

GEORGIA - WATCHLIST

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SITUATION¹

In November 2003, fraudulent parliamentary elections triggered public protests that ended in the resignation of President Eduard Shevardnadze and brought to power a new generation of Georgian politicians led by Mikheil Saakashvili. The new government embarked on a reform program focused on rooting out corruption and developing effective state institutions. However, these achievements have been accompanied by certain setbacks in the democratic balance of power. Three years after the revolution, there is still no credible opposition to Saakashvili's United National Movement party. Changes to the Georgian Constitution in February 2004 strengthened the executive vis-à-vis the parliament, while the judiciary rarely makes decisions that run counter to the will of the executive. Independent media and civil society, though often openly critical of the government, have become less influential and may avoid sensitive topics. Still, there have been important steps in democratic development, especially with regard to elections, which have been much fairer and better organized.

Georgia's political system secures major civil and political rights and provides for political pluralism and meaningful expression of the citizens' will. However, the government's numerous imbalances, most notably the domination of the executive branch over all other state agencies, leads to authoritarian tendencies in different spheres of public life. The effectiveness of the executive government has increased considerably in the last three years, especially in attracting public revenue and providing public goods.

MOST RECENT TRENDS

Presidential and parliamentary elections in 2004, as well as by-elections to the Georgian Parliament in the fall of 2004 and fall of 2005, were considered generally free and fair. Some problems persist, such as incomplete voter lists and the use of state administrative resources by the party in government. Since March 2006 the weakened opposition has been boycotting parliament in protest at heavy-handed tactics by the ruling party.

Important progress has been made in combating torture and curbing violence against religious minorities. However, Human Rights Watch and other groups have registered concern about signs of regression within security forces.

The dispute over the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia has caused tensions with Russia to surge. In the wake of Georgia's Sep. 26 arrest of four Russian soldiers for spying, Russia cut transport and postal links indefinitely, even after the soldiers were released. This crisis places severe strain on Georgia's economy as well as its fragile institutions and could constrain democratic development if not resolved.

¹ Principal author: Freedom House

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STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

World Bank Institute Governance Indicators 2005	Score	Key
Voice and Accountability	39.1	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak voice and accountability; higher value indicates strong voice and account)
Political Stability and Absence of Violence	24.1	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak political stability and high violence; higher value indicates opposite)
Government Effectiveness	37.8	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak government effectiveness; higher value indicates strong govt. effectiveness)
Regulatory Quality	30.7	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak regulatory quality; higher value indicates strong regulatory quality)
Rule of Law	23.7	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak rule of law; higher value indicates strong rule of law)
Control of Corruption	38.4	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak control of corruption; higher value indicates strong control of corruption)

Freedom House: Freedom in the World 2007	Score	Key
Political Rights	3	Range 1-7 (Lower value indicates good system of political rights; higher value indicates bad system political rights)
Civil Liberties	3	Range 1-7 (Lower value indicates good system of civil liberties; higher value indicates bad system civil liberties)
Status	PF	3 Categories: F (Free); PF (Partly Free); NF (Not Free)

Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006	Score	Key
Stateness	5.3	Range 0-10 (Lower value indicates negative democratic development; higher value indicates positive democratic development)
Political Participation	7.5	
Rule of Law	6.5	
Stability of Democratic Institutions	7.0	
Political and Social Integration	4.3	
Total Score Political Transformation	6.10	Range 0-10 (Lower value indicates negative democratic development; higher value indicates positive democratic development) / Arrow shows trend in democratic development (↑Improved; ↓Worsened)
Total Score Political Management	5.91	Range 0-10 (Lower value indicates lower quality of political management; higher value indicates higher quality of political management)

Corruption Perceptions Index 2006	Score	Key
Total Score	2.8	Range 0-10 (lower value indicates high corruption; higher value indicates lower values of corruption)