



The Strategic Hedging Dilemma: Unraveling Georgia-NATO Relations

Peter N. Jones¹

Georgia's relationship with NATO has grown less secure in recent months. Once among the West's closest partners, Tbilisi has, both in terms of rhetoric and action, scaled back its drive towards NATO integration. Meanwhile, at the 2023 Vilnius summit, NATO formally decoupled the question of Georgian membership from that of Ukraine, breaking up a diplomatic tandem that had existed since 2008. This policy memo seeks to identify the causes of this chilling in relations by analyzing influences on each side. It finds that the Georgian government operates under specific conditions that incentivize divergence from NATO. Additionally, years of stalled progress due to a lack of enthusiasm among many NATO member states has engendered a pessimistic view of the prospects for Georgian membership that could fuel Russia-aligned, propagandistic narratives and drag Tbilisi further away from the alliance.

Small states caught between great-power competition tend to build volatility into their foreign policy strategies. These pressures also apply to Georgia, though until recently the country has tended to plot an unambiguously pro-Western foreign policy course as part of a "balancing" strategy against Russia as the regional hegemonic power. More generally, however, buffer states tend to employ "strategic hedging," which denotes "a bundle of

¹ Peter N. Jones is an intern at the Georgian Institute of Politics and an undergraduate student at Harvard University

opposite and deliberately ambiguous policies vis-à-vis competing powers to prepare a fallback position” (Efremova 113, 2019). Applied to the Georgian context, this strategy would envisage a more multi-vector foreign policy stance than Georgia has traditionally held, threading the needle between the interests of Russia, Turkey, and the West. In theory, “strategic hedging” favors long-term self-preservation despite frustrating powerful actors – like NATO and Russia – in the short term.

The shift in Georgia’s geopolitical stance from one of unambiguous pro-Western orientation to a more ambiguous stance could be characterized as Georgia shifting to a more cryptic “strategic hedging” strategy. This has manifested itself primarily in reform slowdowns and messaging tone shifts, complicating the optimal response of Western partners. Even as Georgian foreign policy spokespeople have maintained an explicitly pro-Western facade, Tbilisi’s progress on the political reforms necessary to secure NATO membership has stalled (Koridze 2023). Meanwhile, its leaders have issued inflammatory statements that seemingly contradict the state’s stated goal of integration into the alliance. A democratization and Westernization process that once promised Georgian citizens some relief from the threat of Russian aggression has taken a series of critical, and otherwise avoidable, political hits that risk perpetuating Georgia’s insecurity.

When analysts discuss Georgia’s “balancing act” between Russia and the West (Karelska 2022), they are identifying Tbilisi’s risky strategic hedging doctrine. This doctrine is, however, often characterized as reactionary, or as a form of appeasing the Kremlin. Such a characterization is misplaced; Georgia’s strategic hedging instead reflects a pre-conceived strategy to place Georgia in a purportedly ideal position when the Russia-Ukraine war ends. This said, certain exogenous and endogenous factors influence this behavior, with the effect of either pulling Georgia and NATO apart or pushing them closer together.

The results of the recent NATO summit in Vilnius raise the stakes of Georgian policy. Georgia left the summit with only a reaffirmation of NATO’s previously stated commitments, while Ukraine, long its accession partner, received a streamlined and revitalized membership promise. Ukraine’s security situation may be more fragile, but from the Georgian government’s perspective – with Russian military forces occupying Georgian territory a mere 60 kilometers northwest of Tbilisi – its near-total absence from the Vilnius agenda could catalyze a further retreat from cooperation with the West. These conditions prompt the following questions: What are the influences upon Georgia’s ambiguous foreign

policy regarding NATO? And in a post-Vilnius context, what long-term implications might they pose?

