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**GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS OF MODERN GEORGIA**

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## АНОТАЦІЯ

### **Вакулович У.С. Геополітичні інтереси сучасної Грузії.**

Рукопис. Випускна робота бакалавра за спеціальністю 291 Міжнародні відносини, суспільні комунікації та регіональні студії ОПІ Міжнародні відносини. Волинській національний університет імені Лесі Українки. Луцьк, 2024. 51с. англійська мова.

У першому розділі бакалаврської роботи узагальнено суть поняття геополітика та геополітичний інтерес. Встановлено що геополітика вивчає взаємозв'язок між географією, владою та політикою. Вона аналізує, як географічні фактори, такі як розташування, ресурси та рельєф, впливають на поведінку держав та їхню взаємодію на світовій арені. Дане дослідження вивчає теоретичні та методологічні основи вивчення геополітичних інтересів держав, з особливим акцентом на Грузію. Подальше дослідження надає огляд поточного стану дослідження даної теми в сучасній науковій літературі, ідентифікуючи прогалини та напрямки для подальших досліджень. Також обговорюються методологічні аспекти проведення досліджень щодо геополітичних інтересів держав.

У другому розділі бакалаврської роботи досліджено основні чинники, які вплинули на формування геополітичних інтересів сучасної Грузії. Дослідження розглядає історичні, політичні, правові та соціо-економічні чинники, надаючи уявлення про передумови та шляхи проведення її зовнішньої політики.

У третьому розділі бакалаврської роботи аналізуються особливості реалізації геополітичних інтересів Грузії на сучасному етапі, вивчаються характерні риси сучасної геополітичної стратегії грузії, основні вектори, роль сусідніх країн, таких як Україна, а також проблеми та перспективи, що стоять перед Грузією у здійсненні своїх стратегічних цілей.

Бакалаврська робота містить 4 рисунки, 1 таблицю, список джерел налічує 53 позиції.

За результатами роботи зроблено висновки. Геополітичні інтереси – це ті національні інтереси, що описують стратегічні або ж політичні цілі певної країни, та безпосередньо пов'язані з геополітичним розташуванням держави, ресурсами, впливом та безпекою. Це може включати дипломатичні альянси, контроль над територіями, економічні відносини та інші чинники, що впливають на її позицію у світі. Історичний розвиток формування геополітичних інтересів Грузії можна розділити на два періоди: до здобуття незалежності, та перод з отримання Грузією незалежності. Характерними рисами геополітичних інтересів сучасної грузії є: динамічне прагнення до безпеки, процвітання та інтеграції в широке міжнародне співтовариство, співпраця з країнами ЄС та НАТО, боротьба з тероризмом та вирішення зривних конфліктів та території держави. Основними проблемами в реалізації геополітичних інтересів Грузії є невирішені регіональні конфлікти, зовнішні впливи та стримуючі фактори економічного розвитку. Найвність конфліктів в Абхазії та Південній Осетії, що підривають суверенітет і стабільність Грузії, зовнішній вплив, зокрема з боку Росії, загрожує її євроатлантичним прагненням і територіальній цілісності. Проте, незважаючи на ці виклики, перспективи реалізації геополітичних інтересів Грузії полягають у дипломатичних ініціативах щодо врегулювання конфліктів, диверсифікації міжнародних партнерств та продовженні економічних реформ для підвищення конкурентоспроможності та інтеграції на світові ринки. Перспективними та стратегічно важливими в геополітичній стратегії Грузії є відносини з країнами ЄС, НАТО, Україною, країнами Близького Сходу та Центральної Азії.

**Ключові слова:** Грузія, геополітичні інтереси, держава, чинники, розвиток, політичні передумови, соціо-економічні фактори, безпека.

## ANNOTATION

### **Vakulovych, U.S. Geopolitical interests of modern Georgia.**

Manuscript. Bachelor's Thesis in Specialty 291 International Relations, Public Communications and Regional Studies of the EPP International Relations. Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University. Lutsk, 2024. 51 p. English.

The first section of the bachelor's thesis summarizes the essence of the concept of geopolitics and geopolitical interest. It is established that geopolitics studies the relationship between geography, power and politics. It analyzes how geographical factors, such as location, resources, and topography, influence the behavior of states and their interactions on the world stage. This study examines the theoretical and methodological foundations of the study of the geopolitical interests of states, with a special emphasis on Georgia. Further research provides an overview of the current state of research on this topic in the current scientific literature, identifying gaps and areas for further research. It also discusses the methodological aspects of conducting research on the geopolitical interests of states.

In the second chapter of the bachelor's work, were investigated the main factors that influenced the formation of geopolitical interests of modern Georgia. The study examines historical, political, legal and socio-economic factors, providing an idea of the prerequisites and ways of conducting its foreign policy.

The third bachelor's degree program analyses the specifics of the implementation of Georgia's geopolitic interests in the current region, presents the characteristics of Georgia's current geopolitic strategy, the main vectors, the role of the country's regions, such as Ukraine, and the problems of the prospects that Georgia faces in its own strategic goals.

Bachelor's degree of work has 4 figures, 1 table, the list of jerels has 53 positions.

Based on the results of the work, conclusions are drawn. Geopolitical interests are those national interests that describe the strategic or political goals of a particular country, and are directly related to the geopolitical location of the state, resources, influence and security. This may include diplomatic alliances, control of territories, economic relations, and other factors that affect its position in the world. The historical development of Georgia's geopolitical interests can be divided into two periods: before gaining independence, and the period after Georgia gained independence. The characteristic features of the geopolitical interests of modern Georgia are: a dynamic desire for security, prosperity and integration into the wider international community, cooperation with the EU and NATO countries, the fight against terrorism and the resolution of conflicts and the territory of the state. The main problems in the implementation of Georgia's geopolitical interests are unresolved regional conflicts, external influences and constraints on economic development. The presence of conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which undermine the sovereignty and stability of Georgia, external influence, in particular from Russia, threatens its Euro-Atlantic aspirations and territorial integrity. However, despite these challenges, the prospects for Georgia's geopolitical interests lie in diplomatic initiatives to resolve conflicts, diversify international partnerships, and continue economic reforms to increase competitiveness and integrate into world markets. Promising and strategically important in Georgia's geopolitical strategy are relations with the EU, NATO, Ukraine, the countries of the Middle East and Central Asia.

*Keywords: Georgia, geopolitical interests, state, factors, development, political prerequisites, socio-economic factors, security.*

## CONTENT

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>  | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE STATE’S GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS STUDY.....</b> | <b>7</b>  |
| 1.1. Theoretical foundations of the state’s geopolitical interests study .....                          | 7         |
| 1.2. The state of the research topic study in modern scientific literature .....                        | 11        |
| 1.3. Methodological foundations of the state’s geopolitical interests study.....                        | 13        |
| <b>CHAPTER 2. PRECONDITIONS AND FACTORS OF GEORGIA'S GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS FORMATION .....</b>         | <b>16</b> |
| 2.1. Historical factors of Georgia’s geopolitical interests formation.....                              | 16        |
| 2.2. Political and legal prerequisites of Georgia’s geopolitical interests formation                    | 20        |
| 2.3. Socio-economic prerequisites of Georgia’s geopolitical interests formation...                      | 24        |
| <b>CHAPTER 3. FEATURES OF GEORGIA'S GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS REALIZATION AT THE PRESENT STAGE.....</b>    | <b>29</b> |
| 3.1. Characteristic features of Georgia’s geopolitical interests at the present stage.                  | 29        |
| 3.2 The role of Ukraine in the geopolitical interests of Georgia .....                                  | 36        |
| 3.3. Problems and prospects of Georgia’s geopolitical interests realization .....                       | 40        |
| <b>CONCLUSION.....</b>  | <b>44</b> |
| <b>LIST OF REFERENCES .....</b>   | <b>47</b> |

## INTRODUCTION

**Relevance of the research topic.** Geopolitics, as an important area of international relations, studies the interaction of states, taking into account their geographical location and interests. The political and economic objectives of states are determined by factors such as geographical location, economic development, political system, and cultural values. The study of Georgia's geopolitical interests becomes particularly relevant when considering several key aspects. As a young democratic state seeking to integrate into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, Georgia must develop a clear and consistent geopolitical strategy.

**The object of the study** is the geopolitical interests of modern Georgia.

**The subject of the study** is the preconditions and factors, peculiarities, problems and prospects of the Georgia's geopolitical interests realisation.

**The purpose of the study** is to study Georgia's geopolitical interests at the present stage by analysing the preconditions and factors, features, problems and prospects of their formation and implementation.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to solve the following **tasks**:

- to develop a theoretical framework for the state's geopolitical interests study;
- to study the historical, political and legal prerequisites of Georgia's geopolitical interests realization;
- to study the current state of Georgia's geopolitical interests implementation;
- to analyze the role of Ukraine in Georgia's geopolitical interests;
- to identify problems and prospects of the Georgia's geopolitical interests realization.

In the process of writing the bachelor's thesis, the following **research methods** were used: system-structural approach, analysis, synthesis, historical and generalisation.

**The theoretical basis** for writing the work was the work of such scientists as Budz M., Vozovich A., Krivonos R., Kudryachenko A., Rudych M., Khramov V., Levyk B., Manzhola, V., Sukhiashvili D. T. and others

**Practical significance of the bachelor's thesis.** The results of the research can be used in the study of such disciplines as «International Globalisation and Integration in World Politics», «International Relations and World Politics», «History of International Relations, «Country Studies», «Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Interests in World Politics», «Fundamentals of Geopolitics and Geostrategy», «World Economy», taught at the Faculty of International Relations.

