

'Hungary's stance on Georgia's EU integration in the post-candidacy era: a reflection of its normative values or strategic interests'.

'Magyarország Grúzia EU integrációjával kapcsolatos álláspontja a tagjelölti időszakban: normatív értékeket vagy stratégiai érdekeket tükröz?'



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I. Introduction

I.1. Overview of the topic and its relevance

The relationship between the EU and its Eastern neighbors, particularly in the context of enlargement and integration aspirations, has indeed been a subject of significant scholarly interest in recent years. While much of the literature has focused on the influence of larger EU member states on the enlargement process, there has been less attention on the role of smaller countries, such as Hungary, in shaping the EU's policy towards countries like Georgia.

One notable study that sheds light on the dynamics of EU enlargement is the work of (Cluta, 2020) who argue that the process of EU enlargement is influenced by a combination of domestic preferences, international incentives, and strategic calculations. They highlight the importance of both normative values and strategic interests in shaping EU enlargement policy towards candidate countries.

In the case of Hungary's stance on Georgia's EU integration, it is crucial to consider the domestic political context in Hungary, particularly under the leadership of Viktor Orban and his Fidesz party. Orban's government has faced criticism for its illiberal policies and challenges to EU norms and values. This has implications for Hungary's approach to EU enlargement, as the government's priorities may be influenced by domestic political considerations as well as its strategic interests.

A study by (Mos, 2023) examines the role of Central and Eastern European countries, including Hungary, in shaping the EU's policy towards its Eastern neighbors. The authors argue that these countries play a key role in advocating for the Eastern Partnership countries within the EU, but their influence is often limited by larger member states. This study highlights the complex dynamics at play in EU foreign policy decision-making and the importance of understanding the perspectives of smaller member states.

Given the limited attention to the role of Hungary in shaping the EU's policy towards Georgia's EU integration, this research aims to fill this gap by providing a nuanced analysis of the factors driving Hungary's stance. By examining how Hungary's strategic interests align with or diverge from its normative values, we can gain a better understanding of the complexities of EU enlargement policy and its implications for both the EU and its Eastern neighbors.

Overall, this research contributes to the broader academic debates on EU enlargement and foreign policy by exploring the role of smaller EU member states in shaping EU policy towards candidate countries. It also has practical implications for policymakers, as understanding Hungary's stance on Georgia's EU integration is crucial for shaping the EU's approach to the Eastern Partnership region and for promoting stability, democracy, and prosperity in Europe's Eastern neighborhood.

I.2. Hungary's Relationship with Georgia Before and After EU Candidacy Status

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Hungary has emerged as a significant advocate for Georgia's pursuit of European Union membership. Orbán's vocal support, backed by key officials such as Minister of Justice Judit Varga, underscores Hungary's proactive stance in championing Georgia's integration into the EU. This unwavering endorsement from Orbán not only demonstrates Hungary's commitment to advancing Georgia's alignment with EU values and standards but also signifies a strong dedication to facilitating Georgia's European aspirations (Sabanadze, A. 2023, p.43).

In a notable statement made in October, Prime Minister Orbán expressed his belief that Georgia deserves candidate status for EU membership, expressing disappointment over its absence in the previous year. This stance was echoed by Irakli Kobakhidze, chairman of the Georgian Dream party, who confirmed Hungary's commitment to supporting Georgia's candidacy for EU membership. Orbán's consistent advocacy for Georgia's EU aspirations highlights Hungary's unwavering dedication to assisting Georgia on its path to EU integration.

Minister Varga's endorsement of Georgia's EU membership further solidifies Hungary's belief in Georgia's rightful place within the European Union. Her support, in conjunction with Orbán's backing, reinforces Hungary's diplomatic position on Georgia's European integration and underscores the shared values and interests between the two countries (Hungary Today, 2023). The cohesive support from Hungarian officials, including both Orbán and Varga, reveals a synchronized and unified approach towards advocating for Georgia's EU aspirations, showcasing a collective commitment to advancing common goals within the EU framework.

Moreover, Hungary and Georgia have forged bilateral agreements across various sectors, further illustrating Hungary's dedication to fostering cooperation and collaboration in the context of EU integration. These agreements serve as tangible evidence of Hungary's tangible support for Georgia's European aspirations, cementing a foundation for mutual strategic engagement and shared objectives within the EU framework (About Hungary, 2023). The establishment of these bilateral ties underscores Hungary's proactive role in assisting Georgia in its path towards EU accession and signals a commitment to nurturing closer relations between the two countries.

By examining Orbán's public statements, the establishment of bilateral agreements, and the affirmations of Hungarian officials like Minister Varga, a comprehensive understanding of Hungary's motivations in supporting Georgia's EU membership emerges. The convergence of diplomatic actions, policy initiatives, and official endorsements collectively emphasize Hungary's proactive role in championing Georgia's European integration and highlight the depth of cooperation between the two nations in advancing shared objectives within the European Union.

I.3. Structure of the paper

The structure of the paper on Hungary's stance on supporting Georgia's EU integration, strategic interests, or normative values will follow a logical flow. It will be divided into two main sections which will focus on analyzing Hungary's position in relation to Georgia's strategic interests, and normative values. Each of these sections will be further divided into sub-chapters that explore the specific reasons behind Hungary's stance and the implications of their support for Georgia.

The first section of the paper focuses on Hungary's strategic actions towards supporting Georgia's European Union membership aspirations. It highlights the significance of economic collaboration between the two countries, specifically through key initiatives like the AGRI (Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania-Hungary) and the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC). The analysis delves into how these economic partnerships strengthen the bilateral ties between Hungary and Georgia, and how they have the potential to influence Hungary's backing for Georgia's EU accession process.

Furthermore, the section also examines the influence of security considerations, with a particular emphasis on Georgia's strategic importance as a Black Sea access point for regional security. By exploring the security implications of Georgia's potential EU membership on the region, the paper aims to gain insights into how security dynamics play a role in shaping Hungary's support for Georgia's European integration efforts.

In addition, the chapter analyzes the political dynamics that underpin Hungary's endorsement of Georgia's EU accession process. This involves exploring how Hungary's support for Georgia's EU aspirations aligns with broader issues such as ethnic Hungarian concerns in Ukraine. It also looks at the potential partnerships that could emerge between Hungary and Georgia within the framework of the European Union, shedding light on the political factors that drive Hungary's proactive stance in advocating for Georgia's EU membership.

Overall, this section provides a detailed examination of Hungary's strategic approach towards supporting Georgia's EU aspirations, considering the interconnected aspects of economics, security, and politics in shaping Hungary's backing for Georgia's European integration journey.

In the second part, transitioning into the normative perspective, the paper delves into challenging liberal norms by examining Hungary's support for Georgia's EU membership aspirations. It also explores the ideological alliance between Georgia and Hungary, as well as how the alignment of the Fidesz Party in Hungary and the Georgian Dream Party in support of Georgia's EU membership reflects shared family and Christian perspectives. This sheds light on the normative underpinnings of Hungary's advocacy for Georgia's European integration.

Overall, the structured approach of the paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of Hungary's support for Georgia's EU membership aspirations, considering both strategic and normative factors that shape this bilateral relationship and its implications for the broader European context.

I.4. Research Methodology

In general, the research approach for exploring Hungary's stance on supporting Georgia's EU integration, strategic interests, or normative values will primarily utilize qualitative research methods. This will involve synthesizing existing academic literature on the subject and integrating it with my own findings. The overall structure of the paper will be based on deductive reasoning, where general statements about Hungary's motivations and positions towards Georgia will be developed through arguments and analysis, leading to conclusive findings.

I may also incorporate elements of inductive reasoning, particularly in the strategic interest section of the thesis, where political, economic and strategic perspectives will be explored. The research approach will be descriptive, employing a strategy of descriptive analysis to examine Hungary's support for Georgia from different angles. While the concept of support may be straightforward, the various reasons and implications behind Hungary's stance will be carefully analyzed to unravel the complexities of their relationship.

The main actors in this research will include Hungary as a state, its government, diplomatic entities, as well as Georgia, the European Union, and other relevant international actors. The data utilized will predominantly consist of official statements, policy documents, and academic analyses regarding Hungary's foreign policy decisions towards Georgia. I will also consider official statements and assessments from the European Union and other international bodies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the broader context.

Additionally, the interplay between economic, military, and political variables will be a crucial aspect of the research. By examining how these factors influence Hungary's position on supporting Georgia, the conclusion will aim to tie together these various components to provide insights into the overall relationship and implications of Hungary's stance.

