the EU mission published a report on July 16, which stated that in 2019–2024 the European Union allocated €46.1 million to Georgian NGOs, which is 11 times more than the amount of aid given to

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<sup>81</sup> The interests of the head of the Georgian parliament on the French decision are always behind the money. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 12.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240712/za-dengami-vsegda-stoyat-interesy--glava-parlamenta-gruzii-o-reshenii-frantsii-288972101.html> (download date: 21.11.2024).

<sup>82</sup> The U.S. has frozen Georgia’s aid. TACC (in Rus.), 12.07.2024, <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/21350779>. (download date: 21.11.2024).

<sup>83</sup> The Article 78 of the Constitution of Georgia, in connection with which on October 13, 2017, and on March 23, 2018, Constitutional laws N1324-bc and N2071 were adopted concerning the integration of Georgia into European and Euro-Atlantic structures. They are set out as follows: “*The constitutional bodies within their powers should take all measures to ensure full integration of Georgia into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*”. [see: საქართველოს კონსტიტუცია, მუხლი 78. ევროპულ და ევროატლანტიკურ სტრუქტურებში ინტეგრაცია, 1995 წლის 24 აგვისტო, №786- რს, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/30346?publication=36#>! (download date: 23.11.2024)].

<sup>84</sup> The President of Georgia has filed a lawsuit in the Constitutional Court against the law on “foreign agents”. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 15.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240715/prezident-gruzii-napravila-isk-v-konstitutsionnyy-sud-protiv-zakona-ob-inoagentakh-289004069.html> (download date: 23.11.2024).

<sup>85</sup> Passions around the law “on foreign agents”: the ombudsman will apply to the Constitutional Court of Georgia. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 15.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240715/strasti-vokrug-zakona-ob-inoagentakh-ombudsmen-obratitsya-v-konstitutsionnyy-sud-gruzii-289003167.html> (download date: 23.11.2024).

<sup>86</sup> How transparent NGOs are in Georgia – study. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 15.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240715/naskolko-prozrachny-npo-v-gruzii---issledovanie-289004728.html> (download date: 24.11.2024).

ministries and other public authorities<sup>87</sup>. Continuing the authorities' line on criticism of foreign donors, Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia Sh. Papuashvili said that the latter want to hide from the public information that opposition parties in Georgia are funded by the EU budget in circumvention of the law and through NGOs. Sh. Papuashvili cited as an example the financing of opposition party “Droa”<sup>88</sup>. These arguments of the ruling authorities were naturally rejected and not accepted by the representatives of the NGO sector, and on July 17, 121 public organizations and media, welcomed the decision of the President of Georgia and the parliamentary opposition to address the Constitutional Court, filed a joint action in the CC against the law “On Transparency of Foreign Influence”<sup>89</sup>. On the same day, an MP from the opposition party “Girchi” Alexander Rakviashvili stated that the actions of the opposition and the president are ridiculous, and that “Girchi” is not going to join the action of the opposition in the CC against the law “On Transparency of Foreign Influence”<sup>90</sup>. Criticizing this move, the NGO Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights Protection and Civil Integration Rati Ionatamishvili stated that the latter did not really respect the Constitution, the PC or its decisions. “... *It is because of this attitude that our society will give them a proper evaluation in the elections. Although they are not subjects of elections, we see that they also participate in the electoral campaign as radical opposition activists*”, – said this deputy from the “Georgian Dream”<sup>91</sup>. On 29 July, another member of the ruling party, Givi Mikanakadze, presented the results of a study of organizations that have applied to the Constitutional Court. According to a study conducted on 7 criteria, only 17% of them, or 21 out of 121 organizations, meet the minimum standards of transparency, which, in the opinion of the MP, confirms how opaque and insecure this sector is, and who actually applied to the CC<sup>92</sup>.

*(To be continued)*

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<sup>87</sup> The EU delegation divided 47 programmes and projects implemented by the non-governmental sector into approximately 11 sectors in its report. The ruling party of Georgia claims that funds allocated by the US National Foundation for Democracy (NED) and the European Fund for Democracy (EED) are transferred to accounts of fictitious NGOs run by political parties in Georgia. [see: ევროკავშირმა საქართველოში არასამთავრობო სექტორის დაფინანსების შესახებ ანგარიში გამოაქვეყნა. 16.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.com/20240716/evrokavshirma-arasamtavroboebis-dapinansebis-sheaxebar-angarishi-gamoqvekn-289025609.html> (download date: 24.11.2024)]:

<sup>88</sup> What do donors hide about funding parties and NGOs in Georgia? Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 22.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240715/naskolko-prozrachny-npo-v-gruzii---issledovanie-289004728.html> (download date: 26.11.2024).

<sup>89</sup> რუსეთის კანონის წინააღმდეგ ბრძოლის წინააღმდეგ საკონსტიტუციო სასამართლოში გაგრძელდება. 17.07.2024, <https://www.isfed.ge/geo/gantskhadebebi/rusuli-kanonis-tsinaaghmdag-samartlebrivi-brdzola-sakonstitutsio-sasamartloshi-gagrdzeldeba> (download date: 24.11.2024).

<sup>90</sup> ალექსანდრე რაკვიაშვილი - საკონსტიტუციო სარჩელში ოპოზიციას არ შევეუბნებოდით, კომიკურად გამოიყურება ის, რასაც ოპოზიცია და პრეზიდენტი აკეთებენ. 1tv.ge, 17.07.2024, <https://1tv.ge/news/aleqsandre-raqvashvili-sakonstitucio-sarchelshi-opozicias-ar-shevuertdebit-komikurad-gamoiyureba-is-rasac-opozicia-da-prezidenti-aketeben/> (download date: 24.11.2024).

<sup>91</sup> მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ საარჩევნო სუბიექტები არ არიან, ჩართულები არიან წინასარჩევნო კამპანიაში, როგორც რადიკალური ოპოზიციის აქტივისტები - რატი იონათამიშვილი არასამთავრობო ორგანიზაციებზე. 17.07.2024. <https://rustavi2.ge/ka/news/287332> (download date: 24.11.2024).

<sup>92</sup> The opaquest, or Who is demanding the abolition of the law on “foreign agents” in Georgia? 29.07.2024, <https://rustavi2.ge/ka/news/287332> (download date: 27.11.2024).