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Towards the “Normal” State:
Georgian Foreign Policy between Russia and the West

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Doctor of Philosophy in Social Sciences

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1. Research Topic

Being one of the post-Soviet countries that gained independence and started (re)building its statehood in 1991 (see Jones, 2014), Georgia represents a puzzling case for scholars of international relations. By the time the Soviet Union dissolved, Georgia was struggling with internal issues such as ethnic conflicts and civil war (Nodia, 1996). At the same time, new challenges connected to developing a modern state and acquiring international support emerged on its way (Rondeli, 2001). In this regard, being a point of intersection of Asian and European continents and having been exposed to various civilizations throughout its long history of nationhood, Georgia was not limited to one specific direction to seek the alliance (Kakachia & Minesashvili, 2015). However, even for the price of the collapsed Russo-Georgian relations, the country started following an officially declared Western-oriented foreign policy in the conditions of having no guarantees of the Western commitment (Khelashvili, 2011).

Following the example of the Baltic states (see Smidchens, 2014), Georgia was a pioneer to have experienced one of the several color revolutions in the post-Soviet space (see Mitchell, 2012). The Rose Revolution of 2003 brought the Western-educated ruling elite to the government and, arguably, made pro-Western aspirations of the country more vocal (Mitchell, 2006). As a result, together with the series of domestic reforms, Georgia signed the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO in 2004 and, remarkably, it was the first country to do so (*Individual Partnership Action Plans*, 2017).

Alongside the achieved closer ties with the West, Russo-Georgian relations drastically worsened, culminating in the five-day war of 2008 that set a precedent of Russia engaging in military confrontation beyond Russian territory for the first time after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Klein, 2019). As a result, along with casualties, diplomatic ties were broken between the two countries (*Georgia breaks ties with Russia, 2008*). Furthermore, such development of affairs shook Georgia's economy and made the limitations of Western commitment towards Georgia clear (Khelashvili, 2011).

After the Saakashvili administration was replaced by the coalition government of the Georgian Dream in 2012, the official foreign policy trajectory remained directed towards the West while also initiating the "normalization" process with Russia (Minesashvili & Kakachia, 2015, p. 175). The partnership with the EU was further developed by signing the Deep and Comprehensive

Free Trade Area (DCFTA) agreement in 2014, followed by initiating visa liberalization on 28 March 2018 (*EU relations with Georgia*, 2020). However, the relations between Russia and Georgia have not advanced (Hamilton, 2018).

This study critically examines how Georgian foreign policy transitioned through four leaderships of the country, following the declaration of independence in May 1991 up to the Parliamentary elections of October 2020. October 2020 signifies the end of the second parliamentary mandate of the Georgian Dream government. Moreover, the above-mentioned margin has been chosen due to the fact that the parliamentary elections of 2020 introduced a new system promising more diversity in the parliament and, therefore, it potentially symbolizes the start of a different epoch.

Each leadership camp brought a new reality to Georgia and created a distinct era (see Jones, 2014), justifying the decision to take administration change as a demarcation point in this study. If Gamsakhurdia represented a former dissident striving towards the independence of Georgia and was inspired by “radical nationalism” (Losaberidze & Kikabidze, 1998, p. 10), Shevardnadze was a “political dinosaur and former Politburo member” (Tatum, 2009, p. 156) who could not overcome the issues of corruption and economic stagnation (Cheterian, 2008, p. 693). On the contrary, a Western-educated young leader Saakashvili brought hope for modernization to Georgia but slowly “drifted toward autocracy” (Faibanks & Gugushvili, 2013, p. 117). As a result, the Saakashvili administration was replaced by the Georgian Dream government that was “united not by policy positions or constituencies but by disgust with the government” (Faibanks & Gugushvili, 2013, p. 119).

The study looks at the Georgia-Russia-the West triangle in Georgian foreign policy discourse, where the West is defined as Europe and the US together with the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions such as the European Union and the NATO. The author believes that now, after almost three decades of independence, it is reasonable to critically review the process of foreign policy construction in Georgia. Challenging and complementing the existing scholarly works, this research has the ambition to provide a critical explanation of the academic dilemma around Georgian foreign policy and inspire future research aimed at decolonizing the field of international relations.

