

Piotr Sarama<sup>1</sup>

University of Zielona Góra, Zielona Góra, Poland  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8120-843X>

Jakub Stawicki<sup>2</sup>

University of Zielona Góra, Zielona Góra, Poland  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1489-404X>

## A deferred dream of the West, or which way is Georgia heading?

### Introduction

Modern Georgia has been an independent state since April 9, 1991. The declaration of independence was preceded by a referendum on March 31, 1991, in which 98.91% of the voters voted in favour of the country's independence (Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2021). This decisive result confirmed the aspirations of Georgians regarding their desire to regain freedom and their desire for self-determination. The events of the following years show that this Transcaucasian state has had to face, and still faces, a number of problems, affecting socio-political life. Separatist conflicts, the Rose Revolution, the Georgian-Russian war, the 2012 parliamentary elections – these are the key events that provide the context for the country's situation today. However, regardless of the situation at any given time, one common denominator can be attributed to the contemporary Georgian society – Western aspirations. Increasingly, however, trends are emerging that point to ambiguous intentions in this aspect of the currently ruling Georgian Dream party (hereinafter the GD). The various moves made by the state's decision-makers today raise doubts among citizens, which translate into numerous actions by an outraged civil society and concern in the West. Today, Georgians and all those interested in the country's fate are asking themselves a question, the answer to which is as unclear as it is sensitive, namely – which way is Georgia actually heading? The current state of knowledge points to a consistent distancing from the Western world. Using a comparative and empirical method, an attempt has been made to examine Georgia's course to date and the ways in which those in power have exercised their authority.

### Georgia before the Rose Revolution

Georgians' dreams of rapprochement with the West date back to the decline of the USSR. This had a strong connection to the situation at the time and, more specifically, to the

---

<sup>1</sup> Correspondence address: Instytut Nauk o Polityce i Administracji, Uniwersytet Zielonogórski, Al. Wojska Polskiego 69, 65-762 Zielona Góra, e-mail: [piotrebsarama@gmail.com](mailto:piotrebsarama@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Correspondence address: Instytut Nauk o Polityce i Administracji, Uniwersytet Zielonogórski, Al. Wojska Polskiego 69, 65-762 Zielona Góra, e-mail: [114670@g.learns.uz.zgora.pl](mailto:114670@g.learns.uz.zgora.pl)

growing dislike of the Soviet Union. Georgians did not want to be part of that organism. They associated their future with Europe, seeing it as progress, development and, above all, identifying with Western civilisational values based on Christian tradition. The dissolution of the USSR presented the union republics with an opportunity for independence. Georgia proclaimed its independence on April 9, 1991. The fulfilled desire for autonomy did not stop the other problems that stood in the way of the country's rapprochement with the Western world. Despite formal independence from its northern neighbour, the geopolitical disadvantage remained, of course, unchanged. Russia's neighbourhood was not conducive to Georgia's one-way course. The first serious contacts with the West were initiated by President Eduard Shevardnadze, but due to Russian pressure and unrelenting separatism, which contributed to the republic's instability, the authorities were *de facto* forced to respect Russian interests. Shevardnadze established diplomatic relations with Russia and then (in 1993) Georgia joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The country, thus, became an arena in which the race between the superpowers to consolidate their influence took place.

Both Russia and the United States were keen to deepen good relations with Georgia. As Shevardnadze was convinced that only proper relations with Russia could ensure that the state regained control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, he was prepared to go to extremes. On February 3, 1994, a treaty on friendship, cooperation and good neighbourly relations was signed between the countries. Under its terms, Russia had the option of re-establishing military bases on Georgian territory (Wójtowicz, 2023). The USA, on the other hand, was making an attempt in the Transcaucasus to dominate the raw material transfer corridor in a bid to broaden the list of potential recipients of energy supplies. In addition, Tbilisi strengthened its military cooperation with the United States (Falkowski, 2016). Such circumstances, therefore, forced Georgian decision-makers to find themselves in the situation and pursue prudent policies. The tragic internal situation, the omnipresent corruption, the gigantic criminality, the catastrophic economic conditions or the awkwardness of the political elite are all factors that make it possible to describe Georgia of 1991-2003 as a failed state. In his final period in office, President Shevardnadze did not enjoy a high degree of authority, due to the widespread corruption in his entourage. Power in Georgia at that time was wielded in an inefficient manner due to friction and disagreement between the President and the younger generation of politicians, i.e. Zhurab Zhvania, who was then the Speaker of Parliament, Nino Burjanadze, who was also the Speaker of Parliament and took over from Zhurab Zhvania, and Mikheil Saakashvili, who was the Minister of Justice. These politicians wanted to carry out significant reforms and the lack of agreement with President Shevardnadze weakened Georgian power. Eventually, younger politicians moved to the opposition, becoming opponents of the President. Georgia was in recession and the government was unable to effectively carry out economic reforms to marketize the Georgian economy. All this was creating discontent among the citizens. The culmination of the deepening

