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Georgia in the Center of Geopolitical Struggle: The Interests of Russia and Major World Powers

Abstract

For centuries, the South Caucasus has been an arena of geopolitical rivalry among major regional powers — Russia, the USA, the UK, Turkey, and Iran. In light of contemporary challenges, examining the geopolitical interests of the West and Russia in Georgia has become especially relevant. The strategic significance of Georgia, due to its location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, as well as its role in regional and global energy security, makes it a focal point of competing interests. The primary actors influencing Georgia's political landscape are the USA and Russia, while the role of other external actors remains secondary, depending on the political context. Russia's strategic objective is to maintain its dominant position in the European energy market and solidify its role as the main supplier of natural resources to Europe. Meanwhile, Western countries seek to reduce their energy dependence on Russia, given that the Kremlin often uses energy resources as a tool of political leverage. This article provides a detailed analysis of the geopolitical and economic interests of major powers in Georgia since the restoration of its independence in 1991. Additionally, it examines Georgia's strategic interests and foreign policy aspirations, including its pursuit of integration into international structures and its efforts to balance the influence of both Russia and the West. The increasing geopolitical tensions in the region further enhance the relevance of this study, as Georgia's position continues to evolve in a rapidly changing global landscape.

Keywords: Georgia, South Caucasus, Russia, West, Geopolitical Interest, Cooperation



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Jeopolitik Mücadelenin Merkezindeki Gürcistan: Rusya ve Büyük Dünya Güçlerinin Çıkarları

Öz

Güney Kafkasya yüzyıllar boyunca Rusya, ABD, İngiltere, Türkiye ve İran gibi büyük bölgesel güçler arasında jeopolitik rekabetin yaşandığı bir arena olmuştur. Günümüzün zorlukları ışığında, Batı ve Rusya'nın Gürcistan'daki jeopolitik çıkarlarını incelemek özellikle önemli hale gelmiştir. Avrupa ve Asya'nın kesişme noktasındaki konumu ve bölgesel ve küresel enerji güvenliğindeki rolü nedeniyle Gürcistan'ın stratejik önemi, onu rekabet halindeki çıkarların odak noktası haline getirmektedir. Gürcistan'ın siyasi manzarasını etkileyen birincil aktörler ABD ve Rusya iken, diğer dış aktörlerin rolü siyasi bağlama bağlı olarak ikincil kalmaktadır. Rusya'nın stratejik hedefi Avrupa enerji pazarındaki hakim konumunu korumak ve Avrupa'nın ana doğal kaynak tedarikçisi olarak rolünü sağlamlaştırmaktır. Bu arada Batılı ülkeler, Kremlin'in enerji kaynaklarını sıklıkla bir siyasi baskı aracı olarak kullandığı göz önüne alındığında, Rusya'ya olan enerji bağımlılıklarını azaltmaya çalışmaktadır. Bu makale, 1991 yılında bağımsızlığını kazanmasından bu yana büyük güçlerin Gürcistan'daki jeopolitik ve ekonomik çıkarlarının detaylı bir analizini sunmaktadır. Ayrıca, Gürcistan'ın uluslararası yapılarla bütünleşme arayışı ve hem Rusya hem de Batı'nın etkisini dengeleme çabaları da dahil olmak üzere stratejik çıkarlarını ve dış politika hedeflerini incelemektedir. Bölgede artan jeopolitik gerilimler, Gürcistan'ın konumu hızla değişen küresel ortamda gelişmeye devam ettiğinden, bu çalışmanın önemini daha da artırmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gürcistan, Güney Kafkasya, Rusya, Batı, Jeopolitik Çıkar, İşbirliği

Introduction

It is commonly acknowledged that for many centuries, the South Caucasus has served as a vital crossroads of international interests, attracting the attention of various world powers due to its strategic location at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Its rich history as a trade route and its abundant natural resources, including oil and natural gas, have made the region a key prize for empires and modern states alike. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the geopolitical landscape of the South Caucasus shifted dramatically, setting off a fierce competition for dominance in this critical region. The collapse of the USSR marked a significant turning point for the South Caucasus, as it led to the breakdown of Russia's decades-long political and economic hegemony over the region. As a result, Russia lost its monopoly on the exploration, extraction, and transportation of the region's vast energy resources, which had previously been tightly controlled within the framework of Soviet governance. This vacuum opened the door for new, powerful international players such as the United States and European countries to step in, bringing with them their own strategic, economic, and geopolitical interests. The international community considers Georgia a crucial element of the geopolitical space of the Caucasus. Key geopolitical centers of Eurasia, such as

Russia and Europe, which are directly adjacent to the Caucasus, as well as the extra-regional power — the United States — all have their interests in the region. It is well known that after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of new independent states, the West gained long-term geopolitical opportunities to penetrate areas that were previously inaccessible to it. The hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia are consistently at the center of attention for various powers. This, in turn, provides additional momentum for the West's participation in the political and economic processes in the region.

