



# ПОЛІТОЛОГІЯ

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## DEMOCRACY BACKSLIDING IN GEORGIA: TURNING FROM WEST TO RUSSIA

**Adamadze Kristine,***Postgraduate student at the Department of Politology**Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv**ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5644-2690*

*This article discusses Georgia's democratic backsliding from its Western political trajectory toward a Russian-oriented path. Unfortunately, democratic regression is not a problem unique to Georgia – it is part of a global trend observed over the past two decades in both developed and developing countries. Among post-Soviet states, clear examples of this trend include Belarus, where an authoritarian regime has been firmly consolidated, and Russia, where political competition has been virtually eliminated. In this context, Georgia's case is particularly significant, as it has historically been perceived as one of the leaders of democratic transition in the region. However, in recent years, declining trust in Western institutions, deepening political polarization, and the strengthening of authoritarian tendencies have created a trajectory that closely resembles the Russian model.*

*The article analyzes these ongoing processes in Georgia dynamically – the anti-democratic actions taken by the ruling party “Georgian Dream”, and the methods through which the party is introducing elements of Russia's so-called “sovereign democracy” and, to some extent, autocracy in Georgia. These include instilling fear in society, portraying the West as a threat to the country's national sovereignty, and utilizing conspiracy theories suggesting that a “global war party” is fighting against them.*

*The article also examines increasing pressure on opposition politicians and parties, the media, and independent NGOs. The most striking example of deviation from European standards was the law “On Transparency of Foreign Influence”, which became known as the “Russian law” due to its resemblance to legislation adopted in Russia in 2012. This sparked widespread public protest, increased Georgia's isolation from the democratic world, and effectively froze the country's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. As a result, Georgia has significantly “fallen behind” its fellow members of Association Trio – Moldova and Ukraine – with whom it had previously taken coordinated steps toward deeper European integration.*

**Key words:** *political process, democratic backsliding, Georgia, political polarization, authoritarianism, democracy, political leadership.*

### **Адамадзе Крістіне. Демократичний відкат у Грузії: розворот від Заходу до Росії**

*У статті розглядається відкат грузинської демократії від західної політичної траєкторії в бік курсу, орієнтованого на російську модель розвитку. Регрес демократії – проблема не лише Грузії, а її частина глобальної тенденції, що спостерігається в останні два десятиліття як у розвинутих країнах, так і в країнах, що розвиваються. Серед пострадянських держав яскравими прикладами такої тенденції є Білорусь, де міцно змінився авторитарний режим, і Росія, де політична конкуренція практично знівельована. У цьому контексті випадок Грузії є особливо показовим, оскільки країна історично сприймалася як один із лідерів демократичного переходу в регіоні. Однак останніми роками зниження довіри до західних інститутів, поглиблення політичної поляризації та посилення авторитарних тенденцій сформували траєкторію, яка багато в чому нагадує російський варіант політичного розвитку.*

*У статті в динаміці аналізуються процеси, що відбуваються в Грузії, – антидемократичні дії правлячої партії «Грузинська мрія» та методи, якими ця партія впроваджує в Грузії елементи так званої «суверенної демократії» російського зразку й, певною мірою, автократії. До них належать нагнітання страху в суспільстві, створення уявлення про Захід як про загрозу національному суверенітету країни та використання теорій змови, які передбачають, що проти громадян веде боротьбу «партія глобальної війни».*

*У статті також розглядається все більший тиск на опозиційних політиків і політичні партії, ЗМІ й незалежні неурядові організації. Найбільш яскравим прикладом відступу від європейських стандартів став закон «Про прозорість іноземного впливу», який отримав назву «російський закон» через схожість із законодавством, ухваленим у Росії у 2012 році. Це викликало широкий громадський протест, посилює ізоляцію Грузії від демократичного світу й фактично заморозило інтеграцію країни до євроатлантичних інститутів. У результаті Грузія істотно «відстала» від своїх колег по Асоційованому тріо – Молдови й України, з якими раніше здійснювала скоординовані кроки в напрямі глибшої європейської інтеграції.*

**Ключові слова:** *політичний процес, демократичний відкат, Грузія, політична поляризація, авторитаризм, демократія, політичне лідерство.*



**Introduction.** The aim of this article is to describe Georgia's democratic backsliding from the West toward Russia, based on various sources and literature, through scholarly analysis. The paper focuses on examining the political steps taken by Georgia's ruling party and the contemporary challenges the country faces in this regard. Based on this research objective, the following tasks have been identified:

1. To analyze the process by which Georgia's informal ruler – its most influential political figure and the honorary chairman of the ruling party “Georgian Dream”, Bidzina Ivanishvili – and his team have disregarded the EU's recommendations and deviated from the principles of democratic political order.
2. To examine the strengthening of economic ties with Russia and the return to its sphere of influence, as opposed to aligning with Euro-Atlantic institutions.