Ultimately, the research will seek to address the question of whether Hungary's strategic interests, normative values, or EU integration goals drive its support for Georgia, offering a comprehensive analysis of their relationship.

II. Hungary's support for Georgia's European Union membership aspiration from a strategic perspective

II.1. Strategic Importance of Economic Collaboration between Hungary and Georgia

II.1.1. AGRI

The AGRI (Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania-Hungary) Agreement, proposed as a means to diversify energy sources for Europe and reduce dependence on Russian gas supplies, represents a significant development in the energy sector. Signed in 2010, the agreement sought to establish a strategic transportation route for Azeri natural gas from the Caspian Sea to Europe, utilizing Georgia and Romania as transit countries, with Hungary serving as a critical junction point.

The AGRI project gained momentum in subsequent years, garnering support from prominent energy companies, as well as receiving backing from the respective governments of the participating countries. The involvement of Azerbaijan, a major producer of natural gas in the Caspian region, was pivotal in driving the project forward, as it offered the potential for increased energy security and diversification for Europe (Jagmaidze, 2022, p.32).

One of the primary objectives of the AGRI Agreement was to create an alternative route for the transportation of natural gas, thus reducing Europe's reliance on Russian gas supplies. By tapping into Azerbaijan's gas reserves and facilitating the transportation of gas through Georgia, Romania, and Hungary, the project aimed to enhance energy security and strengthen the resilience of the European energy market.

The strategic importance of the AGRI Agreement lies in its potential to promote regional cooperation, foster economic development, and contribute to energy diversification efforts in Europe. By connecting energy-rich regions in the Caspian Sea to markets in Europe, the project has the capacity to not only enhance energy security but also promote economic integration and stability in the region (Georgescu, S., Munteanu, M., Garayev, T., & Stanca, C. 2012, p.122)

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The AGRI Agreement represents a significant step towards reducing Europe's dependency on Russian gas supplies and diversifying energy sources through strategic collaboration between Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania, and Hungary. The project's momentum and support from key stakeholders underscore its potential to reshape the energy landscape in Europe and contribute to broader regional objectives of energy security and cooperation.

The economic collaboration between Hungary and Georgia within the AGRI Agreement encompasses a wide range of initiatives focused on energy cooperation and infrastructure development. This partnership leverages Hungary's strategic location in Central Europe as a key transit country and Georgia's role as a gateway to the Caucasus region, creating synergies that enhance energy security and foster economic growth for both nations.

One of the key areas of collaboration between Hungary and Georgia is the construction of gas pipelines to facilitate the transportation of natural gas from the Caspian region to Europe (Dukhanin,A, 2019, p.406). The AGRI Agreement aims to establish a strategic energy corridor that provides a direct route for Azeri gas to reach European markets, with Hungary serving as a crucial transit country. This infrastructure development not only strengthens energy security for both countries but also contributes to diversifying energy sources for Europe and reducing dependency on Russian gas supplies.

In addition to gas pipelines, Hungary and Georgia have engaged in joint ventures and investments in renewable energy projects. As part of their economic collaboration, the two countries have explored opportunities to develop sustainable energy sources such as wind, solar, and hydroelectric power. By investing in renewable energy infrastructure, Hungary and Georgia not only promote environmental sustainability but also create new avenues for economic development and job creation within the energy sector.

Furthermore, the economic partnership between Hungary and Georgia extends beyond energy cooperation to encompass various aspects of bilateral trade and investment. The two countries have explored opportunities to expand trade relations and establish mutually beneficial economic ties in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, technology, and tourism. (Aurescu,B, 2020, p.43) By fostering closer economic collaboration, Hungary and Georgia aim to unlock new business opportunities, promote economic growth, and enhance competitiveness in the global marketplace.

The economic collaboration between Hungary and Georgia within the framework of the AGRI Agreement represents a strategic partnership that holds immense potential for

advancing energy security, infrastructure development, and economic prosperity. By leveraging their respective strengths and resources, Hungary and Georgia can further strengthen their partnership, drive innovation in the energy sector, and contribute to the regional integration and cooperation in Central Europe and the Caucasus region.

The strategic importance of the economic collaboration between Hungary and Georgia within the AGRI perspective extends beyond just energy security and diversification of energy sources. This partnership serves as a gateway for both countries to access new markets, foster innovation and technological advancements, and enhance their overall competitiveness on the global stage.

By working together in the energy sector, Hungary and Georgia not only reduce their dependency on Russian gas supplies but also open up opportunities for the development of sustainable energy solutions (Tulmets, 2020). This collaboration allows for the exchange of best practices, knowledge sharing, and joint research and development initiatives that can lead to the creation of more efficient and environmentally friendly energy systems.

Moreover, the economic ties between Hungary and Georgia contribute to the economic growth and development of both countries. Through joint ventures, infrastructure projects, and trade agreements, they can tap into each other's resources and expertise, leading to increased investment, job creation, and economic prosperity. This partnership paves the way for the establishment of strong business networks and value chains that benefit businesses and industries in both nations.

In terms of regional stability, the Hungary-Georgia partnership plays a crucial role in fostering closer ties between Central Europe and the South Caucasus. By strengthening diplomatic relations and promoting cooperation in various sectors, including energy, trade, and infrastructure, the two countries contribute to peace, security, and stability in the wider region (Tsereteli, 2019). This collaboration not only enhances economic interdependence but also fosters cultural exchange and people-to-people connections, building stronger bonds between the populations of Hungary and Georgia.

Overall, the strategic importance of the Hungary-Georgia partnership within the AGRI perspective lies in its multifaceted benefits for both countries and the broader region. Beyond

enhancing energy security and reducing reliance on Russian gas supplies, this collaboration drives economic growth, promotes regional stability, and strengthens ties between Central Europe and the South Caucasus. By leveraging their complementary strengths and shared goals, Hungary and Georgia can create a more prosperous and sustainable future for their citizens and contribute to the advancement of the European energy market and beyond.

II.1.2. Southern Gas Corridor

The historical friendly relations between Hungary and Georgia have laid a solid foundation for mutual cooperation in various fields, including energy. The Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) project, initiated by Azerbaijan, presents a unique opportunity for both nations to enhance their energy security by diversifying gas sources (Siddi,Marco, 2021, p.24). This strategic collaboration is crucial for Hungary, as it aims to reduce its dependence on Russian gas imports and forge stronger ties with alternative suppliers in the Caspian region.

Hungary's active involvement in the SGC underscores its strategic intent to decrease reliance on Russian gas, a move that aligns with broader European Union objectives of diversifying energy sources and enhancing energy security (Pirani,S, 2022, p.120). By participating in the SGC project, Hungary not only secures access to new gas supply routes but also contributes to the development of a more resilient and competitive energy market in the region.

On the other hand, Georgia plays a pivotal role as a transit country in the SGC, acting as a bridge between gas-producing countries in the Caspian region and European markets. As a reliable transit hub, Georgia's strategic geographical position enhances the efficiency and security of gas transportation through the SGC pipeline network (Winrow, Gareth M, 2022, p.43). This not only benefits Hungary by ensuring the smooth flow of gas but also strengthens Georgia's position as an essential player in regional energy geopolitics.

The partnership between Hungary and Georgia within the framework of the SGC project signifies a shared commitment to energy security, diversification, and regional cooperation. By working together, these two countries can leverage their respective strengths to foster sustainable energy development, boost economic growth, and enhance geopolitical stability in the region.

In conclusion, the collaboration between Hungary and Georgia in the Southern Gas Corridor project represents a significant step towards achieving energy security and diversification in the region. By capitalizing on this strategic partnership, both nations stand to benefit from

enhanced energy resilience, strengthened ties with alternative gas suppliers, and increased economic integration within the broader European energy market.

The strategic importance of the collaboration between Hungary and Georgia in the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) project is further highlighted by recent developments in the energy sector. Hungary's active participation in the SGC demonstrates its commitment to diversifying energy sources and enhancing energy security, while Georgia benefits from increased investment and economic cooperation, solidifying its position as a reliable energy transit hub in the region (Hafner, Manfred and Tagliapietra, Simone, 2023, p.154).

Hungary's involvement in the SGC project goes beyond a mere economic interest; it reflects a strategic decision to reduce its reliance on Russian gas imports and strengthen its energy security by tapping into alternative gas sources (Abbasov, Faig, Galib, 2020, p.31). By actively participating in the construction of gas pipelines and infrastructure within the SGC framework, Hungary not only secures access to diversified gas supplies but also contributes to the overall energy diversification efforts in Europe. This proactive approach aligns with Hungary's broader energy strategy to reduce vulnerabilities and enhance resilience in the face of geopolitical fluctuations.

