

The Power of National Identity in the Foreign Policy of Georgia

Abstract

The article discusses the factors that influence the formation and determination of Georgia's foreign policy orientation, with a particular focus on the relationship between national identity and foreign policy. For Georgia, being a small and geopolitically complex state, foreign policy orientation plays a crucial role in protecting and preserving the country's security, sovereignty, identity, territorial integrity, and independence.

It should be noted that, for any sovereign state, foreign policy is the most important tools of realizing national interests. A correct foreign policy course ensures the fulfillment of national interests and a rightful place in the international system. Furthermore, it's worth noting that for Georgia, a small and weak country, the protection and preservation of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity has been of vital importance both since the collapse of the Soviet Union and in the present day. Consequently, national interests serve as the primary determining factor in shaping the country's foreign policy orientation. As previously mentioned, the national interests of the state determine the foreign policy. However, when analysing the formation of foreign policy orientation, it is essential to consider factors such as the national identity. According to the theory of constructivism, national identity has a significant impact on a state's foreign policy, and therefore, the subject of constructivism's study is the relationship between national identity and the state's foreign policy. Constructivism considers identity as an empirical issue to be examined within a historical context. Historical experiences play a significant role in national identity formation and therefore it is impossible to separate national identity from history. The country's future depends on the choices people make from its history, how they envision themselves as a community, and their ongoing efforts to reshape the nation.

The article reviews national identity formation and addresses various aspects, including the structure of society, which consists of a social cognitive structure and within which many discursive formations function. Identity constitutes these formations. Discursive formations and identity represent a social cognitive structure. When forming foreign policy orientation, it is important to take into account issues such as cultural values, past experience, etc. To understand the dynamics of foreign policy creation, it is essential to assess how the identity has developed and what new intellectual factors the polity has internalized. A polity's national identity is very much a result of how it perceives its history - opinions and perceptions that collect over time and form a society's "collective memory". Discussion of the relationship between foreign policy and national identity and the power of national identity in the formation of foreign policy orientation is the main and key issue of the article. To characterize the national identity of Georgia and justify the relevance of the issue, the article will focus one of the dominant foreign policy courses - the Western orientation of the country.

Key words: National identity, foreign policy, orientation, constructivism, national interest, geopolitics, religion

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Introduction

The national interests of the state are the most important factor in determining the orientation of foreign policy. However, during the analysis of the formation of foreign political orientation, factors such as national identity, geographical location, political elite, international system, and others should be taken into account. For example, according to the theory of constructivism, national identity has a significant impact on the state's foreign policy. Therefore, the subject of constructivism's study is the relationship between national identity and the state's foreign policy. Constructivism views identity as an empirical matter that must be studied in the context of history. History plays an important role in the formation of national identity, and therefore, it is impossible to separate national identity from history.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the issue of security remained primary concern for Georgia. During the 1990s, the foundation laid for the formation of Georgia's foreign policy orientation was significantly influenced by national interests. For Georgia, as a small and complex geopolitical state, the foreign policy orientation is crucial for the protection and preservation of the country's security, sovereignty, identity, territorial integrity and independence. When determining foreign policy orientation, it is important to define the impact of national identity and to explore the interrelationship between these two phenomena.

The issue of Georgia's foreign policy orientation is relevant and timely arisen because it is directly related to the country's national interests. The foreign policy orientation of the country is reflected and officially announced both in the strategy of the foreign policy of Georgia and the concept of national security of Georgia, as well as in official statements. According to these documents, the main priority of Georgia's foreign policy is integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.

The purpose of the article is to study the mutual influence and connection between Georgia's foreign policy and national identity. The question of the article is to find out what

influence national identity has on the foreign policy course of Georgia. To answer the questions article will analyze the determining factors of Georgia's foreign policy orientation; justify the influence of historical experience on the national identity of Georgia and its reflection on foreign policy. To this end, the article examines the theory of constructivism based on the study of the relationship between national identity and foreign policy; strengthens scientific reasoning and increases interest in dominant and other alternative foreign policy orientations based on the study of scientific literature, experts, and public opinion.

