



# Russia or the West: The Stakes in Georgia's Election

By Davit Gasparyan, Nicole Wolkov,  
and Frederick W. Kagan

October 21, 2024

**Key Takeaway: The Kremlin will likely seek to influence the October 2024 Georgian parliamentary elections to help secure a Georgian Dream Party victory in order to derail Georgia's Euro-Atlantic Integration efforts. The Kremlin likely hopes to seize on Georgian Dream's increasing pro-Russia position to facilitate long-term hybrid efforts to assert control over Georgia and the South Caucasus and diminish Western influence in the region.**

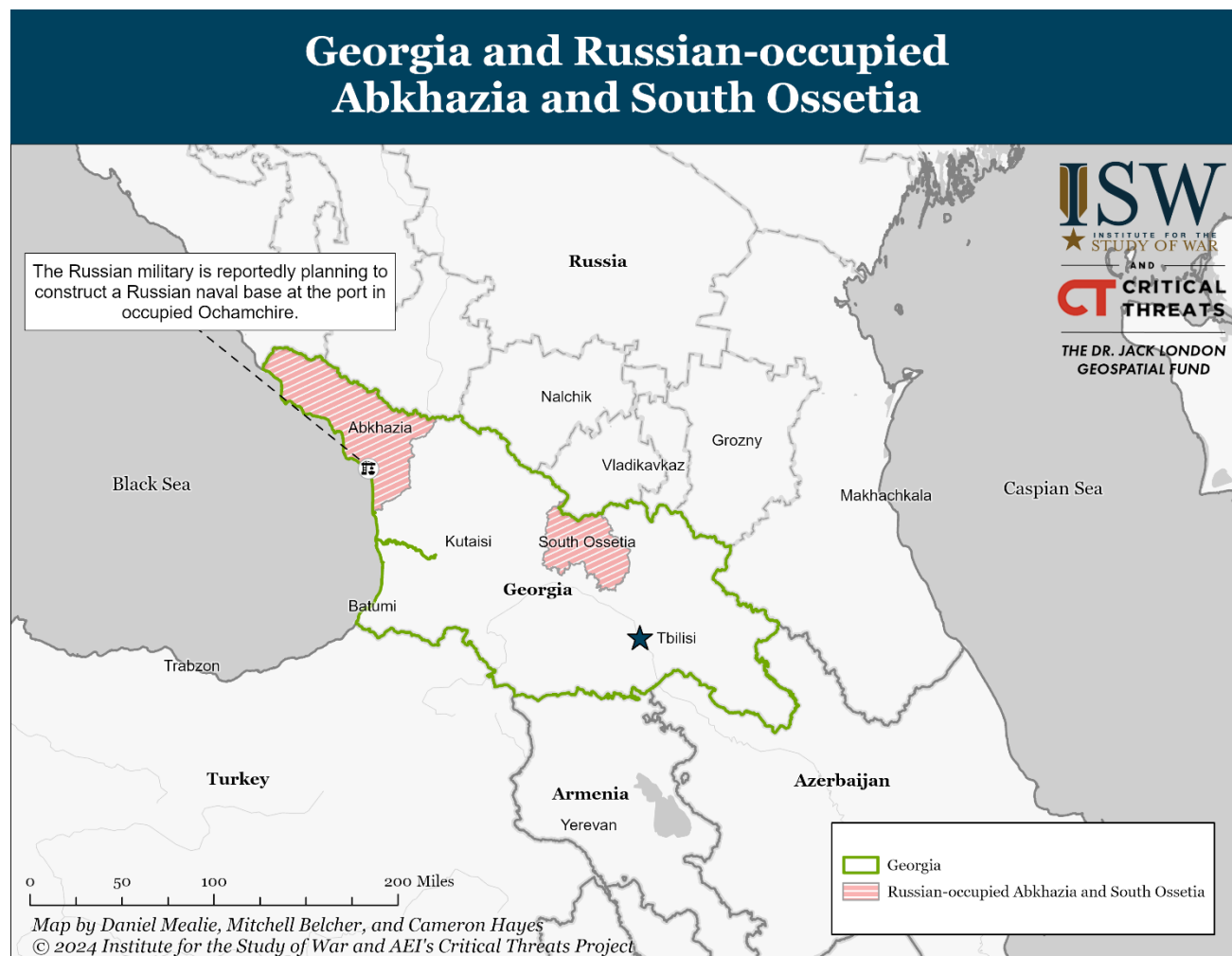
*This paper assesses the implications of a possible Georgian Dream victory in these elections, which would be the most dangerous course of action for Georgia and the West. A Georgian Dream victory is possible but not certain. ISW will offer assessments of Georgia's prospects subsequently if Georgian Dream does not win.*

**Georgia's October 26, 2024, parliamentary elections will likely be one of the country's most significant elections since its independence and present the Kremlin opportunities to derail Georgia's long-term Euro-Atlantic integration efforts and reestablish Russian influence over Georgia.** The Georgian 2024 parliamentary elections will be the first since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the first since Georgia obtained EU candidate status in December 2023.[1] The election outcome will likely determine whether Georgia abandons its longstanding policy of aligning with the West and instead deepens economic and political ties with the Kremlin in line with the pro-Kremlin positions the ruling Georgian Dream party has increasingly taken. Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili has said that the elections will have "existential" importance given the increasingly polarized state of Georgian politics and suggested that the elections will determine the fate of Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations.[2]

Georgia constitutionally enshrined its goal of joining the EU and NATO after the 2003 Rose Revolution — a pro-democracy revolution that sparked Georgia's pro-Western trajectory. The elections after the Rose Revolution brought the pro-Western United National Movement (UNM) party to power, and its leader, Mikheil Saakashvili, became President of Georgia in 2004.[3] NATO supported Georgia's and Ukraine's aspirations for membership and their applications for a NATO membership action plan in the April 2008 Bucharest Declaration.[4] Russia invaded Georgia in August 2008 and occupied the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in part to derail Georgia's path to NATO membership and to enhance Russia's rapidly waning influence in the country. Georgia

nevertheless continued Euro-Atlantic integration efforts following the Russo-Georgian War and the 2012 parliamentary elections, which transferred power to Georgian Dream. Georgian Dream initially continued Georgia's path towards the EU and NATO, but started to undo some of the progress Georgia had made in its Western aspirations shortly after coming to power.[5] Georgia signed an Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement (DCFTA), with the EU in June 2014 triggering a set of Russian trade embargoes and information operations aimed at discrediting Georgia's enhanced EU partnership.[6] Georgia and NATO agreed to deepen cooperation in September 2014 when the alliance endorsed the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP) aimed at strengthening Georgia's defensive capabilities and developing closer security cooperation and interoperability with NATO members.[7] Georgia applied for EU membership in March 2022, and the EU granted Georgia candidate status in December 2023, although the European Council announced in June 2024 that Georgia's accession process was "de facto halted" due to "backsliding on the steps set out in the Commission's recommendation for candidate status." [8] Georgian Dream has accelerated its attempts to derail Georgia's Euro-Atlantic trajectory following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The EU has set key milestones that Georgia must pass before starting actual EU accession talks and progress towards membership can begin, including ensuring a free and fair parliamentary election in October 2024.[9] The October 2024 parliamentary elections will show the elected government's ability, willingness, and interest to advance this pro-Western agenda amid the increasingly Russia-friendly rhetoric that the Kremlin will try to exploit to expand Russian geopolitical influence in Georgia.