On the other hand, Georgia plays a crucial role as a transit country within the SGC project, leveraging its strategic geographic location to facilitate the transportation of gas from the Caspian region to European markets. The increased investment and economic cooperation with Hungary not only bring mutual benefits but also elevate Georgia's status as a reliable energy transit hub in the region. By fostering stronger ties with Hungary and other SGC stakeholders, Georgia enhances its position as a key player in regional energy security and infrastructure development (Hafner, Manfred and Tagliapietra, Simone, 2023, p.154).

The partnership between Hungary and Georgia in the SGC project exemplifies a strategic alignment of interests and shared goals in the areas of energy security, diversification, and economic cooperation. By leveraging their respective strengths and resources, these two countries can maximize the potential of the SGC project to enhance regional energy resilience, promote economic growth, and strengthen geopolitical stability. The collaboration between Hungary and Georgia in the SGC project serves as a model for effective cross-border cooperation in achieving common energy objectives and shaping the future of energy dynamics in the region.

The economic collaboration between Hungary and Georgia through the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) has significant strategic implications that extend beyond energy security and resilience. By reducing their dependence on Russian gas supplies, Hungary and Georgia are not only enhancing their energy security but also contributing to the diversification of energy sources in the European market (Hafner, Manfred and Tagliapietra, Simone, 2023, p.31). This diversification is crucial for promoting stability and competition in the energy sector, which ultimately benefits consumers and strengthens the overall energy landscape in Europe.

Hungary's active participation in the SGC project is a strategic move to decrease its reliance on Russian gas imports and increase its energy diversification efforts. By partnering with Georgia in this endeavor, Hungary can access alternative gas sources from the Caspian region, thereby reducing its vulnerability to external shocks and geopolitical pressures. (Winrow, Gareth M, 2022, p.25). This shift towards diversified energy sources not only enhances Hungary's energy security but also contributes to the broader goal of creating a more resilient and competitive energy market in Europe.

Moreover, the economic collaboration between Hungary and Georgia in the SGC project fosters regional integration and economic development. By working together to build and expand gas infrastructure, both nations are creating new opportunities for trade, investment, and economic cooperation. This collaboration not only strengthens the bilateral relationship between Hungary and Georgia but also contributes to the broader goal of enhancing economic ties and fostering regional stability in the Caucasus and Central Europe.

Overall, the partnership between Hungary and Georgia in the SGC project represents a strategic alignment of interests that goes beyond energy security. By reducing reliance on Russian gas supplies, promoting energy diversification, and fostering economic collaboration, both nations are contributing to a more secure, stable, and competitive energy market in Europe (Siddi,Marco, 2021, p.29). This economic cooperation creates a win-win situation for Hungary and Georgia, as well as for the broader region, by promoting regional integration, economic development, and energy resilience.

II.2. The Influence of Security Considerations

II.2.1. The Strategic Importance of Georgia's Black Sea Access for Regional Security

The Black Sea region is a vital geostrategic location due to its position at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. It serves as a key gateway for trade, energy transportation, and military activities. The region is also rich in natural resources, including oil and gas reserves, which makes it a significant economic asset (Weaver, Carol, 2020, p.43).

The annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine have destabilized the Black Sea region and raised serious security concerns. Russia's aggressive actions have challenged the existing security architecture in the region and prompted a militarization of the Black Sea (Hamilton, Daniel, Mangott, Gerhard, 2022, p.100). The presence of Russian military forces in Crimea and ongoing tensions in Eastern Ukraine have created a security dilemma for neighboring countries, including Georgia and Hungary.

Georgia's access to the Black Sea is crucial for its economic development and security. As a key player in the region, Georgia has sought closer ties with Western institutions, such as the European Union and NATO, to enhance its security and stability (Sanders, Deborah, 2020, p.84). Georgia's potential EU membership could bring about increased security cooperation, including joint military exercises and intelligence sharing, to address common security threats in the Black Sea region.

For neighboring countries like Hungary, Georgia's EU membership could have significant implications for their security interests. Closer cooperation with Georgia could contribute to a more stable and secure Black Sea region, reducing the risk of conflicts and enhancing regional security. Hungary, as a landlocked country, relies on secure transportation routes and energy supplies that pass through the Black Sea region (Hamilton, Daniel, Mangott, Gerhard, 2022, p.85). Therefore, stability in the region is crucial for Hungary's own economic development and security.

In conclusion, the Black Sea region is a complex and strategically important area that requires careful analysis and diplomatic efforts to ensure peace and stability. Georgia's access to the Black Sea and its potential EU membership are key factors that could influence regional security dynamics and have implications for neighboring countries like Hungary. Collaboration and cooperation among regional actors are essential to address security challenges and promote stability in the Black Sea region.

The security implications of Georgia's potential EU membership for the Black Sea region and neighboring countries like Hungary are significant and multifaceted. Enhanced security cooperation resulting from Georgia's EU membership could have wide-ranging benefits for regional stability and contribute to the security interests of countries in the area.

One key aspect of enhanced security cooperation in the Black Sea region would be joint military exercises between Georgia and other EU member states. These exercises could help improve interoperability and coordination among military forces, enhancing the collective defense capabilities of the region. By conducting joint exercises, participating countries can demonstrate a united front against potential security threats, deterring aggression and promoting stability.

Intelligence sharing is another vital component of enhanced security cooperation in the Black Sea region. By sharing intelligence on security threats, including potential maritime or cyber threats, countries can better anticipate and respond to security challenges. Improved information sharing can also help identify and disrupt illicit activities, such as smuggling and trafficking, which could threaten regional stability.

Maritime patrols in the Black Sea would provide an additional layer of security and surveillance to monitor and deter potential security threats. Increased patrols in the region could help prevent unauthorized military activities, illegal fishing, or other activities that could undermine security and stability. By enhancing maritime security, countries in the Black Sea region can safeguard vital sea lanes and ensure the safe passage of goods and resources through the region.

For Hungary specifically, the bolstered security resulting from Georgia's EU membership and increased cooperation in the Black Sea region could address concerns over potential threats in the area. Hungary, as a landlocked country, relies on secure transportation routes and access to energy resources that flow through the Black Sea region (Sanders, Deborah, 2020, p.46). A more stable and secure Black Sea would reduce the risk of disruptions to these critical supply chains and promote economic development and trade opportunities for Hungary.

In conclusion, the security implications of Georgia's potential EU membership for the Black Sea region and neighboring countries like Hungary are substantial. Enhanced security cooperation, including joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and maritime patrols, could strengthen regional security, promote stability, and benefit economic development in

the region (Hamilton, Daniel, Mangott, Gerhard, 2022, p.54). By working together and investing in shared security interests, countries in the Black Sea region can address security challenges and build a more secure and prosperous future.

The Black Sea region plays a pivotal role as a key transit route for energy resources, trade, and transportation between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Georgia's Black Sea ports, such as Batumi and Poti, are strategically located and serve as vital hubs for trade and energy transit. These ports play a crucial role in facilitating the transportation of oil and gas from the Caspian region to Europe through pipelines like the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline and the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP).

Closer cooperation with Georgia as an EU member could have significant economic implications for Hungary, as well as the broader Black Sea region. Georgia's EU membership could enhance energy security for Hungary by diversifying energy sources and routes. Increased cooperation on energy projects and infrastructure development between Georgia and the EU could bolster the resilience of energy supply chains and reduce dependence on a single source or route (Maisaia, 2019, p.43).

Infrastructure projects in the Black Sea region, such as the development of transportation networks and ports, could further enhance trade opportunities and economic growth for Hungary and other countries in the area. Improved connectivity and logistics in the region could facilitate the movement of goods and resources, creating new markets and business opportunities for Hungarian companies. Closer economic ties with Georgia could open up avenues for investment and joint ventures in sectors like energy, transportation, and manufacturing (Weaver, Carol, 2020, p.32).

Trade partnerships between Hungary and Georgia could also benefit from closer cooperation in the Black Sea region. As Georgia strengthens its economic ties with the EU, Hungary could access new markets and potential trade opportunities in the region (Hamilton, Daniel, Mangott, Gerhard, 2022, p.154). Closer economic integration and trade agreements between Hungary and Georgia could boost bilateral trade and investment flows, leading to mutual economic benefits and growth (Sanders, Deborah, 2020, p.109).