Theoretical Framework - Interplay of National Identity and Foreign Policy Orientation

The formation of foreign policy orientation is influenced by various factors and is explained through different theories of international relations that provide diverse perspectives on how states behave. The prominent theory of international relations, realism, explains the formation of foreign policy orientation through several key principles. According to realism, states form their foreign policy based on national interests, which are primarily identified for the purposes of power and state security. The theory assumes that the need to guarantee national security and survival, as well as power, are core factors in realistic perspectives. Secondly, realism argues that the international system is characterized by a permanent struggle for power among states. Accordingly, foreign policy is aimed at maximizing state power and ensuring security against potential threats. This can lead to alliances, coalitions, and power balancing. Morgenthau, the outstanding representative of classical realism, emphasized the importance of power and national interest in the formation of foreign policy.

In contrast to realism, liberalism describes the formation of foreign policy orientation by other causes and underlines the role of international institutions, economic interrelations, and domestic politics. Among the several key factors liberalism underlines domestic politics factor which shapes the state's foreign policy orientation. Liberalism asserts that domestic

political institutions, including democratic governance and political culture, play a crucial role in shaping foreign policy. For example, democratic states might be more likely to seek cooperative and peaceful international relations due to their democratic checks and balances and the impact of public opinion. Additionally, economic interdependence is another key factor, as it suggests that strong economic relations and ties between countries can foster more stable and cooperative foreign policies.

To understand the interdependence of national identity and a state's foreign policy, I will apply the theory of constructivism. Similar to other theories of international relations, constructivism helps to analyze the factors that shape the world order and international relations. Constructivism considers identity as an empirical issue to be examined within a historical context. Historical experiences play a significant role in the formation of national identity and therefore it is impossible to separate national identity from history.

I argue that historical practices were pivotal in shaping Georgian identity as a “resistance identity” (Castells. M. 2009). The history of Georgia is full of struggles with external enemies and regimes. For the purpose of preserving statehood and Christianity, Georgia formed powerful coalitions against Arabs, Mongols, Persians, and Ottomans, and now seeks protection from potential Russian influence. This led Georgia to align its political course with the integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, which became its foremost foreign policy priority. Additionally, I emphasize that alongside its 'resistance identity,' Georgia identifies with Europe due to its European roots, values and its aspiration to join Western structures.

According to constructivism, the formation of foreign policy and relations between states are influenced by social constructions, identities, ideas, beliefs, values, norms and other aspects. Constructivism offers an explanation of identity politics. Understanding how identity is formed, what norms and experiences accompany their formation, and how they are constructed together, is a key part of a constructivist approach (Hopf, 2002).

The basic concept of constructivism originates from the discipline of sociology and the work of Durkheim at the end of the 19th century. Durkheim argued that human societies are held together by the social facts of culture and that particular societies creatively create different socially constructed identities and beliefs (Parsons., 2010. Chapter 4, p. 81.).

Max Weber, a prominent figure among the founders of constructivism, sought to reconcile Durkheim's ideas on culture with Marx's materialist perspective. According to him, ideas often determine the ways in which action is driven by the dynamics of interest. In his most famous work, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" (1904. 1930), Weber argued that it was the religious ideas of Protestantism that indirectly led to the rise of capitalism. This view replaced Marx's perspective, which posited that ideas and ideologies are merely rationalizations created by humans in their pursuit of wealth and power in the material landscape (Parsons, 2010, Chapter 4, p. 82).

Constructivism focuses on the role of identity in shaping political orientation and determining political action. Constructivism focuses on identity and this is one of its main characteristics. Identity is an agent's perception of himself, his place in the social society, and his attitudes and relationships with others. Self-perception always depends on the "other" and is constantly in the process of self-establishment. By conceptualizing agents in international politics, constructivists recognize the importance of agents' historical, political, cultural, and social contexts, as these are the factors that primarily determine identity formation. For constructivists, identity is a very important factor because having an identity means being guided by the norms associated with that identity. Norms determine behavior. In this theoretical approach, the normative structure defines both acceptable and unacceptable norms of behavior. According to Ronald Gregory Suny, the future of a country derives from the choices people make in their own history (Suny, 1994, p. 335).

