



Proportional Representation: Implications for Georgia

Nino Kemoklidze
University of Chichester
25 June 2022

Question

What are the implications of Georgia's move to proportional representation in 2024?

- *How will proportional representation affect governance in Georgia?*

Contents

1. Summary
2. Georgia's Road to Proportional Electoral System
3. Proportional Representation: Some Opportunities and Risks
4. References

The K4D helpdesk service provides brief summaries of current research, evidence, and lessons learned. Helpdesk reports are not rigorous or systematic reviews; they are intended to provide an introduction to the most important evidence related to a research question. They draw on a rapid desk-based review of published literature and consultation with subject specialists.

Helpdesk reports are commissioned by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth, & Development Office and other Government departments, but the views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of FCDO, the UK Government, K4D or any other contributing organisation. For further information, please contact helpdesk@k4d.info.

1. Summary

In a process that spanned over three years, Georgia adopted some important changes to its constitution that is meant to complete the country's transition from a "semi-presidential to a parliamentary system of governance" (Civil.ge, 17 Dec. 2018). In the **last 2020 parliamentary elections**, Georgia's current (revised) electoral mixed system was already the most proportional the country had seen in three decades (Bogishvili, 2020). 120 Members of Parliament (MPs) were elected proportionally by a party list (previously the number was 77) and the remaining 30 were single mandate (majoritarian) MPs elected by the 'first-past-the-post' rule (previous number was 73) (Bogishvili, 2020; OSCE, 2021, p.6). However, in the next parliamentary elections, due to take place in 2024, Georgia is meant to move to a fully proportional system (Civil.ge, 17 Dec. 2018).

This rapid review explores some of the questions surrounding proportional representation in Georgia. *In particular, what do these constitutional changes mean for Georgia? What might be some of the implications of Georgia's move to proportional representation in 2024 and how might this affect governance?*

The report examines some of the main aspects of these constitutional changes during 2017-20 and puts them in context. It outlines some of the main discussions in Georgia concerning opportunities and challenges often associated with proportional representation and highlights some of the main points that emerge from these discussions on the future dynamics of governance in Georgia.

Material summarised in this report is based on a mixture of (online) newspaper articles, government and other reports, and policy, and practitioner-based literature. The evidence that emerges from this reading suggests the following:

Not taking the proportional nature of the next 2024 parliamentary elections for granted. In the run-up to the country's last parliamentary elections in 2020, the Georgian Dream party, which held most of the seats in the Parliament – 115 out of 150 (OSCE, 2021, p.6), backtracked on its promise of introducing *fully* proportional parliamentary elections from 2020 on several occasions. The new constitutional amendments (which would include lowering the election threshold from 5% to 2%) that have been initiated by the ruling party have once again reignited questions about the nature of the next elections and highlighted that for Georgian Dream, the issue of proportionality may not be closed (Tabula, 19 Dec. 2021). Furthermore, if the by-elections are called before the scheduled 2024 elections, according to the current rules, they will go ahead in line with the existing mixed electoral system of 120 + 30 seats (RFE/RL, 3 Nov. 2021; Tabula, 19 Dec. 2021).

- **The importance of pressures from 'below' and from external partners.** Some of the changes that have been adopted in the constitutional amendments over the last few years have been down to internal pressures from the opposition groups (parliamentary and non-parliamentary) and the pressures from below (civil activism and mass protests) (Zedelashvili 2020). However, pressures from external actors – some of Georgia's closest allies and strategic partners such as the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), and the European Union (EU) cannot be understated either (Civil.ge; 16 Dec. 2019; Council of Europe, 2019; European Parliament Delegations, 2019).
- **Challenges posed by the indirect election of president.** From 2023 Georgian citizens will no longer be electing their president through direct popular vote. Rather, presidential

candidates will be elected by the 300-member college of electors which include all 150 MPs (Venice Commission, 2017, p.11). While the Venice Commission (2017, p.12) raised no initial objections to this proposed plan in its opinion on Georgia's constitutional amendments, it did raise concerns that under the new rules, a candidate favoured by the parliamentary majority would be potentially ill-equipped to provide an adequate control over the government and act as an independent (neutral) arbiter between different branches of government. To avoid that, it becomes even more important to ensure "the pluralism in the Parliament" (and subsequently in the college of electors) (Venice Commission, 2017, pp.11-12; see also Goletiani, 2018).

- **An opportunity to improve women's (and other more marginalised groups') participation in politics.** There seems to be a clear correlation between proportional representation and women's participation in politics (ISFED, 27 Oct. 2014). In the latest 2021 municipal elections in Georgia, women made up 42.5% of all proportional candidates and managed to get over 30% of proportionally elected posts. In contrast, however, when it comes to majoritarian candidates, women's representation is much lower (NDI, 2021, p.10). Therefore, it is anticipated that proportional representation in the 2024 parliamentary elections in Georgia will further aid increasing women's participation in the elections and in politics more generally.
- **Crucial role of 'a reasonable threshold' in the next elections.** Proportional elections generally create a climate for the development of a multi-party democracy by allowing for more diverse voices across political spectrum to be represented in the parliament. In other words, potentially, they give more people voice in the country's legislative organ and "provide an opportunity for healthier political process" (ISFED, 13 Nov. 2019). However, it is important to keep 'a reasonable threshold', which is normally understood as 3-5% (ISFED, 24 June 2019; Venice Commission, 2010). Otherwise, there is a danger of 'extreme fragmentation', warn experts, where the party fragmentation is so high that it impinges upon the effective functioning of the legislature (ISFED, 24 June 2019; EPDE, 2019). In Georgia, under the current rules, the next 2024 parliamentary elections are to be held under the 5% threshold, although the latest round of constitutional amendments currently going through parliamentary hearings may reduce this to 2%. In a country where political parties are still largely "leader-centred and lack strong platforms" (EPDE, 2019), there is a danger that with a lower threshold, or no threshold at all, parliamentary decision-making may succumb to "narrow individual interests and financial or other benefits" (ISFED, 24 June 2019).
- **Cross-party collaboration and the change of government between parties more likely under the proportional system.** The number of proportional seats was significantly increased in the latest 2021 municipal elections. As the cases from these elections demonstrate, smaller parties may have a better chance of breaking a highly divisive political deadlock that has existed in Georgia for the past decade between the current (Georgian Dream) and former (United National Movement) ruling parties. The Cases in several municipalities (Chkhorotsku, Rustavi, Tsalenjikha, Zugdidi) show how opposition party For Georgia managed to secure key decision-making posts in municipal councils (Sakrebulo) as a result of bargaining, compromise, and power-sharing between several opposition parties. Translating this experience to a national level (in the next parliamentary elections) will have a **potential to significantly alter the tone of politics in Georgia** by balancing the rule of the Georgian Dream and challenging the role and influence of oligarchs and other informal figures in Georgian politics.

2. Georgia's Road to Proportional Electoral System

Brief Background

Robert Dahl (2011, p.2) defines the term 'electoral system' as a concept "used to describe the structure by which votes cast in an election result in legislative seats (or executive offices) won by political parties and candidates". He identifies three most popular methods for elections as: 1) plurality/majority; 2) proportional representation; and 3) mixed systems (Dahl, 2011, p.2). As many would agree, "The choice of electoral system is one of the most important institutional decisions for any democracy. In almost all cases the choice of a particular electoral system has a profound effect on the future political life of the country concerned" (International IDEA, 2005, p.1).