**Testing of the bachelor's thesis.** The results of the bachelor's thesis were tested at the III International Scientific and Practical Internet Conference «Topical Problems of International Relations and Regional Studies» (Lutsk, 2023).

**Structure of the bachelor's thesis.** The bachelor's thesis consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusions, a list of references, which includes 70 references, including foreign resources. The work is illustrated and contains figures. The total volume of the work is 52 pages, 4 figures, 1 table.

## **CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE STATE'S GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS STUD**

### **1.1. Theoretical foundations of the state's geopolitical interests study**

The exploration of the theoretical foundations of a state's geopolitical interests displays a rich variety of factors that shape the nation's role and behavior on the global stage. This multidisciplinary inquiry integrates various dimensions, including geography, economics, politics, and the intricacies of historical and cultural influences. By delving into these interconnected elements, scholars and analysts seek to unravel the intricate dynamics that govern states' interactions and the pursuit of their strategic objectives in the international arena. Geopolitics, as a scientific discipline, walks us through which these complex interplays are scrutinized. It provides a framework for understanding how the geographical context of a state influences its trajectory, emphasizing the interdependence of space, resources, and power [5, p. 49].

Geopolitics goes beyond a mere examination of physical landscapes; it entails a deep analysis of how geographical factors intersect with economic and political considerations, shaping a state's aspirations and conduct in the global community. Within this analytical framework, the pursuit of economic and political goals takes center stage. Geopolitics recognizes that states are not isolated entities but rather actors in a broader, interconnected system. Their actions are influenced not only by domestic considerations but also by the imperative to navigate the international landscape to secure resources, enhance economic prosperity, and assert political influence [7].

The complexity of geopolitical analysis is further underscored by the historical and cultural dimensions that shape a state's identity and objectives. Historical traditions and cultural values serve as enduring factors that influence a state's approach to international relations. Understanding how these elements

interact with contemporary geopolitical realities is vital for anticipating a state's behavior, motivations, and responses to global challenges.

Geopolitics is a multidisciplinary field of study that examines the relationship between geography, power, and politics. It analyzes how geographical factors such as location, resources, and terrain influence the behavior of states and their interactions on the global stage.

In turn, geopolitical interests are an important category of geopolitics, the formation, definition, and implementation of which at the present stage is one of the primary tasks of every state as a full-fledged subject of international relations. First of all, geopolitical interest is considered in the context of a certain geopolitical space of the state or the geopolitical field of interaction within which its activities are carried out in the international arena.

As a relatively young science, geopolitics emerged in the late 19th and early 20th c., gaining prominence amid the geopolitical competitions and power struggles of that era [27]. Its origins can be traced back to scholars such as Sir Halford Mackinder, who proposed the Heartland Theory in the early 20th c. According to Mackinder's theory, the control of the Eurasian «heartland» (central and eastern Europe) would confer significant geopolitical advantage due to its vast resources and strategic position [17]. This idea laid the groundwork for the study of geopolitical laws, which posit that certain geographical factors exert predictable influences on state behavior and international relations.

Friedrich Ratzel, a pivotal figure in the emergence of geopolitics, laid the groundwork for the discipline by advancing a profound understanding of the relationship between geography and the development of nations. In the latter part of the 19th c., a time marked by rapid industrialization, colonial expansion, and shifting power dynamics, Ratzel's contributions became particularly influential. Ratzel's conceptualization of geopolitics as a science was groundbreaking, as he shifted the focus from traditional political and military analyses to a broader consideration of the spatial dimensions of statehood [53].



At the core of Ratzel's ideas was the conviction that the geographical location of a state played a pivotal role in shaping its destiny. He viewed the struggle for territorial space as a fundamental aspect of a state's development, asserting that the control and expansion of physical territory were essential for a nation's survival and prosperity. Ratzel's emphasis on territorial space went beyond a mere acknowledgment of borders on a map. He argued that the interaction between a state and its geographical surroundings created a symbiotic relationship, influencing not only economic and political aspects but also the cultural and social fabric of the nation. This holistic approach to geopolitics distinguished Ratzel's work, as he integrated geographical determinism with a nuanced understanding of how space influenced the evolution of societies.

Ratzel's ideas laid the foundation for the later development of theories that explored the role of resources, climate, and physical geography in shaping a state's behavior and power dynamics [51]. His work served as a departure from conventional geopolitical thought, emphasizing the interconnectedness of spatial factors with broader national interests. Ratzel's legacy resonated not only in the academic realm but also in the practical considerations of policymakers. His ideas gained traction in an era where nations were vying for global dominance through territorial expansion, and his influence can be discerned in subsequent geopolitical theories that continued to explore the interplay between geography and state power.

Halford Mackinder, a prominent English geographer and statesman, made indelible contributions to the evolution of geopolitical thought in the early 20th c. His seminal work, particularly the concept of the «geographical heart» of the world, has left an enduring impact on the understanding of global power dynamics. Mackinder's geopolitical insights emerged against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world, characterized by geopolitical shifts, technological advancements, and the emergence of new global players. In his influential paper, «The Geographical Pivot of History» presented in 1904, Mackinder introduced the notion of a critical region that he deemed the «Heartland,» situated in the vast expanse of Eurasia [3].

According to Mackinder, the control of the Eurasian Heartland was pivotal for achieving global dominance [44]. This concept marked a departure from earlier geopolitical theories that had predominantly focused on maritime power. Mackinder argued that land power, centered in the Heartland, held the key to controlling the «World-Island,» which comprised Eurasia and Africa. He identified this region as the strategic core of the world, possessing unparalleled resources, agricultural potential, and a central location that provided a formidable advantage. Mackinder's theory can be distilled into the idea that the one who commands the Heartland commands the World-Island, and in turn, commands the world. This geopolitical perspective emphasized the significance of the vast landmass of Eurasia in shaping the fate of global politics. Mackinder's ideas resonated with policymakers and strategists, influencing geopolitical thinking during periods of geopolitical tension, including the two World Wars and the Cold War [6].

In summary, the theoretical foundations of the study of geopolitical interests of the state provide a framework for analyzing the complex interplay between geography, power, and politics in international relations. Geopolitics, as a multidisciplinary field, draws upon concepts from geography, political science, economics, and strategic studies to understand how geographical factors shape a state's foreign policy objectives, security strategies, and interactions with other actors on the global stage. Central to this framework are concepts such as the geopolitical structure of the world, which elucidates the spatial organization of power among states and regions, and doctrines or codes that inform a state's strategic decision-making. By examining historical narratives, theoretical paradigms, and empirical data, scholars can gain insights into the drivers of state behavior, the distribution of power in the international system, and the dynamics of geopolitical competition and cooperation. This theoretical foundation serves as a crucial lens through which to analyze and interpret the geopolitical interests and strategies of states, providing valuable insights for policymakers, strategists, and scholars seeking to navigate the complexities of global affairs.

## **1.2. The state of the research topic study in modern scientific literature**

The study of the geopolitical interests of the state represents a vibrant and dynamic field in modern scientific literature, with scholars from various academic traditions contributing to a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved. This section provides an overview of the state of the research topic in both domestic and foreign scientific literature, highlighting key contributors and the thematic areas they have explored.

An important task in the process of a comprehensive study of the geopolitical interests of modern Canada was the analysis of various sources in which this topic was presented, namely:

- textbooks edited by one or several authors, which usually contain material of a theoretical nature;
- monographs, periodicals, where the authors analyze certain aspects related to the realization of Canada's geopolitical interests, in particular «The Ukrainian Week» magazine, «Scientific Dialogue «East-West», The Mystery of Haushofer. LIFE Magazine;
- official documents of the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, documents of official institutions, normative documents based on the materials of speeches, statements, reports, program documents of political parties, government programs, official speeches, etc.
- Internet source containing articles on this topic;

The first task in the study of geopolitical interests was to clarify the essence of the concepts «geopolitics» and «geopolitical interest». In particular, based on scientific works Kudryachenko A., Rudich M., Hramov V. Internationally, a host of scholars has significantly contributed to the study of the geopolitical interests of the state. Notable figures such as H. Mackinder [3, 44], K. Haushofer [27], F. Knight [29, 31, 34, 35], R. Keohane [39,40], M. Mandel, and S. Huntington.

In the domain of domestic scientific literature, scholars, notably V. P. Filippov have undertaken the crucial task of defining and conceptualizing the essence of a state's geopolitical interests [33]. This endeavor involves a meticulous exploration of the underlying principles that constitute the foundation of a nation's geopolitical agenda. The formation and realization of a state's geopolitical interests represent a central focus within domestic scientific literature. Scholars engage in a comprehensive examination of the myriad factors contributing to the shaping of these interests, encompassing geographical considerations, economic imperatives, and historical legacies. Through rigorous analyses, researchers seek to unravel the intricate interplay of internal and external forces influencing the formation of a state's geopolitical objectives.

Through a rigorous examination of fundamental concepts, influencing factors, and strategic directions, scholars, exemplified by V. P. Filippov, contribute to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how states position themselves in the intricate web of global dynamics [33]. Their work not only enriches academic discourse but also holds practical implications for policymakers seeking to navigate the ever-evolving landscape of international affairs.

