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Beyond the NATO Summit in Washington: Implications for Georgia

Since the 2008 Bucharest Summit, NATO and its member states have been fairly consistent in their response to Georgia's stated desire to join the alliance: "Georgia will become a member[...]with the Membership Action Plan as an integral part of the process." Georgia's bid for NATO membership has been taken seriously, and was for quite some time assessed as growing closer to meeting the standards of NATO. Multiple cooperative projects have been launched to ensure that strong Euro-Atlantic support for Georgia is maintained as the country continues on in its endeavor to meet NATO's criteria—both in terms of defense and security, as well as democracy and liberal values. The 2024 Washington Summit marked a historical low for Georgia's integration prospects: for the first time since the 2008 Bucharest Summit, the NATO Washington Summit Declaration, adopted by the heads of state of the allied countries on July 11, 2024, lacked language indicating that Georgia would eventually become a member of the Alliance. According to pundits, the decision to omit this formulation from the NATO declaration represented an alarming shift in policy. In contrast, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Ilia Darchiashvili, who represented the country at the Washington Summit, insisted that the size of the declaration was such that NATO could not have included a sentence on Georgia's potential membership in the alliance. According to him, the Georgian government is continuing to "actively work with partners for specific, tangible results" on Euro-Atlantic integration.

At the request of the **Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP)**, a selection of experts from different countries responded to the following questions:

- What are the main implications of the 2024 NATO Washington Summit for Georgia and its Euro-Atlantic integration?
- How can Georgia avoid harming its bilateral relations with NATO and how can the country get back on the Euro-Atlantic integration track(s)?



Luke Coffey

A senior fellow, Hudson Institute

In recent years, the Georgian Dream led government has shifted away from aligning with Europe on major policy issues and has instead taken positions sympathetic to Russia: the best example is over Ukraine. In addition, the passing of the so-called “Russian Law” last month made many in Brussels concerned about the Georgian government’s commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration. The Georgian government was warned repeatedly that if the law passed it would impact EU and NATO membership prospects. These warnings were ignored.

The tragic result was seen at the NATO Summit when Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations were omitted from the final declaration for the first time since 2008. That there was no mention of Georgia joining NATO is a major shift in policy, and undeniable proof that the Georgian government has derailed the country’s Euro-Atlantic path. Until there is a change in government or a change in policy, Georgia’s NATO and EU membership prospects remain bleak. Free and fair elections this October offer the best opportunity for the country to get back on its Euro-Atlantic path.



Laura Linderman

Senior Fellow, Eurasia Center

For the first time since the 2008 Bucharest Summit Decision, the July Washington Summit Declaration failed to reiterate Georgia's path to NATO membership, signaling a concerning shift in the country's relationship with the alliance. This omission is due to Georgia’s changed foreign policy orientation, exemplified by the passage of a controversial "foreign agent" law, which hinders democracy and press freedom, and ultimately serves Russia's interests.

This policy shift and anti-democratic trajectory have drawn sharp criticism from Western partners, including the US and the EU. The US government has initiated a comprehensive review of bilateral cooperation with Georgia, imposed visa restrictions on Georgian officials, and indefinitely postponed the Noble Partner military exercise. Similarly, the EU has frozen Georgia’s EU accession process and financial assistance due to concerns about the country's anti-democratic backsliding.

The international community's message is clear: the Georgian government’s actions carry consequences. The omission from the NATO declaration stands as a significant setback for the country’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations, highlighting the high stakes tied to the country’s current foreign policy direction.



Robert E. Hamilton

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For the first time in over two decades, Georgia was a non-entity at the NATO Summit. Not only did NATO fail to invite Tbilisi to send a high-level delegation, but the Summit Communique essentially ignored Georgia, aside from boilerplate language urging Russia to withdraw its military from Georgian territory. Importantly, for the first time since it pledged in 2008 that Georgia would become a member of NATO, the Alliance did not reiterate that pledge this year.

Georgia's NATO accession process is dead in the water, as it should be. Tbilisi's anti-Western and anti-Ukrainian rhetoric and actions - including a statement by the former PM that NATO enlargement caused Russia's invasion of Ukraine - make it impossible for the Alliance to move its membership forward. Tbilisi's goal, against the will of the Georgian people, seems to be to move itself into Russia's orbit. Political leaders a few hours away in Yerevan might have some thoughts about the wisdom of that choice.



Giorgi Muchaidze

Executive director, Atlantic Council of Georgia

2024 NATO Washington Summit has clearly shown the entrenched trend of decoupling the NATO membership aspirant duo - Georgia and Ukraine. While Ukraine's membership aspiration continues to enjoy strong support in the Alliance, with a clear wording in the Washington Summit Declaration underlining irreversibility of Ukraine's path to NATO membership, there is no support registered in it for Georgia's NATO membership and the important reference to NATO Bucharest Summit decision is absent. This is not all that surprising, as during recent months, especially after adoption of the so-called 'foreign agent law', both NATO and EU high officials on numerous occasions have criticized the ruling party for Georgia's accelerated democratic backsliding that runs counter to the country's Euro-Atlantic integration.

NATO is a politico-military alliance that is based on the principle of collective defense and common values, which means that to qualify for the membership, apart from upholding required military standards, aspirant countries must also satisfy the basic democratic criteria.

The decisive steps necessary to get back on the Euro-Atlantic integration track include: conduction of free and fair parliamentary elections planned in October 2024, taking decisive steps to ensure the freedom of media and the rule of law, effective de-oligarchisation, reforming the court system to guarantee its independence, as well as abolition of the so-call 'foreign agent law'.



British Embassy
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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.

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