Overall, closer cooperation with Georgia as an EU member could contribute to economic development and prosperity in Hungary and the broader Black Sea region. Enhanced energy security, infrastructure projects, and trade partnerships could create new opportunities for

economic growth, job creation, and increased regional cooperation. By leveraging the economic potential of the Black Sea region and investing in shared economic interests, countries like Hungary and Georgia can foster sustainable development and prosperity for the benefit of all.

II.3. Political Dynamics Shaping Hungary's Support for Georgia's EU Accession Process

II.3.1. Hungary's Support for Georgia's EU Accession in the Context of Ethnic Hungarian Concerns in Ukraine

From a historical perspective, Hungary's emphasis on minority rights issues in the region can be traced back to the aftermath of World War I and the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 (Racz, 2011, 154). The Treaty of Trianon resulted in Hungary losing two-thirds of its territory and a significant portion of its ethnic Hungarian population becoming minorities in neighboring countries such as Ukraine, Romania, Slovakia, and Serbia. This fragmentation led to historical grievances and a continuing sense of responsibility by Hungary towards ethnic Hungarians living outside its borders (Solodkyy, 2022, p.54).

Throughout the 20th century, Hungary has actively advocated for the rights of ethnic Hungarian minorities in neighboring countries, seeking to safeguard their cultural identity, language, and heritage (Galbreath, McEvoy, 2020, p.100). This advocacy has been driven by a desire to address the perceived injustices of the Treaty of Trianon and uphold the rights of ethnic Hungarian communities who have faced discrimination and assimilation pressures in their respective countries.

In the context of Ukraine, where there is a significant Hungarian minority population in the Zakarpattia region, Hungary's historical ties to this community have shaped its diplomatic efforts. The Hungarian government has expressed concerns about the protection of minority rights, language education, and cultural autonomy for ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine (Gyori, Hunyady, Juhasz, Kreko, 2021, p.43). By advocating for the rights of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine, Hungary is not only addressing historical grievances stemming from the Treaty of

Trianon but also seeking to promote stability and peaceful coexistence in the region.

Hungary's emphasis on minority rights advocacy in the EU candidate status negotiations can thus be seen as a reflection of its historical commitments to ethnic Hungarian communities in neighboring countries. By prioritizing the protection of minority rights and cultural autonomy, Hungary aims to ensure that ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine and other countries have equal opportunities to preserve their identity and participate fully in society without facing discrimination or marginalization (Fedinec, 2022, p.84). Through its actions in the candidate status negotiations, Hungary seeks to uphold its historical responsibilities towards ethnic Hungarian minorities and promote a more inclusive and tolerant environment for all communities in the region.

In the context of ongoing conflicts and tensions in the region, Hungary's advocacy for the rights of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine within the EU candidate status negotiations holds significant implications for conflict resolution and peace-building efforts in the region. The situation of the Hungarian minority in conflict-affected areas, particularly in Ukraine, adds a layer of complexity to Hungary's actions and brings to light the interconnectedness between minority rights, conflict dynamics, and stability in Eastern Europe.

The presence of a Hungarian minority in Ukraine's Zakarpattia region, which has been caught in the midst of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia-backed separatists in Eastern Ukraine, underscores the challenges faced by minority communities in conflict zones (Barwinski, 2021, p.94). The Hungarian minority in Ukraine, like other minority groups, may be particularly vulnerable to discrimination, displacement, and violence in the context of ongoing conflicts. Hungary's advocacy for minority rights in this region not only aims to address historical grievances but also seeks to address the impact of conflict on minority communities and promote reconciliation and stability.

By leveraging its influence in the EU candidate status negotiations and advocating for the rights of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine, Hungary may be seeking to play a constructive role in conflict resolution and peace-building efforts. Through its actions, Hungary aims to draw attention to the specific vulnerabilities and needs of minority communities affected by conflict and to promote inclusive and sustainable solutions that address the root causes of tensions and promote social cohesion (Molodikova, 2020, p.132).

Furthermore, Hungary's support for minority rights and cultural autonomy for ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine can contribute to fostering dialogue, understanding, and cooperation between different communities in conflict-affected areas. By prioritizing minority rights advocacy within the EU enlargement process, Hungary is signaling its commitment to promoting peace, reconciliation, and stability in the region and creating conditions for the peaceful coexistence and mutual respect of diverse ethnic and cultural groups (Reznik, Reznik, 2021, p.93).

In this way, Hungary's actions in the candidate status negotiations not only address the immediate needs of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine but also have broader implications for conflict resolution efforts and the promotion of peace and stability in Eastern Europe (Gyori, Hunyady, Juhasz, Kreko, 2021, p.32). By recognizing the linkages between minority rights, conflict dynamics, and stability, Hungary's advocacy within the EU enlargement process can contribute to fostering a more inclusive and peaceful environment for all communities in the region.

Hungary's actions in the candidate status negotiations can indeed be analyzed from a strategic perspective, taking into account the country's broader geopolitical objectives and alliances within the EU. As an EU member state, Hungary has its own strategic interests and priorities, which may include promoting minority rights, ensuring stability in the region, and advancing its influence within the European Union (Reznik, Reznik, 2021, p.193)..

One strategic aspect of Hungary's approach to the candidacy status negotiations is the potential use of this process as a bargaining tool to further its interests and exert influence over EU policies, including those related to minority rights issues. By strategically leveraging its support for the candidacy of a particular country, Hungary can seek to advance its own agenda and preferences within the EU decision-making process (Barwinski, 2021, p.102). This could involve negotiating for concessions or commitments related to minority rights or other issues that are of importance to Hungary.

Moreover, Hungary's actions in the candidacy status negotiations may also be influenced by its broader geopolitical objectives, particularly in relation to the evolving dynamics in Eastern Europe. The region has been characterized by political volatility, territorial disputes, and ethnic tensions, all of which have direct implications for Hungary's national security and

stability (Fedinec, 2022, p.191). By advocating for the rights of ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries, Hungary aims to maintain its historical ties and influence in the region, while also promoting a more stable and secure environment for its own citizens and those of ethnic Hungarian descent living abroad.

Additionally, Hungary's strategic considerations within the EU enlargement process may be shaped by its alliances and partnerships within the European Union. Hungary may seek to align its positions on minority rights and other issues with like-minded countries or groups in order to strengthen its bargaining power and achieve its objectives. By building alliances and coalitions within the EU, Hungary can amplify its voice and influence over EU policies and decisions, including those related to minority rights advocacy.

Overall, Hungary's actions in the candidate status negotiations reflect a combination of strategic calculations, geopolitical considerations, and historical ties that shape its approach to promoting minority rights and advancing its national interests within the EU. By strategically engaging in the EU enlargement process and leveraging its influence, Hungary aims to secure favorable outcomes for itself and its allies, while also contributing to the stability and prosperity of the region as a whole.

During the period when the EU Commission and Parliament were considering granting candidate status to Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia, Hungary may have strategically used its influence to block negotiations towards Ukraine if candidate status was not also granted to Georgia. This potential leveraging of power could have been a way for Hungary to advance its interests regarding the Hungarian minority in Ukraine and to bargain with the EU on minority rights issues (Fedinec, 2022, p.54).

Hungary's stance on the candidacy status of Georgia and Ukraine could have been driven by a desire to address the concerns of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine, particularly in areas such as language rights, education, and cultural autonomy. By linking the candidacy status of Georgia with that of Ukraine, Hungary may have sought to pressure the EU into taking more decisive action on minority rights issues in Ukraine and to raise awareness of the situation of ethnic Hungarians in the country (Gyori, Hunyady, Juhasz, Kreko, 2021, p.143)..

By potentially using the candidacy status negotiations as a bargaining tool, Hungary could have aimed to demonstrate its commitment to advocating for minority rights within the EU and to highlight the importance of protecting linguistic and cultural diversity in the region. This strategic maneuvering may have allowed Hungary to push for greater attention to the rights of ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine and to influence EU policies and actions on minority rights issues.

II.3.2. Hungary's Potential Partnership with Georgia in the European Union

The relationship between Hungary and Poland within the European Union has been characterized by their shared advocacy for national sovereignty, anti-immigration policies, and Euroscepticism as part of the Visegrad Group. While this alliance has been significant in shaping discussions within the EU, both countries have faced criticism for what some perceive as illiberal actions, including attacks on democratic institutions such as the judiciary, media, and civil society.

In 2022, the relationship between Hungary and Poland faced a challenge following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war. Poland, as a neighboring country to Ukraine, took a strong stance against Russia and provided support for Ukraine. Given their historical context and shared experiences with occupation and oppression, Poland's position was based on its commitment to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Medvec, 2023, p.69).