1. Political Transformation Georgia After the Restoration of Independence

Georgia regained its independence in 1991 with the adoption of the Act on the Restoration of State Independence of Georgia, after which the country began to independently define its priorities in global geopolitics. In 1992, Georgia became a member of the United Nations, and in 1999, it joined the World Trade Organization (WTO). In 1993, Georgia became a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), remaining part of the organization until 2009. Since 1991, Georgia's foreign policy orientation and its role in the geopolitical space have undergone significant changes. After gaining independence, under the leadership of the first president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the country found itself at a crossroads in terms of its development paths. Due to the ineffective policies of the first president, Georgia was essentially condemned to regional isolationism, and as a result, it was perceived by many foreign powers as a "failed" state (Bzhezinskiy, 2004). This perception was partly due to the internal instability, including civil conflict and the lack of a clear foreign policy direction. In the years that followed, Georgia's foreign policy took a turn toward seeking closer ties with Western institutions, such as NATO and the European Union, particularly after the rise of Eduard Shevardnadze to power in the mid-1990s. This shift marked a strategic pivot from regional isolation to active engagement with the West and broader international structures.

The key element of Georgia's geopolitical role is its status as a transit country. In the early 1990s, Georgia found itself in a catastrophic economic situation, which led it to seek to take advantage of proposals from Western political circles for the implementation of several infrastructure projects, including the transportation of oil and gas from Azerbaijan. These projects were seen as “guarantees” of the country's security and factors of economic development. As a result, Georgia began to play a strategically important role in American geopolitical plans for the Caspian region and the South Caucasus.

Georgia's geographic location made it a crucial corridor for energy resources, especially oil and gas, linking the energy-rich Caspian Sea region with global markets, bypassing Russia.

One of the most significant projects in this regard was the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline, which became operational in 2006. The BTC pipeline, running through Georgia, allowed the transportation of Azerbaijani oil to the Mediterranean, thus providing a route for energy exports without relying on Russian infrastructure. The BTC pipeline represents not just an economic asset for Georgia, but also a key symbol of Western influence in the region. It serves to reinforce Georgia's relationships with the United States, the European Union, and other regional partners (Shoshiashvili, 2024). This project, along with others such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, further cemented Georgia's role as an energy transit hub.

After the Rose Revolution in 2003, Mikheil Saakashvili became the President of Georgia. The new government viewed the United States and NATO as guarantors of regional stability, as well as sources of additional budgetary funding. By the time Eduard Shevardnadze came to power, Georgia was in the midst of a severe economic, political, social, and cultural crisis (Vachandze, 2002). Georgia's international position during Eduard Shevardnadze's presidency can be described as a delicate balancing act between the West and Russia. This period marked the beginning of a gradual deterioration in Russo-Georgian relations, primarily due to unresolved issues, most notably regarding Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Throughout Shevardnadze's leadership, Georgia aimed to strengthen ties with Western institutions, such as NATO and the European Union, while also attempting to manage its complex relationship with Russia. However, the unresolved conflicts in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia increasingly strained relations with Russia, which provided political and military support to the separatist movements. This, combined with Russia's growing influence in the South Caucasus, led to tensions between the two countries. Simultaneously, Georgia's strategic importance as a key transit route for energy resources, particularly the oil and gas pipelines connecting the Caspian Sea to global markets, became a focal point for its foreign policy. These pipelines, which bypassed Russia, were central to Georgia's cooperation with Western powers seeking to reduce their energy dependence on Russia. Nevertheless, the ongoing territorial disputes, alongside Russia's strategic interests in the region, meant that Georgia's foreign policy faced continuous challenges, navigating between aspirations for Western integration and the pressure from Russia.

