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GEORGIAN POLITICS

Special Editor: Robert Orttung

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From 4 March to 8 March 2013

The First One Hundred Days of the Georgian Dream: Opportunities Seized, Opportunities Lost

By Julie A. George, New York

Abstract

The victory of the opposition in Georgia's fall 2012 parliamentary elections created an uncomfortable power-sharing arrangement between the President and Prime Minister. The result has been political battles over the right to appoint ministers, the president's ability to dismiss parliament and other executive powers. These conflicts have shifted the focus away from resolving Georgia's pressing economic and social problems, even as the new government has sketched out a set of reforms that could be effective if implemented.

Competition After the Election

February 2, 2013 marked Bidzina Ivanishvili's 100th day as Georgian Prime Minister following the elections that unseated the legislative primacy of Mikhail Saakashvili's United National Movement (UNM) and ushered in the coalition opposition Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia (GDDG). Saakashvili's concession of that election marked the first such event in Georgian politics since independence. While many analysts hailed Saakashvili's democratic impulse, some observers also voiced some skepticism regarding future Georgian political stability. These bearish predictions focused on the difficulties of transforming the punitive security structures of the old system, refashioning relationships with Russia, and navigating the obstacles associated with divided government and executive cohabitation.

Indeed, executive competition dominates the political conversation in current-day Georgia, expressed in squabbling over the rightful position of the President (who is currently more powerful formally than he is in reality), the status of the constitution, and the zeal of the Georgian prosecutors to address UNM's penchant for overstepping its authority in the previous era. These factors, while important, distract from the deep structural economic and political problems that continue to limit the standard of living for average Georgians.

Constitutional Shifts and Uneasy Cohabitation

Constitutional ambiguity has provided an opportunity for Ivanishvili and Saakashvili to engage in zero-sum politics, although Saakashvili is clearly the weaker player in terms of practical legitimacy. The current constitutional arrangement grants both executive authority, due to reforms undertaken in 2010 that established a superior parliament and a weaker president. These measures, passed at a time when UNM felt confident that it would control parliament, are set to take effect upon the expiration of the President's term, in October 2013. Until then, Saakashvili technically is the chief executive, with the

power to select and fire government ministers, dissolve parliament under certain conditions, and veto legislation. However, to conduct the business of the parliamentary system, as Prime Minister, Ivanishvili dominates the policy program of the state. Currently, in order to nominate personnel, the prime minister must request that the president nominate his (that is, Ivanishvili's) choices for main offices. So far, there has not been formal resistance to any particular choice, but the procedure must chafe Ivanishvili, who has made little secret of his wish that Saakashvili be impeached. (Ivanishvili, in what was apparently intended as conciliatory language, remarked in a press conference that "we respect our culture, our society and the state, so we will treat our opponents as our state and culture deserve and not as our opponents deserve....the issue of impeachment will not be raised by me and by our party" although later he predicted impeachment could happen anyway, and "no one should be surprised if this process arrives."¹)

Saakashvili has scant legitimacy to dissolve the parliament or fire the government, despite his formal authority. Last month, Parliament refused him entrance into the legislative chamber for his constitutionally-mandated Parliamentary address (he opted for the National Library, was spurned by an angry mob, and wound up delivering his address at the Presidential palace). This discrepancy between formal and informal authority is not unusual in Georgian politics, although this is a notable time where an executive with considerable formal authority lacks the practical legitimacy to wield it.

In order to combat these ambiguities, Ivanishvili proposes accelerating the implementation of the most important executive power changes, namely the primary executive authority of the president, his ability to select personnel, and his authority for parliamentary dissolution. Such an action would require a constitutional

¹ Civil.ge, Ivanishvili says to seek cutting Saakashvili's Powers, November 22, 2012, via <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=25471&search=>

amendment to adapt the timing of the implementation of the 2010 amendments (clearly passed at a time when UNM expected political dominance). The constitutional debate also swirls around the current constitutional requirement that the Parliament should be located in Georgia's second city, Kutaisi, instead of Tbilisi. The GDDG advocates returning the parliament to Tbilisi. There is also some disagreement as to whether the constitution should mandate a Western trajectory in Georgian foreign policy, for which the UNM has signaled its desire. The current government proclaims that it also intends to uphold a westward policy (perhaps disingenuously, or maybe not), but does not favor a constitutional mandate.