internal crisis came in November 2003 parliamentary elections. The results of the election were falsified, and electoral fraud took place, especially in Adjara and Lower Kartlia. The authorities fraudulently used public funds for campaign purposes. Moreover, the situation during the pre-election period in Adjara meant that parties did not undertake canvassing there. The media in the region, as exemplified by TV Adjara, did not maintain impartiality and objectivity. There were many violations during the electoral process, such as multiple ballots, destruction of ballot boxes, unauthorised filling of ballot papers. The secrecy of the elections was not properly maintained. There were many significant violations during the counting (OSCE, 2004). The rigged elections led to a further deterioration of public sentiment. These consequently escalated into mass protests that forced Shevardnadze to step down as President.

### **United National Movement in power**

The events of 2003 went down in history as the so-called Rose Revolution. They ushered in a period of dynamic change, of which Saakashvili became the face. He won the presidential elections in 2004 and the United National Movement party, which he founded, achieved the best result in the parliamentary elections (Brodowski, 2019). This allowed for a number of reforms and an attempt to heal the state. The new President aimed to stabilize the internal situation, eliminate corruption, liberalize the economy, improve Georgia's image on the international arena and, as a consequence, bring it much closer to the West, which was to enable the country to join the Euro-Atlantic structures. Saakashvili particularly emphasized the need for Georgia to clearly turn towards the European Union and the North Atlantic Pact, which of course worked against Russian interests. Despite the smouldering possibility of reconciling Russia's interests while maintaining Georgia's clearly pro-Western course, Georgians failed to satisfy the aspirations of their northern neighbour (Daško, 2012). Moscow feared a loss of influence. They did not want to allow the control they had in the area to diminish, hence the attempt to discredit Saakashvili and the new ruling team, against whom a series of accusations were made, aimed at causing renewed instability in Georgia. The relations between the two countries again deteriorated significantly, compounded by the Georgian intervention in South Ossetia in August 2008. The escalation of hostilities led to the so-called Five-Day War between Georgia and Russia (Wójtowicz, 2023). As the result of these events, Russia recognized the independence of South Ossetia, as well as Abkhazia.

Saakashvili became the President of Georgia in 2004 with 96% support. The public was euphoric about the changes brought about by the Rose Revolution and its legacy strongly influenced the situation in the country after 2003. Great hopes were raised with the arrival of the new government, whose faces were the young politicians who opposed President Shevardnadze. Saakashvili brought about radical changes in the state, encompassing practically all areas of the state, from the most essential, such as the economy, to

even seemingly unrelated to the most crucial issues of public life, such as architecture. A leading aspect of the reforms carried out in the state by the new ruling team headed by Saakashvili was transparency. One example was the new construction of police stations, which, according to the new doctrine, were to be glazed. The changes even extended to the main headquarters of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which received new glass facades. This was a symbol of the transparency of the Georgian state. The traffic police were disbanded, as under President Shevardnadze, Georgians were forced to pay multiple tolls even on a single route, and bribery was widespread. A determined fight against organized crime was undertaken, resulting in many influential members of criminal organizations being imprisoned. The quality of public services was significantly improved (Falkowski, 2016). Saakashvili also worked to seal the country's borders. He succeeded in sealing the borders with Armenia and Azerbaijan, which improved the state's finances. In a moderate way, Saakashvili resolved the country's territorial integrity issues. Initially, he restored control over parts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and abolished the autonomy of Adjara, which, although not a separate state, had autonomous control over the border with Turkey. Aslan Abashdze, who ruled this region, created an illegal border between the province and the rest of Georgia, where tolls were collected. Saakashvili, therefore, regained control of Adjara (Brodowski, 2019), as well as smaller parts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, during the initial period of his rule. However, these enclaves were lost by Georgia as a result of the 2008 Russo-Georgian war.