**The Kremlin intends to leverage a Russia-friendly Georgian government to enhance strategic Russian interests and Moscow's geopolitical objectives of asserting control over Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia.**

Russia has repeatedly attempted to influence the domestic political landscape of neighboring states formerly part of the Russian Empire and/or the Soviet Union in an effort to exert influence, build a coalition of states opposing the US-led international order, and demonstrate its claimed great power status. Post-Soviet Russian leaders coined the expression "near abroad" to describe the former Soviet states as part of an effort to assert Russia's supposed right to view those states within its "sphere of influence."<sup>[10]</sup> The "near abroad" spans the entirety of the post-Soviet space (and Russia's claimed sphere of influence reaches into Eastern Europe), and targets of this concept notably include Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova. Russia aims to establish pro-Kremlin governments in these states in order to secure many of its strategic foreign policy objectives. Russia has attempted to mold the domestic politics of many nearby countries with varying degrees of success since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Russia has used economic coercion, information operations, political pressures, and most notably military force to violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in its efforts to establish de facto Russian control over the foreign policy and local resources of nearby sovereign states. Russia has occupied Transnistria in Moldova since the fall of the Soviet

Union, invaded Georgia and occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008, and invaded Ukraine in 2014 to establish breakaway pro-Kremlin territories in eastern Ukraine through which it can project its influence in the victim state. (Russia illegally annexed Crimea outright in 2014 but did not annex occupied areas in Ukraine until September 2022.) Russia's occupation of territories in these countries has generally followed domestic developments in these states impelling them away from Russian control and toward the West.

**Russia has increasingly lost its influence in the South Caucasus in recent years, likely explaining its concerted efforts to re-establish this influence particularly through Georgia because of Georgia's pivotal strategic location.**

The South Caucasus — comprised of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia — has increasingly become an important region for global trade routes, particularly following Western sanctions related to Russia's war against Ukraine, and has become a space of geopolitical competition and an energy transport hub.[11] Armenia, once one of Russia's closest allies and one of the countries most dependent on Russia, has attempted to diversify its foreign policy alignments at the expense of Russian influence since its pro-democratic revolution in 2018.[12]

This process accelerated after Azerbaijan launched the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, during which Armenia expected to receive Russian support or at least support from the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) military alliance, of which it is a member.[13] Moscow did not come to Armenia's assistance in that conflict despite the presence of Russian military bases and forces in Armenia because of the complexities of the relationships among Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Turkey. Russia responded to Armenian anger over the betrayal with information operations blaming Armenia for the war and defeat.[14] Russo-Armenian tensions have grown, leading Armenia to distance itself from security and political ties with Russia including effectively freezing its membership in the CSTO, against the backdrop of Armenia's pro-democratic trajectory that has often negatively impacted the influence and interests of domestic pro-Kremlin elites.[15] Armenia has recently pursued closer economic, military, and socio-cultural ties with the EU, United States, and non-Western partners in order to reduce its dependence on Russia.[16] Armenian officials have also hinted at the possibility of a hypothetical future Armenian EU membership.[17]

Azerbaijan, for its part, has become an increasingly important energy partner for the EU, particularly following Russia's re-invasion of Ukraine, increasing its energy supplies to the EU through established trade routes involving Georgia.[18] Azerbaijan has pursued military and political relations with NATO member (and one of Azerbaijan's key patrons) Turkey and has only aligned itself with Russia on select issues while in general maintaining greater geopolitical autonomy facilitated by its geostrategic location on the Caspian Sea, oil-rich economy, and relationships with other powerful states.[19] Russia had limited influence in Georgia after the 2008 Russian invasion and occupation of Georgian territories, but souring Russo-Armenian relations and a more assertive Azerbaijani foreign policy have likely caused Moscow to try to use Georgia to regain influence in the South Caucasus. The Kremlin likely seeks to maintain its political power projection and influence over key trade routes that pass through the South Caucasus as well. Moscow will likely seek to leverage the Georgian 2024 parliamentary elections as a key opportunity.

**The election results will be crucial in demonstrating Georgia's dedication to implementing reforms related to democracy, the rule of law, and judicial independence that are essential to deepening Georgia's Euro-Atlantic relations.** Georgians will elect 150 members of parliament through a fully proportional system, with parties needing to surpass a five percent threshold to win seats.[20] This is the first time that Georgia will be conducting parliamentary elections through a fully proportional system after constitutional changes transitioning Georgia from a semi-presidential republic to a parliamentary system entered into force in 2018.[21] Georgian Dream expressed support for the 2020 elections to be held under a fully proportional system, although Georgian Dream appears to have postponed implementing the change until 2024.[22] The October 2024 election rules prohibit party blocs (pre-election groups of parties that can claim pluralities for the purpose of government formation) – unlike previous Georgian parliamentary elections – and an Edison Research poll indicates[23] Georgian Dream likely implemented constitutional changes in 2018 to limit party blocs and require a five percent threshold in order to make it more difficult for opposition parties to win seats in parliament or use coalitions as the basis of government formation. Several pro-Western opposition parties, including but not limited to the main opposition Unity - National Movement coalition, are expected to win enough seats in total to comprise a majority in the parliament, but the picture differs from a Georgian Dream-affiliated poll suggesting otherwise[24] Imprisoned former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili founded the pro-West United National Movement party, which leads the Unity - National Movement coalition. The pro-Western Strategy Aghmashenebeli and European Georgia parties are also a part of this coalition. The pro-Western opposition parties are currently fractured, however, reducing the likelihood of an outright defeat of the Georgian Dream party and the victory of a united pro-Western front in the Georgian parliament, possibly setting the stage for Georgian Dream to garner more support in the actual elections than the polls.[25] The Georgian Dream party has ruled Georgia since 2012 with clear or near parliamentary majority.[26]

**The Kremlin intends to exploit Georgian Dream to advance Russian influence in Georgia, although the exact extent of Moscow's current relationship with and possible influence over Georgian Dream and its founder, former Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, is unclear.** The degree of coordination between Kremlin and Georgian Dream is also unclear, and ISW is not prepared to assess the Kremlin's involvement in specific Georgian Dream policies or decisions, although ISW assesses that Ivanishvili very likely has Kremlin ties.[27] The Kremlin will likely attempt to leverage Georgian Dream's rhetoric and actions to strengthen Kremlin influence in Georgia and derail Georgia's path to Euro-Atlantic integration, whether or not the Kremlin is directly coordinating with Georgian Dream officials. Russian officials and milbloggers have launched information operations portraying Georgian Dream as the stable choice for Georgia's future, while suggesting that the party's victory could lead to territorial reconciliation, including potential compromises on Russian-occupied regions like Abkhazia and South Ossetia.[28] Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov hinted at this possibility on September 29, signaling that Russia may be open to withdrawing troops under certain conditions.[29] Russia has also

eased trade and migration restrictions since 2012 when Georgian Dream came to power, suggesting Kremlin sympathies toward the party.[30]

