

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

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Summary

The work presents the developments that took place in and around Georgia during the period from April to October 2024 (before the parliamentary elections held on October 26), the recirculation and adoption of the bill on “Transparency of Foreign Influence”, the pre-election processes conditioned by it, and the complex developments that took place around Georgia. At first glance, the processes that occurred during these 9 months seemed to relate only to the bill, and then to the law. In reality, this complex historical period was of vital importance both from the point of view of the restoration of Georgia’s sovereignty, and the editing of the country’s truly Georgian-centered reformation, and the Western zone of influence extending to the Transcaucasia. Through the comprehensive disclosure of the realities mentioned in the article, both the actual goal of the West and the true meaning of the struggle waged by the Georgian authorities are revealed. During this fateful period, the Georgian leadership took another important step towards breaking free from the Western shackles that had taken root during M. Saakashvili’s rule. As a result, the country ceased to be a pawn in the hands of the West and, most importantly, did not take the destructive path of becoming a bridgehead for a second front against Russia.

ԱՐԵՎՄՈՒՏՔ–ՎՐԱՍՏԱՆ ԽՈՐԸ ԱՌՃԱԿԱՏՄԱՆ 9-ԱՄՍՅԱ ՓՈԻԼԸ.

ԱՐՄԿԱՀԱՐՈՒՅՑ ՕՐԵՆՔԻ ԸՆԴՈՒՆՄԱՆ

ԵՎ ՎԵՐՋԻՆԻՍ ԴԵՄ ՊԱՅՔԱՐԻ ՀԵՏՆԱՊԱՏԿԵՐԸ

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Սեղմագիր

Աշխատանքում ներկայացված են 2024 թ. ապրիլ-հոկտեմբեր (մինչ հոկտեմբերի 26-ին կայացած խորհրդարանական ընտրությունները) ժամանակահատվածում Վրաստանում և վերջինիս շուրջ տեղի ունեցած զարգացումները՝ «Օտարերկրյա ազդեցության թափանցիկության մասին» օրինագծի վերաշրջանառումը, ընդունումը, դրանով պայմանավորված նախընտրական գործընթացներն ու Վրաստանի շուրջ տեղի ունեցած բարդ զարգացումները: Նշված ինն ամիսներին տեղի ունեցած գործընթացները միայն առաջին հայացքից էին վերաբերում նշված օրինագծին, այսպե՛ս օրենքին: Իրականում այդ բարդագույն պատմափուլը ճակատագրական նշանակություն ունեցավ թե՛ Վրաստանի ինքնիշխանության վերականգնման, թե՛ Վրաստանի՝ իրապես վրացակենտրոն արևելումի, թե՛ Արևմուտքի՝ Այսրկովկասի վրա տարածվող ազդեցության գոտու խմբագրման տեսանկյունից: Աշխատանքում նշված իրողությունների համակողմանի ուսումնասիրման և վերհանման միջոցով բացահայտվում է թե՛ Արևմուտքի իրական նպատակը, թե՛ Վրաստանի իշխանությունների մղած պայքարի բուն իմաստը: Վրաստանի ղեկավարությունը նշված ճակատագրական ժամանակահատվածում ևս մի կարևոր քայլ կատարեց Մ. Սաակաշվիլի իշխանության ժամանակաշրջանում արմատակալած արևմտյան կապանքներից ազատվելու ուղղությամբ: Արդյունքում՝ երկիրը դադարեց լինել Արևմուտքի ձեռքում մանրադրամ և, ամենակարևորը, չգնաց ՌԴ-ի դեմ 2-րդ ճակատի ռազմահենադաշտի վերածվելու կործանարար ուղով:

**9-МЕСЯЧНАЯ ОСТРАЯ КОНФРОНТАЦИЯ ЗАПАД–ГРУЗИЯ.
ПОДОПЛЁКИ 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): повторное инициирование и принятие законопроекта «О прозрачности иностранного влияния», вызванные этими действиями предвыборные процессы и сложные развития вокруг Грузии. Все процессы, произошедшие в течение этих девяти месяцев, только на первый взгляд касались упомянутого законопроекта, а затем и закона. Фактически, этот сложный исторический период имел роковое значение как с точки зрения восстановления суверенитета Грузии, ее подлинно грузиноцентричной ориентации, так и откорректирования сферы влияния Запада на Закавказье. Посредством всестороннего рассмотрения упомянутых в работе реалий раскрывается как подлинная 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 во времена правления Саакашвили. В результате страна перестала быть пешкой в руках Запада и, самое главное, не пошла по пагубному пути превращения в плацдарм для открытия 2-го фронта против РФ.

9-MONTH STAGE OF DEEP CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE WEST AND GEORGIA. BACKGROUND OF THE ADOPTION OF THE SCANDALOUS LAW AND THE FIGHT AGAINST IT²

(Part III, see previous parts [I](#), [II](#))

The beginning of the Law's implementation amid new western sanctions

The Prime Minister of Georgia sharply criticized the statements and assessments made during the hearings of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US House of Representatives regarding US policy in Georgia and Moldova, where representatives of the US State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) presented reports. During the hearings, it was noted that while Moldova is striving to get closer to the West, Georgia is deviating from this path. The Georgian authorities were advised to withdraw the law on “*Transparency of Foreign Influence*” and hold fair parliamentary elections in October³. According to I. Kobakhidze, the assessments given in the US Congress regarding Georgia were unfair; these were attacks on the Georgian state by specific politicians, which is counterproductive against the backdrop of the restoration of relations with Washington proposed by Tbilisi. The Prime Minister of Georgia also added that criticism of the country indicates the presence of certain interests related to Georgia. “*From this, one simple conclusion can be drawn: there is an interest in Georgia that does not exist in Moldova. Otherwise, no one will be able to explain why they do not talk about the existing problems in Moldova*”, said I. Kobakhidze⁴.

Continuing to present the signals coming from the West in connection with the adoption of the scandalous law, it should be noted that on July 29, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a presentation dedicated to the implementation of the 9 steps established by the European Commission for Georgia on November 8, 2023, within the framework of the enlargement policy, which was attended by ambassadors of EU member states and other partner countries accredited in Georgia, as well as representatives of the embassies. During the event, the Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Georgia, Asuncion Sanchez Ruiz, once again reminded of the EU's conclusions of June 27 regarding the adoption of the law on

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² The original article in Armenian was submitted to the editorial office on December 12, 2024.

³ House Foreign Affairs Committee, A Look at U.S. Policy in Georgia and Moldova Ahead of Their 2024 Elections Subcommittee Hearing, 23.07.2024, <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/hearing/a-look-at-u-s-policy-in-georgia-and-moldova-ahead-of-their-2024-elections/#> (download date: 27.11.2024).

⁴ Attack on the Georgian State – Prime Minister on Statements in the US Congress. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 24.07.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240724/ataka-na-gruzinskoe-gosudarstvo--premer-o-zayavleniyakh-v-kongresse-ssha-289152693.html> (download date: 27.11.2024).

