

NEWS

Ruling party postpones planned campaign rallies

To pay tribute to three Georgian Special Forces personnel killed in this week's August 29 clash, the ruling United National Movement (UNM) party has postponed its election campaign rallies in eleven cities throughout Georgia, including Tbilisi.

"We are sad about the death of our soldiers," Chiora Taktakishvili, spokesperson of UNM, said at a press conference on August 30. The rallies were planned for September 1 but will be organized on September 8 instead.

Solomon Tsiklauri, Archil Chokheli and Vladimer Khvedelidze died during the clash with an armed group close to the Russian-Georgian border. The incident also left 5 Georgian servicemen wounded.

OP-ED

The debate over the state system

By Archil Sikharulidze

On August 27, Georgian Dream Coalition leader Bidzina Ivanishvili unveiled some of the details of the ongoing debates inside the main Georgian oppositional force regarding Georgia's state system. During his pre-election campaign, Ivanishvili visited the city of Oni located in the western part of Georgia. According to the Georgian billionaire, there is no general agreement between members of the coalition on the state system which the Georgian Dream Coalition should promote in the case of victory in the parliamentary elections set for October 1.

Based upon the interview provided by the Georgian Dream Coalition leader, Our Georgia-Free Democrats prefer a presidential system of government, while the Republican Party favors a parliamentary system. As for Ivanishvili, he calls for political members of the Georgian Dream Coalition to postpone debates regarding the issue until the parliamentary elections have been held. Additionally, Ivanishvili said that he is

in favor of a parliamentary state system, but the decision has to be made by the Georgian public through a referendum.

The issue of the state system has been in the spotlight for a long time. According to the initial Georgian Constitution passed on August 24, 1995, Georgia is recognized as an independent democratic state with a strong president on the top. Opposition parties have argued that since the dismantling of the Soviet Union, Georgia has experienced failure with a presidential government.

A presidential system is a system of government where an executive branch is led by a president who serves as both head of state and head of government. In such a system, this branch exists separately from the legislature, to which it is not responsible and which it cannot, in normal circumstances, dismiss.

The first president of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, was overthrown by Eduard Shevardnadze; later on Shevardnadze was toppled by Mikhail Saakashvili as a result of a chain of political rallies that made up the Rose Revolution. Lastly, Saakashvili has been charged by some Georgian NGOs and international organizations with abusing power. The international community forced the Georgian government to redistribute the reins of power and make the decision-making process more transparent and democratic.

Consequently, the Parliament of Georgia passed amendments to the Constitution of Georgia on October, 2010. According to the changes, the Republic of Georgia will transform from a presidential government to semi-presidential state system in 2013.

The semi-presidential system is a system of government in which a presi-

dent and a prime minister are both active participants in the day-to-day administration of the state. It differs from a parliamentary republic in that it has a popularly elected head of state who is more than a purely ceremonial figurehead, and from the presidential system

A parliamentary system is a system of democratic government in which the ministers of the executive branch get their legitimacy from a legislature and are accountable to that parliamentarian body, so that the executive and legislative branches are intertwined.

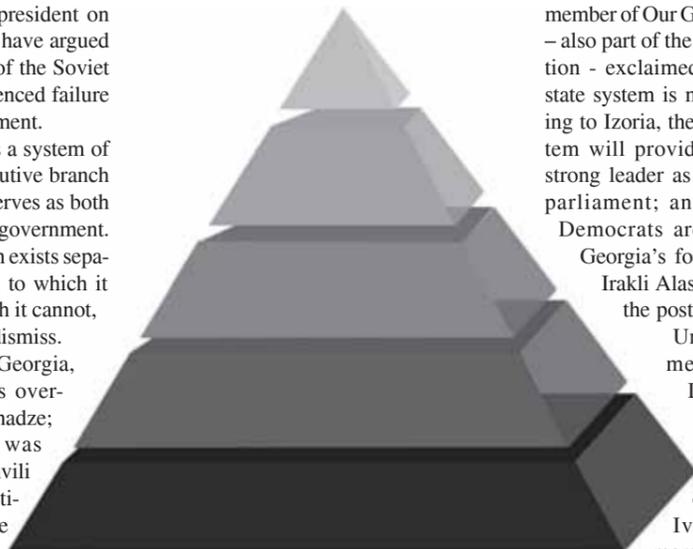
On the other hand, Levan Izoria, a member of Our Georgia-Free Democrats – also part of the Georgian dream coalition – exclaimed that the presidential state system is more relevant. According to Izoria, the presidential state system will provide the country with a strong leader as well as an influential parliament; and Our Georgia-Free Democrats are ready to nominate Georgia's former UN Ambassador Irakli Alasania as a candidate on the post of the president.

United National Movement PM Davit Darchiashvili disapproved the debate ongoing among the opposition forces. He called for Bidzina Ivanishvili to "learn more" about the essence of

politics and state structures. According to Darchiashvili, the coalition's billionaire leader can't discern the difference between politics and business.

Avtandil Demetrashvili, who is the author of the newest amendments to the Constitution, also expressed doubts regarding the approval of a state system via a referendum. According to Demetrashvili, the state system issue is "too comprehensive and complicated" to be solved via a referendum.

All in all, it seems that the disputes regarding the state system issue will stay on the table until a majority political force and civil society agrees on a single choice through a constructive dialog.



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