



Georgia — Va-PoReg Country Report

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09/12/1801 Start Part of Other Country [of Russia]: In 1008, the Kingdom of Georgia was established. When Russian rule began in the early nineteenth century, Georgia was still ruled by royal families of various Georgian states. However, these were deposed by Russia and the country was under the rule of the Russian Empire, after the decree of incorporation of the Kingdom into the Russian Empire, was confirmed by Tsar Alexander on 09/12/1801.¹

11/07/1917 Continuation as Part of Other Country [of Russia, Communist Ideocracy]: On this date the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) was proclaimed.

04/22/1918 End Part of Other Country [of Russia, Communist Ideocracy]/Start Part of Other Country [of TDFR]: The Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (TDFR) existed briefly in the Caucasus, from 04/22/1918 to 05/28/1918. It encompassed the majority of the modern territories of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, along with portions of Russia and the Ottoman Empire. However, the republic's existence was short-lived, as Georgia declared independence after just a month, followed closely by Armenia and Azerbaijan.²

05/26/1918 End Part of Other Country [of TDFR]/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: On this date, Georgia declared itself the Democratic Republic of Georgia (DRG) and became independent.³ As a result of the February Revolution in Russia, the tsarist regime was also overthrown in Georgia. To protect the country from invasion by the Ottoman Empire, the Georgian National Assembly entered into negotiations with Germany. Germany was granted privileges for the exploitation of important raw materials and, in return, stationed soldiers to protect the country from the Ottoman Empire.⁴ Universal suffrage was introduced in 1919.

02/14[-16]/1919 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Electoral Democracy: On this date, the first democratic elections for parliament were held. The suffrage was universal.⁵ The Social-Democratic Party won an overwhelming majority in the parliament (with 83% of the vote) and formed a one-party government. Georgia enacted a constitution, established state institutions, and implemented antidiscrimination laws safeguarding the rights of ethnic and religious minorities. Furthermore, it actively promoted women's rights, adopted a multi-party governmental system, and fostered political discourse, thereby contributing to the advancement of political thought and the cultivation of a culture of debate.⁶ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period. LIED and V-Dem do not provide data for Georgia during this period. The DRG was originally under the "protection" of the German Empire, but following Germany's defeat in World War I, British troops were deployed to the country to prevent a potential Bolshevik invasion. However, the British had to withdraw in 1920 due to the Treaty of Moscow, which stipulated that Russia would recognize Georgia's independence on the condition that the DRG refrained from allowing any forces that were hostile to Russia's interests to operate within its borders.⁷

02/25/1921 End Electoral Democracy/Start Part of Other Country [of Russia, Communist Ideocracy]: Following a one-week offensive by the Red Army, Tbilisi was captured by the Bolsheviks on 02/25/1921. Georgian Bolsheviks assumed control of the country and declared the establishment of the Georgian SSR. On 03/12/1922, the Georgian SSR became part of the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic

(TSFSR), along with the Armenian SSR and the Azerbaijan SSR. Although there were some minor skirmishes between Bolshevik troops and the Georgian Army in Western Georgia, the government of the Georgian Democratic Republic was eventually forced into exile by March 1921. One year later, on 03/02/1922, the first constitution of Soviet Georgia was ratified.⁸

