



*What does  
the Georgian Dream  
count on  
for the next elections?*

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Every time experts, politicians, or Georgian watchdogs declare that it is impossible for the Georgian Dream to win the next elections and form a one-party government, we face skepticism from our partners. Even the part of people who criticize the government is fundamentally concerned that if the party politics does not radically change, the victory of the Georgian Dream is guaranteed, and we will have to deal with filling out Russian homework for another four years.

The truth is that the facts give no reason for such skepticism since the election data of the last ten years clearly prove that the "Georgian Dream" as a single party has no chance of winning the proportional vote. This article contains facts and unmistakable data proving that, even by Georgian "normal" standards, winning an election and independently forming a government by the Georgian dream is impossible.

However, we should keep in mind that there are two questions to be answered in order to project the 2024 proportional parliamentary election results.

✓ The answer to the first question, whether the Georgian dream can get the majority of votes, is simple and unarguably negative.

✓ But there is another question, and the answer, as well as the faith in the election, depends entirely on the decisions and strategies of the opposition parties. Under the 5% electoral threshold, how much of the "protest" vote be lost due to the division of the opposition political spectrum, thus, how much of the votes (cast for the parties left behind the threshold) will go back to Georgian dream<sup>1</sup>.

It must be emphasized that we have no reason to keep calm at this moment. The opposition party-led politics is chaotic, uncoordinated, and often misses fundamental debate or concern over the main problems people face in Georgia. With really rare exceptions, the approaches of the opposition political spectrum are alarming, both in terms of the interests and needs of the electorate and the popular agenda, and require a radical change. Below, we will briefly touch upon the minimum standard required for the opposition's election strategy.

Finally, it is to be said here in the introduction that it is no less important that one part of society (including opposition parties, monitoring organizations, media, etc.) does not even trust the official data due to the extremely polarized pre-election and media environment, which practically makes it impossible for the voters to operate under the minimal standard of free elections. But we are not debating today the extent of the voters' freedom while casting a vote, nor the legality of the vote count; the subject of our analysis is only the election results as counted and summarized by the Central Election Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> See the article 37.6 of the Constitution of Georgia: *"The mandates of Members of Parliament shall be distributed only to those political parties that receive at least 5 % of valid votes cast in the elections. To determine the amount of mandates received by a political party, the amount of votes received by this party shall be multiplied by 150 and divided by the total number of votes received by all political parties that received at least 5 % of valid votes cast in the elections. The integer part of the number thus derived is the amount of mandates received by the political party. If the total amount of mandates received by political parties is fewer than 150, the political parties with the best results shall receive the undistributed mandates in a successive manner."*

## *What do we know about the upcoming elections?*

The Georgian Constitution states that "the next parliamentary elections shall be held on the last Saturday in October of the calendar year in which the term of parliament expires." (Article 37.3), which means October 26, 2024.

Moreover, in accordance with the Constitution, the next parliamentary elections will be held entirely in a proportional manner, and a 5% threshold will enter into force.<sup>2</sup>

## *What does the Georgian Dream's electoral vote bank look like?*

It should be said clearly, that sometimes the electoral process in any country can be influenced by external factors and cause radical changes in the attitude of voters, particularly if these events are of a warlike or revolutionary nature. So, to be clear from the beginning developments in Ukraine do have such a radical and direct effect on Georgian politics, particularly electoral politics. But this paper is written with the understanding of the current pace of events when the use of existing data for similar future events is logical and possible.

Another important note to remember is that fully proportional parliamentary elections with unified party lists have never been held in Georgia and 2024 will be the first. Accordingly, all the majorities we ever had in parliaments were formed by the sum of members elected by proportional and majoritarian rule.

Subject to these reservations, I offer facts that show that in the 2024 proportional elections, the political party "Georgian Dream" has no chance of winning either by constitutional majority or a simple majority.