The reformation of the Georgian state by Saakashvili has been spectacular especially in the economic dimension, however the UNM Recordings have been released showing the brutal treatment of prisoners. In the Georgian prisons, there was a high mortality rate under Saakashvili, and the sheer number of prisoners, compared to the population, was very high compared to other countries. Saakashvili's party rule was also stigmatized by numerous accusations of an authoritarian system of governance. For Saakashvili, the priority was the modernization of the country, rather than the full application of democratic principles. His government disregarded democratic procedures on many issues, placing achievement of the goal above them. The most blatant violations of democratic principles manifested themselves through the overstepping of powers by the power structures and the prison service. On the darker pages of the UNM government, the events of autumn 2007, when a demonstration was dispersed by the police (similar events played out again in May 2011), were written down. The authorities were also accused of restricting media freedom when the Imedi and Kavkasia television stations were temporarily closed (Falkowski, 2016). There were also problems with the independence of the judiciary. There were also numerous accusations against Saakashvili that he was making decisions in a very narrow circle, thus, exercising power in a somewhat authoritarian manner. The numerous undemocratic aspects of the Saakashvili government's exercise of power were reflected in the Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index, where Georgia was described as a hybrid regime, with strong media control

and non-transparent decision-making. This criticism was also present in the EU reports (Falkowski, 2016).

A non-negligible dimension of Saakashvili's rule and achievements is foreign policy. Saakashvili set the azimuth towards the West, taking a pro-European course. The rapprochement with Europe and the United States that it has achieved is unprecedented, and before the Rose Revolution was something unrealistic. Internal reforms were determined by the need for the Georgian state to adapt to Western legal and political standards. Politicians in Tbilisi were counting on the possibility of future accession to the Euro-Atlantic structures, as well as assistance from Europe and the United States in economic and substantive (expert) terms. Directing this Transcaucasian state towards the West brought billions of dollars of aid for development, innovation and security. Tbilisi was to receive \$5.663 billion in official development assistance between 2004 and 2013. In the security sphere, there was also close cooperation with the USA, which funded the reform of the Georgian army, equipped it and trained officers and soldiers. Expert support was also key, which included the training of public administration and assistance in the implementation of the EU and NATO standards (Falkowski, 2016). Saakashvili's government, which had integration with the West high on its agenda, took many measures to align the state with the requirements of Western partners. In the security sphere, this manifested itself, among other things, in the participation of the Georgian soldiers in NATO missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the sphere of the EU integration, Saakashvili's government implemented the decisions of the Venice Commission and the European Commission, as well as other European institutions. The constitutional system was changed from a presidential to a parliamentary-cabinet system. The power of the president was, thus, weakened, and the cabinet, with its legitimacy in Parliament, became the main body of executive power. However, these changes were not to come into effect until the end of President Saakashvili's second term (Matusiak, 2010). The move was widely perceived as an attempt to secure his future political position by the then President, who after the end of his term was hoping to become the Prime Minister in the event of another UNM victory, especially as the prerogatives of the head of government were to be increased. These reforms received a favourable opinion from the Venice Commission. Saakashvili brought his country significantly closer to the Euro-Atlantic structures while turning his back on Russia, which posed risks for Georgia, but also brought a wide range of benefits. In addition to billions of dollars of support, integration has resulted in a number of agreements that are important for Georgia. The Eastern Partnership and the European Union's association programme proved to be a key platform for integration. In July 2010, negotiations began on association agreements between the European Union and Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (*Negocjacje umów stowarzyszeniowych pomiędzy UE i państwami Kaukazu rozpoczęte*, 2010). And in June of the same year in Brussels, Georgia and the EU signed a visa facilitation agreement that reduced Schengen visa fees and introduced facilities for certain groups of citizens (*Umowa o ułatwieniach*

wizowych Gruzja-UE, 2010). At the end of 2011, the EU launched negotiations for free trade areas with Moldova and Georgia (DCFTA) (Ananicz, Sadowski, 2011). This decision allowed to start the process of a wider integration of the Georgian market into the EU market. These agreements gradually brought Georgia closer to the EU, but the potential accession process still remained very distant.

### **Change of government in Tbilisi**

The 2012 parliamentary elections were another landmark event in the Georgian history. The UNM, which had been in power for years, was not favoured in the elections, as confirmed by the official results. In the end, it turned out that the formation of the GD, created the same year by the billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, was a clear winner. The parliamentary elections, with 54.97% of the votes and 85 seats, ended in a victory for the opposition united within the GD coalition. The turnout was 59.76% (Central Election Commission, 2012). This election result demonstrated the success of the democratic processes that Georgia has achieved under Saakashvili and his team. The new government was elected through a completely democratic and fair vote. Ivanishvili's party perfectly exploited the public mood, which clearly indicated fatigue with the previous camp. The new rulers, although initially proclaiming a desire for continuity in the implementation of the reforms initiated by the UNM and an unchanging direction in the conduct of foreign policy, began more or less explicitly to deviate from the announced credo as their position strengthened. Particularly questionable was the person of Ivanishvili himself – a businessman who earned his fortune in Russia. The billionaire denied allegations that he still had links to Moscow, explaining, among other things, that since he had become involved in Georgian political life, his activities in Russia had been shut down. Despite such a declaration, information contradicting this enunciation continues to appear in the Georgian public space. According to Transparency International Georgia's 2022 report, there are strong indications that Ivanishvili has indeed not severed contacts with Moscow, and a conversation with Russian businessman Vladimir Yevtushenkov (otherwise subject to Western sanctions), revealed in the same year, somehow confirms this conjecture (Górecki, 2022).