In Georgia, parliamentary elections are largely regulated through several laws including the country's constitution (adopted on 24 August 1995), 2011 Election Code, 1997 Law on Political Unions of Citizens, and other "regulations adopted by the Central Election Commission (CEC)" (OSCE, 2021, p.7).

In December 2016, the Parliament of Georgia created the State Constitutional Commission (SCC) which was chaired by the Chairperson of the Parliament at the time and was composed of 73 members (Venice Commission, 2017, p.4). The SCC was tasked with the revision of the Constitution of Georgia (Nakashidze, 2017). This act put in motion a series of constitutional amendments that were officially put forward by the Parliament in May 2017 (Civil.ge, 3 May 2017). In September 2017 the Parliament approved a new constitution through third and final hearing, introducing some important changes in the **electoral system** that would change the way elections are conducted in Georgia over the next few years.

These initial amendments were signed into law by President of Georgia in October 2017 amidst severe opposition criticism (Reuters, 20 Oct. 2017). Further changes to the constitution were approved in March 2018. The latter were initiated to incorporate some of the changes to the original amendments recommended by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (or Venice Commission) – an advisory body of the Council of Europe (Civil.ge, 24 March 2018). The new constitution entered into force in December 2018 (Civil.ge, 17 Dec. 2018). However, the debate about these constitutional amendments and the bitter dispute among Georgia's ruling Georgian Dream party and the opposition parties continued over the next two years resulting in further amendments to the electoral legal framework (including constitution) in 2020 (OSCE, 2021, p.8).

Under the new constitution, changes concern both presidential and parliamentary elections and with the planned move to a fully proportional representation now expected to take place in the **2024 parliamentary elections, Georgia will complete its "evolution from semi-presidential to a parliamentary system of governance"** (Civil.ge, 17 Dec. 2018). This process had started with constitutional amendments in October 2010 when Georgia's then ruling party – United National Movement¹ – passed necessary changes in the parliament that shifted the main ruling

¹ The United National Movement was the ruling party in Georgia in 2004-12. Since then, it has been the largest opposition party with 27 MPs in the 2016 elections. However, in 2017, most of its MPs left the party and established a political party: the European Georgia – Movement for Liberty (EG), becoming "the largest opposition party in the outgoing parliament" (OSCE, 2020, p.6).

powers in the country from the president to the prime minister (RFE/RL, 15 Oct. 2010; 19 Oct. 2010).

Presidential Elections

Under the new constitution, **presidential elections** will no longer be conducted under the direct public vote. Rather, presidential candidates will be elected by the 300-member college of electors, including all 150 MPs as well as local and regional government representatives (Venice Commission, 2017, p.11). Salome Zourabichvili, Georgia's former Foreign Minister (2004-5), became the country's fifth President after winning the second round of presidential elections in November 2018 – the last time the elections were held under a direct ballot. She will serve six years in her post as opposed to the usual five-year term. From 2024, the five-year timeframe will be reintroduced, and the same person will only be able to serve as the President for two terms, as is the case now (Civil.ge, 27 Sept. 2017).

The President remains 'the head of state' and 'the Commander-in-Chief', and represents the country in foreign relations, but s/he is no longer able to safeguard "the functioning of state bodies within the scope of his/her powers granted by the Constitution" (Civil.ge, 27 Sept. 2017). The President also lost the right "to request particular matters to be discussed at the Government session and participate in the discussion" (Civil.ge, 27 Sept. 2017).

The age of Presidential candidates was raised from 35 to 40 years. The time of residency in Georgia for potential candidates was also raised from at least five to at least 15 years although candidates are no longer required to have lived in Georgia for the last three years before the election (Civil.ge, 27 Sept. 2017).

The new rules also scrapped the President-led National Security Council (established in 1996) which "organises the military development and defence of the country" (Civil.ge, 27 Sept. 2017). Instead, the newly adopted constitution was meant to establish the National Defence Council, which would "function only during martial law to coordinate the work of the constitutional bodies, and will consist of the President, the Prime Minister, Parliamentary Chairman and the Head of the Armed Forces of Georgia" (Civil.ge, 27 Sept. 2017).

This move, however, was met with fierce criticism both inside and outside of Georgia and was deemed by many as short-sighted (see Civil.ge, 11 May 2017; 14 June 2017). Georgia's President at the time, Giorgi Margvelashvili (in office 2013-18) criticised the move, stating that "This attitude that exists today is worrying – that since the Security Council belongs to the President, it should be abolished" (Civil.ge, 11 May 2017). Furthermore, he argued that the proposed constitutional amendments would further undermine "presidential powers as the Commander-in-Chief" and "would distance him from the actual decision-making and make him a 'nominal' figure" (Civil.ge, 11 May 2017).

In December 2018, however, the government of Georgia put forward new amendments to the law on the National Security Policy Planning and Coordination and proposed establishing a new National Security Council, this time under Prime Minister's leadership (Civil.ge, 24 Dec. 2018). The new Security Council convened its first session in May 2019 (Civil.ge, 1 May 2019).

This constitutional reform – in particular, the question of scrapping direct elections for the post of president, was largely framed as a necessary step towards Georgia’s “transition to a European-type parliamentary system” (Goletiani, 2018). The Georgian Dream argued that in a parliamentary system of government direct public elections legitimising a president who had ‘little real power’ and held a largely symbolic post were no longer needed. However, critics maintained that such framing ignored local dynamics and did not account for “the entire political context” in the country (Goletiani, 2018). President is meant to be an ‘independent arbiter’ and direct voting is meant to provide stronger guarantees to ensure the adequate division of power between different branches of government (Goletiani, 2018). Thus, it is believed that president – “the highest ranking official with a public mandate has more credence as a neutral arbitrator and, when needed, can confront the ruling power” (Goletiani, 2018).

Opposition parties and civil activists raised genuine concerns that an indirectly elected president “will have more difficulty balancing the threat of one-party domination that has become a permanent fixture in the Georgian political reality” (Goletiani, 2018). While the Venice Commission (2017, p.12) overall welcomed the move, it also expressed concerns over the possibility that in the likely scenario of the president being the candidate of the parliamentary majority, her/his role “as a neutral arbitrator between the state institutions” might be put under threat, “weakening the system of checks and balances” (Venice Commission, 2017, p.12). At the time, the overwhelming majority of the people surveyed (84%) believed that “the president should be directly elected by Georgian citizens” and only 9% thought that s/he “should be elected by those who are elected by people” (NDI and CRRC, 2017, p.40).

Parliamentary Elections

In addition to the above changes, the constitutional amendments also provided significant changes to the way the country’s future MPs are elected. For the past three decades parliamentary elections in Georgia were held using the mixed electoral system – the “‘parallel’ form of ‘mixed member proportional’ (MMP) voting” (Dahl, 2011, p.4). In this system, some MPs are elected “through party list proportional representation” and others “in single-mandate election constituencies” (Dahl, 2011, p.4). Different from other ‘mixed member’ systems, “the ‘parallel’ system is essentially two simultaneous elections for parliament, with the results of each ballot having no relationship or impact upon the distribution of seats to parties and candidates from the other” (Dahl, 2011, p.4).