Veering Off Track

At the 2008 NATO Bucharest summit, both Georgia and Ukraine received identical commitments of eventual membership, and ever since, Georgia has maintained close collaboration with the alliance. In lieu of a Membership Action Plan (MAP), NATO offered Georgia an Annual National Programme (ANP) just after the Bucharest Commitment, establishing a yearly means of reviewing Georgia's progress on political reforms, and quickly deepened several military partnerships (Rybarczyk 2022). Perhaps most significant of all, NATO updated its 2014 Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP) in 2020 to offer practical support and bolster "interoperability" between Georgian defense forces and the alliance (NATO 2023). Though far from a MAP, the updated SNGP was a notable inducement and bolstered not only Georgia's defense capabilities—with 15 support areas across all military services—but, crucially, potential integration of the Georgian military into NATO. In a post-2022 context, this capacity building helps reduce the existential nature of the Russian threat and thereby draws Georgia closer to the West.

In recent months, however, it seems that the good-faith partnership between Tbilisi and the alliance has faltered. What was once a NATO-aspirant dyad of two West-oriented fledgling states, Ukraine and Georgia, has disintegrated; despite Moscow's active military presence in the territory of both, it appears that the Georgian government has lost some enthusiasm for NATO.

This cooldown in relations has manifested itself in Georgia's drop-off in progress toward NATO-mandated reforms like those under the ANP (Civil Georgia 2022). Western partners have castigated Georgia's lack of political will in areas such as media freedom, "de-oligarchization," and reducing the perception of alignment with Russia, NATO's most pressing adversary. In fact, even Georgia's purported remedies have elicited Western ire: The Georgian Dream (GD) anti-oligarch law's subjective definition of oligarch suggested it would target opposition businesspeople, rather than reduce the political power of Georgia's wealthiest man, billionaire and GD founder Bidzina Ivanishvili (Kinchka 2022). Accordingly, in June of this year, the EU said it was "better not to adopt the bill" (JAMnews 2023).

Moreover, even political-military relations may be stalling. NATO holds joint military exercises to project its willingness to “defend every inch of Allied territory” (NATO 2023). Georgia skipped the multinational DEFENDER 2023 exercises, citing “expenses,” yet former Defense Minister Tina Khidasheli doubted this motive and said that participation costs Georgia nothing (Gogotishvili 2023). If this backsliding persists, then both the values-based and political-military dimensions of Georgia-NATO relations will work in concert to counteract Georgian accession. At present, the resilience of political-military technocratic cooperation mitigates the harm of Georgia’s stalling values-based reform agenda. Without this, relations would fall further into jeopardy.

The most striking way in which Georgia has departed from its traditional policy towards NATO is in the rhetoric of its officials towards the alliance. This has gone as far as repeating narratives on NATO more commonly associated with the Kremlin than those of hitherto staunchly pro-Western Georgia. Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, for example, stated at a security forum in May that “NATO expansion” was “one of the main reasons” for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (Gavin 2023), which elicited a harsh reaction from NATO Special Representative Javier Colomina. NATO is “concerned about the reaction of certain representatives of the parliament and government,” responded Colomina, who added that Georgia and NATO must together “stand ... with Ukraine” (Gogotishvili 2023).

Clearly, Georgia-NATO friction has accelerated at an inopportune moment. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has necessitated more urgency in focusing on European collective defense, and Georgia, defying its NATO-supportive public, risks missing its chance at integration.

Identifying Georgia’s Non-Integration Incentives

It is prudent to identify the ways in which Euro-Atlantic integration opposes powerful Georgian interests. The actions that follow from these incentives—detailed in the previous section—have contributed to NATO policymakers’ souring on Georgia. Because Western integration demands concessions on these interests, Georgia is primed to resist full implementation of Western reforms, influenced by these “pull” factors.

Economic Factors

The first major influence in this regard is the one with the broadest influence on the country as a whole: refraining from imposing stronger sanctions on Russia carries obvious short-

term benefits for the Georgian economy. The Western multilateral sanctions program designed to isolate the Russian war economy has been largely ineffective. When the West stopped exporting to Russia, the Kremlin found other willing partners. China and Turkey filled most of the post-invasion import gap, but Georgia appeared alongside Kazakhstan and Iran in the list of countries whose exports to Russia increased by at least 25% in the eight months after the invasion began (Holder et al 2023).

NATO members—and the broader West—noticed. A team of Western sanctions officials visited Tbilisi in mid-June, seeking to ensure that Georgia would not render their anti-Russian sanctions program obsolete. Their assessment was positive: Officials acknowledged that Georgia was upholding its “serious obligations” to avoid Russian sanction circumvention (Agenda.ge 2023).