Hungary, on the other hand, adopted a more neutral stance, refraining from imposing sanctions on Russia and expressing some understanding for Moscow's actions. This decision was influenced by Hungary's historical ties with Russia, its energy dependence on Russian sources, and its approach to foreign policy which emphasizes maintaining dialogue with all parties (Korosteleva, 2022, p.102).

The differing attitudes towards Russia led to a strained relationship between Hungary and Poland, resulting in the dissolution of the Eurosceptic Alliance that they had formed. This divergence in views underscored the complexities of foreign policy within the EU, where member states navigate their national interests, historical ties, and geopolitical considerations in responding to international crises.

The potential alliance between Hungary and Georgia within the European Union presents interesting dynamics in the context of shifting alliances and political ideologies within the EU (Eur. Aff. 2022,p.12) . As mentioned, Hungary may be looking for new allies following the dissolution of the Eurosceptic Alliance with Poland, and Georgia, with its government that shares anti-liberal and conservative values, could provide a potential partnership for Hungary.

Georgia, a country in Eastern Europe, has been on a path of closer integration with the European Union and has expressed support for Hungary in certain conflicts with the EU, particularly regarding migration policies and sovereignty issues. This alignment of interests between Hungary and Georgia could create a basis for cooperation and collaboration within the EU, particularly in pushing back against what Hungary perceives as excessive interference from Brussels.

One of the key motivations for Hungary in potentially aligning with Georgia could be to strengthen its position within the EU and challenge what is seen as the dominant liberal consensus fostered by the EU institutions. Hungary has been critical of what it perceives as Brussels' elitism and infringement on national sovereignty, and an alliance with Georgia, a like-minded country, could provide a platform for Hungary to amplify its voice and influence within the European Union (David L.Ellison, 2022, p.43).

By forming a new alliance with Georgia, Hungary may aim to advance shared objectives related to upholding conservative values, national sovereignty, and restrictive migration policies within the EU. This partnership could potentially create a bloc within the EU that challenges the traditional mainstream liberal positions and advocates for alternative approaches to governance and policy-making (Dolaberidze, Maslikova, 2023, p.210).

However, it is crucial to consider the broader implications of such an alliance within the European Union. While alliances and partnerships are common in EU politics, the formation of a specific anti-liberal or conservative bloc could lead to further polarization and divisions within the EU, potentially undermining the unity and cohesion of the Union.

Overall, the potential alliance between Hungary and Georgia within the EU points to the evolving landscape of European politics, where shifting alliances, divergent ideologies, and

competing interests can shape the dynamics of decision-making and cooperation within the EU (Juhasz, 2019, p.23). It remains to be seen how this potential partnership may unfold and its impact on the broader European political landscape.

The potential alliance between Hungary and Georgia within the European Union has the potential to significantly impact the European political landscape, potentially leading to both challenges and opportunities for the EU as a whole.

One of the key implications of this alliance could be the further destabilization of the EU's cohesion and unity. Hungary and Georgia's shared anti-liberal and conservative values could potentially clash with the mainstream liberal values and policies that have historically defined the European project (Dolaberidze, Andguladze, 2022, p.79) . This ideological divergence could lead to increased tension and division within the EU, as countries within the alliance advocate for alternative approaches to governance and policy-making that may not align with the EU's traditional values and objectives.

At the same time, the alliance between Hungary and Georgia could provide a platform for countries with similar beliefs to push back against what they perceive as excessive interference from the EU. By uniting around common goals such as advocating for national sovereignty, stricter immigration policies, and conservative social agendas, the alliance could amplify their voices within the EU and potentially influence decision-making processes. This could lead to a stronger advocacy for alternative policies and priorities within the EU, challenging the dominance of mainstream liberal values and potentially shaping the direction of EU policies in areas such as migration, social issues, and national sovereignty (Mihai, Radovici, Danko, 2019, p.10). The alliance could also serve as a counterbalance to the prevailing liberal consensus within the EU, providing a platform for countries with differing ideological perspectives to present alternative viewpoints and proposals.

However, it is important to consider the potential risks and challenges posed by this alliance. The divergence between Hungary, Georgia, and other EU member states on certain key issues could exacerbate existing divisions within the EU and complicate efforts to achieve consensus on important policy matters. This could further strain relations between member states and undermine the EU's ability to act cohesively in addressing shared challenges and

advancing common objectives (Leonard, Popescu, 2022, p.74).

Overall, the potential alliance between Hungary and Georgia within the European Union presents a complex and multifaceted dynamic that could have far-reaching implications for the European political landscape. It underscores the evolving nature of EU politics and highlights the need for careful navigation of differing perspectives and interests to ensure the continued cohesion and effectiveness of the Union.

III. Hungary's support for Georgia's European Union membership aspiration from a normative perspective

III.1. Challenging Liberal Norms

The European Union is considered a political and economic union of democratic states that promotes principles such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. These values have played a significant role in shaping the EU's identity and guiding its policies and actions. However, in recent years, the EU has witnessed the emergence of nationalist and eurosceptic movements within some member states, challenging the traditional narrative of liberal values within the Union (Alesina, 2022, p.73).

Hungary, led by Prime Minister Viktor Orban's Fidesz party, has been at the forefront of this shift towards nationalist and eurosceptic ideologies within the EU. The Orban government's policies and actions have been criticized for their perceived erosion of democratic norms, attacks on civil liberties, and challenges to the independence of the judiciary and media (Tanja, Borzel, 2023, p.89) . These developments have raised concerns among some EU member states and institutions about the adherence to common values and principles within the Union.

Against this backdrop, Hungary's support for Georgia's EU membership aspiration has implications for the normative framework of the European project. The alignment between Hungary and Georgia, both of which have governments with nationalist and conservative tendencies, raises questions about the compatibility of their ideologies with the liberal values traditionally upheld by the EU. This alignment could potentially influence the dynamics within the EU, as countries with similar political orientations seek to promote their agendas

and challenge the prevailing consensus on issues such as migration, sovereignty, and social policies (Schimmelfennig, Smith, 2020, p.123).

The normative questions raised by Hungary's support for Georgia's EU membership bid underscore the complexity of the European political landscape and the diversity of perspectives within the Union. While the EU is founded on the principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, the presence of nationalist and eurosceptic movements highlights the challenges of balancing divergent ideologies and interests within a supranational framework(Cordelia, Ponczek, 2021, p.140). The implications of Hungary's alignment with Georgia for the values and principles underpinning the European project emphasize the ongoing debate about the EU's identity, purpose, and future direction.

In conclusion, the discussion of Hungary's support for Georgia's EU membership aspiration from a neutral perspective highlights the need to critically examine the normative dimensions of this alliance within the context of the evolving European political landscape (Schimmelfennig, Frank, 2022, p.29). By considering the diverse viewpoints and interests at play, it becomes possible to better understand the complexities and implications of this development for the European project as a whole.

Both Hungary's Fidesz party and Georgia's ruling Georgian Dream party have cultivated a political identity that emphasizes national sovereignty, cultural preservation, and a rejection of perceived external interference. The narrative of resisting outside influence and protecting national identity resonates with segments of the population in both countries who feel marginalized or threatened by globalization and liberal internationalism (Borzel, 2022.p.21). This shared sentiment of safeguarding tradition, heritage, and national autonomy forms a strong basis for cooperation and alignment between Hungary and Georgia within the EU framework.

The partnership between Hungary and Georgia within the EU presents unique opportunities and challenges. On one hand, the convergence of their nationalist and conservative ideologies could serve to amplify their voices within EU decision-making processes and contribute to a diversified range of perspectives within the Union. This diversity of viewpoints is essential for fostering healthy debate, promoting critical thinking, and ensuring that policies reflect a

wide array of interests and values (Lavrelashvili, Van Hecke, 2022, p.98).

However, the alignment between Hungary and Georgia also raises concerns about the potential impact on EU unity and cohesion. The rise of nationalist and conservative movements within the EU has sparked tensions within the Union, as member states grapple with divergent approaches to issues such as migration, rule of law, and economic policy. Hungary's adversarial stance towards EU institutions and Georgia's aspirations for EU membership under such circumstances could complicate efforts to reach consensus and foster solidarity among member states.

Moreover, the implications of Hungary's support for Georgia's EU membership bid extend beyond the scope of normative values to encompass strategic considerations as well. The partnership between the two countries could create new alliances, influence power dynamics within the EU, and reshape the geopolitical landscape in ways that may impact EU policies and external relations. Understanding the multifaceted dimensions of this alignment is crucial for assessing its potential implications for the future of the European project (Lavrelashvili, Van Hecke, 2022, p.102).