**The assessments in this ISW report consider the most dangerous course of action that the Georgian Dream party can secure an electoral victory and achieve a parliamentary majority. This course of action, although uncertain, remains plausible and would have significant consequences for Georgia's political landscape and Russia's role in Georgia and the broader South Caucasus. A Georgian Dream parliamentary majority would enable the party to implement its policies derailing Euro-Atlantic integration efforts, which the Kremlin will likely leverage to advance its influence in Georgia and the South Caucasus. Should Georgian Dream fail to gain control of the government, ISW will offer subsequent assessments and forecasts of Georgia's trajectory and Kremlin responses.**

**The Kremlin will likely attempt to leverage the ruling Georgian Dream party's increasingly pro-Russian narratives that justify Russian violence against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of post-Soviet countries such as Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.** This shift in Georgian Dream rhetoric also offers a possible blueprint for deepening Russo-Georgia cooperation and potential reconciliation without Russian accountability, further distancing Georgia from its Western orientation. Georgian Dream has increasingly positioned itself as favoring the Kremlin, explicitly promoting enhanced Russia-Georgia bilateral ties while gradually distancing the country from its long-standing pro-Western trajectory. Georgian Dream has mirrored Kremlin-driven narratives to justify Russia's aggression and enhance its voter base by fear mongering. On August 13, Georgian Dream accused Saakashvili of provoking the 2008 Russian invasion and subsequent illegal occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, blaming these Russian actions on Saakashvili's UNM party and unspecified "external actors," likely alluding to Western states.[31] Georgian Dream's Political Council also pledged to "inform" the public about Saakashvili's and the UNM's allegedly "treasonous actions," blaming them — rather than Russia — for the 2008 Russian invasion. This narrative echoes Kremlin information operations seeking to shift responsibility away from Russia, despite international condemnation of Russia's occupation of Georgian territory and violation of its territorial integrity. Russia has frequently alleged that pro-Western and pro-democratic leaders in neighboring countries collaborate with "external forces," presumably Western actors, to undermine Russian interests.[32] Russia has simultaneously engaged in lawfare as a means of legitimizing invasions, occupations, and hybrid operations against these sovereign states. A well-known Kremlin-linked Russian military blogger echoed Georgian Dream's remarks and reinforced earlier Kremlin accusations against Saakashvili and the West, indicating that this narrative might gain further momentum in the broader information space.[33]

Ivanishvili again attributed the 2008 Russian invasion to external actors and the UNM during an election rally held in September 2024 in Gori, a city bordering Russian-occupied South Ossetia.[34] Ivanishvili ostentatiously failed to mention Russia's aggression and vowed that Georgian Dream would hold UNM accountable should Georgian Dream secure a majority in the upcoming 2024 elections. Ivanishvili notably stated that the Georgian government, under the Georgian Dream party, would seek "reconciliation" with South Ossetia and work towards "forgiveness" for the alleged

violence that UNM caused. Ivanishvili's rhetoric aligns with the broader Georgian Dream campaign, which portrays the party as a force for peace while framing the opposition, particularly the UNM, as agents of instability and war. Georgian Dream's rhetoric explicitly excuses Russian aggression in Georgia and plays into Russian information operations attempting to shift blame from Russia's violation of Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity onto domestic actors. This Georgian Dream rhetorical line directly copies the Kremlin's position on Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 and Russian invasions of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022 and supports Moscow's claims that the domestic policies of post-Soviet states are by themselves sufficient *casus belli* to justify Russian invasions.

Georgian Dream's electoral campaign has also recently used controversial visual propaganda, featuring images of buildings that the Russian military has destroyed in Ukraine, including the aftermath of the Mariupol Drama Theatre strike, under the caption "choose peace." [35] These ads further emphasize Georgian Dream's supposed narrative of peace, contrasting it with the alleged war-mongering of opposition parties, all while aligning with pro-Kremlin rhetoric by implicitly blaming Ukraine for Russia's full-scale invasion and for the horrors and war crimes Russia has committed in the course of that invasion. Ukraine's Foreign Ministry (MFA) condemned on September 26 Georgian Dream's new campaign banners criticizing the instrumentalization of Ukrainian suffering. [36]

**The Georgian government has also reiterated standard Kremlin information operations accusing Georgian citizens who had served as volunteers alongside Ukrainian forces of "terrorism" and "conspiracy to overthrow the government" in an attempt to portray associates of Ukrainian forces as threatening Georgian national security.** The Georgian State Security Service (SUS or SSSG) reportedly recently summoned several Georgian citizens who had served as volunteers alongside Ukrainian forces for questioning on charges of "conspiracy to overthrow the government" and "terrorism" on July 19. [37] Article 410 of Georgia's criminal code forbids mercenarism, but Georgian authorities notably did not charge these former volunteers under that article. The Kremlin routinely uses the narrative of a "violent coup" in Ukraine to misrepresent Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity and protests for Ukrainian European integration, and SUS activities increasingly mirror Kremlin rhetoric. The decisions by Georgian authorities and the SUS to question and charge its citizens who have fought in Ukraine indicate that the Georgian Dream ruling party likely intends to derail long-term Georgian efforts for Euro-Atlantic integration, which plays into continued Russian hybrid operations to divide, destabilize, and weaken Georgia. [38]

**Georgian Dream has already forwarded pro-Russian policies and enacted laws that mirror Kremlin-style governance, thereby setting conditions to strengthen relations with Russia while distancing Georgia from its Western allies.** The Georgian parliament passed a "foreign agents" law in May 2024 requiring NGOs receiving at least 20 percent of their funding from abroad to register as "foreign agents," with penalties for non-compliance. [39] The law bears a strong resemblance to Russia's foreign agents law that also requires civil society bodies to register as "foreign agents" to let the Kremlin monitor and restrain pro-democracy, anti-Kremlin activities in Russia. [40] Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov defended Georgia's Parliamentary majority for reintroducing the foreign agents law, stating that it is normal for sovereign

states to prevent foreign interference in their domestic politics.[41] EU High Representative Josep Borrell warned in March 2023 and May 2024 that the adoption of the bill would "negatively impact" Georgia's membership prospects — likely the desired effect from the Kremlin's perspective.[42] Georgian parliamentary speaker Shalva Papuashvili announced on October 3, 2024, that he had signed a "family values" law, echoing Kremlin-style initiatives to implement restrictive measures under the guise of protecting "traditional values" from alleged foreign threats.[43]

**Georgian Dream announced on August 20 most significantly that it will ban all pro-Western opposition groups — particularly targeting the main opposition party, UNM — if it secures a constitutional majority (113 out of 150 parliamentary seats, as opposed to 76 seats to create a parliamentary majority).[44] Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze stated that the ban would include all major opposition parties essentially leaving Georgia with a one-party parliament.[45]** Such a ban would eviscerate representative government in Georgia and presumably establish the Kremlin-friendly Georgian Dream party permanently in control.