Society is composed of a social cognitive structure within which operate many discursive formations. Identities make up these formations. Discursive formations and

identities constitute the social cognitive structure (Hopf, 2002). In order to clarify this assumption, Ted Hopf (2002, p.4) offers Nancy Fraser's quotation: "People's social identities are complexes of meanings and networks of interpretation. To have a social identity . . . is just to live and act under a set of descriptions. These descriptions . . . are drawn from the fund of interpretive possibilities available to agents in specific societies" (1992. p. 52). The theoretical approach of identity elaborated by Ted Hopf allows us to understand how a state understands other states in international politics.

Meaningful action is possible only within an inter-subjective social context. Constitutive norms specify an identity by defining the behaviors that will motivate others to acknowledge that identity and react to it properly (Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein, 1996, p. 54).

Constructivism's empirical task is to surface the "background". This theoretical approach can give an understanding of what occurs most of the time in relationship between states. A polity's national identity is very much a result of how it perceives its history - opinions and perceptions that collect over time and form a society's "collective memory". As the memories of societies, much like those of individuals, are not consistent and selective, the national identity is subject to what layer of a polity has the custodianship of the collective memory. A transfer of the custodianship of a polity's collective memory will often cause a fundamental change of the "national idea" and, with it, the aspects of a polity's national interest (Prizel, 1998. p. 14).

Results and Discussion - The Power of National Identity: Language, Religion, Geopolitics

To determine the power of national identity in the foreign policy of Georgia, it is important to study Georgian identity, its formation, and the key determining factors. Analyzing the determinants of identity will enable us to establish and understand the link

between national identity and foreign policy orientation and to identify where the concept of nation or identity fits within the context of international unity. This approach will assist in answering questions regarding the Georgian identity's affiliation, its position, where it identifies common aspirations, ideas, and interests, and to whom its foreign policy orientation is directed.

Georgian language – Linguistic Identity

There are various scientific opinions regarding the origin of the Georgian writing. It has been linked to both Greek and Semitic scripts, such as Aramaic and Phoenician. While many scholars draw comparisons between the Georgian script and the Greek script, the origins of the Georgian language itself remain a topic of ongoing research. The significance of the Georgian language and script grew notably after the declaration of Christianity as the official religion. Georgian religious figures, who worshiped in Jerusalem and Palestine, began translating liturgical books into Georgian. These manuscripts were then distributed in the churches of Kartli. The writing became closely intertwined with Christianity, as languages were developed to translate Christian books. This event significantly accelerated the development of languages, writing, and integration into Christian society, leading to the formation of common values similar to those in Christian societies.

Georgians are linguistically isolated. The Georgian language belongs to the group of Georgian languages of the Caucasian language family. This group includes three languages Georgian, Svan and Chanur-Megrul (Lazur-Megrul). The Megrul, Svan and Lazur languages have preserved the signs of the archaic Georgian language.

The majority of linguists believe that the Kartvelian languages (Georgian, Megrul, Lazur and Svan) form a completely independent language family and do not represent one of the groups included in the family of Caucasian languages. Due to its uniqueness, Georgian language does not allow to understand other languages. From this point of view, the Georgian

language has no related language, and therefore ethnic unity and state. Ethno-cultural proximity may not always guarantee friendly international relations, but in most cases, closely related nations form a common political union and present a unified political vision on the international stage (Davitashvili, unpublished article).

Religious identity

The adoption of Christianity in Georgia occurred during a period when two powerful empires, Rome and Iran, sought to strengthen their influence in the region. Georgia firmly embraced the orientation of the Western Christian world, even in the early 4th century, and became a part of Christian culture, ideology and society. Christianity is a defining feature of the West and serves as an indicator of identity (Chkhartishvili, 2009). This was one of the initial steps toward European alignment.

The strengthening of the Christian Church and the relationship between the "friendly countries" of Rome of the common confession is a clear example of how important a role religious identity plays in the foreign policy and orientation of countries. Religion played a significant role in the formation of Georgian nationality. As the saying goes in Georgia, "Orthodox Christianity saved Georgia." This statement is true because, from the fall of Byzantium to the emergence of Russia in the political arena, it was Christianity that set Georgia apart from its Islamic neighbors (The Armenians, the only Christian neighbors, were also distinct). The importance of language as the primary marker of nationality was also closely tied to Christianity, as the status of the Georgian language largely depended on the language of the autocephalous Georgian Church (Nodia, 2009).

