

Georgia's balancing strategy (December 2025)

ARVAK Center comment, 11.12.2025¹

Summary

ARVAK's comment analyzes Georgia's balancing strategy amidst the global escalation between the Russian Federation (RF) and the collective West. In December 2025, Tbilisi and Moscow synchronously declared the degradation of bilateral relations due to the unresolvable contradiction regarding Georgia's territorial integrity (Russia's recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia). This declaration coincided with a new spike in tension between the Georgian authorities and Western actors, triggered by the failure of attempts to remove the ruling "Georgian Dream" party through electoral mechanisms. The comment hypothesizes that the public confirmation of hostility toward the RF is a preventive step by Tbilisi, aimed at disavowing the narrative of a pro-Russian conspiracy and minimizing external sanctions pressure from the West, which seeks to integrate the entire South Caucasus into its geopolitical orbit. The analysis underscores that the position of "Georgian neutrality" is also beneficial to Moscow, as it prevents Georgia's full engagement in the anti-Russian camp.

Keywords: Georgia, neutrality, territorial integrity, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, geopolitical escalation, institutional sanctions, internal political stability, foreign policy orientation, South Caucasus.

Georgia is attempting to conserve its position of neutrality amidst the global escalation between the Russian Federation and the collective West.

On 03.12.2025, the RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) stated that "*there are no prerequisites for the normalization of bilateral relations*", because Tbilisi is setting as an unavoidable condition the withdrawal of the act recognizing the state sovereignty of Abkhazia and South Ossetia – a demand which, according to the Russian foreign policy establishment, is excluded. A few hours later, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze confirmed the Georgian position at a briefing in Tbilisi, stating that reconciliation with Moscow is possible only on the condition of the revocation of the recognition of the independent status of the former Georgian autonomies and their "*de-occupation*".

Thus, on the same day, both sides synchronously declared that their mutual relations continue to be in a state of degradation due to the issue of territorial integrity, which is the most sensitive for Georgia.

It is noteworthy that these statements coincided with a new cycle of tension in Georgia's relations with the West and a mutual exacerbation of aggressive rhetoric. At the same briefing, Prime Minister I. Kobakhidze told journalists that Kelly Degnan, the former U.S. Ambassador to Tbilisi, "*became hysterical*" during meetings with the Georgian leadership after the start of the Special Military Operation (SMO) in Ukraine, demanding the introduction of sanctions against the RF, but "*received a firm refusal*". On the same day, December 3, 2025, the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, Shalva Papuashvili, sharply criticized the EU, which, in his words, is waging a hybrid war aimed at the political "*strangulation of Georgia*". Papuashvili also demanded an apology from Eurocrats for false accusations that the Georgian authorities used chemical weapons against opposition demonstrators.

¹ The original (in Rus.) was posted on our website on 10.12.2025.

It is evident that the West has not reconciled with the fiasco of the Georgian opposition, which missed opportunities for the constitutional removal of the “Georgian Dream” party from power following the parliamentary (October 2024), presidential (December 2024), and municipal (October 2025) electoral cycles in the republic.

The failure of the collective West’s plans, which invested significant resources in supporting the radical Georgian opposition, will further increase external pressure on Tbilisi, as the EU and the U.S. have virtually no alternative but to initiate a process of institutional sanctions against Georgia, aimed at its political and economic isolation from the Western world. Such measures are pertinent for Brussels and Washington, considering that the anti-Russian *démarches* of the authorities in Yerevan and Baku may be devalued in the context of the global confrontation if Tbilisi does not join them. In this scenario, the West risks losing the window of opportunity to simultaneously pull the entire South Caucasus out of the RF’s sphere of influence, leaving Moscow no geopolitical points of support there. Consequently, its pressure on Tbilisi will continue and intensify, but the main political battles will shift from the domestic Georgian political arena to the foreign policy front, where the information war against Georgia will intensify, and sanction measures will be sequentially applied—including the cancellation of the visa-free regime with the EU, the curtailment of financial and economic support programs by the West, and so on.

In view of this, it becomes clear why, on the eve of the expected new stage of tough political confrontation between Tbilisi and the West, the Georgian authorities once again emphasized the baselessness of rumors regarding their synergy with Moscow. Tbilisi is thereby attempting to devalue this discourse, which has become the main motive for attacks on Georgia in the West’s political-informational campaign. The U.S. and the EU are increasingly rising the aggressiveness of their anti-Georgian rhetoric, emphasizing the circumstance that the defeat of pro-Western NGOs, alleged “*election falsifications*”, and persecution of opposition leaders in this South Caucasian country supposedly occurred with the direct support of Russia, upon which, the West claims, “Georgian Dream” relies.

All this gives the ruling party in Georgia grounds to fear that the West may not be limited to sanctions and isolation alone but is already looking for “legitimate pretexts” for direct intervention in the internal affairs of the republic, up to the use of military force against its leadership. Such a scenario cannot be excluded, considering that in the Western geopolitical game, the stakes involve not just the foreign policy orientation and subjugation of Georgia itself, but the fate of the entire region.

In Tbilisi, they understand that the conflict with the EU and the U.S. has gone too far, prompting Western opponents to radical actions under the guise of fighting aggressive Russian revisionism in the post-Soviet space, of which Georgia is allegedly a victim. This is precisely why the current Georgian authorities are once again making desperate attempts to convey to the international community that the discourse cultivated in the West about the anti-democratic nature of “Georgian Dream”, which has supposedly turned away from EU liberal values at Moscow’s behest and under its influence, is fundamentally erroneous and manipulative. According to the official position of Tbilisi, the matter concerns exclusively Georgia’s neutrality and its unwillingness to become a platform for global geopolitical struggle, and even less a bargaining chip. It is important for Tbilisi to demonstrate to the West that it

has and can have no political engagement with Moscow due to the enduring problem of the “*occupied*” autonomies whose independence Russia has recognized. Thereby, Tbilisi seeks, as much as possible, to stabilize relations with the EU and the U.S. and persuade them to leave the Georgian agenda alone.

However, the curious fact is that Moscow is fully playing along with Tbilisi in this initiative. It cannot be excluded that the exchange of accusations and reproaches on December 3 was not sporadic but was necessitated by the need for both sides to demonstrate to the West that the issues of Abkhazia and South Ossetia guarantee the exclusion of any possibility of rapprochement. It is no coincidence that the Russian MFA emphasized that absolutely nothing has changed in Tbilisi’s position toward Moscow since the time of Mikheil Saakashvili.

Evidently, for Russia, the current detachment and coolness of Georgia is more acceptable than its “*capitulation*” to the West and, consequently, its involvement in the anti-Russian camp. Therefore, it is extremely advantageous for Moscow to support the agenda of “*Georgian neutrality*”, even at the cost of maintaining contradictions and hostility over the issues of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.