Georgia has notably refrained from joining Western and international sanctions against Russia despite supporting UN resolutions and offering limited rhetorical support for Ukraine after Russia's full-scale invasion.[46] Then-Prime Minister and leader of the Georgian Dream party Irakli Garibashvili publicly rejected the idea of sanctions in February 2022 and argued that they were ineffective and would harm Georgia's economy.[47] Members of the Russian Federation Council's International Affairs Committee subsequently praised Garibashvili's position.[48] Although Georgia's economy is indeed dependent on Russia in key sectors such as trade, tourism, and remittances, Georgian Dream officials have not only highlighted these economic realities but also leaned on pro-Russian rhetoric to justify their refusal to join international sanctions.[49] Georgian Dream rhetoric has often mirrored Russian talking points, downplaying the effectiveness of sanctions and adopting a more sympathetic stance toward Moscow, rather than focusing solely on Georgia's economic interests and needs.

**The Kremlin will likely leverage success in realigning Georgian foreign policy with Moscow to advance Russian political, military, and economic influence in the South Caucasus and Black Sea region and leverage these areas to support its war effort in Ukraine.** Since Georgian Dream came to power in 2012, and particularly after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, trade relations between Russia and Georgia have notably increased. Russia has emerged as one of Georgia's largest import and export partners, ranking among the top five in both categories.[50] Russia gradually lifted previous trade embargoes, including those on Georgian wine, signaling its willingness to cooperate with the Georgian Dream party despite the fact that the two countries have not had formal diplomatic ties since the 2008 Russian invasion.[51] Transparency International's Georgian bureau reported in February 2024 that Russia accounted for 10.8 percent of Georgia's total exports and 13.3 percent of its total imports.[52] The study also noted a large increase in Russian businesses registered in Georgia since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Russian citizens have been able to stay in Georgia without a visa for a year since 2012 — one of the most liberal residency laws for Russian citizens in the world.[53] Russian President Vladimir Putin lifted the ban on direct flights between Russia and Georgia in May 2023 and abolished the visa regime for



Georgian citizens to stay in Russia first in 2023 and then expanded the scope to include Georgian labor migrants in October 2024.[54]

**Russia may seek to exploit improved economic relations with Georgia to expand its sanctions evasion capabilities and mitigate the impacts of Western and international sanctions.** Reports suggest that Georgia's increased trade with Russia and the flow of goods through its borders could be aiding Russia's war effort in Ukraine. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) Georgian Bureau*, echoing a February 2024 US Senate Investigation, reported on March 5, 2024, an analysis of Georgia's import and export data from the past two years.[55] The analysis indicated that Georgian imports of crucial Western dual-use "critical components" required for Russia's military operations have significantly surged since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine suggesting that Russia may be acquiring them via Georgia. The Georgian government denied these allegations noting that the importation of dual-use commodities was well below the levels of pre-COVID pandemic years and that the surge was simply a sign of economic recovery and re-establishment of trade.[56] A Georgian opposition outlet noted, however, that while the Georgian government's claims are likely true, Georgian re-exports of critical dual-use components have notably increased to countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan through which Russia has acquired dual-use materials.[57] A Georgian Dream victory in future elections is likely to continue this trend, positioning Georgia as one of the bases for possible Russian sanctions evasion and further entrenching Russia's economic influence in the South Caucasus. This deepening relationship risks undermining international efforts to isolate Moscow economically and could shift the region's balance of power in favor of Russia.

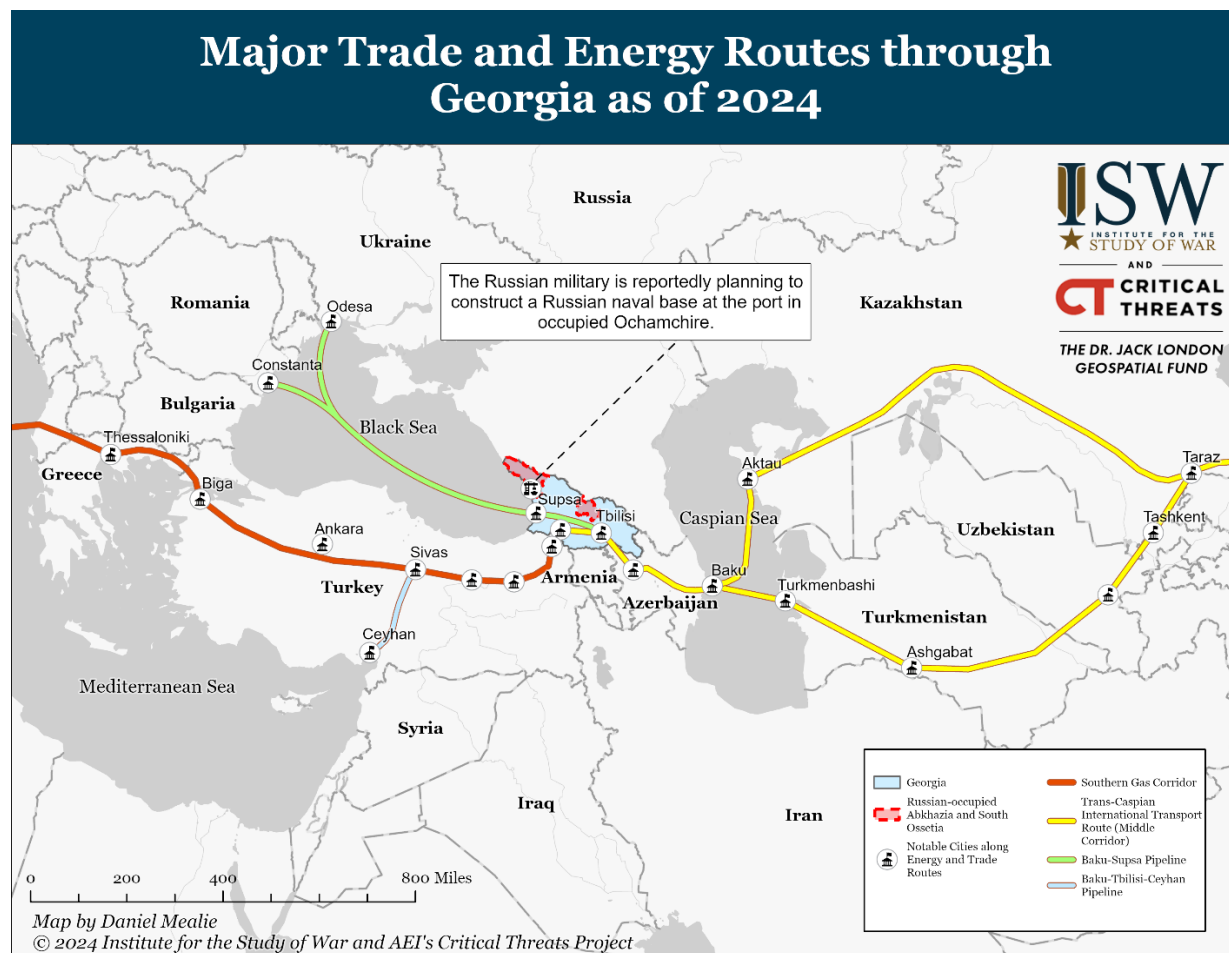
**The Kremlin will likely seek to leverage the potential of a Russia-friendly Georgian government to secure long-term access to Georgian territorial waters and ports in the Black Sea after Ukraine's Summer-Fall 2023 strike campaign against the Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) successfully curtailed Russian naval operations in the Black Sea.** Ukrainian missile and drone strikes targeting BSF assets in occupied Sevastopol, Crimea, in Summer and Fall 2023 forced Russia to relocate vessels to Novorossiysk, Krasnodar Krai. Ukrainian drones also targeted Novorossiysk in August 2023, demonstrating Ukraine's growing ability to disrupt Russian operations across the Black Sea.[58] Russia subsequently began to shift some naval assets to the eastern Black Sea and to expand the small Russian military port in occupied Ochamchire, Abkhazia. Georgian leadership, including former Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, condemned Russia's actions in occupied Ochamchire, and the Georgian MFA called the port a violation of sovereignty and urged compliance with the 2008 EU-mediated ceasefire.[59] Breakaway Abkhazian President Aslan Bzhania announced on October 5, 2023 an agreement with Russia to construct a permanent naval base in occupied Ochamchire[60] Deputy Chief of the Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Major General Vadym Skibitskyi reported on October 23 that Russian authorities started dredging and constructing port infrastructure in Ochamchire in order to construct a base for some warships currently stationed in occupied Crimea, which could not be redeployed to Novorossiysk[61] The base's expansion will reportedly take over two and a half years to complete, but the Russian BSF reportedly began utilizing the Ochamchire port even before full construction, suggesting the urgency for Russia of gaining access to Georgian Black Sea facilities. International