2. Significance of the Study

There has always been a vigorous academic interest in Georgian foreign policy due to its bold choices that led the country to the war with one of the most powerful actors of the international system (see, for example, Oskanian, 2016; Coene, 2015; Kotchkian, 2006; Jones, 2003; Huseynov, 2015; Gvalia, 2008; Kakachia & Minesashvili, 2015). Hence, many scholars, Georgian and foreign, have written research pieces exploring different aspects of its development, starting from ideas and identities of elites (Kakachia & Minesashvili, 2015; Jones, 2003; Minesashvili, 2016; Naskidashvili & Kakhishvili, 2016; Ó Beacháin & Coene, 2014), including but not limited to focusing on the “smallness” of Georgia and the constraints of this condition on the foreign policy options of countries like Georgia (Wivel, 2016; Gvalia, Lebanidze & Siroky, 2019; Gvalia, 2008; Huseynov, 2015). However, researchers have shied away from examining the influence of historical understandings on envisioning the modern international playground by Georgian policymakers and positioning the “Self” vis-à-vis the “Others” in the context of the actual or imagined postcoloniality of the country. Similarly, the instrumentalization of language in the formulation and justification of foreign policy choices has been rather left out of the scope of academic inquiry.

More specifically, the question as to why Georgia continuously compromises its economy, political stability, and international ties with “actors finding cooperation with Russia profitable” (Khelashvili, 2011, p.5; Huseynov, 2015) by following the foreign policy that overtly goes against Russia remains to be a puzzle. According to Khelashvili (2011), none of the Western European states nor the United States “bothered to strain their relations with Russia, let alone come to Georgia’s military aid” (p. 1) during the war of 2008. Furthermore, even the financial aid contributed to post-war Georgia was more of a “guilt money” (Khelashvili, 2011, p. 1) rather than adequate assistance (Khelashvili, 2011; Ó Beacháin & Coene, 2014). Considering the created conditionalities, it can also be argued that with its obstinate anti-Russian policy Georgia neglects the common Russo-Georgian security interests over the North Caucasus and limits one’s options of reliable foreign partnerships (Khelashvili, 2011).

Georgian foreign policy looks even more intriguing in terms of its tenacious pro-Western gaze considering the fragmented public opinion and remaining pro-Russian sentiments deeply rooted in the memory of the post-Soviet Georgian society (see *Summary of focus group findings*, 2017). Moreover, the Euro-Atlantic reluctance to broaden their borders and the lack of tangible

benefits for ordinary citizens make the case of pro-Western orientation even more puzzling (Loda, 2019). Especially in light of Brexit, when Euroscepticism is growing within the member states themselves and their nationalistic political leaders more and more frequently lobby for less dependency (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2018).

While the outlined academic dilemma has been addressed by various theoretical lenses such as realism, liberalism, constructivism (see Gvalia, Lebanidze & Iashvili, 2011; Kakachia & Minesashvili, 2015; Oskanian, 2016; Huseynov, 2015; O Bechain & Coene, 2014; Jones, 2003; Kakhishvili, 2016; Rondeli, 2001; Oskanian, 2016; Gvalia, Lebanidze & Siroky, 2019), it has not been targeted by the postcolonial critique. Positivist arguments offer an ahistorical reading of the current affairs and focus on the Westphalian state-system, creating ontological and epistemological obstacles (Sørensen, 1998). On the other hand, even if conventional constructivism employs historical arguments to some extent and relies on the concepts of ideas and identities, it lacks the capacity to explain their formation process (Palan, 2000). In other words, constructivism takes certain norms and identities as given rather than questioning their “normalization” (Epstein, 2014, p. 300) process. Another critical issue with the proposed interpretations is their negligence towards the role of masses in the process of foreign policymaking.

When it comes to the development of Georgian foreign policy, positivist scholars highlight balance of power as its main determinant and portray different phases in terms of balancing/bandwagoning Russia or rapprochement and confrontation with Russia, where the West works as a balancing tool for Georgia to achieve this strategy (Gvalia, 2008; 2013; Gvalia, Lebanidze & Iashvili, 2011; Huseynov, 2015). This assumption can be questioned by pointing out the level of Western commitment towards playing such a role in Georgia’s “game” (Oskanian, 2016; Khelashvili, 2011).