The facts may run deeper, however. Giorgi Muchaidze, former Georgian Deputy Defense Minister, noted in an interview, “Western officials still aren’t exactly sure what’s happening; there are suspicions and question marks” (Jones and Muchaidze 2023).

For example, a recent report alleged that the Georgian government used taxpayer money to purchase a fleet of Kamaz trucks after the war began. The Russian state owns 49% of Kamaz and uses its vehicles against Ukraine and the West sanctions Kamaz accordingly (Kroll 2023). Such a purchase would constitute sanction-evasion and pose a double threat to Georgian accession, not only opposing the will of NATO member states but signaling favoritism toward Russia over NATO. The first offense represents another reform lapse, while the second could motivate an alliance-wide rejection of Georgian membership.

Georgian economic dependence on Russia has grown since the invasion of Ukraine. A February 2023 independent report found that, in 2022, Georgia accrued \$3.6 billion USD in income from Russia, triple the 2021 figure, and remittances from Russia to Georgia grew fivefold (Transparency International 2023). This growing dependence portends one of two ramification-laden scenarios. Firstly, Georgia might be covertly but consciously aligning itself with Russia, both politically and economically, ultimately at the cost of Georgia-NATO relations. Second, and perhaps more likely, economic dependence on Russia could stem from opportunism and necessity, ultimately undermining Georgian economic stability if Georgia-NATO relations improve again and force a sudden economic disengagement from Russia.

Power Consolidation

A second factor is the NATO-mandated political and economic liberalization that potentially threatens the current Georgian government's power. Freedom House notes Georgia's culture of "political antagonism and illiberal tactics." The Washington-based organization rated Georgia's "democratic governance" 2.25 out of 7 (Freedom House 2023).

In stark contrast with this on-the-ground Georgian reality, NATO holds that an "essential" membership criterion for aspirant nations is a commitment to "uphold[ing] democracy" (U.S. Department of State 1997). Democratic countries, as NATO recognizes, are generally less receptive to Kremlin influence (Katz and Taussig 2018). Granted, neither Hungary nor Turkey are models of democracy, but both secured membership in a prior era.

The current Georgian government has displayed authoritarian tendencies and pursued illiberal policies in recent months. The high-profile "foreign agents bill" and the refusal to deal with entrenched corruption in the Georgian judiciary are examples of this. A prominent anti-corruption coalition stated in June that several Georgian judges are "in alliance with the government and [make] decisions ... to achieve narrow political goals" (Civil Georgia 2023). These circumstances reflect the importance of holding onto power for the current Georgian government and present a major barrier to the country's NATO accession.

Parliamentary opposition members agree; many, including Defense and Security Committee Deputy Chair Teona Akubardia, say the Georgian government is not faithfully implementing democratic reforms because it would compromise their grip on power (Jones and Akubardia 2023). Recent democracy-related concerns underscore these assertions. At minimum, given the illiberal GD track record, the intrinsic value of a free, pluralistic society is unlikely to motivate NATO reforms; at maximum, the GD actively avoids reform implementation because they hinder the use of repressive political tools.

NATO Withdrawal Could Fuel Anti-Western Populism

For the above reasons, NATO member-state representatives have recently criticized Georgia's reliability, indicating that recent Georgian actions constitute an endogenous "pull" factor (Jozwiak 2023). However, considering the West's inaction amid the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and snowballing Eurosceptic rhetoric from the Georgian government, any

NATO move away from Georgia might further drive Tbilisi into the arms of Russia, inflicting strategic harm on broad Western interests. As former U.S. diplomats Ian Kelly and David J. Kramer predicted: “Unless the West takes action quickly, we may be asking, ‘Who lost Georgia?’” (Kelly and Kramer 2023).

Vilnius Decouples Ukraine and Georgia

Georgia’s and Ukraine’s dual receipt of the Bucharest commitment in 2008 was based on their commonalities. For a considerable period, discussion of one country’s membership hopes brought discussion of the other (Agenda.ge 2021).