In summary, the exploration of the geopolitical struggle for space within foreign scientific literature offers a comprehensive understanding of the historical forces and contemporary dynamics shaping the global geopolitical arena. The frameworks established by scholars like H. Mackinder [44] and K. Haushofer [29] continue to inform discussions on territorial dominance, providing valuable insights into the complexities of power politics and the enduring significance of specific geographic spaces in the ongoing drama of international relations. The exploration of the geopolitical interests of great powers within foreign scientific literature is a critical endeavor that sheds light on the motivations and behaviors of major global players. Through in-depth analyses, scholars contribute not only to our understanding of individual nations but also to the broader theories shaping the study of geopolitics, offering valuable insights into the complexities of international relations and the evolving dynamics of global power. The study of the geopolitical

interests of regional powers within foreign scientific literature is an integral component of geopolitical research. Scholars, such as F. Knight, R. Keohane, M. Mandel, and S. Huntington, provide valuable insights into the dynamics, challenges, and impact of states that operate at the regional level. This nuanced perspective enhances our understanding of the complex web of international relations, recognizing the pivotal role that regional powers play in shaping the ever-evolving landscape of global geopolitics.

### **1.3. Methodological foundations of the state's geopolitical interests study**

The study of the geopolitical interests of modern Georgia is a complex task, so the process of scientific research should be carried out in several stages.

At the first stage, the development of a scientific research program takes place, in which justification of the relevance of the chosen topic is given. From proving the relevance of the topic, there was a logical transition to the formulation of the research goal, and specific tasks that must be solved in accordance with the goal were indicated. Then, the object (geopolitical interests of modern Georgia) and the subject (preconditions and factors, peculiarities, problems and prospects for the Georgia's geopolitical interest realisation) of the research were determined, indicating its stages and expected results. In addition, at this stage, information is collected and processed.

The second stage is organizational and methodical, which consists directly in the description of the research process and the accumulation of information.

The third stage consists in processing the collected materials and evaluating the research results obtained based on the analysis of the obtained information. Also at this stage, based on the research results, certain forecasts are formulated regarding the problems, prospects and priorities of Georgia's geopolitical interests.

1. The use of appropriate methods became a necessary condition for conducting each stage of the research. Method – is a set of techniques and

operations, with the help of which some specific practical or theoretical activity is carried out; it is a complex of various methods used in a specific science and enables comprehensive knowledge of its subject [1].

In the study of geopolitical interests of modern Georgia, analysis of prerequisites and factors, features, problems and prospects of their formation and implementation, such methods were used as system-structural approach, analysis, synthesis, historical and generalisation.

The systemic-structural approach is a set of tools (first of all, making and justifying decisions) that are used in the study of complex objects. Stages of systematic research include: clear formulation of the problem, definition of the goal and evaluation criteria for goal realization; structural analysis of the object under study, development of concepts for its development and finding ways to achieve the set goal; analysis of the problem and its solution, obtaining research options; synthesis of the investigated problem and decision-making [1].

Analysis is a research method that includes the study of a subject with the help of an imaginary or real dissection of it into constituent elements (parts of the object, its features, properties, relations) [19]. Synthesis is a combination of abstract aspects of a subject and its reflection as a concrete whole. Synthesis is also a method of studying an object in its integrity, in the single and mutual connection of its parts [1]. The synthesis gives a concrete general characteristic of the object. These two methods are interrelated and interdependent, i.e., synthesis is impossible without analysis, as it makes it possible to combine the parts of the subject, dismembered in the process of analysis, to establish their connection and to know the subject as a whole. With their help, geopolitical interests were considered as a specific category of geopolitics, which has characteristic features. With their help, separate groups of geopolitical interests were singled out, which are pursued by all states, including Georgia.

The historical method is a method of research, a complex of techniques aimed at analyzing all phenomena of the life of the country or individual regions in

chronological development, revealing the connection between the past, present and future [1]. It was used to conduct a retrospective analysis and establish cause-and-effect relationships related to the peculiarities of the formation of Georgia as a separate participant in international relations, which went through a long period of forming its own foreign policy course and choosing strategic partners for interaction.

Generalization is a logical process of transition from individual to general or from less general to more general knowledge, as well as a product of mental activity, a form of reflection of general features and qualities of objective phenomena [20]. The simplest generalizations consist in unification, grouping of objects based on a separate feature. With its help, we were able to analyze certain aspects of Georgia's geopolitical activity in different regions of the world and thus isolate the country's geopolitical vectors.

The graphic method is graphs, schemes, diagrams, cartograms, etc., which make it possible to obtain a synthesized view of the researched object and at the same time to visually show its components, their specific weight, cause-and-effect relationships. It is also characterized as a method of conditional images of statistical data using shapes, lines, dots and various symbolic images. In general, with the help of a graphic method was depicted the South Caucasus' conflict zones or Zangezur Corridor in the South Caucasus

Therefore, the use of a set of different methods provided an opportunity to deeply investigate and analyze the characteristic features, peculiarities, problems and prospects of the realization of Canada's geopolitical interests.

## **CHAPTER 2. PRECONDITIONS AND FACTORS OF GEORGIA'S GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS FORMATION**

### **2.1. Historical factors of Georgia's geopolitical interests formation**

Throughout history, Georgia's geographical position at the intersection of Europe and Asia has made it a pivotal point for trade, transit, and cultural interaction. Nestled in the South Caucasus, Georgia plays a pivotal role in linking Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia, facilitating connections between key markets and economic centers. Its location along the Black Sea shoreline and nearness to the Caspian Sea amplify its strategic importance, granting access to sea-based trade pathways and energy reservoirs.

The colonial legacy has left a significant imprint on Georgia's geopolitical landscape, profoundly shaping its historical development and geopolitical interests. Throughout history, Georgia has been subject to the influence and control of various imperial powers, including the Persian, Ottoman, and Russian empires. These colonial experiences have had enduring effects on the country's political, social, and cultural fabric, influencing its relations with neighboring states and its quest for independence and sovereignty.

During the Persian and Ottoman periods, Georgia faced periods of subjugation and external rule, as these empires sought to expand their territorial holdings into the Caucasus region. This colonial subjugation subjected Georgia to foreign domination and contributed to its fragmentation and political instability. Moreover, it established patterns of geopolitical competition and conflict in the region that continue to shape Georgia's strategic imperatives and security concerns today [42].

The Russian Empire's expansion into the Caucasus during the 18th and 19th c. marked a pivotal moment in Georgia's colonial history. Following a series of Russo-Persian wars, Georgia was gradually incorporated into the Russian Empire, first as a protectorate and later as a full-fledged province. This period of Russian



imperial rule fundamentally altered Georgia's geopolitical orientation, shifting it from a crossroads of empires to a subordinate entity within the Russian sphere of influence [11].

Tsarist Russia's expansion into the Caucasus region during the 18th and 19th c. marked a significant chapter in Georgia's history, profoundly shaping its geopolitical interests and strategic position. As Russia sought to consolidate its control over the vast territories of the Russian Empire, it turned its attention towards the Caucasus, viewing the region as a crucial frontier for expansion and imperial consolidation. This expansionist drive brought Russia into direct contact with Georgia, triggering a series of conflicts and power struggles that would profoundly impact the geopolitical landscape of the region.

The Soviet era represents a significant period in Georgia's history, profoundly shaping its geopolitical interests and strategic orientation. Following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Georgia became embroiled in the turmoil of the Russian Civil War, leading to the establishment of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) within the newly formed Soviet Union in 1921. Under Soviet rule, Georgia underwent a radical transformation, as the communist regime imposed its ideology, institutions, and policies on the country, fundamentally altering its geopolitical landscape [36].

The Soviet Union's geopolitical strategy in the Caucasus region, characterized by military buildup, strategic alliances, and ideological competition, had profound implications for Georgia's security and stability. As a borderland between East and West, Georgia became a focal point of geopolitical rivalries and power struggles between the Soviet Union and its adversaries, including NATO and the United States. This geopolitical context shaped Georgia's strategic imperatives and security concerns during the Cold War era, influencing its relations with neighboring states and its alignment within the broader international system.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked a pivotal moment in Georgia's history, fundamentally reshaping its geopolitical landscape and strategic orientation. As the Soviet Union collapsed, Georgia, along with other former Soviet

republics, regained its independence after decades of communist rule. This seismic shift in the geopolitical order brought about profound changes in Georgia's domestic politics, foreign relations, and regional dynamics, setting the stage for a period of transition and transformation [42].

