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From Westward Dreams to Eastern Realities: The Shifting Currents of Georgian Energy Security in the Post-Soviet Era

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Abstract and Keywords

Abstract

Georgia’s geostrategic position is often overlooked in the South Caucasus. This paper investigates the evolution of Georgia’s energy security, with a particular focus on how external pressure, especially from Russia, have shaped the country’s energy landscape and domestic policy. This is not only important for national security but also for the EU's energy diversification and the east-west energy corridor. By analysing the formation of the Georgian energy landscape through a historic perspective, applying the Common Energy Law principles to current events and comparing the developments with the Baltic States this work demonstrates the shift in national policy in the last decade. From striving to “return to west” after independence, diversifying its energy resources and forging new international partnerships, Georgia has now turned back to the east, deepening its reliance on Russia. As a result, Georgia now finds itself in a state of uncertainty, prompting its Western partners to question the future of their investments and the stability of the critical energy corridor.

Keywords: Georgia, Russia, Energy Security, South Caucasus, the Common Energy Law principles.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	*Meaning*
BRELL grid	Belarus, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania power grid
DCTFA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EnC	Energy Community
EU	European Union
FSRU	Floating Storage & Regasification Unit
GAF	Georgian Armed Forces
GIPL	Gas Interconnection Poland-Lithuania
GSE	Georgian State Electrosystem
IEA	International Energy Agency
ISAF	International Security Assistance Forces
LNG	Liquified Natural Gas
MoF	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation
SDR	Strategic Defence Review
UN	United Nations
US	United States of America

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Introduction

Since gaining independence, Georgia has navigated a complex path between aspirations for Western integration and the persistent pull of Russian influence. Nowhere is this tension more evident than in the realm of energy security, where dependence on external sources, particularly from Russia, creates vulnerabilities for political exploitation. While the early post-Soviet years were marked by a clear westward orientation and efforts to reduce reliance on Russia, recent national policy developments reveal a marked shift back toward the East. Increasingly, key decisions appear to prioritize external interests over national well-being, underscoring how foreign influence continues to shape Georgia's energy landscape and domestic policy in profound ways.

Nestled at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Georgia is a country where ancient traditions meet a tumultuous modern history. Christianity in Georgia traces its roots to the 1st century, when it was introduced by Apostles Simon and Andrew according to Orthodox tradition. It later became the state religion remarkably early, in the year 319 (Parry, 2007). Strategically located at the Black Sea, Georgia has drawn influence from the largest empires such as Persia, Byzantine and the Ottoman. Annexed by the Russian Empire in the 19th century, Georgia became part of the Soviet Union until 1991, when the collapse of the USSR allowed the country to declare its independence. However, this freedom has come with challenges such as political instability and territorial disputes (Coene, 2011).

Post-independence, Georgia went through multiple setbacks such as the Russian initiated energy crisis in the 90s. Still struggling with the post-Russian influence on politics and infrastructure; the stakes were raised due to its geographic location as the key transit route for energy supplies from the Caspian Sea. Following the break from the USSR, Georgia quickly became a valuable partner for the West due to the oil and gas reserves bypassing Russia (German, 2008). The tensions reached its peak in 2008

during the Russo-Georgian war. Following the conflict two of Georgia's regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia were left under Russian control. This conflict underscored the high stakes of Georgia's geopolitical positioning (Cornell, 2009).

At this time, Georgia continues to walk a delicate tightrope between its desire to move closer to the EU and NATO and the political turbulence caused by remaining Russian influence. Its struggle is not only about survival but also striving for a future of independence and assertion of its sovereignty (Pignatti, 2023). This makes for an interesting case in International Relations as despite hybrid warfare and historical influence the state has refused to turn to Russia despite its power play and lack of other obvious choices. In the center of it all, is the geostrategic pipelines which forms a crucial piece to the energy security of Europe. Georgia's story is one of resilience, cultural pride, and geopolitical importance, one that continues to unfold in the shadow of larger powers.

This paper investigates the evolution of Georgia's energy security, with a particular focus on how external pressure, especially from Russia, have shaped the country's energy landscape and domestic policy. The research follows Georgia's journey as it navigates European and transatlantic integration from the early 2000s with a lingering Russian influence, placing these dynamics within the context of regional and global energy politics. Special attention is given to the strategic importance of Georgia's transit routes for Caspian oil and gas, and the country's critical role in European energy diversification.

Understanding Georgia's energy security is highly relevant as it exposes the vulnerabilities faced by small states dependent on external energy sources and the accompanying risks of political manipulation. Moreover, it is connected to the challenges other post-Soviet countries as the Baltic States have faced. Additionally, it highlights the importance of EU-Georgia and EU-NATO relations and the progress and investments that have been made in the 21st century that are now at risk. Given Georgia's strategic location it also sheds a light on the South Caucasus that often is overlooked by offering

critical insights into a great power competition that is becoming more relevant day by day. Furthermore, the analysis ties Georgia's energy challenges to global priorities such as SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), underlining the vital connections between reliable energy access, environmental sustainability, and peacebuilding.

More importantly, beyond the geopolitical and economic dimensions, this issue has profound consequences for Georgian civil society. The ongoing struggle over energy security, squeezed between west and east, directly affects the daily lives of citizens. The choices made today will have lasting impacts on the country's youth and future generations, influencing their prospects for peace, prosperity, and self-determination.

The next chapter will introduce Securitizing Energy: The interplay of Energy and Security in Russo-Georgian relations. Following an exploration of the theoretical framework and methodology, the study presents an overview of Georgia's energy sector and security policy from a historical perspective in chapter three. Chapter four and five are divided in two time periods 2014-2019 and 2020-2024, providing a detailed examination of Georgia's role in the international energy market and developments in national energy policy over the past decade. Moreover, by applying the Common Energy Law Principles to these developments and drawing comparisons with strategic moves undertaken in the Baltic States, chapters four and five offer insights into the evolving challenges and strategies that shape Georgian energy security. Lastly, the discussion draws conclusions about the current and future energy landscape in Georgia in relation to foreign actors.

1. Securitizing Energy: The interplay of Energy and Security in Russo-Georgian relations

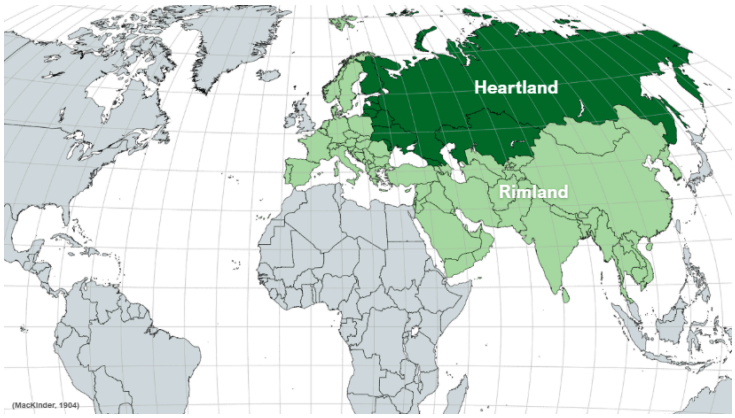
1.1. Russo-Georgian relations throughout time

The relationship between Russia and Georgia is rooted in a history that spans centuries. The earliest interactions date back to the 15th and 16th centuries, with a significant milestone being the alliance treaty signed between the Georgian kingdom of Kakheti and the Russian Empire in 1587. This marked the beginning of a complex and evolving relationship (Coene, 2011). A pivotal moment came in 1783 with the signing of the Treaty of Georgievsk, which established eastern Georgia as a Russian protectorate. This arrangement ultimately led to Georgia's incorporation into the Russian Empire in the early 19th century. For nearly two centuries, Georgia remained under Russian influence (Coene, 2011).

However, the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 20th century brought Georgia back to its independence. From then, the Georgian spirit has been to “return to Europe”. This was especially enforced by the Rose Revolution in 2003, as a part of the coloured revolutions across the former Soviet Union, that brought about a significant political shift to the country’s agenda (German et al, 2022). It would not only signify a union with the West but also the break from the former ways towards freedom. Pro-Georgian and western scholars argue that Georgia’s time underneath the Soviet rule can be described as a deviation from their natural European path (German et al, 2022). A mindset that explains their quick pro-European foreign policy shift as Georgia sought to assert its independence and explore integration with Western institutions. The Individiaul Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO and involvement with the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline served as a stressor, heightening tensions with Russia (Lynch, 2006).

Moscow's support for separatist regions within Georgia further strained relations**.** These tensions culminated in the Russo-Georgian War in August 2008. The war resulted in

terrible consequences for Georgia such as Russia's annexation of 20% of its territory and extensive damage to military and civilian infrastructure (Hamilton, 2018). On the 25th of August the same year, Russia recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia's independence and with that the diplomatic ties between Moscow and Tbilisi ended (German Federal Foreign Office, 2018). Despite their shared history, the geopolitical dynamics in the region have led to a deep rift between Russia and Georgia in the 21st century.



Much of this is rooted in the Russian government's glorification of the Soviet times, and how it is continuously affecting its foreign policy towards Georgia and other post-Soviet states today (Scott, 2007). This perspective was recently underscored by Russia's former President Medvedev who declared that "Ukraine is Russia", confirming that the Russian government denies Ukrainian statehood. President Putin has also reinforced this narrative by invoking Tsarist-era terminology such as "Novorossiya" (New Russia) when referring to annexed regions in Ukraine (Kuzio, 2024). Additionally, the invasion has been explicitly linked to the imperial conquests of Peter the Great and the Russian right to its historical territory (Dickinson, 2024). From these events, one can come to the conclusion that the current Russian foreign policy agenda is strongly motivated by the Heartland theory of geopolitical world domination (MacKinder, 1904).