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<sup>2</sup> See article 37.2 and 37.6 of the constitution:

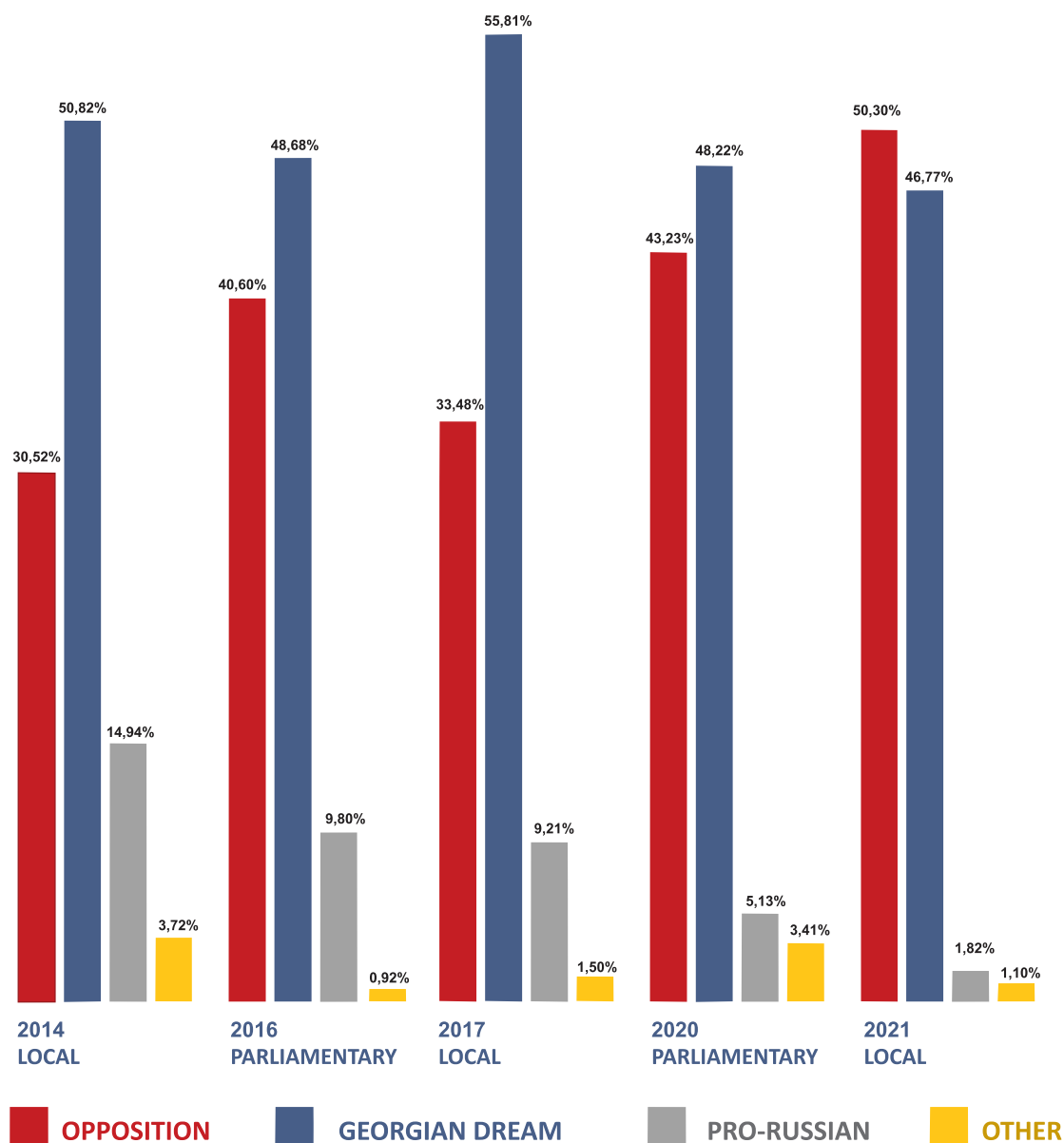
*"Mandates of Members of Parliament shall be distributed only to those political parties that receive at least 5% of valid votes cast in the elections." (Article 37.6)*