During Eduard Shevardnadze's presidency, Georgia's relations with the United States became a central component of its foreign policy. As the country sought to navigate the delicate balance between Russia and the West, Georgia increasingly found itself aligned with American geopolitical interests. Given Georgia's lack of significant natural resources, its geographical location in the Caucasus region became a crucial asset. The country's role as a key transit route

for energy resources, particularly oil and gas, positioned it as an important player in global energy networks, linking the Caspian region with Western markets. In cooperation with both Georgia and Azerbaijan, the United States actively supported the construction of alternative energy pipelines, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline, which bypassed Russian territory. This effort was part of a broader strategy to reduce Russia's influence over regional energy resources and trade. By promoting energy diversification and supporting Georgia's position as a transit hub, the U.S. aimed to limit Russia's economic and political leverage in the South Caucasus, thus reshaping the region's geopolitical dynamics.

It is important to note that the U.S. strategic interest in Georgia was not only driven by energy transit but was also part of a wider effort to integrate Georgia into Western political and security frameworks, such as NATO and the European Union. In this context, Georgia's cooperation with the U.S. was seen as a means to achieve broader objectives, including strengthening democratic governance and aligning the country with Western institutions. Shevardnadze, in turn, embraced this partnership, viewing it as essential for Georgia's development and security. In 2004, Georgia further solidified its alignment with the West when its forces joined the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, demonstrating its commitment to international security efforts under NATO's umbrella (Smolnik, 2020). The geoeconomic interests of the United States in the South Caucasus and Georgia, as noted above, are rooted in the region's energy potential, particularly in the context of Caspian hydrocarbons. Georgia's strategic position as a transit country for oil and gas from Central Asia and the Caspian Sea is of great importance to the U.S., as it allows for the diversification of energy supplies and reduces Europe's dependency on Russia. One of the key objectives of the U.S. in the region is to create alternative routes for energy resources that bypass Russian territory, thereby weakening Russia's influence over Europe's energy supply (Parkanskiy, 2003). Georgia has historically been influenced by Russia due to its geopolitical position and strategic importance. Russia traditionally views Georgia as part of its "near abroad" and seeks to maintain control over the region, using it as a buffer zone to secure its own safety. The South Caucasus is considered a critical area for Russia, as it contains vital air, sea, and land communication routes connecting Russia with Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia. In this context, Georgia becomes an essential element of Russia's geostrategic interests, serving as a transit route for economic and military links (Lekov, 2009). For Russia, maintaining a political, military, and economic presence in the South Caucasus is crucial. The region holds significance not only in terms of energy security but also as a strategic foothold for defending

Russian interests in the broader Eurasian security context. Georgia, being a key part of the South Caucasus, directly impacts Russia's security, and its orientation toward the West is seen as a threat to regional stability. An important aspect of this dynamic is Russia's control over energy resources and infrastructure that pass through the Caucasus. For instance, pipelines transporting gas and oil through Georgia are vital not only for Russia but also for its competitors, including the United States and the European Union.

As Western influence in the region grew, particularly from the United States and NATO, Russian authorities began to view any initiatives aimed at strengthening Georgia's ties with these international organizations as a challenge to Russia's geopolitical position. The increasing U.S. presence in Georgia, designed to expand its influence in the South Caucasus, heightened the geopolitical confrontation between Russian and American interests. The U.S., in turn, sought to diversify energy supplies by creating alternative routes for oil and gas that bypassed Russia. With its strategic location, Georgia became a crucial link in this energy network.

After the Rose Revolution in 2003, Georgia's orientation toward the West became more pronounced, signaling to Russia the potential loss of its influence in the region. Mikheil Saakashvili, who became the president following the revolution, actively pursued strengthening ties with the U.S. and NATO, which caused an increase in tensions with Russia. Despite the internal crisis, Saakashvili chose to integrate Georgia into Euro-Atlantic structures, seeking partnerships with Western countries, which provided Georgia with support, including in modernization and economic development.

Washington does not emphasize competing with Russia in the former Soviet republics, as both countries officially acknowledge the importance of strategic partnership. However, disagreements on a number of issues, particularly regarding security and geopolitics, lead to tensions, especially in regions where the interests of the two states intersect. In practice, despite statements of cooperation, the contradictions between the U.S. and Russia remain a significant factor influencing their relationship, particularly in the context of the South Caucasus.