“*Transparency of Foreign Influence*” and stated that for this reason, the process of Georgia’s accession to the EU has been suspended⁵.

On July 30, the Minister of Justice, Rati Bregadze, officially announced that the ministry had prepared everything for the implementation of the *Foreign Influence Transparency Law*, and the registration of organizations would begin on August 1⁶. The minister also warned of sanctions that would follow if organizations refused to register, which includes a fine of 25,000 lari⁷. The next day, on July 31, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the suspension of \$95 million in aid to the Georgian government as part of a review of relations with Georgia. According to the Secretary of State, the mentioned aid directly benefits the Georgian government. “*The US will continue to support those programs and actions that benefit the people of Georgia, strengthening democracy, the rule of law, independent media, and economic development*”, Blinken noted, adding that over 32 years of friendship and partnership, the people of the United States have provided Georgia with assistance totaling more than \$6.2 billion⁸.

In response to the US decision, Beqa Odisharia, a deputy of the ruling party “Georgian Dream”, stated that the Secretary of State’s statement was regrettable, and the Georgian people, according to the deputy, are being punished only for strengthening their sovereignty⁹.

On August 1, the day after the registration process for organizations began, the European Union once again expressed concern about the entry into force of the *Foreign Influence Transparency Law* in Georgia and discussed the possibility of suspending aid provided to the Georgian government. In making this statement, EU representative Peter Stano also reminded that the European Union had already frozen €30 million in military aid provided through the European Peace Facility¹⁰.

⁵ Deputy Head of EU Delegation to Georgia: EU side by side with Georgians who expressed willingness to join EU. 29.07.2024, <https://itv.ge/lang/en/news/deputy-head-of-eu-delegation-to-georgia-eu-side-by-side-with-georgians-who-expressed-willingness-to-join-eu/> (download date: 27.11.2024).

⁶ The registration process officially started on August 1. For more details, see: Registration of “foreign agents” has begun in Georgia. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 01.08.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240801/registratsiya-inoagentov-nachalas-v-gruzii-289273446.html> (download date: 01.12.2024). The Vice-speaker of the Georgian parliament, Nino Tsilosani, stated on the same day that those who refuse to voluntarily register in the register of organizations supporting foreign interests, NGOs, and media will be registered directly by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, as such a provision is stipulated in the law [see: Refusal to register under the “foreign agents” law in Georgia will be registered in absentia – MP]. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 01.08.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240801/otkaznikov-po-zakonu-ob-inoagentakh-v-gruzii-zaregistriruyut-zaочно-deputat-289292480.html> (download date: 01.12.2024)].

⁷ Bregadze: Violation of the “Foreign Influence Transparency” law implies a fine of 25,000 lari for organizations. Apsny.ge (in Rus.), 30.07.2024, <https://www.apsny.ge/2024/pol/1722346569.php> (download date: 27.11.2024).

⁸ U.S. Department of State, United States to Pause Assistance to the Government of Georgia, Press Statement Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State. 31.07.2024, <https://www.state.gov/united-states-to-pause-assistance-to-the-government-of-georgia/> (download date: 01.12.2024).

⁹ The people of Georgia are being punished for strengthening their sovereignty – MP on the suspension of U.S. aid. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 01.08.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240801/narod-gruzii-nakazyvayut-za-ukreplenie-suvereniteta--deputat-o-priostanovke-pomoschi-ssha-289282206.html> (download date: 01.12.2024).

¹⁰ La UE reitera que la ley de agentes extranjeros es un retroceso y considera suspender ayudas a Georgia. 02.08.2024, <https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-ue-reitera-ley-agentes-extranjeros-retroceso->

Decisions of the Constitutional Court of Georgia

On August 29, the Constitutional Court of Georgia began considering lawsuits against the law on “*Transparency of Foreign Influence*”, filed by 38 opposition members of the Georgian Parliament, 122 public organizations, 2 media outlets, and the president of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili. According to the plaintiffs, the law equates friends and enemies of Georgia, stigmatizes them, and hinders the country’s integration into the EU. The plaintiffs requested the suspension of the controversial law during the consideration of the case on its merits. It was decided to combine the 4 lawsuits mentioned into one case and consider them together. The Chairman of the Constitutional Court, Merab Turava, noted that the lawsuit of the Association of law firms of Georgia (a union of lawyers), filed in the Constitutional Court two days before August 29, would be considered separately and without oral hearings¹¹. On August 31, the Plenum of the Constitutional Court of Georgia completed hearings on the lawsuit against the law on “*Transparency of Foreign Influence*”. It was announced that another piece of evidence from the president of Georgia regarding the threat posed by the bill to Georgia’s EU integration had been added to the case¹².

On October 9, the Constitutional Court of Georgia published a decision rejecting the plaintiffs’ request to suspend the *Foreign Influence Transparency Law* as a temporary measure during the consideration of the lawsuit. The Constitutional Court decided “*not to agree with the plaintiffs’ request to suspend the challenged norms until a final decision on the case is made*”¹³. The court ruled that during the consideration of the case, it was not recognized that providing financial reports and/or information to the National Agency of Public Registry upon its request constitutes an unbearable burden for organizations and makes their activities impossible. The conclusion states: the plaintiffs failed to convince the court that until a final decision is made, public trust in the activities of NGOs and media with “*negative connotations*” would be undermined to such an extent that their business reputation would suffer so much that a complete paralysis of their work would likely follow, or it would become impossible to restore trust in them. The court was also not convinced by the arguments that the *Foreign Influence Transparency Law* harms the process of Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic integration, as a result of which Georgia would lose a real opportunity for integration into the EU and NATO.

[considera-suspender-ayudas-georgia-20240801171801.html](https://www.constcourt.ge/ka/judicial-acts?legal=17223) (download date: 01.12.2024).

¹¹ Lawsuits against the “Foreign Agents” law in Georgia – Court weighs the pros and cons. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 29.08.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240829/iski-protiv-zakona-ob-inoagentakh-v-gruzii---sud-vzveshivaet-vse-za-i-protiv-289627139.html> (download date: 01.12.2024).

¹² The Constitutional Court of Georgia has completed the hearings on the “Foreign Agents” law case. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 31.08.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240831/konstitutsionnyy-sud-gruzii-zavershil-slushaniya-po-delu-o-zakone-ob-inoagentakh-289674925.html> (download date: 04.12.2024).