These constitutional issues, the dual executive authority and proposed amendments, have dominated Georgian political debate since the October 2012 election, in part because they are linked with the current balance of power in the parliament. Constitutional amendments require a two-thirds majority, 100 votes in a 150-member chamber. The Georgian Dream holds 90 seats, while the UNM clings to its 54 seat block. Six members have defected from UNM to establish a faction of independents, some of who can be counted onto vote with the GDDG faction. In this current configuration, the Georgian Dream's desired constitutional amendment requires at least some UNM support. This numerical circumstance has created a small space for negotiation between the two parties, given the uncertainty of UNM's parliamentary future and the Georgian Dream's constitutional ambitions.

The political animosity over these institutional debates occupies a great deal of space in the Georgian news coverage. What is interesting is that these specific issues are temporary. Whether the sides agree on a constitutional amendment will be irrelevant in October 2013, when the new constitution is set to take hold if left alone. Rather, the attention and urgency of these events are proxies for a larger concern: the role of political pluralism in Georgia and the existence of strong opposition parties.

The demise of the Georgian Dream is much anticipated, most often by its own leadership. Ivanishvili has indicated his expectation that the party would collapse into its constituent units, several parties that joined together to create the winning coalition. Currently, the Republicans and Free Democrats maintain their own factions inside the parliament, in addition to the generic Georgian Dream faction. Despite these centrifugal predictions, however, the party has stayed together. Moreover, while the individual parties continue to exist in their own right, Ivanishvili has been active recently in ensuring party cohesion and message

consistency. For example, Ivanishvili publicly reprimanded and demoted his Defense Minister and (then) First Deputy Prime Minister, Irakli Alasania, for internal discussions inside the Free Democrats party on his possible candidacy for presidency, without sanction by the Georgian Dream.

The future of the United National Movement is also unsettled. Unlike Gamsakhurdia's Round Table-Free Georgia bloc, Shevardnadze's parties, Citizens Union of Georgia and For a New Georgia, the United National Movement has not ceased to exist upon its removal from power. The strength of the UNM's ideological program has always been murky, mixed up in Saakashvili's charismatic and populist politics. Many scholars assert that the standard post-Soviet party is an ephemeral one, attached to a personality and disintegrating upon political loss. This assessment has general traction in Georgian politics, although several small opposition parties have persisted over decades and, while associated with powerful personalities, nonetheless have developed some ideological reputations. The United National Movement, which won sixty-five seats in the Parliament during the 2012 election, has faced a mini-exodus as some of its members have joined either joined Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia or formed a group of independent lawmakers. These departures have occurred so swiftly that the defecting parliamentarians are still listed as UNM on the Parliament's website. Notably, UNM caused a similar exodus after the Rose Revolution in Georgia, when several majoritarian parliamentarians abandoned Shevardnadze's immediately defunct For a New Georgia in favor of the United National Movement or other opposition parties.

UNM's continued lasting power will be tested by Saakashvili's coming resignation. For the Georgian political arena to stabilize into predictable and democratic politics, it needs a powerful opposition party with a programmatic message that appeals to a clear constituency. Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia became that foil to the ruling UNM, thanks in large part to Ivanishvili's ability to financially overwhelm the ruling party's access to favorable media coverage and state funds for political campaigns, as well as his recruitment of some tested political talent. With Ivanishvili's stated intention of leaving politics, his own predictions of an eventual disintegration of GDDG, and the potential dismantling of the UNM, party development in Georgia remains threatened. Without stable political parties, the politics of accountability, constituencies, and valuable opposition will not develop. Without constituency concerns, the political leadership can continue to ignore the real matters that should dominate the Georgian political landscape: pernicious unemployment, lower salaries,

poor work environment, and the overwhelming poverty, particularly in rural and suburban areas.

Crime and Punishment

The Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia united opposition mounted a successful electoral campaign against the ruling United National Movement substantively by attacking a key UNM weakness, the dominant role played by the police and security actors and the perception among the population that abuse of power by ruling party elite was common. GDDG surged higher in public opinion polls upon the release of a video documenting abuse against alleged political prisoners on an opposition television channel. Following the transfer of power, the prosecutor's office began implementing campaign promises, announcing an amnesty of prisoners (releasing over half of the Georgian prison population) and investigating and arresting officials of the former UNM government, mostly for charges of abuse of power and embezzlement. The tide of arrests, reminiscent of the post-Rose Revolution anti-corruption purge and UNM zero-tolerance judicial policy, has drawn howls from the UNM, claiming illegal retribution, and admonitions from European actors that the ruling party should avoid any semblance of a witch hunt.