Based on this assumption, multiple parallels can be drawn between Russia's activities in Ukraine and its recent relations with Georgia. Both countries are located within what Russia regards as its "historic territory" and lie inside the strategic Heartland border, making them central to Russia's geopolitical interests. This shared context helps explain the similarities in Moscow's approach to exerting influence and pursuing its objectives in both regions.

In that sense, Georgia is walking a tightrope between Western nations that could enforce their democratic values and Russia who still “claims” Georgia and other Post-Soviet states through its traditional sphere of influence ([Tsygankov & Tarver-Wahlquist, 2009] & [Scott, 2007]).

In 2023, 79% of Georgian citizens were in favour of an EU membership and further political and Economic integration with the Union (NDI, 2023). By the end of that year, their path towards the EU looked bright as they obtained EU candidate status. At the same time, a survey conducted by the Caucasus Barometer in the beginning of 2024 showed that 69% identify Russia as Georgia’s main enemy (Caucasus Research Resource Center, 2024). Simultaneously illustrating the Georgians public opinion towards the west, and the east. These numbers were also a reflection of the election polls ahead of the October 2024 national elections where the pro-West opposition parties were expected to win with a plus 50% majority against the pro-Russian Georgian Dream.

However, Georgia’s journey towards its western partners was abruptly shut down by the fraudulent election in 2024. After the votes were counted Georgian Dream came out as a winner with 54% majority, a result that instantly was questioned by international observers, the opposition and the Georgian people (Sikharulidze, 2025). Leading the European Parliament to call for a re-election to be held as soon as possible while refusing to enforce the election results (European Parliament, 2024). At the same time, Moscow officially endorsed the result that instantly would turn Georgia towards Russia. Despite the public opinion's support for the EU membership journey, the political elite in Georgia is working to improve the relationship with Russia once again by pleasing the current regime. Following the Georgian Dream entering into office, Georgians have taken to the streets protesting weekly since the election in October 2024, making it the longest running resistance movement in the country (Sikharulidze, 2025).

The future outlook on Russo-Georgian relations is also affected by current events around the Baltic Sea. During the last year there have been multiple reports of damages due to external factors on underwater power cables in the Baltic Sea (Leicester & Burrows, 2025). Most likely provoked by the recent NATO expansion, as Russia holds strategic interest in the Baltic just as around the Black Sea. In the end, the heightened tensions pushed the Baltic states to completely disconnect from the Russian energy market and BRELL (Rooks, 2025).

The western expansion in the north shifts the focus from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Currently, all the countries of the Black Sea have the EU candidate status which Russia views as a further threat. Following the shutdown of the Nord stream pipeline the EU has done its best to turn away from Russian oil and gas exports. Leaving Russia with a gas-surplus that could be distributed through its southern channels (Vakulenko, 2022). All together, this places Georgia in the geostrategic center of Russia's future energy expansion. Losing control over this area at this stage would be devastating for the country's oil and gas industry. A sector that on average generates 20% of the Russian GDP (Yermakov, 2024). Even more so, since surplus capacity and fossil-fuel exports have been identified as a core to Russian energy security by Kreml (Vatansever, 2017).

1.2. Global Energy Trends

Global energy consumption has increased exponentially in recent years, driven by rapid industrialization, the digital revolution and the electrification of sectors in transport and industry. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA) global energy demand rose by 2.2% in 2024, almost double the average annual increase of the previous decade. Primarily due to soaring electricity consumption in both advanced and emerging economies (IEA, 2024).

At the same time, the global energy landscape is undergoing a profound transformation. Renewables and nuclear power accounted for 80% of the increase in electricity generation in 2024 (Ember, 2024). Despite these advances, the transition to cleaner

energy sources remains uneven. Many developing nations continue to rely heavily on fossil fuels due to limited access to affordable alternatives and underdeveloped infrastructure, leaving some countries vulnerable to supply disruptions (World Bank Group, 2023).

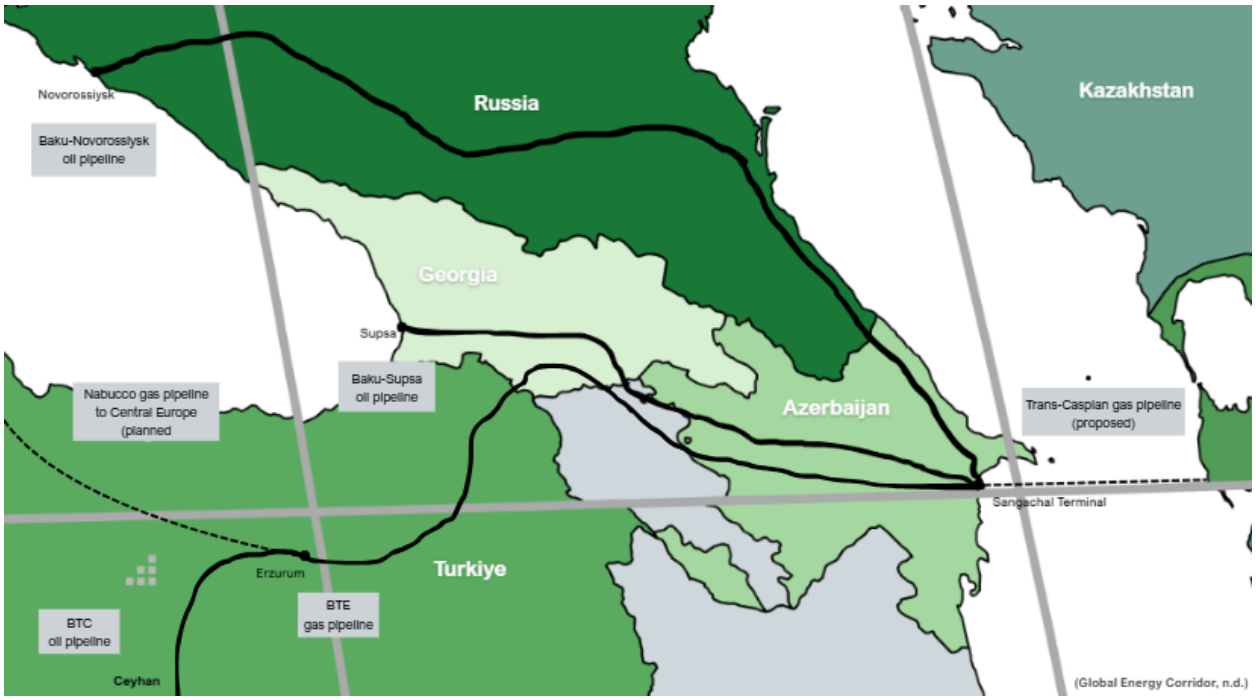
In the end, the connection between energy, economy and stability have increased the urgency in the international community to obtain control over resources and energy transit routes. This has resulted in pipeline diplomacy, in which geostrategic locations such as harbours, and connections to resource rich areas have grown more important (De Pous et al., 2020). In many of these cases, it comes at the expense of local communities and contributes to the deterioration of regimes stability and security. Furthermore, as energy security is directly linked to state security it contains a higher risk to escalate further into inter-state conflicts. Therefore, in a time of rising demand and unjust allocation of resources, energy insecurity has risen up on the agenda as one of the biggest problems in international relations. As such, energy security concerns continue to drive alliances, interventions, and the broader dynamics of power.

1.3 Georgia as a Geopolitical Chokepoint: Transit, Security, and Influence

Georgia's energy landscape is defined less by its domestic resources and more by its critical position as a geopolitical chokepoint. Dependent on imports for all its natural gas and most of its oil (IEA, n.d.), Georgia's true significance lies in its strategic location between the Caspian and Black Seas. This placement makes Georgia a vital corridor for energy transit between East and West.

As a transit country, Georgia's territory serves as a bridge for oil and gas pipelines linking Azerbaijan's resources to Turkiye and, ultimately, to Europe (Cornell et al., 2005). This network has elevated the South Caucasus to a central hub in global energy flows, with Azerbaijani gas reaching numerous countries through Georgian territory. From a geopolitical perspective, Georgia's role exemplifies the enduring relevance of Mackinder's Heartland Theory, which posits that control over pivotal spaces in Eurasia

confers significant global influence (Mackinder, 1904). The ongoing contest among Russia, the EU, the US, and China for sway in the region underscores Georgia's status as a chokepoint where transit, security, and influence intersect.



Modern analysts like Michael Klare have highlighted that control over energy transit routes, such as those crossing Georgia, can ignite or sustain geopolitical conflicts, as access and revenues become powerful tools of leverage (Klare, 2001). This dynamic has become increasingly evident in recent years, as industrial demand for secure energy supplies has surged during periods of heightened international tension.

In today's geopolitical climate, marked by strained ties between Russia, Europe, and the US, Georgia's role as an intermediary is more critical than ever. Its infrastructure not only supports Europe's pursuit of energy diversification away from Russia but also amplifies Georgia's own strategic importance as a partner in regional security and development (Cornell et al., 2005).

