Elections in Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia in the context of the West-Russia global confrontation

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Summary

ARVAK's comment analyzes the elections in Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia as key arenas of hybrid confrontation between Russia and the collective West. Diametrically opposed outcomes are noted: a controversial victory for pro-Western forces in Moldova and a revanche for supposedly "pro-Russian" forces in Georgia. The main thesis is that the 2026 parliamentary elections in Armenia will be the decisive factor determining the geopolitical balance in the South Caucasus region. The strategies of external actors—the West's "Moldovan model" (eliminating opponents) and Russia's "Georgian model" (focusing on big business) — are analyzed, projected onto Armenia's domestic political struggle. It concludes that domestic political discourse in Armenia is artificially reduced to a binary choice between the West and Russia, excluding the possibility of an Armenia-centric agenda.

Keywords: *Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, West, elections, hybrid war, geopolitics, external intervention, South Caucasus, Nikol Pashinyan, Maia Sandu, Bidzina Ivanishvili.*

The elections held in Moldova and Georgia, as well as those expected in Armenia, have become key elements in the ongoing hybrid war between the collective West and Russia. Their outcome is of fundamental importance in the context of the evolving balance of power in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus.

The Moldovan agenda is of particular importance to the opposing parties, as it concerns the struggle for geostrategic positions in the Northern Black Sea region, the fate of the Russian Transnistrian military group, and control over the "Ukrainian rear", which is of strategic importance for the outcome of hostilities between Moscow and Kiev.

In the unfolding geopolitical clash of power centers, the Georgian track is also acquiring fundamental significance. At issue is the fate of the "buffer zone" between Russia and NATO's southern flank, the balance of power in the eastern Black Sea, and the prospects for Russia's continued military-political presence in the South Caucasus (Armenia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia), which determines the security of Russia's southern frontiers. Unlike Moldova, the October Georgian elections were municipal, but this did not diminish their political significance in the context of Tbilisi's conflicts with the West, especially given the Georgian opposition's repeated promises to stage a revolution immediately after the "*obviously falsified*" voting.

The elections in Moldova and Georgia had diametrically opposed results in the context of the confrontation between Moscow on the one hand, and Brussels, Washington, and London on the other. In the Moldovan parliamentary elections, the pro-European *Action and Solidarity Party* of President Maia Sandu won an absolute majority of the total vote (over 50.2%), while its main opponent, the *Socialist Party*, led by, as is commonly believed "*pro-Russian politician*" Igor Dodon's party garnered half as much (24.17%). The other political forces, which split the remaining votes among themselves, will not be able to exert significant influence on the policies of the Action and Solidarity Party, which has set Chisinau's course toward European integration, regardless of the balance of power in the Moldovan parliament.

According to experts, the pro-European forces would have been doomed to failure were it not for two key factors. First, the courts and the Central Electoral Commission, controlled by

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the ruling *Action and Solidarity Party*, orchestrated a process of discrediting and disqualifying the *Greater Moldova* and *Heart of Moldova* parties from participating in the elections, citing their alleged funding and oversight by Moscow. Second, of the over 100,000 eligible Moldovan citizens in Russia, only 10,000 were allocated ballots, of which just over 4,000 took advantage of the opportunity to participate. Overall, only 2 polling stations were open in Russia, while in Western countries, primarily in the EU, approximately 250 polling stations were open on the election day, where Moldovan voters delivered an overwhelming majority of votes in favor of pro-European political forces.

This created a paradoxical situation where the majority of voters living in Moldova cast their ballots for the conditionally "*pro-Russian*" forces, but thanks to the votes of Moldovan citizens living or working in the West, M. Sandu's pro-Western party, *Action and Solidarity*, won an overwhelming majority of seats in the country's parliament. This absurdity, as well as the series of "*blatantly illegal measures*" documented by the opposition taken by the ruling party against political opponents, did not prevent Western countries and supranational structures from declaring the Moldovan elections "*free and in accordance with all the criteria and standards of democracy*". In turn, the Russian political establishment, as expected, expressed itself in a diametrically opposite vein, characterizing these elections as obviously rigged and "*fraudulent*" (a definition by Russian Foreign Minister S. Lavrov).

However, the post-election situation in Moldova has demonstrated that the opposition lacks the necessary capacity to systematically boycott the election results, and Russia, which supports it, is unable to exert any effective influence on the political landscape. Any steps or critical responses from Russia only serve to provoke the "winning" forces and elicit a harsh political and informational reaction from the West. Currently, if the Moldovan opposition attempts to resort to radical actions against the government, it risks losing even those fragile positions in parliament and in the existing balance of power that were effectively left to it as a residual by pro-European forces and the West supervising them.