Table 2.1

**Periods of formation of Georgia's Geopolitical Interests\***

| <b>Period</b>   | <b>Main characteristics</b>  |
|---|--|
| <b>Birth of geopolitical thought of Georgia</b>   |  |
| <b>Persian periods</b><br>(1501-1578, 1629-1723, 1735-1747 )                                  | <p>The geopolitical thought of Georgia originates from its early history, influenced by interactions with neighboring powers during different periods of its existence.</p> <p>During the Persian period, Georgia sought strategic alliances to maintain autonomy and cultural identity, while also navigating the influence of Persian imperialism. After gaining independence from Persia, Georgia developed its relations with other countries and sought its place in the world political system.</p>  |
| <b>Ottoman periods</b><br>(1578-1603, 1723-1735 )   | <p>Under Ottoman rule, Georgia faced challenges to its sovereignty and cultural heritage, leading to resistance movements and diplomatic maneuvering to safeguard national interests.</p>  |
| <b>Period of the Russian Empire and The Soviet era</b><br>(the beginning of the 19th to 1917) | <p>Incorporation into the Russian Empire brought political and economic integration, but also posed challenges to Georgia's autonomy and national identity, shaping its geopolitical outlook and fostering desires for independence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Russian Empire used Georgia as an important geopolitical region to secure its imperial interests in the South Caucasus and on the Caspian coast.;</li> <li>- The Russian Empire pursued a policy of exploiting Georgia's resources and enriching the Russian elite at the expense of the local population, which led to economic backwardness and social tension..</li> <li>- Economic dependence on Russia, which led to inequality in the development and use of resources.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Formation of geopolitical interests of independent Georgia</b>                             |  |
| <b>The Soviet era</b><br>(1921-1991)  | <p>Throughout the late 20th century, Georgia's geopolitical interests evolved to include aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration, democratization, and economic development, alongside efforts to resolve conflicts and establish regional stability.</p>  |
| <b>Post-independence period</b><br>(1991-for now)   | <p>Modern Georgian geopolitical interests focus on strengthening democracy, enhancing security through partnerships with Western institutions like NATO and the EU, and fostering economic growth and development through regional cooperation and integration into global markets.</p>  |

\*Compiled by: [42], [11], [38]

The dissolution of the Soviet Union also had far-reaching implications for Georgia's relations with Russia, its former imperial overlord. The breakdown of the Soviet Union strained Russo-Georgian relations, leading to tensions and conflicts over issues such as territorial integrity, ethnic minorities, and geopolitical alignment. Georgia's aspirations for closer integration with Western institutions, such as the European Union and NATO, further exacerbated its frictions with Russia, as Moscow sought to maintain its influence in the region and prevent the spread of Western influence into its traditional sphere of influence [15].

Ethnic and territorial conflicts have played a significant role in shaping Georgia's geopolitical interests and security landscape, posing challenges to its sovereignty, stability, and territorial integrity. One of the most notable conflicts is the Abkhazia conflict, which erupted in the early 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Abkhaz separatists, supported by Russia, sought to break away from Georgia and establish an independent state, leading to a bloody war between Georgian forces and Abkhaz militias.

The conflict escalated in 2008 when Russia intervened militarily to support South Ossetia, resulting in a brief but devastating war between Russia and Georgia. The war ended with the de facto independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, further complicating Georgia's territorial integrity and security situation [49].

In summary, the historical factors shaping the formation of Georgia's geopolitical interests are multifaceted and deeply ingrained in the country's past. From enduring colonial legacies under Persian, Ottoman, and Russian imperial rule, to the consequences of Tsarist Russia's expansion into the Caucasus, and the complexities of the Soviet era, Georgia's geopolitical landscape has been profoundly influenced by a myriad of historical forces. These factors have not only shaped Georgia's territorial boundaries, cultural identity, and political institutions, but have also left enduring legacies of ethnic and territorial conflicts that continue to pose challenges to its sovereignty, stability, and security. Understanding these historical factors is crucial for comprehending the complexities of Georgia's geopolitical position and its quest for security, sovereignty, and regional integration in the modern world.

## **2.2. Political and legal prerequisites of Georgia's geopolitical interests formation**

The international recognition of sovereignty stands as a pivotal aspect shaping Georgia's geopolitical interests formation. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Georgia declared its independence, seeking recognition as a sovereign state from the international community. The recognition of Georgia's sovereignty by other states and international organizations established the legal and diplomatic basis for its participation in global affairs and pursuit of its geopolitical objectives. This recognition affirmed Georgia's status as a legitimate actor on the world stage, granting it the rights and privileges accorded to sovereign states under international law.

The process of international recognition of Georgia's sovereignty was not immediate nor universal. While many countries swiftly extended recognition to Georgia, others, particularly those with close ties to Russia, were more hesitant to do so. The complex geopolitical dynamics of the post-Soviet era, coupled with the unresolved conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, contributed to varying degrees of recognition from different states. Nevertheless, over time, the majority of the international community came to acknowledge Georgia's sovereignty, affirming its territorial integrity and right to self-determination [36].

The recognition of Georgia's sovereignty paved the way for its integration into the international community, enabling it to establish diplomatic relations, join international organizations, and engage in diplomatic, economic, and security cooperation with other states. Georgia's membership in organizations such as the United Nations (1992), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (March 24, 1992), and the Council of Europe (April 27, 1999) provided platforms for it to promote its interests, advocate for its concerns, and contribute to global peace and security initiatives. The recognition of territorial integrity is a fundamental aspect shaping Georgia's geopolitical interests, serving as a cornerstone of its sovereignty, stability, and security. The recognition of Georgia's territorial

integrity is enshrined in various international agreements, declarations, and resolutions, including those adopted by the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the European Union. These documents affirm Georgia's internationally recognized borders and condemn any attempts to alter them through force or coercion. They underscore the principle of the inviolability of borders and the prohibition of the threat or use of force in international relations, emphasizing the importance of respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states, including Georgia [23].

The constitutional framework serves as a cornerstone in shaping Georgia's geopolitical interests formation, providing the legal and institutional basis for its governance and foreign policy. Since gaining independence in 1991, Georgia has adopted several constitutions that have outlined the fundamental principles, structures, and procedures governing the state. These constitutional documents establish the framework within which Georgia's geopolitical decisions are made, ensuring adherence to the rule of law, democratic principles, and respect for human rights in its international engagements.

The constitutional framework enshrines fundamental principles guiding Georgia's foreign policy and geopolitical interests, including the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty, and non-aggression. These principles serve as guiding principles for Georgia's interactions with other states and international actors, shaping its strategic priorities, alliances, and responses to external challenges and opportunities. By upholding these principles, Georgia seeks to promote stability, security, and cooperation in the region and advance its national interests in a manner consistent with international law and norms [50].

Bilateral and multilateral treaties form a crucial component of Georgia's geopolitical interests formation, shaping its relations with other states and international organizations and influencing its strategic priorities and alliances. Bilateral treaties, agreements, and conventions concluded between Georgia and other sovereign states establish the legal framework for cooperation, collaboration, and mutual support across various fields, including security, trade, diplomacy, and

culture. These agreements cover a wide range of issues, from border security and military cooperation to economic partnerships and cultural exchanges, reflecting Georgia's efforts to forge mutually beneficial relationships with its neighbors and partners.

Multilateral treaties and agreements, negotiated and ratified within the framework of international organizations and regional blocs, play a significant role in Georgia's geopolitical engagement and integration into the global community.

Bilateral and multilateral treaties play a crucial role in addressing regional challenges and conflicts and fostering peace, stability, and cooperation in the Caucasus region and beyond. Treaties aimed at resolving territorial disputes, promoting confidence-building measures, and facilitating conflict resolution processes contribute to reducing tensions, building trust, and promoting reconciliation among neighboring states, enhancing Georgia's prospects for regional integration and cooperation. Moreover, treaties addressing cross-border issues such as trade facilitation, energy cooperation, and environmental protection promote economic development, prosperity, and sustainability in the region, fostering conditions conducive to peace and stability [24].

Georgia has pursued bilateral and multilateral agreements and treaties with neighboring states and international partners as part of its legal framework for conflict resolution. These agreements may cover a range of issues, including the non-use of force, the protection of minority rights, and the promotion of economic cooperation and confidence-building measures. By establishing legal commitments and obligations among parties involved in conflicts, these agreements aim to create conditions conducive to dialogue, negotiation, and reconciliation, and to prevent the escalation of tensions and violence.

Throughout its history, Georgia has participated in various bilateral and multilateral treaties. These agreements span a wide range of areas including trade, defense, security, human rights, and environmental cooperation. Bilateral treaties involve agreements between Georgia and individual countries, while multilateral treaties involve multiple parties. Some notable examples include the Association

Agreement with the European Union, bilateral agreements with neighboring countries like Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey, as well as membership in international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. These treaties play a crucial role in shaping Georgia's foreign relations and advancing its interests on the global stage

The ongoing occupation and annexation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Russia represent blatant violations of Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty under international law. Despite international condemnation and diplomatic efforts to address the situation, Russia continues to maintain military control over these regions, exacerbating tensions and undermining efforts to resolve the conflicts peacefully. The lack of progress in resolving these conflicts highlights the challenges Georgia faces in protecting its territorial integrity and restoring its control over its entire territory [11].

Georgia's adherence to international law encompasses its commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts through diplomatic means, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter and other relevant international agreements. Georgia seeks to address conflicts within its territory, such as those in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, through dialogue, negotiation, and mediation, rather than resorting to violence or coercion. By promoting peaceful conflict resolution, Georgia aims to foster stability, trust, and cooperation in the region and advance its geopolitical interests in a manner consistent with international legal norms and principles [23].

In summary, the political and legal prerequisites of Georgia's geopolitical interests formation encompass a multifaceted framework that shapes the country's engagement with the international community and management of domestic affairs. Embedded within constitutional principles, bilateral and multilateral treaties, and adherence to international law, Georgia navigates its geopolitical landscape with a commitment to sovereignty, territorial integrity, and peaceful conflict resolution. By upholding these prerequisites, Georgia asserts its status as an independent actor on the world stage, seeks to foster stability and cooperation in the region, and advances its national interests in alignment with legal norms and international obligations.