1.4. Energy Dependency

The European Environment Agency defines energy dependency as “the proportion of energy that an economy must import”, calculated as net imports relative to total consumption (EEA, 2014). To measure a country's dependency rate, one must analyze the country's capability of providing itself with its use of energy resources through its own production or import. By doing so one will also identify who or whom the nation is dependent on, and its vulnerabilities.

Actively pursuing energy diversification is essential for countries with high levels of energy dependency. This can be achieved by securing a range of suppliers for energy resources and fostering an open, competitive market environment to ensure stable pricing (Beyer & Molnar, 2022). Another key strategy involves diversifying the energy mix and boosting domestic production, particularly through renewables. In recent years, many nations have prioritized expanding solar, wind, hydropower, and other renewable capacities to enhance energy security and reduce reliance on imports (UNCTAD, 2023).

A high energy dependency on one or multiple resources to a few providers puts a country in a great security risk. History has shown that energy extortion or the use of energy pressure mechanisms is a common tool during times of political tension or in war (Klare, 2001). This puts the nation in a dilemma, establishing energy independence might trigger a high-risk security threat. At the same time, without diversifying suppliers the state will be stuck with a long-term political risk (USAID, 2023).

In the case of post-Soviet states, they inherited Soviet-era infrastructure that was deeply integrated into the Russian energy system, resulting in significant energy dependencies (Janeliunas & Tumkevic, 2013). As a result, these newly independent countries began with a noteworthy reliance on Russian energy supplies. Characteristics from the majority of these countries are a small to medium sized state, with geographic proximity to the former imperial power with monopolized transit routes that left them vulnerable to political pressure, and price manipulation. These vulnerabilities heighten the risk of foreign influence. Therefore, the drive to achieve energy independence has become

especially urgent, as Russia has a well-documented history of leveraging energy dependency as a tool for political influence and hindering efforts by neighboring countries to diversify their energy sources (USAID, 2023).

There are multiple theories a nation can use to assess their energy dependency and improve their independence. The most relevant for this study is “the common Energy Law principles”. These can be used as guidelines for states to break free from energy dependency, but also considers important functions to protect against foreign intervention on the national energy market.

1.5. Energy security in the Post-Soviet space

Energy security is a cornerstone of national stability in today’s world, as disruptions in supply, geopolitical manipulation of resources, and reliance on unstable suppliers can all endanger the functioning and security of a state (Lis, 2023). Recent years have seen national security strategies place increasing emphasis on energy resilience, with countries such as the US, Germany, and Poland prioritizing the diversification of suppliers and the protection of critical infrastructure. A major catalyst for this shift has been Russia’s weaponization of energy exports following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine (Kutani, 2025), prompting leading European nations to accelerate alternative supply agreements and reshape their geopolitical alignments (IEA, 2024). As a result, states are compelled to balance immediate needs for stable energy markets with long-term goals for sustainable transitions. This interplay between national interests and energy security directly shapes foreign policy decisions, industrial strategies, and investment priorities, highlighting the ongoing securitization of energy issues (Lis, 2023).

For post-Soviet states, energy security takes on particular urgency due to their historical and infrastructural ties to Russia. Their electricity grids and pipelines were, or in some cases still are, integrated with Russian systems, making them especially sensitive to external threats and manipulation (German et al., 2022). To conceptualize a nation’s approach to energy security, they can apply the threat perception mechanisms in

combination with securitization, political legitimization, formation of interests, and formation of identity.

These mechanisms must guide the formation of energy policy to ensure it aligns with the nation's best interests and self-preservation. If energy policy is not aligned with national interests, it risks undermining sovereignty and security, as highlighted in national security theory (Pirtskhelani, 2021).

Concrete examples from the Baltic States illustrate how these theories are applied in practice. Lithuania, for instance, actively rejected deeper energy ties with Russia, recognizing that such dependence would threaten its independence and sovereignty by giving Russia undue leverage (Pirtskhelani, 2021). Comparative analyses of the Baltic States and Ukraine further explore how post-Soviet countries securitize energy in their national documents and policies (Janeliunas & Tumkevic, 2013). These studies emphasize the importance of understanding how, why, and to what extent a country securitizes energy issues.

This can be done by mapping the situation from the following **six perspectives:**

1. **The inclusion of energy security (as a point of concern) in national security strategies:** Energy security is formally designated as a national security concern when included in national strategies. This indicates a consensus to view energy issues as a threat.
2. **The status of the energy sector in security strategies:** The energy sector is evaluated as either an independent security sector or part of the economic sector. Its status determines whether specific means are allocated to address energy issues.
3. **The significance of energy threats:** Energy threats are prioritized if they are considered more pressing than other security risks. This prioritization indicates that energy issues require immediate attention.

4. **The timing of energy concerns:** The timing of energy concerns affects their urgency and priority. Current problems are generally considered more threatening than potential future risks.
5. **Sources of energy threats:** External energy threats are more likely to lead to securitization due to the "us vs. them" narrative. This narrative helps legitimize securitization efforts by identifying specific external sources of threats.
6. **Extraordinary measures:** Securitization can create conditions for using extraordinary measures to address energy issues. These measures are typically implemented to achieve rapid changes that would be difficult without securitization.

(Janeliunas & Tumkevic, 2013)

By applying these analytical points, post-Soviet states like the Baltics have developed robust strategies to manage energy security, demonstrating the practical impact of theoretical frameworks on national policy and regional stability.

1.6. The Common Energy Law Principles

The Energy Law Principles were developed with the purpose to advance the practice of energy law by offering a guiding framework. The energy market as a whole has gone through great changes in the last decades and is continuously developing according to our growing needs. Through market liberalization and internationalization the need for common energy law principles have grown due to this growing practice field. Therefore, Professor Raphael Heffron, along with other authors have suggested seven guiding principles to aim for justice within the energy sector (Heffron, 2018). These principles have been acknowledged as a foundation for modern energy law, and are for instance implemented when an aspiring EU member is aligning their legislation with the EU markets energy laws (Samkharadze, 2019).

These are the following principles:

1. **National resources sovereignty:** This principle recognizes the absolute right of states to freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources in accordance with their national interests. It stresses that no state should be subjected to economic, political, or any other type of coercion to prevent the free and full exercise of this right.
2. **Access to modern energy services:** This principle acknowledges that access to energy is a necessity for development and survival and should be available to all citizens of a nation. It points out that energy should be regulated with the objective of ensuring access to modern energy services to meet basic needs and stimulate social and economic development
3. **Energy justice:** This principle focuses on the application of human rights across the energy system. Heffron's work is based on five key energy justice principles: distributive, procedural, restorative, recognition, and cosmopolitan justice.
4. **Prudent, rational and sustainable use of natural resources:** This principle advocates for achieving a balance between economic development and environmental concerns in the use of natural resources. It highlights the need for responsible management and utilization of resources to ensure long-term sustainability.
5. **Protection of environment, human health & combating climate change:** This principle states that the use of energy and natural resources should comply with the triple objective of protecting the environment, public health, and mitigating climate change. It underscores the importance of considering these factors in energy-related decisions and policies.
6. **Energy security and reliability:** This principle emphasizes the need for a secure and reliable supply of energy. It focuses on ensuring consistent delivery of energy to all consumers and maintaining a stable energy system.
7. **Resilience:** This principle advocates for the different energy activities in the energy system to be resilient so they can plan, recover, and adapt to adverse

events. It showcases the importance of creating energy systems that can withstand and quickly recover from various disruptions

(Heffron, 2018)

Besides forming the foundation for modern energy law, this framework is used to regulate dysfunctional energy markets and optimize national legislation. Its significance has grown substantially in recent years, particularly as natural resources have emerged as critical flashpoints in geopolitical conflicts globally (Klare, 2001). By following these principles, a state can achieve a stronger and more resilient energy provision in the country. Just as deviating from the guidelines goes against a sovereign, just and sustainable energy market (Heffron, 2018).

2. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research methodology, relying exclusively on an extensive literature review to investigate an area and a country often overlooked in the field of International Relations. The methodology is designed to address the interplay between geopolitical dynamics and institutional adaptations in Georgia's energy security landscape from 2014 to 2024.

The research systematically reviews academic publications, policy briefs, and regional analyses centered on post-Soviet energy politics, with particular emphasis on Georgia's trajectory following 2014. Special attention is given to critical events such as the aftermath of the 2008 Russo-Georgian war, the 2022 EU-Georgia Association Agreement, and the 2024 parliamentary election. These events have mainly been analysed from strategic foreign policy documents such as the "Strategic Defence Reviews" published by the Georgian Ministry of Defence, as well as the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports on its relations with the European Union.

Additionally, the analysis integrates the common energy law principles, such as energy justice, security of supply and market liberalization, to assess regulatory responses to foreign influence. Furthermore, parallels are drawn between energy independence efforts in Georgia and the Baltic states, to compare similar challenges in the post-Soviet countries. The dual approach enables a more nuanced exploration of Georgia's energy sovereignty and external dependencies during the last decade.

While the study prioritizes securitization theory and energy law frameworks, a number of topics have been excluded. Broader International Relations perspectives and realist analyses of the power dynamics in the Post-Soviet space is included briefly, but is not analysed on a deeper level. Additionally, sub-state actors such as the role of local governments and NGOs have not been addressed. Moreover, the research is also limited by the 2017 dissolution of the Ministry of Energy in Georgia. This factor heavily

affects the amount of data and insights available regarding the national energy market since then. Therefore, I have been pushed towards foreign data and analysis. To compensate for this factor I have based my research on collaborative reports such as USAID's work with the Georgian Economic Research Policy Center. Additionally, I have favoured sources from Georgian scholars and professionals when reviewing work published from western institutions.