However, this does not change the fact that there is no direct evidence of unacceptable business operations. Nor does it undermine the *de facto* role that Ivanishvili played and still plays on the Georgian political scene. In no time at all, he was able to construct a formation which he subsequently led to triumph in the very first parliamentary elections in which it took part. After winning the election, he became the country's Prime Minister – an office he held from 2012 to 2013 (Tronchet, 2024). Throughout his time in office, he became known to citizens as a persona with an individualistic approach to the conduct of politics. This is evidenced by the fact that he appointed as his closest collaborators people with strong ties to him (including business) and, above all, who were

dedicated. In addition, after only two months in office, he removed the Deputy Prime Minister, Irakli Alasania, from his post. He belonged to one of the parties forming the GD coalition, namely the Our Georgia grouping. It came to light that Alasania had discussed at his party's forum possibility of putting forward his candidacy for the 2013 presidential elections (*Mała pomyłka Irakliego: pierwsze wstrząsy w nowym rządzie Gruzji?*, 2013).

This did not please Ivanishvili, who did not fail to take decisive steps. The marginalization of the Our Georgia politician seemed particularly damaging because of the guarantee he offered on the platform of continuing a pro-Western course. Alasania was considered a pillar of pursuing such an oriented policy in Ivanishvili's government, and the high position ensured a strong voice of dissent should there be signs of derailing the path to the West. The Prime Minister neutralized this voice in no time. Ivanishvili seemed to be a politician with unspecified political views. The beginning of his party's rule is mainly associated with a determined fight against the opposition or, more precisely, his predecessors from the UNM. Shortly after taking power, after only a hundred days, several thousand officials and local government officials associated with the UNM were summoned to the prosecution and tax offices. In the following months, convictions were handed down against many associates of the still-in-office President, and in 2014 a Tbilisi court ordered the arrest of Saakashvili himself (Górecki, 2024). Anti-opposition rhetoric virtually dominated Georgian politics, and the revanchism of GD politicians began to turn into an unhealthy political game that violated democratic principles. In fact, this process continues uninterrupted, as the still ruling GD continuously makes political capital out of scaring opponents from the opposition and constantly trying to discredit them. The GD has been able to maintain support, not least through social transfers and salary increases in the budget sector (Górecki, 2024).

The successes of the GD can be described as a significant increase in spending on sectors important for the state, i.e. healthcare and education. It is also worth noting the significant increase in GDP. During the GD's rule, the Georgian GDP almost doubled – from \$16.89 billion to \$30.54 billion (Górecki, 2024). The main entity in charge of the state is, of course, Ivanishvili, who, although he ceased to hold the office of the Prime Minister in November 2013, remained the main decision-maker in the Georgian politics. The billionaire became virtually a grey eminence who, even while formally out of politics, pulled and still pulls all the strings. He was succeeded as head of government by his close associate, Irakli Garibashvili, whose actions were *de facto* dependent on the will of his predecessor. Another success for those in power, and above all for Ivanishvili, was the victory in the presidential elections of Giorgi Mergwalishvili, another nominee of the billionaire, who regarded the politician as his mentor. In 2014, the GD won the local elections, and two years later, already as an independent formation without coalition partners, it outclassed the opposition in the parliamentary elections, thus, gaining a constitutional majority and re-election (the GD received 51% of the votes, second place went to the UNM with a result of 22%, while the turnout was 43%) (Matusiak, 2014).

The rulers, thus, already had virtually full political control in the country, and Ivanishvili could enjoy omnipotence. Such circumstances were not conducive to the development of democracy in Georgia. The marginalization of pro-Western politicians, the constant campaign against the opposition, the ambiguous foreign policy and the figure of Ivanishvili as a 'back seat' decision-maker were all elements that weakened democracy and created an extremely opaque model of governance. This opacity does not only relate to the position of the now honoured chairman of the GD, for it is also linked to the ambiguous intentions of the government representatives in terms of moving towards the Euro-Atlantic structures.