The subsequent political dialogue has pitted UNM desires for amnesty against the politics of constitutional reform. This dialogue is more about the interests and livelihoods of political elites and less about the very real concerns of human security faced in Georgian society. There are caveats, of course. Political imprisonment should not occur in democratic or rights-based societies. Political officials should be subject to an objectively written and implemented rule of law. One complication of Georgian politics, however, has been how political losses coincide with imprisonment, scandal, interrogation and exile. At the time of writing, the Georgian prosecutor has alleged charges and issued an indictment of embezzlement and money laundering against Gigi Ugulava, the elected Mayor of Tbilisi and possible UNM presidential candidate in the upcoming contest. The court has blocked prosecutorial demands for Ugulava to step down from his post in advance of a trial, provoking the prosecutors to opine about a UNM bias in the courts.

The unfolding Ugulava drama, as well as the arrests, investigations, and trials of UNM luminaries already in motion represent an as yet unrecognized political opportunity for GDDG, one whose temporal window is closing. It is possible to pursue justice in times of political turmoil, but each step must be taken carefully, with overt and transparent decision-making that cannot give the appearance of engaging in political retribution. Georgia has the means and capability to conduct such an

investigation. It would mean that the list of possible targets would probably need to be narrowed and the rules of evidence heightened to a point to be encumbering. However, a thorough and objective investigation would send a message to Georgian society that a real shift in the political game is taking place and that there is real space in the Georgian political arena for pursuing justice without political scorekeeping. This is a lesson that members of the Republican Party, part of the Georgian Dream coalition, know well, as they witnessed the UNM forego this same opportunity following Shevardnadze's ouster in 2003 and for this reason were among the first actors to abandon the UNM. Issues of crime and punishment, as well as concerns about abuse of power and extreme surveillance, helped unseat the UNM. The Georgian Dream has an opportunity to avoid a similar trap and, at the same time, help end the pattern of zero sum politics that has dogged Georgia since Gamsakhurdia's ouster in 1992.

Reform Programs

Despite the attention paid to the elite power politics, the current government has offered some hints of the programs it plans to pursue. Several of these reforms, namely a reorganization of the system of local and regional governance, universal healthcare, an end to military conscription, and renewed economic ties to Russia, have been recently publicized in Georgian news outlets. The details of each of these programs, as well as the mechanism of implementation, vary in their specificity. None of these programs is fully developed at the time of writing, at least with regard to what information is publicly available. This dearth of detail may be due to the Georgian government's preoccupation with law and order, may reflect a lack of urgency, or may simply be illustrative of the complexity and structural nature of such reforms. Nonetheless, several bear close attention.

The Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure has produced new policy on local and regional governance that promises to decentralize much of what the 2006 Law on Local Governance centralized. The proposed structure would create over 200 self-governing municipalities (69 currently exist) and also establish village level administration. The traditional power stronghold of the regional governors, positions of authority amidst ambiguous accountability, would become more transparent in nomination and selection. This reform, should it be implemented, would offer local governments real budgetary power and their own tax base through property taxes. Without central government intervention, this would in practice create budgetary inequality between very wealthy and very poor regions. The municipal leadership would be elected, potentially cre-

ating competitive and accountable politics at the local level and possibly limiting the extent to which central governing elites can coopt provincial leaders.

The government likewise has indicated its intention to construct a system of universal healthcare, although the preliminary information offered is more aspirational than practical. Currently, good Georgian medical care costs far more than the average Georgian can pay. Many of means seek second opinions and difficult treatments outside of the country. Not only will a healthcare reform need to construct adequate medical infrastructure throughout the country, both in terms of well-trained personnel and equipment, but the reform will need to address public health critical needs, such as the rise of reported HIV-AIDS infections and continued prevalence of hepatitis and tuberculosis.

Georgian Dream: Potential and Reality

When assessing American politics, pundits have used the first one hundred days of a new administration to take its measure and assess the merits of policy concep-

tion and implementation. In Georgia, the first one hundred days have seen more elite competition than real policy plans to address the deep structural problems of the country. But Georgia is not the United States, which, even in the days of the Great Depression, had clear institutional structures with defined powers.