### **2.3. Socio-economic prerequisites of Georgia's geopolitical interests formation**

Economic stability and development are foundational elements influencing Georgia's geopolitical interests formation, shaping its position in regional and global affairs. A stable and growing economy provides the necessary foundation for Georgia to assert its influence, engage in diplomatic initiatives, and address domestic and international challenges effectively. By maintaining economic stability, Georgia enhances its attractiveness as a partner for trade, investment, and cooperation, bolstering its geopolitical standing and influence in the international arena.

In the 1990s, Georgia, akin to numerous other former Soviet republics, witnessed an economic downturn. This downturn stemmed from various factors, including the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the conflict in Abkhazia during 1992-1993, and the Russian economic crisis of 1999. Nevertheless, by the mid-2000s, Georgia's economy initiated a recovery phase catalyzed by the advent of the Rose Revolution and augmented international assistance post the 2008 conflict. Subsequently, from 2010 to 2012, Georgia's economy exhibited sustained growth, continuing its upward trajectory.

Economic stability and development contribute to Georgia's regional integration and connectivity, enhancing its role as a bridge between Europe and Asia. Investments in transportation, logistics, and infrastructure connectivity improve Georgia's connectivity with neighboring countries and enhance its capacity to serve as a transit hub for trade, energy, and transportation networks. Enhanced regional connectivity fosters economic cooperation, trade, and investment flows, strengthening Georgia's ties with its neighbors and promoting peace, stability, and prosperity in the region [25].

Energy security and infrastructure play pivotal roles in shaping Georgia's geopolitical interests, positioning the country as a crucial transit route for energy resources between Europe and Asia. Georgia's strategic location at the crossroads of major energy corridors, including the Southern Gas Corridor and the Baku-Tbilisi-



Ceyhan oil pipeline, underscores its significance in ensuring the reliable and secure transit of oil and gas to international markets. By serving as a transit hub for energy resources, Georgia enhances its geopolitical relevance and strengthens its relationships with energy-producing countries and consumer markets, contributing to regional stability and economic development [22].

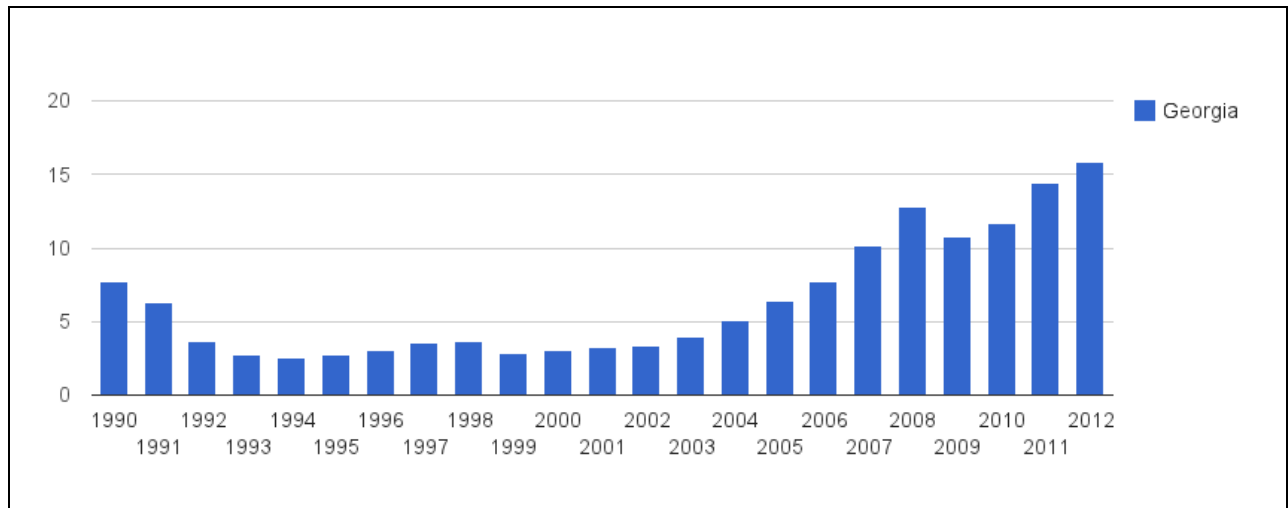


Figure 2.1. GDP of Georgia by nominal values [32]

Trade and investment opportunities play a significant role in shaping Georgia's geopolitical interests, fostering economic growth, and strengthening its international relationships. The country's favorable business environment, including low taxes, streamlined regulations, and liberal trade policies, attracts foreign investors and encourages the establishment of businesses, contributing to economic diversification and job creation [50].

Georgia's participation in regional and international trade agreements, such as the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with the European Union and free trade agreements with countries in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East, expands its access to global markets and enhances its competitiveness. By reducing trade barriers and promoting market access, these agreements stimulate trade and investment flows, drive economic growth, and foster closer economic ties with partner countries, strengthening Georgia's position as a regional trade hub.

Georgia's strategic investments in infrastructure, including ports, airports, roads, and railways, improve connectivity and facilitate the movement of goods and services within the country and across borders. The development of transportation and logistics infrastructure enhances Georgia's competitiveness as a transit route for trade between Europe and Asia, reducing transit times and costs and attracting businesses seeking efficient transportation routes and supply chain solutions [10, c. 88].

Infrastructure development and connectivity are fundamental elements shaping Georgia's geopolitical interests, positioning the country as a vital hub for regional trade, transportation, and connectivity initiatives. Strategic investments in infrastructure, including ports, roads, railways, and energy networks, enhance Georgia's connectivity with neighboring countries and global markets, facilitating the movement of goods, people, and services across borders. By improving transportation links and reducing transit times and costs, infrastructure development strengthens Georgia's role as a key transit corridor between Europe and Asia, attracting investment, stimulating economic growth, and promoting regional integration and cooperation [33].

Human capital and education constitute foundational elements in shaping Georgia's geopolitical interests, driving economic development, innovation, and social progress. Investments in education and the development of human capital are essential for building a skilled and adaptable workforce, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, and promoting sustainable economic growth.

Education plays a crucial role in promoting social mobility, inclusivity, and equality of opportunity, contributing to social cohesion, stability, and resilience within Georgian society. Access to quality education empowers individuals to realize their full potential, pursue their aspirations, and contribute to the social and economic development of the country. By promoting equal access to education for all segments of society, Georgia fosters a more inclusive and equitable society, reducing social inequalities and promoting social cohesion and unity [11].

Social cohesion and inclusivity are essential for building resilience to external pressures and challenges, including geopolitical tensions and conflicts. By fostering a sense of unity and solidarity among its citizens, Georgia strengthens its capacity to withstand external pressures and navigate complex geopolitical challenges, reducing the risk of internal divisions and conflicts. Inclusive policies and initiatives that promote dialogue, tolerance, and understanding contribute to building bridges between different communities and fostering mutual respect and cooperation, enhancing Georgia's resilience and stability in a volatile international environment [41].

Environmental sustainability contributes to Georgia's economic development and competitiveness by promoting green growth, innovation, and sustainable resource management practices. Investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable agriculture enhance resource efficiency, reduce environmental pollution, and create new opportunities for economic diversification and job creation. By embracing sustainable development principles, Georgia strengthens its resilience to external shocks, reduces dependency on finite resources, and fosters long-term economic growth and prosperity [45].

Additionally, environmental sustainability contributes to regional cooperation and diplomacy by providing common ground for collaboration and dialogue among neighboring countries. Transboundary environmental issues, such as air and water pollution, deforestation, and biodiversity loss, require coordinated action and cooperation across borders to address effectively. By promoting regional cooperation on environmental sustainability initiatives, such as the protection of shared ecosystems and the sustainable management of natural resources, Georgia fosters trust, confidence, and cooperation among neighboring states, contributing to peace, stability, and prosperity in the Caucasus region and beyond [14, c. 52].

In summary, the socio-economic prerequisites of Georgia's geopolitical interests formation encompass a multifaceted framework aimed at fostering economic stability, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability. Through investments in infrastructure, human capital, and education, Georgia enhances its

connectivity, competitiveness, and resilience in the global economy while promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities for its citizens. Furthermore, initiatives aimed at environmental sustainability and climate resilience strengthen Georgia's capacity to address emerging challenges and promote regional cooperation, contributing to peace, stability, and prosperity in the Caucasus region and beyond.

## **CHAPTER 3. FEATURES OF GEORGIA'S GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS REALIZATION AT THE PRESENT STAGE**

### **3.1. Characteristic features of geopolitical interests of Georgia at the present stage**

Georgia's strategic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia has historically positioned it as a crucial nexus for trade, transportation, and cultural exchange. Situated in the South Caucasus region, Georgia serves as a vital link between Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia, connecting major markets and economic hubs. Its geographic location along the Black Sea coast and proximity to the Caspian Sea further enhances its strategic significance, providing access to maritime trade routes and energy resources.

Georgia's strategic location offers unique opportunities for regional cooperation and integration. As a transit corridor for pipelines, railways, and highways, Georgia plays a pivotal role in facilitating the movement of goods, energy, and people between East and West. The country's strategic position as a gateway to the Caucasus region and beyond has attracted investments in infrastructure development, logistics hubs, and trade facilitation initiatives, bolstering its role as a regional trade and transit hub [9, c. 122].