In the initial 2017 amendments to the constitution, it was suggested that 73 MPs would be elected in the 2020 elections “in majoritarian, single-seat constituencies” and the remaining 77 seats would be “distributed proportionally in the closed party-list contest” (Civil.ge, 27 Sept. 2017). MPs are elected for four-year terms (OSCE, 2021, p.6). Initially, the proposed threshold for entering the parliament was set to be 5% (Civil.ge, 3 May 2017). In the subsequent drafts, however, the suggested threshold was lowered to 3% (Civil.ge, 27 Sept. 2017).

Similarly, an earlier draft of the constitution banned establishment of party blocs in the parliament and MPs listed under one political party were only allowed to “form one parliamentary faction” (Civil.ge, 27 Sept. 2017). However, amidst growing opposition pressure, the ruling party was forced to backtrack on some of the earlier propositions and make several concessions. 20 parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition groups as well as President Margvelashvili put forward a joint document “on the Necessity of Improvement and Adoption of the Draft Constitution of Georgia by

Consensus” in September 2019² (Civil.ge, 22 Sept. 2017; Margvelashvili, 19 Sept. 2017). Thus, the final draft allowed elected parties to form electoral blocs (Civil.ge, 27 Sept. 2017).

More importantly, further public and opposition discontent, which is discussed in more detail below, led to more concessions and additional amendments to the constitution in 2020. Some of the main achievements of these new constitutional amendments were introduction of “a larger proportional component” and lowering of “the threshold for parties to be represented in parliament” (OSCE, 2021, p.6). As a result, while the revised electoral system remained mixed, the last **parliamentary elections in October and November 2020** were conducted in a *largely* proportional system for the first time (Bogishvili, 2020). 120 MPs were elected proportionally (as opposed to earlier figure of 77) “in a single nationwide constituency, through closed party lists”, and the remaining 30 MPs (as opposed to 73) were elected “in single member constituencies” by ‘first-past-the-post’ (OSCE, 2021, p.6; see also Bogishvili, 2020). The threshold for proportional seats was also (temporarily) further reduced from 5% to 1% of the votes (OSCE, 2021, p.6).

The age of potential candidates was also increased from 21 to 25 years as well as the residency requirement – increasing from 2 to 10 years which is in contradiction with much of the international standards and good practice (OSCE, 2021, p.13).³

The situation is meant to change further in the **next 2024 elections** when the parliament transfers to fully proportional representation. While the current constitution envisages the **5% threshold** for the next elections, a series of the latest new amendments that had been initiated by the Georgian Dream in 2021 proposed decreasing this threshold to 2% (Civil.ge, 7 Sept. 2021; 30 Nov. 2021; RFE/RL, 16 Aug. 2021; 3 Nov. 2021). The debate about who benefits the most from a myriad of percentage thresholds – 2%, 3%, or 5% – the opposition or the ruling party, is fiercely debated and is still ongoing (RFE/RL, 5 Oct. 2021; Civil.ge, 2 Nov. 2021).

According to the initially proposed amendments, votes of those parties that failed to cross the proposed 5% threshold were meant to go to the winning political party – **the so-called electoral bonus system**. However, in the end, this provision was also dropped in the final draft (Civil.ge, 22 Sept. 2017; 27 Sept. 2017). Instead of transferring undistributed mandates to the winning party only, in the final draft it was confirmed that “all parliamentary seats from 2024 will be proportionally distributed among those parties, who manage to garner over 5% of votes in elections” (Civil.ge, 22 Sept. 2017).

Mass Protests and Concessions

Back in 2017, one of the main points of criticism from the opposition side – the ruling party’s “decision to backtrack on the opposition-pushed and the Venice Commission-endorsed introduction of the fully proportional electoral system for 2020” – was left unchanged (Civil.ge, 20 Sept. 2017; 22 Sept. 2017). The opposition argued at the time that the initial draft of the constitution envisaged a fully proportional electoral system from 2020, but that the draft was

² See: http://civil.ge/files/files/2017/Constitution_Margvelashvili_Opposition.pdf

³ See, for instance, International Standards of Elections (1996) and Venice Commission (2002). Thus, the OSCE and the ODIHR recommend that “The residency requirement for candidates should be significantly reduced or removed, to ensure compliance with international standards” (OSCE, 2021, p.13).

'single-handedly' changed by the Georgian Dream "two days ahead of it being put to a vote in Parliament, negating the work of the constitutional commission, the public discussions and the opinion of the Venice Commission" (Civil.ge, 5 Sept. 2017).

In June 2019, protests in Tbilisi, sparked by Sergei Gavrilov's visit to the Parliament of Georgia, quickly turned into mass anti-government demonstrations⁴ (RFE/RL, 24 June 2019). This further added to the already rather tense political situation in the country. The opposition parties demanded resignation of the government and called for early elections conducted under fully proportional system (OSCE, 2021). To calm the situation down, the head of the ruling party, its founder and former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (in office 2012-13) pledged to conduct the country's parliamentary elections in 2020 in line of full proportional system as well as scrap the proposed 3% threshold for political parties and introduce the so-called zero threshold (EPDE, 2019; Reuters, 24 June 2019; RFE/RL, 24 June 2019).

However, in November 2019, several majoritarian MPs from the Georgian Dream allegedly defied party's wishes and the amendment bill on proportional system did not manage to gather enough support to pass the first reading (OSCE, 2021, p.6; Zedelashvili, 2020). It is worth noting that none of these MPs had previously opposed the draft that they had initiated. A similar pattern could be observed during the first wave of constitutional reform process in 2017 as well. Despite initially supporting the initiative, later, some majoritarian MPs changed their mind and voted against a move to proportional system from 2020 (ISFED, 13 Nov. 2019).

The Georgian Dream blamed the parliamentary defeat of the new draft constitution on "sharp internal discussions and misunderstandings" within the ruling party (Bidzina Ivanishvili cited in Civil.ge, 14 Nov. 2019). However, as many have speculated, the story of "the 'revolt of majoritarian MP's' was unpersuasive and may have been orchestrated [by the Georgian Dream itself]" (Zedelashvili, 2020). According to Davit Zedelashvili (2020) – a Tbilisi-based Law Professor, as soon as the 'danger' of June 2019 protests had passed, Ivanishvili and his ruling party backpedaled on their earlier promise.

Continuous mass protests as well as external pressures from some of the most important strategic partners of Georgia (especially the US and the EU) eventually led to some constructive dialogue between the opposing sides – the ruling party and the opposition parties – and some concrete results (Zedelashvili 2020). In March 2020, a Memorandum of Understanding was reached between the two sides which led to a series of new amendments to the constitution that were adopted in June that year (Zedelashvili, 2020; see Civil.ge, 8 March 2020). As mentioned above, this resulted in the most proportional representation in the history of the Georgian Parliament in the autumn 2020 elections with 120 proportionally elected MPs versus 30 majoritarian MPs (Bogishvili, 2020; OSCE, 2021).⁵

⁴ Gavrilov – Russian State Duma Deputy – who had previously voted in support of independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (breakaway territories that are considered part of Georgia under international law), sparked outrage among the Georgian public when he occupied the Speaker's seat at the Georgian Parliament while addressing a council of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (IAO). Protests at the Parliament building in Tbilisi turned violent on 20 June 2019 and dozens were injured during the police crackdown (RFE/RL, 24 June 2019).