¹³ საქართველოს საკონსტიტუციო სასამართლო, საქართველოს პრეზიდენტი, საქართველოს პარლამენტის წევრები: თამარ კორძაია, ანა ნაცვლიშვილი, ლევან ბეჭაშვილი და სხვები (სულ 38 დეპუტატი), ა(ა)იპ „ინფორმაციის თავისუფლების განვითარების ინსტიტუტი“, ა(ა)იპ „უფლებები საქართველო“, ა(ა)იპ „სამოქალაქო საზოგადოების ფონდი“ და სხვები (სულ 122 მოსარჩელე), შპს „საინფორმაციო ცენტრების ქსელი“ და ა(ა)იპ „სტუდია მონიტორი“ საქართველოს პარლამენტის წინააღმდეგ, 9 ოქტომბერი, 2024, <https://www.constcourt.ge/ka/judicial-acts?legal=17223> (download date: 07.12.2024).

Recall that the plaintiffs argued that the law contradicts Article 78 of the Constitution of Georgia, which obliges constitutional bodies, within their powers, to take all measures to ensure Georgia's full integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. *“Based on the above, the plaintiff did not justify why the law causes such consequences that cannot be corrected by recognizing it as unconstitutional. Simultaneously, it was not identified that the suspension of the disputed law is an effective mechanism to prevent the threats indicated by the plaintiff. Considering all the above, there are no grounds in the present case for suspending the disputed law to protect the objectives of Article 78 of the Constitution of Georgia. ...Consequently, no grounds were found why the suspension of the law before its substantive consideration would prevent the risks of deteriorating relations with the European Union”*, the conclusion states.

Initial indicators following the Law's implementation: A new discussion on percentage ratios

On September 2, 2024, the deadline for voluntary registration in the Register of organizations representing foreign interests expired. According to published data, about 50 organizations applied to the register, indicating that they meet the registration criteria but do not intend to register. According to the first Deputy Minister of Justice, Tamar Tgheshelashvili, by the deadline for registration, 476 non-governmental organizations and media outlets financed from foreign sources had applied for registration¹⁴. According to the deputy minister's explanation, after the registration deadline, it will be carried out with a fine, and NGOs that refuse to register will be identified during monitoring and entered into the register, paying a fine for the delay until they can no longer afford it, after which a completely different regime may be implemented.

During the law's consideration in the Constitutional Court, Western media widely covered the opinions of Georgian NGO representatives who opposed the law and, at that stage, also opposed registration, stating that *“of the approximately 30,000 NGOs operating in Georgia, only about 1.5% registered as foreign agents by the September 2 deadline”*¹⁵. The same was claimed by the leader of the opposition party “Lelo for Georgia”, Mamuka Khazaradze, to which the Executive Secretary of the ruling party “Georgian Dream”, Mamuka Mdinardze, responded, stating that most Georgian NGOs are only registered on paper and that claims that only 1% of them voluntarily registered in the register of organizations representing foreign interests are *“dirty lies”*¹⁶.

On October 19, the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, announced that as of that day, 144 organizations had been registered in the Transparency register, and

¹⁴ The deadline for voluntary registration in the register under the “Foreign Agents” law in Georgia has expired. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 02.09.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240902/istek-srok-dobrovolnoy-registratsii-v-reestre-po-zakonu-ob-inoagentakh-v-gruzii-289697707.html> (download date: 04.12.2024).

¹⁵ Georgian NGOs Refused to Register in the Foreign Agents Register. (in Rus.), 10.09.2024, <https://ru.euronews.com/2024/09/10/georgia-foreign-agents-law> (download date: 04.12.2024).

¹⁶ Dirty Lies – leader of “Georgian Dream” on the “Foreign Agents” registration process. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 03.09.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240903/grvaznaya-lozh--lider-gruzinskoy-mechty-o-protssesse-registratsii-inoagentov-289702929.html> (download date: 04.12.2024).

applications from more than 300 organizations were under consideration. According to the speaker, the number of organizations registered in the Transparency register already exceeded the number of organizations challenging the law¹⁷.

On September 5, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze commented on the lawsuits filed in the Constitutional Court of Georgia to declare the *Foreign Influence Transparency Law* unconstitutional, calling them unpromising and pointing out that several organizations were already registered in the special register, proving the absence of stigmatization and restrictions. The Prime Minister also responded to statements by opposition members (Mamuka Khazaradze and others) claiming that only about 1.5% of NGOs had registered. According to him, this was a “*mere speculation*”: the number of plaintiffs was about 100, while 450 applied to the Ministry of Justice; if this was 1%, then the number of plaintiffs was much less than 1%. According to I. Kobakhidze, it was unclear how one can challenge a law that provided for one thing: the need to apply to the Ministry of Justice and post information about funding on the website if foreign funding exceeded 20%. In the Prime Minister’s opinion, the number of public organizations funded from abroad could not exceed a thousand. “*I don’t have statistics, but I believe that more than half of the organizations funded from abroad have indeed applied to the Ministry of justice, and this may even constitute 2/3 – 80%*”, he stated, adding that a maximum of 10 organizations (so-called “*elite NGOs*”)¹⁸ receive 90% of the funding, while the remaining 500, based on the number of 1,000 organizations, receive 10% of the funding¹⁹.

The next day, on September 6, I. Kobakhidze responded to a statement by US Senator Jeanne Shaheen, who accused Kobakhidze of allegedly demanding that the U.S. stop funding all NGOs operating in Georgia. Recalling what Senator J. Shaheen had stated in an interview the day before during a meeting with the Prime Minister of Georgia (senators Jeanne Shaheen and Congressman Mike Turner visited Georgia from August 9 to 11 and held meetings with government officials, the opposition, and public organizations)²⁰, the Prime Minister of Georgia asked him to stop funding all civil society organizations that might criticize the “Georgian Dream” government²¹. I. Kobakhidze reacted very sharply to the

¹⁷ Shalva Papuashvili: the number of organizations registered in the Transparency register has exceeded the number of organizations challenging the law. (in Rus), 18.10.2024, <http://ru.gruzinform.ge/news/63846/Salva-papuaSvili-Cislo-organizacij-zaregistrovanniK-v-reestre-prozraCnosti-previsilo-koliCestvo-organizacij-osparivaUSiK-zakon.html> (download date: 04.12.2024).

¹⁸ The registration was mainly opposed by the wealthiest and most influential NGOs, including “Transparency International Georgia”, the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association, and the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI).

¹⁹ The Prime Minister also noted that those organizations that truly serve the interests of the state had no problems establishing contact with the Ministry of Justice, but those who have something to hide do not approach the Ministry of Justice, and a clear line will be drawn here [see: Georgian Prime Minister called the case against the “Foreign Agents” law in court hopeless. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 05.09.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240905/net-perspektivy-premer-gruzii-ob-iskakh-protiv-zakona-ob-inoagentov-289751069.html> (download date: 05.12.2024)].

²⁰ U.S. Embassy in Georgia, Senator Shaheen and Congressman Turner’s Press conference, August 11, 2024. Tbilisi, <https://ge.usembassy.gov/senator-shaheen-and-congressman-turners-press-conference/> (download date: 05.12.2024).