naval activities-focused outlet *Naval News* reported in July 2024 that satellite imagery from July 2024 purportedly showing a Russian Project 22870 support ship docked at Ochamchire, indicating Russia's commitment using the port.[62] The Russian military is likely intending to develop the existing port into a subsidiary rather than a main base since the surrounding terrain largely consists of sandy beaches unsuitable for the construction of naval infrastructure.[63] Russia might seek to use this small port for small-scale operations and to allow a limited number of vessels to evade Ukrainian strikes, even though Georgian officials have thus far opposed these actions. A Russia-friendly Georgian government that ceases to voice meaningful criticisms of the Russian port in occupied Abkhazia would likely allow Russian authorities to more rapidly expand port infrastructure with fewer denunciations from the Georgian government and the international community.

**The Kremlin may also be interested in long-term access to larger Georgian Black Sea ports to expand Russia's economic and military influence in the Black Sea region.** The Kremlin may attempt to leverage a Russia-friendly Georgian government to gain access to larger Georgian ports such as Batumi and the planned deep seaport in Anaklia. A Russian flagged cargo ship entered Batumi Port in July 2022, and the Georgian Maritime Transport Agency and Economy Ministry stated that international sanctions against Russia for its war in Ukraine did not apply to the ship or the shipping company.[64] A Russian cruise ship attempted to dock in Batumi Port in July 2023, raising concerns and causing controversy about Russia's increasing presence in Georgian territorial waters.[65] Russia likely has long-term interests in expanding commercial and military access to larger Georgian Black Sea ports that can dock large military and commercial vessels — unlike the Ochamchire port — in order to address current Russian vulnerabilities and expand influence in the Black Sea region at large. These ports offer no military support and limited commercial support in the short term but over time could play a key role in Russia's broader Black Sea strategy. If Georgian Dream's policies favor rapprochement with Moscow, it could further enable Russian commercial and naval operations in the Black Sea. Georgian Dream's pre-election rhetoric emphasizing reconciliation with Russia and downplaying Moscow's responsibility for the 2008 war could rhetorically set conditions for increased Russian access to regional ports and enhanced Russian influence in this sector of the Black Sea.

**The Kremlin may seek to secure long-term access to Georgian territory, airspace, and ports by normalizing relations with Georgia though negotiating the return of Georgia's occupied territories.** *RFE/RL*, citing unspecified Russian and Georgian analysts, reported in June 2024 that Russia could negotiate a return of occupied Georgian territories under the condition that Georgia renounces its Euro-Atlantic aspirations.[66] ISW cannot independently confirm the veracity of the claims. The floating of such rumors, however, clearly mirrors the ongoing Russian demands in Ukraine intended to coerce Ukraine to give up its Euro-Atlantic and particularly NATO aspirations in return for Russia's cessation of its invasion.[67] Russia notably did not attempt to annex Abkhazia and South Ossetia Russia after illegally seizing them despite select Russian officials' threats to do so since 2008.[68] Russia likely refrained from annexing the occupied territories in order to attempt to integrate the Russian-controlled territories into the Georgian state as a means whereby Russia could exert direct control over Tbilisi. The Kremlin attempted to leverage the Russian-

preferable 2014 and 2015 Minsk Agreements with Ukraine to integrate Russian occupied territory into the Ukrainian state to destroy an independent Ukrainian state and bring it under Russian control.[69] Russia would likely leverage such an agreement with Georgia to justify its occupation of and influence over Ukraine and Moldova, if Georgia and Russia started such negotiations, moreover, using Tbilisi's surrender as a model for Kyiv and Chişinău.[70] Russia could instrumentalize Georgia's coerced renunciation of Euro-Atlantic integration to enhance its influence in Georgia and particularly Georgian territorial waters and infrastructure in the Black Sea without facing meaningful domestic and Western pushback if such rumors are accurate. Russia could also leverage land and air routes passing through Georgia to facilitate sanction evasion schemes and expand access to trade routes, including to Armenia and Iran. Rumors suggesting Georgian territorial reconciliation, however, could also be a part of Georgian Dream campaign effort to sway voters in their favor or a Russian information operation intended to affect the outcome of Georgian elections as the Russian Foreign Ministry continues to portray warming Georgia-Russia relations as false.[71]



**Russia's strategic efforts to enhance its economic influence in Georgia could serve a broader agenda of infiltrating key elements of the Middle Corridor, an informal but increasingly vital trade route connecting Europe and Asia circumventing Russia.** The Middle Corridor offers a promising alternative to traditional trade routes between Asia and Europe amid increasing Western and

international sanctions against Russia. With worsening EU-Russia relations following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the worsening situation in the Middle East, the EU is eager to reduce reliance on Russian-controlled and other unstable trade routes, making the Middle Corridor, a set of trade routes which passes directly through the South Caucasus, increasingly important for European trade and security.[72] This trade route, supported by major Western infrastructure investments and the People's Republic of China's (PRC) Belt and Road Initiative, has significantly reduced transit times. The Middle Corridor cuts transit times to 14 to 18 days, compared to 19 days through Russia or 22 to 37 days via southern sea routes, making it an attractive option.[73] Cargo volumes through this corridor increased by nearly 65 percent in early 2023, surpassing one million tons. Georgia has emerged as a pivotal hub in this network, playing a vital role in transporting oil, gas, and goods along the Middle Corridor. Russia's growing interest in Georgian ports, its occupation of Georgian territories, and its increasing trade ties with Georgia pose significant risks. These efforts could enable Russia to destabilize the Middle Corridor, using Georgia to undermine the trade route and reassert its influence in the region. The success of the Middle Corridor hinges on the stability and security of Georgia and the surrounding region, leaving it vulnerable to Russian interference, despite significant investments by the PRC and the EU. Russia could indirectly disrupt this key trade route and undermine efforts to establish a stable alternative to Russian-controlled corridors if Russia gains influence over the Georgian government.