Few observers of Georgian politics thought that Bidzina Ivanishvili and the Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia coalition would have an easy time adapting to governance following the October 2012 election. The institutional framework of mandated cohabitation amidst a substantive executive power changeover meant that gridlock was likely and disagreement inevitable. Political haggling has exacerbated this structural condition, illustrated by the mutual animosity of Saakashvili and Ivanishvili. The elite-level exchanges, while sure to make locals sigh about “politics as usual” and frustrate observers eager for action, deserve attention. They betray, in part, a distrust of political competition and a rejection of the legitimacy of a powerful opposition, two factors critical for democratic development.

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Georgia—Another Painful Step Forward

By Tornike Sharashenidze, Tbilisi

Abstract

The landmark parliamentary elections of October 1 2012 won praise as a great victory of Georgian democracy. Despite the fact that Georgia scores better in terms of democratic transition and reforms than its post-Soviet neighbors, it had not passed the test of transferring power from one government to its opposition. Contrary to what many skeptics predicted, the country achieved this milestone on October 1. However the subsequent developments make clear that democratic transition in Georgia is far from complete.

The Background

The skeptics who questioned Georgia’s ability to carry out a peaceful, constitutional transfer of power pointed to the fact that the Saakashvili government made too many people unhappy and therefore feared leaving office. In this context, it would use all possible means to stay in power. The President proved these skeptics wrong by immediately admitting the defeat of his party (the United National Movement) in the elections. He also allowed Bidzina Ivanishvili’s victorious Georgian Dream coalition to form a new cabinet without any reservations.

But the skeptics turned out to be accurate about the masses of unhappy citizens that Saakashvili’s nine-year rule created. The Saakashvili era accomplished something other post-Soviet countries can still only dream about—eradicating corruption and introducing effective and transparent public services. But, despite these accomplishments, it failed to address such problems as poverty and mass unemployment; it violated private property rights; and abused power. Georgia’s streets became secure and free of crime, but the country’s prisons were overcrowded and prisoners (as revealed on the

eve of the elections) were often victims of torture and abuse.

Thus, for many Georgians, the elections of October 1 became a choice between order and liberty. The choice was especially stark for younger people who matured during the last decade and did not appreciate what Saakashvili had accomplished—they simply did not remember such thing as corruption, killings, robberies, power shortages, etc. Therefore they wanted much more than just order and the absence of crime.

But their choice did not necessarily guarantee a better life. The election campaign was aggressive and sometimes simply hysterical; it abounded with bitter mutual accusations and slanders that further polarized society. It was clear that the winner would try to concentrate as much power as possible and to marginalize the loser—not only because the loser was a resentful rival, but also because the loser had been demonized in the public eye and would have to be crushed.

Therefore despite the fact that the former authorities admitted defeat, the two rival forces found it extremely difficult to cooperate and even to cohabitate. Consequently, the Georgian Dream coalition started doing what had been expected of it—concentrating power and marginalizing the opposition. Since October 2013 the most frequently used terms in Georgia are: “the restoration of justice” (used by the winners), “political revenge” (used by the losers), and “cohabitation” (used by the Western mediators).

Justice vs. Revenge

The restoration of justice is something that Georgia cannot and should not avoid. Many people suffered under the former authorities. Under Saakashvili one could lose one’s job, business, freedom and sometimes even life under suspicious circumstances. What is even worse, such cases were not always investigated in a proper way, breeding further discontent among the public. Meanwhile, as petty crime and corruption was eradicated, suspicions grew that the ruling elite benefited considerably from dishonest deals. In fact there are grounds for launching investigations. Justice has to be restored and the authorities have to make exemplary cases demonstrating that no official, no matter how powerful, stands above the law. No one should escape responsibility for crimes committed to ensure that no one will dare to commit the same crimes in the future. The ruling coalition definitely has the moral advantage, which is legitimized not only by the masses of discontent citizens, but also by the fact that many senior officials from the former government (most importantly and symbolically the former Minister of Justice) fled the country immediately after the elections.