*"Parliament shall be composed of 150 Members of Parliament elected in a single multi-mandate electoral district by a proportional system." (Article 37.2)*

During the entire period of GD in power, 7 elections were held in the country:

- ✓ 2 presidential elections;
- ✓ 2 parliamentary elections;
- ✓ 3 Local Self-Government Elections;

## ELECTIONS 2014-2021

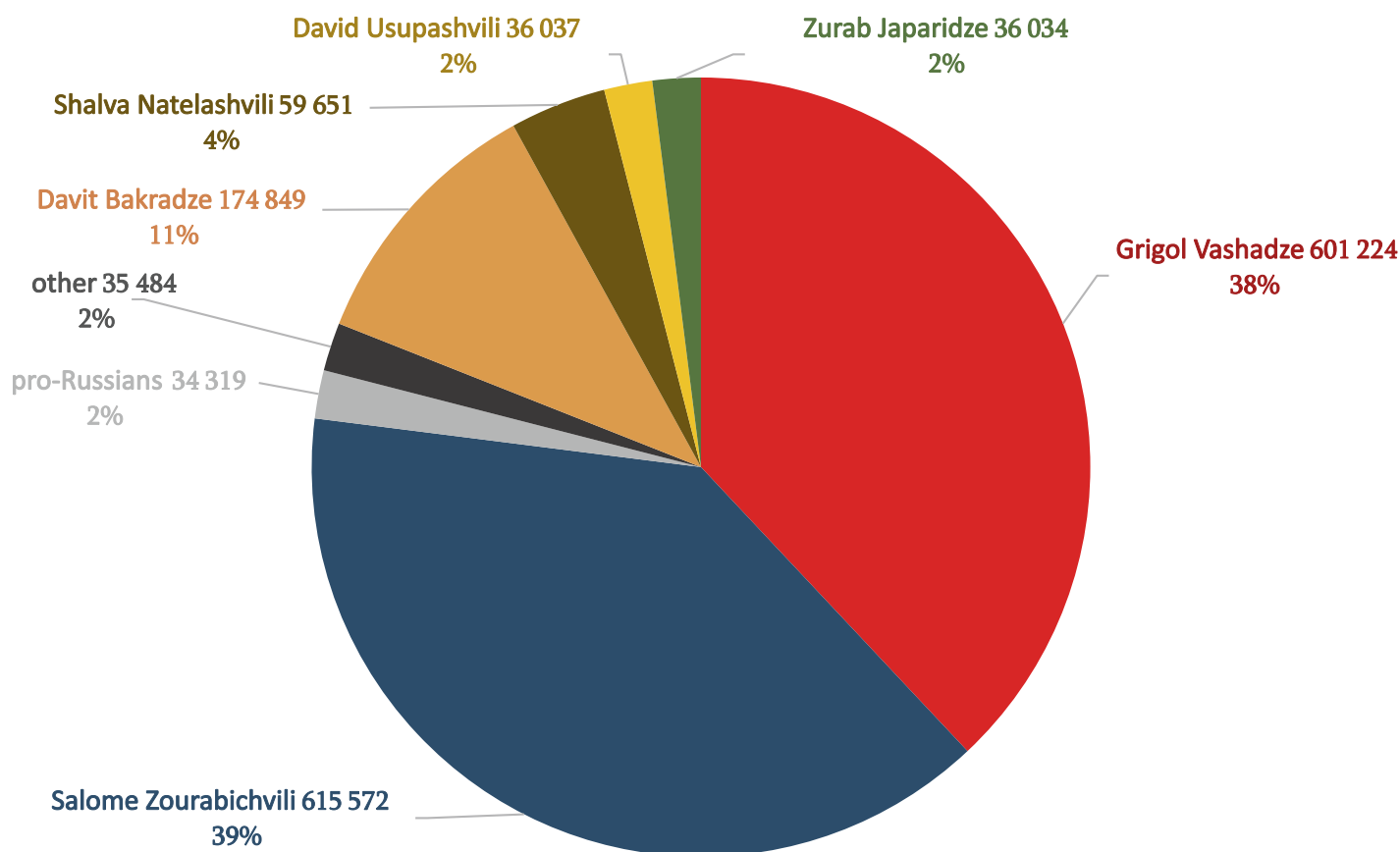


## Presidential Elections

The first elections were held on October 27, 2013, one year after Georgian Dream came to power, and the candidate of the ruling party won a convincing victory according to the results of the count of both the CEC and monitoring organizations. This was the only election (parliamentary/presidential) when the GD was able to win a convincing victory in the unified national elections.

Another presidential election was held on October 28, 2018, where the ruling party did not formally have its own candidate and no one participated with their electoral brand or number, although no one denies or doubts that Mrs. Salome Zourabichvili, who participated in the elections with number 48, represented the Georgian dream. She was supported by the ruling party, its leadership and the entire party infrastructure. In the first round of the 2018 presidential elections, the candidate supported by the government received only 38% of votes, that was the first major electoral defeat of the GD and a very significant indicator.

2018



## *Parliamentary Elections*

**It is to be said without a doubt that if the current constitutional model was in force in either 2016 or 2020 (parliamentary elections during the GD government period), the GD would have been obliged to form a coalition government and the country would have avoided one-party rule with its destructive consequences.**

Neither in 2016 nor in 2020 did the ruling party manage to mobilize more than half of the electoral votes, and in both cases, it finished with 48 percent. It was only due to the unfair system that in both cases GD ended up with not only a majority enough to form a government but even a constitutional majority.

However, the lesson they've learned, from all nationwide elections, contrary to the prevailing notions, is that every time there is an election, they lose the popular vote. Before it was OK, as the constitutional system was granting them the chance of overrepresentation without popular support. In 2024 simple reliance on a normal vote-cast makes their ambition of staying in power without building a coalition government a mission impossible.

It is an absolutely indisputable fact that there is no precondition or objective prediction for them to get the majority of the popular vote in the 2024 parliamentary elections.

## *Local Self-Government Elections*

Given the specificity of local self-government elections, their results are not usually generalized to other elections. Nevertheless, we consider it necessary to present the results of all three elections that took place during GD in power. Strange as it may sound, the outcome of the local elections can be the best symptom to observe the increase/decrease of support for the ruling party in the country.