⁵ Following these elections, most of the opposition parties boycotted the results, calling them as 'unfair', 'illegitimate', and 'fraudulent', and refused to take up their parliamentary mandates (RFE/RL, 3 Dec. 2020; 28 July 2021). This led to a near 'political paralysis' in the country, which ended in April 2021 after the European Council President Charles Michel managed to negotiate a deal between the Georgian Dream and some of the main opposition groups (RFE/RL, 28 July 2021). The 19 April agreement became known in Georgia as the 'Charles

3. Proportional Representation: Some Opportunities and Risks

Opportunity to improve women’s (and other marginalised groups’) participation in politics

Many international as well as local organisations and think tanks have long lobbied the idea of proportional representation in Georgia. International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) (2019), among others, has argued that “Holding the next parliamentary elections under proportional system is essential for democratic development of Georgia, for votes to be proportionately translated into seats and for fair political representation” (see also EPDE, 2019). This can have significant effect on governance dynamics in Georgia.

One particularly important opportunity for Georgia’s governance from proportional representation is improving women’s and other marginalised groups’ participation in politics. It is widely believed that proportional representation allows political parties to present to their electorate, a much more “diversified voter lists”, including more female candidates, more national/religious minorities, more persons with disabilities and other usually underrepresented groups (such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) community representatives) (NDI, 2021, p.10). This is likely to create more possibilities for increasing participation of these traditionally marginalised groups “both at the party as well as at a broader electorate levels” (ISFED, 27 Oct. 2014).

Women constitute about 53% of the electorate in Georgia (NDI, 2021, p.10). Traditionally, they are relatively well represented at the lower levels of the election administration – for instance, over 60% of the District Election Commission (DEC) and Precinct Election Commission (PEC) members in Georgia were female. Although they were underrepresented at the CEC level – only 4 out of 17 CEC members were female (NDI, 2021, p.10). Usually, they are significantly underrepresented in public offices and higher posts in government too (OSCE, 2021, p.4). Currently, only two out of 12 ministerial posts in the government of Georgia, for instance, are occupied by women.⁶

One of the criticisms often directed towards **majoritarian elections** is that they **do not encourage women’s participation in politics** (ISFED, 27 Oct. 2014). During the **last 2020 elections, out of 150 seats, only 31 women (21% of all MPs)** were elected in parliament.⁷ **Out of 30 majoritarian seats only one went to a woman** (OSCE, 2021, p.13).⁸

However, Georgia did address an earlier recommendation by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) regarding a mandatory quota system for the list of candidates. It

Michel Agreement’. For the later developments on this agreement, see Agenda.ge (28 Jul. 2021); RFE/RL (9 Feb. 2022).

⁶ These are Vice Prime Minister; Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth of Georgia Thea Tsulukiani and State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality Tea Akhvlediani. See: https://www.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=124&mod_id=0&info_id=0&new_year=0&limit=0&date=&new_month=&entrant=1

⁷ Currently the number of MPs in Georgian Parliament stands at 144, out of which only 27 are women. For more on this, see: <https://parliament.ge/en/parliament-members>

⁸ The only female majoritarian MP (Nino Latsabidze) stayed in Parliament only for a year (2020–21). In 2021 she was elected as the Mayor of Rustavi city (Civil.ge, 2 Dec. 2021). Currently all 30 majoritarian MPs in Parliament are male. See: <https://parliament.ge/en/parliament-members>

required participating political parties to put forward “at least every fourth candidate” a woman, that increased the previous requirement of three women in every 10 candidates (OSCE, 2021, pp.4, 13). Parties were also given incentives with an increase of 30% of extra public funding if they “include[d] at least one of each gender within every three candidates on their lists” (OSCE, 2021, p.13). In the end, **women comprised 44.3% of all parliamentary party list candidates in 2020** (OSCE, 2021, p.13).

Majoritarian seats were not subject to the same quota requirements though and many of the well-known, bigger parties seemed less eager to put forward more female majoritarian candidates. The Georgian Dream named only one female majoritarian candidate, while the United National Movement named three. Overall, there were 107 female majoritarian candidates comprising less than 22% of all majoritarian candidates. No female majoritarian candidate managed to be elected in the first round of elections (NDI, 2 Nov. 2020, p.13).

One of the reasons suggested for the lack of female majoritarian candidates was to do with safety concerns, whether online abuse experienced by female candidates or the growing number of attacks on women’s personal lives (OSCE, 2021, p.13; see also: NDI, 2 Nov. 2020, p.11).

Results of Georgia’s municipal elections in recent years further suggest that more women are likely to “be represented in local self-government representative bodies through the proportionate election system” rather than majoritarian system (ISFED, 27 Oct. 2014).

In the **last 2021 municipal elections** in Georgia, women made up 42.5% of all proportional candidates (8,767 out of 20,624) and more than 30% of proportionally elected candidates were women. In contrast, in the previous municipal elections in 2017, only 13% of all elected candidates were women. Female candidates were also listed as Number 1 in 18% of all lists (141 of 771 lists) (NDI, 2021, p.10). However, as National Democratic Institute (NDI) (2021, p.10) reports, “outside of proportional lists, women’s representation was much lower”:

- Women comprised 10% of the candidates in all mayoral races (26 of 239);
- They comprised about 17% of the candidates in all majoritarian races (488 of 2,769);
- Of 56 independent majoritarian candidates, only seven were women (12.5%);
- Out of 64 newly elected mayors, only three were women and out of 664 majoritarian members of Sakrebulo, only 45 were women (NDI, 2021, p.10).

Thus, the projection is that the move towards a fully proportional representation will remedy this situation and will further improve women’s as well as other more marginalised groups’ participation in politics.

Electoral threshold: an opportunity for political pluralism or a risk of political fragmentation?

In addition to increasing the pluralism in Georgian politics, many in the country view the move to a fully proportional electoral system as a chance to move away from one-party rule that has become a near-constant attribute of Georgian politics and turn towards a more competitive, coalition rule

(RFE/RL, 3 Nov. 2021; Goletiani, 2018). Despite some obvious positives, there are also some risks associated to shifting to proportional representation. **In particular, significantly lowering or abandoning the threshold for political parties participating in the elections has often been pointed out as one such risk.** On the one hand, this move inevitably increases the number of political parties in the legislative organ but on the other hand, it can also have some unintended negative consequences (ISFED, 24 June 2019).

The 1992 parliamentary elections in Georgia are a particularly notable case. A low electoral threshold of 2% led to “**extreme fragmentation and the trend of mass creation of political parties**” at the time (ISFED, 24 June 2019). The repeat of such a scenario can lead to a situation where political parties with a very small electorate, lack of necessary resources and capacities end up in parliament and fail “to adequately engage in parliamentary performance” (ISFED, 24 June 2019). Moreover, in a political culture which continues to be **dominated by personality-centred political parties** rather than strong platforms bound together by some shared ideology, “decision-making process in Parliament may become motivated by narrow individual interests and financial or other benefits” (ISFED, 24 June 2019). This will adversely affect the parliamentary functioning: it may become extremely difficult to reach a consensus and form a government, and can lead to a political deadlock, increasing the risk of “political crisis and instability” (ISFED, 24 June 2019).