**Relevance of the Research.** Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia has experienced economic hardship, coups, and territorial conflicts. Despite these challenges, the desire for integration into the European Union has remained deeply rooted in the consciousness of the Georgian population. Accordingly, successive governments have honored the will of the people. From the moment Georgia declared its independence, efforts were made to adopt European standards and implement reforms, which eventually led to the country receiving EU candidate status in 2023.

However, in recent years, the ruling party “Georgian Dream” has increasingly distanced itself from the principles of democratic political order. Instead of accelerating the integration process into Euro-Atlantic institutions, it has begun pivoting toward Russia and strengthening economic ties with it – particularly after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. At present, Georgia finds itself at a crossroads.

At the current stage, the political processes unfolding in Georgia are of critical importance for the country's political future.

**Research Methodology.** This study employs a combination of methodologies, including case studies, comparative analysis, systems analysis, and a problem-chronological approach, among others.

**Literature Review.** The search for academic literature related to the article's research topic revealed a lack of fundamental works tailored to the Georgian context, highlighting a challenge in accessing relevant resources. Among the limited number of publications, several recent studies are noteworthy for addressing particular aspects of the research problem:

- The article “*The Anatomy of Sovereign Democracy and the Georgian Context*” by defense and security researcher Giorgi Antadze, which analyzes the concept of “sovereign democracy,” its practical applications, the Georgian government's messaging within this context, and the risks that stem from it [1].
- The study by Georgian Institute of Politics researcher Teona Zurabashvili, titled “*De-oligarchization in Georgia in the Context of the Oligarch and Power-Holding Elites*” [2], which discusses the European Commission's twelve-point recommendations issued on June 17 in response to Georgia's EU membership application. The author evaluates the progress made on one of the key points: the demand for “de-oligarchization”.
- The same topic is addressed in the work of young researcher Ana Papuashvili, titled “*How Should the Recommendation on De-Oligarchization Be Implemented? – The Experiences of the ‘Associated Trio’ with Oligarchy and Possible Solutions*” [3]. This study presents a comparative analysis of the cases of Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova in relation to fulfilling the EU's recommendation on de-oligarchization.
- The issue of political radicalization in Georgia is discussed by Georgian scholar Bidzina Lebanidze in his work “*Radicalization of Party Politics in Georgia: In Search of Long-Term Stability*”, which argues that political radicalization negatively affects democratic processes and the functioning of state institutions. According to the author, this is largely driven by polarization among the political elite. Such conditions contribute to political crises and create a toxic political environment, which must urgently be addressed in order to accelerate democratic processes and prevent further radicalization [4].

– Along with Georgian and international academic sources, internet materials and secondary data helped identify gaps in the literature and contributed to shaping the article's research structure and focus areas.

**Theoretical Framework.** This article employs the theoretical framework of *balancing and bandwagoning*, as developed by Stephen M. Walt [5, p. 279]. The theory outlines two distinct strategies that states may pursue in response to threats: either balancing – aligning with other powers to counter the source of the threat or bandwagoning – aligning with the threatening power itself in hopes of neutralizing the danger.

According to the prevailing view, states are more inclined to balance against threats rather than bandwagon. Walt argues that this tendency is driven by at least two factors. First, balancing is considered a more reliable strategy for containing threats, as relying on the goodwill of an aggressive power through bandwagoning is inherently risky. Second, bandwagoning with a threatening state tends to produce asymmetric alliances, in which the weaker party (i.e., the bandwagoning state) faces restrictions on its autonomy and strategic choices.



Since the day Georgia gained independence, the political elite, guided by the will of the Georgian people, chose the path of balancing – pursuing integration with the West as a means of ensuring national security and development. However, at the current stage, this political orientation is undergoing a significant transformation. “Georgian Dream” has shifted its electoral messaging to claim that peace in Georgia depends on striking an accord with Russia – a stance that, in practice, implies halting European integration and establishing a Kremlin-style authoritarian model.