In the history of Georgia, Christianity played a crucial role in shaping the national identity. As Ilia Chavchavadze noted, for a Georgian, Christianity represented the entirety of Georgian land, and being Georgian and being Christian were synonymous (Fawn, 2004, pp. 87-89). In terms of religious identity, Stephen Jones asserts that Georgians associate

Christianity with Europe. According to Jones, the European identity of Georgians is intertwined with the Christian Church, which has served as an “outpost” of the Western Christian world in the Muslim world since the 4th century (Jones, 1994).

Due to the circumstances that arose in the 15th and 16th centuries when the Orthodox world, including Georgia, came under the influence of the Muslim world, the preservation of religious identity and the survival of the country became primary priority. Consequently, the need arose to seek a political ally, especially among nations sharing the same faith. It was at this critical juncture that Russia emerged as the savior of united nations, leading Georgia to direct its political orientation towards Russia. However, it soon became apparent that Russia was motivated by imperial ambitions. A once single-faith alliance now appeared as an adversary to Georgian nationalism. This critical situation gave rise to nationalism and laid the foundation for national liberation movements, which were aimed at countering the Russian Empire. As a result of these developments, the idea of religious and cultural ties lost its influence, and with it, the concept of unity in Georgia's foreign policy orientation. Moreover, countries sharing similar religious and cultural identities fighting against the Russian occupation and aggression (case of Georgia, Ukraine).

Geopolitics – Caucasian, Eurasian and European identities

One of the key factors contributing to the formation of national identity is a state's geographical location. Georgia's position at the crossroads of Europe and Asia has resulted in the influence of various cultures and the synthesis of these cultural elements. Due to the Caucasus region's location, an ongoing debate persists regarding whether the Caucasus should be classified as part of Europe, Asia, or if it should have a distinct **Caucasian identity**.

When considering the countries of the Caucasus region in terms of religion, language, culture, politics, and other characteristics, it becomes evident that there is little unity among the nations of the Caucasus. Furthermore, relations between the peoples of the Caucasus are

marked by confrontations and conflicts. As a result, the Caucasus primarily represents a region in terms of its geographical location (Davitashvili, 2005).

The modern geopolitical interpretation of the term “Caucasus” traces back to Russia's conquest of the region. “Transcaucasia” denotes the area beyond the primary Caucasus range, while “North Caucasus” refers to the region north of the mountain range. The southern borders of the Caucasus were historically defined by the Russian Empire, and this is exemplified by the Kars case in the late 19th century (Ismailov, Papava, 2010. p. 43).

In the history, there were several instances where the idea of creating a Caucasian federation was explored. These pan-Caucasian approaches included the Transcaucasian Commissariat (1917), the Transcaucasian Democratic Federal Republic (1918), the Transcaucasian Economic Bureau (1921), the Transcaucasian Federation of Socialist Soviet Republics (FSSRZ) (1922), and the Transcaucasian Allied Republics (1936). It is almost impossible to implement the idea of a united Caucasus due to its inherent diversity. The North Caucasus comprises the republics of Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, and Adygea, along with the regions of Stavropol and Krasnodar. All of these entities are part of the Russian Federation.

Zviad Gamsakhurdia believed that despite the fact that it is recognized that the country is culturally a part of Europe and Christian civilization, Georgia is considered as the geographical and cultural center of the Caucasus, which, according to Gamsakhurdia, represents a historically formed ethno-cultural space. For Gamsakhurdia, Georgia is destined to be the political center of the Caucasus (Zurabashvili, 2021 - "Z. Gamsakhurdia. Manifesto. 1991").

The political situation in the South Caucasus is unstable, and the three states in the region have different foreign policy orientations. Among the peoples of the Caucasus, the term “Caucasian” primarily has a territorial meaning, rather than a religious, linguistic, or ethnic

one. When discussing the idea of Caucasian unity, it should not be perceived as a political goal based on a shared identity but rather as an attempt to create a collective force capable of resisting external threats. However, such a force would likely be small and weak, rendering it inadequate in countering real threats (Z. Davitashvili, unpublished article).