In this way, having “**a reasonable electoral threshold**” – **generally estimated at 3-5% – becomes particularly important** in countries such as Georgia, that are “transitioning to proportional system” (ISFED, 24 June 2019; see also Venice Commission, 2010, p.12). In this case, the chances of the survival of political parties that get over this threshold are more likely. It also provides some protection against “antiestablishment, radical forces” getting in the legislature (except when a significant part of the society supports them) (ISFED, 24 June 2019).

As the above-discussion highlights, transfer to proportional electoral system has a potential to open some much-needed opportunities for Georgia although as experts warn, there are no guarantees that it will necessarily translate into a success story, at least not in the immediate future.

- **Will we see an increase in the number of political parties in parliament?**

The answer to this question largely depends on the electoral threshold mentioned above. A lot is contingent upon whether the ruling party opts for a zero, 1%, 2%, 3%, or 5% thresholds for next elections, all of which had been proposed or had been under consideration in Georgia at various points (Reuters, 24 June 2019; RFE/RL, 5 Oct. 2021).

If we judge by the 2021 municipal elections, only four political parties would have made it over the required threshold:

1. The Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia: 46.74%
2. The United National Movement: 30.68%
3. Gakharia – For Georgia: 7.8%
4. Lelo: 2.71% (RFE/RL, 5 Oct. 2021).

With 3% threshold we would have seen only three parties in the parliament, instead of four, and with 1% threshold we would have seen nine political parties (RFE/RL, 5 Oct. 2021), including:

5. European Georgia - Movement for Liberty: 1.66%

6. "Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Irma Inashvili - Alliance of Patriots of Georgia: 1.46%
7. Zurab Girchi Japaridze: Girchi - More Freedom: 1.44%
8. Shalva Natelashvili - Georgian Labour Party: 1.38%
9. Third Power: 1.34% (Agenda.ge, 2021).

These local elections were held in 64 municipalities. The Electoral Code that regulates the elections went through significant amendments in June 2021 as a result of the earlier (19 April) agreement between the ruling party and the opposition, brokered by the EU.⁹ Under the new electoral system, the number of sakrebulo members elected through the proportional list increased from 970 to 1,404 and the number of members elected through a majoritarian list decreased from 1,088 to 664. The threshold for majoritarian candidates was set at 40%. For proportional lists, the threshold was set at 3% (reduced from the initial 4%) across the country, while in the capital Tbilisi it was set at 2.5% (NDI, 2021, p.4).

In the last 2020 parliamentary elections, when the threshold for proportional seats was even lower (reduced from 5% to 1%), nine parties managed to secure parliamentary seats:

1. The Georgian Dream: 48.17% (90 seats out of 150)
2. United National Movement: 27.13%
3. European Georgia - Movement for Liberty: 3.78%
4. Lelo: 3.15%
5. Strategy *Aghmashenebeli*: 3.15%
6. Alliance of Patriots of Georgia: 3.14%
7. Girchi: 2.89%
8. Citizens - Aleko Elisashvili: 1.33%
9. Shalva Natelashvili - Georgian Labour Party: 1% (NDI, 2 Nov. 2020, p.4; see also RFE/RL, 3 Dec. 2020).

The recent discussions about the lowering of the threshold barrier to 2% seem far more important to smaller political parties. In their case, "it makes a big difference even whether the threshold is 2% or 3%" (RFE/RL, 3 Nov. 2021). For bigger, more established parties, such as the Georgian Dream or the United National Movement – the two main adversaries over the past decade – 5% may be better suited. According to some, it keeps them perpetuate the existing bipolarity by marginalising other parties and further exacerbating political polarisation in the country. As Stefan Meister (2021, p.2) comments, both parties "have a vested interest in this polarization because it helps to mobilize their electorate and offers no space to competitors" (see also Gegeshidze and de Waal, 2021). Thomas de Waal (2021) also notes that the current polarisation is a result of a 'systemic crisis' and "is the work of more than just Georgian Dream. It is a joint venture with the ... United National Movement".

Proportional representation may encourage more pluralism in the legislature and may help end, or at least ease the monopoly that the Georgian Dream and the United National Movement have had over Georgian politics (NDI, 19 Aug. 2020). But others have been more cautious, as seen by some

⁹ See Footnote 5.

of the earlier discussion above (ISFED, 24 June 2019). Some have argued that smaller electoral threshold does, in fact, suit the ruling party. “It’s easier to ‘control’ smaller parties. It will be so much easier to ‘buy’ their loyalty, increase the majority in the parliament by couple of percentages and even form ‘coalition’ governments while leaving aside parties with much larger electorate votes behind them. In this case the ruling party can turn around and say – ‘You wanted political pluralism? Here is your political pluralism. We have political pluralism now, we have multi-party-rule, what more do you want?!’ In a country where a billionaire oligarch informally controls almost all aspects of life, whether it is the judicial system or business sector, and can bribe everyone and everything, spending couple of millions is nothing” (personal communication with the former government official in Tbilisi, 2021).¹⁰ Therefore, a potential **increase in the number of political parties in parliament does not necessarily signal a healthy political pluralism and a genuinely diverse legislature.**

- **Will change of government between parties be more likely?**

According to many, in any of the above-discussed threshold scenarios, the Georgian Dream would still manage to get a parliamentary majority and form a government (RFE/RL, 5 Oct. 2021; 3 Nov. 2021). However, recent cases from the 2021 municipal elections (discussed below) point to the possibility that **the change of government between the parties is more likely to happen under the proportional electoral system.**

Opportunity for Cross-Party Collaboration and Consensus

Evidence shows that there is a far better likelihood of **stronger cross-party collaboration and consensus** under the proportional system. This, in turn, has a potential to reduce overreliance on traditional one party-rule in Georgia and the power and influence of oligarchs and other ‘shadow’ political figures.¹¹ The 2021 municipal elections are, once again, particularly noteworthy here.

The case of Tsalenjikha.¹² In January 2022 Tsalenjikha became the only municipality where both the mayor of the city as well as the chairperson of Sakrebulo were elected from the opposition parties – the United National Movement and For Georgia¹³ respectively while the vice-mayor became a member of another opposition party Lelo (RFE/RL, 20 Jan. 2022; Zaborona, 2021; Formula, 2021). As a result, “Tsalenjikha has become an example of the compromise different opposition parties have come to – a joint coalition government” (Zaborona, 2021). This is how the election outcome looked like in this municipality:

- The Georgian Dream: 11 members

¹⁰ Critics have long accused Bidzina Ivanishvili – billionaire businessman and Georgia’s wealthiest man of ‘informal governance’ and lack of proper political accountability (Russell, 2021, p.6; see also: RFE/RL, 12 Jan. 2021; Transparency International Georgia, 2020, p.40). For more on Ivanishvili, see: <https://www.forbes.com/profile/bidzina-ivanishvili/?sh=7205a8b64598>

¹¹ See footnote 10.