**A Georgian Dream parliamentary victory giving it a majority and the subsequent possible pursuit of an overtly Russia-friendly Georgian foreign policy would be a major setback for the West, as it would enable Russia to enhance its war effort, bolster its economic capacity, and showcase soft power, all the expense of Western interests.** A Caucasus Barometer survey conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) in April and May 2024 reported that 70 percent of Georgians support EU membership and 57 percent of Georgians support NATO membership.[74] Despite this widespread support for Western integration, the policies and rhetoric of the ruling Georgian Dream party have already caused Western countries to limit aid and cooperation with Georgia. The US Department of Defense (DoD) reported on July 5 that it would indefinitely postpone the Noble Partner joint military exercise with Georgia due to the Georgian government's accusations that the US and Western entities pressured Georgia to open a second front against Russia and participated in coup attempts against the ruling Georgian Dream party.[75] In light of these allegations, the US also initiated a comprehensive review of its bilateral relations with Georgia.[76] EU Ambassador to Georgia Pawel Herczynski announced on July 9 that the EU had suspended Georgia's accession process.[77] The EU delegation in Georgia announced on October 8 that the country would lose 121 million euros (\$130 million) in EU funding due to democratic regression.[78] The European Parliament overwhelmingly adopted a resolution on October 9 condemning Georgia's democratic backsliding and threats to political pluralism.[79] The resolution called on the European Commission to assess Georgia's adherence to visa-free regime criteria and urged EU member states to impose targeted sanctions on Ivanishvili. UK Ambassador to Georgia Gareth Ward announced on October 15 that the UK had frozen its annual security dialogue with Georgia and canceled defense talks over concerns about the country's democratic backsliding.[80] This suspension comes after widespread criticism of Georgian Dream's legislative actions. Such developments indicate that the trajectory Georgia is on — should Georgian Dream

secure a majority — will not only likely reshape the country's EU and NATO ambitions but also fortify Russia's influence at the expense of the aspirations of the Georgian people and Western strategic interests in the region.

**A parliamentary victory for a more Russia-friendly party in Georgia would represent a significant soft power victory for Russia, showcasing its ability to coerce neighboring countries and deter them from pursuing Western integration paths in the long run. It would also show that the Kremlin is able to leverage the invasion and partial occupation of neighboring states to shape their political orientations.** Increasing Kremlin alignment in a post-Soviet country that has long sought Western integration would further cement the long-standing Russian portrayal of its now-sovereign former colonies as vassal states – a framing that seeks to deter both domestic interest in Western cooperation and Western willingness to pursue closer relations with these countries. A victorious Georgian Dream that pursues more Kremlin-friendly policies would also demonstrate a remarkable Kremlin capability to reverse decades of European integration efforts in a country that Russia has attacked and victimized, which would likely embolden Kremlin efforts to pursue hybrid operations and open aggression against Ukraine, Moldova, and other post-Soviet countries.

**The Kremlin's attempts to assert control over Georgia through hybrid operations are part of a broader coordinated Kremlin effort to gain control over post-Soviet countries to form a coerced coalition of vassal states against the West.** The Kremlin's efforts to gain suzerainty over Georgia are part of an interconnected effort to use hybrid and military means to destabilize Ukraine and Moldova and forcibly coerce them into Russia's asserted sphere of influence. Russia could achieve its objective of influencing Georgia through soft power and non-kinetic hybrid means should the Kremlin succeed in leveraging a potential Russia-friendly majority in the Georgian Parliament. Such a success through soft power and non-kinetic hybrid means would likely inform future Kremlin calculus and decision-making on operations against target countries including, but not limited to, Ukraine and Moldova.

POWERED BY:



BABEL STREET

[1] <https://www.consilium dot europa.eu/en/policies/enlargement/georgia/>

[2] <https://civil dot ge/archives/621729>

[3] <https://www.dw com/en/georgia-the-thorns-of-the-rose-revolution/a-67536678>

[4] [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm)

[5] <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/georgia-russia-internal/georgia-and-russia-why-and-how-save> ; <https://oc-media dot org/gazprom-media-to-broadcast-in-georgia/>

[6] [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/georgia\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/georgia_en)

- [7] [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2016\\_02/160209-factsheet-sngp-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_02/160209-factsheet-sngp-en.pdf) ;  
[https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2015\\_12/20151209\\_151209-factsheet-nato-georgia-package.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_12/20151209_151209-factsheet-nato-georgia-package.pdf) ;  
[https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2016\\_02/20160303\\_160209-factsheet-sngp-full-eng.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_02/20160303_160209-factsheet-sngp-full-eng.pdf)
- [8] [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/georgia/european-union-and-georgia\\_en?s=221](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/georgia/european-union-and-georgia_en?s=221)
- [9] <https://civil.ge/archives/625445>
- [10] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/denying-russia%E2%80%99s-only-strategy-success> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/high-price-losing-ukraine-part-2-%E2%80%94military-threat-and-beyond> ;  
<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/05/the-end-of-the-near-abroad?lang=en>;
- [11] <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/10/the-eu-and-the-south-caucasus-geo-economics-at-play?lang=en&center=europe>; <https://agsiweb.org/growing-gulf-footprint-in-the-south-caucasus/>; <https://aspensiaonline.com/the-south-caucasus-a-pivotal-region-shaken-by-the-war-in-ukraine/>;  
<https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2024/03/the-middle-corridor-a-renaissance-in-global-commerce.html>
- [12] <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/07/armenia-navigates-a-path-away-from-russia?lang=en> ; <https://eurasianet.org/russias-powerful-economic-levers-over-armenia>
- [13] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar022924> ; <https://isw.pub/UkrWar090124> ;  
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-31-2024> ; <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2023/10/long-standing-ties-between-armenia-and-russia-are-fraying-fast?lang=en> ; <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/07/armenia-navigates-a-path-away-from-russia?lang=en> ; <https://www.rferl.org/a/armenia-pashinian-united-states-west-relations-russia-analysis/32591327.html> ;  
<https://cepa.org/article/armenia-edges-toward-breach-with-russia/>
- [14] <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/09/20/kremlin-orders-media-lawmakers-to-blame-armenia-for-karabakh-conflict-reports-a82527>;  
<https://www.azatutyun.am/a/32624909.html>
- [15] <https://eurasianet.org/armenian-ex-president-kocharyan-arrested-again>;  
[https://arka.am/en/news/politics/lavrov\\_about\\_kocharyan\\_detention\\_russia\\_concerned\\_over\\_things\\_in\\_armenia/](https://arka.am/en/news/politics/lavrov_about_kocharyan_detention_russia_concerned_over_things_in_armenia/)
- [16] <https://apnews.com/article/armenia-us-military-drills-russia-karabakh-e1975bdbb3a7f6adb2145f19f6e32558>; [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-9-2024-0167\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-9-2024-0167_EN.html); <https://tass.com/world/1768393>; <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/32948935.html>;  
<https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/764173/uae-emerges-as-a-new-key-trade-partner-for-armenia/>