This changed when the Vilnius summit ended with drastically different outcomes for Ukraine and Georgia. In the summit communiqué, NATO declared that “Ukraine’s path to full Euro-Atlantic integration has moved beyond the need for [MAP]” and Ukraine may join once “Allies agree and conditions are met.” The decision was significant and streamlined Ukraine’s path to membership.

Georgia fared differently. After asserting the continued relevance of the ANP to Georgian membership, the alliance merely reiterated the Bucharest Commitment and said Georgia “must” make reform progress, a sharper tone than before (NATO 2023). Furthermore, NATO did not, as it has since 2016, reaffirm that Georgia-NATO relations contain sufficient “tools to prepare for membership” (Civil Georgia 2023).

Catalyzing Further Decline

A protracted sense of hopelessness regarding Georgian membership will provide ammunition to Eurosceptic voices and lower the cost of engagement with Russia. Consequently, analysts expect greater perceived isolation to result from the decoupling (Jones and Kakachia). This isolation—with its accompanying security risks—will provoke additional vitriol akin to the prime minister’s anti-NATO remarks, potentially angering the alliance even more. The GD has long used the West’s relative inaction when Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 to justify its stance. Extended NATO indifference may create another emotional weak spot to exploit.

GD leaders, including Speaker of the Georgian Parliament Shalva Papuashvili, have already incorporated the alliance’s apparent detachment into their populist remarks. Papuashvili compared Western passivity during the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia to NATO’s

involvement with Ukraine and criticized the West for calling on Georgia to “act boldly” without sufficient security guarantees (Georgia Today 2023).

Papuashvili’s statements, and others like them, reflect what U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Walter Landgraf calls “NATO fatigue,” which Landgraf connects to MAP-less “consolation prizes” (Kucera 2023). This fatigue—even if disingenuous—threatens future relations between NATO and Georgia. As experts note, the recent cooling of relations could be a tool for GD NATO-sceptics eager to compromise key pillars of Georgia-NATO relations, especially in terms of undermining broad public support for the alliance in Georgian society (Jones and Kutelia 2023). And with parliamentary elections on the horizon, manipulation of public opinion will grow more lucrative.

This element introduces dangerous volatility into Georgia-NATO relations. As Georgia backslides on NATO cooperation, the resultant NATO withdrawal will then enable Eurosceptics to use “NATO fatigue” against the West. This process could create a feedback loop and more alienation in Georgia-NATO relations. That is, Georgian anti-NATO rhetoric and failure to reform will lead NATO to further withdraw, in turn eliciting more of the former and repeating until halted by concrete policy change.

Conclusion

Georgia-NATO relations may be cooling but are not yet beyond the point of no return. This memo sought to identify exogenous disincentives for the Georgian government to cooperate with NATO and detailed the ways in which these Georgian “pull factors” – chiefly economic dependence on Russia and illiberal power-consolidation – motivate a stance of defying NATO, potentially creating a destructive feedback loop.

Although the strategic hedging doctrine ostensibly promotes long-term survival at the expense of short-term bilateral relations, Tbilisi must recognize that in Georgia’s case, its long- and short-term fates are inextricably linked. As this paper has established, given the conditions that dictate Georgia-NATO relations, for Georgia to further frustrate NATO could set off a chain reaction that provokes a more permanent Georgia-NATO break and thereby serious long-term security risks for Tbilisi. This outcome appears somewhat probable, given that the Georgian government’s non-integration incentives sap it of the

political will to credibly align its policies with the West. As such, Georgian civil society actors favoring Euro-Atlantic integration should first target the strength of these incentives, for only under conditions in which the underlying incentives shift considerably might the Georgian government develop the political will for good-faith Western solidarity.

Cryptic policies vis-à-vis two competing powers may work elsewhere, but for Georgia, a vulnerable state seeking a Western escape route from the Russian military threat, it is unsustainable to proclaim a desire for a Western future while also placating the Kremlin. As the Russo-Ukraine war reinforces NATO's defensive cohesion and thereby solidifies the divide between Russia and the West, effective strategic hedging will soon become impossible. Tbilisi will need to demonstrate – with actions, not hollow declarations – that it wishes to align itself with the West.