It is not only Ivanishvili's likely contacts that raise doubts in this matter. Since coming to power, the GD has gradually strengthened relations with Moscow, even though Georgia still does not officially maintain diplomatic relations with its northern neighbour. Since 2012, the politicians from the ruling party had made gestures indicating a desire to warm relations with Russia (which was reciprocated). Tbilisi was willing to take certain Russian interests into account, direct flights between the countries were resumed, and the Russian market was opened to goods from Georgia. Tbilisi also did not join the sanctions imposed on Russia after the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war. This clearly indicates a different attitude towards its neighbour than that of Saakashvili's team. However, the GD tried to maintain a relative balance, as if wanting to divert attention from its rapprochement with Moscow. This is evidenced by the fact that it was during the current ruling party's term that Georgia's constitution was expanded to include a provision on seeking integration with the European Union. In addition, in June 2014, an association agreement and a deep and comprehensive free trade area (DCFTA) agreement were signed with the EU.

In 2017, the European Union also decided to abolish visas for citizens of the Transcaucasian state. At the European Council summit on June 23, 2022, it was granted the so-called European perspective, and in December 2023, Georgia obtained the EU candidate status. The GD also balanced the issue of integration with NATO. Tbilisi took many steps to normalize the relations with Russia, but tried not to close the door to NATO, at least in a declarative sense. Ivanishvili's party repeatedly declared accession to the North Atlantic Alliance as its goal. These assurances were manifested in the continued participation of Georgian soldiers in NATO operations in Afghanistan and the opening of the NATO-Georgia Training Centre in Krcanisi near Tbilisi (Falkowski, 2016). Despite the GD's subsequent successes in integrating with the Euro-Atlantic structures, with each successive term of their government, the pro-Western course became increasingly declarative in nature, while the actual actions of the ruling camp did not confirm the declarations about continuing this course, and even showed a slow drift towards Russia and a simultaneous distancing from the Euro-Atlantic structures. Tbilisi began to pursue an anti-European narrative, striking a strongly conservative tone in its rhetoric.

Despite its strong pro-European stance and support for integration with NATO and the EU, which stands at around 80% (Wojtasiewicz, 2023), the Georgian society is also conservative, and the Georgian Orthodox Church and its head, Patriarch Elias II (Górecki, 2020), also plays a huge role in the society. The GOC enjoys high support in Georgia, also at around 80% (Górecki, 2023). Before the 2012 elections, which were won by the GD, the Church hierarchs informally supported the opposition of the time. For these reasons, during its subsequent rule, the GD created a narrative suggesting to citizens that Europe was hostile towards Georgia, which was supposedly caused by differences in worldview between the Georgian society and European values. This way, the ruling party attempted to distance the society from the West and limit widespread pro-European sentiment, as well as justify its actions, which distanced the Transcaucasian country from Europe. Despite the pro-Western attitude of society, more than half of Georgians support some form of dialogue with Russia out of fear of it (Górecki, 2023). This stems from the traumatic events of 2008. This gives the GD room for manoeuvre in its policy of balancing between Russia and the West.

Although the first years of the GD's rule were marked by the continuation of pro-Western reforms and policies, the situation began to reverse over time. In 2020, parliamentary elections were held, which were also won by the GD, but the opposition did not recognize the results and boycotted the work of Parliament (according to the OSCE, the elections were free and competitive, although not without reservations) (Górecki, 2020). After several months of disputes, in April 2021, under the auspices of the European Council President, Charles Michel, an agreement was reached between the political forces, but it was broken three months later by the GD (Górecki, 2024), which significantly weakened ties between Georgia and the West. Another serious crisis in the relations with the West, indicating that the GD government's intentions differed from those declared, occurred as a result of the adoption on May 28, 2024, of the controversial Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, commonly known as the Foreign Agents Law. This law stipulates that legal entities such as the media or non-governmental organizations that are more than 20% financed from abroad must be registered as "agents pursuing foreign interests", which is a significant blow to entities independent of the authorities and resembles a solution introduced a decade earlier in Russia. The bill sparked massive protests from the Georgian public and Western representatives, who describe it as undemocratic and stigmatizing to the representatives of civil society. By pushing through the bill, the GD decided to distance itself from the West, but also to strengthen its power at the expense of Georgian democracy. The adoption of the bill resulted in the restriction and suspension of Western financial aid to Georgia and a cooling of relations. The next serious blow to the 'rule of the people' in Georgia was the parliamentary elections held on October 26, 2024, or rather the campaign preceding them and the way they were conducted. Although the ruling party's victory was never in doubt, the scale of its triumph was. According to the independent exit polls, the party creat-

ed by Ivanishvili could count on around 42% of the votes. However, the results reported by the CEC indicated as much as 54% (Strachota, 2024).