12/30/1922 Continuation as Part of Other Country [of USSR, Communist Ideocracy]: On this date, the TSFSR was incorporated into the USSR. On 12/05/1936, the TSFSR was dissolved, and the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic was established. Under Soviet rule, Land was collectivized, private property eliminated, and nationalization extended to industry, education, and the media. While nominally sovereign, Georgia's Communist Party was directly managed from Moscow. The First Secretary held real authority, but was always subject to Moscow's intervention. Soviet authorities treated Georgia's powerful church, old nobility, and traditional clans as threats to Communist ideology, suppressing religion and "bourgeois nationalism".⁹ Repression in Georgia was particularly brutal during the Stalinist era. The August Uprising from 08/28/1924 to 09/05/1924, a major anti-Soviet revolt by nationalists and Social Democrats, was crushed with mass executions and the deportation of tens of thousands to Siberia.¹⁰ Between 08/19/1936 and 11/17/1938, Georgia was affected by the Great Purge, with many Georgian intellectuals and party officials executed or sent to the Gulag. In 1951 and 1952, a series of criminal cases was fabricated, on the personal order of Joseph Stalin, to defame Mingrelian members of the Georgian SSR Communist Party as collaborators with the Western powers.¹¹ Resistance against communist rule persisted throughout the Soviet period. Despite severe repression, Georgian intellectuals, writers, and underground organizations kept nationalist sentiment alive, with periodic waves of student unrest and secret networks of dissidents. Starting on 03/09/1956, the Georgian Communist Party profited off Khrushchev's decentralization program and expanded their regional power. On 04/09/1989, Soviet troops broke up a peaceful demonstration in Tbilisi, prompting a radicalization of Georgian politics toward preferring independence over Soviet unity. On 11/18/1989 all union laws were declared legally invalid by the Georgian SSR Supreme Soviet, followed by the nullification of all previous treaties conducted by the RSFSR and the declaration of the protection of Georgian state sovereignty on 03/09/1989. Democratic parliamentary elections were held on 10/28/1990. Georgia participated in the boycott of the union-wide preservation referendum in 03/1991. On 03/31/1991, Georgia held a referendum on the restoration of its independence, which gained a majority in favor of the act.¹²

04/09/1991 End Part of Other Country [of USSR, Communist Ideocracy]/Start Electoral Autocracy [as independent country]: On 05/26/1991 presidential elections were held. Zviad Gamsakhurdia and the Round Table-Free Georgia party emerged as victors.¹³ On 9/16/1991, the arrest of key opposition leaders and the suppression of demonstrators in 9/1991 mark the pivotal moment when the government of Zvia Gamsakhurdia transitioned from a relatively democratic state to an autocratic regime (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 61).¹⁴ In a Human Rights Watch report it was noted, that Gamsakhurdia has accumulated nearly dictatorial powers (Denber 1992). Between 12/21/1991 and 01/06/1992, there was a violent overthrow of the civilian government by oppositional militia forces that stormed the capital and forced Gamsakhurdia to flee. (Zurcher 2007: 126-27, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 61).¹⁵ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. The 1991 election is categorized as not competitive by LIED. V-Dem's EF&FI scores elections freedom and fairness as ambiguous while their CEI scores them as not really clean. As classified by FH for this regime period, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. In addition, political liberties were absent (LIED). V-Dem's PCLI declares their presence as ambiguous. As per Polity5's classification, the executive experienced moderate limitations on authority, placing it in the second intermediate category. For 1991, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. For 1992, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are limited. At the same time, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive.

01/02/1992 End Electoral Autocracy/Start Military Autocracy: On this date, Georgia underwent a violent regime breakdown that occupies a borderline position between rebellion and military coup. The overthrow of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia began with armed uprisings in Tbilisi, led not only by irregular paramilitary formations such as Jaba Ioseliani's Mkhedrioni but also by state forces under Tengiz Kitovani, commander of the National Guard, in alliance with former Prime Minister Tengiz Sigua. The fighting, which included heavy shelling of government buildings, bore many features of an armed rebellion. However, the decisive role of the National Guard, the forcible removal of the incumbent president, and the immediate creation of a Military Council that assumed executive authority point more strongly toward a military coup. The Council dissolved parliament, abolished the constitution, and exercised effective control over the state. Because the seizure of power was consolidated by military leaders and resulted in junta rule, this episode is best coded in Va-PoReg as a military coup leading to the establishment of a military autocracy.¹⁶

03/10/1992 End Military Autocracy/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: On this date the Military Council replaced itself by the State Council under the leadership of Eduard Shevardnadze, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union. He was appointed as the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, which made him *de facto* president.¹⁷ There was no electoral legitimacy, therefore, we classify this period as transitional. Per FH's evaluation for this regime period, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. In 1992 political liberties are coded as absent by LIED and as ambiguous by V-Dem's PCLI.