Georgia's location has geopolitical implications, influencing its relationships with neighboring countries and global powers. Situated between Russia to the north and Turkey to the south, Georgia navigates a complex geopolitical landscape characterized by competing interests and geopolitical rivalries. Its proximity to conflict zones, such as Ukraine and the Middle East, further adds to its strategic significance, shaping its foreign policy priorities and security considerations [15, c. 92].

Georgia's strategic location has implications for energy security and diversification. As a transit country for oil and gas pipelines, including the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and South Caucasus Pipeline projects, Georgia plays a vital role in

ensuring the reliable and secure transit of energy resources from the Caspian region to global markets. Its geographic position at the intersection of major energy corridors strengthens its advantage in regional energy politics and enhances its importance for energy security in Europe and beyond.

After Russian full-scale invasion Ukraine in 2022, the Chinese geopolitical strategy in the South Caucasus changed. Due to EU sanctions imposed on Russia and Russian counter-sanctions banning EU trucks from entering the country, the Northern Corridor of BRI is closed. Therefore, only the Central Belt and the Maritime Road are remaining trade routes for China. But the sea route for exported goods to Europe as well as for the main import of natural resources – mainly crude oil – from the Middle East to China are passing through the Strait of Malacca, which is under control of the U.S. with its Singaporean 18 Changi Naval Base. Therefore, now China is actively seeking alternative trade and energy routes [9]. This offers chances for the countries closed to the Middle Corridor – also to the South Caucasus.



Figure 3.1. The Middle Corridor of BRI [33]

The Iranian leaders opposed any change to this border. After the Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020, the government of Azerbaijan demanded the creation of a so-called “Zangezur corridor”, a corridor that would connect Azerbaijan with Nakhichevan [2].

Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations reflect its deep-seated desire to integrate with Western institutions, align with democratic values, and secure its place within the Euro-Atlantic community. Since gaining independence in 1991, Georgia has pursued a foreign policy trajectory aimed at forging closer ties with Europe and the United States, viewing Euro-Atlantic integration as a pathway to security, stability, and prosperity. This strategic orientation is rooted in Georgia's historical ties to Europe, its commitment to democratic governance, and its aspiration to overcome the legacy of Soviet influence.



Figure 3.2. Zangezur Corridor in the South Caucasus [33]

At the core of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations lies its pursuit of NATO membership. Joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is seen as a means to enhance Georgia's security, deter external threats, and reinforce its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Georgia's cooperation with NATO dates back to the early 1990s, with the country participating in NATO-led peacekeeping missions and contributing troops to alliance operations. Georgia's Membership Action Plan (MAP) status and its partnership with NATO through the NATO-Georgia Commission underscore its commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration and reform efforts [47].

In addition to NATO, Georgia has sought closer integration with the European Union (EU) as part of its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. The EU is viewed as a beacon

of democracy, prosperity, and rule of law, and Georgia's engagement with the EU aims to promote democratic reforms, economic development, and institutional modernization. The signing of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement in 2014 marked a significant milestone in Georgia's European integration journey, providing a framework for closer political association and economic integration with the EU [12].

Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations are closely linked to its broader geopolitical orientation and security considerations. Against the backdrop of regional instability, unresolved conflicts, and external pressures, Georgia views Euro-Atlantic integration as a bulwark against potential threats and a safeguard for its independence and sovereignty. By aligning with Western democratic institutions and values, Georgia seeks to enhance its security, stability, and resilience in a challenging geopolitical environment [16].

In the realm of security, Euro-Atlantic integration offers Georgia the opportunity to enhance its defense capabilities, interoperability with Western militaries, and resilience to external threats. Georgia's partnership with NATO through the NATO-Georgia Commission, the Partnership for Peace program, and the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package underscores its commitment to collective security and defense reform efforts. By participating in NATO-led operations, contributing troops to alliance missions, and hosting joint military exercises, Georgia strengthens its security cooperation with NATO member states, fosters regional stability, and contributes to international peacekeeping efforts.

Georgia places a strong emphasis on strategic partnerships with European Union member states, which play a central role in shaping Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration agenda, economic development, and regional cooperation efforts. Georgia's association with the European Union through the Eastern Partnership and the EU-Georgia Association Agreement underscores its commitment to European values, standards, and norms, while fostering closer political, economic, and cultural ties with EU member states [48].



Georgia seeks to build strategic partnerships with regional powers, including Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Israel, to promote economic cooperation, security dialogue, and cultural exchange.

Regional cooperation initiatives offer opportunities for economic integration, trade expansion, and infrastructure development, creating win-win situations for participating countries. Georgia's geographic location as a transit hub for energy, trade, and transportation networks positions it as a natural bridge between Europe and Asia, facilitating regional connectivity and economic cooperation. Projects such as the East-West and North-South transportation corridors, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, and the Southern Gas Corridor underscore Georgia's commitment to enhancing regional connectivity and promoting economic integration.

Furthermore, regional cooperation initiatives extend beyond traditional security and economic dimensions to encompass broader issues such as environmental sustainability, cultural exchange, and people-to-people contacts. Georgia actively participates in regional organizations and forums, including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) organization, and the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, to promote dialogue, cooperation, and confidence-building measures among member states [9].

Energy security is a critical component of Georgia's geopolitical interests, given its strategic location as a transit corridor for oil and gas pipelines between the Caspian Sea region and Europe. As a small country with limited domestic energy resources, Georgia relies heavily on imported natural gas and oil to meet its energy needs, making energy security a top priority for its economic development and national security. Ensuring reliable and diversified energy supplies is essential for Georgia's economic growth, industrial development, and social stability.

Georgia's energy security is closely linked to its regional and international partnerships, including cooperation with energy-producing countries, transit states, and international organizations. By engaging in dialogue and collaboration with energy partners, Georgia seeks to strengthen bilateral and multilateral energy

cooperation, promote energy trade and transit, and enhance regional energy security. Moreover, participation in energy-related initiatives and forums, such as the Energy Community and the Eastern Partnership, provides Georgia with opportunities to align its energy policies with European standards and norms, enhance regulatory frameworks, and promote sustainable energy development [10].

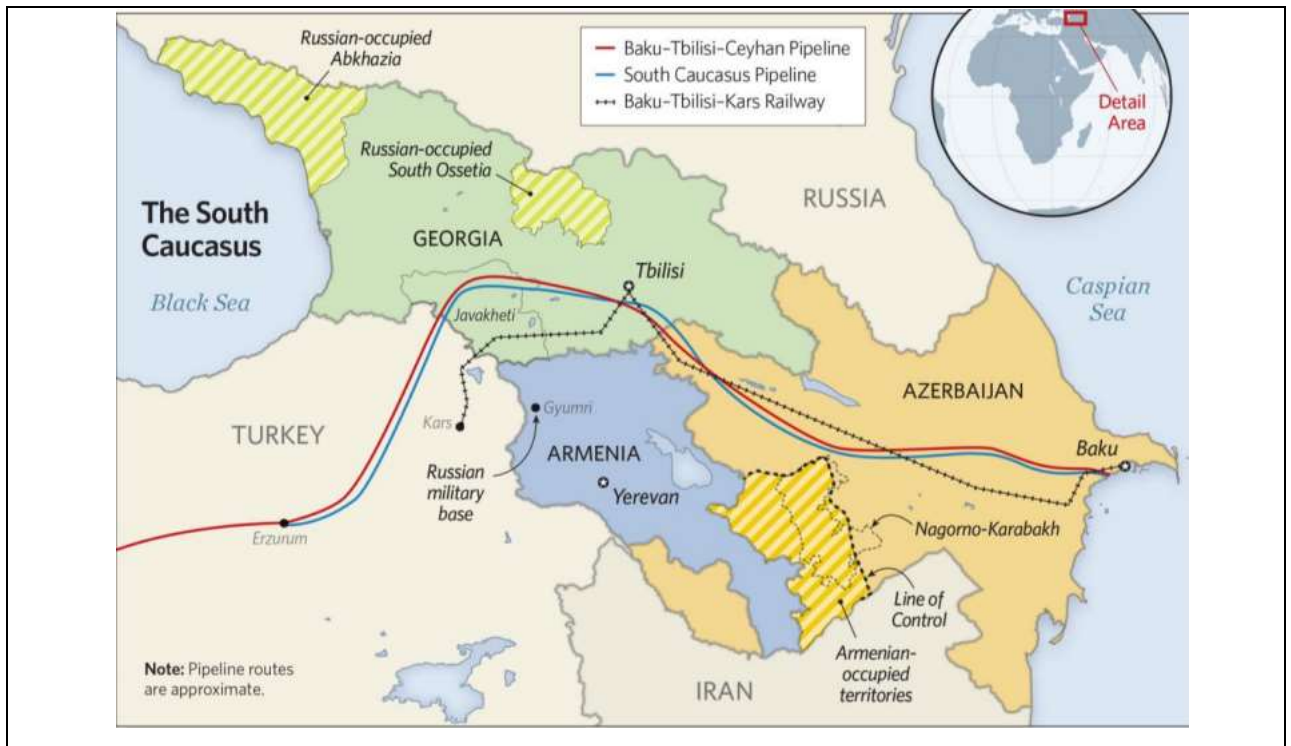


Figure 3.3. The South Caucasus' Conflict Zones (till 2024) [50]

On the bilateral front, Georgia engages in diplomatic efforts with a wide range of countries to promote political dialogue, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange. Bilateral diplomacy allows Georgia to cultivate strategic partnerships, strengthen alliances, and address shared challenges and opportunities with key international actors. For example, Georgia maintains close diplomatic ties with its neighbors, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Russia, seeking to build trust, resolve conflicts, and promote regional stability through dialogue and cooperation. Moreover, Georgia's bilateral diplomacy extends beyond its immediate neighborhood to include partnerships with major powers such as the United States, European Union member states, and other influential actors, leveraging these

relationships to advance its geopolitical interests and secure support for its foreign policy priorities [9].

