

Street protests, backed by EU and US, try to bring down Georgian government

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Violent protests have seized the capital city of the country of Georgia for the last week. Demonstrators, backed by the European Union and the United States, are working to drive the ruling Georgian Dream (GD) party from power.

The immediate spark for the street fighting outside of the parliament building in Tbilisi was an announcement by Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze that he is suspending talks with the European Union (EU) regarding his country's membership in the alliance. Kobakhidze, whose party recently won elections that the West claims, without proof, were falsified, said he was halting discussions due to Brussel's "constant blackmail and manipulation."

Earlier this year, the EU froze Georgia's ascension process and cut its financial support, after Tbilisi passed a "foreign agents law." Brussels insisted that the bill be rescinded. This was, however, the least of their demands.

The NATO powers want Georgia to cut all its ties to Moscow and become the next front in the war against Russia. The Georgian Dream party, despite repeatedly making clear that it wants to bring the country into the EU, has been labeled as "pro-Russian" by the imperialist powers because it has thus far resisted the total reduction of Georgia into a NATO client state cut off entirely from Russia's markets, which are key to its economy. Georgian Dream, which describes its opponents as a "global war party," won the election on the basis of its appeal to popular anti-war sentiments.

Estimates of the size of the anti-government demonstrations in Tbilisi have varied from day-to-day, with some news reports putting it as high as "hundreds of thousands" to, more commonly, "tens of thousands," and in the last couple days, "thousands." Demonstrators have been holding aloft EU and Georgian flags and signs that read, "Russian slaves." One banner read, "You suck." Demands that relate to the concerns of the working class—for jobs, higher wages, better working conditions, decent healthcare, and so forth—are absent.

The government is responding with force. Several hundred people have been arrested and dozens injured in ongoing clashes with riot police, who are using tear gas, water cannons, and truncheons to break up the crowds. Protesters have transformed fireworks into mini-missiles and are attacking the security services with them and Molotov cocktails. Oppositionists' homes and offices are being searched and several have been arrested. Some appear to have been beaten up in the process.

Prime Minister Kobakhidze declared the protests to be an attack

on the country's constitutional order, for which "EU politicians and their agents" are to blame. He insisted that his government would resist a Maidan-style attempt to overthrow it. Kobakhidze promised oppositionists would face "the full rigor of the law."

On Tuesday, the executive secretary of the Georgian Dream party, Mamuka Mdinardze, declared that 30 percent of those arrested in Tbilisi are foreigners, including individuals from Russia, the UK, the US, and the Netherlands.

At the center of the efforts to bring down the government is the former French diplomat and now Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili. She insists that the parliamentary vote held in October, which delivered a victory to Georgian Dream, was "illegitimate." Zourabichvili, who worked in Paris' diplomatic corps for three decades, including as its ambassador to Georgia, says that she will not vacate the presidential post when her constitutional authority expires on December 29. She claims that the legislature, which will elect the new president, has no popular mandate.

The United States and its allies are rapidly moving to isolate and strangle the Georgian government. Washington announced on November 30 that it is suspending the US-Georgia Strategic Partnership, halting its foreign assistance, and imposing sanctions. The EU, Canada, Germany, and the Baltic states are following suit.

Unencumbered by hypocrisy, in a November 28 statement that "strongly condemns Russia's systematic interference in Georgia's democratic processes," the European Parliament demanded that Tbilisi nullify its recent vote. "MEPs [Members of the European Parliament] want the elections re-run within a year under thorough international supervision and by an independent election administration."

A vote is only valid if it produces the result they want.

The reality or unreality of electoral fraud has nothing to do with why EU and US-allied forces are trying to push out the GD government. In nearby Moldova, Washington and Brussels just hailed the outcome of a highly undemocratic and suspect election that delivered a victory to pro-EU forces on the basis of a 1 percent margin.

When Georgia's ruling party won the parliamentary election in late October, garnering 54 percent of the vote in comparison to 38 percent split among various opposition parties, the West and its allies in Tbilisi immediately claimed there was evidence of vote rigging, ballot stuffing, intimidation at the polls, and so forth. The

basis of their allegations was reports by not-so-neutral election observers, local and international, who oppose Georgian Dream.

At that time, Georgia's state prosecutor's office, having launched an investigation into the matter, asked that President Zourabichvili, who was at the center of these allegations, provide them with the evidence she had. She replied, "It's not up to the president to provide proof of election fraud," adding, "I just want to say that my answer to the prosecutor's request that I present proofs to sustain my declarations on the results of the elections is not relevant because the prosecutor should be doing its own investigation."