An alternative dominant stance highlights ideas and identities as key drivers of the foreign policy of Georgia and labels it as identity-driven (Kakachia, 2013; Kakachia & Minesashvili, 2015). According to such views, Georgia finds itself more compatible with Western liberal democracy rather than the Russian model of development (Kakachia & Minesashvili, 2015). However, such an interpretation focuses on the affinity of elite groups with the West, which cannot solely explain the changes in the country’s foreign policy trajectory or the way these ideas acquire legitimization from the public. Especially when there is no unipolarity within Georgian society either with regards to the “co-religionist neighbor” and former fellow Soviet Russia or the so-

called ideal model of development, the West (see *Summary of focus group findings*, 2017). Moreover, the above-mentioned interpretation is based on the idea of the superiority of Western norms, and the preference of the Georgian elites to align with the West is taken for granted rather than being questioned.

The explanatory power of positivist arguments dominates when referring to the pre-Rose Revolutionary stage, while constructivist insights take over the interpretation of its afterward. However, the question of how certain identities are imagined and hold up in the discourse making it possible for a small state like Georgia to defy the balance of power logic in the conditions of little to no guarantee of tangible benefits coming from the affinity with the West remains unsettled in the existing theoretical readings. This is where postcolonial critique with its focus on historical experiences and subjectivity can further elaborate the discussions. Postcolonialism can serve as an intrinsic tool to discern the ideological underpinnings of Georgian foreign policy, rather than take Western superiority as given (Hobson, 2012, p. 1).

Besides, even if both constructivism and postcolonialism highlight the role of norms, as well as identities in the formation and execution of foreign policy, the postcolonial lens explains why certain normative ideals are constructed that binds the identity and its consequent behavior rather than examining who disseminates them. In other words, the focus of inquiry becomes the process of “normalization” (Epstein, 2014, p. 300), rather than norms themselves, defined as mutually shared understandings and beliefs of what counts as an acceptable behavior (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001, p. 393).

By transcending mainstream theories of IR with their Western-centric worldviews and introducing postcolonial critique to the study of Georgian foreign policy, this research attempts to contribute to decolonizing the field of international relations more broadly alongside detangling the outlined academic puzzle.

3. Research Questions and Methods

The study is guided by two research questions: 1. How has the foreign policy of Georgia transitioned through different leaderships? 2. What discursive strategies have been employed to justify the foreign policy choices? The research questions target the Georgia-Russia-the West triangle as observed in the official foreign policy discourse.

Tracking the evolution of Georgian foreign policy and the changes and continuities in its trajectory explores the following dynamics: 1. Understanding of Georgian “Self”; 2. Understanding of Russian and Western “Others”; 3. Positioning the “Self” vis-à-vis the “Others.” More specifically, the study focuses on how the positive “Self” of Georgia and the “Other” of the West, as opposed to the hostile Russian “Other” are discursively represented to (re)position Georgia in the international system and justify the foreign policy orientation of the country.

The “Self” and the “Others” have been defined and instrumentalized in different ways by each leadership. If the consistency in understanding of Georgian “Self” guarantees the continuity of the foreign policy choices, a varied understandings/interpretations of the Russian and Western “Others,” affected by the attitudes towards the predecessor governments, and positioning the “Self” vis-à-vis the “Others” accounts for the observed changes in Georgian foreign policy.

The theoretical framework selected for the purpose of answering the research questions is postcolonialism. Postcolonialism challenges mainstream international relations theories by pointing out their ahistorical and western-oriented nature and switching the focus on the subjectivity of historical experiences. Postcolonial studies acknowledge the multiplicity of identities by highlighting the varieties of oppression and exploitation (Saurin, 2006, p. 38). According to the postcolonial critique, in order to decolonize international relations, scholars should transcend the mainstream methodological and political dispositions and reconstruct “historically adequate knowledge about the global constitution of all regions and the international” (Jones, 2006, p. 12).

