

Opinion & Analysis

Parties are preparing for an active pre-election campaign

FULL STORY ON Page 2

Economics

An anti-corruption service may be set up in Georgia



FULL STORY ON Page 3

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The dossier of the Russian opposition and businessman Mikhail Khadarkovsky's organization has published two parts of an investigation into the financing of the Patriots Alliance and Russian ties. The investigation reveals that the party is aided by individuals close to the Kremlin in planning the election campaign, who, in turn, are controlled by high-ranking Russian intelligence officials.

The second part of the investigation,

Dossier publishes new material on Patriots Alliance



The dossier of the Russian opposition and businessman Mikhail Khadarkovsky's organization has published two parts of an investigation into the financing of the Patriots Alliance and Russian ties.

published on 31st of August, discusses the visit of party leaders to Abkhazia, election clips, and pre-election activities.

The dossier describes that the publi-

cation of the first part of the investigation coincided with the visit of the leaders of the party to Abkhazia, which led to great dissatisfaction with them. Accord-

ing to published documents, they sought help from Moscow in preparing to repel this discontent. The document contains these that they should have used in their comments to the media, as well as pre-prepared answers. Among them we read the following phrases: "The purpose of the visit was charitable"; "We interviewed more than a million people and 70% are in favor of direct dialogue with Sokhumi, Tskhinvali, and Moscow. We serve the national interests through public diplomacy"; "There are those who do not like public diplomacy. They take up arms, and we are accused of treason. Who does this and why? Those who want to make money through war, those who arrange for our children to die" and such.

The 'strategy' listed in the documents lists the pre-election activities that the "Patriots Alliance" should carry out. For example, it says:

In late August and early September, Adjara residents must picket the parliament building, which can be organized by a new force, such as the newly formed Informal Committee for the Protection of Adjara and others.

Majoritarian Candidates' Action - "Take the Children to School", which means handing over school supplies to poor families.

Legislative initiative - All Georgians living abroad, including in Russia, should be able to participate in elections, opening polling stations, including in Russia.

On August 28th, St. Mary's day, leaders arrived at a monastery to be presented



"Georgia must do everything possible to protect the elections from Russian influence," Ambassador Degnan said.

CONTINUED ON Page 2

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

Parties are preparing for an active pre-election campaign

Two months remain before the next parliamentary elections, however, the election campaign has not yet become a major topic of Georgian politics. First of all, an active election campaign will be launched in September, and the attention of the media and the public is shifted to high-profile criminal cases. Until the election campaign is actively launched, experts and representatives of the parties themselves are trying to predict the likely outcome of the upcoming elections.

Under the new election legislation, the party that wins the election must receive more than 40% of the vote, the election is predominantly proportional, and the threshold for parties is only 1%. This gives many small parties a chance to consider withdrawing their representatives from parliament, with only the ruling Georgian Dream claiming to get more than 40% of the vote. Contrary to many predictions, its leaders are talking about their 60% rating and a convincing victory in the upcoming elections.

Recently, the results of two public opinion polls were published almost simultaneously. One was conducted by the International Republican Institute

(IRI) and the other by the international organization Survation, commissioned by Rustavi-2. The results turned out to be significantly different from each other, although the layout of the parties is more or less the same.

Georgian Dream has the highest support in both surveys - 33% in the IRI survey and 52% in the Rustavi-2 survey. Then comes the National Movement, to which one of these studies attributed 16%, and the other - 19%.

European Georgia is in third place - 5% and 8%. After the top three, several parties have roughly the same ratings - according to an IRI poll, New Georgia and the Patriots Alliance have 3-3% and the Labor Party, the Civil Movement, Lelo and Girchi-2%. According to the survey of Rustavi-2, Lelo and Alliance of Patriots have 5% support each.

Obviously, it is still far from the elections and judging by the Georgian experience, many things will change in the mood of the voters. However, the layout of the parties is more or less clear. The leader of the election marathon is the Georgian

Dream, which has administrative resources and a colossal advantage in terms of financial resources.

However, there is great dissatisfaction in the society with his 8-year rule. According to the Georgian Dream, their election campaign will be built on the positive outlook. But at the same time, criticism of the National Movement and intimidation of the public with the prospect of its return to power remain relevant.

The program of the Georgian Dream aims to stay independent as the head of the government and at the disappearance of the National Movement as the main opposition force. Both of these goals are difficult to achieve, especially the disappearance of the National Movement from the politics. It should be more desirable for the Georgian Dream to remain in power as a coalition with one or more satellite parties. In this case, it would be easier for them to present the victory convincingly to the public.