The results section has been divided into three time periods to ease the data collection and analysis. Chapter four covers the period from post-independence until 2013 to provide background information on the topic. Chapter five is focused on 2014–2019, marking a new era with multiple steps toward the European Union and international partnerships. Lastly, chapter six covers 2020–2024, when national policy undergoes a rapid shift away from the pro-European path. Dividing the chapters into these time periods offers the reader a chance to understand the history behind the events of recent years. Moreover, it helps provide a clearer picture of the changes in both national and foreign policy by applying the common energy law principles on these specific time frames.

Due to time constraints, no in-person observations or interviews were conducted. All findings and conclusions are based on the critical examination and synthesis of existing literature. However, this research has been supported and critically reviewed by friends and colleagues from Georgia, whose insightful feedback and valuable notes have significantly enriched the study. Their local perspectives have helped ensure the accuracy and relevance of the analysis, providing important context that deepens the overall understanding of the subject.

Research Findings

In the following chapters, you will be guided through Georgia's history from the perspective of energy security and politics. The chapters are organized into three periods: post-independence to 2013, 2014–2019, and 2020–2024. The initial sections focus on Georgia's experience with energy-related hybrid warfare and the challenges it faced as a post-Soviet state. Chapters five and six place greater emphasis on recent events and shifts in both foreign and national policy. Moreover, the latter chapters include a section applying the common energy law principles on the developments in the energy Sector. They also offer a comparison with developments in the Baltic States during the same period, examining efforts to break energy dependency from the perspective of smaller post-Soviet states.

3. Shifting currents in the post-Soviet era: the formation of Georgia's energy landscape

3.1 Introduction to Georgia's Energy Landscape

Georgia occupies a strategically significant position as a natural transit hub between Central Asia and Europe, with its location bridging the South Caucasus and facilitating the movement of energy resources. This advantage makes Georgia a crucial player in regional energy dynamics and a potential gateway for energy transit to Europe. Something that already was acknowledged a century ago by Winston Churchill who called the transit route "one of the greatest strategic lines in the world", referring to Germany's and Britain's plans of using Georgian railway to transport oil and other material in the 1920's (German et al., 2022; 2).

Despite its geographical potential, the country faces significant energy challenges due to high import dependency and an uneven distribution of energy sources (Coene, 2011). The world factbook estimates Georgia's domestic production and consumption of

petroleum, natural gas and coal to be the following (CIA, n.d.). This offers an indication of the severe energy dependency the country has.

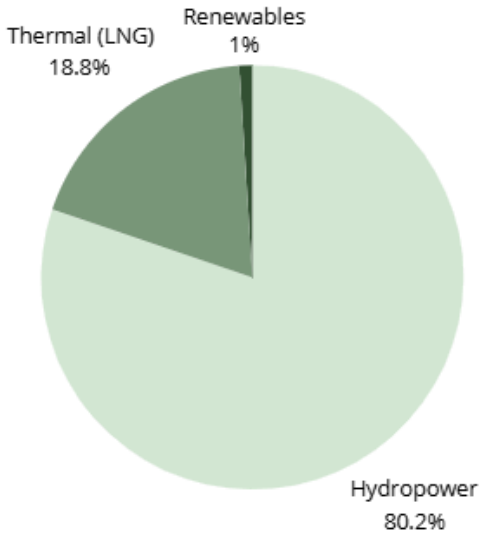
	Petroleum	Natural Gas	Coal
Domestic Production	300 bbl/day (2023 est.)	10.77 million cubic meters (2023 est.)	148,000 metric tons (2023 est.)
Export	-	-	80 metric tons (2023 est.)
Import	-	2.764 billion cubic meters (2023 est.)	223,000 metric tons (2023 est.)
Consumption	34,000 bbl/day (2023 est.)	2.775 billion cubic meters (2023 est.)	384,000 metric tons (2023 est.)

(CIA, n.d.)

As for the total energy dependency level in the country, the National Statistics Office of Georgia, estimates that approximately 90% of the nation's energy needs are met through imported resources (Pirtskhelani, 2021). However, the dependency level on external actors differs depending on the resource. For example, in 2020 natural gas was predominantly imported from Azerbaijan, which accounts for 92.8% of supply, with Russia contributing just 7% (Pirtskhelani, 2021). Placing Azerbaijan in a favorable position as they can assert political pressure on Georgia.

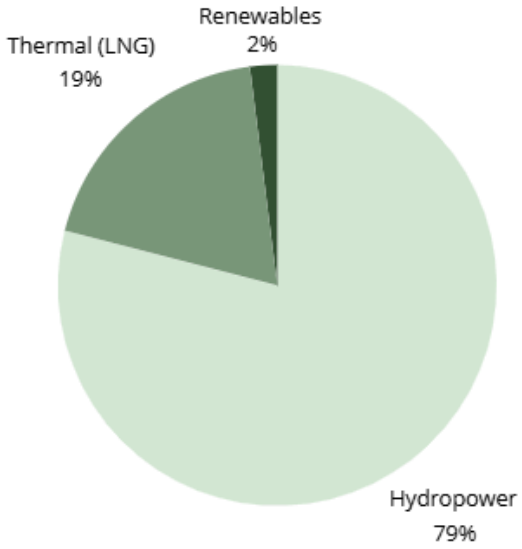
In contrast to natural gas, oil is sourced from five larger and fifteen smaller companies, creating a more diversified and secure supply chain (Pirtskhelani, 2021). The larger companies originate from different countries, such as SOCAR (the state oil company of Azerbaijan), Lukoil and Rosneft (Russia), GOGC (Georgian Oil and Gas Corporation) and Rompetrol (Romania) (IEA, n.d.). This competitive oil market helps ensure more stable pricing and reduces the risk of overreliance on a single provider. Due to the low domestic sources, as illustrated above, Georgia is forced to find foreign alternatives to provide them with the fossil fuels. Worth noticing is that oil products made up 26,6% of

Georgia’s total energy supply, however it is not the major factor for the electricity grid (IEA, n.d.). In contrast to natural gas that is essential for domestic electricity production as it drives the country’s thermal power, which can be seen illustrated by the country's energy mix charts down below.



Georgian Energy Mix: 2014

(Lui, 2018)



Georgian Energy Mix: 2024

(IEA, n.d.)

As for domestic electricity production, Georgia generates most of its electricity from hydropower, capitalizing on its extensive river network. Hydropower is a central element of Georgia’s energy mix, reflecting the country’s commitment to utilizing renewable energy sources. However, as of 2020, only 22% of Georgia’s hydropower potential was being exploited (Pirtskhelani, 2021). The lack of expanded hydro plants so far is mostly motivated by lack of funds designated to the cause and risks associated with the method. Unlike gas and oil, hydropower generation is subject to seasonal fluctuations in water flow, making it less predictable and stable as an energy source. In the end, Georgia's energy landscape is shaped by a combination of its geographic advantages and resource constraints.

Year	Domestic Generation (%)	Imports (%)	Notes
1994	Ca. 70	Ca. 30	Severe energy crisis, much domestic infrastructure non-functional.
2004	Ca. 98	Ca. 2	Domestic generation recovered, imports minimal
2014	Ca. 97	Ca. 3	Continued high self-sufficiency
2024	Ca. 91,6	Ca. 8,4	Hydropower variability, higher imports

([Lui, 2018] & [IEA, n.d.])

The following table accounts for the development of domestic electricity generation. However, it is difficult to find exact data from the 90s as power plants were a victim of multiple attacks and the energy grid was highly unreliable. Although the table offers an insight into the quick recuperation due to domestic energy modernization; it's worth noticing the high electricity imports in the 90s that were a direct consequence of the shut off of Russian gas used in thermal plants. At this time, the domestic electricity production relied on hydro power, as further explained in the next sub-chapter (Engurhesi, n.d.).

3.2 Energy Independence at Risk: Major Challenges and Emerging Threats

In the early 1990s, Georgia appeared well-positioned to strengthen its infrastructure and capitalize on its strategic location within the South Caucasus corridor. Numerous international actors showed interest in investing in the country, recognizing its potential as a transit hub for energy resources (German, 2008). However, these aspirations were undermined by significant political and economic challenges. Instead of becoming a decade of growth and reinforced independence, the 1990s became a period marked by setbacks, declining living standards, and a failure to achieve sustainable progress due to political hiatus (Glonti, 2000).

Georgia's newfound independence was immediately tested by internal ethnic conflicts and political instability, which destabilized the economy and undermined national cohesion. Many of these conflicts were supported, if not orchestrated, by forces in the former Soviet Union, which sought to weaken Georgia's sovereignty and maintain influence in the region (Coene, 2011).

A particularly complex aspect of the post-independence conflicts was the role of energy resources connected to the regional disputes. For instance, the region of Adjara became a significant pawn due to its strategic location along the Black Sea and the presence of Batumi, a vital energy transit hub (Jervalidze, 2006). Just as the Abkhazia-Georgian war in 1992-1993 split the vital Enguri hydro plant between Abkhazian and Georgian territory, and resulted in Abkhazia gaining Vardnili hydro plant (Sabonis-Helf, 2017). Russian support for local separatist movements, and its ties to local government until recent days, has been driven by its interest in maintaining control over energy routes and fundamental energy infrastructure; creating further challenges for Georgia's economic stability and resource provision, while securing an important geostrategic position for themselves.