10/11/1992 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Electoral Autocracy: On this date general elections were held. The parliament and the chairman of parliament, as *de facto* head of state, were elected. Shevardnadze was the only candidate for that office.¹⁸ Presidential elections were not held again until 1995.¹⁹ In the aftermath, the OSCE concluded that the parliamentary and presidential elections generally transpired without violence or significant mishaps.²⁰ Some opposition members were arrested, but nonetheless the opposition was able to compete. Although media coverage was not evenly distributed, a broad public discussion took place.²¹ Shevardnadze was able to secure a second term in the presidential elections 2000. Election observer Mission reported irregularities like ballot stuffing and non-transparent vote counting. Furthermore, the media coverage was not balanced and favored Shevardnadze and his Party Union Citizens of Georgia.²² Shevardnadze was confident that he could secure electoral victories or manipulate the results if deemed necessary to ensure his triumph (Kandelaki 2006). As for Shevardnadze's political powers as president, they are often referred to as superpresidentialism (Devdariani 2011). At the same time, civil liberties were generally permitted and respected. Per FH's evaluation for the period until 1995, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. In 1996 the country is classified as partly free with a score of 8, which we categorize as rather not free. Between 1997 and 1999 a score of 6 to 7 for the assessed regime period designates the country as partly free, which aligns with our interpretation of rather free. For the remaining period Georgia is classified as partly free with a score of 8, which we categorize as rather not free. Regarding the political liberties they were classified as absent (LIED). V-Dem's PCLI declares them as somewhat present. Overall, especially after 2001 Shevardnadze "entertained the idea of 'managed democracy'" (Kandelaki 2006, Chin/Wright/Carter 2021a). Overall, this period is a borderline case between an electoral hybrid regime and an electoral autocracy. The quality of elections was very volatile, and Shevardnadze was even missing an official electoral mandate the first three years. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. During this period elections are categorized as not competitive by LIED. V-Dem's EF&FI scores their freedom and fairness as ambiguous while their CEI scores them as not really clean. Since 1995, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was significantly constrained by institutional checks during this time. For the years 1993 and 1994, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. From 1995 to 1997, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that

legislative constraints on the executive were also limited. From 1998 to 2002, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited. the period from 1992 to 2003 is best characterized as a borderline case leaning toward electoral autocracy. The decisive reasons are the volatility and manipulation of elections, the lack of a direct presidential mandate in the first years, and Shevardnadze's reliance on what Kandelaki described as "managed democracy." At the same time, the persistence of pluralist elements and partial respect for civil liberties place Georgia closer to the boundary than many straightforward electoral autocracies.