[17] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-9-2024> ; <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/33084535.html> ; <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/armenia-is-considering-seeking-eu-membership-foreign-minister-says-2024-03-09/>

[18] <https://www.politico.eu/article/russian-gas-deal-europe-ukraine-pipeline-energy-market-lng/>

[19] <https://www.mei.edu/publications/azerbaijans-foreign-policy-priorities-and-role-middle-east>

[20] <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2018/2674#gsc.tab=0> ; <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2024/57#gsc.tab=0> ; <https://civil.ge/archives/627971> ; <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33089657.html> ; <https://www.gmfus.org/news/risk-assessment-georgias-2024-parliamentary-elections>

[21] <https://civil.ge/archives/271293>

[22] <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-2020-parliament-vote-to-be-held-under-proportional-system---ruling-party-head/30016662.html>

[23] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfOASkONCS8> ; <https://politpro.eu/en/georgia/polls/60667/edison-research/2024-09-29> ; <https://civil.ge/archives/271293> ; <https://civil.ge/archives/553006>

[24] <https://info.imedi.ge/en/elections/2638/gorbi-poll-shows-if-parliamentary-elections-were-held-this-week-georgian-dream-party-would-receive-593-of-votes> ; <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2024/40991#gsc.tab=0> ; <https://mtavari.tv/news/153386-issa-sotsiologiuri-kvlevis-shedegebi-sruli-versia> ;

[25] <https://civil.ge/archives/627440>

[27] <https://isw.pub/UkrWar072424> ; [doceo.eu/document/TA-9-2022-0239\\_EN.pdf](https://doceo.eu/document/TA-9-2022-0239_EN.pdf) ; [ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Broken-Dream-The-oligarch-Russia-and-Georgias-drift-from-Europe.pdf](https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Broken-Dream-The-oligarch-Russia-and-Georgias-drift-from-Europe.pdf) ; ; [ecfr.eu/publication/broken-dream-the-oligarch-russia-and-georgias-drift-from-europe/](https://ecfr.eu/publication/broken-dream-the-oligarch-russia-and-georgias-drift-from-europe/) ; [www.cfr.org/article/dangers-democratic-backsliding-georgia](https://www.cfr.org/article/dangers-democratic-backsliding-georgia) ; [www.politico.eu/article/who-is-running-georgia-tbilisi-ukraine-russia-war-vladimir-putin-sanctions-georgian-dream/](https://www.politico.eu/article/who-is-running-georgia-tbilisi-ukraine-russia-war-vladimir-putin-sanctions-georgian-dream/) ; [www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0239\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0239_EN.pdf) ; [ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Broken-Dream-The-oligarch-Russia-and-Georgias-drift-from-Europe.pdf](https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Broken-Dream-The-oligarch-Russia-and-Georgias-drift-from-Europe.pdf) ; ; [ecfr.eu/publication/broken-dream-the-oligarch-russia-and-georgias-drift-from-europe/](https://ecfr.eu/publication/broken-dream-the-oligarch-russia-and-georgias-drift-from-europe/) ; [www.cfr.org/article/dangers-democratic-backsliding-georgia](https://www.cfr.org/article/dangers-democratic-backsliding-georgia) ; [www.politico.eu/article/who-is-running-georgia-tbilisi-ukraine-russia-war-vladimir-putin-sanctions-georgian-dream/](https://www.politico.eu/article/who-is-running-georgia-tbilisi-ukraine-russia-war-vladimir-putin-sanctions-georgian-dream/)

[28] [https://vk.com/video-70034991\\_456252990](https://vk.com/video-70034991_456252990) ; [www.politico.eu/article/russia-georgia-deal-occupied-regions-abkhazia-south-ossetia-foreign-minister-sergey-lavrov-unga-georgian-dream/](https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-georgia-deal-occupied-regions-abkhazia-south-ossetia-foreign-minister-sergey-lavrov-unga-georgian-dream/) ; [t.me/rybar/64553](https://t.me/rybar/64553)

[29] [https://vk.com/video-70034991\\_456252990](https://vk.com/video-70034991_456252990) ; <https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-georgia-deal-occupied-regions-abkhazia-south-ossetia-foreign-minister-sergey-lavrov-unga-georgian-dream/>

[30] <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-19798323>;  
<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-lifts-visa-curbs-georgians-ahead-parliamentary-election-2024-10-10/>; <https://eurasianet.org/russia-rewards-georgia-with-lifting-of-visa-requirement-renewal-of-direct-flights>;  
<https://www.newsweek.com/russian-imports-georgian-wine-skyrocket-after-lifted-ban-434698>

[31] <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/georgian-ruling-party-accuses-former-president-saakashvili-of-unleashing-2008-war/3302841>;  
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-august-14-2024>; <https://apnews.com/article/moldova-russia-war-ukraine-transnistria-eu-6c14d96e8cdc0bc699f0315eecaab4f6>

[32] <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/putin-ukraine-war-speech-today-blames-us-nato-after-one-year-invasion/> ; <https://www.voanews.com/a/fact-check-us-ukraine-revolution-funding-russian-disinfo/6742026.html> ;  
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2022-05-06/putins-orange-obsession>

[33] <https://t.me/rybar/62744>

[34] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-september-14-2024>; [https://t.me/tass\\_agency/272693](https://t.me/tass_agency/272693); <https://civil.ge/archives/624195>; <https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/georgia-s-ruling-party-founder-surprises-1726335264.html>

[35] <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-elections-ukraine-war-russia/33155450.html>

[36] [https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/zayava-mzs-shchodo-reklamnih-baneriv-partiyi-vladi-gruziyi-gruzinska-mriya?fbclid=IwY2xjawFuJotleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHXOi8C9vayuohhg\\_ecM7c64laXg\\_oUJ-rMF9KCJyly5Koe8YppBDhMtx7A\\_aem\\_3lKa-ynBZgYiulU1o762cA](https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/zayava-mzs-shchodo-reklamnih-baneriv-partiyi-vladi-gruziyi-gruzinska-mriya?fbclid=IwY2xjawFuJotleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHXOi8C9vayuohhg_ecM7c64laXg_oUJ-rMF9KCJyly5Koe8YppBDhMtx7A_aem_3lKa-ynBZgYiulU1o762cA)

[37] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-21-2024>

[38] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-21-2024> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-july-24-2024>

[39] <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/georgian-parliamentary-speaker-signs-foreign-agents-bill-into-law-2024-06-03/>

[40] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/01/russia-new-restrictions-foreign-agents>