Thus, in Moldova, the West secured an unconditional victory over Russia, perhaps for the first time in the post-Soviet space resorting to such disregard for the principles of legality and democracy on this scale.

However, Georgia did not ensure the continuity of the march of "*democracy's victory*" during this new phase of the Russia-West confrontation, as sought by Brussels and other European capitals. According to the voting results on October 4, 2025, candidates from the ruling Georgian Dream party won in all 64 municipal councils (*sakrebulo*) where elections were held. Furthermore, according to the republic's Central Election Commission, 26 candidates from the government allegedly received 100% of the votes. Thus, the opposition suffered a crushing defeat. Expecting such "*falsified results*", a large part of the radical opposition parties had preemptively refused to participate in the elections, arguing that the elections "*merely create a facade of legitimacy for the illegitimate Russian regime*". However, some political forces decided to participate, pointing out that boycotting and inaction would only strengthen the ruling party's sense of impunity.

This camp included one of Georgia's strongest and most experienced opposition parties, *Lelo*, as well as the *Gakharia for Georgia Party*, which explained its decision by its desire to prevent *Georgian Dream* from gaining complete control at the local municipal level. This

stance was characterized by the boycotting camp as "*treason*" and provoked a split within the opposition. The boycotting forces considered the announcement of the *Lelo–Strong Georgia* coalition's participation in the elections a treacherous deal, especially since the day after the coalition's registration with the Central Election Commission, its arrested leaders, Badri Japaridze and Mamuka Khazaradze, were released by an amnesty decree from President Mikheil Kavelashvili.

It is noteworthy that, unlike the Moldovan authorities, the Georgian leadership did not take the path of disqualifying its most powerful opponents from the opposition from the elections, but resorted to the exact opposite method of action: it invited all political forces without exception to participate in the electoral process, promising to release from custody their leaders, previously accused of organizing unrest and "*illegal cooperation with Western centers*".

In any case, the pro-Western Georgian opposition suffered a crushing defeat in the municipal elections, and new street riots organized by its most radical representatives, aimed at seizing power, were once again harshly suppressed by the authorities.

As expected, Western countries reacted extremely negatively to the October municipal elections in Georgia, declaring them "*unfree*" and the results not reflective of the socio-political sentiments in the South Caucasian republic. Russia, as usual, was identified as the main culprit, although no evidence of its direct interference in Georgia's electoral processes was documented by the West. Essentially, European capitals perceived the events in Georgia as Moscow's revenge after its equivalent defeat in Moldova. The Georgian elections restored balance in the context of the struggle between Russia and the collective West for political influence in several post-Soviet republics that still remain in a zone of geopolitical uncertainty, balancing between global power centers and their integration projects.

The conditional "draw" in the Russian-Western competition to establish loyal forces in countries yet undecided on their foreign policy vector has predictably heightened the intrigue surrounding the 2026 Armenian parliamentary elections. Without achieving the desired voting outcomes in Armenia, the competing centers objectively cannot fully capitalize on their political successes in Moldova and Georgia.

Should Nikol Pashinyan's party, which is not the most convenient for Moscow, and its satellite political forces oriented towards the West win in Armenia, Russia risks losing not only its last chance to keep Yerevan within its sphere of regional influence but also completely losing its leverage with Tbilisi, Baku, and Central Asian capitals. Their need to consider Moscow's regional interests is largely driven by the presence of a Russian military base and significant investment capital in Armenia.

N. Pashinyan, whose re-election will be fully supported by Western centers, will be forced, in exchange for this support, to agree to the final isolation of Armenia from Russia, the withdrawal of the Russian military base, rapprochement with Turkey, and the de facto formalization of a deal on the "TRIPP route", designed to ensure NATO's unimpeded access to the Caspian region and Central Asia. Thus, the outcome of the Armenian elections will largely determine the fate of Russian interests in a region not limited solely to the South Caucasus.

From this perspective, the crushing defeat of the pro-Western Georgian opposition significantly reduced the chances of N. Pashinyan's party's victory, breaking one of the links in the "chain of liberalization" of the post-Soviet republics that Brussels and Washington were

attempting to construct with the aim of strangling Russia and the Eurasian Economic Community. Moreover, Georgia, which had not yet experienced a serious crisis in its relations with the EU and the U.S. until the early 2020s, was a convenient platform for the transit of ideas, experience, and technology to Armenia for "*liberalization*" of system and public opinion, as well as for the dissemination of anti-Russian sentiment, which was clearly demonstrated during the change of power in Yerevan in 2018. Meanwhile, the current use of Georgian state resources by Western centers to support the incumbent Armenian authorities is practically reduced to zero or extremely minimized, inevitably creating difficulties for the EU and the U.S.