A retrospective and contemporary analysis of Georgian politics confirms the core principle of Walt’s theory: bandwagoning with Russia and relying on its goodwill has never produced positive outcomes for Georgia. On the contrary, Georgian leaders have repeatedly attempted to strike deals with Russia – some in pursuit of national interests, others to preserve their own political power. Yet the outcome has always been the same: Russia reneges on agreements and turns against Georgia.

“Georgian Dream” propaganda seeks to legitimize its policy of bandwagoning with Russia by constructing persuasive arguments aimed at manipulating the electorate. The party portrays the West as a source of war, despite the fact that Europe and NATO together represent the only region in the world that has enjoyed continuous peace and prosperity since the end of World War II.

#### **Main Research Topics:**

1. The initial steps of “Georgian Dream” and the policy of “multi-vector diplomacy”.
2. The beginning of the major political pivot.
3. The law “On Transparency of Foreign Influence”.
4. The Georgian context of Russian “sovereign democracy”.

#### **The First Steps of “Georgian Dream” and the Policy of “Multi-Vector Diplomacy”**

Following Georgia’s declaration of independence in 1991, the 2012 parliamentary elections marked the first peaceful transfer of power in the country’s history – a development that significantly improved Georgia’s democratic ratings. However, there were troubling signs associated with the composition of the victorious coalition, “Georgian Dream”, and its electoral platform. One of the most alarming promises made by the ruling team was that Georgia would no longer serve as a point of contention between the West and Russia.

Another major concern – shared by a segment of the Georgian electorate as well as by Western observers – was the founder of Georgian Dream, billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili’s dangerous ties to Russia. Ivanishvili amassed his wealth in Russia during the 1990s, primarily in the finance, ferrous and non-ferrous metals sectors. At that time, he maintained close connections with government officials and security services. He retained these business interests even after entering politics.

According to a study by *Transparency International Georgia*, between 2012 and 2019, Ivanishvili owned at least ten Russian companies through offshore entities, and as of 2022, he still retained ownership of at least one company with Russian subsidiaries [6]. Ivanishvili continues to maintain ties with Russia including members of the Russian business elite. Ivanishvili’s relatives continue to own companies in Russia, and some of them run joint businesses with individuals who have been personally sanctioned by the United States.

Driven by personal interests, one of Ivanishvili’s central political goals throughout his career has been to establish friendly relations with Russia. In October 2012, he expressed disappointment that Vladimir Putin did not congratulate him on his parliamentary election victory in Georgia. In July 2013, he sought a meeting with Putin, not only in hopes of improving economic relations but also with the aim of political normalization.

Even Russia’s war in Ukraine did not compel Ivanishvili and “Georgian Dream” to abandon their so-called “multi-vector” foreign policy. For some time, they managed to pursue this course without entirely closing Brussels and Washington’s doors to Tbilisi. While consolidating power, they had to acknowledge the pro-Western sentiment of the Georgian public – a stance that has remained dominant in Georgian political consciousness throughout all stages of the country’s development since regaining independence. In this regard, “Georgian Dream” took certain steps to demonstrate alignment with the West: in 2013, they signed the Association Agreement with the European Union; in 2016, Georgia secured visa-free travel to the Schengen Area.

Through these steps, the ruling party sought to appease the pro-European segment of society and divert attention from domestic developments that increasingly took on an authoritarian character and pulled Georgia further away from its European path.

After winning the 2012 parliamentary elections, “Georgian Dream” launched a campaign against political opponents, releasing numerous prisoners from jail and declaring them “political prisoners”. It carried out purges in government institutions under the pretext that some employees might have supported the previous administration. Former high-ranking officials were prosecuted on various charges, including the alleged misuse of state funds for party activities. During this period, openly anti-European and thus pro-Russian political





forces became unusually active. Meanwhile, growing pressure was exerted on media owners who criticized the government. For example, television channels such as *Rustavi 2*, *TV Pirveli*, *Mtavari Arkhi*, and *Formula* faced mounting pressure, while the pro-government newspaper *Asaval-Dasavali* was hailed as a flagship of Georgian media. Judicial reform was also implemented hastily and in violation of parliamentary procedures.