11/23/2003 End Electoral Autocracy/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date, the Rose Revolution culminated on this date after weeks of massive, peaceful protests against the results of the parliamentary elections held on 11/02/2003. These elections were widely condemned by domestic and international observers due to credible allegations of systemic fraud, including ballot stuffing and the manipulation of voter lists, which favored President Eduard Shevardnadze's party. The protests were led by a trio of opposition leaders: Mikheil Saakashvili, Zurab Zhvania, and the speaker of the outgoing parliament, Nino Burjanadze. The movement reached its climax on 11/22, when demonstrators, led by Saakashvili holding a rose, peacefully stormed the parliament building during its opening session, forcing Shevardnadze to flee. Despite declaring a state of emergency, Shevardnadze lost the support of the military and police, who refused orders to use force against the protesters. On 11/23/2003, mostly peaceful opposition protesters took to the presidential palace and forced Shevardnadze to step down after sham elections. The speaker of the house Burjanadze was appointed acting president in the wake of the revolt. Protests ultimately led to Shevardnadze's resignation and the transfer of power to an opposition interim president. The regime went directly from Electoral Autocracy to Electoral Hybrid Regime because the electoral legitimation pattern continued through existing parliamentary institutions. No institutional collapse occurred that would require Non-Electoral Transitional classification. The transfer of power to an opposition-led interim government paved the way for new, fairer presidential elections on 03/28/2004, which were won by Saakashvili from the National Movement-Democrats (Jones 2009: 314-37, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 61).²³ Although the Rose Revolution in 2003 marked a major liberalizing moment, the post-revolutionary regime under Mikheil Saakashvili was according to our classification an electoral hybrid regime due to systemic deficiencies in the separation of powers, media pluralism, and executive constraints. For 2003 and 2004, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. A preliminary report by an election observation mission from the Organization for Security and Development in Europe praised the democratic character of the elections. Nevertheless, it was highlighted that events in the post-election period, such as irregularities during result tabulation, questionable voter turnout, mishandling of certain complaints, and the selective annulment of election results, presented a challenge to the electoral cleanliness in specific districts.²⁴ On 01/05/2008, Mikheil Saakashvili was re-elected president with 53.47% of the vote. According to the OSCE election observation mission, this was "the first genuinely competitive post-independence presidential election" and was "in essence consistent with most OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards for democratic elections." At the same time, the mission emphasized that the process "revealed significant challenges that need to be addressed urgently,"²⁵ underscoring persistent concerns about media access, the use of administrative resources, and the blurred line between state and ruling party. The 2008 parliamentary and presidential elections still fell short of Va-PoReg's standards required for classification as an electoral democracy. Until 2012, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was significantly constrained by institutional checks during this time. Per FH, from 2004 to 2006, the country scores between 6 and 7, categorized as partly free, which we interpret as rather free. Between 2007 and 2009 the country is partly free with a score of 8 according to FH, which we interpret as rather not free. Overall, Georgia under Mikheil Saakashvili represents a borderline case between an electoral democracy and an electoral hybrid regime. While elections were competitive and certain institutional and societal checks remained operative, persistent executive dominance and unequal conditions for opposition parties positioned the regime at the upper edge of

the hybrid spectrum.

10/01/2012 End Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start Electoral Democracy: The parliamentary elections on this date marked a decisive turning point in Georgia's regime trajectory. For the first time since independence, an opposition coalition, the Georgian Dream alliance led by Bidzina Ivanishvili, defeated the incumbent United National Movement of President Mikheil Saakashvili. The election was assessed by international observers as genuinely competitive and overall free and fair, despite some irregularities. Crucially, the peaceful transfer of power from the ruling party to the opposition demonstrated that electoral competition could credibly produce alternation in government. Political rights and civil liberties, while imperfect, were sufficiently safeguarded to warrant reclassification from an electoral hybrid regime to an electoral democracy. The key difference from earlier elections lay in the combination of broad suffrage, meaningful pluralism, and the actual realization of alternation in executive power, which together consolidated the regime's status as a democracy, albeit one with notable deficiencies. According to Tonino Picula, an electoral observer from the OSCE, their monitors observed an escalating political polarization within the country. They expressed specific apprehension regarding the State Audit Office's utilization of extensive discretionary powers to scrutinize the legality of individual or party expenditures. The office was noted for making dubious decisions and imposing severe penalties without clear or transparent guidelines. The fines imposed were deemed disproportionate and seemed to be applied selectively, primarily targeting one political entity.²⁶ On 10/08/2016 parliamentary elections were held. International observers from the OSCE, NATO, Council of Europe and European Parliament said the elections "were competitive, well-administered and fundamental freedoms were generally respected".²⁷ However, there were also more critical voices.²⁸ The country's political landscape, policy decisions, and media environment are influenced by oligarchs, leading to a compromise in the rule of law due to politicization. The protection of civil liberties is inconsistently maintained.²⁹ Georgia submitted its application for EU membership on 03/03/2022, shortly after the commencement of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. On 12/14/2023, the European Council awarded Georgia the status of EU Candidate.³⁰ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. For this period, LIED has categorized elections as competitive. V-Dem's EF&FI scores them as somewhat free and fair while their CEI fluctuates between scoring their electoral cleanliness as ambiguous and somewhat clean. From 2010 onward a FH score of 6 to 7 designates the country as partly free, which aligns with our interpretation of rather free. Besides, according to LIED political liberties remain absent. Whereas V-Dem's PCLI underlines a somewhat presence until 2012 and a full presence from 2013 onwards. Since 2013, based on Polity5's evaluation, the executive's power was limited to a degree between substantial constraints and parity with other institutions, fitting Intermediate Category 3. From 2005 to 2012, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. For the year 2018, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive. For the rest of the regime period, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive.