Georgia promotes its geopolitical interests through participation in military alliances and peacekeeping missions. Georgia's contribution to NATO-led operations, such as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and the Resolute Support Mission, underscores its commitment to collective security and international peacekeeping efforts. Additionally, Georgia's partnership with NATO through the NATO-Georgia Commission and its participation in the Partnership for Peace program demonstrate its dedication to enhancing interoperability, defense reform, and military cooperation with the Alliance and its member states [43].

Georgia actively participates in peace negotiations and conflict resolution processes, such as the Geneva International Discussions, aimed at finding peaceful solutions to protracted conflicts in its territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. By engaging in multilateral diplomacy, Georgia seeks to build consensus, promote dialogue, and advance cooperative approaches to regional security, stability, and development and thereby strengthens its role as a geopolitical leader.

In conclusion, the characteristic features of Georgia's geopolitical interests are multifaceted, reflecting its strategic location, aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration, and commitment to regional cooperation and conflict resolution. Georgia's strategic location as a transit hub between Europe and Asia underscores its importance for trade, energy transit, and transportation networks, shaping its economic and security priorities. Moreover, Georgia's strong Euro-Atlantic aspirations drive its efforts to align with Western democratic values and institutions, seeking NATO and EU membership as anchors for security and stability. Additionally, Georgia actively engages in regional cooperation initiatives, promoting dialogue, economic integration, and conflict resolution efforts to enhance peace and stability in the Caucasus region. Amidst ongoing challenges and opportunities, Georgia's geopolitical interests at the present stage are characterized by a dynamic pursuit of security, prosperity, and integration within the broader international community.

### **3.2 The role of Ukraine in the geopolitical interests of Georgia**

The strategic partnership between Georgia and Ukraine represents a cornerstone of both countries' foreign policies, characterized by shared values, mutual interests, and historical ties. Grounded in their common aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration, democracy, and territorial integrity, the partnership between Georgia and Ukraine spans political, economic, security, and cultural domains. At the heart of this strategic relationship lies a deep understanding of the importance of cooperation in addressing common challenges, advancing shared objectives, and promoting regional stability and prosperity [21].

In the realm of security, Georgia and Ukraine collaborate closely to enhance their defense capabilities, promote interoperability with NATO, and address common security threats. Military exchanges, joint exercises, and defense reforms are central to their security cooperation efforts, aiming to bolster their resilience to external pressures and contribute to Euro-Atlantic security. Moreover, both countries share experiences and lessons learned from their respective conflicts, providing valuable insights into conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and post-conflict reconstruction efforts [4].

Economically, Georgia and Ukraine engage in bilateral trade, investment, and economic cooperation initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable growth, job creation, and prosperity. Close economic ties between the two countries contribute to their economic development and regional integration efforts, fostering closer economic cooperation and enhancing connectivity between the Black Sea and Caspian regions. Joint infrastructure projects, such as transportation corridors and energy pipelines, further deepen their economic partnership and contribute to regional stability and development.

Cooperation, trade, and investment characterize economic relations between Georgia and Ukraine, contributing to the economic development and regional integration of both countries. Bilateral trade between Georgia and Ukraine has seen steady growth in recent years, with a diverse range of goods and services exchanged

between the two countries. Key sectors of trade include agriculture, machinery, chemicals, textiles, and food products. The signing of a free trade agreement between Georgia and Ukraine in 2016 further facilitated trade flows by reducing tariffs and trade barriers, fostering closer economic ties and enhancing market access for businesses in both countries [41].

Infrastructure development and connectivity projects play a crucial role in enhancing economic relations between Georgia and Ukraine. The construction of transportation corridors, energy pipelines, and logistics hubs strengthens their physical connectivity and facilitates the movement of goods, services, and people between two countries. Projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, the Black Sea Silk Road Corridor, and the Anaklia Deep Sea Port contribute to enhancing regional connectivity, promoting trade, and fostering economic cooperation between Georgia, Ukraine, and other countries in the wider Black Sea and Caspian regions [13].

Georgia and Ukraine support each other's aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration, advocating for closer ties with European Union and the NATO as essential for enhancing their security and defense cooperation. Both countries participate actively in NATO's Partnership for Peace program, the NATO-Georgia Commission, and other cooperative security initiatives, seeking to align their defense policies, practices, and capabilities with Euro-Atlantic standards and norms. Aspiring NATO members, Georgia and Ukraine contribute to collective security efforts, participate in NATO-led operations, and receive support for defense reforms and modernization efforts [5].

Georgia and Ukraine collaborate on regional security initiatives aimed at promoting stability and confidence-building measures in the Black Sea region. The two countries advocate for enhanced cooperation among Black Sea littoral states, the consolidation of international efforts to address maritime security challenges, and the promotion of dialogue and cooperation with neighboring countries. By fostering regional dialogue, cooperation, and trust-building measures, Georgia and

Ukraine contribute to reducing tensions, preventing conflicts, and promoting security in the wider Black Sea area.

Ukraine's steadfast support for the territorial integrity of Georgia underscores the strong bilateral relations between the two countries and their shared commitment to upholding international law and principles. Since gaining independence, Ukraine has consistently reaffirmed its support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, including the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are occupied by Russian forces. Ukraine's principled stance on this issue reflects its own experiences with territorial integrity challenges, particularly in the context of the ongoing conflict with Russia in eastern Ukraine [37].

Ukraine has consistently condemned Russia's illegal occupation and annexation of Georgian territories and has joined the international community in affirming Georgia's right to territorial integrity and sovereignty. Ukrainian leaders have reiterated their support for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations and have emphasized the importance of upholding the norms and principles of international law in addressing territorial disputes and conflicts [9].

Their shared geopolitical environment, common security challenges, and mutual interests in promoting stability, cooperation, and integration in the wider Black Sea region shape regional dynamics between Georgia and Ukraine. As neighboring countries in Eastern Europe, Georgia and Ukraine play important roles in shaping regional politics, economics, and security dynamics, influencing and being influenced by the actions of other regional actors [5].

Both countries are members of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) organization, which aims to promote economic cooperation, trade, and investment among Black Sea littoral states. Through their participation in BSEC, Georgia and Ukraine engage in dialogue, exchange best practices, and coordinate policies on issues such as transportation, energy, tourism, and environmental protection, contributing to regional stability and prosperity.

Regional dynamics between Georgia and Ukraine are influenced by their interactions with other regional actors, including Russia, Turkey, and the European Union. Both countries have complex relationships with Russia, characterized by historical legacies, territorial disputes, and security concerns. Russia's annexation of Crimea and its ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine have significant implications for regional stability and security, affecting Georgia's and Ukraine's security calculations and foreign policy priorities [40].

Since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Georgian authorities have taken an ambiguous position, avoiding drastic actions and statements regarding Russia. Relations between Ukraine and Georgia are currently going through a rather difficult period. Currently, significant disagreements remain on fundamental issues for Ukraine, such as the provision of military aid, the introduction of a regime of bilateral sanctions against the Russian Federation, and the introduction of a visa regime for Russian citizens fleeing en masse to Georgia. There is strong solidarity with Ukraine in Georgian society: humanitarian aid is regularly sent there from Georgia, the country accepts Ukrainian refugees, it became one of the initiators of the investigation at the International Criminal Court in The Hague into the actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine. But at the same time, the Georgian government is cautious and does not openly oppose Russia.

In summary, the role of Ukraine in the geopolitical interests of Georgia is multifaceted and significant, reflecting a strategic partnership grounded in shared values, mutual interests, and historical ties. Ukraine's steadfast support for Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and Euro-Atlantic aspirations underscores the strength of their bilateral relations and their common commitment to upholding international law and principles. Through diplomatic, political, and practical measures, Ukraine advocates for peaceful conflict resolution, engages in security cooperation, and promotes regional stability in the Black Sea region. Moreover, economic cooperation, infrastructure projects, and cultural exchanges between Georgia and Ukraine deepen their ties and contribute to fostering connectivity, trade,

and people-to-people contacts. As neighboring countries facing similar security challenges and geopolitical pressures, Georgia and Ukraine collaborate closely to advance their strategic interests, enhance their security, and promote peace and prosperity in the wider Black Sea and Euro-Atlantic area.

### **3.4. Problems and prospects of Georgia's geopolitical interests realization**

Regional conflicts, particularly in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, pose significant challenges to Georgia's geopolitical interests and its aspirations for sovereignty, territorial integrity, and stability. Despite efforts to resolve the conflicts through diplomatic means, including peace talks and ceasefire agreements, they remain unresolved, with de facto authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia maintaining control over their territories with the support of Russia [20].

The presence of unresolved regional conflicts creates a complex security environment in Georgia, characterized by military tensions, occasional outbreaks of violence, and humanitarian challenges. The presence of Russian military forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as the establishment of so-called «buffer zones» along the administrative boundary lines, further exacerbates tensions and undermines efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the conflicts. Moreover, the conflicts have resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, with many unable to return to their homes and facing socio-economic hardships as a result.

