

“Friendly” Fire

On 6 May 2025, the U.S. House of Representatives adopted the [MEGOBARI Act](#) with 80% support. While MEGOBARI stands for “Mobilizing and Enhancing Georgia’s Options for Building Accountability, Resilience, and Independence,” it also means “friend” in the Georgian language, underlying the authors’ intent of applying tough love.

Votes and Numbers

Voting patterns and numbers always tell an interesting story. Of the 349 members who voted in favor, 168 were Republicans and 181 were Democrats. Meanwhile, 42 representatives voted against the measure—34 Republicans and eight Democrats—and another 42 did not vote at all. In the current composition of the House of Representatives, there are 220 Republicans and 213 Democrats. The quorum for passing legislation stands at 218 votes. Among those who opposed the measure were several progressive Democrats, including Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), Rep. Ayanna

Pressley (D-MA), Rep. Summer Lee (D-PA), and Rep. Delia Ramirez (D-IL). Also voting “no” were Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-NY), who has consistently expressed opposition to unilateral US sanctions, and Rep. Hank Johnson (D-GA), well-known for disliking Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC), the bill’s main champion.

Republicans who voted against the Act are primarily [known](#) for their anti-Ukrainian stance, including Reps. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) and Lauren Boebert (R-CO). Some are just freshmen without clear foreign policy agendas.

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Overall, it appears the majority of the Act’s opponents represent either the ultra-left or the ultra-right fringes of the American political establishment. For a sharply divided Congress, con-



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The bill's official title - “To Counter the Influence of the Chinese Communist Party, the Iranian Regime, and the Russian Federation in the Nation of Georgia” - sets the tone and explains the reasoning for the legislation. All three nations have long been considered America's principal adversaries; thus, keeping Georgia on the Western fold is a clear goal of U.S. foreign policy. The bill explicitly states that “the consolidation of democracy in Georgia is critical for regional stability and United States national interests.” At the same time, the title rejects the notion of Georgia as “Russia’s backyard” - a narrative Russia has fiercely promoted - and implies that the current Georgian regime, against the will of its population, is dragging the country into the camp of America's adversaries.

It is important to note that the bill's Statement of Policy questions the legitimacy of Georgia's current regime. Section 4, Paragraph 11 states: “Call on the Government of Georgia to thoroughly investigate all allegations emerging from the recent national elections, which took place in October 2024, make a determination on whether or not the elections should be judged as illegitimate and hold those responsible for interference in the elections.” Translated from diplomatic language, this essentially means “we are unsure how legitimate you are.”

The shorter title of the bill - “Mobilizing and En-

hancing Georgia's Options for Building Accountability, Resilience, and Independence Act” or the MEGOBARI Act - is self-explanatory. Simply put, Georgia is on the wrong trajectory, and the U.S. intends to support its population through a concrete set of actions.

In terms of methodology and practicality, the bill emphasizes sanctioning individuals, including officials from the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, deemed to be undermining Georgia's prior democratic achievements, good governance, and independence. The initial list [floated](#) by Rep. Wilson on his X account includes almost a full list of top decision-makers in the Georgian Dream hierarchy but also reaches judges, heads of various “independent” agencies, and propaganda instruments.

As stated in the bill's official summary: “This bill requires the President to impose sanctions upon certain foreign persons, including Georgian government officials, who are undermining Georgia's security or stability.

Specifically, the bill requires the President to impose visa-blocking sanctions and authorizes the President to impose property-blocking sanctions on any foreign person the President determines is involved with actions or policies to undermine Georgia's security or stability. Immediate family members of a sanctioned individual are also subject to these sanctions if they benefited from the sanctioned individual's conduct.

The bill also requires the President to impose visa-blocking sanctions on the following foreign persons if the President determines such persons knowingly engaged in significant acts of corruption or acts of violence or intimidation in relation to the blocking of Euro-Atlantic integration in Georgia.”

Additionally, the bill mandates visa-blocking sanctions on foreign persons who knowingly engage in

significant acts of corruption or violence/intimidation to obstruct Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration.

Notably, the sanctions will apply not only to individuals but also to their immediate family members. Sanctions extend beyond travel bans to include the freezing of assets directly or indirectly owned under U.S. jurisdiction.

While the bill questions cooperation with the Georgian government, it clearly states continued support for civil society, independent media, and humanitarian assistance, which is exempt from sanctions.

The bill empowers the White House, the Department of State, and USAID to implement its stated goals. While interagency coordination is essential, it is often slowed by differing methodologies and institutional interests. Recently, former senator and now distinguished Trump administration official, Marco Rubio, has assumed a unique dual role as both National Security Advisor and Secretary of State - a combination not seen since Henry Kissinger. This combination makes him the chief National Security Advisor and the chief Foreign Policy Advisor to the President. With USAID now part of the State Department, Secretary Rubio holds sweeping authority over implementation. This consolidation may reduce interagency friction and expedite policy execution.

Although the bill is valid for five years (a sunset clause), it introduces specific time-bound benchmarks for engagement, reporting, and action.

U.S. legislative procedures require the Senate to consider the bill before it reaches the President. Typically, it takes two to three weeks for Senate approval. Still, on 27 March 2025, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee endorsed the bill in its current form, greatly increasing its chances of swift passage.

Carrots

The bill is designed as a “carrot and stick” mechanism. It allows the Georgian leadership to reverse course and adjust policies. However, failure to address U.S. concerns may trigger the full enactment of sanctions.

The MEGOBARI Act outlines a series of incentives the United States is prepared to offer Georgia—should the country recommit itself to democratic reform and its Euro-Atlantic path. At the heart of the Act is a clear message: if Georgia makes “significant and sustained progress” in reviving democratic standards, the U.S. is ready to respond with deeper political, economic, and defense cooperation. These are not abstract promises. They include tangible benefits such as liberalizing the visa regime, expanding academic exchanges, increasing defense assistance, and opening new economic opportunities through enhanced trade frameworks.