But the ruling coalition faces certain threats in this endeavor. As we know, the one who fights a dragon can easily become a dragon himself. The restoration of justice can breed new injustices if it is not done in a proper way. So far the new authorities demonstrate more commitment to legal procedures than their predecessors used to, but at the same time they give the impression of being overzealous and sometimes clumsy too. The clumsiness is visible not only in executive actions, but also in public statements. The new Georgian Foreign Minister declared that Saakashvili-era officials are “criminals and guilty,” which stirred bitter criticism in the Western press.¹ Too many former officials and even current parliamentarians from the opposition are being questioned and prosecuted, which allows Saakashvili’s team to question Ivanishvili’s true motives. Why is it so that only the United National Movement members and supporters are under investigation (including the likes of the current Tbilisi Mayor)? Does Ivanishvili aspire to restore justice or to crush the opposition? The most observant would say that Ivanishvili could aspire to achieve both of these goals.

At the same time, Ivanishvili cannot avoid one simple fact: those unhappy with the former regime demand revenge and their outcry cannot be easily ignored. Actually the masses of these discontented people have proved to be an effective tool for achieving political goals too. For example, the local government bodies are still controlled by the United National Movement, and since many citizens are unhappy about this fact, they tacitly are allowed by the central authorities to block the local offices and put the local officials under heavy pressure. This public pressure has resulted in the removal of United National Movement leaders in several municipalities. These events may look and sound outrageous since the elected officials should be allowed to serve their terms and no one has the right to interfere with that. But, on the other hand, the United National Movement no doubt would do the same if it faced opposition in local bodies—it would oust the opposition and maybe would do it much faster and even in more brutal ways. So when the United National Movement tries to rebuke the current authorities for non-democratic methods the answer is always the same: “you have no moral rights to question our actions, you did worse things.”

Hopefully, those who use this argument will realize sooner rather than later that ends do not justify means and that harassing former and sitting officials eventually may harm the country’s interests and undermine the process of democratic transition. The Georgian Dream

¹ http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/11/30/georgian_for_ign_minister_saakashvili_officials_are_criminals_and_guilty

Coalition may have won as a result of wide-spread discontent and so it has to “restore justice.” But how far should it go?

On February 8 the discontent masses clashed with opposition parliamentarians on the street and not a few people suffered injuries. The public saw the scenes of mass violence that evoked dreadful memories from the civil war. The developments in Georgia already bear dangerous signs of ochlocracy—the angry mobs enforce the law.

Ivanishvili himself could not fail to see this danger and soon after the dramatic clash, he initiated a dialogue between the two rival forces on the most pressing issues—such as presidential powers and the irreversibility of Georgia’s pro-Western course.² The presidential powers have become the subject of scrutiny in recent months. According to the current constitution, Saakashvili can fire the cabinet and dissolve the parliament. In practical terms, taking such a step hardly makes any sense because even if Saakashvili did so, he would have to conduct new parliamentary elections, which definitely would be won by the Georgian Dream, and probably by an even bigger margin. Besides, Saakashvili’s presidential term expires in October and so he can hardly threaten Ivanishvili’s position.

In effect, the United National Movement has lost and so far it is in free fall. However the ruling coalition is desperately trying to deprive Saakashvili of his remaining privileges. For this purpose, the coalition has tried to forge a constitutional majority by a variety of means. Most prominently, some parliamentarians have left the United National Movement faction, no doubt having been lured by the ruling coalition. Saakashvili’s teammates claim these defections were the result of either bribes or blackmail—something that could not make Georgia’s Western partners happy. Most probably the ruling coalition realized the dangerous consequences of those defections and it became the main reason for starting the dialogue. However the two sides still have not achieved compromise. Cohabitation—the term recently introduced to the Georgian political dictionary—so far has remained only a term, which hardly has anything to do with reality.

The Commonplace Realities

No matter how far the ruling coalition goes and what happens to the United National Movement, sooner or later average Georgians will ask themselves the perennial electoral question: “What about the economy?” The answer may not be very encouraging. The Georgian economy has staggered for the last year. Over the previ-

ous decade it has been driven mainly by Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), foreign assistance and the tourism industry. FDI fell in 2012³ ostensibly because of the election campaign and political instability. It still remains to be seen if FDI will rise in 2013. Most probably it will take some time given the still tense political situation. At the same time, the United National Movement blames the new authorities for neglecting Georgian tourism, a problem that can have disastrous consequences for the country. Indeed Saakashvili’s team itself has done a lot to rebuild and modernize Georgia’s sea and mountain resorts. But so far the new government has concentrated on the “restoration of justice” and the projects initiated by the United National Movement have been abandoned.