²¹ Sen. Shaheen: GD Wants Georgia to Be a Dictatorship, Not a Democracy. 06.09.2024. <https://civil.ge/archives/622795> (download date: 05.12.2024), Compare: Q+A with Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, The

senator's statement, calling it “*pure lies*” and expressing regret that such lies are allowed by a person holding a very high position – a U.S. senator²².

Steps of the Georgian authorities: A new direction for strengthening statehood

On September 9, Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze announced an important initiative. Considering that foreign donors threatened to stop funding Georgian non-governmental organizations if they registered with the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, the Prime Minister announced that the authorities decided to create a grant program for Georgian NGOs. The program was projected to be funded from the state budget – at the expense of Georgian taxpayers. According to Kobakhidze, the institutional and financial foundations necessary for the proper functioning of the grant fund were to be prepared within the next two months, and the first grant programs would be funded from January 2025 on. “*In the near future, we will share detailed information about the grant programs that will be funded to fulfill the tasks defined in accordance with the interests of the Georgian people*”, Kobakhidze emphasized, adding that NGOs that work well and serve the interests of the Georgian people will receive twice as much funding from the state budget as they have received from the foreign donors²³. The head of government called on NGOs that want to *become “agents of influence of the Georgian people”* and promote Georgia's national interests to actively participate in the tenders that will be held within the framework of the grant program.

The “Autumn” phase of the U.S. and Western sanctions: The reaction of the Georgian authorities

As expected, the Georgian authorities reacted sharply to the offensive statements made by several senators on September 12 during a meeting of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As mentioned earlier, during the hearings on “*Anti-NGO Laws and Other Tools of Democratic Repression*”, the events unfolding in Georgia after the adoption of the law on *Transparency of Foreign Influence* were discussed. Speaking at the committee, senator Jim Risch insulted the Georgian authorities, stating that in the October elections, the Georgian people would have the opportunity to “*throw out the scoundrels and take their future into their own hands*”²⁴. Responding to senator Risch's offense, Prime Minister Kobakhidze

New Hampshire Democrat discusses her recent trip to the Republic of Georgia and her concerns about the nation's anti-democratic trajectory, National Journal, 06.09.2024, <https://www.nationaljournal.com/s/726077/qa-with-sen-jeanne-shaheen/?unlock=WQVACHTE5JNQ6FXL> (download date: 05.12.2024).

²² Mere lies – Georgian prime minister responds to US senator. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 06.09.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240906/chistaya-lozh--premer-ministr-gruzii-otvetil-senatoru-ssha-289774995.html> (download date: 05.12.2024).

²³ The government of Georgia is establishing a grant fund for NGOs – Prime minister. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 09.09.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240909/pravitelstvo-gruzii-sozdaet-grantovyy-fond-dlya-npo--premer-289812965.html> (download date: 05.12.2024).

²⁴ Foreign Relations Committee, Full Committee Hearing, “Anti-NGO Laws and Other Tools of Democratic Repression”. Thursday, September 12th, 2024, <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/hearings/anti-ngo-laws-and-other-tools-of-democratic-repression> (download date: 05.12.2024).

stated: “Risch said that after these elections, the scoundrels will be expelled from the Georgian politics. I think this is true. This is our promise. After these elections, all, using his term, scoundrels should be banned from the Georgian politics”²⁵. Kobakhidze referred to the statements of the ruling party “Georgian Dream” that if the ruling force obtains a constitutional majority in the parliamentary elections on October 26, it promises to start a legal process to recognize the former ruling “United National Movement” and organizations in its orbit as unconstitutional for their “numerous crimes”. The Prime Minister called the participation of Eka Gigauri, the executive director of the Western organization *Transparency International-Georgia*, who spoke at the hearings, “another lustration”, whose speech was “a typical speech by Sergo Ordzhonikidze”²⁶.

Reacting to statements about the suspension of Georgia’s Euro-integration process due to the adoption of the law on *Transparency of Foreign Influence*, the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Georgian parliament, Nikolo Samkharadze, called them “speculations”. According to the parliamentarian, on December 14, 2023, Georgia was granted candidate status for EU membership, and the elections in the country were to be held on October 26. Ensuring competitive elections is one of the 9 new steps that Georgia must take on the path to Euro-integration. Therefore, according to the deputy, no decision could be made on starting negotiations or even continuing the integration process before the elections²⁷.

On September 16, the US officially announced that the country’s Treasury Department had imposed sanctions against two Georgian government officials (referring to Zviad Kharazishvili, head of the Special Assignments Department of the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs, and his deputy Miller Lagazaouri) for actions related to the law on *Transparency of Foreign Influence*. According to the American ministry’s statement, they were involved in the brutal suppression of peaceful protesters and political opponents. In addition, sanctions were imposed against two Georgian citizens (leaders of the media platform “Alt-Info”) for being responsible, complicit, or directly or indirectly involved in the violent suppression of the freedom of peaceful assembly of Georgians participating in the democratic process and peaceful expression of their opinions²⁸. On the same day, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced that the State Department was also taking additional measures to impose visa restrictions on more than 60 Georgians and their family members who, according to Blinken, were responsible or involved in undermining democracy in Georgia²⁹. Commenting

²⁵ Senator Risch is right, scoundrels have no place in Georgian politics – prime minister, Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 13.09.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240913/senator-rish-prav-negodyayam-ne-mesto-v-politike-gruzii-premer-289876926.html> (download date: 06.12.2024).

²⁶ An outstanding party figure, Chairman of the Caucasus Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP(b), and an active participant in the establishment of Soviet rule in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, Sergo Ordzhonikidze, according to I. Kobakhidze, played an active role in the overthrow of the government of the First Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1921.

²⁷ Has Georgia suspended the EU integration process? MP’s response. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 13.09.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240913/gruziya-priostanovila-protsess-evrointegratsii-otvet-deputata-289874509.html> (download date: 06.12.2024).

²⁸ U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Releases, Treasury Sanctions Georgian Officials and Extremists for Serious Human Rights Abuse. September 16, 2024, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2580> (download date: 06.12.2024).

²⁹ U.S. Department of State, Promoting Accountability for Serious Human Rights Abuse and Anti-

on the sanctions, the State Department representative Matthew Miller stated that the U.S. authorities are deeply concerned about the ongoing anti-democratic actions of the Georgian government, which are incompatible with the norms of EU and NATO membership. *“In addition to the so-called foreign influence law, we have seen the Georgian government repeatedly mistreat Georgian citizens who protested against this law”*, he said³⁰.