The South Caucasus has always been a key region for both countries. The U.S. has supported the aspirations of countries in the region, such as Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, to integrate more closely with Western institutions, including NATO and the European Union. Washington viewed this process as part of its strategy to expand democratic values and strengthen its presence in Eurasia. At the same time, for Russia, where the South Caucasus has historically been part of its geopolitical sphere of influence, such steps were seen as threats to security, a loss of control over the region, and a weakening of its position in the post-Soviet space. In response to the growing influence of the U.S. and NATO in Georgia, Russia took

several measures to reduce Western influence. One such measure was the demand for the closure of Russian military bases in Georgia, which was one of the conditions for normalizing relations with Russia. The decision to withdraw three Russian military bases from Georgian territory in 2005 marked a significant step, definitively confirming Georgia's pro-Western orientation and ending its military cooperation with Russia. This move sent a clear message to Moscow that Georgia was ready to take radical steps toward independence from Russia's sphere of influence, further worsening Russian-Georgian relations. At the same time, Russia began to actively support separatist movements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which exacerbated the conflicts in these regions and deepened the confrontation between the two countries. These territorial disputes became a major source of tension, ultimately escalating into the 2008 war, which marked a turning point in Georgian-Russian relations.

In the spring of 2008, Georgian-Russian relations once again deteriorated, and this crisis marked the culmination of numerous tense moments between the two countries that had been accumulating since the collapse of the Soviet Union. One of the most significant factors contributing to the worsening of relations was the military conflict in South Ossetia in August of that year. After Russia recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as a result of the conflict, Georgia officially announced its decision to withdraw from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), marking the end of years of cooperation with Russia within this interstate organization. The decision to withdraw was formalized by the Georgian Parliament on August 14, 2008, and just four days later, on August 18, the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent an official note to the CIS Executive Committee, informing them of the decision (Modebadze & Kozgambayeva, 2018). This event symbolized the final break, signaling the complete loss of mutual trust between Georgia and Russia. The process of withdrawal from the CIS continued thereafter: on June 12, 2009, the Georgian Parliament unanimously adopted a resolution "On the Interparliamentary Assembly of the CIS," officially completing the country's withdrawal from the organization. This step was a significant political statement of Georgia's desire for full independence from the post-Soviet space and its intention to strengthen ties with the West, particularly with the European Union and NATO. Special attention should be given to the political course pursued by Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili during these years. His efforts to integrate the country into NATO, despite strong opposition from Russia, became a factor that notably increased geopolitical tensions in the region. The Kremlin repeatedly stated that Georgia's and Ukraine's accession to the alliance was unacceptable, as it was seen as a threat to Russia's national security and its strategic

interests in the post-Soviet space. Saakashvili, in turn, believed that joining NATO was an essential step to ensure Georgia's security, strengthen its sovereignty, and further the country's political and economic modernization.

This process also led to increased tensions not only in relations between Georgia and Russia but also in the context of international politics. The confrontation on these issues between Moscow and the West, including the United States and the EU, became increasingly acute, which, in turn, influenced Georgia's internal and external relations. Russia viewed Georgia's pursuit of NATO membership as a direct violation of its interests in the region, leading to new sanctions and political pressure on Tbilisi. Meanwhile, Georgia sought to balance its aspirations for integration with the West with maintaining a certain degree of stability in its relations with neighboring countries, including Russia. The 2008 war between Russia and Georgia led to a significant deterioration in the international situation, particularly concerning energy security and geopolitical interests in the South Caucasus. One of the main consequences of this conflict was the unsuccessful Western intervention in the Georgian crisis, which considerably reduced the prospects for active Western involvement in strengthening and expanding the East-West energy transport corridor through the region. This corridor, including projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, had strategic importance for the U.S. and Europe in their efforts to diversify energy supplies and reduce dependence on Russia.

During the presidency of Giorgi Margvelashvili, who succeeded Mikheil Saakashvili in 2013, Georgia's policy underwent significant changes. Margvelashvili criticized the outcomes of Saakashvili's foreign economic and foreign policy strategies, including the excessive focus on the West. Despite the importance of establishing strong ties with NATO and the EU, which provided political and economic support to Georgia, the new administration acknowledged the need for a balanced approach to ensure national security and stability.

