
GEORGIAN DREAM PROPOSES ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY AS STATE RELIGION IN PLOY TO RETAIN POWER

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On August 27, the ruling Georgian Dream party proposed strengthening the constitutional status of the Georgian Orthodox Church and declaring Orthodox Christianity as the state religion (Formula News, August 27; OC-Media, August 28). According to the current constitution, Georgia is a secular state, though Orthodoxy is the countrys largest and historically dominant religion. The constitution states, The State shall recognize the outstanding role of the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia in the history of Georgia and its independence from the State (The Constitution of Georgia, accessed September 4). Georgian Dream has been conducting behind-the-scenes consultations with the Patriarchate, the administrative body of the Georgian Church, about the declaration of Orthodox Christianity as the state religion. The church, however, has expressed skepticism over the proposal. Giorgi Zviadadze, the official representative of the Patriarchate, stated that the declaration of Orthodoxy as the state religion is connected with a process of mutual subordination, which is unacceptable for the church (TV Pirveli, August 28). With this proposal, Georgian Dream aims to gain favor and increased support from the church for the upcoming parliamentary elections in October. Over 80 percent of the Georgian population identify as Orthodox Christians, and, by showing state support for the church, Georgian Dream hopes to sway the Georgian population in its favor, though the proposal may end up backfiring on the ruling party.

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