The West Shakes Georgia's Foundation by Exploiting the “Saakashvili Factor”

As planned by the West, the internal political crisis in this country and the crisis in Georgia’s relations with the European Union and the United States only intensified with the return of Mikheil Saakashvili to his homeland.

The EU has been trying to return Georgia to the path of democracy for over a year now. Even before his return to Georgia, Saakashvili had been warned by Brussels and Strasbourg that it was not the best idea. Hence, Viola von Cramon, MEP, openly stated that this step would only create unnecessary tension.

Saakashvili’s return is unlikely to help de-escalate the situation in the country was also stated by influential US Senator Jeanne Shaheen, the co-author of the sharpest letters from the US Senate openly criticizing the Georgian authorities and their rollback on democracy. According to Shaheen, the former president had his chance but was defeated in a free and fair election in 2012.

Now the US State Department, which planned and implemented the operation for the return of the ex-president to his homeland, is trying to provide Mikheil Saakashvili with propaganda and other support, referring to the pressure on the Georgian authorities on “international obligations of this country and the Convention on Human Rights.” Meanwhile, at an apparent prompting from Washington, the European People’s Party has already named the ex-
President a political prisoner. At the same time, as Georgian Dream Chairman Irakli Kobakhidze said the other day, the West is simply forgetting that several European parliamentarians, in particular Anna Fotyga, who in August 2008 headed the office of Polish President Lech Kaczyński, and later served as Minister of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland, has long been lobbying for Saakashvili’s United National Movement. Even as this ex-president’s regime murdered, raped, robbed businesses, and kidnapped independent media. According to the Georgian Dream Chairman, “lobbyists of the radical opposition” promote polarization in Georgia since oppositionist Gigi Ugulava, the shareholder of shareholders of Mtavari Arkhi TV, Giorgi Rurua and Nika Melia, chairman of the United National Movement, were released from prison between 2020 and 2021 thanks to the efforts of these people. The opposition has claimed all three as political prisoners. Hence, politicians in the EU and the USA have called for their release. “Everyone can see that today these ‘perpetrators,’ along with the main criminal Mikheil Saakashvili, are playing the most active role in the polarization harming the interests of society and Georgia. Together with the radical opposition, the direct responsibility for all this, of course, is placed on all those persons who actively demanded the release of criminals,” Kobakhidze said. Under the circumstances, the condemnation of foreign support for Saakashvili by the head of Georgia’s ruling party is quite understandable and justified.

But appeals by the West to stop persecuting political opponents, according to many experts, will be ignored by the ruling Georgian party, which understands that the release or relaxation of the Saakashvili Factor will hit the foundations of the ruling party. So the Georgian Dream will resist this in every way it can for as long as it can. In particular, it was demonstrated by the annulment of the compromise agreement.

Kelly Dagnan, the US Ambassador to Georgia, also blatantly stood up for Saakashvili to continue directing the situation in Georgia and not to cease meddling in Georgia’s internal affairs.

It is worth noting that Kelly’s predecessor in the position of US Ambassador to Georgia, Ian Kelly made rather harsh remarks on Twitter about incumbent Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili and the prisoner Mikheil Saakashvili. “They are both poisonous to the political body. Like all politicians, including in my country, who prefer conflict and personal power to national interests.”

The European Union needs to find some healthy forces in this country, in its parliament, with which a dialogue can be held. It is impossible to build a dialogue with either the ruling party or the opposition, says an MEP from Germany, Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, who tried to lead the work on the Charles Michel’s Agreement (the Agreement failed, as we recall).

At the same time, another MEP and former prime minister of Lithuania, Andrius Kubilius, said the presence of the Georgian Dream party in power could hinder the country’s integration into the EU and NATO, clearly putting pressure on the current authorities of the country.

As for Saakashvili, on November 10, the Tbilisi City Court resumed the criminal case hearing on the violent dispersal of the opposition rally on November 7, 2007, and the pogrom of Imedi TV station with the appropriation of its property. By the evening of the same day, it became known that Saakashvili had agreed to end his hunger strike, as reported by his lawyer Nika Gvaramia. The video shown by the Georgian authorities demonstrates the apparent absence of Saakashvili’s “loss of strength” from the alleged hunger strike. This decision of the ex-president was likely influenced by the answer of the European Court of Human Rights, which did not satisfy the demand to transfer Saakashvili to a private hospital. Instead urged the plaintiff to stop his hunger strike, Georgian Justice Minister Rati Bregadze said.

But the West has not yet decided what to do with the current government and how to implement the Saakashvili factor further. On the one hand, they demonstrate their tension with the actions of the Georgian authorities, which they do not hide. On the other hand, they give a favorable evaluation of the October 2 local elections and the opposition’s failure. It is felt that such confusion can not last much longer, and some ordering signal is expected from Washington. There may be a further development of a political crisis in Georgia, previously prepared by the United States, and solution of Saakashvili’s fate, and the whole of Georgia. For its part, official Washington has only shown its role in further development of the situation in Georgia. In addition to continued active haranguing of Kelly Dagnan, US Ambassador to Georgia, a massive military allied presence of the US Sixth Fleet ships, USS Mount Whitney flagship and destroyer USS Porter in the Black Sea, and a port call in Batumi. Continuing to nudge Kyiv to strengthen its role in playing the Saakashvili Card, Washington is clearly pursuing the goal of achieving worthwhile aims in Georgia using Ukraine.

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