On September 17, the Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze expressed concern during a meeting with U.S. Ambassador Robin Dunnigan about the decision made by the U.S. State Department the day before, according to which sanctions and visa restrictions would be applied to Georgian citizens, including police officers. The Prime Minister noted that *“with this decision, the American side has approached a critical line, which, if a similar decision is made, could lead to a qualitative reassessment of Georgia’s position regarding Georgian-American relations”*³¹. In response to I. Kobakhidze’s accusations against the U.S., according to which *“the State Department is not to blame, but oligarchic forces that have a fundamental influence on official U.S. institutions”*, M. Miller stated that *“in the U.S., unlike some countries in the world, a democratically elected government makes decisions in favor of our policy and no one else”*³². The next day, on September 18, I. Kobakhidze stated that the sanctions imposed by the U.S. do not contribute to the restoration of relations and are, moreover, aimed at undermining Georgian-American relations. He called the application of sanctions *“extremely offensive”*, especially concerning high-ranking police officers who participated in the August War of 2008³³. The Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, linked the timing of the announcement of sanctions against Georgian citizens to the upcoming parliamentary elections in the country and the desire to push the opposition, as, according to the speaker, they see what an absolutely useless and shameful opposition operates in Georgia³⁴. He also stated that the restoration of relations between Georgia and the U.S. would only occur if the false accusations against Georgia and the Georgian people were ceased³⁵.

Democratic Actions in Georgia, Press Statement, Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State. September 16, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/promoting-accountability-for-serious-human-rights-abuse-and-anti-democratic-actions-in-georgia/> (download date: 06.12.2024). According to sources from the “Formula” TV channel, among the more than 60 people sanctioned by the US, four are leaders of the ruling party “Georgian Dream”, including the party’s general secretary, Tbilisi mayor Kakha Kaladze, the party’s executive secretary Mamuka Mdinardze, and MPs Anri Okhanashvili and Dmitry Samkharadze.

³⁰ U.S. Department of State, Department Press Briefing—September 16, 2024, Matthew Miller, Department Spokesperson. September 16, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-september-16-2024/#post-585229-GEORGIA2> (download date: 20.11.2024).

³¹ საქართველოს მთავრობა, საქართველოს პრემიერ-მინისტრი ამერიკის შეერთებული შტატების ელჩს შეხვდა. 17.09.2024. https://www.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=596&info_id=89656 (download date: 06.12.2024).

³² U.S. Department of State, Department Press Briefing—September 17, 2024, Matthew Miller, Department Spokesperson. Washington, D.C., September 17, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-september-17-2024/> (download date: 20.11.2024).

³³ Prime minister: US sanctions are aimed at destroying relations with Georgia. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 18.09.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240918/premer-sanktsii-ssha-napravleny-na-razrushenie-otnosheniy-s-gruziye-289955669.html> (download date: 06.12.2024).

³⁴ US sanctions are related to the elections in Georgia – Parliament speaker. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 19.09.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240919/sanktsii-ssha-svyazany-s-vybarami-v-gruzii--glava-parlament-a-289961581.html> (download date: 06.12.2024).

³⁵ The speaker of the Georgian parliament named the conditions for resetting relations with the USA.

Decision on new sanctions in EU–Georgia relations

On October 4, the EU Ambassador to Georgia Pavel Herczynski announced that the European Union structures had decided to cease all high-level meetings with representatives of the Georgian authorities. Recalling the well-known discussion of the law on *Transparency of Foreign Influence* in the European Council on June 27 and the corresponding decisions, the ambassador reported that the EU decided not to conduct high-level visits to Georgia and not to organize high-level meetings in Brussels with representatives of the Georgian authorities due to the anti-European rhetoric, propaganda, and discourses of the Georgian authorities³⁶. On October 8, the EU delegation in Georgia clarified that the annual amounts allocated to Georgia were not fully spent, so what remained from 2022 and 2023 would be lost. The reason, according to the EU, lies in the rollback of democracy following the adoption of the law on *Transparency of Foreign Influence*. The withheld and reallocated funds are distributed by year as follows: €12 million in 2022, €72 million in 2023, and €37.3 million in 2024, totaling €121.3 million euros over three years³⁷.

The statement of the EU delegation in Georgia was called a politically biased statement by the first Vice-Speaker of the Parliament and one of the leaders of the ruling party “Georgian Dream”, Giorgi Volski³⁸. On October 8, the European Parliament adopted the resolution “*Rollback of Democracy and Threats to Political Pluralism in Georgia*” with a vote ratio of 495 “for” and 73 “against”, which contained a long list of demands presented to the Georgian authorities. It mentioned the need for sanctions against Russia, the release of former president Mikheil Saakashvili, the repeal of laws against “foreign agents” and LGBT propaganda. The resolution also called on the EU to freeze all funding to the Georgian government and impose sanctions against the founder of “Georgian Dream”, Bidzina Ivanishvili, and all those responsible for “undermining democracy”³⁹.

According to the resolution, there is a growing cult of Stalin and nostalgia for the Soviet period in Georgia. According to the European deputies, the Georgian authorities support this, which emphasizes their “*closer ties with Russia*”. It was noted that on May 28, the

Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 19.09.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20240919/spiker-parlamenta-gruzii-nazval-usloviya-perezagruzki-otnosheniy-s-ssha--289964175.html> (download date: 06.12.2024).

³⁶ პაველ ჰერცინსკი - ევროკავშირის ინსტიტუტებმა გადაწყვიტეს, რომ შეგვეჩერებინა ყველა მაღალი დონის შეხვედრა საქართველოს ხელისუფლების წარმომადგენლებთან. 04.10.2024, <https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/814858-pavel-herchinski-evrokavshiris-institutebma-gadaveqvitet-rom-shegvecherebina-qvela-magali-donis-shexvedra-sakartvelos-xelisuplebis-carmomadgenlebtan> (download date: 06.12.2024).

³⁷ Georgia to Lose 121 Million Euros in EU Aid Over Democratic Backsliding. 08.10.2024, <https://civil.ge/archives/627707> (download date: 06.12.2024).

³⁸ EU to withdraw €121 million from Georgia – reaction of “Georgian Dream” representative. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 08.10.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20241008/es-lishit-gruziyu-121-mln-evro---reaktsiya-predstavatelya-gruzinskoy-mechty-290254632.html> (download date: 06.12.2024).

³⁹ European Parliament, JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on the democratic backsliding and threats to political pluralism in Georgia. 08.10.2024, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-10-2024-0070_EN.html (download date: 07.12.2024). This is already the fourth harsh resolution of the European Parliament on Georgia since the beginning of the Ukrainian conflict. The first resolution was adopted on June 9, 2022, the second on December 14, 2022, and the third on April 25, 2024. Additionally, on February 15, 2023, the European Parliament adopted a resolution in support of Saakashvili.

parliament, despite the calls of Georgia's European partners and mass protests in the country, adopted the law on *Transparency of Foreign Influence*, overcoming the veto of president Salome Zourabichvili. This law, according to European deputies, was designed *"based on the model of foreign agent legislation in Russia"* and in its spirit and content contradicts EU norms and values. It was noted that the adoption of the so-called *Foreign Agents Law* had effectively frozen Georgia's EU accession process and led to the cessation of EU financial assistance to Georgia.