The opposition, like President Salome Zourabichvili, considered the elections to be rigged, and its representatives refused to accept their mandates. Doubts about the fairness of the elections were also expressed by a significant part of the international community, which called for all doubts to be clarified. The chaos surrounding the parliamentary elections led to further protests on the streets of Georgia and confirmed that democracy is slowly collapsing in this Transcaucasian country. By attacking democracy, the GD is effectively withdrawing the country from the Western world. The Georgian government continues to consciously pursue a policy of drifting towards Russia. A move that clearly confirmed this course was the decision announced on November 28, 2024, by the Prime Minister, Irakli Kobakhidze, who stated that Georgia would not begin accession talks with the EU until 2028. This decision provoked widespread opposition, not only from civil society and the opposition, but also from around 100 diplomats who issued a letter assessing the government's decision as unconstitutional on the grounds that the pursuit of the EU and NATO membership is enshrined in the constitution (this entry was made by the GD in 2016). Some ambassadors and government officials resigned as a result of the decision, while Washington suspended its strategic partnership mechanism with Georgia (Górecki, 2024).

It is also worth noting the exceptionally brutal actions of the authorities who attempted to suppress the protests with the help of law enforcement agencies. They used water cannons and tear gas, and several dozen people were detained. There were also reports that the police added chemicals to the water, as protesters complained of burns to their bodies. There were also reports of beatings. The authorities insinuate that the protesters are a threat to public order, commit acts of vandalism and act under external influence.

The authorities in Tbilisi very often suggest external influences in their rhetoric when civil society protests, thus, supporting their narrative about Western attempts to interfere in Georgia's internal processes, as well as alleged attempts by the West to draw the Transcaucasian state into a war with Russia. This way, the GD is spreading a narrative of fear and threat among its electorate, trying to stir up hostility towards the opposition, European countries and the United States. On December 14, 2024, a new President of Georgia was elected – Mikheil Kavelashvili. The election was carried out by an electoral college, and it was the first time President has been elected this way in Georgia. The ruling party is counting on the loyalty of the new President, as the two previous Presidents, Margvelashvili and Zurabishvili, who were elected with the support of the GD, later came into conflict with the party. However, Kavelashvili describes himself as a supporter of conservative values, unlike Zurabishvili and Margvelashvili, who represented the pro-European option. The new President's views may reinforce the government's Eurosceptic policy. Western politicians have criticized the election of the new President, further exacerbating the crisis in the multilateral relations between Georgia, the EU and

NATO. The election has also deepened polarization in the society, which, despite pressure from the state apparatus, continues to strongly oppose it.

## Conclusions

Georgians are a nation that, through their tenacity and courage, have shown great agency in taking responsibility for the fate of their country. The people of Georgia, who for years have courageously manifested their opposition to all abuses by their ruling politicians, are expressing their strong desire to join the Euro-Atlantic structures. Unfortunately, civil society is currently unable to exert sufficient influence on the country's leaders to bring Georgia closer to the West. Years of efforts by the citizens and pro-Western Georgian politicians seem to be squandered in a clearly ostentatious manner before the eyes of the world. The Georgian Dream, which has been in power for years, disregarding the will of the people and the good of the state, is drifting more and more decisively towards the Russian Federation, closing off its country's path to the West. It is difficult to say whether there is still hope for Georgia, as the GD is gradually destroying the bridges that seemed to be increasingly connecting the country with the European Union and NATO after years of positive reforms. The Transcaucasian state is plagued by many problems, ranging from the deteriorating state of democracy and isolation in the Western world, which have been gaining momentum in recent years under the GD, to those for which no Georgian government has been able to find a comprehensive solution, such as unemployment. All these factors contribute to a crisis that negatively affects the prospects for Georgia's future. Although the country's fate is uncertain today, the coming years will likely show where Georgia will end up.