Margvelashvili actively sought to restore relations with neighboring countries, including Russia, and pursued a more rational foreign policy, avoiding provocations and recognizing Russia's sensitivities. In particular, he emphasized the need to ensure long-term stability and independence for Georgia in the context of a changing international order. As a result, many international projects initiated under Saakashvili were suspended, while new initiatives aimed at strengthening the country's diplomatic position on the world stage began (Ghasemi, Hakim & Tishehyar, 2023).

2. Georgia in the Strategic Interests of the EU, Turkey, Iran, and the USA

The European Union views Georgia as a key element in diversifying its energy supplies, helping to reduce dependence on Russian gas and oil. In this context, Georgia serves as a significant alternative to Russia's energy supply routes to Europe, as well as a strategic hub for the development of new energy corridors, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline. These projects are of considerable importance to the EU, as they enhance the region's energy security by mitigating risks associated with potential disruptions in supplies through Russia.

For the European Union, Georgia is not only important in terms of energy but also as a vital economic partner. Strategically located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Georgia offers the EU access to new markets and opportunities for deepening economic cooperation with the Caucasus and Central Asia. In September 2009, during a meeting of foreign ministers from 27 EU countries in Brussels, a decision was made to grant the European Commission a mandate to begin negotiations with Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia with the aim of expanding economic interaction. One of the key objectives of these negotiations was the establishment of a "comprehensive free trade area," which would improve trade relations and foster economic integration. In the longer term, the EU sought to deepen its relationships with these countries, including the potential for association agreements, which could further strengthen the EU's position in this strategically important region (Lyubinskaya, 2024). Thus, for the European Union, Georgia became not only a central element in its energy strategy but also a crucial partner in a broader effort to enhance stability and security on the Eastern front. The interests of Turkey and Iran in Georgia are crucial when discussing the geopolitical dynamics in the region. Both countries were among the first to recognize Georgia's independence in the early 1990s, and over time, they have played significant roles in shaping the political, economic, and security landscape of the South Caucasus.

Turkey, having recognized Georgia's sovereignty in 1991, has consistently maintained a friendly relationship with the country. For Turkey, Georgia is a vital strategic partner in the South Caucasus. Bilateral relations have expanded into various sectors, including trade, energy, transportation, and security. One of the most significant projects between the two nations was the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, inaugurated in 2006, which became the primary route for transporting Caspian oil to international markets. This project allowed Turkey to establish itself as a key energy transit hub, while also offering Georgia new opportunities for exporting its resources. However, following the Russo-Georgian conflict of 2008, Turkey's position became more nuanced. While Turkey continued to support Georgia as an important strategic ally, it also

sought to maintain stable relations with Russia due to the substantial economic and energy ties between the two countries. Consequently, Turkey adopted a cautious approach towards Georgia, mindful of the potential economic and security risks posed by deteriorating relations with Russia.

Iran, likewise, has significant interests in Georgia and the broader South Caucasus region. As one of the first countries to recognize Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty in 1992, Iran has worked to develop political and economic ties with Georgia, primarily focused on trade and economic cooperation (Razmeshcheno v Irane i na televidenii: Razvitiye otnosheniy Islamskoy Respubliki s Gruziyey, 2025). Iran is particularly interested in ensuring the stability of the region, as it presents opportunities for economic engagement and bolstering ties with neighboring countries.

However, despite the strengthening of these relations, Iran remains deeply concerned about the potential use of Georgia and other South Caucasus nations as platforms for U.S. and NATO military operations. These concerns are heightened by Iran's ongoing ambitions to develop nuclear capabilities and its strategic objective of preventing an increased U.S. military presence in the region, which it perceives as a direct threat to its security. As such, Iran closely monitors any indications of an expanded American military footprint in Georgia, viewing it as a security risk that could destabilize the region and undermine Iran's strategic position.

Despite differences in their approaches, both Turkey and Iran share the goal of expanding their influence in the South Caucasus. Each seeks to strengthen its position through political, economic, and, to a lesser extent, military ties with Georgia and other neighboring states. For Turkey, this is part of its broader strategy to assert dominance in the energy sector, leveraging its role as a transit country for energy resources from the Caspian and Central Asia. For Iran, improving regional relations, even at the cost of certain political and economic concessions, is essential to enhancing its diplomatic standing and securing its geopolitical interests.

