



# GEORGIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2024

## BACKGROUND

On **October 26, 2024**, Georgians will head to the polls to elect all 150 members of the parliament. Many observers consider this to be the most significant election in Georgia's history, believing it will determine the country's future trajectory, either cementing its relationship with Russia or resuming its path toward EU accession. This election marks Georgia's first fully proportional vote, where all parliamentary seats will be allocated based on each party's or candidate's share of the national vote. This new system replaces the previous hybrid model, where half the seats were filled through district-based elections. In this model, candidates who won their district would secure a seat in parliament, even if their party's national vote share was relatively low. This election will also be the first to utilize electronic voting machines.

Further changes include a ban on party blocs, which prevents parties from running as a single electoral unit, and a 5 percent threshold for securing parliamentary seats. In response, opposition parties have formed coalitions to increase their chances of passing the threshold. Historically, the opposition in Georgia has been fragmented, struggling with internal divisions and a lack of public support. Despite recent efforts to unite, opposition groups still face challenges with limited resources and voter appeal. The United National Movement (UNM), the largest opposition party, is particularly weakened by the imprisonment of its de facto leader, Mikheil Saakashvili. Polls indicate that Georgian Dream (GD) remains the most popular party, especially in rural and socially conservative areas. However, securing the most votes may not be enough for GD as they will still need a parliamentary majority to implement many of their proposed policies, which have been widely criticized for their authoritarian tendencies and pro-Russian stance.

## KEY PLAYERS

- » **President Salome Zourabichvili:** Elected in 2018 with the support of GD, became critical of the pro-Russian shift of the party and has aligned with pro-Western parties.
- » **Bidzina Ivanishvili:** Oligarch and founder of the pro-Russian Georgian Dream Party and Honorary Chairman. Considered the "shadow ruler" of Georgia.

### Coalitions:

- » **Unity to Save Georgia coalition (centrist):** A pro-Western coalition and led by the largest pro-EU opposition party, UNM.
- » **Coalition for Change (center-right):** Pro-EU coalition that unites multiple parties headed by former leaders of the UNM.
- » **Strong Georgia coalition (center-left):** Brings together four small pro-EU opposition parties

## WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

**Russian Hybrid Warfare:** Georgia has faced significant interference from Moscow, which occupies 20 percent of its territory and has significant influence over the ruling pro-Russian party, Georgian Dream (GD). GD has passed laws resembling Russian legislation, raising concerns about democratic backsliding, while also being accused of purposely straining EU relations. GD's founder, Bidzina Ivanishvili, is accused of being a Russian proxy due to his wealth from Russian state-owned Gazprom. While Russian influence is unpopular, Moscow has exploited societal divisions, using propaganda to fuel nationalist and anti-LGBTQ+ sentiments.

**Democratic Backsliding:** Bidzina Ivanishvili has promised to outlaw opposition groups if GD wins a constitutional majority. Concerns regarding free and fair elections are growing, with opposition groups accusing GD of misusing public resources and exerting undue influence over the media and judiciary. The newly enacted 'foreign agents' law, which requires civil society organizations receiving over 20 percent of their funding from abroad to register as "pursuing the interests of a foreign power," has further heightened these concerns, as most NGOs fall under this category. The growing risk of Georgia sliding further into authoritarianism, and under the

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

**November 8, 2023:** The EU grants candidate status to Georgia.

**May 28, 2024:** The Georgian Parliament adopts the 'foreign agents' law, mirroring similar Russian legislation. This caused domestic and international backlash, due to its potential to restrict civil society organizations.

**July 9, 2024:** The European Union announces it halted the Georgian accession process on June 27 in response to the foreign agent's law.

**September 17, 2024:** Moscow-inspired "Family Values" bill is approved, in explicit violation of EU values, to curtail LGBTQ+ rights.



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Kremlin’s wing would likely signal that the country is approaching a point of no return for relations with the West.

**EU Accession:** In 2023, Georgia was offered EU candidate status. While the Georgian population strongly supports EU integration, GD has been accused of deliberately straining relations with the EU through recent legislation. EU officials have publicly stated that GD has significantly stalled Georgia’s progress, and in July, the EU announced it had halted accession talks. Further democratic backsliding would likely solidify the EU's decision and could possibly result in the revocation of Georgia's EU candidate status.

**Black Sea Competition:** China’s influence in Georgia is growing, highlighted by the 2023 strategic partnership and major Chinese infrastructure investments. GD’s alignment with authoritarian powers signals a shift away from the West. As the Black Sea region remains a key geopolitical battleground between the West and Russia, China’s involvement adds a new player. GD's plans to deepen this relationship could further pivot Georgia away from Euro-Atlantic integration and reshape the regional balance of power.

**October 9, 2024:** The European Parliament passed a resolution calling on the EU’s executive branch to halt aid to Georgia and sanction those accountable for democratic backsliding in the country, including Ivanishvili.

**October 15, 2024:** The UK suspended its annual security dialogue with Georgia, citing concerns over democratic backsliding and anti-Western rhetoric.

**20 October 2024:** Thousands of pro-EU protesters rally in the capital city of Tbilisi to show support for EU accession ahead of the elections.

## POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

- » **Georgian Dream Victory:** If GD wins a majority, mass protests similar to those over the "foreign agents law" are likely and could turn violent. GD would likely outlaw opposition parties, deepening its democratic backslide. Ties with Russia and China would strengthen, while relations with the West would worsen, likely ending its EU candidate status and NATO prospects.
- » **Power-sharing:** If neither GD nor the opposition wins a majority, political power-sharing could help Tbilisi balance ties with Moscow and the West, though this would be challenging. A coalition that repeals anti-Western laws and reaffirms EU and NATO goals could repair Western relations but risk straining ties with Moscow. Despite a coalition, GD’s control over media and the judiciary could still enable pro-Russian or authoritarian laws, sparking mass protests and potential societal unrest.
- » **Opposition Coalition Win:** Although unlikely, analysts have suggested that a united opposition could form a majority over GD. An opposition win could reignite efforts toward NATO and EU integration, but internal divisions may challenge governance. Russia would likely respond negatively, leveraging its economic and diplomatic power against the new pro-Western government.

## POLLS

**Polls for the upcoming election show mixed results, with the two most common outcomes being:**

“If parliamentary elections were held this week, which party would you vote for?”  
(%) **(GORBI Poll (reportedly affiliated with GD)/September 2024)**

- Georgian Dream - 59.5%
- Unity to Save Georgia coalition - 13.6%
- Coalition for Change - 10.3%
- Strong Georgia coalition - 4.5%

“Which party would you vote for if parliamentary elections were held today?”  
(%) **(Edison Research Poll/September 2024)**

- Georgian Dream – 32.0%
- Unity to Save Georgia coalition - 20%
- Coalition for Change - 10.3%
- Strong Georgia coalition - 4.5%

TOPIC EXPERTS: NIKKIE LYUBARSKY

DATE SOURCES: BBC, FPRI, Reuters, Jamestown Foundation, CEPA, Voice of America, Institute for the Study of War

*Read more:*

[IntelBrief: Protests in Georgia and Armenia Cause Political Unrest and Signal Russian Hybrid-Warfare](#)

[IntelBrief: Russian Interference Tactics in European Democratic Processes Ramp Up](#)

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