Through the manipulation of a seemingly pro-European agenda and the use of administrative resources, the parliamentary elections of 2016 and 2020 resulted in executive power being filled exclusively by members or nominees of the ruling party “Georgian Dream”. As early as the 2016 elections, the most pro-democratic factions within the governing coalition, specifically members of the European Democrats and the Republican Party left the coalition in protest.

While Georgia’s political system has often been described as a dominant-power system [7], after the 2012 change of government the country moved toward a weaker form of pluralism and has since exhibited features of both models. The ruling *Georgian Dream* party has controlled, and continues to control, significant state resources. Initially, rather than relying on coercion, it leaned more heavily on co-optation thus appearing less threatening in the eyes of the public compared to its predecessors. The political playing field has long been tilted in favor of the ruling party. All branches of government including the judiciary are at least partially politicized. However, strong civil society, grassroots public movements, viable opposition parties, and pressure from Western partners have thus far hindered full authoritarian consolidation [4, p. 3].

### **The Beginning of the Great Political Pivot**

The illusion of loyalty to the European perspective did not last long. The first visible signs of a major political reorientation toward Russia appeared in Georgian politics on June 30, 2021, when *Georgian Dream* officially withdrew from the EU-mediated agreement, brokered by the President of the European Council, Charles Michel [8]. This agreement had aimed to resolve the political crisis that followed the disputed 2020 parliamentary elections, as well as issues related to the judiciary, electoral code, and the distribution of power in parliament. *Georgian Dream’s* withdrawal triggered sharp criticism from both the European Union and the U.S. State Department, which stated that they were “...deeply disappointed and shocked by Georgian Dream’s unilateral decision to withdraw from the April 19 agreement” [8].

The next step came in August of the same year, when then-Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili unexpectedly declined to accept the second tranche (€75 million) of a €150 million long-term loan from the EU. This financial assistance had been tied to judicial reforms, specifically regarding the appointment of Supreme Court justices and members of the High Council of Justice [9, p. 5].

Toward the end of 2021, the Georgian Parliament adopted amendments to the Law on Broadcasting, which regulated hate speech and granted the national Communications Commission the authority to review complaints of defamation and insult without going through the judiciary. The law also introduced a vague and controversial definition of “hate speech” [10].

The most striking example of deviation from European standards was the proposed *Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence*, which became widely known as the “Russian law” because it mirrored the logic of legislation adopted in the Russian Federation in 2012 [11]. The law’s adoption sparked widespread public protests and further deepened Georgia’s isolation from the democratic world.

### **The Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence**

The introduction of the *Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence* was preceded by significant developments in international politics that had a substantial impact on Georgian domestic affairs.

It was called the “American law”, but in reality, the bill fundamentally differed from the American version. The fundamental difference between it and the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) lay in the following:

First, there is the historical context in which these two laws emerged, as well as the targets they were aimed against. The U.S. Congress passed FARA in 1938, and its main targets were lobbying and consulting firms that acted on behalf of Nazi Germany’s government, posing a direct military and security threat to the country.

In contrast, the supporters of the Georgian “foreign agents” law the leaders of the *Georgian Dream* party identified American and European funding directed toward Georgian non-governmental organizations as the source of foreign agents in Georgia. In this respect, they placed the United States and the European Union in the same category where the U.S. placed Nazi Germany in 1938.

Second, under FARA, the U.S. Department of Justice initiated criminal prosecution only against individuals and organizations found guilty of serious criminal offenses such as money laundering, fraud, sanctions evasion, illegal campaign contributions, bribery, terrorism, and cooperation with hostile foreign powers. In contrast, the *Georgian Dream* party targeted NGOs that operate legally and receive funding from the U.S. and EU member states to carry out various activities for the public good in health, social welfare, civil rights,



education, and other fields. None of the U.S. or EU-funded organizations targeted by the Georgian Dream party are associated with legal violations.

Third, the most important legal difference between FARA and the Georgian “foreign agents” law was how they define a “foreign agent”. According to the Georgian bill, simply receiving foreign funding already it is sufficient for an organization to be declared a foreign agent if the “foreign force” constitutes more than 20% of the total income received by the non-commercial legal entity during the calendar year. A “foreign force” includes not only governments but also companies, funds, and individuals.