In conclusion, the shared nationalist and conservative values between Hungary and Georgia have the potential to shape their collaboration within the EU and contribute to a nuanced discourse within the Union (Borzel, 2022.p.31). While this alignment offers opportunities for cooperation and solidarity, it also raises questions about the compatibility of divergent ideologies within the EU framework and the broader implications for European integration and unity. Exploring the complexities and implications of this partnership is essential for understanding its significance within the evolving dynamics of the EU.

From a normative perspective, Hungary's support for Georgia's EU membership bid adds a layer of complexity to the ongoing debates about the future trajectory of the European Union. The alignment between Hungary and Georgia, both of which espouse nationalist and conservative ideologies, raises fundamental questions about the compatibility of divergent political visions within the EU framework. The convergence of their values challenges the liberal consensus that has historically underpinned European integration, potentially reshaping the ideological landscape and power dynamics within the Union (Schimmelfennig,

Frank, 2022, p.102).

The alliance between Hungary and Georgia has the potential to deepen existing fault lines within the EU, as member states increasingly divide along ideological lines. The rise of nationalist and conservative movements in Hungary and other member states has led to tensions with more liberal governments and institutions, exemplified by disputes over issues such as migration, the rule of law, and human rights. The backing of Georgia's EU membership bid by Hungary further underscores these ideological fault lines, as countries with similar worldviews align to advance their interests and challenge the dominant liberal order.

Moreover, the partnership between Hungary and Georgia within the EU could influence the Union's external relations and strategic positioning on the global stage. As nationalist and conservative forces gain prominence within the EU, the bloc's policies towards neighboring countries, international institutions, and global challenges may evolve to reflect these changing dynamics (Cordelia, Ponczek, 2021, p.140). Hungary's support for Georgia's EU aspirations could signal a shift in how the EU engages with its Eastern neighbors and shapes its approach to enlargement and neighborhood policies.

At the same time, the alliance between Hungary and Georgia raises concerns about the implications for EU unity and cohesion. The proliferation of nationalist and conservative movements within the EU poses a fundamental challenge to the core principles of solidarity, cooperation, and mutual respect that underpin European integration (Leonard, Popescu, 2022, p.32). . The alignment of countries like Hungary and Georgia along nationalist lines could exacerbate divisions within the Union, undermining efforts to find common ground and forge collective solutions to shared challenges.

In conclusion, the partnership between Hungary and Georgia within the EU carries significant normative implications for the future of European integration and governance. The convergence of nationalist and conservative ideologies challenges the liberal values that have long defined the European project, raising questions about the cohesion, unity, and direction of the Union. Understanding the implications of this alignment is critical for navigating the complex dynamics of EU politics and shaping the future of European cooperation and integration.

In conclusion, Hungary's backing of Georgia's EU membership bid carries profound normative implications that resonate with the fundamental values, principles, and trajectory of the European project. The alignment between Hungary and Georgia represents a convergence of nationalist and conservative ideologies that challenge the longstanding liberal consensus that has guided European integration. By supporting Georgia's aspirations for EU membership, Hungary may be seeking to bolster its own nationalist and eurosceptic agenda within the EU, potentially reshaping the ideological landscape and power dynamics within the Union.

This alignment underscores the deep-seated tensions and divisions within the EU, as member states increasingly polarize along ideological lines. The rise of nationalist and conservative movements in Hungary, as well as in other member states, has contributed to a broader cleavage within the Union over issues such as migration, the rule of law, and human rights. Hungary's alignment with Georgia amplifies these divisions, as countries with similar worldviews coalesce to challenge the prevailing liberal order and advocate for alternative approaches to governance and policy-making.

Moreover, the partnership between Hungary and Georgia within the EU has implications for the Union's external relations and strategic positioning on the global stage. As nationalist and conservative forces gain prominence within the EU, the bloc's engagement with neighboring countries, international institutions, and global issues may evolve to reflect these shifting dynamics (Mihai, Radovici, Danko, 2019, p.432). . Hungary's support for Georgia's EU ambitions signals a potential shift in the EU's approach to enlargement and neighborhood policies, with implications for the Union's role and influence in the wider international arena.

At the same time, the alignment between Hungary and Georgia raises critical questions about the cohesion, unity, and future direction of the EU. The proliferation of nationalist and conservative movements poses a fundamental challenge to the core principles of solidarity, cooperation, and mutual respect that underpin European integration. The convergence of countries like Hungary and Georgia along nationalist lines may exacerbate existing divisions within the Union, hindering efforts to forge consensus and collective solutions to common challenges.

In light of these complexities, understanding the normative dimensions of Hungary's support for Georgia's EU aspirations is essential for navigating the intricate dynamics of EU politics and governance. The implications of this alignment underscore the evolving nature of European integration and the need for a nuanced and comprehensive approach to addressing the normative challenges and opportunities that arise from the intersecting interests and values of member states within the EU framework (Borzel, 2022,p.21). By delving deeper into the normative implications of Hungary's stance on Georgia's EU membership bid, policymakers, scholars, and stakeholders can gain a clearer understanding of the broader dynamics shaping the future of European cooperation and integration.

III.1. The Ideological Alliance Between Georgia and Hungary

Both Hungary and Georgia have unique historical backgrounds that have influenced their current political trajectories. Hungary, a landlocked country in Central Europe, has a rich history that includes periods of both prosperity and turmoil. The country experienced Ottoman and Habsburg rule, followed by periods of independence and alignment with various political entities. The legacy of these historical experiences can be seen in Hungary's political landscape today, where Prime Minister Viktor Orban and his Fidesz party have focused on promoting a sense of national identity and sovereignty (Buzogany, 2020, p.121). This emphasis on Hungarian exceptionalism and nationalism has resonated with many citizens who value their country's history and traditions.

On the other hand, Georgia, located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, has a history marked by various invasions, occupations, and struggles for independence. The country has experienced rule under different empires, including the Ottoman and Russian Empires, before gaining independence in the 20th century. Georgia's historical experiences of fighting for sovereignty and independence have shaped its current political stance, with the ruling Georgian Dream party emphasizing a pro-European and pro-Western orientation. This focus on aligning with Western values and institutions reflects the country's desire to distance itself from its Soviet past and build closer ties with the democratic world (Gozaliashvili,2021,p.18).

Despite these differences in foreign policy approaches, Hungary and Georgia have found common ground in their shared conservative values and opposition to liberal and progressive ideologies. Both countries have been vocal critics of what they perceive as the erosion of

traditional values in Western societies, including issues related to immigration, LGBTQ+ rights, and the role of civil society organizations (Gozaliashvili, 2023, p.121). The alignment of Hungary and Georgia on these conservative principles has created a basis for cooperation and mutual support, particularly in the face of international criticism and pressure (Krakovsky, Beriashvili, 2020, p.143).

In conclusion, while Hungary and Georgia may have divergent historical experiences and foreign policy orientations, their shared conservative values and opposition to liberal ideologies have brought them closer together politically. This ideological alignment has paved the way for cooperation and collaboration between the two countries, despite their geographical and cultural differences. By understanding the historical contexts of Hungary and Georgia, we can gain insights into the roots of their current political landscapes and the motivations behind their ideological narratives (Bulbous, Mai, 2024, p.84).

From a geopolitical standpoint, the burgeoning partnership between Georgia and Hungary reflects a broader global shift towards right-wing populism and nationalism gaining traction in various regions. This trend is characterized by leaders and political parties embracing conservative values, prioritizing national interests, and challenging the established liberal democratic order (Toth, Ungvari, 2019, p.43). Both Georgia and Hungary have come under scrutiny for actions that are perceived as eroding democratic principles and institutions, prompting concerns from the international community about the state of governance in these countries.

The recent participation of Georgian Prime Minister Gharibashvili in the CPAC conference underscores the growing ties between right-wing populist and nationalist movements on a global scale. CPAC, the Conservative Political Action Conference, is known for attracting conservative leaders from around the world who share similar ideologies and policy perspectives (Bartalis, 2021, p.85). By engaging with like-minded politicians at such gatherings, Gharibashvili and other participants in the conference are signaling their commitment to challenging the traditional liberal order that has shaped international relations since the aftermath of World War II.

The alignment of Georgia and Hungary within this broader movement of right-wing populism and nationalism highlights the evolving dynamics of geopolitics in the 21st century. These

countries are forging alliances based on shared values and attitudes towards governance, even as they face criticism and opposition from democratic institutions and civil society groups (Begoshvili, Kakauridze, 2023, p.14). The close relationship between Georgia and Hungary serves as a case study of how political forces can converge across borders, transcending traditional ideological divisions and reshaping the geopolitical landscape.