References

- Agenda.ge. 2020. NDI Poll: 82% of Georgians Support EU, 74%- NATO Membership. 16 Jan. Available at: agenda.ge/en/news/2020/146. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Agenda.ge. 2021. US Reaffirms Support for Georgia, Ukraine to Become NATO Members. Available at: agenda.ge/en/news/2021/3766. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Agenda.ge. 2023. EU, UK, US Sanctions Officials Highlight Georgian Gov't's 'Great Job' in Preventing Circumvention of Russian Sanctions in Tbilisi Visit. Available at: agenda.ge/en/news/2023/2548. Accessed on: July 12, 2023. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Amuedo-Dorantes, Catalina. 2014. The Good and the Bad in Remittance Flows. *Institute of Labor Economics*, Nov. Available at: wol.iza.org/uploads/articles/97/pdfs/good-and-bad-in-remittance-flows.pdf. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Atlantic Council. 2023. NATO Public Forum. July. Available at: www.atlanticcouncil.org/event/2023-nato-public-forum/. Accessed on: July 13, 2023.
- Baranowski, Michał. 2023. Very Impressive Opening from Lithuanian FM @GLandsbergis 'There Is a Consensus in NATO That Ukraine Will Be in the Alliance - If We Are Honest, This Consensus Didn't Exist in Bucharest. Vilnius Summit Is a "Bridge" to an Even More Historic Summit in Washington D.C. Next Year. *Twitter*, 12 July. Available at: twitter.com/M_Baranowski/status/1679070758473981952?s=20. Accessed on: July 13, 2023.
- Camut, Nicolas. 2023. 'Ridiculous' to Rope Georgia into Western Sanctions against Russia, PM Says. *POLITICO*, 24 May. Available at: www.politico.eu/article/economic-sanctions-from-georgia-would-not-affect-russias-economy-pm-says/. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Cathcart, Will. 2022. Georgia's Ruling Party Is Tanking Its Own NATO Bid. *Foreign Policy*, 8 Aug. Available at: foreignpolicy.com/2022/08/08/georgia-nato-eu-russia/. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Chkhikvadze, Ani. 2019. Former NATO Chief Suggests German Model for Georgia to Join Alliance. *VOA*, 11 Sept. Available at: www.voanews.com/a/europe_former-nato-chief-suggests-german-model-georgia-join-alliance/6175632.html. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Civic Idea. 2023. New Security Architecture in Europe and Its Impact on Georgia - One Year since European Perspective. 15 June. Available at: civicidea.ge/en/new-security-architecture-in-europe-and-its-impact-on-georgia-one-year-since-european-perspective/project/. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Civil Georgia. 2022. Deoligarchization Campaign Aimed at 'discrediting' Governance System, Says PM. 13 July. Available at: civil.ge/archives/500216. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Civil Georgia. 2022. Georgian Prime Minister's NATO Remarks Stir Controversy. 22 June. Available at: civil.ge/archives/497257. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Civil Georgia. 2022. NATO Concerned Over Georgia's 'Stalled' Reforms. 8 May. Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/489415>. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Civil Georgia. 2023. Coalition for Independent and Transparent Judiciary Supports US Sanctions on Judges. 6 Apr. Available at: civil.ge/archives/536388. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Civil Georgia. 2023. Georgia in NATO Vilnius Summit Communiqué. July 2023. Available at: civil.ge/archives/551834. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Civil Georgia. 2023. Javier Colomina: Georgia Should Be Ready for the Decisive Moment. 25 May. Available at: civil.ge/archives/544172. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.