¹² The city of Tsalenjikha (population: 46,251) is in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region in western Georgia. See: <https://tsalenjikha.gov.ge/en>

¹³ Political Party For Georgia was founded in May 2021 by former Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia (in office 2019-21). Gakharia resigned from his post as Prime Minister in February 2021. His new party came third in the autumn 2021 municipal elections after the Georgian Dream and the main opposition United National Movement (RFE/RL, 5 Oct. 2021; see also Civil.ge 18 Feb. 2021).

- United National Movement: 11 Members
- For Georgia: 3 members
- Lelo: 1 member
- Independent candidate: 1 member (RFE/RL, 20 Jan. 2022).

The case of Chkhorotsku.¹⁴ Chkhorotsku was the first municipality where the opposition parties managed to successfully cooperate and in December 2021 elected the chairperson of Sakrebulo from the opposition party For Georgia with two deputy chairs going to two other opposition party members – the United National Movement and Lelo (Civil.ge, 23 Dec. 2021). The mayor of the city is from the Georgian Dream party.¹⁵

- The Georgian Dream: 12 members
- United National Movement: 7 Members
- For Georgia: 7 members
- Lelo: 1 member (Civil.ge, 23 Dec. 2021).

The case of Rustavi.¹⁶ In Rustavi – the fourth largest city in Georgia – opposition parties also managed to get their members elected in key decision-making positions. The chairperson of Sakrebulo became a member of the For Georgia party while the two deputy chair positions went to the United National Movement and For Georgia members (Civil.ge, 31 Jan. 2022).

- The Georgian Dream: 16 members
- United National Movement: 16 members
- For Georgia: 3 members (Civil.ge, 31 Jan. 2022).

The case of Zugdidi.¹⁷ In Zugdidi – the main city in the Samegrelo region of Georgia, which also ended up with the hung Sakrebulo after the 2021 municipal elections, the opposition again managed to come together and elect a member of the For Georgia party as the chairperson (Civil.ge, 14 Feb. 2022).

- United National Movement: 22 members
- The Georgian Dream: 20 members
- For Georgia: 3 members (Civil.ge, 14 Feb. 2022).

The Georgian Dream councillors called this move “a ‘political theatre’ and ‘yet another political marriage’ between For Georgia and the United National Movement”. The newly elected Sakrebulo chairperson, however, expressed hope that in Zugdidi, where no single party holds the majority in

¹⁴ The city of Chkhorotsku (population: 33,931) is in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region in western Georgia. See: <https://chkhorotsku.gov.ge/en>

¹⁵ See: <https://chkhorotsku.gov.ge/en/node/428>

¹⁶ The city of Rustavi (population: 127,839) is located near Tbilisi in the Kevo Kartli region of Georgia. See: <https://www.rustavi.gov.ge/index>

¹⁷ Zugdidi (population: 161,351) is in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region in western Georgia. See: <https://zugdidi.gov.ge/en>

Sakrebulo, “the municipality would set an example of ‘a new political culture’ and cross-party collaboration for the country” (Giga Parulava cited in Civil.ge, 14 Feb. 2022).

The above cases, while not many, can still be considered as significant victories for the opposition, especially for the political party For Georgia that was taking part in its first elections since being formed a few months earlier in May 2021 (see RFE/RL, 8 Oct. 2021). With only three elected members in each of the Tsalenjikha, Rustavi, and Zugdidi municipalities in particular, For Georgia managed to get their candidates elected in the post of a chairperson. This highlights the opportunities that may open up for political parties (other than the Georgian Dream and the United National Movement) and the influence they can exert on the decision-making process via proportional representation.¹⁸

4. References

Agenda.ge (28 Jul. 2021). Ruling Georgian Dream leaves EU-mediated agreement. Available at: <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2021/2131>

Agenda.ge (2021). *October 30, 2021 Municipal Elections of Georgia*. Available at: <https://agenda.ge/elections/2021/dist/index.html?fbclid=IwAR1kZQeIMFiACS-66icTvKWhxz8zngmwU0kX7CWA2MEEAGzeP8yyDnQFwwU#>

Bogishvili, Diana (2020). *Georgia on the Way to Proportional Representation*. ZOiS Spotlight 39/2020. 28 October. Available at: <https://www.zois-berlin.de/en/publications/georgia-on-the-way-to-proportional-representation>

Civil.ge (3 May 2017). *Constitutional Amendments Initiated*. Available at: <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30072&search=constitution>

Civil.ge (11 May 2017). *President Criticises Planned National Security Council Abolishment*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/126388>

Civil.ge (14 June 2017). *Georgia needs a National Security Council*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/187529>

Civil.ge (5 Sept. 2017). *Opposition Parties Appeal to Venice Commission*. <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30419&search=>

Civil.ge (20 Sept. 2017). *President, Opposition Unveil Joint Document on Constitutional Amendments*. Available at: <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30457>

Civil.ge (22 Sept. 2017). *Ruling Party Makes Concessions to Opposition*. Available at: <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=30460>

Civil.ge (27 Sept. 2017). *Key Points of Newly Adopted Constitution*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/218332>

¹⁸ For more on the role that smaller political parties can play in Georgian politics, see Samkharadze (2021).

Civil.ge (24 March 2018). *Constitutional Changes Passed on Final Reading*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/220025>

Civil.ge (17 Dec. 2018). *New Constitution Enters into Force*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/271293>

Civil.ge (24 Dec. 2018). *New Security Council to Operate Under Prime Minister*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/272173>

Civil.ge (1 May 2019). *New Security Council Convenes Inaugural Session*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/303750>

Civil.ge (14 Nov. 2019). *Ivanishvili 'Disappointed' with Parliament's Decision, Slams Opposition*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/326393>

Civil.ge (16 Dec. 2019). *U.S. Congressmen Express 'Growing Concern' as Georgia 'Abandons Promised Political Reforms'*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/331758>

Civil.ge (8 March 2020). *Georgian Dream, Opposition Reach Consensus over Electoral Reform*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/341385>

Civil.ge (18 Feb. 2021). *PM Giorgi Gakharia Resigns over Melia's Detention*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/398524>

Civil.ge (7 Sept. 2021). *Parliament Endorses Constitutional Amendments in First Hearing*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/439202>

Civil.ge (2 Nov. 2021). *Kobakhidze Says GD 'Not Obligated' to Make Constitutional Amendments*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/452429>

Civil.ge (30 Nov. 2021). *GD Hints Backtracking on EU-brokered Constitutional Amendments*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/458746>

Civil.ge (2 Dec. 2021). *Parliament Terminates MP Mandate of Newly Elected Rustavi Mayor*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/459150>

Civil.ge (23 Dec. 2021). *Opposition Elects Chair in Hung Chkhorotsku Sakrebulo*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/463872>

Civil.ge (31 Jan. 2022). *Opposition Elects Chair in Hung Rustavi Sakrebulo*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/469808>

Civil.ge (14 Feb. 2022). *Opposition Elects Chair in Hung Zugdidi Sakrebulo*. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/472645>