When discussing **Eurasian identity**, it is essential to consider the doctrine of Eurasianism, as it provides an explanation for the collapse of the Soviet Union and reestablishes the problematic historical and political continuity of Russia. The flexibility of Eurasianism lies in its capacity for success, diversity, and extensive coverage. It encompasses political doctrine, theories of nation and ethnicity, and a set of expansionist geopolitical principles for Russia and beyond (Klump, 2009).

For several former post-Soviet countries (e.g. Russia, Belarus, Central Asian nations), the ideology of Eurasianism has found acceptance because they do not fit neither Europe nor Asia. They identify as Eurasian, a union of shared civilization. Eurasianism serves as an ideological justification for Russia's geopolitical objectives.

Georgia, drawing from its historical experience and aligning its foreign policy with Western interests, does not identify with Eurasian identity. The concept of Georgian identity being part of the Eurasian identity is not prevalent in Georgian society. If it exists, it is exceedingly rare. Beyond the Soviet historical context, the Georgian identity shares few commonalities with the peoples of the Eurasian Union.

To understand **European identity** and Georgia's place within it, we need to explore European values from both ethno-cultural and political perspectives. When we examine European countries from a linguistic-ethnic perspective, we find that the majority of them belong to the Indo-European linguistic group, with the only exceptions being the Iberian-Caucasian, Finno-Hungarian, and Basque languages (Megrelishvili, 2017).

While Europe is characterized by its ethnic, national, and linguistic diversity, European states share common values. The Europeanization process involves both institutional and value changes. Within this context, many scholars link it to the export of European influence and values, the establishment of new norms and ideologies, economic and political transformations, cultural shifts, and the emergence of a new identity. As these processes develop, they contribute to the formation of a European transnational society and the construction of European identity.

According to the perspectives of various authors, European identity differs from traditional notions of nationality and ethnicity. It carries a more political weight, rooted in common values that distinguish it from others. These values encompass principles such as the rule of law, human rights protection, equality etc.

Common values shared by Georgians and Europeans were uncovered through an analysis of identity values, as studied in the survey conducted in Georgia from 2014 to 2016. From the analyzed data, it becomes evident that Georgian values fundamentally align with European values. Examples of these similarities include the Georgian nation's tolerance, acceptance of religious and ethnic minorities, and their commitment to establishing democratic principles and values. The endeavor to build a democratic state itself stands as an expression of the European identity of Georgians (Tsuladze, 2016, p. 137).

The European Union embodies a fusion of European values encompassing freedom of faith, justice, the rule of law, social equality, pluralism, and the right to vote. These foundational principles closely bind together ethnically, linguistically, and nationally diverse nations.

Georgia is an integral part of European civilization. In ancient times, the people who settled in the territory of Georgia had close contact with Greek culture and Hellenism. Georgian states served as allies of the Roman Empire, integrating them into European

civilization. Subsequently, when Christianity was declared the state religion in Rome and later recognized in Kartli and Egrisi (regions in Georgia), European states strengthened their connections and became members of a shared Christian civilization. Christianity acted as a unifying force among European countries for centuries, and Georgia naturally became a part of the Christian European civilization. For many centuries, “Europe” represented Christendom.

Within this united Christian world, common cultural approaches, traditions, and values developed, shaped by political and economic relations between states. However, Georgia's relationship and development with Europe faced interruptions when it became isolated from the Islamic world (Megrelishvili, 2017).

Under the pressures of the Persian and Ottoman empires, Georgian kingdoms sought allies in Europe. One such example is the diplomatic mission of Sulkhan Saba Orbeliani to Europe. Meanwhile, Russia emerged as a major power, offering hope to Georgian monarchs who believed that Orthodox Christian state Russia would protect Orthodox Georgia from Muslim oppression. However, Russia's imperial ambitions were soon disclosed.