Unlike the Georgian law, the American law does not presume that an organization or person receiving funding from a foreign force is a foreign agent. It defines a foreign agent as any person (legal or natural) who is under the control of a foreign force, acts on its instructions, or based on its interests. This was the key difference. Georgian organizations, which operate solely in the interest of Georgia and for the benefit of the country’s population, are labeled foreign agents. In the U.S., individuals and organizations receiving foreign funding and carrying out activities beneficial to Americans are not labeled foreign agents. They are considered foreign agents only if they act under the specific direction of a foreign principal.

Furthermore, unlike the Georgian bill, according to FARA, the following persons and organizations are not considered foreign agents: humanitarian aid organizations; persons and organizations engaged in religious, educational, academic, scientific, or artistic activities; media organizations with foreign ownership whose policies are not directed by a foreign country; U.S. allies; lawyers representing clients in court proceedings [14].

Due to its nature, this bill was nicknamed the “Russian law” by society, as it closely resembled the Russian law passed in July 2012 (Law on Foreign Agents), which does not take into account the type of activity and, therefore, practically registers all NGOs as “foreign agents”. Over time, the Russian law became increasingly strict, and the definition of “foreign agent” broadened considerably. Currently, in Russia, agents include not only organizations that have no obligations whatsoever to any foreign force not only organizations but also individuals who receive any form of income from abroad are included [15].

The transplantation of the Russian type of Law on Foreign Agents to Georgian law field poses a significant threat to Georgia’s European integration. It directly contradicts the EU’s 10th priority (civic society involvement in all decision-making processes) and, instead of strengthening the NGO sector, aims to weaken it. This led to widespread opposition to the adoption of this law by Parliament from civil society, media, and international bodies, including the European Union and the United States.

From March 7 to March 9, 2023, large-scale protests led by Gen-Z activists took place in front of the Parliament building, which resulted in clashes with special police forces. The mass protests produced results, and Parliament withdrew the law. However, instead of taking reconciliatory steps toward a large part of society, especially students who played a key role in the protests, the government encouraged a campaign to demonize protesters, the opposition in general, NGOs, critical media, and student activists. The opposition was labeled as “liberal fascists”, and NGOs were accused of acting against Georgia’s European prospects.

Despite the fact that the actions of the leaders of the Georgian Dream party caused Western doubts about their commitment to democracy and the path toward the European Union, especially since only 9 of the 12 reforms mandated by the EU were partially fulfilled, the European Council, with advocacy from civil society, granted Georgia candidate status on December 15, 2023 based on the recommendation of the European Commission.

Just three months later, “Georgian Dream” reintroduced the bill it had withdrawn a year earlier. This again led to mass protests by citizens and sharp criticism from the EU and the U.S. During the one-and-a-half-month daily protests, the police and special forces...

Excessive force was used; mostly peaceful protesters were attacked and detained. About two dozen protesters suffered serious injuries, including fractures and head trauma, and had to be hospitalized.

On May 28, one week after President Salome Zourabichvili vetoed the law, the Georgian Dream party overrode the veto, and on June 1, the law came into force.

In April 2024, following the reintroduction of the so-called “Russian law”, *Georgian Dream’s* drift toward authoritarianism became irreversible: it gradually became clear that the party’s aim was to consolidate an authoritarian-type regime, which entails the establishment of a one-party system, the devaluation of democratic rules, and the withdrawal from the country’s Euro-integration process. The main characteristics of authoritarianism in Georgia are becoming one-party rule, the destruction of political opponents, media controlled by the government, a sharp weakening of civil society, and individual repressions against voters critical of the government.

Alongside the emergence of authoritarianism, it becomes practically very difficult to develop and deepen partnerships with Western democracies and talk of membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions is no longer



relevant. Georgia, a state not rich in natural resources, will not be able to establish a form of authoritarianism economically attractive or necessary for the West, as is the case with some countries in the Middle East. Consequently, criticism of authoritarianism coming from Western democracies will be sold domestically as a struggle against Georgian statehood, which is already evident and will leave Georgia in a situation where its situational partners will be other authoritarian regimes similarly focused on retaining power and self-preservation. This means that Russian influence will have no alternative in Georgia, and Tbilisi will no longer be able to oppose Moscow's directives. This will have devastating consequences for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Naturally, actors with similar interests and rhetoric regimes will "package" Georgia's return under Russian influence as "cooperation" [16, p. 11].