In the educational and people-to-people sphere, the MEGOBARI Act envisions a scaling-up of academic exchanges—potentially allowing hundreds or even thousands of Georgian students to study at U.S. universities. It also encourages closer professional and cultural ties across sectors. On the security front, the Act calls for maintaining and, where appropriate, expanding defense cooperation with Georgia, including the provision of defensive military equipment tailored to counter Russian aggression. This also extends to broader support in de-occupation efforts—whether through financial assistance, diplomatic backing, or joint security programs.

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In return, the United States asks for something basic: that Georgia restore democratic standards to a minimal threshold of credibility. A rational government would use the U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Charter and its four bilateral working groups to advance these goals year after year. Instead, the Georgian Dream has abandoned this framework, dismantling existing cooperation platforms and jeopardizing the very opportunities that serve the interests of the Georgian people. The MEGOBARI Act reminds us what is still possible—if Georgia chooses to turn back toward its democratic and Euro-Atlantic path.

Timing and Purpose

The bill was [first introduced](#) on 23 May 2024 by Congressman Joe Wilson, chair of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, in response to Georgia's adoption of the Russian-style "foreign agents" law ("On Transparency of Foreign Influence"). With the upcoming U.S. presidential elections, most members of Congress appeared to defer the issue to the incoming administration and Congress, avoiding the appearance of a "last-minute legacy."

It is notable that the House vote occurred shortly after the first 100 days of the new administration, during which foreign policy priorities became clearer. China is now viewed as the main U.S. challenger and a target in the emerging "tariff war." Simultaneously, the Trump administration is becoming more realistic toward Russia, with President Trump openly acknowledging the need to pressure Russia into a peace deal with Ukraine. Iran and its proxies are also seen as obstacles to Middle East peace under Trump's "Abraham Accords" initiative.

Thus, the bill's focus on China, Iran, and Russia is no coincidence. The Georgian leadership has demonstrably aligned with China, contrary to public sentiment favoring Western integration. This shift

is evident not only in official statements and frequent visits to China but also in major infrastructure decisions—such as selecting a Chinese company over U.S. or European firms for the Anaklia deep seaport. Georgia remains the only viable access point to resource-rich, landlocked Central Asia, where Chinese influence is rapidly growing. If Georgia is locked into the Russo-Chinese orbit, so too will be Central Asia.

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Ample evidence [suggests](#) that Georgia has become one of the hubs for undermining Western sanctions on Russia. Eroding these sanctions and benefiting from it appears to be the "economic policy" for the current Georgian regime. As President Trump considers tightening sanctions on Russia, Georgia's mercantilist policies are increasingly intolerable. Georgian territory is actively used by Russian intelligence agencies for malign operations targeting opposition figures and pro-Western actors, compounding challenges for the West.

The same applies to Georgia's cooperation with Iran. Georgia has become a base for anti-Israeli activity. A [foiled](#) assassination attempt on Mr. Itsik Moshe, head of the Georgia-Israel Chamber of Commerce, points toward Iranian involvement. Unlike prior Georgian governments that disrupted Iranian smuggling networks, the current regime appears more accommodating to Iranian-linked enterprises.

Against this backdrop, the MEGOBARI Act increasingly looks like a key instrument in the U.S. foreign policy toolkit.

Reactions

Passage of the bill by the House sparked celebration and renewed hope among Georgia's pro-Western forces who see it as a result (among other reasons) of their tenacious resistance, endured humiliation, exuberant fines, physical assaults, arrests, and continuous street protests for more than 160 consecutive days. For them, international pressure and sanctions are crucial to countering a regime that has reversed Georgia's pro-Western and democratic trajectory. Their hopes are echoed in bipartisan U.S. statements, such as those from the Helsinki Commission, [describing](#) the bill as an "effort to help restore Georgian democracy." Rep. Wilson even proposed a comprehensive, although not exhaustive, list of potential sanction targets, including senior officials across Georgia's government.

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Meanwhile, Georgia's ruling regime is less celebratory. Traditional narratives blaming an international cabal - dubbed by misinterpreted jargon, like "the party of war" or "deep state" - are losing traction. The regime clings to the hope that the Senate will not pass the bill or the President will not sign it, buying time without clear signs of policy reversal. The Georgian Dream's leaders even went as far as to argue that the Act was a hostile act towards Georgia.

Ironically, the Georgian Dream is right about one thing: the MEGOBARI Act is indeed an unfriendly step—toward them. But it is a profoundly friend-

ly act toward the Georgian people. The message is unambiguous: the Georgian Dream and its oligarchic leadership are adversaries of the United States with all the consequences that follow; the Georgian people, by contrast, are seen as friends and allies, with all the opportunities that entail.

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Until now, Western reactions to Georgia's backsliding have come in the form of warnings, aid freezes, halted interstate cooperation, and travel restrictions mainly targeting unnamed individuals. So far, the regime seems to digest such "inconveniences" and has tightened its grip against any sort of opposition by adding more restrictive legislation and more punitive actions. This time may be different. Sanctions targeting a broad range of enforcers and their families may finally disincentivize repression, creating cracks in the regime's already fragile but still functional punitive apparatus.

A potential image of President Trump signing the bill into law could turn the Georgian Dream into a foreign policy nightmare. Normally, we might say "the clock is ticking," but judging by the regime's reaction, they do not hear - or do not want to hear - the sound. If it is not a clock, surely it is an hourglass, flipped 180 degrees. We will likely know within 180 days how long the sand will fall ■