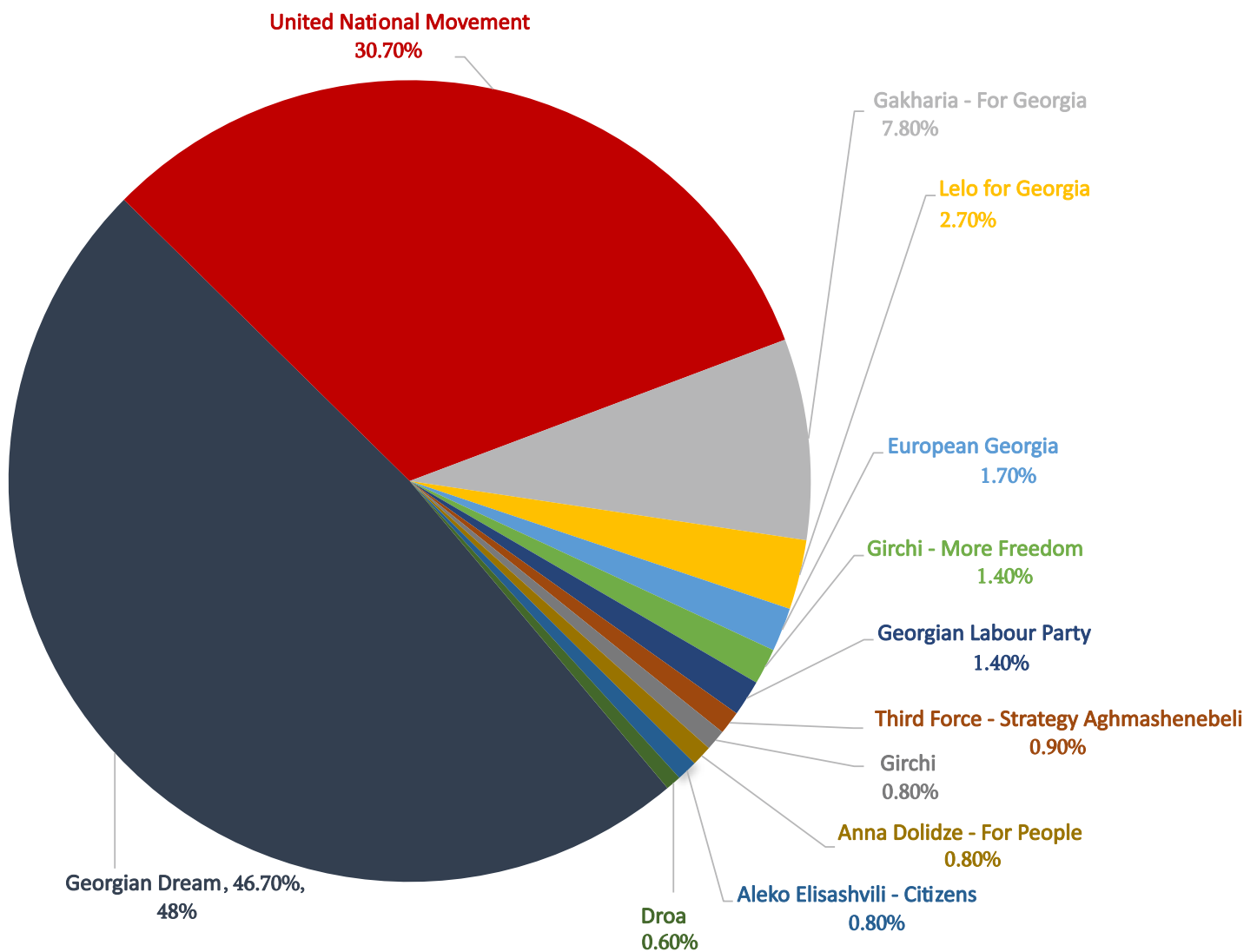
In 2014, GD received exactly half of the votes (50,8%). However, this result improved significantly in the 2017 elections up to 55%. In 2021, support went down again to 46% and equalized more or less with the results of other national elections.

The data itself shows the specificity of local elections. While GD failed to mobilize half of the electorate in 2016 and 2018 and barely exceeded one-third of support in 2018, the 55% result in 2017 seems somewhat irrelevant, although it can be explained by the motivation of local representatives.

In 2021, the situation changed. Along with the extremely growing discontent, mobilizing support for the ruling party even in local elections became impossible. Despite the high motivation of local leaders and representatives of Georgian Dream to work not abstractly for the victory of the party but for their own concrete success, they still failed to win a proportional vote, lost the majority in several local municipalities, and went for the second round of vote in one-third of Mayoral elections.

2021 Local elections showed the best that the Georgian Dream is no longer able to regain the trust of dissatisfied and distanced voters (as they managed to do in the 2017 local elections). The traditional mechanisms that ensured the maintenance of local loyalties (neighbors, relatives, fellow residents) by candidates with more resources and power, regardless of party, no longer work, as the degree of the unacceptability of the Georgian Dream is higher than local loyalties and Georgian style of "brotherhood."

