



GEORGIA

Capital
(and largest city) Tbilisi, 41°43'N 44°47'E

Official languages Georgian

Government **Unitary semi-presidential republic**
– President Mikheil Saakashvili
– Prime Minister Nikoloz Gilauri

Independence from the Soviet Union

Declared 9 April, 1991
Finalised 25 December, 1991

Political Parties (elections 2008)

Governing Party
United National Movement –
for Victorious Georgia (119 seats)
Electoral Bloc The Joint Opposition (17 seats)*
Christian-Democrats (6 seats)
Labour Party (6 seats)**
Party of Republicans (2 seats)***

Total: 150

Total votes 1,773,809
Total registered voters: 3,458,020

*The joint opposition consisted of 8 parties: New Rights, Conservative Party, Georgia's Way, Freedom Party, We On Our Own, Party of People, Movement for a United Georgia and National Forum. Six individual opposition members who initially refused to take up their seats have since done so.

**Formally part of parliament, accepted seats, yet boycotts parliamentary sessions.

***The Republican candidates nominated for the Tsageri and Kazbegi districts were elected to Parliament but were not official party members.

State of Democracy Georgia

Georgia as a modern nation state en route to democracy is less than fifteen years old. Its new political institutions started to emerge in the late 1980s, in the twilight of the weakened Soviet Union. The first multi-party elections were held in 1990, and most of Georgia's modern political parties ran for the first time in these elections. More recently, opposition to the corrupt, authoritarian rule of President Shevardnadze led to the 2003 Rose Revolution. Georgia's current ruling party, the United National Movement (UNM) was part of the protest movements at that time.

Political Landscape

At present, Georgia's political landscape is characterised by deep-rooted political polarisation. The governing party UNM and the opposition parties are at odds over the division of power. As a result, after the 2008 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections a number of opposition parliamentarians chose not take up their seats in Georgia's parliament, the Sak'art'velos Parlamenti. Together with non-parliamentary parties and parts of civil society they instead formed an extra-parliamentary oppositional group. The 2010 local government elections, and the parliamentary and presidential elections (in 2012 and 2013, respectively), will be important new testing grounds for the division of power.

Constitutional Reform

Georgia is in the midst of a constitutional reform process. The constitutional debate is focused on the balance of powers and on the question of whether to move from a presidential to a semi-presidential, parliamentary or monarchical system. The constitutional reform process is expected to come to a conclusion in 2010 and its outcomes will significantly impact upon Georgia's future political system. Electoral reforms relating to local elections were recently finalised. Major changes in this context include the division between proportional and single-mandate districts and the introduction of direct elections for the position of mayor in the capital, Tbilisi.

Border Tensions

In August 2008 Georgia and Russia fought a short war over the two secessionist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. While border disruptions have since continued, a renewed outbreak of large-scale violence between Russia and Georgia is deemed unlikely. Nevertheless, although major hostilities have ended, Georgia's territorial situation remains fragile.

About NIMD

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) is a democracy assistance organisation of political parties in The Netherlands for political parties in young democracies. Currently working with more than 150 political parties from 16 programme countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe, NIMD supports:

1. Joint initiatives by parties to improve the democratic system in their country;
2. The institutional development of political parties; and
3. Efforts to improve relations between political parties, civil society and the media.

NIMD Georgia Programme 2006-2008

The Political Landscape of Georgia

As a result of an interactive self-assessment on the part of the Georgian political parties, *The political landscape of Georgia – Political Parties: Achievements, Challenges and Prospects*, was published in 2006. The book presented an overview of the needs of political parties in Georgia and provided recommendations to address these needs. Subsequently a multi-annual programme in support of the Georgian political parties was jointly set up by NIMD, the Caucasus Institute for Peace Development and Democracy (CIPDD) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE-ODIHR).

Party Strengthening and Interparty Dialogue

From 2006-2008 the six major political parties at the time undertook various joint initiatives to strengthen their internal capacities. A pool of internal party trainers was created through a series of 'train the trainers' sessions, and a 'VoteMatch' project assisted the parties to formulate their party platforms in the lead-up to the 2008 elections. Within the context of intense polarisation of political forces, the programme con-

tributed to maintaining channels of interparty communication through regular meetings between party leaders and international study tours.

NIMD Georgia Programme 2009-2010

Restart

Due to the war with Russia, and OSCE's departure from Georgia, the NIMD-CIPDD-OSCE/ODIHR programme came to a halt in the summer of 2008. Since the end of 2009, NIMD has restarted its activities in Georgia, without its former programme partners. NIMD's programmatic outlook for 2009-2010 centers on three major issues:

Constitutional reform process

A public survey was initiated and will be published and regional debates on constitutional reform will be organised throughout Georgia in 2010. All Georgian political parties are encouraged to formulate their viewpoints with regard to key constitutional issues. A publication assembling and assessing different viewpoints on the constitution by all political parties, civil society and the constitutional commission is expected in 2010.

Institutionalisation of political parties

Strategic planning sessions with the political parties will be conducted in the course of 2010, centering on various political party needs to be addressed, such as issues pertaining party identity, party organisation and institutionalisation, human resource management and so on.

Interparty dialogue

With the aim of reducing tensions, and increasing confidence between Georgian political parties, continuous efforts will be made to facilitate dialogue and information sharing between political parties.



In the run-up to the parliamentary elections in May 2008, the NIMD programme in Georgia helped political parties define their programme using VoteMatch, an online voting tool developed by the Dutch Institute for Political Participation (IPP).

Stakeholders

1. Our Country Partner

2006-2008: CIPDD, Tbilisi, Georgia.
2009 – present: NIMD Office Tbilisi, Georgia.

2. Key national partners

Caucasus Research Resource Centre (CRRC)

3. Key international partners

National Democratic Institute (NDI)
Council of Europe (COE)
European Commission (EC)
European Union Special Representative (EUSR)
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

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