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# Georgia: Is the West losing another battle against Russian influence?



Georgia, a country often described as a "beacon of democracy" in the Caucasus, is facing the most brutal confrontation between the government and the opposition in the last twenty years.

The **protests** in Georgia, which began in late October 2024, have come to symbolise a broader civil resistance to the increasingly overt authoritarianism and pro-Russian policies of the ruling Georgian Dream Party.

For decades, the pro-European forces in Georgia have been fighting for integration into the European Union and NATO, but the regime's recent decisions have practically buried these aspirations.

The authorities' decision to suspend EU accession talks until 2028 sparked a wave of demonstrations in Tbilisi and other cities. Although the protests lasted for more than two months, their intensity weakened in early 2025, which the regime used to launch a brutal confrontation with the pro-European forces.

The ruling Georgian Dream, now controlled by a clearly pro-Russian wing, is pursuing a strategy that not only eliminates the current opposition but also completely prevents any future attempts at organised political resistance.

After the protests died down, the authorities began an extensive arrest campaign, including prominent opposition leaders Nika Melia and Giorgi Ugulava, who were arrested in February 2025.

These arrests were intended to break the organisational structures of the opposition and send a clear message: any resistance to the regime will be brutally punished. However, the suppression of the opposition did not stop at political leaders.

## The model of Russia and Belarus

At the same time, the government is taking legal steps to criminalise any form of social activism directed against the regime. New laws

that impose heavy penalties for participating in protests and cooperating with non-governmental organisations allow the authorities to legalise their brutal actions under the guise of "protecting state stability."

The way in which the regime uses the legal apparatus to suppress opposition and freedom of expression is almost identical to the methods already used in Russia and Belarus.

### Moscow watches with pleasure as its influence in the Caucasus continues to strengthen

In addition to arrests and legal measures, the regime also uses economic pressure mechanisms. The dismissal of employees from state and private institutions and the suspension and expulsion of students from faculties are other ways of controlling society. In a country where economic stability is already under serious threat, such measures have a frightening effect on citizens.

While Georgia brutally represses pro-European forces, Moscow watches with pleasure as its influence in the Caucasus continues to strengthen. Over the past decade, the Kremlin has consistently built up a network of political, economic, and informational influences in Georgia. The aim is obvious: to ensure that Georgia remains within the Russian sphere of influence and to prevent any rapprochement with the West.

## Economic pressure

Russia has a significant economic influence on Georgia. More than 20% of the Georgian economy is controlled by Russian investors or companies directly linked to Moscow.

Energy dependence on Russia also makes any serious political change difficult. As in the case of Belarus, Moscow uses dependence on its energy resources as a means of exerting political pressure and disciplining the ruling elites.

## The Russian media is spreading narratives that demonise the opposition and justify the repressive measures taken by the government in Tbilisi

In addition to economic influence, the Kremlin also relies on massive information warfare. The Russian media is openly spreading narratives that demonise the opposition and justify the repressive measures taken by the government in Tbilisi.

Moscow uses local networks and social media platforms to spread propaganda that legitimises the government and delegitimises all forms of civil resistance.

## Without a decisive reaction from the West

While Moscow is increasingly entrenching itself in Georgia's political, economic, and media structures, the West's reaction remains inadequate and rhetorical. Although **statements** by representatives of the European Union and the United States formally express "concern about the collapse of democracy in Georgia," they remain without any real political influence.

Fearing that decisive action could further destabilise the region, Brussels and Washington have opted for "constructive engagement," which in practice amounts to preserving the status quo.

The lack of a decisive response from the West has only further strengthened the pro-Russian authorities in Georgia. In a recent speech, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov **praised** the decisive steps Georgia is taking to free itself from Western influence, which could be seen as a clear signal that the Kremlin supports Tbilisi's repressive measures as part of a broader strategy to install pro-Russian regimes in the region.

## Western reactions to the brutal measures taken by the regime in Georgia have been limited to formal condemnations and empty threats

Western reactions to the brutal measures taken by the regime in Georgia have been limited to formal condemnations and empty threats. The European Union and the United States express "deep concern," but concrete action is almost non-existent.

The president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, warned that Georgia risks moving away from the European path forever but refused to impose sanctions that would have a real impact.

Is the West exhausted by the numerous crises?

Under the current circumstances, several scenarios are possible:

First, the continuation of the current policy of repression will lead to a radicalisation of the opposition. In the absence of institutional means for political action, opposition groups could resort to more extreme methods, which would only further justify the regime's repressive measures.



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Secondly, the lack of Western reaction and the continued strengthening of pro-Russian influence will lead to Georgia's complete



isolation from the West. The pro-Russian authorities in Tbilisi are already using Western passivity as proof that Europe and America do not stand for true democracy.

Thirdly, if the West decides to introduce targeted sanctions against pro-Russian actors within the Georgian regime, the conditions could be created for the start of a political dialogue. However, this scenario seems unlikely at the moment.

Numerous crises seem to have exhausted the West, leaving it completely incapable of opposing the expansion of Russian influence in the Caucasus. In practice, the policy of "constructive engagement" means maintaining the status quo, which is entirely in the interest of the pro-Russian authorities in Tbilisi.

If the West does not react more decisively, the pro-European forces in Georgia will disappear completely from political life. The radicalisation of the opposition will be inevitable because the citizens, deprived of all institutional mechanisms for struggle, will begin to resort to more extreme methods.

In the worst-case scenario, Georgia could become another satellite of Moscow in the Caucasus. Tbilisi's policy of suppressing and eliminating the opposition is entirely in line with the Kremlin's long-term goals.

If the European Union and the United States continue to rely on empty statements and incoherent diplomatic pressure, the result will be Georgia's irreversible departure from the democratic path.

At stake here is not only the future of a country but also the larger geopolitical landscape of the Caucasus, where Russia is systematically trying to expand its influence.