Another challenge was Georgia's transition to a liberal market economy from the Soviet system. The introduction of the economic reformation system "Shock Therapy" commonly used in post-Soviet states was supposed to create a liberal and stable economy with new structural policies. Instead, Georgia was pushed into a deep economic crisis (Beridze, 1996). Additionally, the slow development of a new national currency, Georgian Lari, that was first introduced in 1995 decelerated foreign investors and aid (Beridze, 1996). As a result, vital investments in infrastructure, the electricity grid and energy sector, were hindered due to the weakened industry and investment confidence.

The combination of internal instability, regional conflicts, and economic challenges left Georgia struggling to assert its energy independence in the critical years following 1991. Despite its promising potential, the country's journey toward energy security has been obstructed by political and economic fragility from the start. The lack of progress

worsened the country's reliance on foreign energy imports, leaving it vulnerable to external pressures. Hence, opening up for Russia to cut off the gas supply and triggering the Energy Crisis in the 90s.

Energy Crisis of the 1990s and its legacy

After Russia shut off the gas supply to Georgia in January 1990, Georgia descended into darkness with widespread energy black outs and water deficit;creating what is known as the worst energy crisis in Georgia's modern history. The crisis devastated the population leading to numerous casualties and a surge in internally displaced people as communities struggled to survive without basic resources. From 1989 to 2000, over 1 million left Georgia, a country with a 5,5 million population (Glonti, 2000).

Neither Russia nor other foreign actors have orchestrated an energy crisis to that extent since. However, there have been numerous incidents, comparable to terror attacks, on essential energy infrastructure throughout the 90s and 00s. The repetitive attacks have taken place in winter time when the country and its citizens are especially vulnerable. Probably with the intention to put extra pressure on the government. The halted domestic energy production ended up favoring Georgia's largest energy suppliers Russia and Azerbaijan (Transparency International Georgia, 2008).

Attacks/Sabotage at essential energy infrastructure

Date	Target	Nature of Attack	Potential trigger
Dec 1993	Enguri Power Station	Accident (unspecified, possibly sabotage)	Two months after the fall of Sukhumi*
Dec 1993	Gardabani gas generation units (9th and 10th blocks)	Fire	Two months after the fall of Sukhumi*
1995	Enguri Power Station (500 kW unit)	Attack (destruction)	Not specified
Dec 2001	Gardabani energy blocks (9th and 10th)	Explosion (9th block seriously damaged, 10th block destroyed)	Months after South Caucasus pipeline announcement
Nov 2002	Enguri Power station	Serious damage	Not specified

Sep 15, 2004 until Mar 2005	Electricity transmission lines Kartli 1 and 2	Serious damage (multiple incidents)	Post Rose Revolution w/ new pro-West government

***End of 1992-1993 war in Abkhazia**

Due to the sabotage in the early 90s and the poor state of the infrastructure the state received 591,770,150 USD in grants and beneficial credits between 1995-2000 for reparations and reconstruction of the damage caused from 1993. One of the largest benefactors was the German Development Bank (Transparency International Georgia, 2008). In the coming years, the European Investment Bank, the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, as well as the European Union would invest large sums in the reconstruction of energy infrastructure ([Martikian, 2018] & [EIB, 2010]). However, continuing sabotage stretching into the 21st century in combination with extensive corruption in the energy sector resulted in the German Development Bank deciding to revoke the grants (Transparency International Georgia, 2008). Setting a negative precedent for future foreign investors.

Worth noticing, is how the memory of the 1990s energy crisis is still fresh in the minds of many Georgians who experienced it. It is often used as a warning in national politics and serves as a powerful example of what can happen when energy security fails. Even today, many people fear the return of such a difficult time, which influences public opinion, in contrast to what many believe, in favor of Russia as they are viewed as a strong actor (Narimanishvili, 2022). In hindsight, the pro-Russian movement argues that at least during Soviet times they had reliable energy flow and no one was starving or freezing.

3.3 Rebuilding and Reform: Georgia's Energy Sector Developments (1995-2008)

In the aftermath of the energy crisis and widespread blackouts of the 1990s, the Georgian government initiated the first reforms aimed at modernizing the country's energy infrastructure (The World Bank, 2009). A key priority was the rehabilitation of

existing hydropower plants to increase domestic electricity production, using Georgia's river network. At this time the Enguri hydro plant provided 50-60% of Georgia's electricity, and any supply failure was devastating for the nation (Asian Development Bank, 2015). These efforts marked an important step in strengthening domestic energy supply and improving energy security. Additionally, limited privatization of the energy sector was introduced, with the aim of attracting foreign investment to enhance the efficiency and reliability of the energy grid (The World Bank, 2009).

As mentioned above, the Gardabani thermal plants and the Enguri power station, Georgia's largest hydroelectric facility, suffered from multiple damages at this time. Despite some initial failed attempts to provide aid at the Gardabani plant the Swiss government granted the first international grant for urgent repairs to the Enguri hydro plant in the late 90s. The assistance went to urgent repairs to the dam and tunnel and were shortly followed by more support from the European Commission (Engurhesi, n.d.). Thanks to these efforts, the domestic production could go on.

The next step was to reduce its reliance on Russian fossil fuels, instead securing oil and natural gas imports primarily from Azerbaijan. Efforts to diversify energy suppliers became a cornerstone of Georgia's energy reforms. Although the concept of energy security was not yet fully developed at the time, the government recognized the importance of energy threats and the critical role of the energy sector in the national security strategy, consistent with the securitization of energy issues.

However, the most important project during this period was the construction of major energy transit lines, which elevated Georgia's strategic significance in the region. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Supsa (BTS) for natural gas, established Georgia as a critical transit corridor between Central Asia and Europe. The opening of the BTC pipeline provided a direct link to the Mediterranean, and the BTS pipeline to the Black Sea. These transit routes not only strengthened the country's economic position but also aligned it with Western energy interests looking to break the dependency on Russian-controlled energy routes (Glonti, 2000).
What makes these lines so special is the geopolitical motive that lies behind them. BTC

and BTS pipelines are both designed to bypass Russia and Iran, providing Caspian oil directly to the Western markets (Starr & Cornell, 2005). This strategic aim provoked Russia that viewed the projects as undermining its influence and economic position in the South Caucasus. During the 2008 Russia-Georgian war, infrastructure close to the BTC pipeline was targeted along with key railways used for oil transport. This resulted in resources being temporarily re-routed to the BTS line (Global Energy Monitor, n.d.). In recent developments, SOCAR announced in 2022 that it would fully replace Kazakh oil transportation from the CPC–Novorossiysk route to the BTC pipeline, as noted above. This move effectively confirmed the concerns Russia had at the time about losing its influence over regional energy transit routes (SOCAR Midstream, 2023).

The energy reforms of 1995–2008 laid the foundation for a more stable and secure energy sector in Georgia. By rehabilitating infrastructure, attracting investment, and positioning itself as a regional transit hub, Georgia took significant steps toward modernizing its energy landscape and reducing the vulnerabilities exposed during the energy crisis of the 1990s. However, the long-term challenge of achieving true energy independence while balancing foreign relations would continue to shape the country's policies and strategic partnerships.

Under the Shevardnadze administration, Georgia wrote its first foreign policy document that would lay the ground to Georgia's return west-wards conceptualising its aspirations for a full Euro-Atlantic integration. At the same time, it underlined the necessity of strategic security collaboration through international relations (German et al., 2022). This document was the first one in a series of strategic foreign policy documents that have outlined Georgia's foreign policy in the 21st century (German et. al, 2021: 118-119). These depict the journey towards west following the Rose Revolution, and more recent developments accordingly.

Strategic Foreign Policy Documents issued by the Government

Document (Period)	Energy Security	Military Cooperation	Western Cooperation	Cooperation with Russia

Georgia and the World: Vision and Strategy (Shevardnadze)	Emphasized diversification, reducing dependence on Russia, and developing Georgia as a transit hub (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline).	Strong focus on NATO standards, Western military ties, and modernization.	Clear ambition for EU and NATO membership.	Limited, cautious engagement; priority on sovereignty and Western alignment.
UNM 1 (2006-2009, Saakashvili)	Prioritized independence from Russia, support for Western pipeline projects, legal reforms for foreign energy investment.	Modernization, increased defense spending, NATO cooperation.	NATO/EU membership as strategic goals, reforms to meet accession criteria.	Pragmatic engagement, but with emphasis on sovereignty and territorial integrity.
UNM 2 (late 2000s-2012, Saakashvili)	Continued focus on transit and diversification; support regional energy projects.	Interoperability with NATO, defense reforms, peacekeeping participation. Identified Azerbaijan and Ukraine as strategic allies in protecting and advancing the Trans-Caucasus Energy Corridor.	Commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration.	Cautious, dialogue-oriented but unsure due to security threats
Foreign Policy Document (2015-2018, Georgian Dream)	Continued diversification, support for Southern Gas Corridor, pragmatic approach to Russian energy links.	Maintained NATO partnership, but with a more balanced tone; some recalibration of priorities.	Officially continued Euro-Atlantic aspirations, but with more emphasis on pragmatic, foreign policy.	Sought normalization of relations without compromising territorial integrity; more dialogue, but no restoration of full diplomatic ties.
Foreign Policy Document (2019-2022, Georgian Dream)	Focus on energy independence, renewable energy, and further diversification; cautious management of Russian energy imports.	Continued NATO cooperation, but criticised for slowed reforms.	Stated commitment to EU, but with growing skepticism; some signals of balancing between West and Russia	Ongoing pragmatic engagement, but no compromise on occupied territories: some critics argue for a drift toward Russia.