**2021**



## *What can the Georgian dream do?*

From all the elections held after the defeat of the UNM and Mikheil Saakashvili, according to the CEC data<sup>3</sup>, Georgian Dream won popular vote in only two elections - 2014 (50.8%) and 2017 local elections (55.8%).

In all national elections held during the period of the Georgian Dream government, which can be directly compared to the upcoming parliamentary elections, the ruling party achieved results that make its stated goal of winning the elections as the only party and forming the government alone an impossible task.

Although this article was prepared only for the analysis of the data, of course, we cannot ignore the fact that after the local elections of 2021 (where they also lost), the electoral appeal of the Georgian Dream has not increased. On the contrary, the country was swept by two strong waves of protests, which for the first time required the ruling party to withdraw its own announced decisions. The expectation that the Georgian Dream will start listening to public opinion and ensure that civilized political competition prevails in the country is groundless. Accordingly, as the elections approach, the political temperature will rise even further, another wave of protests can be expected, and the ruling party may also take “Agents Law”-like initiatives generating even more protests and alienation of the remaining voters.

## *In which case would the Georgian Dream win the elections and form the government by itself?*

As of today, it can be unquestionably said that after the 2021 elections, the political key to the country's development is not in the hands of the Georgian Dream, but in the hands of the opposition. The only scenario when we can clearly see the 2024 victory of the Georgian Dream is the maintenance of the current level of division of the Georgian opposition, which will result in the loss of a large part of the “protest” vote, leaving them without representation in parliament.

To put it more simply, it is a matter of finding the right answer to the question of whether a significant part of the Georgian opposition sees the 5% electoral threshold as an obstacle and a problem or as a challenge that can stimulate a positive political process.

According to the same election data, if we model the 2020 parliamentary elections according to the current law, the following can be unambiguously said about 2024:

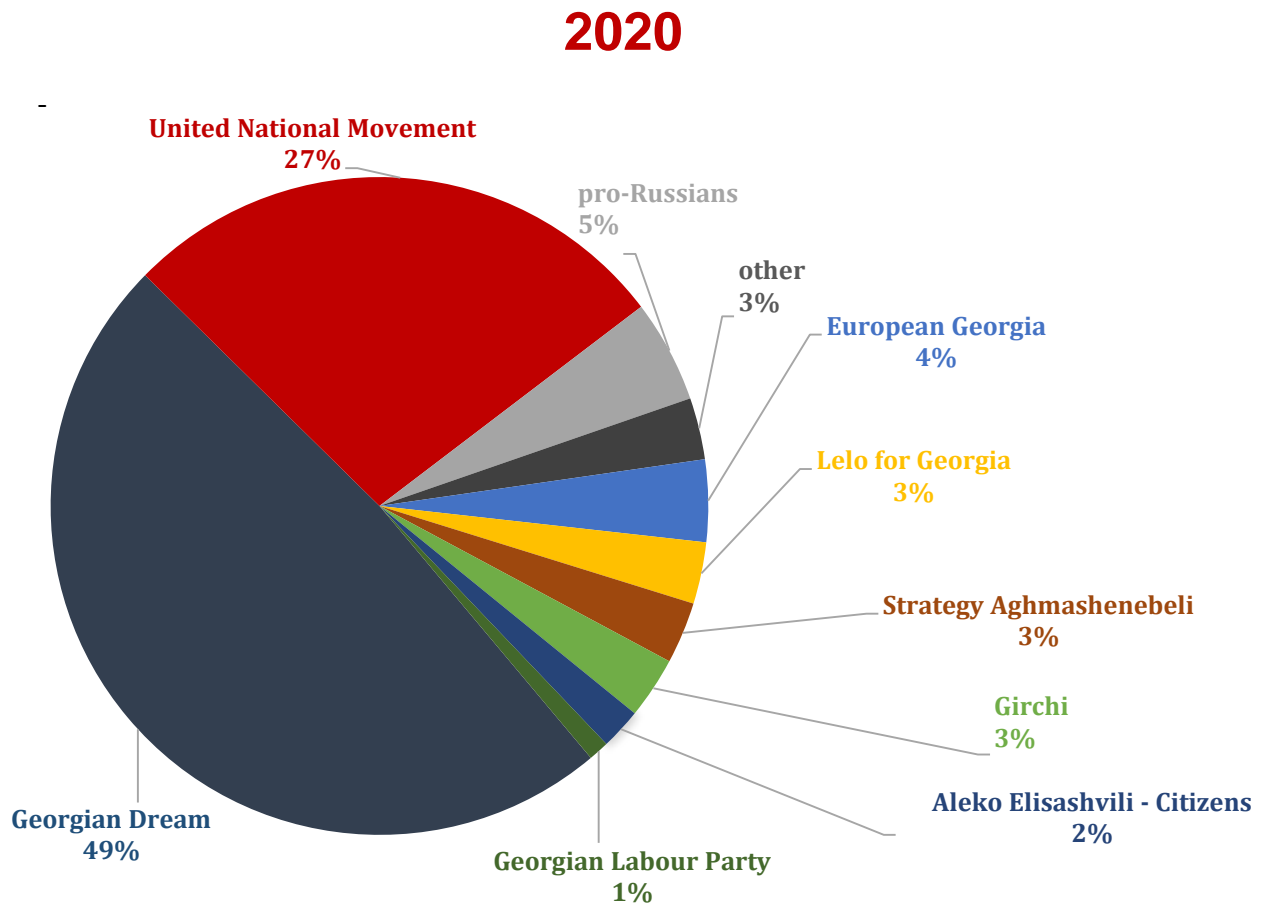
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<sup>3</sup> it should be emphasized again, in this article we use only official data and in no case perceptions created by generalizing the degree of falsification or manipulation.