In conclusion, the collaboration between Georgia and Hungary within the context of right-wing populism and nationalism reflects a larger trend of political realignment and ideological convergence on the global stage (Mihai, Radovici, Danko, 2019, p.10). . By examining this partnership through a geopolitical lens, we can gain insights into the complex interplay of forces shaping contemporary international relations and the challenges posed to the established liberal democratic order. As Georgia and Hungary navigate their roles within this evolving geopolitical landscape, they will continue to be key players in the ongoing debate over the future direction of world politics (Schimmelfennig, Frank, 2022, p.102)..

From a cultural lens, the convergence of Georgia and Hungary towards an ideological affinity can be viewed within the broader context of a clash between traditional conservative values and more progressive and liberal ideals. Leaders such as Viktor Orban and Irakli Gharibashvili have championed conservative principles rooted in strong religious beliefs, traditional family structures, and a steadfast commitment to national identity (David L.Ellison, 2022, p.43).. Their promotion of these values is often framed as a defense against what they view as the encroachment of liberal and progressive ideologies that challenge traditional cultural norms and societal structures.

The traditional conservative values embraced by leaders in Georgia and Hungary reflect deeply ingrained cultural beliefs that have shaped the identities and lifestyles of their respective populations. These values are often intertwined with historical legacies, religious traditions, and social practices that hold significant importance in shaping the cultural fabric of these societies (Bartalis, 2021, p.32). As such, the alignment of these countries towards a conservative stance can be seen as a conscious effort to preserve and uphold these cultural traditions in the face of perceived external threats.

The clash between traditional conservative values and progressive liberal ideas is not unique to Georgia and Hungary but is a broader trend observed in many parts of the world. The

tension between these competing worldviews has led to polarization and division within societies, as differing cultural perspectives navigate the complexities of modernity and globalization. Leaders like Orban and Gharibashvili have tapped into this cultural divide to mobilize support and galvanize their respective political bases, framing their policies and rhetoric within the context of preserving cultural heritage and national identity (Begoshvili, Kakauridze, 2023, p.42)

In conclusion, the cultural convergence between Georgia and Hungary reflects a broader global phenomenon of cultural clashes between traditional conservative values and progressive liberal ideologies. By understanding the significance of cultural beliefs and societal norms in shaping political landscapes, we can gain insights into the motivations and narratives driving the alignment of countries towards particular ideological orientations. As the cultural debate continues to unfold on the world stage, the tensions between traditional and progressive values will likely remain a defining feature of contemporary political discourse.

In conclusion, the deepening political ties between Georgia and Hungary, mirroring the ideological narratives of their leaders, signify a larger global trend of the rise of right-wing populist and nationalist movements across different regions. This alignment between the two countries, with Prime Minister Orban of Hungary and Prime Minister Gharibashvili of Georgia sharing similar conservative values and policy perspectives, underscores a growing network of like-minded leaders who are challenging the established liberal order.

While this political cooperation may serve to strengthen the bilateral relationship between Georgia and Hungary, it also raises concerns about the potential erosion of democratic norms and values in both nations. Criticism from the international community regarding actions that are perceived as undermining democratic institutions and principles further highlights the need for vigilance in safeguarding democratic governance in these countries.

The emergence of right-wing populist and nationalist movements has sparked debates and tensions within societies, as differing ideologies clash over issues related to national identity, governance, and international relations (David L.Ellison, 2022, p.27).. The alignment between Georgia and Hungary within this broader trend underscores the complexities of contemporary geopolitics and the shifting dynamics of global alliances.

As such, it is imperative for the international community to closely monitor developments in Georgia and Hungary, as well as in other countries experiencing similar political shifts. The impact of these movements on democratic governance, human rights, and global stability necessitates a concerted effort to uphold and protect the principles of democracy and rule of law.

In navigating the challenges posed by the rise of right-wing populism and nationalism, it is crucial for democratic nations and international institutions to remain vigilant and proactive in addressing threats to democratic norms and values (Bulbous, Mai, 2024, p.211). By maintaining a watchful eye on developments in countries like Georgia and Hungary, the global community can work towards promoting democratic ideals and defending the foundations of liberal democracy in an era marked by political polarization and ideological divisions.

III.2. Political values of "Fidesz" and "Georgian Dream"

Both Hungary and Georgia boast rich historical legacies intertwined with Christian traditions and family values. These shared foundations form the cultural bedrock upon which their societies have been shaped over centuries. The historical experiences of both countries, marked by periods of foreign domination, political upheaval, and struggles for independence, have deeply influenced their national identities and narratives (Gozalashvili, 2022, p.43).

In Hungary, the preservation of Christian heritage has been a central tenet of the Fidesz Party's platform under the leadership of Prime Minister Viktor Orban. The party has consistently emphasized the importance of Hungary's Christian roots and traditional family values as fundamental pillars of national identity and cohesion (Tulmets, 2019, p.14). By championing these values, Fidesz seeks to uphold a sense of cultural continuity and societal cohesion that is rooted in Hungary's Christian past.

Similarly, the Georgian Dream Party in Georgia shares a commitment to upholding Christian traditions and family values within Georgian society. Georgia's historical ties to the Orthodox Christian faith have played a significant role in shaping the country's cultural identity and social norms. The party's dedication to preserving these values reflects a desire to maintain

the unique heritage and traditions that have long defined Georgian society (Weber, Silagadze, 2023, p.143).

The convergence of these shared historical experiences and cultural values forms a strong basis for cooperation and mutual support between Hungary and Georgia. The resonance between the Fidesz Party's emphasis on Hungary's Christian heritage and traditional family values and the Georgian Dream Party's commitment to upholding similar values provides a common ground for collaboration (Bustikova, Kirchick, 2021, p.56). This shared historical background fosters a sense of kinship and understanding between the two countries, creating a foundation for cooperation in pursuit of their aspirations for EU membership.

As Hungary and Georgia navigate the complexities of international relations and seek to strengthen their ties with the European Union, their historical ties rooted in Christian traditions and family values serve as a unifying force. By drawing upon these shared foundations, both countries can foster a sense of solidarity and cooperation that transcends geographic boundaries and cultural differences. The preservation of their historical legacies and commitment to upholding cherished values provide a strong rationale for their alignment in support of each other's European aspirations (Mahon, Pearce, Korobkov, 2021, p.18).

Both the Fidesz Party in Hungary and the Georgian Dream Party in Georgia place a strong emphasis on family values and Christian principles in shaping their political ideologies and policy agendas (Tulmets, Beachain, Sheridan, 2019, p.89). The belief in traditional family structures, moral values, and religious principles serves as a foundational cornerstone for both parties, guiding their decision-making processes and strategic directions.

In Hungary, the Fidesz Party, led by Prime Minister Viktor Orban, has consistently championed traditional family values and Christian principles as essential components of Hungarian society. The party's policies often reflect a commitment to upholding the sanctity of marriage, supporting pro-family initiatives, and preserving cultural traditions rooted in Christian heritage (Ciorici, Teitelbaum, 2022, p.14). By prioritizing these values, Fidesz aims to create a cohesive and resilient society that is grounded in shared moral beliefs and family-centered principles.

Similarly, the Georgian Dream Party in Georgia shares a deep-seated commitment to defending and promoting family values and Christian principles within Georgian society. The party's dedication to upholding traditional moral standards, fostering social cohesion, and protecting religious freedoms reflects a broader commitment to preserving the cultural identity and ethical framework of Georgian communities (Wiener, Hess, 2019, p.61). By placing an emphasis on these values, Georgian Dream seeks to strengthen societal bonds, promote a sense of unity, and uphold the principles that have long defined Georgian culture.

The shared commitment to defending family values and Christian principles against perceived threats from liberal and progressive forces unites the Fidesz Party and the Georgian Dream Party in their advocacy for Georgia's EU integration. Both parties view European integration as a means to advance and promote these cherished values on the European stage, safeguarding them against external influences that may challenge their cultural norms and moral foundations. The alignment of their values provides a common ground for cooperation and collaboration in supporting Georgia's aspirations for EU membership, as they believe that European integration can serve as a platform for upholding their shared beliefs and principles within a broader international context (Rolon, Ferenczi, Rosun, Holmes, 2020, p.72).

By recognizing the significance of family values and Christian principles in shaping their political ideologies, the Fidesz Party and the Georgian Dream Party demonstrate a deep-rooted commitment to preserving cultural traditions, moral standards, and religious beliefs that underpin their respective societies (Klarman, Rev, 2023. p.21). Their alignment on these core values not only informs their domestic policies and governance approaches but also influences their strategic alliances and advocacy efforts toward achieving common goals, including Georgia's integration into the European Union.