The unresolved regional conflicts also have broader implications for Georgia's geopolitical position and its relations with neighboring countries and international partners. The lack of territorial control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia hinders Georgia's ability to fully exercise its sovereignty and pursue closer ties with Western institutions such as NATO and the European Union. Moreover, the presence of unresolved conflicts in its immediate neighborhood raises concerns about Georgia's security and stability, deterring foreign investment, and economic development, and



complicating efforts to achieve long-term peace and reconciliation [30]. As Georgia continues to navigate the complexities of the regional security landscape, finding a sustainable solution to the conflicts will be essential for advancing its geopolitical interests, promoting regional stability, and achieving its aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration and economic development.

External influences, particularly those stemming from Russia, present significant challenges to Georgia's geopolitical interests and its efforts to maintain sovereignty, territorial integrity, and regional stability [46]. Russia's historical and ongoing involvement in the region has shaped the geopolitical landscape of the South Caucasus and continues to impact Georgia's security and foreign policy decisions. One of the most prominent manifestations of Russian influence in Georgia is its military presence in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which Moscow recognized as independent states following the Russo-Georgian War in 2008. The presence of Russian troops and military installations in these regions represents a direct challenge to Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty and undermines efforts to resolve the conflicts peacefully [52].

Despite these challenges, Georgia remains committed to pursuing a balanced foreign policy that seeks to strengthen ties with its Western partners, promote regional cooperation, and address security threats through diplomatic means. Efforts to diversify its international partnerships enhance its defense capabilities, and advance economic reforms are essential components of Georgia's strategy to mitigate external influences and safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Moreover, Georgia's engagement with international organizations, such as the European Union, NATO, and the United Nations, provides platforms for advocating for its interests and seeking support for resolving regional conflicts and addressing security challenges in the South Caucasus.

Economic development and integration are essential components of Georgia's geopolitical interests, as they contribute to the country's stability, prosperity, and ability to assert its influence in the region. Georgia has made significant strides in recent years in promoting economic growth, attracting foreign investment, and

diversifying its economy. The country's strategic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, along with its liberal economic policies and business-friendly environment, have positioned it as a key hub for trade, investment, and transit in the wider region.

Georgia's efforts to integrate into the global economy are evident in its participation in various regional and international economic initiatives and organizations. The country is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and the Energy Community, among others. These memberships provide Georgia with access to international markets, promote trade liberalization, and facilitate economic cooperation with partner countries. Moreover, Georgia's participation in regional initiatives such as the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) organization strengthens its economic ties with neighboring countries and fosters regional stability and development [48].

Infrastructure development plays a crucial role in Georgia's economic development and integration efforts, particularly in enhancing connectivity with neighboring countries and improving trade facilitation. The construction of transportation corridors, such as the East-West Highway and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, has improved Georgia's transportation infrastructure and reduced transit times for goods traveling between Europe and Asia. Additionally, investments in ports, airports, and logistics hubs contribute to strengthening Georgia's role as a transit and logistics hub in the wider Black Sea and Caucasus region, attracting foreign investment and promoting economic growth.

Georgia's commitment to economic reforms, including measures to improve the business environment, strengthen the rule of law, and combat corruption, is essential for attracting foreign investment, fostering entrepreneurship, and promoting sustainable economic development. The country's progress in these areas is reflected in its rankings in international indices such as the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index and the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, where Georgia consistently ranks among the top performers in the region.

Looking ahead, Georgia's continued focus on economic development and integration will be essential for advancing its geopolitical interests and promoting regional stability and prosperity. Sustained efforts to diversify the economy, enhance infrastructure, and improve the business environment will help Georgia to capitalize on its strategic location and realize its potential as a regional economic powerhouse. Moreover, strengthening economic ties with neighboring countries and deepening integration into international markets will contribute to Georgia's long-term growth and competitiveness on the global stage [18].

In conclusion, the realization of Georgia's geopolitical interests faces significant challenges, including unresolved regional conflicts, external influences, and economic development constraints. The presence of conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia undermines Georgia's sovereignty and stability, while external influences, particularly from Russia, pose threats to its Euro-Atlantic aspirations and territorial integrity. Economic development and integration efforts are hindered by infrastructure limitations and the need for further reforms. Despite these challenges, Georgia's prospects for realizing its geopolitical interests lie in diplomatic initiatives to resolve conflicts, diversification of international partnerships, and continued economic reforms to enhance competitiveness and integration into global markets.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the conducted research make it possible to draw the following conclusions:

1. The theoretical foundations of the study of geopolitical interests of the state provide a framework for analyzing the complex interplay between geography, power, and politics in international relations. Geopolitics, as a multidisciplinary field, draws upon concepts from geography, political science, economics, and strategic studies to understand how geographical factors shape a state's foreign policy objectives, security strategies, and interactions with other actors on the global stage. Central to this framework are concepts such as the geopolitical structure of the world, which elucidates the spatial organization of power among states and regions, and doctrines or codes, which inform a state's strategic decision-making. The geopolitical interests of the state are a fundamental category of the geopolitics of the state. They should be understood as the needs and values of the state, which should be implemented in the international arena, and the purpose of which is not only the full development of the state, but also the formation of state power. It is clearly defined geopolitical interests and their defense in the international arena that are the driving force in the development of the state.

2. A necessary task in the process of researching the geopolitical interests of modern Georgia was the study of historical, political, legal, socio-economic prerequisites and factors of their formation. The historical factors shaping Georgia's geopolitical interests formation are multifaceted and deeply ingrained in the country's past. From enduring colonial legacies under Persian, Ottoman, and Russian imperial rule to the consequences of Tsarist Russia's expansion into the Caucasus and the complexities of the Soviet era, Georgia's geopolitical landscape has been profoundly influenced by a myriad of historical forces. These factors have not only shaped Georgia's territorial boundaries, cultural identity, and political institutions but have also left enduring legacies of ethnic and territorial conflicts, which continue to pose challenges to its sovereignty, stability, and security. The political and legal prerequisites of Georgia's geopolitical interests formation encompass a multifaceted

framework that shapes the country's engagement with the international community and management of domestic affairs. Embedded within constitutional principles, bilateral and multilateral treaties, and adherence to international law, Georgia navigates its geopolitical landscape with a commitment to sovereignty, territorial integrity, and peaceful conflict resolution. By upholding these prerequisites, Georgia asserts its status as an independent actor on the world stage, seeks to foster stability and cooperation in the region, and advances its national interests in alignment with legal norms and international obligations. The socio-economic prerequisites of Georgia's geopolitical interests formation encompass a multifaceted framework aimed at fostering economic stability, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability. Through investments in infrastructure, human capital, and education, Georgia enhances its connectivity, competitiveness, and resilience in the global economy while promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities for its citizens.

3. The geopolitical interests of modern Georgia reflect its geopolitical code and are represented in the security, economic, energy, socio-cultural, informational, political and environmental spheres and reflect the values of Georgian geopolitics. At the present stage, the characteristic features of Georgia's geopolitical interests are multifaceted, reflecting its strategic location, aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration, and commitment to regional cooperation and conflict resolution. Georgia's strategic location as a transit hub between Europe and Asia underscores its importance for trade, energy transit, and transportation networks, shaping its economic and security priorities. Georgia actively engages in regional cooperation initiatives, promoting dialogue, economic integration, and conflict resolution efforts to enhance peace and stability in the Caucasus region. Amidst ongoing challenges and opportunities, Georgia's geopolitical interests at the present stage are characterized by a dynamic pursuit of security, prosperity, and integration within the broader international community.

4. The role of Ukraine in the geopolitical interests of Georgia is multifaceted and significant, reflecting a strategic partnership grounded in shared values, mutual interests, and historical ties. Both Ukraine and Georgia face similar security

challenges, including territorial integrity issues and Russian aggression. Strengthening security cooperation, including intelligence sharing and joint military exercises, can help both countries address common threats and enhance their resilience. Ukraine's steadfast support for Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and Euro-Atlantic aspirations underscores the strength of their bilateral relations and their common commitment to upholding international law and principles. Through diplomatic, political, and practical measures, Ukraine advocates for peaceful conflict resolution, engages in security cooperation, and promotes regional stability in the Black Sea region. Ukraine and Georgia have strong economic ties, including trade agreements and investment projects. Both countries benefit from bilateral trade in various sectors such as agriculture, energy, and tourism. Enhancing economic cooperation can contribute to the development and prosperity of both nations. Economic cooperation, infrastructure projects, and cultural exchanges between Georgia and Ukraine deepen their ties and contribute to fostering connectivity, trade, and people-to-people contacts.

5. The realization of Georgia's geopolitical interests faces significant challenges, including unresolved regional conflicts, external influences, and economic development constraints. The presence of conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia undermines Georgia's sovereignty and stability, while external influences, particularly from Russia, pose threats to its Euro-Atlantic aspirations and territorial integrity. To some extent, they weaken Georgia's international position and serve as a deterrent to the realization of the country's interests, which determine their solution in the future. Economic development and integration efforts are hindered by infrastructure limitations and the need for further reforms. Despite these challenges, Georgia's prospects for realizing its geopolitical interests lie in diplomatic initiatives to resolve conflicts, diversification of international partnerships, and continued economic reforms to enhance competitiveness and integration into global markets. Promising and strategically important areas of its geopolitics remain ability to fully exercise its sovereignty and pursue closer ties with Western institutions such as NATO and the European Union.

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