In conclusion, the foreign policies of Turkey and Iran toward Georgia and the South Caucasus are driven by their respective geopolitical ambitions, with both countries striving to expand their influence in this strategically important region while navigating the complexities of their relationships with the West and Russia. These policies are not only shaped by economic and security concerns but also reflect broader regional and global power dynamics.

The geopolitical significance of Georgia has significantly increased, particularly considering its strategic location in close proximity to such "hotspots" as the Middle East and Central Asia (Kozhokina, 2001). This is important not only in the context of the region but also for global powers striving for political and economic dominance in these strategically vital

areas. Georgia's proximity to regions marked by persistent geopolitical and military tensions makes it an important geopolitical player, whose actions and decisions can have a substantial impact on the balance of power in Eurasia and even in a broader context.

For countries concerned with political and military dominance in the Middle East, such as the United States, this proximity plays a crucial role. Given that Georgia is a key transit country for energy resources and a potential hub for the transportation of oil and gas, its strategic position cannot be overlooked. This provides the U.S. with additional opportunities to expand its influence in the region, especially since Washington actively seeks to strengthen its position in the South Caucasus and prevent any increased Russian presence.

In the context of the competition between the U.S. and Russia for influence in Georgia, Washington has clear advantages. The United States possesses significant economic and military-technical potential, allowing it to effectively engage with Georgia and offer a wide range of economic and military assistance. One example of such cooperation is the active support provided by the U.S. in the modernization of Georgia's armed forces and the provision of financial resources aimed at improving infrastructure and developing the economy. U.S. support also includes assistance in addressing Georgia's territorial issues, such as the matters related to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which remain among the country's most significant internal challenges.

For Georgia, relations with NATO are undoubtedly one of the main priorities of its foreign policy. The desire to join the North Atlantic Alliance has become a strategic goal aimed at ensuring national security and enhancing military readiness. In recent years, Tbilisi has actively developed military cooperation with NATO, conducting joint exercises and receiving military-technical assistance, which significantly strengthens the country's defense capabilities.

Financial support also plays a key role in the context of these relations. Georgia receives substantial investments from Western countries, contributing to the development of infrastructure and the improvement of the business climate, which in turn fosters political stability in the country. These investments and support help Georgia strengthen its independence and address long-term economic challenges. Thus, the alliance with NATO and the United States has become an important tool for Georgia in its efforts to ensure territorial integrity and political independence amid a tense geopolitical situation. This alliance helps Tbilisi strengthen its international position and address internal problems, while simultaneously increasing its strategic importance on the global stage.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth noting again that after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the West gradually recognized the strategic importance of Georgia and the entire Caucasus region. Georgia and the South Caucasus, which were once considered Russia's backyard, now represent a region of significant strategic and geopolitical value for the West (Gruziya yest', no yeye bol'she net v sostave SNG, 2025). This is clearly reflected in the statement by U.S. Secretary of State under President George H. W. Bush, James Baker: *"The Caspian is not an economic, geological, or technical problem. It is a geopolitical problem of paramount importance"* (Buyanov, 2007, p.125). Alternative oil and gas export routes pass through this region, which reduces Europe's dependency on Russian hydrocarbons. Therefore, the West has a vested interest in strengthening its presence in this region.

Although Georgia does not have significant reserves of oil and gas, it still plays a crucial role in the export of hydrocarbon resources to the West. Georgia serves as a vital bridge connecting several important global economic regions. As previously mentioned, Georgia is a key to the Caucasus and the Black Sea region, and it is unlikely that major powers would voluntarily relinquish control over the country. Regarding Georgia's foreign policy, there have been no significant changes, as the main strategic goal of the country remains its integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic communities. Despite external challenges and pressure, Georgia continues to seek deeper ties with the West, particularly through NATO and the European Union. This geopolitical orientation towards Western institutions remains central to Georgia's foreign policy, which aims to ensure its sovereignty, security, and economic prosperity in an ever-changing global order. In this way, Georgia's geopolitical position at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East makes it an important player in regional and global affairs. The country's strategic significance continues to grow, as reflected in the increasing interest and involvement of major world powers, each of which seeks to secure its economic and political interests. Georgia's integration into a broader European and Euro-Atlantic context remains its primary priority, making the country an important partner for the West in ensuring stability and security in the South Caucasus and beyond.

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