Georgia: Saakashvili is replaced by a political rival

A 44 years old philosopher, a representative of the ruling coalition “Georgian Dream” Giorgi Margvelashvili has recently won the Georgian presidential elections by a mile. Before his recent political succeed the new Georgian head of the office was previously employed as Education Secretary. According to the Georgian Central Electoral Commission Giorgi took 62% of all the votes. The runner-ups have failed to get anywhere close to the mark Giorgi Margvelashvili has shown. One of the two major rivals of the Georgian president-to-be was Davit Bakradze that represented the “United National Movement” party, he got 22% of all votes. Third place was occupied by Nino Burjanadze with 11%, she represented the “Democratic Movement–United Georgia” party. Among the rest 19 candidates no one has managed to make the 5% bar.

The countless international observers that were monitoring the election process from the beginning till the end say there was no foul play that could affect the results of the elections. The freedom of vote was preserved everywhere, including penitentiaries. It was so high that many observers have called it “unprecedented for a former-USSR republic”. This fact can be partially explained by a relatively low voters turnout (47%), that was awaited by all sides of the elections, but nobody tried to raise this number with “certain measures”. The present political layout in Georgia is simple: any candidate can win should be supported by the head of the “Georgian Dream” Bidzina Ivanishvili that occupies the Prime Minister's chair. When Bidzina Ivanishvili was presenting Giorgi to his supporters he clearly stated that “By voting for him, you vote for me”. That line did the trick all right for the new Georgian president.

The majority of political opponents have congratulated Giorgi Margvelashvili with his persuasive victory long before the vote counting was through. The discontent that Bakradze and Burjanadze expressed about the results won't last for long since it won't get any support on the streets. The third place occupied by Burjanadze and her 11% is a major surprise of this elections. Nino, the former Speaker of the Parliament, was aiming for second place and she had all the reasons to do so. It seems that the public opinion polls have played a mean joke on her, since her supporters decided not to bother themselves with voting since the saw no difference in Burjanadze coming second or third.

But this situation for Burjanadze is so much more than a failure to save political prestige. She was responsible for making “Democratic Movement–United Georgia” the leading oppositional force in Georgia and minimize the chances that the former ruling party collapse. Now that Saakashvili is gone the DM-UG won't be staying in the opposition camp for long. There's a number of municipal elections scheduled till the end of the year in Georgia, and the DM-UG will be making an attempt to return to power. The only force that can support or contest it is “Georgian Dream”.

Ivanishvili has promised the people of Georgia that his decision to leave political career doesn't automatically mean that he's going to leave the country “on its own”. He believes that it will be quite the opposite, since work in the capacity of a civilian servant.

The presidential elections in Georgia have officially put an end to the 9 years long reign of the United National Movement party. The first years in power were really productive for the UNM headed by Saakashvili since they've
managed to gain trust of Georgian people by quick and harsh decisions and reforms, they've secured the economical growth for the years to come. At the time Georgia was widely regarded across the Globe as a paragon of a young developing democracy.

The better part of all blames for the Georgian military campaign of 2008 the new authorities prefer to push on Saakashvili. The same kind of approach was adopted by the new Georgian president. At the same time Giorgi Margvelashvili expresses hopes that he will mend the Georgian-Russian bilateral relationships, but only if these won't affect the Georgian national interests. What this means is that one shouldn't be waiting for significant changes in Georgian relationships with Russia. Since the Georgia is not willing to change its pro-Western course so it would try to maximize to use all the options it can, it's not going to give up on the idea of territorial integrity, but at the same time there's little to no chance it's going to change its policy

The new Geogian president said to media representatives that Georgia is going to make friends with Russia

How should one understand these words? As a reflection of the current state of the Georgian-Russian affairs. Margvelashvili in a way repeated the words of Ivanishvili that have achieved a certain amount of success in this domain. Georgia needed Russian markets? Here you go. All the transport links between the two countries are in place, Russia promised to ease the visa regime for Georgian citizens and it's pretty much it. All the rest benefits that Georgia can have are closely connected with the Georgian strive to go to the West. And it seems it not willing to trade a place in Russian Customs Union for its friendship with the European and American authorities. As for the possible military aggression against Russia, it seems that Georgia has learnt its lesson.

In their turn Russian authorities understand that they cannot go any further in this situation as well. Georgia is only willing to turn away from the Western world if Russia hands it over Abkhasia and South Ossetia, but Russia has already recognized these countries and now there's no turning back without a loss of face.

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