([German et. al, 2021] & [Kakchia & Cecire, 2013])

The following documents lay the ground for the future analysis and results section as they highlight Georgia's priorities at different times. For the purpose of the study, the

table shows particular policy priorities in Energy Security, Military Cooperation, Western Cooperation and cooperation with Russia.

3.4 Emerging Power: Georgia's Rise in International Cooperation (2009-2014)

From 2009 to 2014 Georgia would go through its most intense enclosing to the European Union both in a physical and political sense. In 2009, Georgia joined the Easter Partnership Initiative (EaP) together with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. The initiative aims at improving the relations with the EU's eastern neighbours through bilateral and multilateral cooperation (EU Neighbours East, n.d.). Some of these projects aim at improving infrastructure and investments in the energy sector, along with civil society, agriculture and more. In the following years, Georgia strengthened its ties with the European Union by signing the Visa Facilitation Agreement, which made it easier for Georgian citizens to travel to the EU, and by starting negotiations to join the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), further integrating Georgia into the EU's economic and trade system (MoF Georgia, n.d.).

Moreover, Georgia posed themselves as a supportive military power to its western allies through further NATO cooperation. Georgia had previously deployed troops in the Balkans from 1999, and contributed to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan from 2004 (German et. al, 2021: 22). Georgia's cooperation intensified in 2008-2009 when the army took part in US-led trainings in Iraq, and then later sent troops to Helmand (Shanker, 2008). By 2012, Georgia had become the largest contributor to ISAF. In the following years, they continued to take part in Operation Active Endeavor, maritime intelligence, and support NATO's Rapid Force as well as the EU-led mission in the Central African Republic (German et. al, 2021: 22). Worth noticing, in the last decade, Georgia has yet to support Russia with any military personnel at missions or training in the Post-Soviet space. They are rather illustrating its loyalty to the Trans-Atlantic alliance than the CIS (German et. al, 2021: 23). Instead,

many Georgians have volunteered to fight along Ukraine following the Russian full-scale invasion.

These priorities are grounded in the Strategic Defence Reviews from 2007 and 2012. The following strategic policy documents are developed by the Ministry of Defence and are a part of the National Security Policy framework. The first edition was launched in 2007, but was quickly updated with the 2012 edition following the Russo-Georgian war in 2008 that shifted the geopolitical landscape and national policy (Civil Georgia, 2017). The most recent edition was released in 2017 including “Plan 2020” as analysed in the next chapter.

4. Pursuing the Western Dream & the Common Energy Law Principles applied (2014-2019)

4.1. Georgia & the International Energy Market (2014-2019)

2014 marked a turning point for Georgia both domestically and within the international energy community. By signing the Association Agreement with the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, Georgia opened the door to new opportunities with international allies and deepened its cooperation with the EU (EU, 2014). At the same time, Georgia strengthened regional partnerships with countries such as Turkiye and Azerbaijan, further diversifying its energy relationships and positioning itself for a more secure and integrated energy future. These efforts set Georgia on a positive trajectory for the coming decade (Partsvania & Gegenava, 2024).

In 2017, Georgia ratified its accession to the EU Energy Community Treaty, building on growing investments in wind and solar energy supported by both the Georgian government and international organizations. The state also introduced programs to reduce energy consumption through efficiency measures (GSE, n.d.). These reforms and investments were instrumental in modernizing Georgia's energy sector and aligning it more closely with European standards.

Becoming a part of the Energy Community Treaty stands out as a milestone for Georgia, as membership has been a key step for other post-Soviet states seeking to reduce their energy dependence on Russia. Traditionally, these states belonged to the BRELL (Belarus, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, & Lithuania) network and were largely isolated from the European energy market (Pirtskhelani, 2021). Technically, this integration could result in a deeper shift towards greater energy security and market liberalization.

At the end of this transformative period towards the west, Georgia included adaptations of the Law on Energy and Water Supply as well as Law on Support of the Renewable Energy Sources at the end of 2019 (IEA, n.d.). This marked a major step in aligning

Georgia's energy sector with the European Union's standards as obliged under the Association Agreement (Energy Community, 2021).

While Georgia's foreign policy is dominated by the Pro-Western agenda, the Ministry of Defence specifically acknowledges that Russia's "aggressive foreign policy" is a threat to the nation in the "Strategic Defence Review: 2017-2020" (MoD, 2017: 48). The national security analysis is based on a "threat-based methodology" as "the main factor for planning national defense and security still remains the threat from the Russian Federation" (Civil Georgia, 2017). The recommendation is to reshape the Georgian Armed Forces (GAF) and implement necessary updates to relevant and sensitive infrastructure. Moreover, the SDR refers back to events from 2008 and highlights that Russia's key strategic objective is to seize control over vital infrastructure, such as power plants, to undermine the state (MoD, 2017: 53). The security of the energy supply is especially circled out as a challenge for Georgia. Therefore, the recommendation for "plan 2020" is to deepen the cooperation with regional actors in energy, political and military related issues (MoD, 2017: 58). Despite the increased threat level the SDR emphasizes the importance of continued military cooperation with its western allies and NATO to keep the stability in the Black Sea region.

4.2. National energy policy & developments (2014-2019)

As a new addition to the European Atomic Energy Union and with the ambition to live up to international standards the Georgian government undertook significant modernization efforts of its national power plants (GSE, n.d.). The thermal plants have been a vital energy provider for Georgia since the Soviet era. Although the original Gardabani power stations from the 90s were outdated and inefficient. The new thermal plants were commissioned to foreign investors in 2015 and 2020. In addition to the first plants, there have been additional plans to build a third higher capacity plant to address future demand but the government has failed to secure investors so far (Global Energy Monitor, n.d.).

Plant Name	Type	Capacity (MW)	Commissioned	Key role	Investor
Gardabani 1	Combined-cycle gas (Natural-gas driven)	230	2015	Baseload, grid stability	ÇALIK ENERJI (Turkiye)
Gardabani 2	Combined-cycle gas (Natural-gas driven)	230	2020	Baseload, grid stability	Tianchen Engineering Corporation (China)
Gardabani 3 (Planned - Delayed)	Combined-cycle gas	350-430	-	Addressing demand growth	Missing

(Global Energy Monitor, n.d.)

The Gardabani powerplants are currently working as a vital function in Georgia's energy landscape. They are acknowledged as a baseload power supply since they also serve as a reliable electricity provider during periods when the hydropower generation is low. In addition to the hydropower, the combined-cycle gas turbines support integration of renewable energy sources. Today, the plants are some of the most technologically developed in the country. Compared to older thermal plants they have a high efficiency and relatively low environmental impact (Power Technology, 2016). Therefore, the new investors from Turkiye and China are an interesting addition to the Georgian energy scene.

While the Georgian government made notable progress in energy sector reconstruction, it simultaneously applied national policy changes that contradicted its international commitments. In 2017, the government merged the Ministry of Energy with the newly created Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development as part of broader constitutional reforms that also shifted Georgia to a parliamentary republic, transferring executive power from the president to the prime minister (Civil Georgia, 2017).

The abolition of the Ministry of Energy has had lasting negative effects on the implementation and efficiency of energy policies (USAID, 2023). The merger weakened

the strategic focus on energy, resulting in slower development of new projects and delays in reforms aligned with Georgia's Energy Community obligations (IEA, 2020). It also became more difficult to access reliable information on energy policy, domestic production, and energy use, undermining transparency and stakeholder engagement (USAID, 2023).

The institutional restructuring is especially striking given that it occurred just as Georgia was deepening its integration with the European Union, joining key energy organizations, and reforming domestic energy law to international standards. Until this moment, the Ministry had been instrumental in driving the sector forward and monitoring reconstruction and development efforts (USAID, 2023). Instead of promoting transparency and sectoral advancement, the merger has introduced new barriers to information and reduced policy coherence to reform Georgia to a fullworthy EnC member (IEA, 2020).

4.3. Comparison to the Baltic State (2014-2019)

As discussed before the countries' share similar traits such as their size and historical legacy due to the USSR. These factors make them an interesting candidate to compare national policy strategies in terms of energy security. Moreover, as the research presented above regarding the securitization of energy related issues. Today the vast majority of comparisons are made between the Baltic States and Ukraine. Although it is important to remember that the Baltic states have geographical advantages that Georgia doesn't, still they could benefit from learning from each other's developments.

From 2014, onwards the Baltic states achieved remarkable progress in reducing energy dependency on Russia due to active national policy implementations to tackle the issue. Most importantly, they took the first major step from complete dependence on Russian gas supplies with the Klaipéda LNG terminal (Hyndle-Hussein, 2012). At the same time, they established a gas interconnection project towards the European market that was completed in 2022, which is discussed further in the next chapter (ERRA, n.d.).

Worth noticing is that this progress was possible due to the EU's agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators who made a landmark decision in 2014 to create a shared investment in regional security between Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. This approach solidified that energy independence for the Baltic states and further energy security for Poland and the EU required coordinated regional action **Source**.