- Efremova, Ksenia. 2019. Small States in Great Power Politics: Understanding the 'Buffer Effect.' *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, 20 pp. 100–121. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.51870/cejiss.a130102>. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- European Council of the European Union. 2023. Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation. 10 Jan. Available at: www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/01/10/eu-nato-joint-declaration-10-january-2023/. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Freedom House. 2023. Georgia: Nations in Transit 2023 Country Report. Available at: freedomhouse.org/country/georgia/nations-transit/2023. Accessed on: July 12, 2023.
- Gavin, Gabriel. 2023. NATO Aspirant Country Blames NATO for Russia's War on Ukraine. *POLITICO*, 30 May. Available at: www.politico.eu/article/georgia-blame-nato-russia-war-ukraine/. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Georgia Today. 2023. The Repercussions of PM Garibashvili's Message to Europe and NATO. 1 June. Available at: georgiatoday.ge/the-repercussions-of-pm-garibashvilis-message-to-europe-and-nato/. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Gogotishvili, Teng. 2023. Georgia Sidesteps NATO in Risky Political Game. *Caravanserai*, 15 June. Available at: central.asia-news.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_ca/features/2023/06/15/feature-01. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Holder, Josh, et al. 2023. The West Tried to Isolate Russia. It Didn't Work. *The New York Times*, 23 Feb. Available at: www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/02/23/world/russia-ukraine-geopolitics.html. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- JAMnews. 2023. 'It Is Better Not to Adopt the Bill on Deoligarchization' - EU Delegation to Georgia. 14 June. Available at: jam-news.net/european-union-on-the-georgian-law-on-deoligarchization/. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Jozwiak, Rikard. 2023. Estonian PM Says NATO Membership Is the 'only Security Guarantee' for Ukraine, but Rules out Offer While Fighting Continues. *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, 5 July. Available at: www.rferl.org/a/estonia-kallas-nato-ukraine/32489111.html#0_8_10089_8766_2710_249217664. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Kakachia, Kornely, et al. 2020. Game of (Open) Doors: NATO-Georgian Relations and Challenges for Sustainable Partnership. *Georgian Institute of Politics*, 29 Sept. Available at: gip.ge/publication-post/game-of-open-doors-nato-georgian-relations-and-challenges-for-sustainable-partnership/. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Karelska, Christine. 2022. Georgia's Balancing Act Between Russia and the West. *Visegrad Insight*, 24 November. Available at: <https://visegradinsight.eu/georgias-balancing-act-between-russia-and-the-west/>. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Katz, Jonathan, and Torrey Taussig. 2018. An inconvenient truth: Addressing democratic backsliding within NATO. *Brookings*, 10 July. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/an-inconvenient-truth-addressing-democratic-backsliding-within-nato/>. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Kincha, Shota. 2022. Georgian Dream's 'anti-Oligarchy Law' Set to Bypass Ivanishvili and Target His Rivals. *OC Media*, 11 Oct. Available at: oc-media.org/georgian-dreams-anti-oligarchy-law-set-to-bypass-ivanishvili-and-target-his-rivals/. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Kochladze, Manana, and Mariam Patsatsia. 2023. Putin-Style 'foreign Agent' Bill in Georgia Threatens Civil Society. *POLITICO*, 8 Mar. Available at: www.politico.eu/article/russia-vladimir-putin-style-foreign-agent-bill-in-georgia-threatens-civil-society/. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.