The author follows the idealist ontological stance claiming that reality can only be known “through the human mind and through socially constructed meanings” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 16) as opposed to realist or materialist traditions which believe that “an external reality exists independent of our beliefs or understanding” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 16). As far as epistemology is concerned, the author is taking a critical epistemological stance that challenges both positivist and interpretivist traditions for ignoring the issues of power and ideology and

regards documents and texts as not just a source of information but a research object where such issues play out (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

The study relies on documents as primary sources of data as opposed to questionnaires, interviews, or observation. In critical tradition, documents are considered to be an object of research in their own right as they can project the issues of power and ideology and illustrate the relationship between documents and the society where it has been produced (Denscombe, 2014).

Documents as a data source come with a few drawbacks, such as the risk of low retrievability, being biased when selecting them, or the lack of detailed information as documents are not produced with a specific research agenda in mind (Bowen, 2009). However, there is a number of advantages of using documents as primary sources of data, such as efficiency, availability, cost-effectiveness, and the opportunity to conduct longitudinal analysis (Bowen, 2009). Moreover, since documents are not characterized by reactivity and obtrusiveness, arguably, they offer exact and stable information that can be reviewed multiple times (Bowen, 2009). Thus, documents serve as a suitable source of data for this type of longitudinal research.

The evolution of Georgian foreign policy covers four leaderships of independent Georgia from May 1991 to the Parliamentary elections of October 2020. The first administration of the country is referred to as the Gamsakhurdia government (1991-1992), led by the first democratically elected president of Georgia Zviad Gamsakhurdia. The following administration is labeled as the Shevardnadze government (1992-2003), headed by the former-Soviet politician Eduard Shevardnadze. The third administration is the Saakashvili government (2003-2012), led by the Western-educated Mikheil Saakashvili and his United National Movement (UNM). And, finally, the Georgian Dream (GD) government from 2012 to 2020.

In order to answer the research questions and increase the validity of the findings, three genres of documents have been chosen: official legislation and governmental strategy papers, speeches of high-level officials made at the national parliament, and speeches of high-level officials made internationally in the United Nations and the Council of Europe. The UN is considered as the main platform addressing the international community, while the CoE represents a place of dialogue between Georgian and European leaders. Furthermore, international affairs and accompanying political processes have also been taken into consideration to observe the relationship between foreign policy discourse and its following actions.

The above-mentioned first two genres of documents have been obtained from the official sources of Georgian governmental bodies, such as the Ministry of Defense of Georgia, Georgian Parliament, Official Website of Georgian President, and through personal communication with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia. As for the third genre of documents, it has been retrieved from the official archives of the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

The study employs Reisigl & Wodak's (2009) discourse-historical approach (DHA), which is based on critical theory and serves as one of the methods of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). The DHA provides an efficient analytic tool to critically examine dominant narratives in a socio-political realm. The main strength of the above-mentioned method lies in its interdisciplinarity, reliance on the triangulation principle, incorporating historical analysis, and its practical applicability.

As a tool to discern discursive structures in texts and analyze the changes within them over time, the DHA provides an efficient method for longitudinal research. Moreover, with its focus on the notions of critique, ideology, and power, the DHA examines "how linguistic and other semiotic practices mediate and reproduce ideology" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 88) as well as manifest power through discourse. Here, ideology is defined as a particular perspective shared by a specific social group, and power refers to the domination over others' positions (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). In this context, the goal of critique becomes to delineate hegemony of specific discourses (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) treats discourse, or the language employed in written texts or speeches, "as a form of social practice" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258). Therefore, it can create ideological effects in the way it portrays others (Wodak, 2001). In this sense, the main task of the DHA becomes decoding the specific utterances employed to produce such images and enable tracking the formation of "Self" and "Others" in the discourse. After identifying "In-group" and "Out-group," "various linguistic strategies and tools are used to debase the 'other' and to characterize the In-group as positive" (Wodak, 2003, p. 133). The representation of negative "Other" usually targets less powerful groups (Wodak, 2003). However, in this research, the "Other" presented negatively (Russia) is also considered as a more powerful one.