10/26/2024 End Electoral Democracy/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date, parliamentary elections were held in which the ruling Georgian Dream party secured a majority amid widespread accusations of irregularities (vote-buying, intimidation).³¹ These elections were followed by massive public protests rejecting both the parliamentary and subsequent presidential election results. On 12/14/2024, Mikheil Kavelashvili was elected president by an Electoral College, a vote that many domestic and international actors deemed illegitimate. Although elections continue, competition among multiple parties persists; opposition remains active though under pressure. The cumulative evidence warrants coding Georgia as an electoral hybrid regime. According to FH, for the assessed regime period, the country is categorized as partly free with a score of 8, which corresponds to our interpretation of rather not free. V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are limited. At the same time, V-Dem's LCE indicates that legislative constraints on the executive are moderate. Based on V-Dem's PCLI, political civil liberties are ambiguous. Furthermore,

according to V-Dem's CEI, the election were not really clean.

Electoral Hybrid Regime as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Slider 1995, Hale 2005, Kuchinka-Lančava/Grotz 2001)

Notes

- ¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia_within_the_Russian_Empire
- ² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcaucasian_Democratic_Federative_Republic
- ³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Republic_of_Georgia
- ⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Georgia_\(country\)#Democratic_Republic_of_Georgia_\(1918%E2%80%931921\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Georgia_(country)#Democratic_Republic_of_Georgia_(1918%E2%80%931921))
- ⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37
- ⁶ <https://archive.gov.ge/en/sakartelos-pirveli-demokratiuli-respublika>
- ⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Republic_of_Georgia
- ⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgian_Soviet_Socialist_Republic
- ⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgian_Soviet_Socialist_Republic
- ¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Uprising
- ¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mingrelian_affair
- ¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgian_Soviet_Socialist_Republic
- ¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1991_Georgian_presidential_election
- ¹⁴ <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-09-18-mn-2258-story.html>;
<https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/georgia/politics-gamsakhurdia.htm>
- ¹⁵ <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/georgia/politics-gamsakhurdia.htm>;
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1991%E2%80%931992_Georgian_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat#
- ¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1991%E2%80%931992_Georgian_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat#
- ¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1991%E2%80%931992_Georgian_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat#After_the_Coup;
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_Council_\(Georgia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_Council_(Georgia)); https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eduard_Shevardnadze#
- ¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1992_Georgian_general_election
- ¹⁹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eduard_Shevardnadze#President_of_Georgia_\(1995%E2%80%932003\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eduard_Shevardnadze#President_of_Georgia_(1995%E2%80%932003));
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1995_Georgian_presidential_election
- ²⁰ <https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/election-observation/election-observation-statements/georgia/statements-11/2073-1995-parliamentary-and-presidential/file>
- ²¹ <https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/election-observation/election-observation-statements/georgia/statements-11/2073-1995-parliamentary-and-presidential/file>
- ²² <https://www.csce.gov/publications/report-presidential-election-georgia/>
- ²³ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/9/17822.pdf>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose_Revolution;
<https://www.rferl.org/a/1105091.html>
- ²⁴ <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/57860>
- ²⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008_Georgian_presidential_election
- ²⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012_Georgian_parliamentary_election
- ²⁷ <https://sg.news.yahoo.com/ruling-party-set-win-georgia-vote-early-results-024041570.html>
- ²⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_Georgian_parliamentary_election
- ²⁹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/georgia/freedom-world/2022>
- ³⁰ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia_\(country\)#History](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia_(country)#History)
- ³¹ <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/584029>; <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/report/georgia/october-2024>;
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