[41] <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/kremlin-says-georgias-foreign-agents-law-is-being-used-stoke-anti-russian-2024-04-17/>

[42] [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/georgia-statement-high-representative-josep-borrell-with-european-commission-adoption\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/georgia-statement-high-representative-josep-borrell-with-european-commission-adoption_en) ; [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/georgia-statement-high-representative-adoption-%E2%80%9Cforeign-influence%E2%80%9D-law\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/georgia-statement-high-representative-adoption-%E2%80%9Cforeign-influence%E2%80%9D-law_en) ; <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-urges-georgia-withdraw-foreign-agent-bill-2024-05-15/>



[43] <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-law-lgbt-rights-signed/33144544.html>

[44]

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1070769791080485&set=a.488868739270596> ; <https://civil dot ge/archives/621188>

[45] <https://www.politico.eu/article/georgia-opposition-ban-georgian-dream-party-election-eu-enlargement-irakli-kobakhidze/>

[46] <https://eurasianet dot org/georgia-says-it-wont-join-international-sanctions-against-russia>; <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2023/791#gsc.tab=0>

[47] <https://x.com/CivilGe/status/1498220316501360643>

[48] <https://jam-news dot net/lack-of-political-will-why-georgia-does-not-join-anti-russian-sanctions/>

[49] <https://civil dot ge/archives/582712>; <https://transparency dot ge/en/blog/georgias-economic-dependence-russia-summary-2023>; <https://forbes dot ge/en/georgia-stuck-in-the-russian-economic-trap/>

[50] <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountrySnapshot/en/GEO>

[51] <https://www.bmz dot de/en/countries/georgia/tensions-in-relations-with-russia-117750>

[52] <https://transparency dot ge/en/blog/georgias-economic-dependence-russia-summary-2023>

[53] <https://apnews.com/article/russia-georgia-visas-flights-9da7e205ec81170194b3a12f71f3c2ef>

[54] <https://www.dw dot com/en/georgia-risks-eu-candidacy-by-restoring-russia-flights/a-65677502>; <https://www.reuters dot com/world/europe/russia-lifts-visa-curbs-georgians-ahead-parliamentary-election-2024-10-10/>; <https://civil dot ge/archives/628027>

[55] <https://www.radiotavisupleba dot ge/a/%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%A5%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%97%E1%83%95%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9B-35-%E1%83%AF%E1%83%94%E1%83%A0-%E1%83%92%E1%83%90%E1%83%96%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%93%E1%83%90-%E1%83%90%E1%83%9B%E1%83%94%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98%E1%83%99%E1%83%98%E1%83%93%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C-%E1%83%9B%E1%83%98%E1%83%99%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A9%E1%83%98%E1%83%9E%E1%83%94%E1%83%91%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%98%E1%83%9B%E1%83%9E%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A0%E1%83%A2%E1%83%98/32847656.html>; <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/Opening-Statement-Ranking-Member-Johnson-Feb.-27-2024.pdf>; <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/8566/text>; <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/subcommittees/investigations/hearings/the-u-s-technology-fueling-russias-war-in-ukraine-how-and-why/>

[56] <https://www.globalaffairs dot ch/2024/08/09/increased-russian-georgian-trade-sanctions-circumvention-or-benign-change-of-trade-flows/>

[57] <https://civil dot ge/archives/585891;>  
[https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-26-2024;](https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-26-2024) <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-02-26/eu-says-russia-still-gets-banned-weapons-technology-from-europe>

[58] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/ukrainian-strikes-have-changed-russian-naval-operations-black-sea>

[59] <https://civil dot ge/archives/562405>

[60] <https://iz dot ru/1583490/valentin-loginov/uchastie-v-soiuznom-gosudarstve-otvechaet-interesam-abkhazii> ; <https://ria dot ru/20231005/abkhaziya-1900600812.html>; <https://tass dot ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/18916579> ;  
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-october-5-2023>

[61] <https://www.svoboda.org/a/v-obse-osudili-sozdanie-rossiyskoy-voenno-morskoy-bazy-v-abkhazii/32714549.html> ; <https://www.golosameriki.com/a/georgia-russia-abkhazia/7324226.html> ;  
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/ukrainian-strikes-have-changed-russian-naval-operations-black-sea>

[62] <https://www.navalnews dot com/naval-news/2024/07/first-russian-navy-ship-seen-in-base-in-abkhazi-separatist-region-of-georgia/>

[63] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/ukrainian-strikes-have-changed-russian-naval-operations-black-sea>

[64] <https://agenda dot ge/en/news/2022/2576#gsc.tab=0>

[65] <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-cruise-ship-batumi-protests-russian-passengers/32523979.html> ; <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-russia-cruise-ship-batumi/32527570.html>

[66] <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-georgia-relations-georgian-dream-abkhazia/32988405.html>

[67] [https://www.lemonde dot fr/en/international/article/2024/06/14/putin-says-ukraine-must-withdraw-troops-and-end-nato-bid-for-peace-talks-to-begin\\_6674805\\_4.html](https://www.lemonde dot fr/en/international/article/2024/06/14/putin-says-ukraine-must-withdraw-troops-and-end-nato-bid-for-peace-talks-to-begin_6674805_4.html)

[68] <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-may-annex-georgian-breakaway-regions-medvedev-2023-08-22/>

[69] <https://www.ft.com/content/21b8f98e-b2a5-11e4-b234-00144feab7de> ;  
<https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/E16%20-%20Ukraine%20Considers%20Talks%20with%20Putin%27s%20Proxies.pdf> ;

[70] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russia-poses-long-term-threats-moldova%E2%80%99s-european-integration-beyond-october-elections>;  
<https://www.csis.org/analysis/how-do-you-solve-problem-transnistria>

## Russia or the West: The Stakes in Georgia's Election

[71] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-june-12-2024>

[72] <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2024/03/the-middle-corridor-a-renaissance-in-global-commerce.html#:~:text=The%20Middle%20Corridor%2C%20also%20known,%2C%20East%20Asia%2C%20and%20Europe.>

[73] <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2024/03/the-middle-corridor-a-renaissance-in-global-commerce.html#:~:text=The%20Middle%20Corridor%2C%20also%20known,%2C%20East%20Asia%2C%20and%20Europe.>; <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/middle-corridor/>; <https://sponsored.bloomberg.com/article/speeding-trade-across-central-asia-through-the-middle-corridor>

[74] <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2024ge/EUSUPP/> ; <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2024ge/NATOSUPP/>

[75] <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3827839/postponement-of-exercise-noble-partner-announcement/>

[76] <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32961682.html>;  
<https://www.rferl.org/a/tbilisi-foreign-agent-blinken--visa-protest-/32961744.html>

[77] <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/33027609.html>;  
<https://www.rferl.org/a/eu-halts-georgia-accession/33027858.html>

[78] <https://x.com/EUinGeorgia/status/1843623247855923598>

[79] <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20241003IPR24429/parliament-says-georgia-s-democracy-is-at-risk>

[80] <https://www.reuters.com/world/britain-freezes-security-dialogue-with-georgia-georgian-media-reports-2024-10-15/>