

Georgia: internal political consolidation and foreign policy diversification ARVAK Center comment, 13.11.2025¹

Summary

ARVAK analyzes the internal political processes in Georgia following the October 2025 municipal elections, which confirmed the consolidation of power by the “Georgian Dream” party and the electoral collapse of the pro-Western opposition. It examines the escalating tensions in Tbilisi’s relations with the EU and the U.S., including Georgia’s refusal to participate in the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly and the West’s harsh responses, as well as the authorities’ use of legal mechanisms to neutralize the opposition field. The analysis addresses Georgia’s foreign policy diversification, particularly its strategic partnership with China, as a method of compensating for losses from frozen Western integration programs. The conclusion is drawn that Georgia, unlike Armenia and Azerbaijan, is diverging from the collective Western anti-Russian strategy in the region, preferring the role of a neutral zone.

Keywords: Georgia, Georgian Dream, Irakli Kobakhidze, EU, USA, Russia, China, South Caucasus, elections, opposition, Euronest, TRIPP, Middle Corridor, Armenia, Azerbaijan.

The results of the municipal elections in Georgia on October 24, 2025, demonstrated that the electoral resources of the pro-Western opposition in the country have markedly diminished [1]. Judging by the election results, which the opposition failed to systemically challenge through legal procedures, the ruling “Georgian Dream” party secured a convincing victory in almost all municipalities, including the capital, Tbilisi. Within opposition circles, it is generally believed that the authorities capitalized on low voter turnout, which, in turn, was a consequence of a split in the opposition’s ranks regarding an election boycott and a renewed attempt to change the ruling power through non-parliamentary methods [2].

In response, the EU reacted to the Georgian elections with harsh rhetoric and criticism of the ruling party, which, according to Brussels, applied repressive measures against opposition forces and the public, thereby undermining the transparency and fairness of the elections [3]. The United States demonstrated a more restrained reaction at the official level, although certain groups within the country’s legislature called on the executive branch in Washington to act more decisively against “Georgian Dream” for “*ignoring the transparency of free elections*” and cultivating “*particular aggression*” against the United States in Georgia [4].

Nevertheless, it can be assumed that the concern of American legislators was largely caused not by the municipal elections themselves, but by the statement made a few days before the vote by the head of the State Security Service (SSG) of Georgia, Mamuka Mdinaradze. He alleged that the U.S. continues to illegally finance opposition elements and agents of influence in the country through non-transparent schemes, with the aim of orchestrating a *coup d’état* [5]. Nonetheless, the White House and the State Department, compared to the supranational EU structures in Brussels, are behaving more passively regarding Georgia and are currently refraining from drastic actions.

The Georgian opposition and EU speakers periodically declare that following the parliamentary (October 2024), presidential (December 2024), and municipal (October 2025) elections, the South Caucasian republic has plunged into a deep political crisis. However, the authorities in Tbilisi are inclined to believe that it is the radical opposition forces and their Western backers who are in a

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critical impasse, as their technologies for effecting regime change in sovereign countries are no longer effective in Georgia. The current authorities have thoroughly studied and deconstructed the methodology of these technologies and have developed effective mechanisms for the political-informational, legal, and security-based neutralization of undesirable processes being introduced into the country under the slogans of liberalization and progress.

In addition to internal containment, the ruling power in Georgia is, for now, also quite effectively resisting Western pressure in the political-diplomatic sphere. It asserts that while it is constantly subjected to threats and blackmail, it does not intend to retreat from the country's national interests. Tbilisi is unwilling to yield to its opponents, even considering the suspension of nearly all of Brussels' integration programs, including the visa-free regime [6] and financial assistance from the EU.

At first glance, "Georgian Dream's" convincing victory in the municipal elections, which successfully completed the staffing of all levels of government with its own appointees, should have reduced the level of tension in the ruling circles. It should have prompted attempts to resume a constructive dialogue with the West, persuading it to accept the outcome of Georgia's internal political struggle as an incontrovertible reality. However, it is evident that the Georgian authorities do not wish to stop halfway and are prepared to raise the stakes in their confrontation with the EU and the opposition it supports.