Council of Europe (2019). *PACE rapporteurs deplore failure of Georgian parliament to pass constitutional amendments on proportional election system*. Council of Europe News. 14 November. Available: https://www.coe.int/en/web/tbilisi/council-of-europe-news/-/asset_publisher/zsGQOJsjjHjv/content/pace-rapporteurs-deplore-failure-of-georgian-parliament-to-pass-constitutional-amendments-on-proportional-election-system?_101_INSTANCE_zsGQOJsjjHjv_viewMode=view%2F

Dahl, Robert (2011). *Georgia's Parliamentary Electoral System: Options for Advancing Voter Equality*. Concept Paper. United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). March. Available at: https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/georgias_parliamentary_electoral_system_2011_0.pdf

De Waal, Thomas (2021). *Georgian Democracy is Dying by a Thousand Cuts*. Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe. Carnegie Europe. 21 September. Available at: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/85300>

European Parliament Delegations (2019). *Statement of 15 November 2019 on the failure to enact proportional system in Georgia*. Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/statement-of-15-november-2019-on-the-fai/product-details/20191118DPU23461>

EPDE (2019). *Georgia*. ISFED statement on proportional elections with no threshold. 25 June. Available at: <https://www.epde.org/en/news/details/isfed-welcomes-the-proportional-electoral-system-warns-about-risks-of-eliminating-threshold.html>

Formula (2021). *UNM Candidate Giorgi Kharchilava Becomes Tsalenjikha Mayor*. 31 October. Available at: <https://formulanews.ge/News/59258>

Gegeshidze, Archil and de Waal, Thomas (2021). *Divided Georgia: A Hostage to Polarization*. Carnegie Europe. 8 December. Available at: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2021/12/08/divided-georgia-hostage-to-polarization-pub-85937>

Goletiani, Ketevan (2018). *The last president elected by people? A review of the 2018 presidential elections*. Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP). 10 September. Available at: <https://gip.ge/the-last-president-elected-by-people-a-review-of-the-2018-presidential-elections/>

International Standards of Elections (1996). *UN Committee on Human Rights, General Comment 25*. "The Right to Participate in Public Affairs, Voting Rights and the Right to Equal Access to Public Service". 1510th meeting (fifty seventh session). 12 July. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/a/19154.pdf>

International IDEA (2005). *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook*. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Reprinted 2008. Trydells Tryckeri AB, Sweden. Available at: <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/electoral-system-design-the-new-international-idea-handbook.pdf>

ISFED (27 Oct. 2014). *Why Should the Election System be Changed in Georgia?* International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy's Blog. Available at: <https://www.isfed.ge/eng/blogi/ratom-unda-sheitsvalos-saarchevno-sistema-sakartveloshi>

ISFED (24 June 2019). *Holding the 2020 parliamentary elections under proportional system is commendable but abolishing the threshold poses risks*. Press Release. Available at: <https://isfed.ge/eng/gantskhadebebi/2020-tslis-saparlamento-archevnebis-proportsiuli-sistemit-chatareba-misasalmebelia-magram-barieris-gauqmeba-riskebs-sheitsavs>

ISFED (13 Nov. 2019). *MPs Should Support the Move to a Proportional System*. International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy. Available at: <https://www.isfed.ge/eng/gantskhadebebi/parlamentis-tsevrebma-proportsiul-sistemaze-gadasvlas-mkhari-unda-dauchiron>

Meister, Stefan (2021). *Introduction. Georgia's Political Crisis: Actors and Instruments of Polarization*. Caucasus Analytical Digest. Available at: <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CAD123.pdf>

Margvelashvili, Giorgi (19 Sept. 2017). *President's Declaration [Prezidentis gantskhadeba]*. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=820829338085341> [In Georgian]

Nakashidze, Malkhaz (2017). *Georgia – Constitutional reform: From semi-presidentialism to parliamentarism Leave a reply*. Around the Caspian. 3 October. Available at: <http://caspianet.eu/2017/10/03/georgia-constitutional-reform-semi-presidentialism-parliamentarism-leave-reply/>

NDI and CRRC (2017). *Public attitudes in Georgia*. Results of an April 2017 survey carried out for NDI by CRRC Georgia. National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Caucasus Research Resource Centre (CRRS). Funded with UK aid. Available at: https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI_April_2017_political%20Presentation_ENG_version%20final.pdf

NDI (2 Nov. 2020). *Georgia Election Watch. Report on October 31, 2020 Parliamentary Elections*. National Democratic Institute. Available at: https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Georgia%20-%20VEAT%20Statement%20Nov%202020%20-%20ENG%20-%20FINAL%20%281%29_0.pdf

NDI (19 Aug. 2020). *Georgia Election Watch*. Available at: https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20-%20Georgia%20Election%20Watch%20Report%20-%20Final%20-%20August%202019,%202020%20-%20ENG_0.pdf

NDI (2021). *Limited Long Term Election Assessment 2021. Municipal Elections in Georgia. Election Assessment Report*. September 1 - November 5. National Democratic Institute. Available at: <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Georgia%202021%20Limited%20Long%20Term%20Election%20Assessment%20Mission%20Report%20ENG.pdf>

OSCE (2021). *Georgia Parliamentary Elections 31 October 2020*. Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report. 5 March. Warsaw. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/4/480500.pdf>

Reuters (20 Oct. 2017). *Georgian President Reluctantly Signs New Constitution into Law*. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-president-constitution/georgian-president-reluctantly-signs-new-constitution-into-law-idUSKBN1CP200>

Reuters (24 June 2019). *Georgia 2020 parliament vote to use proportional system: ruling party head*. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-protests-parliament/georgia-2020-parliament-vote-to-use-proportional-system-ruling-party-head-idUSKCN1TP0TQ>

RFE/RL (15 Oct. 2010). *Georgian Parliament Approves Controversial Constitutional Amendment*. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty' Georgian Service. Available at: https://www.rferl.org/a/Georgian_Parliament_Approves_Controversial_Constitutional_Amendment/2191769.html

RFE/RL (19 Oct. 2010). *Georgia Gets A More Democratic Constitution, Though The Process Is Not Perfect*. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty' Georgian Service. Available at: https://www.rferl.org/a/Georgia_More_Democratic_Constitution_Process_Not_Perfect/2195251.html

RFE/RL (24 June 2019). *Georgia Ruling Party Head Announces Electoral Reform After Protests*. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty' Georgian Service. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-2020-parliament-vote-to-be-held-under-proportional-system----ruling-party-head/30016662.html>

RFE/RL (3 Dec. 2020). *Final Election Results Announced In Georgia As Opposition Cries Foul*. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty' Georgian Service. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/final-election-results-announced-in-georgia-as-opposition-cries-foul/30982468.html>

RFE/RL (12 Jan. 2021). *Ivanishvili Says He's Leaving Georgian Politics For Good. His Critics Have Heard That One Before*. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty' Georgian Service. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-ivanishvili-leaving-politics-ruling-party/31043818.html>

RFE/RL (28 July 2021). *Georgia's Ruling Party Tears Up EU-Brokered Deal With Opposition*. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty' Georgian Service. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-eu-deal-crisis-kobakhidze-/31382714.html>

RFE/RL (16 Aug. 2021). *After Kutaisi, the Public Discussion of Constitutional Amendments will Take Place in Tbilisi [Sakonstitucio cvlilebebis saxalxo ganxilva kutaisis shemdeg tbilisshi gagrdezdeba]*. In Georgian. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty. Available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31413185.html>