As for the opposition parties, whose main task is to change the

government of the Georgian Dream, they are well aware that no opposition force can do this task alone. The strongest opposition force remains the National Movement, which retains 16-20% of the electorate. This figure may increase in the upcoming parliamentary elections, but the number of voters who want neither the Georgian Dream nor the return of the National Movement to power is very large.

Such an electorate is looking for any other opposition party, though it has not yet seen it, and judging by existing public opinion polls, their votes are divided among many small parties. These parties have big ambitions and believe that they have an advantage over other opposition forces. The upcoming parliamentary elections will more or less reveal the opposition spectrum and show the level of their influence.

The opposition also tried to unite, fought together for electoral reform, and agreed on common majoritarian candidates in Tbilisi, but there were serious disagreements and mutual criticism. Nev-

ertheless, on August 18, about 30 opposition parties signed a declaration that they would cooperate with each other during the elections, protect each other's votes, and not allow the Georgian Dream to manipulate votes.

Opposition parties have denied the allegations in a statement issued Friday stating "Similar, baseless allegations concerning Georgia's foreign policy have been made more than once.

The opposition is also trying to reach an agreement on the principles that they will follow the western orientation of the country, will not cooperate with the Georgian Dream after the elections. As for the ideological controversy, it does not interest the electorate much and, consequently, it is not relevant for the parties either. Given the dire socio-economic situation in the country, with a severe economic crisis as a result of the Corona pandemic, the populist promises of a leftist nature to improve social conditions will be attractive. In addition to the promises, the government has prepared extensive pre-election social programs, while the opposition blames the government for difficult socio-economic problems.

(Translated by Mariam Mchedlidze)

Dossier publishes new material on Patriots Alliance

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

with an icon by David Tarkhan-Mouravi - handing over a gift to the monastery/church from the Georgian Church in Russia (possibly through Archil Chkoidze). In response, they will give a similar gift to the Georgian Church in Moscow. The aim is to show that the position of the Alliance of Patriots and the Georgian Orthodox Church is similar in key issues - "to restore brotherly relations with Russia."

The documents also show how the campaign is planned to be run on social networks:

By September 5th - Find young bloggers who are ready to meet, meet a party member, and post information about the meeting; By September 27th - Patriotic Song Contest. Online flash mob "Singing Together;" By October 1st - Launch flashmob on social networks 'Support March' media celebrities, athletes, doctors, actors, etc. that support the party.

Weather

Wednesday, September 2

Day  Partly Cloudy

High: 32°C

Night  Mostly Cloudy

Low: 21°C

Thursday, September 3

Day  Partly Cloudy

High: 33°C

Night  Partly Cloudy

Low: 21°C

The organization also publishes documents where, according to them, the party corresponds with Russian instructors. According to these documents, they are arguing with the party from Moscow because of their lack of speed.

Regarding the election clips, we read in the response of the party that they will gather about 80 people, and by the end of August, they will make videos in which these people express support for the party.

The documents also show that the Alliance of Patriots does not follow all the advice. For example, it seems that they were asked to hold a rally on the anniversary of the war, in response to which they wrote to Russian instructors:

"As for the August war, programs with the participation of Irma and David were aired on August 6, 7, 9, and 10. Only clips were aired on August 8. These programs have already provoked a reaction from Mikheil Saakashvili. "We won't be forgiven for organizing a rally on this topic on this day," they wrote from Tbilisi.

According to the center, these documents include financial schemes related to the Patriots' Alliance in Georgia and previous

election instructions. Dossier writes that political technologist close to the Kremlin Sergei Mikheev, who heads the company POLITSECRETS in Moscow, was hired for the party's PR.

On August 24th, Dossier released an extensive investigation into the Kremlin's direct support for the Patriots Alliance, both financially and in terms of campaign planning.

The Audit Office sent a letter to the Patriots Alliance requesting information about the finances.

The Audit Service is paying close attention to party revenues and expenditures during the pre-election period, including the finances of the Patriots Alliance.

The Prosecutor's Office applied to the Audit Service about the financing of the Patriots Alliance, which was requested by Elene Khoshtaria to investigate the financing of the pro-Russian party. The majoritarian candidate of European Georgia applied to the agency on August 25th. On August 31st, she received a response from the prosecutor's office that there was no reason to launch an investigation into the Patriots Alliance.

"It turns out that there is no basis for the investigation and

they only applied to the audit service. It seems like it is a normal case where they have to find out the accuracy and transparency of financial issues," said Khoshtaria.

According to Irma Nadirashvili, a member of European Georgia, the party has taken the initiative to apply to the Constitutional Court to remove the Patriots Alliance from the parliamentary elections.

According to Nadirashvili, the consent of 30 members of parliament is required to discuss the issue and the signatures of 20 opposition MPs already exist. The member of European Georgia asked the members of the management team to add the rest of the signatories.