The reaction of the Georgian authorities remained the same. The Secretary-General of the ruling party "Georgian Dream", Tbilisi mayor K. Kaladze, stated that the resolution *"is not worth a penny"*. Regarding the call for sanctions against Russia, K. Kaladze noted: *"We know what war is, how much trouble it brings. We know what sanctions can lead to. If we were a weak government, feared someone, and joined the sanctions, the farmer who works would suffer"*⁴⁰. The Executive Secretary of the "Georgian Dream" party, MP Mamuka Mdinardze, stated that the latest harsh resolution of the European Parliament on Georgia is *"not only interference in the country's affairs and a call for war," but also an attempt to influence the upcoming parliamentary elections in favor of the largest opposition party "United National Movement"*⁴¹.

On October 11, Georgia received another stern message from Europe: the German Bundestag adopted the resolution *"For the European Future of Georgia"*, which, along with numerous severe formulations, stated that *"in the event of the so-called Foreign Influence Transparency law coming into force, there can be no further progress in the EU accession process"*. In the document adopted by Germany's ruling parties, deputies also called for the repeal of laws restricting the rights of sexual minorities, considering this a necessary condition for further progress in Georgia's EU integration process⁴². The speaker of the Georgian parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, sharply criticized the chairman of the Bundestag's Foreign Affairs Committee, Michael Roth, stating that *"there are people in German politics and diplomacy who, for short-term goals, undermine the special friendship between Georgia and Germany"*⁴³.

On the eve of the parliamentary elections in Georgia, amid such attacks from the West, Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze once again addressed the law on *Transparency of Foreign Influence*, due to which the EU suspended the country's Euro-integration, calling it the *Transparency of Revolution Law*. *"We are telling everyone, including specific foreign*

⁴⁰ The European Parliament's resolution isn't worth a dime – Kaladze. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 09.10.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20241009/rezolyutsiya-evroparlamenta-i-grosha-lomanogo-ne-stoit---kaladze-290296584.html> (download date: 07.12.2024).

⁴¹ MP: European Parliament resolution is interference in Georgia's affairs and a call to war. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 10.10.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20241010/deputat-rezolyutsiya-evroparlamenta--vmesha-telstvo-v-dela-gruzii-i-prizyv-k-voyne-290303165.html> (download date: 07.12.2024).

⁴² Deutscher Bundestag, Dokumente, Motion: A European future for Georgia, tabled by the SPD, Alliance 90/ The Greens and FDP parliamentary groups. Berlin. <https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/text-archiv/2024/kw41-de-georgien-antrag-en-1023276>? (download date: 06.12.2024).

⁴³ An attempt to undermine friendship – the speaker of the Georgian parliament condemned the resolution of the German Bundestag. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 11.10.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20241011/popytka-podorvat-druzhu---glava-parlamenta-gruzii-osudil-rezolyutsiyu-bundestaga-germanii-290314800.html> (download date: 07.12.2024).

entities, please, you can try to organize a revolution in Georgia; naturally, these attempts will be unsuccessful, but if you want to organize a revolution in Georgia, please do it transparently,” said Irakli Kobakhidze, who called the announcement of the new law a “Russian Law” and “the scam of the century” by opponents in Georgia and beyond⁴⁴.

Georgia-Moldova:

An unfair comparison according to Georgian authorities

On the eve of the parliamentary and presidential elections in Georgia and Moldova, respectively, on October 14, 2024, at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg, EU foreign ministers discussed the situation in Georgia and Moldova. Speaking at a press conference after the meeting of EU foreign ministers, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-president of the European Commission Josep Borrell, who also chaired the council meeting, stated that Brussels highly appreciates the resilience of the Moldovan government in facing these “*unprecedented challenges*”, adding that the EU will maintain its support. In his opinion, in contrast, the situation in Georgia “*paints a bleaker picture*”. “*The recent actions of the ruling party, its statements, and election promises are taking the country away from the European path and signaling a shift towards authoritarianism. That is why the EU accession process is de facto halted*”, said Josep Borrell⁴⁵.

According to Irakli Kirtzkhalia, a deputy of the ruling party “Georgian Dream”, Josep Borrell is guided by “*double standards*”, and his statement about the pre-election situation in Georgia is “*extremely unfair*” and detached from any reality. According to the deputy, Josep Borrell’s statement directly insults all published reports and studies about Georgia⁴⁶. In turn, the Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, responding to the criticism of the EU’s chief diplomat, stated that comparing Georgia with Moldova in a negative context, when there is evidence of superiority, is offensive. “*You know that Georgia surpasses Moldova in all parameters, whether it is democracy, human rights, or the economy. ...Georgia’s economy is \$9 billion larger, and this is partly due to the fact that Georgia, unlike Moldova, has very strong state institutions. ...As for democracy and human rights, it should be reminded that one after another, political parties and media were banned in Moldova. In reality, there are only two media outlets broadcasting nationwide – the first channel of the public broadcaster and the second channel of the public broadcaster,*” - noted the Prime Minister of Georgia⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ The Georgian prime minister called the law rejected by the West the “Revolution Transparency Law”. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 11.10.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20241011/premer-gruzii-nazval-zabakovannyi-zapadom-zakon-zakonom-o-prozrachnosti-revolutsii-290323520.html> (download date: 07.12.2024).

⁴⁵ European Commission, Foreign Affairs Council: press conference by Josep Borrell Fontelles, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission. 14.10.2024, <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-261883> (download date: 09.12.2024).

⁴⁶ Borrell’s statement on Georgia is detached from reality – МР. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 15.10.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20241015/otorvano-ot-realnosti--v-gruzii-rezko-otvetili-na-zayavlenie-borrellya-290363263.html> (download date: 09.12.2024).

⁴⁷ Comparing Georgia to Moldova is Insulting – Kobakhidze Responds to Borrell. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 15.10.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20241015/sravnienie-gruzii-s-moldovoy-oskorbitelno---kobakhidze->

Freezing the decade-long “Wardrop Dialogue”: A pre-election signal from the UK

In the pre-election stage, the Georgian authorities received another negative signal from the UK: on October 15, British Ambassador to Georgia Gareth Ward stated in an extensive interview that the UK decided to freeze the annual high-level “Wardrop Dialogue” between ministers. This dialogue format is named after one of the first British diplomats in Georgia, Oliver Wardrop. It covers areas of cooperation such as foreign policy, defense, security, economy, and trade. According to the ambassador, the reason is also the adoption of the law on *Transparency of Foreign Influence*. *“Relations between the UK and Georgia, as well as other Western partners, have suffered due to the steps taken by the Georgian government this year. We were concerned when the parliament passed a law restricting the activities of civil society, although it faced significant public resistance and pledged not to put this law back on the agenda. We were disappointed when the leaders of ‘Georgian Dream’ began promoting conspiracy theories and suggesting that Western partners were undermining Georgia. We were shocked when ‘Georgian Dream’ promised in its election program to ban opposition parties. ...We also canceled planned high-level defense talks and suspended a new cybersecurity program. After the elections, regardless of who will be in the government, we hope to see clear evidence of a return to the Euro-Atlantic path to restore trust and return to close partnership,”* said the ambassador⁴⁸. It should be noted that the “Wardrop Dialogue” platform, created in 2014, is being frozen for the first time.