The values, national identity, and legitimacy of this political entity originate from Europe and are rooted in European ideals. These concepts were introduced to Georgia from Europe, by Ilia Chavchavadze, who is associated with the contemporary concept of “Georgianism” (Nodia. G. 2009). Iakob Gogebashvili, Vazha Pshavela, Alexander Kazbegi, Akaki Tsereteli, Dimitri Kifiani, and others were followers of liberalism. The content of their works often revolved around individuals striving for personal freedom outside the confines of society or organizations.

Although the idea of Georgia's European identity had been circulating in Georgian political discourse for some time, it was in 2003 that it began to be reflected in the country's

foreign policy. The Euro-Atlantic integration of Georgia was established as the primary priority, grounded in the narrative of Georgia's place within the European family.

Official documents emphasize Georgia's membership in the European family, stating, "Historically, culturally, politically, and geographically, Georgia is a part of Europe; we fully share European values" (Georgia's Foreign Policy Strategy, 2003). In his inauguration speech in 2004, Mikheil Saakashvili remarked that the European flag symbolized not only Europe but also Georgia's civilization, culture, essence, history, and vision of the future. He emphasized, "Georgia is not just a European country, it is also one of the oldest European countries" (Saakashvili, 2003).

Western orientation

For any sovereign state, foreign policy is of paramount importance in the pursuit, protection, and achievement of the country's national interests. To provide a classical definition of foreign policy, I will use Walter Carlsnaes' definition. According to Carlsnaes, foreign policy includes those actions expressed in explicit state goals, commitments, and/or directives to which state representatives aspire, acting on behalf of their sovereign entity. These actions are directed towards the goals, conditions, and actors, both governmental and non-governmental, that they wish to influence and that are beyond their territorial legitimacy (Carlsnaes, 2013).

Three primary foreign policy alternatives are typically distinguished in Georgia's foreign policy orientation: Western, Northern, and Neutrality. In this discussion, article will focus on one of the dominant foreign policy orientations of Georgia – Western orientation.

In February 1999, former Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania declared regarding Georgia's accession to the Council of Europe: "I am Georgian, therefore, I am European." This statement underscored that being Georgian equates to being European and that Georgia is an integral part of European civilization. It was a call for Georgia to return to its European home. Following the Rose Revolution of 2003, significant progress was made on the path of

integration into the European Union. Georgia prioritized integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, as reflected in the country's strategic documents.

The Western orientation is grounded in the following arguments: 1) Georgia's alignment with Europe is a natural choice, as it reflects the country's values, historical experiences, and cultural heritage. This alignment signifies a return to its rightful path for growth and development. Georgia has deep historical and cultural connections with Europe. For centuries, it has seen itself as part of the European civilization, despite its geographic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Georgian elites, especially since the 19th century, have often looked to Europe as a model of modernization and progress. Georgia adopted Christianity as a state religion in the 4th century, which has linked it culturally and religiously with Europe. 2) The Western world and civilization not only offer a natural path for Georgia but also is the best choice. Georgia's Western orientation is driven by the pursuit of strong partnerships and security guarantees. Western integration is seen as vital for survival. It is evident that integration into Western structures will allow Georgia to establish robust partnerships, which will boost the development of democracy, economy, and provide security guarantees. History links the past to the future, connection of Georgia with Western partners is a historical process. Georgia formed as a resistant identity due to the security concerns. Georgia has a complex relationship with Russia, which has sought to maintain its influence over the region. This relationship has been particularly strained since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, culminating in conflicts such as the 2008 August Russian Georgian war. Aligning with the West and western structures is seen as a way to safeguard its sovereignty and security against Russian aggression. Moreover, Western support is seen as crucial for restoring its territorial integrity. 3) Geography alone does not define the West. It symbolizes progress and modernity. For any nation aiming to achieve progress, democracy, economic prosperity, freedom, and political stability, close integration with the West is imperative. Conversely, distancing oneself from the West would constitute a backward step that could hinder a country's development for years. Western models of governance, particularly those

from the European Union, are seen as ideals to aspire to. These include the rule of law, human rights, and democratic governance. Western orientation is associated with modernization, economic development, and improved governance. Many Georgians see European integration as a path to a better quality of life and stronger institutions.