## Bibliography

- Ananicz S., Sadowski R. (2011), *UE rozpoczyna negocjacje o strefach wolnego handlu z Mołdawią i Gruzją*, "OSW", 14.12.2011, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2011-12-14/ue-rozpoczyna-negocjacje-o-strefach-wolnego-handlu-z-moldawia-i> [access on: 24.02.2025].
- Brodowski J. (2019), *Gruzja po rewolucji róż: obraz przemian polityczno-społecznych w latach 2003-2018*, Kraków.
- Central Election Commission (2012), *Results 2012*, [https://archiveresults.cec.gov.ge/results/2012/index.html?\\_\\_cf\\_chl\\_tk=S7utRPI01pw89e1b6eBeKm93WjrxUHGYZdc1DjLAGyI-1742058017-1.0.1.1-cu.fW\\_MKjbU9ODljxSYsnjxuR9LvObdRf2Ga6Qwa74Y](https://archiveresults.cec.gov.ge/results/2012/index.html?__cf_chl_tk=S7utRPI01pw89e1b6eBeKm93WjrxUHGYZdc1DjLAGyI-1742058017-1.0.1.1-cu.fW_MKjbU9ODljxSYsnjxuR9LvObdRf2Ga6Qwa74Y) [access on: 15.03.2025].
- Daško D. (2012), *Polityka Federacji Rosyjskiej wobec Gruzji w latach 2004-2008*, "Historia.org", [https://historia.org.pl/2012/12/13/polityka-federacji-rosyjskiej-wobec-gruzji-w-latach-2004-2008/#footnote\\_0\\_15351](https://historia.org.pl/2012/12/13/polityka-federacji-rosyjskiej-wobec-gruzji-w-latach-2004-2008/#footnote_0_15351) [access on: 12.02.2025].
- Falkowski M. (2016), *Gruziński dryf: kryzys gruzińskiej drogi na Zachód*, Warszawa.
- Furier A. (2022), *Gruzińskie starania o zbliżenie z Zachodem po 1991 r.*, "Nowa Polityka Wschodnia", No. 4(35), pp. 9-13, <https://czasopisma.marszalek.com.pl/images/pliki/npw/35/npw3501.pdf> [access on: 27.02.2025].

- Górecki W. (2020), *Złota jesień patriarchy. Rola Kościoła prawosławnego w Gruzji i gruzińskiej polityce*, "OSW", 18.05.2020, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/komentarze-osw/2020-05-18/zlota-jesien-patriarchy-rola-kosciola-prawoslawnego-w-gruzji-i> [access on: 24.02.2025].
- Górecki W. (2022), *Zjść ciastko i mieć ciastko. Gruzja wobec wojny na Ukrainie i integracji z Zachodem*, "OSW", 07.06.2022, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/komentarze-osw/2022-06-07/zjsc-ciastko-i-miec-ciastko-gruzja-wobec-wojny-na-ukrainie-i> [access on: 24.02.2025].
- Górecki W. (2023), *Między Brukselą a Moskwą. Gruzja zbliża się do Rosji*, "OSW", 25.05.2023, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2023-05-25/miedzy-bruksela-a-moskwa-gruzja-zbliza-sie-do-rosji> [access on: 24.02.2025].
- Górecki W. (2024), *Gruzja: burzliwe protesty i oznaki erozji w obozie władzy*, "OSW", 03.12.2024, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2024-12-03/gruzja-burzliwe-protesty-i-oznaki-erozji-w-obozie-wladzy> [access on: 24.02.2025].
- Górecki W. (2024), *Podróż w świetlaną przeszłość. Trzy kadencje Gruzjińskiego Marzenia*, "OSW", 08.10.2024, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/komentarze-osw/2024-10-08/podroz-w-swietlana-przeszlosc-trzy-kadencje-gruzjinskiego> [access on: 24.02.2025].
- Janicki K. (2012), *Wojna w Osetii Południowej 1991-1992*, "histmag.org", 07.07.2012, <https://histmag.org/Wojna-w-Osetii-Poludniowej-1991-1992-6943> [access on: 15.03.2025].
- Kuczyński G. (2012), *Raj dla biznesu, a policja nie bierze. Saakaszwili zmienił Gruzję*, "TVN 24", 28.09.2012, <https://tvn24.pl/swiat/raj-dla-biznesu-a-policja-nie-bierze-saakaszwili-zmienil-gruzje-ra279640-ls3508381> [access on: 24.02.2025].
- 'Mała pomyłka Irakliego': pierwsze wstrząsy w nowym rządzie Gruzji? (2013), "Eastbook.eu", 05.02.2013, <https://eastbook.eu/2013/02/05/mala-pomyłka-irakliego-czyli-pierwsze-wstrzasy-w-nowym-rzademie-gruzji/> [access on: 17.02.2025].
- Matusiak M. (2010), *Reforma konstytucyjna w Gruzji: zmieniać, aby zachować?*, "OSW", 20.10.2010, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2010-10-20/reforma-konstytucyjna-w-gruzji-zmieniac-aby-zachowac> [access on: 24.02.2025].
- Matusiak M. (2014), *Wybory lokalne w Gruzji*, "OSW", 25.06.2014, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2014-06-25/wybory-lokalne-w-gruzji> [access on: 24.02.2025].
- Negocjacje umów stowarzyszeniowych pomiędzy UE i państwami Kaukazu rozpoczęte* (2010), "OSW", 21.07.2010, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2010-07-21/negocjacje-umow-stowarzyszeniowych-pomiedzy-ue-i-panstwami-kaukazu> [access on: 24.02.2025].
- OSCE (2004), *OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report*, Part 1, Warszawa.
- Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (2021), *Święto niepodległości Gruzji z udziałem wicepremiera Piotra Glińskiego*, <https://www.gov.pl/web/kultura/swieto-niepodleglosci-gruzji-z-udzialem-wicepremiera-piotra-glinskiego> [access on: 10.02.2025].
- Strachota K. (2024), *Powyborczy pat w Gruzji*, "OSW", 31.10.2024, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2024-10-31/powyborczy-pat-w-gruzji> [access on: 22.02.2025].
- Tronchet S. (2024), *'Il n'a jamais cessé d'être un oligarque russe': qui est Bidzina Ivanichvili, le milliardaire qui dirige la Géorgie en sous-main?*, "franceinfo", 20.05.2024, [https://www.francetvinfo.fr/replay-radio/le-choix-franceinfo/reportage-il-n-a-jamais-cesse-d-etre-un-oligarque-russe-qui-est-bidzina-ivanichvili-le-milliardaire-qui-dirige-la-georgie-en-sous-main\\_6527090.html](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/replay-radio/le-choix-franceinfo/reportage-il-n-a-jamais-cesse-d-etre-un-oligarque-russe-qui-est-bidzina-ivanichvili-le-milliardaire-qui-dirige-la-georgie-en-sous-main_6527090.html) [access on: 15.03.2025].
- Umowa o ułatwieniach wizowych Gruzja-UE* (2010), "OSW", 23.06.2010, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2010-06-23/umowa-o-ulatwieniach-wizowych-gruzja-ue> [access on: 24.02.2025].

