

Georgian Parliament Curbs Powers of Rival President

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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TBILISI — Georgia's parliamentary majority, led by Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, voted to curb the powers of President Mikheil Saakashvili, adding to tensions between the two rivals locked in a bitter cohabitation in the Caucasus nation.

Georgia has been in a state of political tension since Ivanishvili and his Georgian Dream coalition won parliamentary elections last October.

The 57-year-old billionaire has been trying to assert his supremacy over Saakashvili, 45, whose presidential term ends later this year.

On Monday, the parliament unanimously passed a motion to make constitutional changes stripping the president of authority to dismiss the government and parliament.

"With this constitutional amendment the parliament restored its power, and I want

to congratulate the Georgian people on that," speaker and Ivanishvili ally David Usupashvili said.

Critics of Saakashvili, who rose to power in the 2003 Rose Revolution that swept out Georgia's post-Soviet old guard, have accused him of centralizing power and stifling civil society.

The amendment was backed Monday by lawmakers loyal to the president, who must sign off on the change for it to take effect and is widely expected to do so.

The Western-educated Saakashvili has said he did not plan to dismiss the cabinet, but Ivanishvili allies pushed for the change to make sure he could not do so.

The president retains the right to return laws to parliament for revision.

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