Other factors of western orientation are economic opportunities, public support, strategic location and geopolitical significance of the country at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. A Western-oriented foreign policy helps Georgia assert itself as a key player in regional geopolitics, as a gateway between the East and the West.

Georgia's Western orientation and its aspirations towards Europe are driven by a combination of national identity, national interests and security concerns, democratic values, economic benefits, public support and strategic considerations.

Conclusion

Identity goes beyond collection of traditions. It encompasses how a society perceives itself, its position in the external world, and its vision of the world as a means of survival. This complexity arises from historical responses. Identity involves both the perception of the external world and the search for a place to exist.

Georgia's primary objective is to ensure security, safety, and development, which are the country's national interest. Several key factors emerge as crucial elements in Georgia's foreign policy: independence, territorial integrity, and Euro-Atlantic integration. Consequently, Georgian national identity has evolved as a means of self-protection against potential threats to its statehood, territorial integrity, sovereignty, culture, and values. This involves envisioning the world as a means of survival, and this complexity is rooted in historical responses.

The European identity and orientation of the Georgian nation form the foundation of its progressive political thought. Upon gaining independence as a developing state in a

changing global landscape, Georgia sought direct connections with Europe. In its early stages, Western identity served as the primary and driving force of Georgia's foreign policy. On one hand, Georgia, with its values and culture, is an integral part of Europe, making Europeanization and European integration a natural aspiration, a return to its intrinsic environment. This process is propelled by national values and factors closely tied to national identity. Conversely, the alternative perspective asserts that Georgia's European course stems from the country's national interests and security.

The key factors of national identity influencing Georgia's foreign policy are historical experience and cultural ties. Georgia has a long history of foreign domination, particularly by the Persian, Ottoman, and Russian empires. This historical experience has fostered a strong sense of national identity and a desire for sovereignty and independence, which drives its foreign policy orientation. Historical experience shaped Georgian national identity as a resistant one. Moreover, Georgia's cultural and religious identity not only established cultural ties to Europe but also made Georgia an integral part of European culture and civilization. Georgia's historical and cultural identity naturally shaped its foreign policy orientation and its aspiration to integrate with Western institutions, as this is a natural place for Georgia. Moreover, geopolitically, Georgia's location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia has influenced its identity as a bridge between different cultures and powers. This positioning has led to a foreign policy that seeks to balance relationships with both Western and regional powers while maintaining its sovereignty. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Georgia has sought to distance itself from Russian influence, reaffirming its identity as an independent state. This has led to a foreign policy orientation that prioritizes alignment with the West over ties with Russia. In addition, a strong sense of nationalism and the desire to protect and promote Georgian identity are central to the country's foreign policy. The preservation of statehood and sovereignty is a key element of Georgia's identity, driving its foreign policy towards securing international recognition and support for its territorial integrity.

National identity is shaped by a nation's experiences, values, perceptions, and aspirations. The pro-Western orientation of society is influenced by these factors. Recent events in Georgia, particularly when the threat of Georgia deviating from its pro-Western course became evident from the political statements of European leaders, prompted society to strongly assert that Georgia is an integral part of Europe and that any alternative course is unacceptable. Accordingly, public opinion in Georgia, which is shaped by national identity, mainly influence in foreign policy decisions. Strong public support for Western integration, for example, pushes the government to pursue closer ties with the EU and NATO.

It should be noted, that the formation of national interests is rooted in past experiences. The entire process of shaping national identity and national interests is profoundly influenced by the historical experiences. National identity involves self-perception, unity, determination of one's place in international society, and one's attitudes and relationships with others. Self-perception is always interdependent with the perception of the 'other' and is in a constant state of self-establishment. The historical, political, cultural, and social context plays a pivotal role in the formation of national identity, creating strong connections to external politics. This is where the power of national identity in foreign policy lies.

In summary, Georgia's national identity influences its foreign policy by shaping the country's aspirations, alliances, and responses to external threats. Georgia's historical experiences, cultural ties, nationalistic sentiments, and geopolitical location all contribute to a foreign policy orientation that aims to protect its independence, align with the West, and navigate challenging regional circumstances.

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