Is the Georgian Dream capable of solving the country’s economic problems? This may prove to be a much more important issue than restoring justice or reducing presidential powers.

For the last two decades Georgia has remained poor and even Saakashvili’s bold and quite successful reforms failed to achieve tangible results. The Georgian Dream made too many promises during the election campaign and the public has extremely high expectations. There were many people unhappy about Saakashvili’s regime but maybe there were even more people expecting the self-made billionaire Ivanishvili, famous for his charity activities, to fill the state’s coffers with gold and turn Georgia into a paradise,—dreams and expectations that hardly could be fulfilled.

Ivanishvili understands better than anyone in Georgia how to make a fortune and that providing charity is much easier than building the economy. He also must realize that not many Georgians can understand the economy as he does and that most Georgians expect miracles from his rule. Time can run out soon for him. People cannot be fed by circuses for long, bread has to be provided too and as soon as possible. Ostensibly Ivanishvili believes that bread, in the short-term, can be provided by renewing trade with Russia (Moscow imposed a trade embargo on Georgia in 2006, in the heyday of Saakashvili’s rule). This must be one of the reasons he is attempting to reconcile with Russia. The United National Movement is already ringing alarm bells by pointing to the country’s difficult economic situation.⁴ So far the new authorities have managed to calm the situation, but if they fail to stimulate the economy and create new jobs, disillusioned citizens may start looking for an alternative political force.

3 <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=25534&search>

4 <http://www.georgianews.ge/business/22046-on-brink-of-economic-crisis.html>

2 <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=25743&search=>

Given current reality, the United National Movement cannot be such an alternative. Unless the former ruling party manages to reinvent itself, it has very poor chances for returning to power, no matter how badly the Georgian Dream performs. But the events of 2012 have proven that with all of its shortcomings, Georgia is developing as a democracy and no political force or pol-

itician is indispensable (even a charismatic reformer like Saakashvili). If there is a need for a new political force, it will appear. Georgian politics is becoming more competitive—one of the encouraging consequences of 2012. Georgian democracy has advanced for the last decade slowly but irreversibly and the trend looks to continue, irreversibly and maybe even faster.

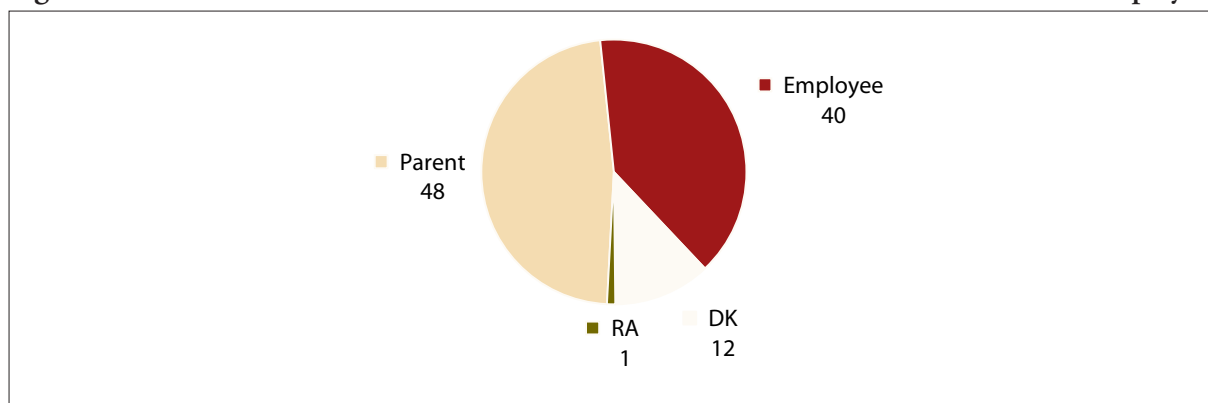
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OPINION POLL