### **The Georgian Context of Russian "Sovereign Democracy"**

The reports of the Venice Commission [17] and OSCE/ODIHR [18] emphasize that these laws adopted by the ruling party are incompatible with democratic principles, the Constitution of Georgia, and the country's international obligations, including the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) [19] and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) [20].

The Georgian Dream disregarded the views of prominent international experts, labeling them as "biased assessments" and claimed that they are under the influence of the so-called "Global War Party." *Georgian Dream* considers the Global War Party to be an invented mystical group, a Masonic-type organization that supposedly controls the Western world and aims to provoke Georgia into war with Russia.

The fact is that the idea of integration into the EU and NATO structures enjoys such broad support in Georgia that the government cannot openly abandon global institutions. Instead, they only obstruct the country's further integration into these institutions while gradually bringing Georgia and Russia closer: strengthening bilateral trade, aligning foreign policy, and political systems. The ruling party, in order to consolidate power, avoid necessary democratic reforms on the path to European integration, and justify a shift in the country's foreign political course in the eyes of a pro-European society, resorts to populist political speculation: it appeals to fundamental and universal issues such as national sovereignty and peace.

Like Russia, the Georgian government has declared the national sovereignty of its own country to be under threat from the West. Politicians of *Georgian Dream* constantly talk about a "second front" and the financing of "revolutions" by the U.S. and the European Union. Their political rhetoric in relations with international organizations and partners firmly rests on "standing on two feet", rejecting interference of foreign actors in domestic politics, and also references the mythical Global War Party that supposedly tries to drag the country into war from the outside. This rhetoric, with its pathos, directly carries the spirit understood in Russian terms as so-called "sovereign democracy" [21, p. 4].

The term "sovereign democracy" itself was popularized during Vladimir Putin's presidency by one of the Kremlin's ideologists, former deputy speaker and Putin's aide Vladislav Surkov. Surkov developed this idea in a conceptual article titled "The Nationalization of the Future: Paragraphs in Favor of Sovereign Democracy", published in the magazine "Expert" [21, p. 355]. According to the concept of "sovereign democracy", the assessment of the quality of democracy in any country according to international norms should be regarded as an attempt to interfere in that country's sovereign affairs, which was clearly reflected in Russia's anti-Western rhetoric.

In Georgia, such rhetoric has become particularly relevant after February 24, 2022, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Discussions began about the Georgian government acting according to national interests and that conducting sovereign policy is a means to preserve peace and stability in the country. Georgian Dream's claim that "we must stand firmly on two feet so that our friends see this more correctly" is inspired by the Russian idea of "sovereign democracy". However, it should be noted that the ideas of "sovereign democracy" in Georgia are not as systemic as in Russia because, unlike Russia, a large part of Georgian society supports Western integration. Therefore, such ideas are often used in different contexts within Georgian political discourse.

Specifically, the discussions focus on national sovereignty in the context of relations with the West and manifest as criticism of Western institutions, which supposedly interfere excessively in Georgia's domestic affairs; the idea of Georgian neutrality; and the creation of a unique political model that would be neither Western nor Russian.

**Conclusion.** The recent political steps taken by the informal ruler Bidzina Ivanishvili's team, the ruling party of Georgia, Georgian Dream, especially the introduction of the "Russian law," align with the growing and consolidated illiberal regimes such as Russia, China, Iran, Belarus, and Kyrgyzstan. These steps are, to some extent, provocative for Western countries and may be used to justify Georgia's distancing from the Euro-Atlantic path.





The demands of the U.S. and the European Union for Georgia to meet specific conditions for further integration are perceived as attempts to undermine the sovereign rights of an independent nation, which puts the government in a deadlock.

Although the ideas of protecting traditional Georgian values from “Western liberalism” and globalization processes do not enjoy significant influence among the Georgian population, there is still a certain risk of them becoming part of the political agenda in Georgia, which would pose a direct threat to the country’s democratic development and its Euro-Atlantic integration.

In this context, the position of the West is very important, and fortunately, it is unequivocal. Officials from the European Union and the United States are making significant efforts to save Georgia’s democracy. The U.S. Congress has introduced bills in both chambers aimed at imposing comprehensive personal financial sanctions, restricting visa policies, and reducing financial and military aid to the country.

However, if Georgia returns to a democratic and pro-European path, the U.S. is ready to start negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and a visa-free travel regime for Georgian citizens.

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