- Wojtasiewicz W. (2023), *Europejska perspektywa Gruzji*, PISM, 07.07.2023, <https://www.pism.pl/publikacje/europejska-perspektywa-gruzji> [access on: 24.02.2025].
- Wójtowicz D. (2023), *Wojna rosyjsko-gruzińska: przyczyny, przebieg, konsekwencje*, "histmag.org", 12.08.2023, <https://histmag.org/Wojna-rosyjskogruzinska-przyczyny-przebieg-konsekwencje--25923> [access on: 11.02.2025].

**Abstract:** Georgia is a country created as a consequence of the fall of the Soviet Union. Like other countries of this bloc, since the moment of regaining independence, Georgia still encounters problems that are a result of difficult geopolitical location and relentless Russian pretensions in this region. Intemperate gestures of the Russian Federation, in conjunction with the actions of ruling party, the Georgian Dream, make Georgia a state fluctuating between the return to the Russian area of influence and rapprochement with the Western world and values. The purpose of this article is to show in which direction the Georgian foreign policy is heading, and what are the means of prosecution power by the government. Georgia as an independent country, since 1991, has struggled with various internal, external and image problems. The first Presidents of the republic were focusing on stabilization of internal issues, what was happening in a painfully slow and often incapable way. Moreover, they were struggling with the Soviet Union heritage, and Russian pression that was preventing them from taking their own direction of foreign policy. Georgia in years 1991-2003 is described as a failed state due to chronic crises and government inefficiency. The events that occurred in 2003 went down in history as the Rose Revolution. Social discontent sparked protests on Georgian streets, where the citizens manifested their objection to President Eduard Shevardnadze and multiple anomalies during the parliamentary elections. Peaceful protests led the head of state to step down and be replaced by Mikheil Saakashvili. The Rose Revolution began a new phase of Georgian politics. The new President made an attempt to implement a string of reforms, and orient Georgian policy on the pro-Western course. These actions brought the country many benefits. During the Saakashvili's presidency, the Russo-Georgian war happened, which confirmed that Russia will not reconcile itself to losing its influence in this region, and even try to increase it. The President's image was undermined in association with penitentiary system scandals. The society's exhaustion caused by Saakashvili and his party, the United National Movement, governance triggered the next serious changes. In 2012, the Georgian Dream, a party created by Bidzina Ivanishvili, won the parliamentary elections. Since this moment Georgia has fluctuated between Russia and the West. The politicians of governing for years GD bother to maintain proper relations with Russia, simultaneously creating the pretenses of willingness to continue the pro-Western course. The policymakers of Georgian state notoriously break democracy standards. The following Georgian elections seemed to depart from those standards. Georgia is sitting on a fence. Future is unknown, and the politicians of GD are pushing country further away from accession to the UE and NATO. That policy enrages the citizens and evokes anxiety in majority of international community. What will be the fate of Georgia? Will the country return on the way of rapprochement with the West, or reorient to Russia? The answer to those questions will be known in close future.

**Keywords:** Georgia, Georgian Dream, Rose Revolution, Western world, democracy, Russia, foreign policy, systems of prosecution power

Article submitted: 28.02.2025; article accepted: 26.05.2025.