In contrast to the Baltics, Georgia lacks opportunities for regional cooperation to the same extent. However, plans to extend the BTC-pipeline into the Kazakh market with the trans-caspian line or from Ceyhan to Hungary would strengthen their regional role. Tapping into the Kazakh market beyond boat shipments and bypassing Russia would exponentially increase the value of the BTC pipeline (Global Energy Monitor, n.d.). Moreover, as discussed in early stages, a pipeline from Turkey to Hungary would complete the east-west energy corridor (Komuves, 2025). In the end, this would not only provide economic benefits for Georgia but could give them more political and military protection as a key player in the European energy diversification process.

Furthermore, Lithuania found an innovative approach to gas storage by leasing an Floating Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU) from the Norwegian gas company Norway's Höegh LNG. The FSRU is now the center of the Lithuanian LNG terminal and can house the equivalent of the country's gas consumption in one winter season. The lease agreement is signed for 10 years, although Lithuania is planning to buy it out at the end of the contract and use it for another 30 years (Hyndle-Hussein, 2012).

The FSRU solution is an interesting option for gas storage as the two biggest compartments are a leasing agreement and access to the sea. Even though Georgia lacks its own LNG sources they could store gas transported from the BTS or the BTC pipelines. Similarly to Lithuania they could ensure the electricity output from the nation's thermal plants. The FSRU would surely pose a military target and require protection. However, a deliberate attack on a gas storage is a significant step for a nation to take compared to shutting off gas deliveries as a part of a hybrid warfare strategy.

In summary, Georgia has multiple options to adapt other strategic energy diversification as seen in other post-Soviet countries. However, lack of data and clear diversification

plans from the government hinders further comparisons of the national policy. It also sends a signal that the Baltic states are further ahead in terms of their securitization of energy related issues.

4.4. The Common Energy Law Principles applied (2014-2019)

Overall, Georgia's trajectory since 2014 demonstrates alignment with the common energy law principles, especially in sovereignty, access, security, and resilience. However, institutional reforms and ongoing import dependency is still presented as a challenge and energy risk that must be managed, as presented below.

(1) National Resources Sovereignty

In terms of resource sovereignty this period of time accounts for multiple efforts that strengthen Georgia's autonomy in managing and developing its natural resources. The shift toward EU integration and diversification of its energy partners, such as Azerbaijan and Turkiye, reduced reliance on Russia. Moreover, by joining the EU Energy Community and modernizing domestic legislation Georgia managed to diminish external political leverage practically and theoretically.

(2) Access to modern energy services

During this time period, significant progress was made in expanding access to electricity and natural gas through foreign investments and partnerships. The modernization of power plants and the integration of renewables have further improved the reliability and quality of energy services. These developments directly support the principle of universal access. However, there is still progress to be made in fully connecting rural and remote areas.

(3) Energy Justice

Initially, reforms and investments in energy infrastructure and new support to renewables promoted fairer access to energy. However, the decision to merge the

Ministry of Energy with the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development in 2017 weakened strategic oversight and transparency across the sector. Furthermore, it undermines policy implementation and lowers stakeholder engagement. In this sense, there are multiple negative effects that will reduce the effectiveness of energy justice initiatives.

(4) Prudent, rational and sustainable use of natural resources

First and foremost, Georgia made progress towards sustainable use of natural resources although the country remains heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels which poses a challenge. Still, there's been moves to modernize thermal plants and support renewable energy which aligns with the principle. Additionally, the new combined-cycle gas plants are more efficient and have lower environmental impacts than older facilities. The adaptations of EU-aligned laws on energy and renewables also signals a commitment to rational, long-term resource management.

(5) Protection of Environment, Human Health & Combating Climate Change

As mentioned above, ongoing reliance on fossil fuel imports and the relatively low percentage of renewable energy in the country's energy mix indicates room for improvement on this principle. At the same time, the shift towards high-efficiency gas plants has reduced the environmental footprint somewhat. The alignment with EU standards and the development of a National Energy and Climate Plan further demonstrates a commitment to environmental protection and climate action

(6) Energy Security and Reliability

Georgia demonstrated positive progress in relation to energy security and reliability. Integration into European energy frameworks, diversification of supply sources, and modernization of infrastructure have significantly enhanced energy security and reliability. However, the country's high import dependency (over 80% for primary energy in 2019) and regional geopolitical risks, such as Russian threats to infrastructure, remain vulnerabilities that need to be addressed.

(7) Resilience

In this time, the resilience of Georgia's energy system has improved through diversification, infrastructure upgrades, and regional cooperation. The government's focus on contingency planning and infrastructure security, as highlighted in the strategic defense reviews, reflects a proactive approach to resilience. However, the merger of the Ministry of Energy could lead to slower reformations and undermine the resilience work.

5. Eastern Realities & the Common Energy Law Principles applied (2020-2024)

5.1. Georgia & the International Energy Market (2020-2024)

In early 2020, the Georgian government approved the “Concept of the Energy Market Model” reflecting a continued commitment to shifting national policies and advancing energy market reforms. This ambition was further strengthened by Georgia’s decision to apply for an EU membership in 2022 along with Ukraine and Moldova following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine (Hedlund, 2025). By the end of 2023, they were granted EU candidate status. While Georgia has made substantial progress in harmonizing its legislation with EU directives, the process of fully adopting and implementing EU energy reforms remains ongoing (IEA, n.d.) For example, the European Commission reports unresolved issues for standards on transmission system operator (TSO) and distribution system operator (DSO) for gas that should be aligned with the European Community’s requirements (European Commission, 2024).

The EU Neighbours East report on Georgia in 2024 acknowledges that they have made some progress within the energy sector during the reporting period. Moreover, they account for the fact that their National Energy and Climate Plan fulfills Georgia’s legal obligations as a part of the Energy Community Treaty (European Commission, 2024; 17). Moreover, they emphasize the need to continue following European standardised guidelines covering trans-European energy infrastructure (European Commission, 2024; 18).

Until this point, Georgia followed its “return to west” trajectory, but the fraudulent elections in 2024 marked a turning point, and a halt in EU integration processes. The controversial “foreign agents law” passed earlier that year had already sparked widespread criticism from international partners, including the European Union and the UN, who condemned the legislation as a setback for democratic values and civil society (Sikharulidze, 2025). In the wake of these developments, international reprimands and

threats of reduced cooperation quickly followed, putting Georgia's EU accession prospects on the line, as illustrated below. The rapid deterioration of relations with the European Union, is in stark contrast to public opinion, whose support to the EU still lies above 70% (Caucasus Resource Research Center, 2024).

Date	Event/Policy	Description/ Impact	Domestic response	International response
Dec 2023	EU Candidate Status	Georgia granted EU candidate status, progress on EU-standard reforms	Broad public support	EU encouragement
May 2024	"Foreign Agents" Law	NGOs/media with >20% foreign funding must register as "foreign agents"; heavy fines for non-compliance	Widespread protests and sit-ins	EU, OSCE and UN condemnation
Nov 2024	Suspension of Accession	GD government halts EU accession talks, refuses EU funding until 2028	Mass protests and unrest	EU, US and UK targeted sanctions
2024-2025	Crackdown on Protesters	Hundreds detained, violence against media and opposition	Demands for snap elections	Sanctions and aid suspension
2024-2025	EU Aid Suspension	€121.3 million withheld/reallocated, €30 million frozen, investment projects halted	Economic concerns	EU signals readiness to support if reforms resume

([Hedlund, 2025] & [MoF Georgia, n.d.])

This significant political shift was described as party-led radicalisation by Stefan Hedlund, Professor Emeritus of Soviet, and East European Studies at IRES, Uppsala University (Hedlund, 2025). Democracy is not the only thing that has suffered from these events, so has the energy sector. More specifically, due to the current political developments, the EU chose to suspend talks and future investment plans for wind farms that were planned to be built in 2025. Georgia only has one operating wind farm located in Kartli and the three additions would be a well needed boost for renewable energy in the country (Amiranashvili, 2018). These projects, and similar investments, are now stuck in a limbo and the future of Georgia's renewable energy expansion remains uncertain.

At this time, it is acknowledged that the pro-Russian movement in Georgia is in control of the state apparatus (Hedlund, 2025). This will not only change the country's foreign policy but imply big changes to its relation with the international energy market. In the SDR presented in 2017 with "plan 2020", the MoD announced its ambitions to deepen its cooperation with regional actors in energy, politics and security. However, the current administration is not aligned with that agenda anymore. Instead, it is turning eastwards. Although, pro-Russian tendencies have already been noted in the energy sector from the start of the 2020's as discussed in the following chapter.

5.2. National energy policy & developments (2020-2024)

While the world turned to stabilize its domestic production following the COVID-19 pandemic and turned away from Russian energy sources due to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine; Georgia's energy importation went against international trends. Instead, USAID reports that Georgia's imports in electricity, natural gas and petroleum products all rose quickly in the four year period between 2019 and 2022. The following resources account for the vast majority of the country's energy consumption. The quick increase towards one supplier clearly goes against the previous attempts for energy diversification.

Russian percentage of total import (2019–2022)

	Electricity	Natural Gas	Petroleum & Petroleum products
2019	29%	10,9%	26%
2022	51,5%	24,4%	46,6%

(USAID, 2023)

Simultaneously, Georgia increased its imports of Russian gas, as illustrated below, while limiting imports from Azerbaijan due to new legal constraints. In 2021, the country experienced a 42.4% surge in thermal power generation, which directly contributed to

greater gas dependency (IEA, n.d.). As a result, Georgia is not only becoming more reliant on natural gas overall but is also shifting its dependence toward Russian supplies. This trend has accelerated in recent years, in the first quarter of 2025 Georgia imported $100.6 million worth of natural gas from Russia, surpassing the $82.4 million imported from Azerbaijan for the first time in 18 years (Caucasus Watch, 2025).