The DHA consists of three steps (Wodak, 2001; 2003): contextualizing a text, conducting a three-dimensional critique, and interpreting the findings. According to Wodak (2003), after

situating a text into the historical context, the three-dimensional critique takes place to identify: discursive topics, “discursive strategies” (p. 139, and “the linguistic means (as types) and context-dependent linguistic realizations (as tokens)” (p. 139).

A strategy is a “more or less intentional plan of practices (including discursive practices) adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological, or linguistic aim” (Wodak, 2001, p. 73). Some of the discursive strategies that can be employed in text refer to “nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification/mitigation” (Wodak, 2001, pp. 72-73). Reisigl (2017) provides an explanation of the above-mentioned discursive strategies and the relevant questions to identify them in a given discourse. The goal of the examination of discursive strategies is to examine how social actors, objects, events, or phenomena are represented and positioned in the discourse (see Table 3.1).

Table 3. 1 Discursive Strategies in the DHA

<i>Questions to approach discursive features</i>	<i>Discursive strategies</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
How are persons, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically in the discourse in question?	nomination	discursive construction of social actors discursive construction of objects, phenomena, events discursive construction of processes and actions
What characteristics or qualities are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions mentioned in the discourse?	predication	discursive characterization of social actors, objects, phenomena, events processes and actions (e.g., positively or negatively)
What arguments are employed in discourse?	argumentation	persuading addressees of the validity of specific claims of truth and normative rightness
From what perspective are these nominations, attributions, arguments expressed?	perspectivisation	positioning the speaker’s or writer’s point of view and expressing involvement or distance
Are the respective utterances articulated overtly, are they intensified or mitigated?	mitigation and intensification	modifying the illocutionary force of utterances in respect to their epistemic or deontic status

Source: From *The discourse-historical approach*, by M. Reisigl, 2017, In J. Flowerdew & J. E. Richardson (Eds.). *The Routledge handbook of critical discourse studies*. Routledge. Copyright 2018 by John Flowerdew and John E. Richardson.

Discourse analytic approaches can be a target of criticism for being subjective and making a political judgment (Aydin-Düzgit & Rumelili, 2019). Yet, the theoretical base of the above-mentioned approach precludes the possibility of objectiveness (Forchtner, 2011). In critical approaches, the researcher is trying to critically examine means of expressing power through discourse, guided by theories and self-reflection during the entire process (Aydin-Düzgit & Rumelili, 2019). Therefore, (s)he cannot be purely objective.

For the purpose of increasing the reliability and validity of discourse analytic research, the DHA relies on the triangulation principle. This principle refers to employing various disciplines and methods, different empirical data, as well as background information. The DHA focuses on “intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between utterances, texts, genres, disciplines, as well as extra-linguistic social/sociological variables and historical and contextual frameworks” (Wodak, 2001, p. 67). By doing so, it tracks changes within a particular discourse over time (Wodak, 2001). The DHA’s triangulation approach consists of four levels: the language, the intertextuality/interdiscursivity, the extralinguistic context, and “the broader sociopolitical and historical context” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 93).

As for the practical application of the DHA to this research, the author followed the eight steps provided by Reisigl and Wodak (2009). The first stage was devoted to reviewing the existing literature about the foreign policy of Georgia. After familiarizing oneself with the preceding theoretical knowledge, the author designed the research questions and gathered relevant data together with the context information. The third stage consisted of downsizing and preparing data for the purpose of specific analysis, followed by the reformulation and specification of research questions and assumptions. At the fifth stage, there was conducted a qualitative pilot study, followed by analyzing the entire data. Later, the results were interpreted considering context knowledge and the three-dimensional critique and, finally, analytical results were presented guided by the specific research questions and the chosen theoretical framework.

The main limitation of this study comes from its reliance on documents as primary sources of data and the degree of subjectiveness attached to the critical discourse analysis methods in general. Even if documents provide exact and stable information, free from reactivity and obtrusiveness, the researcher is limited in terms of the depth of data as (s)he cannot ask the follow-up questions (Bowen, 2009).