RFE/RL (5 Oct. 2021). *2%, 3%, 5% - Who Benefits from By-Elections? [2%, 3%, 5% - vis adzlevs khels riggareshe archevnebi?]* In Georgian. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty. Available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31494538.html>

RFE/RL (8 Oct. 2021). *Political 'Naughtiness' of a Realistic Offer – Who Needs Gakharia's Mandates? [Politikuri 'tsughlutoba' tu realuri shetavazeba – vis schirdeba gakharias mandatebi?]*. In Georgian. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty. Available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31499980.html>

RFE/RL (3 Nov. 2021). *Protest, MP Mandates, and the Inevitable Amendments to the Constitution [Protesti, sadeputato mandatebi da konstituciis satuo cvlileba]*. In Georgian. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty. Available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31544421.html>

RFE/RL (20 Jan. 2022). *Agreement in Tsalenjikhka – “Move against the State” or Working for People? [Shetankhmeba tsalenjikhashi – “sakhelmcipos dazianeba” tu mushaoba*

khalkhistvis?]. In Georgian. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty. Available at:
<https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31663606.html>

RFE/RL (9 Feb. 2022). How was the Charles Michel Agreement Adopted – Assessment of the NGOs [*Rogor shesrulda sharl mishelis shetanxmeba – arasamtavroebis shepaseba*]. In Georgian. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty. Available at:
<https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31694451.html>

Russell, Martin (2021). *Georgia's bumpy road to democracy On track for a European future?* Briefing. European Parliament. EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service. Members' Research Service. PE 690.626. May. Available at:
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/690626/EPRS_BRI%282021%29690626_EN.pdf

Samkharadze, Nino (2021). *Power of the Powerless? The Role of Small Parties in Georgian Politics*. Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP). 28 May. Available at: <https://gip.ge/power-of-the-powerless-the-role-of-small-parties-in-georgian-politics/>

Transparency International Georgia (2020). *Georgia National Integrity System Assessment*. Available at: https://www.transparency.ge/sites/default/files/nis_report_en.pdf#page=41

Venice Commission (2002). *Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters: Guidelines and Explanatory Report*. European Commission for Democracy Through Law. Adopted by the Venice Commission at its 51st and 52nd sessions (Venice, 5-6 July and 18-19 October). Strasbourg. 30 October. Opinion no. 190/2002. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/090000168092af01>

Venice Commission (2010). *Report on Thresholds and Other Features of Electoral Systems which Bar Parties from Access to Parliament (II)*. Adopted by the Council for Democratic Elections at its 32nd meeting (Venice, 11 March 2010) and by the Venice Commission at its 82nd plenary session (Venice, 12-13 March 2010). Strasbourg. 15 March. Study No. 485/2008. Available at: <https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD%282010%29007-e>

Venice Commission (2017). *Georgia. Opinion on the Draft Revised Constitution*. Adopted by the Venice Commission at its 111th Plenary Session (Venice, 16-17 June 2017). Strasbourg. 19 June. Opinion 876/2017. Available at:
[https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2017\)013-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2017)013-e)

Zaborona (2021). *Georgia Faces Political Crisis and Pro-Russian Sentiment is Rising – Here's What You Should Know*. 27 December. Available at: <https://zaborona.com/en/georgia-faces-political-crisis-and-pro-russian-sentiment-is-risingheres-what-you-should-know/>

Zedelashvili, Davit (2020). *Georgia's battle on electoral rules and the pivot towards proportional representation*. Constitution Net. 26 August. Available at:
<https://constitutionnet.org/news/georgias-battle-electoral-rules-and-pivot-towards-proportional-representation>

Further Reading

Constitution of Georgia 1995, as amended to 2018. Available at:
<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/30346?publication=36>

Constitution of the Republic of Georgia (Adopted on 24 August 1995) As amended in February 2004. Available at: <https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL%282004%29041-e>

Georgia's Constitution of 1995 with Amendments through 2013. Available at:
https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Georgia_2013.pdf?lang=en

Joint Position of the President of Georgia and the Opposition Political Parties on the Necessity of Improvement and Adoption of the Draft Constitution of Georgia by Consensus. Available at:
http://civil.ge/files/files/2017/Constitution_Margvelashvili_Opposition.pdf

NDI and CRRC (2021). *Public attitudes in Georgia*. Results of July 2021 Telephone Survey. National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Caucasus Research Resource Centre (CRRS). Funded with UK Aid. Available at: <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Georgia%20-%20Poll%20Results%20-%20July%202021%20Poll%20-%20ENG%20-%20Final.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3KcnyY9FM4Xw8Lj-H85acfuoyI-cWYSwkncUgf8abEkgHeAc8EX2KvISo>

Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR (2021). *Georgia. Joint Opinion on the Amendments to the Election Code, the Law on Political Associations of Citizens and the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Georgia*. Strasbourg. 20 March. Opinion No. 1017/2021. ODIHR Opinion Nr ELE-GEO/406/2020. Available at:
<https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD%282021%29008-e>

Tabula (19 Dec. 2021). *Kobakhidze: The Proportional Issue is not Closed, the Prerequisite is to at Least Stop the Boycott [Kobakhidze: proporciulis sakitkhi daxuruli araa, tsinapirobaa rom tundac boikoti mokhsnan]*. Available at: <https://tabula.ge/ge/news/677836-kobakhidze-proportsiulis-sakitkhi-dakhuruli-araa>

Transparency International Georgia. *Functions of the National Security Council and Problems of the Draft Law: Role of the President and Rule of Appointment of the National Security Council Secretary*. Available at: https://www.transparency.ge/sites/default/files/usaprtxoebis_sabcho-e.pdf

Key websites

Council of Europe – Venice Commission: <https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/events/>

Freedom House Georgia – Freedom in the World 2022:
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/georgia/freedom-world/2022>

Government of Georgia – https://www.gov.ge/index.php?sec_id=1&lang_id=ENG

National Democratic Institute (NDI) Georgia Publications – <https://www.ndi.org/publications?country=1069>

OSCE Elections in Georgia – <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia>

Parliament of Georgia – <https://parliament.ge/en>

Suggested citation

Kemoklidze, Nino (2022). *Proportional Representation: Implications for Georgia*. K4D Helpdesk Report. Institute of Development Studies. DOI: [10.19088/K4D.2022.111](https://doi.org/10.19088/K4D.2022.111)

About this report

This report is based on six days of desk-based research. The K4D research helpdesk provides rapid syntheses of a selection of recent relevant literature and international expert thinking in response to specific questions relating to international development. For any enquiries, contact helpdesk@k4d.info.

K4D services are provided by a consortium of leading organisations working in international development, led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), with the Education Development Trust, Itad, University of Leeds Nuffield Centre for International Health and Development, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), University of Birmingham International Development Department (IDD) and the University of Manchester Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute (HCRI).

This report was prepared for the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and its partners in support of pro-poor programmes. Except where otherwise stated, it is licensed for non-commercial purposes under the terms of the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#). K4D cannot be held responsible for errors or any consequences arising from the use of information contained in this report. Any views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of FCDO, K4D or any other contributing organisation.

© Crown copyright 2022.