This was an obvious set up. Zourabichvili had no evidence and knew that the investigators, appointed by a government that she says is illegitimate, would find little to none. Initially, the US and EU held back from saying that Georgian Dream had stolen the vote outright. Following the election of Donald Trump, however, they are anxious to ignite more fronts in the war against Russia before President Biden leaves office. This includes, in addition to Syria, the South Caucasus, which were once part of a unified nation, alongside Russia and other states, in the Soviet Union.

When the Communist Party bureaucrats that ruled the Soviet Union decided to dissolve it in 1991 and turn themselves into capitalist oligarchs, the appetites of American and European imperialism were whet. The South Caucasus sit astride trade routes that are central to the US' struggle to destroy Russia, China, and Iran.

In a recent study, the Institute of War noted that Georgia is critical to securing the "Middle Corridor," a trade route from Central Asia to Europe that bypasses Russia and drastically reduces transit times. "Cargo volumes through this corridor increased by nearly 65 percent in early 2023, surpassing one million tons," observed the Institute. "Georgia has emerged as a pivotal hub in this network, playing a vital role in transporting oil, gas, and goods along the Middle Corridor."

For the imperialist powers, it is now time to bring Georgia to heel. Despite years of cutting deals with the EU, the United States, and NATO, Georgian Dream is inadequate. Thus, the country's "opposition" has been activated. Its leaders, several of whom were educated in elite universities in the US, have long histories in the country's previous violent, anti-democratic, right-wing governments, which gutted social spending and privatized services, making Georgia by 2008 "the leading economic reformer in the world," according to the World Bank.

Running around yelling about the "European path" and "democracy," they appeal to the grasping sentiments of better-off layers in the major cities, whom often have personal and financial ties to EU and American institutions via business, education, or one of Georgia's numerous "civil society" organizations. They find a further base of support among some sections of youth. Many of Georgia's expensive, private universities have shut down in support of the demonstrations.

Two articles on the website of Civil.ge, which is funded by the US National Endowment for Democracy, highlight the political outlook of these layers. The first fawns over "Georgia's libertarian youth," who combine advocacy for the legalization of drugs with support for "right-wing economics and minimal government

intervention." Forming groups like the Ayn Rand Center, Institute for Individual Liberty, and "Georgia's right-wing youth party" Girchi, they are hostile to, in the words of one representative, the idea that "the 'Nanny State' should provide everything for us."

The second article published by the US government-sponsored website promotes the "new generation of leftist youth," who insist, according to one activist, that "merging class and national interests is the only way forward." Behind a hodge-podge of references to feminism, labor rights, environmental protection, anti-authoritarianism, social justice, etc., lies the goal of giving Georgian nationalism a left-wing coloration. The ultimate aim is to drown any genuine socialist sentiment that emerges among young people in a cesspool of political reaction. The group highlighted in the piece, Khma, has some association with the Pabloite United Secretariat, whose political life has been dedicated to this very cause.

To the extent that the working class of Georgia is drawn to the anti-government demonstrations, it is due to a combination of illusions and delusions in what a "European future" means and misdirected, albeit well-founded, anger at the not-so-dreamy reality that Georgian Dream has delivered. But if workers allow themselves to be swept along by the US and EU-directed regime change operation in Tbilisi, they will discover the consequences of the "European path"—savaged living standards and a country transformed into a bombed-out parking lot.

The Georgian Dream party is no alternative. It represents a layer of Georgia's ruling class which believes that its interests will be best served by finding some sort of balance between Russia and the West. Unable to make any genuine popular appeal—to call the working class onto the streets in opposition to the machinations of the imperialists—they resort to police brutality to secure their hold on power. The state violence unleashed against the opposition in Tbilisi today will be directed against the workers tomorrow as soon as they express their own demands.

The challenge that faces the working class of Georgia, and all of the former Soviet Union, is that of casting aside the entirety of the Stalinist and post-Soviet political refuse weighing upon them. Not Washington, not the Kremlin, not the imperialist stooges in Tbilisi, not the politicians of the Georgian Dream party can stop global war or deliver the social, political, and economic rights to which the working masses are absolutely entitled. These aims can only be won on the basis of a politically independent fight, led by the working class and its own party, for socialist internationalism.



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