In late October, it became known that "Georgian Dream" had decided to file a lawsuit with the Constitutional Court of the republic, demanding a ban on three radical opposition parties: "Lelo–Strong Georgia", the "National Movement", and the "Coalition for Change" [7]. These forces had won seats in parliament in the October 2024 elections but had boycotted its work until recently, deeming the results "falsified". Thus, the Georgian authorities decided to use legal mechanisms to definitively liquidate the pro-Western opposition field in the country. Furthermore, on October 27, 2025, in an open letter to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, Tbilisi officially gave notice that it would not participate in the 12th Plenary Session of the Assembly, held October 28-30 in Yerevan. The stated reason was "*crude, illegal interference by Brussels in the internal affairs of the republic and the provocation of unrest in the country*" [8]. On 01.11.2025, the speaker of the Georgian parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, announced that Tbilisi was completely refusing to participate in all sessions of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, alleging that several anti-Georgian resolutions were adopted during the Yerevan session, which questioned the legitimacy of the Georgian authorities and provoked a new internal political crisis and destabilization [9].

Thus, Tbilisi is consistently continuing the process of distancing itself from the West, setting as its main conditions for normalization the recognition of the legitimacy of the current authorities and the establishment of a paradigm of equal relations between the collective West and Georgia—devoid of pressure, blackmail, and mentorship.

In the context of regional geopolitical processes, Georgia's course fundamentally contradicts the logic of the West's South Caucasus strategy. This likely explains the persistent, yet so far unsuccessful, attempts by the U.S., and primarily the EU and the UK, to achieve a change of power in Tbilisi at any cost. Georgia is diverging from the general process of reformatting the political systems in the region's republics and the synchronization of their shift to an anti-Russian vector. In

Armenia, this task began to be implemented starting in 2018, when forces came to power that subsequently subjected Armenian-Russian relations to a radical revision.

In Azerbaijan, the regime that has ruled for three decades was not displaced; however, it possibly undertook a commitment to internally restructure its system, including the mandatory elimination of political groups traditionally associated with a pro-Russian vector. This process extended over two phases: first, parallel to the establishment of “*revolutionary rule*” in Armenia, the Azerbaijani state apparatus was purged of groups allegedly tied to Moscow; then, starting in mid-October 2025, criminal prosecution was authorized against these same circles on charges of preparing a *coup d'état* [10].

The reformatting of power in Armenia and the complications in Azerbaijani-Russian relations should be considered a significant achievement for the collective West in the region. Nevertheless, without securing the complete loyalty of Georgia, the success of the strategy to permanently remove the South Caucasus from Russia's orbit of influence remains ambiguous. Tbilisi, under the governance of “Georgian Dream”, may not maintain the closest, most trusting relations with Moscow, but it is also unwilling to become a platform for generating anti-Russian sentiments, much less a potential “*second front*” after Ukraine [11]. In the context of the West-Russia confrontation in the South Caucasus, Tbilisi evidently prefers to be considered a conditional “*grey zone*” in the geopolitical space. This status is fraught with significant costs for Georgian statehood, but it at least does not threaten its very existence.

It can be assumed that the anti-Russian Western bloc is acting in concert and in close coordination in the South Caucasus; however, the region is effectively divided among Western centers of influence into zones of responsibility, designated according to the priorities of their patrons and their traditional ties with regional actors. Georgia is considered the EU's zone of responsibility, whereas in Azerbaijan and Armenia, the United Kingdom and the United States, respectively, are more active.

Against the backdrop of Washington's evident successes in Armenia—supporting the 2018 “*Velvet Revolution*” and launching the U.S.-sponsored *TRIPP project*—and considering the close ties of Azerbaijani political and financial-economic elites to London since the end of the last century, Brussels' efforts with Tbilisi can be considered a failure. The EU was unable to prevent the ousting of Mikheil Saakashvili's thoroughly pro-Western government and has been incapable, even with tangible support from the U.S. and UK, of reversing the situation since 2012. In this context, it should be emphasized that the U.S. activity in support of the EU on the Georgian track has noticeably decreased since 2024. Likewise, official Washington's criticism of “Georgian Dream” for its “*anti-democratic methods of governance*” and “*repression*” against the liberal opposition has become more restrained. This is evidently linked to the internal political conjuncture in the U.S. and the fierce campaign initiated by President D. Trump against USAID [12], organizations affiliated with G. Soros [13], and the entire “*deep state*” system, which, in the opinion of the current American president, not only corroded the U.S. from within but also violently interfered in the internal affairs of many other countries worldwide.

