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Deflowering the ‘Rose Revolution’

By Justin Raimondo

October 2, 2012

Despite the best efforts of Georgian strongman Mikheil Saakashvili and his ruling party, Georgian voters have delivered a [stunning victory](#) to challenger [Bidzina Ivanishvili](#), a billionaire who vowed to [tamp down tensions](#) with Russia and free up an increasingly authoritarian system. Saakashvili pulled out all the stops in his campaign to neutralize the first credible political challenge to his rule: his initial response was to [revoke](#) Ivanishvili’s citizenship. When that raised eyebrows in the West — and a storm of protest in Georgia — Saakashvili backtracked, and turned to other methods. The Georgian opposition, Georgian Dream, was subjected to new rules and regulations, limiting the amount of money they could spend, and opposition supporters were fired from their state jobs. [Exorbitant fines](#) were levied on dissident groups, and gangs of thugs preyed on opposition activists, particularly in rural areas where dependence on state subsidies — and the good graces of the ruling party — is the key to survival.

And, of course, Saakashvili’s Western allies were quick to respond to Ivanishvili’s challenge. A much [criticized](#) “survey” put out by the National Democratic Institute — the Democratic party’s international bureau, affiliated with the US government-subsidized National Endowment for Democracy — [claimed](#) right before the election that Georgian Dream was “losing support to Saakashvili,” with one of its questions [asking](#) if voters would support Ivanishvili’s “call for street protests” if he lost. A major flaw in this equation: Ivanishvili had made no such call. Yet even after Ivanishvili complained, the US ambassador, John Bass, [defended](#) NDI’s intervention in the election, averring that its methodology was correct — even as independent pollsters, not

affiliated with the NED, were saying it was a close race. Opposition spokesperson Maia Panjikidze was blunt:

“We do not trust the NDI surveys, as well as the researches of other organizations. We are not familiar with the methodology of research, how the field work was conducted, we do not know who’s funding these studies.”

Of course they don’t trust the NDI surveys — that’s because Saakashvili has been one of America’s [top clients](#) since his ascension to power in the 2003 “Rose Revolution.” George W. Bush stopped off in Tbilisi, Georgia’s capital, in 2005, where he [hailed](#) Georgia for increasing its commitment to stationing troops in Iraq “five-fold,” and held up Saakashvili’s increasingly repressive regime as an exemplar of his “Freedom Agenda.” After Saakashvili [bombed](#) the city of Tskhinvali for defying his authority, killing over a thousand civilians and a dozen Russian peace-keepers, the Russians intervened. Although Saakashvili started the war — he had been planning it for quite some time, according to a [former government official](#) — both US presidential candidates ([Obama and John McCain](#)) sided with Saakashvili, competing with each other in denouncing “Russian aggression.” After the war, in which the Georgians were soundly defeated, the US [sent \\$1 billion](#) in “aid” to “rebuild Georgia.”

Saakashvili’s aim — to drag the US into a military confrontation with Russia — failed, but not without a reasonable expectation of substantial American support. McCain’s unforgettably stupid declaration that “[Today we are all Georgians](#)” reflected a bipartisan consensus in Washington that Big Bad Russia is trying to reabsorb its former satrap, and that Saakashvili is a Good Guy. The big problem with this equation is that the Georgian people had, by this time, had enough of “Misha.” Growing public dissatisfaction with the regime’s repressive methods — [political murders](#), [beatings of dissidents](#), [closing down opposition media](#) — led to massive street demonstrations in November, resulting in a crackdown: police fired on protesters, and an opposition television station was occupied by troops. Dissident media were “temporarily” banned.

The next elections were characterized by outright ballot-stuffing, intimidation, and threats against opposition activists, who were jailed and fired from their jobs. The OSCE [condemned](#) the balloting. The country was rocked by protests, resulting in more confrontations on the streets of Tbilisi between opposition activists and police. This week’s election was marked by open bias in the government-controlled media, threats against government employees who refused to support Saakashvili, and the above-mentioned interventions by US-funded “pro-democracy” organizations — all to no avail.

The final blow against Saakashvili was delivered by a video showing disgusting abuse of prisoners in a Georgian prison. An arrest warrant was issued for the prison guard who leaked the video: he has since sought political [asylum](#) abroad. In spite of official acclaim for the “democratic reformer” Saakashvili, the horrific conditions in Georgia’s prisons was well-known to human rights groups: that didn’t stop the US government from sending billions to their “democratic” sock puppet, however.

During the campaign, the regime's refrain was that Ivanishvili and his supporters are "traitors," "Russian agents" who want to deliver Georgia to Putin's tender mercies: this, indeed, has been his response to any and all internal critics who dared speak up. Georgian voters weren't buying it: yet it would be a mistake to think Saakashvili is going to fold up his tent and go quietly. He's [still the President](#), and while governmental reforms mean the powers of his office are slated to be reduced, with the switch to a parliamentary system, the transition has yet to take place.

Ivanishvili is calling on Saakashvili to resign, but that isn't going to happen. "Misha" will put every obstacle in the new government's way, and is doubtless at this moment planning his revenge. In the meantime, however, the oppressed people of Georgia mean to have *their* revenge — paving the way for a long, drawn out drama.

Saakashvili will always have his American apologists, including [this creep](#), who dismissed Ivanishvili's exposure of Georgia's authoritarian regime as "stories of pro-government voter suppression and opposition rhetoric that seemed to reject the institutions of government itself." Yes, the screams of the tortured dissidents coming from Georgia's dungeons are just the yelps of miscreant anarchists and Ron Paul supporters, according to this oily little neocon. Expect to hear more from Saakashvili's [well-compensated](#) American [fan club](#) as the deflowering of the "Rose Revolution" continues apace.