4. Research Argument

Challenging the ahistorical readings of Georgian foreign policy development, the author argues that the evolution of Georgian foreign policy is an odyssey of failed de-postcolonial-ization or, in other words, the pursuit of becoming “normal.” If decolonization refers to either creating nation-states in parallel to the dissolution of empires or the delegitimization of the alien (colonial) rule (Jansen & Osterhammel, 2017), de-postcolonial-ization would mean the process of liberating oneself from the physical, ideological and historical legacies of the existing postcolonial state. The tool employed to achieve this task is argued to be the sentimentalization strategy, evoking long-term dispositions (Deonna & Teroni, 2012) regarding the Georgian “Self,” as well as Russian and Western “Others” and positioning “Self” vis-à-vis the “Others.”

The most important sentiments employed in the process of the discursive construction of identities are reflected in nativism, hybridity, and the “compensatory tug” behavior. Nativism in this context is inspired by the ideas of Appiah (1991), Spivak (1988), Loomba (2005), and other postcolonial thinkers who examine the understandings of pre-colonial experiences by postcolonial societies. The concept of nativism can be defined as a state of romanticizing one’s native culture and over-praising pre-colonial times.

The starting point of nativism as an analytical concept lies in the understanding that most postcolonial nations have a history dating back to pre-colonial times. Thus, colonial experiences do not bear full responsibility for the postcolonial discourses. However, as Spivak (1988) notes, the task of uncovering pre-colonial histories is often complicated due to the existing nostalgic aura created during colonial times. Consequently, pre-colonial times are often presented through the lens of colonial experiences. However, precisely the existence of such strong nativist sentiments can give even small players of the international system the drive to neither follow power calculations nor obey geopolitical conditions but rather tailor foreign policy trajectories to their liking. The case of Georgian foreign policy is an illustration of this pattern.

Another driver for Georgian foreign policy is intellectual hybridity, or the in-betweenness, which creates an ambivalent understanding of the colonial past and, more precisely, Russia as a colonial power. Even though some authors (See Young, 1995) see hybridity as a biological condition, in this context it is understood as a psychological condition and the ways of commemoration. The hybridity of identities in terms of ambivalence regarding the colonial

experiences divides not only official and vernacular memories but also different layers of Georgian society.

Even though the ambivalence observable in the official foreign policy discourse reflects the mixed feelings of the postcolonial society, in some cases, the narratives are homogenized, neglecting the full specter of the existing polarity. Consequently, ignoring the hybridity and stressing the importance of the leading narrative supported by the elite groups leads Georgian foreign policy towards anti-Russian, anti-colonial, sentiments. However, the suppression of the nostalgic feelings of particular groups of Georgian society can be an explosive instrument in the hands of certain political groups.

Finally, the concept of “compensatory tug” behavior provided by Moore (2001) is further developed to explain the fixation of Georgian foreign policymakers to become one with the West, rejoin the European family, that was isolated from Georgia by force for dozens of years, through acquiring the membership into the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. Moore (2001) argues that if in the former colonies of Europe, the compensatory behavior is reflected in mimicking the colonizer, it “plays out differently in the post-Soviet space since postcolonial desire from Riga to Almaty fixates not on the fallen master Russia but on the glittering Eur-American MTV-and-Coca-Cola beast that broke it” (p. 118). Moore (2001) claims that the “compensatory tug” is the desire of Eastern Europeans to take the forcibly removed Westernness back. However, it is unclear if Moore (2001) includes the South Caucasus region with its confusing geographical location in-between Asia and Europe, or more specifically Georgians in his definition of Eastern Europeans.

In the context of the sentimentalization strategy employed by the Georgian leaders, “compensatory tug” is utilized to back up the “bravery” of a small state like Georgia to redirect and maintain its foreign policy trajectory towards the West without looking back to Russia. Such an argument is further strengthened by highlighting the superiority of the Western civilization over the Russian one and emphasizing Georgia’s belongingness to the former. However, it should be noted that the hierarchical perspective regarding the Georgia-Russia-the West triangle is not consistent throughout the past few decades. The imagined positions of Georgia, Russia, and the West are (re)arranged and reversed in the ideational “contest of superiority” according to the level of nativism, hybridity, or “compensatory tug” behavior.