- there would be only two, the current and the former ruling parties in the parliament;
- Voters who support pro-European, democratic parties (over 20%) in the 2020 will be left without representation;

Accordingly, the above-mentioned 20 %, i.e. the votes of “protest” of the current and the former government, would be distributed proportionally between these two parties, making Georgian Dream represented by a one-party majority in parliament without the help of the majoritarian deputies.<sup>4</sup>



The current political situation is not significantly different from the situation before the 2020 elections. Although the electoral votes of the parties in the first two places have decreased, they are still not clearly enough for the major victory of any other parties.

Analyzing the situation in more detail, it can be said unequivocally that the elections without electoral threshold have motivated many political actors to run separately with the hope of ensuring

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 1.

their own parliamentary seat. Accordingly, currently we have almost a dozen parties represented by 1 and 2 MPs.

For the 2024 elections, there are two scenarios. In one scenario, the parties will still decide to participate in the elections independently, despite the available data and experience. In this case, the probability is very high that the next parliament will again be composed of 2 or at most 3 political parties, with the ruling party having no problem mobilizing the votes needed to form a government. However, there is another scenario in which the formation of a grand political coalition gives a significant part of the democratic, pro-European opposition the synergy effect and thus the support of the voters.

What decisions the political parties will make and to what extent the pro-European civil society is ready to force the parties to come to the negotiating table as soon as possible will be shown by the development of events in the coming months, but one thing can already be clearly said today.

At present, the political initiative and the key to success are clearly in the hands of the opposition. The ruling party no longer has the ability or political capital to carry out any particular maneuver unless it continues to try to ensure success through violence or abuse of power, which will further make the resistance movement stronger. Therefore, the Georgian dream can remain in power for another four years only if no alternative of adequate political and electoral weight emerges. It must be made clear that this does not mean the emergence of a new hero riding a white horse and slaying the dragon, but it is about the right alternative configuration that offers the voter the opportunity to win and alternatively follow the European path with non-violent methods.