Lawsuit in the European Court of Human Rights

On October 17, the reputable Georgian NGO “Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association” announced that on behalf of 16 media outlets, 120 civil society organizations, and 4 individuals, it had filed a lawsuit in the European Court of Human Rights against the law on *Transparency of Foreign Influence* (in their wording – *“against the Russian law and its severe consequences”*). The official statement indicated that Georgian NGOs are starting a new phase of the fight against the Russian law, as *“the fight against independent organizations by Russian methods not only violates fundamental human rights but also undermines the unwavering choice of the Georgian people for integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. It is regrettable that the constitutional duty, which obliges state bodies to protect all these civilizational choices, is violated by the authorities, and the Constitutional Court refuses to fulfill its duties.”*⁴⁹. Reacting to the initiative, the Speaker of

otvetil-borrellyu-290371947.html (download date: 09.12.2024).

⁴⁸ გაერთიანებული სამეფოს ელჩი გარეთ უორდი - „უცხოური გავლენის გამჭვირვალობის“ შესახებ კანონი არის არაპროპორციული, აზიზობს სიტყვის თავისუფლებას და ახდენს მათ სტიგმატიზაციას, ვინც საზოგადოებისთვის სასარგებლო საქმეს აკეთებს. 15.10.2024, <https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/816247-gaertianebuli-samepos-elchi-garet-uordi-ucxouri-gavlenis-gamchvirvalobis-shesaxe-b-kanoni-aris-araproporciuli-axshobs-sitqvis-tavisuplebas-da-axdens-mat-stigmatizacias-vinc-sazogadoebistvis-sasargeblo-sakmes-aketebs> (download date: 09.12.2024).

⁴⁹ საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია, სამართლებრივი ბრძოლა რუსული კანონის წინააღმდეგ სტრასბურგში გაგრძელდება. 17.10.2024, <https://www.gyla.ge/post/samartlebrivi-brdzola-rusuli->

Parliament Shalva Papuashvili wrote on his social media page: *“The number of organizations registered in the Transparency Register to date (144 organizations) has already exceeded the number of organizations challenging the ‘Foreign Influence Transparency’ law (136 organizations).”* According to him, *“...more than 300 applications for organization registration are under consideration”*⁵⁰.

The Western attack on the eve of the elections: Another failed attempt to seize power

On October 17, 2024, the European Council at a summit in Brussels published a document in which it *“reiterates its serious concern regarding the course of action taken by the Georgian government, which runs counter to the values and principles upon which the European Union is founded. 46. The European Council recalls that such a course of action jeopardises Georgia’s European path, and de facto halts the accession process. It calls on Georgia to adopt democratic, comprehensive and sustainable reforms, in line with the core principles of European integration. The European Council will continue monitoring the situation closely”*⁵¹. Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, commenting on the conclusions of the European Council meeting, noted that statements about undemocratic governance in Georgia, against the backdrop of praise for Ukraine and Moldova, where TV channels and parties are being closed one after another, are unfair, simply because there is no such interest in Moldova as in Georgia. Irakli Kobakhidze emphasized that the criticism of Georgia was completely unfounded, and everyone knew this, and that after the parliamentary elections in Georgia and the end of the Ukrainian conflict, the interest in Georgia will change, and relations with the European Union and the US would be restored (*“relations will change, and justice will be restored”*). *“Our message is for Georgia to continue moving forward in such a way as to become an EU member state by 2030. That is, to develop much faster than Ukraine and Moldova, as it has been happening in previous years”*, said Irakli Kobakhidze⁵². The next day, on October 18, EU Ambassador to Georgia Pavel Herczynski held a briefing, more reminiscent of blackmail, reminding that in response to the *“targeted actions, decisions, legislation”* of Georgia, the leaders of the 27 EU countries decided in June to suspend Georgia’s Euro-integration process. According to him, Georgia

[kanonis-cinaagmdeg](#) (download date: 09.12.2024).

⁵⁰ შალვა პაპუაშვილი - გამჭვირვალობის რეესტრში რეგისტრირებულ ორგანიზაციათა რიცხვმა გადაჭარბა იმ ორგანიზაციებს, რომლებიც კანონს ასაჩივრებენ, 300-ზე მეტი განაცხადი კი დამუშავების პროცესშია. 17.10.2024, <https://itv.ge/news/shalva-papuashvili-gamchvirvalobis-reestrshi-registrirbul-organizaciata-rickhvma-gadaacharba-im-organizaciebs-romlebic-kanons-asachivreben-damatebit-300-ze-meti-ganackhadi-damushavebis-processhia/> (download date: 09.12.2024).

⁵¹ European Council, Brussels, 17 October 2024 (OR. en) EUCO 25/24 CO EUR 20 CONCL 5, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/2pebccz2/20241017-euco-conclusions-en.pdf?fbclid=IwY2xjawF-V9JleHRuA2FlbQlXMQABHZBfhj6DRobFK_iRgZno3ICUe-E-fcQd5Wq4IJSNfpE1Ngq1WrUG6o2iuw_aem_rWzOcr3Li_Rd_clcG6zorA (download date: 09.12.2024).

⁵² The Georgian prime minister called all EU accusations unfair. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 18.10.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20241018/premer-gruzii-nazval-nespravedlivymi-vse-obvineniya-evrosoyuzu-290420546.html> (download date: 09.12.2024).

has already lost \$121 million in European aid, but this only concerns current government support programs. *“The European Union has made it very clear that the decisions and actions of high-ranking Georgian government officials have led to the fact that relations between Georgia and the European Union have reached such a low point. ...If the trajectory of the Georgian government does not change, Georgia will lose even more. If you, Georgians, decide with your votes not to continue moving towards the European Union, then Georgia will lose all financial assistance directed until membership, and Georgia will lose all the money that new EU member states receive, those with low economic development”*, said Pavel Herczynski⁵³.

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze called the statement biased, noting that obtaining a parliamentary majority by one party does not mean one-party rule. It is the choice of people, which everyone must respect. According to him, in the 2020 parliamentary elections, “Georgian Dream” received the votes of every second voter. This meant that the will of the people was for “Georgian Dream” to govern the country without the participation of the former ruling party “United National Movement” or any of its affiliates⁵⁴.