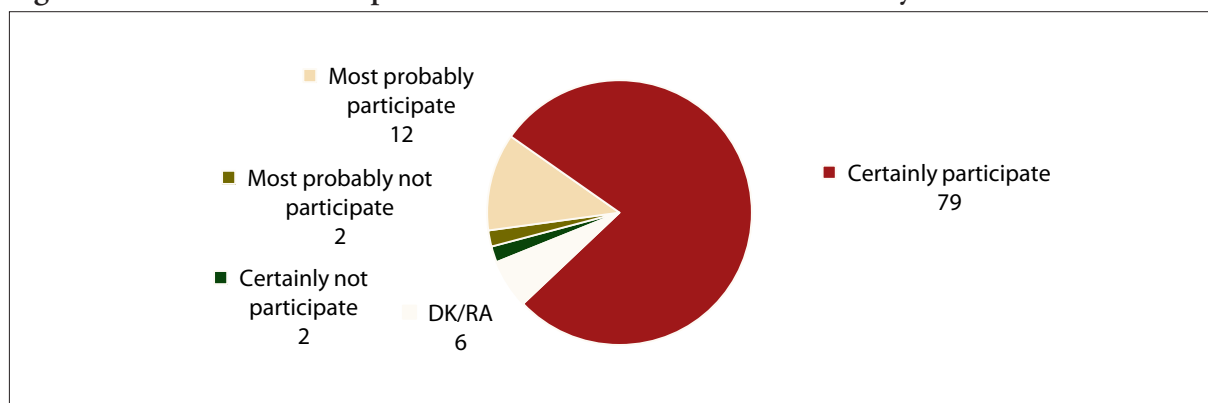
Attitudes Towards Government and Democracy After the Elections

Figure 1: Government Should Be Like A Parent Vs. Government Should Be Like An Employee

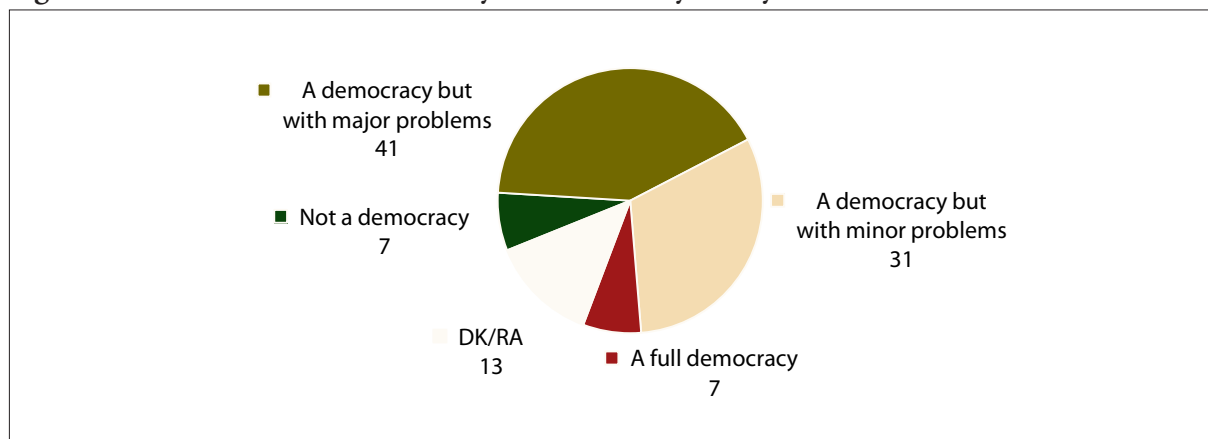


Source: Caucasus Barometer 2012, representative opinion poll conducted between October 26 and November 29, 2012