Given all of these circumstances, as well as the deepening global military-political crisis surrounding the Ukrainian and Iranian issues, there is no doubt that the elections in Armenia are of utmost importance for Moscow and its opponents in the West. The significance of their outcome is so high that both sides will likely be willing to resort to tried-and-true methods of engaging in domestic political processes of the "*undecided*" republics, as well as relatively new technological schemes.

Thus, it seems quite likely that Western centers are recommending that the Armenian authorities use administrative resources almost without restrictions, and, in particular, resort to excluding the most significant competitors from the election race, as was done in Moldova. This is evidenced by the discourse unfolding in the Armenian media space among pro-Western forces about barring parties and opposition leaders allegedly supported by Moscow from the elections. This specifically refers to the *Republican Party of Armenia* (RPA), the *Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaktsutyun* (ARF), the *Armenia Bloc*, and the *Our Way* political association, headed by the arrested businessman Samvel Karapetyan. Such an approach already proved successful for its initiators in Moldova, where President M. Sandu received full support from Western centers, providing political and media cover for this mechanism of eliminating political competitors. Given the current balance of competing political forces in Armenia and the relatively weak electoral potential of the ruling *Civil Contract* party (as shown by the municipal elections in Gyumri), such a strategy might be considered by the government and its Western partners as the most effective way to win the elections — aiming for an absolute majority, as repeatedly stated by members of Nikol Pashinyan's team.

For its part, Moscow is apparently continuing to rely in Armenia on a method traditional in post-Soviet republics: involving and supporting representatives of national businesses who built their empires in Russia or maintain close financial and economic ties with it. This scheme failed in Moldova, where pro-Russian billionaire Ilan Shor faced political and criminal prosecution and, ultimately, failed to bring his anti-European *Pobeda Bloc* to power in Chisinau. In Georgia, however, this method worked on the second try. The first – in the 2008 snap presidential elections – ended in failure: Moscow-backed oligarch Badri Patarkatsishvili lost to Mikheil Saakashvili and was found dead in his London mansion several months later. The second attempt, timed to coincide with the October 2012 parliamentary elections, was successful: the highest political power in Tbilisi passed to the *Georgian Dream party*, whose founder and honorary chairman is the billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, who holds a reputation in the West as "*Moscow's protégé*" and the republic's "*shadow ruler*".

Even without any evidence of direct ties between B. Ivanishvili and the Russian political establishment, the Georgian opposition and its Western partners are not inclined to consider

the head of the *Georgian Dream* either a Georgia-centric figure or a supporter of Tbilisi's geopolitical neutrality, a priori rejecting the very possibility of such a conceptual niche within the republic's foreign policy. Apparently, Western centers and pro-Western forces grouped around Nikol Pashinyan's party adhere to similar principles when assessing the intentions and actions of businessman Samvel Karapetyan, who is claiming primacy in the competition with the ruling party. He is directly accused of aiding Russia's imperial policies and deliberately rejecting "*democratic values*" and the political and civilizational model that has been consistently implanted in Armenia recently.

S. Karapetyan is demonized by his opponents precisely within this ideological-political paradigm, leaving no room for theories about the billionaire's personal ambitions for power or his attempts to balance Yerevan's dangerous foreign policy volatility. In exactly the same way, the radical Armenian opposition and the Russian establishment are discrediting N. Pashinyan and his party, leaving no room for speculation about his independent course of disengagement from Russia, unrelated to Western pressure.

Thus, the internal political struggle in the Republic of Armenia on the eve of the 2026 elections is developing in a paradigm set by external players, which excludes even the hypothetical possibility of forces advocating Armenia-centrism and neutrality.

The Armenian elections are essentially repeating the pattern of confrontation between Russia and the collective West, as occurred recently in Moldova and Georgia. Moreover, the outcome of the political competition in Armenia will take on even greater significance for these global actors: a victory of the conditionally "*pro-Russian*" forces would largely negate the Euro-centrists' success in Moldova, while the continuation of N. Pashinyan's pro-Western party and its satellites in power would significantly nullify for Moscow the importance of the crushing defeat of anti-Russian forces in Georgia.