Signals, messages, and statements from the West, which turned into warnings, threats, and blackmail before the parliamentary elections in Georgia, have already become familiar to the Georgian authorities, and daily reactions to these attacks have become an integral part of their pre-election vocabulary. The latest was a joint statement regarding Georgia by the ministries of European affairs of 13 EU member states, distributed on October 21, according to which Georgia would not be able to become an EU member if the government does not change its course. *“In recent months, Georgia has adopted several laws that do not comply with the EU’s *acquis communautaire*, particularly the Foreign Influence Transparency Law. Due to these decisions, your country’s integration process into the European Union has been suspended. It will remain suspended as long as the current political course continues. ...The so-called ‘Foreign Influence Transparency’ law neither in content nor in spirit complies with the fundamental norms and values of the European Union. It undermines the fundamental rights of Georgian citizens, which are the basis of the commitments Georgia has made on the path to EU membership. The Georgian parliament hastily adopted this law despite weeks of public protests, the president’s veto, and unequivocal criticism from Georgia’s partners. Unfortunately, the laws that have come into force in recent months and do not comply with the European Union and the Council of Europe, especially the legislative package restricting the rights of LGBTQI individuals, further distance Georgia from the path to the EU,”* said the statement signed by representatives of the relevant departments of 13 EU countries⁵⁵.

⁵³ “This is not a threat, but reality” – EU ambassador issues warning to Georgia. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 18.10.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20241018/eto-ne-ugroza-a-realnost---posol-es-sdelal-preduprezhdenie-gruzii-290418949.html> (download date: 09.12.2024).

⁵⁴ The Georgian prime minister called all EU accusations unfair. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 18.10.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20241018/premer-gruzii-nazval-nespravedlivymi-vse-obvineniya-evrosoyuza-290420546.html> (download date: 09.12.2024).

⁵⁵ The statement was signed by the heads and representatives of departments coordinating the external European sphere of Germany, France, Poland, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg,

The speaker of the Georgian parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, called the joint statement by the ministers of European affairs of 13 EU countries “*interference in the upcoming parliamentary elections*” and thanked the remaining 14 EU countries for not supporting this text. The speaker also commented on another section of the statement. According to him, the interpretation of the European Council’s decision of June 27, 2024, that the process of Georgia’s integration into the EU is *de facto* suspended due to the *Foreign Influence Transparency Law*, is either absurd or a lie. He emphasized that Georgia is now going through a very important stage of development. “*In Georgian politics, the necessary principle of responsibility is gradually, painfully, but still being established. Responsibility for one’s words, actions, appeals to the people and the country*”, said Shalva Papuashvili⁵⁶.

According to the founder of the “Georgian Dream” party, Bidzina Ivanishvili, the Western sanctions against Georgia were blackmail based on biased information, which had the opposite effect and did not work. These statements, as Ivanishvili noted, are essentially blackmail, and the coordination, according to him, is carried out by the “*the global war party*”, to which the current opposition belongs⁵⁷. Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, at a government meeting on the eve of the elections (October 24), stated that their “*ambitious goal is to become a full member of the EU by 2030, and all conditions will be prepared for this. Georgia will be maximally ready for EU integration by 2030*”⁵⁸.

Conclusions

- The revision of the law on *Transparency of Foreign Influence* by the Georgian authorities is perceived as a cornerstone on the path to restoring sovereignty and freeing from dependence on the West.
- The adoption of the law was a direct blow to the West and the Georgian public, non-governmental organizations, and media funded by it. Western organizations and media, which have created the most active zones of influence since the rule of Mikheil Saakashvili, “declared war” on the initiative, thus revealing many realities.
- The adoption of the law became a kind of lustration, through which the Georgian authorities exposed the model of the “NGO-state” created by the West, identifying

Portugal, Finland, Sweden, and the Czech Republic, including ministers, deputy ministers, and other officials. [см.: სააგენტო „ინტერპრესნიუსის“ ცნობით, ევროკავშირის წევრი 13 ქვეყნის ევროპის საკითხთა მინისტრები ერთობლივ განცხადებას ავრცელებენ. 21.10.2024, <https://1tv.ge/news/evrokavshiris-wevri-13-qveynis-evropis-sakitkhta-ministrebi-ertobliv-ganckhadebas-avrceleben/> (download date: 09.12.2024)].

⁵⁶ Papuashvili: the statement of ministers from 13 EU countries on Georgia is an interference in elections. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 21.10.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20241021/papuashvili-zayavlenie-ministrov-13-stran-es-po-gruzii---eto-vmeshatelstvo-v-vybory-290462208.html> (download date: 09.12.2024).

⁵⁷ Sanctions against Georgia had the opposite effect – Ivanishvili. Спутник Грузия (in Rus.), 22.10.2024, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/20241018/premer-gruzii-nazval-nespravedlivymi-vse-obvineniya-evrosoyuza-290420546.html> (download date: 09.12.2024).

⁵⁸ ირაკლი კობახიძე - ჩვენი ამბიციური მიზანია, 2030 წლისთვის ქვეყანა გახდეს ევროკავშირის სრულფასოვანი წევრი და ამისთვის ყველა პირობა იქნება მომზადებული. 24.10.2024, <https://1tv.ge/news/irakli-kobakhidze-chveni-ambiciuri-mizania-2030-wlistvis-qveyana-gakhdes-evrokavshiris-srulfasovani-wevri-qveyana-da-amistvis-yvela-piroba-iqneba-momzadebuli/> (download date: 09.12.2024).

forces, organizations, and media that are funded from foreign sources and act against the state, the Georgian Orthodox Church, and the values of the Georgian people.

- In discussions related to the adoption of the law, the Georgian authorities showed that many NGOs and other organizations are not actually engaged in the functions defined in their charters or programs but are simply involved in political processes, actively supporting opposition forces and movements sponsored by the West.

- The process of adopting the law turned into a conflict between the West and the Georgian authorities, where neither side yielded, understanding that even the slightest step back could be pivotal. Thus, the West would lose its 20-year zone of influence at the crucial crossroads of the South Caucasus, and Georgia would lose the prospect of sovereignty and relatively stable development.

- According to the Georgian authorities, during the recirculation of the law, the West tried to overthrow the Georgian authorities, who were coming out of its influence, through a coup, form a controlled government, and quickly open a second front against Russia, which, however, did not succeed.

- On the eve of the parliamentary elections on October 26, the West, once again activating its discourses related to the adoption of the law, organized another attack on the legitimate authorities of Georgia, trying to exclude or weaken their chances of re-election. To achieve this goal, warnings, sanctions, as well as threats and blackmail from various Western countries, international institutions, and other structures were applied against Georgia. Nevertheless, the Georgian authorities managed to neutralize the challenges and earn the trust of the majority of election participants.

- One of the most influential institutions in Georgia – the Georgian Orthodox Church, despite its apolitical nature and behavior, silently, and sometimes openly, supported the legislative initiatives of the Georgian authorities both on the law on *Transparency of Foreign Influence* and the law banning LGBTQI propaganda.

- With the adoption of the *Foreign Influence Transparency Law* on June 27, the process of Georgia's accession to the EU was effectively suspended. Despite this, the Georgian authorities declared before the parliamentary elections that Georgia is confidently moving along the path of Euro-integration and that by 2030 the country will become a full member of the EU.

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