The shift of Georgian foreign policy from the condition of coming to terms with one’s postcoloniality to the quest of becoming de-postcolonial or “normal,” transitioned through four

stages. The short period of Great Delusion is assigned to the Zviad Gamsakhurdia's administration and is characterized by active resistance and repulsion for Russia. Gamsakhurdia's approach is impulsive, idealistic, delusionary, and driven by the longing for breaking free from the "Soviet captivity," or to decolonize oneself, both physically and ideologically, and prove that Georgia deserves to be an independent player of the international system. In this context, Georgia has a special spiritual mission to enlighten the world.

The next phase, labeled as Post-Independence Agony, is led by the former Soviet leader Eduard Shevardnadze and is covered with hybridity and ambivalence, as reflected in mixed resistant/collaborative and attracted/repulsed attitudes towards Russia. Pro-Westernism also appears in the foreign policy discourse from this time, coloring Georgian foreign policy with even more ambivalence. Georgian leadership starts moving away from decolonial narratives to coming to terms with one's postcoloniality.

The later stage, called Aggressive Turn, is guided by the Western-educated Mikheil Saakashvili's government. Even though it is marked with repulsion for Russia, an abrupt turn from collaborative spirit to strict resistance is observed in the official foreign policy discourse. Georgia's spiritual mission, in the context of Aggressive Turn, becomes overcoming the complexes fixed by Russia and inspiring the transformation of the entire post-Soviet space.

Finally, the current Georgian Dream government is argued to be Deadlocked in Pre-Defined Conditionalities with its ambivalent nature, as seen in contradictory collaborative and repulsed attitudes regarding Russia. In this context, Georgia's only mission becomes transformation from a post-Soviet country to a "normal" European state.

By providing the historical reading to Georgian foreign policy evolution through postcolonial critique, the irrationality or the "oddity" (Khelashvili, 2011 p. 8), as some authors put it, of Georgian foreign policy becomes the pursuit of de-postcolonial-ization. However, this audacious endeavor of Georgia has failed so far due to the fact that Georgian leaders could not manage to overcome their own postcoloniality but rather tried to de-postcolonial-ize the country with postcolonial means and ideological dispositions. As a result, currently, the country finds itself in a position when overcoming the pre-defined conditionalities, including the prescribed ideological underpinnings, would require deconstructing and re-imagining the idea of the "Self," as well as its "Others."

5. Outline of the Dissertation

The dissertation consists of seven chapters. The first chapter introduces the research topic and the significance of the study. The introduction is followed by the literature review. Chapter two delves into the theoretical debates relevant to the research topic and specific scholarly works exploring the foreign policy of Georgia. The goal of this chapter is to shed light on the existing body of knowledge, highlight its gaps along with the shortcomings, and build a foundation for additional research.

The third chapter sketches the theoretical framework of the study and defines the main concepts employed throughout the dissertation in the process of formulating the research argument. The theoretical framework is presented following the three themes: colonialism and postcolonialism, postcolonialism and the post-Soviet space, and postcolonial critique to the study of international relations.

The fourth chapter provides a contextual framework. It overviews the recorded history of the Georgian nation, as well as its hybrid commemoration by the modern Georgian society. The fourth chapter is important in order to situate the findings within a broader socio-political realm and link them to the issues of postcoloniality of being as observed in Georgian foreign policy.

The fifth and the sixth chapters present the evolution of Georgian foreign policy as an odyssey of failed de-postcolonial-ization or a quest of becoming “normal.” The chronology is drawn according to four different stages: Great Delusion, Post-Independence Agony, Aggressive Turn, and Deadlocked in Pre-Defined Conditionalities. By exploring how Georgian foreign policy has transitioned through different leaderships, the chapters demonstrate the process of the discursive construction of identities and the positioning of Georgia vis-à-vis Russia and the West following the declaration of independence by Georgia.

The concluding chapter summarizes the research argument raised in this dissertation and presents Georgian foreign policy as the politics of postcolonial subjectivity as reflected in the observed nativism, hybridity, and the “compensatory tug” behavior. It draws the implications of the study together with its limitations that could be addressed in future research projects in order to expand and complement the insights of this research.

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