At the same time, it cannot be excluded that the U.S. passivity in Georgian affairs was also influenced by the “*peace process*” between Armenia and Azerbaijan under Washington's *de facto* mediation. As a “reward” for this, D. Trump secured for his country the right to control the Armenian section of the transport corridor between Azerbaijan, Nakhichevan, and Turkey.

This corridor is poised to become a key element in the diversification of the “Middle Corridor” and the “Trans-Caspian Route” in the South Caucasus. Georgia’s geographical location and its potential transit role certainly attracted the United States’ attention in the context of geopolitical and economic competition with Russia and China. However, with the possibility of establishing control over Armenia, its transit potential, and its internal political situation, the U.S. may have, to some extent, lost its previous interest in the Georgian agenda.

In the new configuration, Washington evidently prefers to work with Turkey, the United Kingdom, and Azerbaijan, thereby constructing Armenia into a reliable platform for isolating Russia on its southern flank, cutting off Iran’s access to the Black Sea, securing a strategic U.S. outlet to Central Asia, and controlling a significant portion of the region’s trade and logistics initiatives. Consequently, Georgia largely loses its position in the new configuration, thereby also depriving the EU of participation in the division of the “South Caucasian pie”.

It is noteworthy that the former head of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, warned the authorities in Tbilisi about such a scenario while in prison. He emphasized that the successful launch of the so-called “*Zangezur corridor*” and the general refocusing of Western attention onto Armenia would turn Georgia into an “*amputated organ*” and become a geopolitical catastrophe for it [14]. This is, by all appearances, a politically motivated assessment reflecting the views of the entire pro-Western radical opposition in Georgia. At the expert analysis level, the prospect of a “*catastrophe*” is dismissed, although alarming signals are noted.

A number of Georgian analysts believe that the diversification of transit flows, with quotas allocated between Georgia and Armenia, will only benefit both countries, without the threat of turning them into a “*thoroughfare*” [15]. According to other experts, the Armenian transit route could cause Georgia to lose up to 20% of its cargo traffic, which would inflict tangible damage on the country’s economy and budget, with severe political consequences. Therefore, to prevent these serious losses, they urge Tbilisi to take steps immediately to strengthen its competitiveness, revise its tariff policy, develop its infrastructure, and work more actively with carriers [16].

By all appearances, the Georgian government intends to adhere precisely to this course, compensating for the political discord with Western partners by increasing the attractiveness of Georgian transit and economic projects for them [17].

Tbilisi is openly seeking to deepen its interaction with China—a new geopolitical player in the region—by relying on which Georgia has managed to significantly reduce the risks of balancing on the front line of the U.S.-Russia geostrategic rivalry in the South Caucasus. The declaration of a strategic partnership between the PRC and Georgia [18] has opened the way for colossal Chinese investments into the Georgian economy and the restructuring of its logistical and energy infrastructure. This has tangibly reduced the republic’s dependence on Western centers of power and undermined the effectiveness of their financial and political leverage.

The recent statement by the country’s Prime Minister, Irakli Kobakhidze, regarding the expansion of interaction with Beijing in the context of developing trade and energy routes, and his emphasis on Georgia’s historical role as a link between West and East, also contains a message to Western opponents: Tbilisi will only agree to a model of interaction similar to the Georgian-Chinese partnership—broad economic integration without political interference in the country’s sovereign affairs and without coercion to participate in the larger geopolitical struggle.

Tbilisi is signaling that it is only comfortable with the role of a connecting bridge, not a fault line where the front of global confrontation converges. This voice is already being heard clearly, given that the small republic has, at least until now, managed to maintain a fragile equilibrium in one of the world's most complex and explosive regions.

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