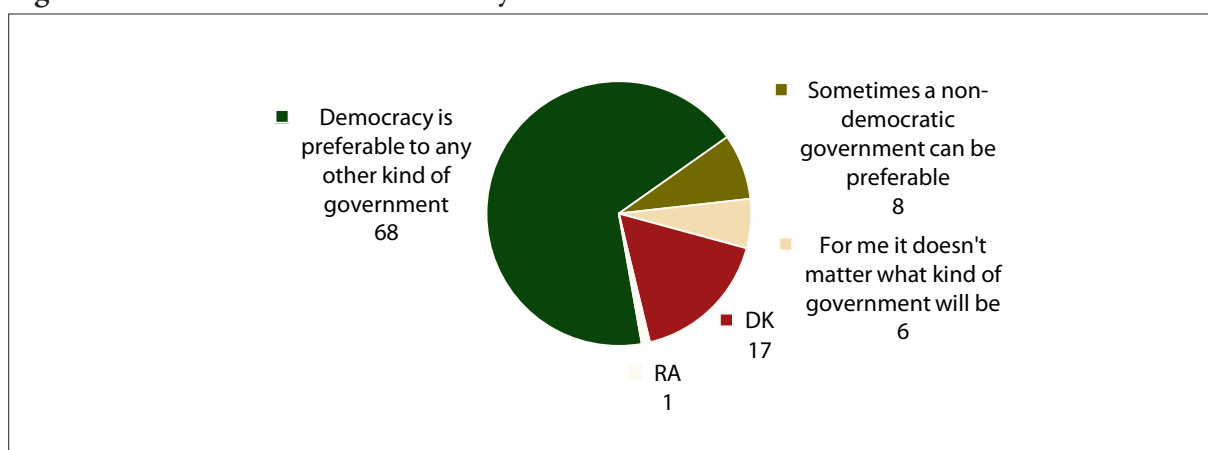
Figure 2: Would You Participate In Presidential Elections Next Sunday?



Source: Caucasus Barometer 2012, representative opinion poll conducted between October 26 and November 29, 2012

Figure 3: How Much of A Democracy Is the Country Today?

Source: Caucasus Barometer 2012, representative opinion poll conducted between October 26 and November 29, 2012

Figure 4: Attitude Towards Democracy

Source: Caucasus Barometer 2012, representative opinion poll conducted between October 26 and November 29, 2012

CHRONICLE

From 4 March to 8 March 2013

4 March 2013	Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili held talks in the state chancellery
5 March 2013	Hundreds of supporters of defeated presidential candidate Raffi Hovannisian rally in the streets of Yerevan
5 March 2013	Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili says he is in favor of not replacing direct presidential elections in Georgia
5 March 2013	Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili's fortune is estimated at 5.3 billion US dollars in the Forbes annual list
6 March 2013	Former Armenian presidential candidate Vardan Sedrakian is arrested in connection with the shooting of rival candidate Paruyr Hairikian on 31 January 2013
6 March 2013	The Russian state agency for consumer protection RosPotrebNadzor says that 35 wine and 4 mineral water producers in Georgia can apply for registration to resume the export of their products to the Russian market
6 March 2013	The Georgian government makes public the signing of a contract between the Georgian Ministry for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and a Brussels-based lobbying and public relations firm
6 March 2013	Azerbaijani officials say that an army conscript has died during military manoeuvres following two other conscript deaths in a week
7 March 2013	The Georgian parliament adopts a resolution drafted jointly by Georgian Dream and the United National Movement party that reiterates Georgia's commitment to join NATO and the EU
8 March 2013	Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Alasania visits Armenia and meets with newly re-elected Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan and Armenian Defense Minister Seyran Ohanyan to discuss cooperation between the two countries in the defence sector

Compiled by Lili Di Puppo

For the full chronicle since 2009 see www.laender-analysen.de/cad

ABOUT THE CAUCASUS ANALYTICAL DIGEST

Editors: Lili Di Pippo, Iris Kempe, Matthias Neumann, Robert Orttung, Natia Mestvirishvili, Jeronim Perović, Heiko Pleines

The Caucasus Analytical Digest (CAD) is a monthly internet publication jointly produced by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (<http://www.crrccenters.org/>), the Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen (www.forschungsstelle.uni-bremen.de/), the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies of the George Washington University (www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/), the Resource Security Institute in Washington, DC (resourcesecurityinstitute.org/) and the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich (www.css.ethz.ch) with support from the German Association for East European Studies (DGO). The Caucasus Analytical Digest analyzes the political, economic, and social situation in the three South Caucasus states of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia within the context of international and security dimensions of this region's development. CAD is supported by a grant from Robert Bosch Stiftung (<http://www.bosch-stiftung.de>).

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The Caucasus Analytical Digest is supported by:

Robert Bosch Stiftung

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Editors: Lili Di Pippo, Iris Kempe, Matthias Neumann, Robert Orttung, Natia Mestvirishvili, Jeronim Perović, Heiko Pleines

Layout: Cengiz Kibaroglu, Matthias Neumann, and Michael Clemens

ISSN 1867 9323 © 2013 by Forschungsstelle Osteuropa, Bremen and Center for Security Studies, Zürich

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