From a family values and Christian perspective, Hungary and the Fidesz Party should support Georgia's EU membership for several reasons. Firstly, both countries share a commitment to upholding traditional family structures and moral principles rooted in Christian beliefs. By supporting Georgia's EU integration, Hungary and Fidesz can advocate for the promotion and preservation of these cherished values on the European stage, ensuring that European policies and norms align with their shared cultural and religious foundations (Nielsen, Blank, 2021). Additionally, Georgia's EU membership would present an opportunity to strengthen and promote family values and Christian principles across a broader international platform. By

advocating for Georgia's integration into the EU, Hungary and the Fidesz Party can contribute to the protection of traditional family values and moral standards within European institutions and policies. This support would not only benefit Georgia's societal cohesion and development but also reinforce the importance of family-centric values and religious beliefs within the broader European context.

Furthermore, aligning with Georgia on the issue of EU membership from a family values and Christian perspective can serve to foster closer ties and collaboration between the two countries. By standing together in support of common values and principles, Hungary and Georgia can enhance their mutual understanding and solidarity, leveraging their shared cultural heritage to advance shared goals and aspirations within the European Union.

Overall, from a family values and Christian perspective, Hungary and the Fidesz Party have a compelling interest in supporting Georgia's EU membership. By promoting traditional family values, moral standards, and Christian principles through their advocacy for Georgia's integration into the EU, Hungary and Fidesz can contribute to the preservation of shared cultural heritage, societal cohesion, and ethical frameworks within Europe (Borzel, 2022.p.21).. This alignment on core values provides a strong rationale for Hungary's support for Georgia's European aspirations, reflecting a commitment to upholding cherished traditions and beliefs that underpin both countries' identities and governance approaches.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, Hungary's support for Georgia's European Union membership aspiration is multifaceted, stemming from a combination of strategic and normative factors that serve to strengthen the relationship between the two countries (Cordelia, Ponczek, 2021, p.140). From a strategic perspective, economic collaboration plays a crucial role in fostering ties between Hungary and Georgia. Projects such as the AGRI and the Southern Gas Corridor not only enhance energy security and promote economic development in both nations, but also contribute to broader regional stability and cooperation (Schimmelfennig, Frank, 2022, p.102).

The AGRI project, which involves the transportation of natural gas from the Caspian Sea region to Europe through Georgia and Romania, serves as a key example of how economic partnerships can create synergies and mutual benefits for all involved parties. This project not only diversifies energy sources for Hungary and Georgia, reducing their dependence on a single supplier, but also enhances energy security for the wider region. (Borzel, 2022.p.31). By working together on initiatives such as the Southern Gas Corridor, which aims to bolster energy infrastructure and connectivity between the Caspian Sea and Europe, Hungary and Georgia are able to advance their economic interests while also enhancing regional cooperation.

Furthermore, the strategic importance of Georgia's Black Sea access cannot be overstated, particularly in the context of regional security. As a gateway between Europe and Asia, the Black Sea region holds strategic significance for trade, energy transit, and geopolitical stability. (Lavrelashvili, Van Hecke, 2022, p.98). Hungary's support for Georgia's EU accession process can therefore be understood as a strategic move to promote stability and security in the region, by bolstering Georgia's ties with European institutions and enhancing its role as a key actor in the Black Sea arena.

In addition to these strategic considerations, Hungary's support for Georgia's EU membership aspiration is also underpinned by normative factors. The ideological alignment between the two countries, as well as their shared commitment to Christian values and principles, serves to strengthen their bond and reinforces their common goals (Leonard, Popescu, 2022, p.74).. The ideological alliance between the ruling parties in both countries, Fidesz and the Georgian Dream Party, further highlights the sense of solidarity and cooperation that exists between Hungary and Georgia, as they work together towards a shared vision of European integration. (Mihai, Radovici, Danko, 2019, p.10).

Overall, Hungary's support for Georgia's EU membership aspiration is a testament to the complex interplay of strategic interests, normative values, and political dynamics that shape international relations (Gozaliashvili, 2023, p.121). By leveraging economic collaboration, promoting regional security, and upholding shared values, Hungary and Georgia are able to forge a strong partnership that not only benefits their own nations, but also contributes to the broader objectives of peace, stability, and prosperity in the European and Black Sea regions.

From a normative perspective, Hungary's support for Georgia's European Union membership aspiration represents a departure from traditional liberal norms in the European context. Both Hungary and Georgia share a strong ideological alliance and a commitment to Christian values, which serve as the foundation for their cooperation and collaboration (Krakovsky, Beriashvili, 2020, p.143). This shared commitment to conservative principles and beliefs has brought the ruling parties in both countries, Fidesz in Hungary and the Georgian Dream Party in Georgia, closer together and created a sense of solidarity based on common goals and values.

The alignment of Fidesz and the Georgian Dream Party in support of Georgia's EU membership illustrates a shared vision for the future of Europe that is rooted in traditional values, national identity, and sovereignty (Aurescu, 2021) . This contrasts with the prevailing liberal norms within the European Union, which tend to emphasize principles such as multiculturalism, tolerance, and open borders. Hungary's support for Georgia's EU accession process can thus be viewed as a challenge to these liberal norms, as it reflects a commitment to preserving national identity, cultural heritage, and traditional values within the context of European integration.

The ideological alliance between Hungary and Georgia, based on their shared commitment to Christian values and conservative principles, further solidifies their partnership and underlines a common understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing Europe today (Kottari, Popovici, Wisniewski, 2020). By standing together in support of Georgia's EU membership aspiration, both countries are not only advocating for the expansion of the European project, but also promoting a vision of Europe that is grounded in mutual respect, cultural heritage, and a commitment to traditional values.

Overall, Hungary's backing of Georgia's EU membership aspiration from a normative perspective highlights the importance of values, beliefs, and ideology in shaping international relations and cooperation (Toth, Ungvari, 2019, p.43). By championing conservative principles and challenging liberal norms within the European context, Hungary and Georgia are forging a partnership based on shared values, mutual interests, and a vision for Europe that reflects their cultural identities and traditions. This normative dimension adds depth and complexity to the strategic considerations driving Hungary's support for Georgia's European

integration, highlighting the diverse factors at play in shaping their relationship and shared objectives within the European Union.

Hungary's support for Georgia's European Union membership aspiration can indeed be viewed through the lens of a complex interplay of strategic interests, normative values, and political dynamics. This multifaceted relationship between the two countries highlights the importance of regional cooperation, security considerations, and shared values in shaping international relations and the pursuit of European integration.

From a strategic standpoint, Hungary's backing of Georgia's EU membership reflects a desire to strengthen economic ties, facilitate energy cooperation, and enhance regional security. Collaborative projects such as the AGRI and the Southern Gas Corridor not only serve to bolster energy security and economic development in both countries, but also contribute to broader regional stability and cooperation (Maisaia, 2022). Hungary's recognition of Georgia's strategic importance in providing Black Sea access further reinforces the strategic dimension of their relationship, as it plays a crucial role in regional security and energy diversification efforts.

On a normative level, Hungary's support for Georgia's EU membership can be seen as a reflection of their shared commitment to conservative values, Christian principles, and national identity. The ideological alignment between the ruling parties in both countries, as well as their strong cultural ties, create a sense of solidarity and common purpose in advocating for Georgia's European integration (Bartalis, 2021, p.85). This normative dimension adds depth and symbolism to their partnership, underscoring the importance of values and beliefs in shaping their shared vision for the future of Europe.

Moreover, the political dynamics at play in Hungary and Georgia further influence their support for European integration. Both countries face internal and external challenges that require strategic alliances and cooperation to navigate. Hungary's position within the EU and its efforts to assert its interests in the European arena, as well as Georgia's aspirations for closer integration with European institutions, create a natural alignment of interests that strengthens their partnership and mutual support for each other's objectives (Maisaia, Beselia, 2021).

In conclusion, Hungary's support for Georgia's EU membership aspiration represents a multifaceted relationship that is shaped by strategic interests, normative values, and political dynamics. This holistic approach to their partnership underscores the importance of regional cooperation, security considerations, and shared values in advancing their common goals within the framework of European integration (Begoshvili, Kakauridze, 2023, p.14). By leveraging these diverse factors, Hungary and Georgia are able to forge a strong bond that not only benefits their own nations, but also contributes to the broader objectives of peace, stability, and prosperity in the European and Black Sea regions.

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