Irakli Kobakhidze, one of the leaders of the Georgian Dream, says that the party rules out forming a coalition with the Alliance of Patriots.

Gia Volski, a member of the parliamentary majority, said he could not be a lawyer for the Patriots Alliance, but 'raising the issue of removal because the paper is not serious.' This is how he responds to the investigation into the dossier, according to which the Kremlin is helping the Alliance of Patriots in the elections. He says, if confirmed that

the Patriots' Alliance is funded by Russia, it would end the party.

"The allegations are so absurd...this is ridiculous," said Giorgi Lomia, a member of the Patriots' Alliance, responding to an investigation published by the Dossier, according to which Russia was trying to interfere in Georgia's elections through the Patriots Alliance.

Assessing Russia's influence in the Georgian elections, US Ambassador Kelly Degnan said it was expected and everything should be done against it.

"If we look at other elections, including the one held in the US years ago, it is clear that the country must do everything possible to protect its electoral system. The US and other international partners are implementing various programs to better understand what misinformation is." the ambassador said.

Political parties and their leaders have a responsibility to provide the right information to the population on various important issues so that voters can be informed about the October elections and be able to make decisions in a free environment, without intimidation.

published by

The Messenger

43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi,
0108, Georgia
Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze

Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli

Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze

Editor-in-Chief

Khatuna Gogichaishvili

Layout Designer, Photographer

The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact.

All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

The Messenger preserves the style of a source written in English where possible.

An anti-corruption service may be set up in Georgia

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Independent MPs Tamar Chugoshvili, Dimitri Tskitishvili, and Irina Pruidze have introduced new anti-corruption legislation to the parliament. According to Chugoshvili, the submitted document consists of several hundred pages and envisages 3 directions in the fight against corruption: Corruption Crime Investigation; Control over the financing of political parties; Monitoring of property declarations of officials.

According to Chugoshvili, to fight corruption effectively, it is necessary to have an independent anti-corruption institution in the country. The MP says that the submitted bill envisages the creation of such an institution, the "National Anti-Corruption Agency."

"Anti-corruption institutions must be completely independent, have high legitimacy and all 3 issues - political funding, corruption investigation, and control of officials; income declarations - must be carried out by an independent institution," Chugoshvili said.

Chugoshvili says that the problems related to corruption in Georgia are mentioned in the European Parliament resolutions, as well as in the statements of the congressmen and the bills supported by the House of Representatives. Accordingly, the legislative process related to the initiated law will be actively monitored by international partners.

Another initiator of the bill, Tskitishvili, speaks about the importance of an independent anti-corruption institute. He said the new bill would significantly improve the situation in the fight against corruption. The international publication



Independent MPs have introduced new anti-corruption legislation to the parliament.



According to the authors of the bill, the existing legislative model needs to be changed.

Bellingcat published an article on the deterioration of the corruption situation in Georgia on August 1. The article reviews the possible facts of corruption by the Georgian authorities during the

Covid-19 pandemic. Adoption of the amendments is also supported by Transparency International Georgia (TIG), which states that to fight corruption, it is necessary to have an accountable body to the Parliament, which will carry out extensive monitoring of corruption risks.

TIG stated that the proposed model had proved to be effective in various European countries and would provide an effective mechanism to deal with the cases of "elite corruption" in Georgia. The watchdog called on the Georgian MPs to support the bill to help fundamentally strengthen the anti-corruption environment of Georgia.

The agency will be accountable to Parliament and will have investigative powers. The head of the agency is appointed by the parliament with a high quorum, which ensures a high degree of political impartiality.

The agency has several anti-corruption functions that are currently scattered in various agencies (State Security Service, Civil Service Bureau, and State Audit Office) or are not assigned to any agency at all: Control over the implementation of the anti-corruption legislation of Georgia and refinement of the anti-corruption policy; Detect, investigate and prevent corruption in public institutions. Also, implementation of corruption prevention measures; Monitoring the property declarations of officials; Monitoring the financial activities of political parties; Protection of whistleblowers; Ensuring the fulfillment of international anti-corruption obligations by the Georgian authorities, etc.

According to the authors of the bill, the establishment of a new agency will cost up to €10 million.

ღამის სერენადები / NIGHT SERENADES

ფესტივალის დამფუძნებელი ლიანა ისაკაძე
სამხატვრო ხელმძღვანელი გიორგი ისაკაძე

Founder of the Festival LIANA ISSAKADZE
Artistic Director GIORGI ISSAKADZE

შთავარი დირიჟორი ვახტანგ მატჩავარიანი
Principal Conductor VAKHTANG MATCHAVARIANI

ბათუმი BATUMI
AUGUST 27 კვირბორი

თბილისი TBILISI
SEPTEMBER 2,4 სექტემბერი