- Koridze, Nata. 2023. Georgia and NATO Ahead of Vilnius Summit: Where Did the Spark Go? *Civil Georgia*, 3 June. Available at: civil.ge/archives/546171#:~:text=Since%202019%20Georgia%20has%20not,the%20country%20tended%20to%20pursue. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Kramer, David J., and Ian Kelly. 2023. The Nation of Georgia's Democratic Future Is Slipping Away. *The Hill*, 25 Feb. Available at: thehill.com/opinion/international/3874004-the-nation-of-georgia-democratic-future-is-slipping-away/. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Kroll, Katharina. 2023. How EU Sanctions against Russia Are Failing. *DW Documentaries*, YouTube, 5 July. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7yofon22AM>. Accessed July 12, 2023.
- Kucera, Joshua. 2023. With Ukraine Poised for Closer NATO Relationship, Georgia Falls Further Behind. *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, 3 July. Available at: www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-nato-membership-georgia-falling-behind/32487545.html. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Landale, James, and James Gregory. 2023. NATO Summit: Allies Refuse to Give Ukraine Timeframe on Joining. *BBC News*, 11 July. Available at: www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-66167616. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Mandaria, Tornike. 2023. Georgia's de-Oligarchisation Bill 'Ineffective', Venice Commission Says. *Bne IntelliNews*, 13 June. Available at: www.intellinews.com/georgia-s-de-oligarchisation-bill-ineffective-venice-commission-says-281504/. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Menabde, Giorgi. 2022. Is De-Oligarchization of Georgia Possible? *Jamestown*, 14 Sept. Available at: jamestown.org/program/is-de-oligarchization-of-georgia-possible/. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- NATO. 2023. Relations with Georgia. 23 May. Available at: www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_38988.htm. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- NATO. 2023. Germany Hosts Biggest Ever Air Exercise of NATO Forces. 22 June. Available at: www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_215611.htm. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- NATO. 2023. Vilnius Summit Communiqué Issued by NATO Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Vilnius 11 July 2023. 11 July. Available at: www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Rasmussen, Anders Fogh, et al. 2023. NATO's Next Decade. *Foreign Policy*, 6 July. Available at: foreignpolicy.com/2023/07/06/nato-vilnius-summit-next-decade-ukraine-russia-china/. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Rybarczyk, Katarzyna. 2022. Georgia and NATO: Close Cooperation but No Membership. *EU Reporter*, 2 Aug. Available at: www.eureporter.co/world/georgia/2022/08/02/georgia-and-nato-close-cooperation-but-no-membership/. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.
- Seskuria, Natia. 2021. Russia's 'Hybrid Aggression' against Georgia: The Use of Local and External Tools. *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 21 Sept. Available at: www.csis.org/analysis/russias-hybrid-aggression-against-georgia-use-local-and-external-tools. Accessed on: July 20, 2023.
- Shatakishvili, Davit. 2023. Flight Resumption with Russia - Potential Consequences for Georgia. *GFSIS*. Available at: gfsis.org.ge/blog/view/1549. Accessed July 12, 2023.
- The Diplomatic Service of the European Union. The Twelve Priorities. Available at: www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/12%20Priorities.pdf. Accessed July 12, 2023.
- Transparency International. 2023. Georgia's Economic Dependence on Russia: Impact of the Russia-Ukraine War. Available at: transparency.ge/en/post/georgias-economic-dependence-russia-impact-russia-ukraine-war-1. Accessed on July 12, 2023.

U.S. Department of State. 1997. Minimum Requirements for NATO Membership. 30 June. Available at: 1997-2001.state.gov/regions/eur/fs_members.html. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.

World Bank. 2022. Personal Remittances, Received (% of GDP) | Data. Available at: data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS. Accessed on: July 14, 2023.

Interviews

Batu Kutelia, Former Georgian Ambassador to the United States of America. Online. 12 July 2023.

Giorgi Muchaidze, Former Deputy Defense Minister of Georgia. Online. 10 July 2023.

Giorgi Shaishmelashvili, Former Head of Defense Policy and Planning, Georgian Ministry of Defense. In person. 4 July 2023.

Irakli Porchkidze, Former Deputy National Security Advisor to the President of Georgia and Deputy Secretary of the National Security Council of Georgia. Online. 6 July 2023.

Kornely Kakachia, Professor of Political Science, Tbilisi State University, and Director of the Georgian Institute of Politics. Online. 4 July 2023.

Teona Akubardia MP, Parliamentarian and Deputy Secretary of the National Security Council of Georgia. In person. 4 July 2023.



საქართველოს პოლიტიკის ინსტიტუტი
GEORGIAN INSTITUTE OF POLITICS

Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP) is a Tbilisi-based non-profit, non-partisan, research and analysis organization. GIP works to strengthen the organizational backbone of democratic institutions and promote good governance and development through policy research and advocacy in Georgia.

This publication was produced in cooperation with the Open Society Georgia Foundation. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the Open Society Georgia Foundation and the Georgian Institute of Politics.

How to quote this document:

Peter N. Jones, *“The Strategic Hedging Dilemma: Unraveling Georgia-NATO Relations”* Policy Memo No. 69, Georgian Institute of Politics, July 2023

© Georgian Institute of Politics, 2023
13 Aleksandr Pushkin St, 0107 Tbilisi, Georgia
Tel: +995 599 99 02 12
Email: info@gip.ge
For more information, please visit
www.gip.ge