Georgia's Gas Imports (2020–2025)

Year	Azerbaijan Share (%)	Russia Share (%)	Notable policy or event
2020	Ca. 80	Ca. 16	"Social gas" agreement with Azerbaijan
2023	78,5	21,5	Decline in Azerbaijani imports begin
2024	Halved from 2023	Highest in 20 years	Technical/legal limits on Azerbaijani supply
2025	(Q1 2025) $82.4M	(Q1 2025) $100.6M	Russian gas imports surpass Azerbaijani by value for the first time since 2007. AZ still provides more.

([USAID, 2023] and [Caucasus Watch, 2025])

Looking ahead, the International Energy Agency projects that demand for thermal power in Georgia will grow by 25% by 2033, raising significant questions about where the necessary investments and gas supplies will come from to support this growing demand (IEA, n.d.). With Azerbaijan's export capacity increasingly tied up in long-term contracts with European buyers and Russia seeking new markets for its surplus gas, Georgia's energy future appears increasingly uncertain and exposed to geopolitical risks.

Moreover, throughout the 2020s, journalistic investigations were made into the ownership structures within Georgia's energy sector. These reports revealed a widespread pattern of "hidden" foreign, particularly Russian, ownership of hydropower plants and electricity transmission lines. The majority of these assets are managed by companies with direct links to Russia or prominent Russian citizens, as illustrated below.

Ownership in major power plants and companies (2022/2023)

Plant/ Company	Type/Role	Output/Coverage	Owner connections (State)	Critical Energy Security Info
Khramhesi I & II HPPs	Hydropower Plants	227.2 MW total; 399.1 GWh (2020), 529.1 GWh (2021), ~3.6–4.2% of national generation	100% Inter RAO (Russian, state-linked via Rosneftegaz, Rosseti)	Regulatory HPPs, crucial for grid stability (frequency, east-west balance). Shutdown would require electricity imports.
Telasi JSC	Tbilisi electricity distributor	697,400 subscribers (Tbilisi, ~20% of national consumption)	75% Inter RAO (Russian), 25% Best Energy Group (Georgian, CBS Group)	Only distributor in Tbilisi. Russian control over urban supply is a strategic risk.
Larsi HPP	Hydropower Plant	19.5 MW; 74.4 GWh (2021)	70% Energia Ltd (Russian citizen), 30% Feri Ltd (Georgian)	Located near Russian border; Russian citizen majority owner.
Shilda HPP	Hydropower Plant	5 MW; 18 GWh (2021)	70% Energia Ltd (Russian citizen), 30% Feri Ltd (Georgian)	Output below projected; Russian citizen majority owner.
Hydro Invest GA	HPP developer (planned)	Tskhenistskali 1 HPP (21.85 MW, planned), Zeskho 1 HPP (20.3 MW, planned)	50% Hydro Invest Ltd (Georgian), 50% (Armenian, Electric Networks of Armenia)	Armenian-Russian business links; cross-border ownership; projects in development.
Inter RAO	Energy holding	Controls Khramhesi I & II, Telasi, stakes in Armenia	Russian state-linked (Rosneftegaz, Rosseti, Inter RAO Capital)	Key Russian energy actor; board members under US/UK/EU sanctions; strategic leverage in Georgia and Armenia.
Dariali HPP	Hydropower Plant	108 MW; 510 GWh/year	Dariali Energy JSC (Georgian-owned)	Largest post-independence HPP, no Russian ownership, close to Russian border.

(Mountain Stories, 2022)

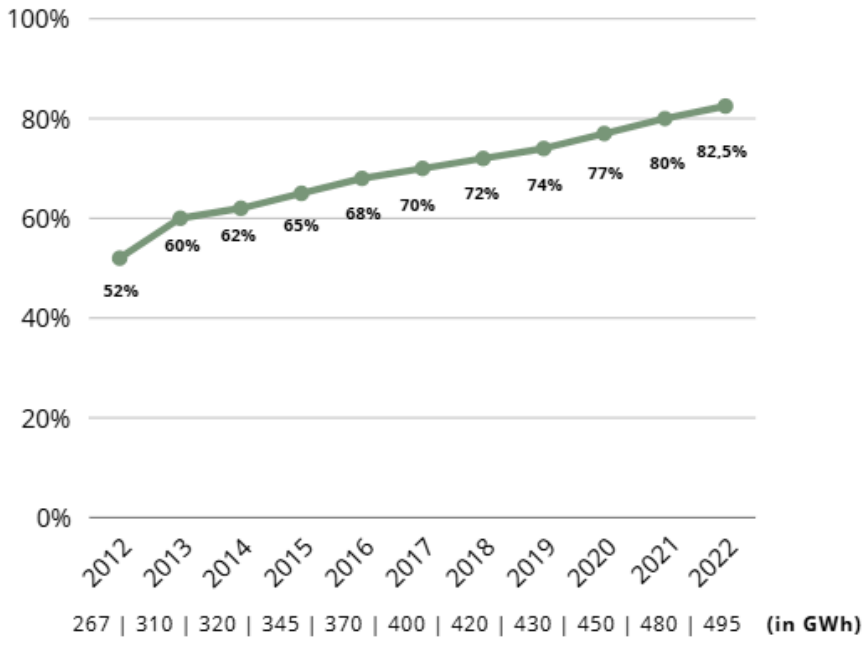
This concentration of control poses several significant risks. First, it increases Georgia's vulnerability to external political and economic pressures, particularly from Russia. Second, it raises concerns about the security and reliability of critical energy infrastructure, as strategic assets could be influenced or disrupted by foreign interests. Finally, these ownership structures undermine transparency and public trust, making it more difficult for regulators and policymakers to ensure accountability and safeguard national energy security.

In summary, the period from 2020 to 2024 marks a clear divergence from Georgia’s earlier efforts towards energy independence and diversification. Both in practice, through increased reliance on Russian energy imports, and in law, with halted adaptations according to international agreements.

5.3. Comparison to the Baltic States (2020-2024)

In 2022, Baltic energy security was completely transformed due to its successful launch of the Gas Interconnection Poland-Lithuania (GIPL). This connected the region to the EU's internal gas market and granted the Baltic countries access to both Norwegian LNG and German gas hubs. Most importantly, it broke Gazprom’s regional monopoly. Just as the BTC-Pipeline it also provided alternative supply routes to Europe, increasing EU’s energy security as well. Overall, the 2020-2024 period witnessed accelerated energy diversification efforts across the Baltic states, which solidified their independence from Russian energy supplies (ERRA, n.d.). Meanwhile, Georgia's energy sector displayed contrasting trends, with increasing reliance on Russian natural gas imports and electricity despite earlier diversification attempts.

Georgia's Electricity Imports from Russia (2012–2022)



Furthermore, in early 2025 the Baltic states completely disconnected themselves from the Russian electricity grid (Rooks, 2025). This signified the full transition into the European energy market. However, in the same timeframe Georgian electricity imports from Russia had been steadily rising (USAID, 2023).

Based on these events it is evident that the Baltis states managed to achieve structural energy independence through three connected strategies. Firstly, they expanded their infrastructure into surrounding markets with the GIPL and LNG terminals. Secondly, they used market mechanisms such as EU price coupling to achieve competitive market pricing (ERRA, n.d.). Last but not least, they developed a substantial energy storage to provide domestic energy security. At the same time, Georgia's regression into Russian energy dependency comes from the same structural failures. First of all, they have mostly maintained Soviet-era pipelines. Moreover, they lack options for regional integration due to geographic disadvantages. Lastly, they have not managed to develop a secure domestic supply with strategic storage capacity. The Asian Development estimates that only 10% of generated hydro power can be stored (Asian Development Bank, 2015).

5.4. The Common Energy Law Principles applied (2020-2024)

At the beginning of the 2020s, Georgia seemed to be following the course set during 2014-2019. However, the country's shift toward increased reliance on Russian resources, proven by rising imports and slowdown in legal and regulatory adaptation, makes a significant change in direction. This development not only threatens to reverse the positive impacts discussed in the previous chapter but also introduces new vulnerabilities for Georgia's energy security, social and environmental sustainability as discussed in relation to the principles below.

(1) National Resources Sovereignty

Georgia's commitments in the early 2020s to EU harmonization and energy market reform initially strengthened its sovereignty over energy resources. However, the recent increase in Russian energy imports and the exposure of widespread "hidden" Russian ownership in hydropower and electricity infrastructure have undermined this sovereignty. Moreover, the shift away from EU integration and toward greater Russian influence reduces Georgia's independent control over its energy assets and policy direction. In conclusion, national sovereignty is compromised by foreign powers and Russian influence.

(2) Access to modern energy services

As for energy services, Georgia made progress in modernizing its energy market, and the National Energy and Climate Plan fulfills legal obligations for improved access. However, the suspension of EU-backed wind farm projects and the uncertain future of renewable investments threaten the expansion of modern, clean, energy services. While access to energy is currently stable, the lack of investment in renewables could limit future improvements and affordability, this poses a specific challenge since they have a substantial dependence on fossil fuels.

(3) Energy Justice

Over this period, energy justice would be weakened by reduced transparency, accountability and public involvement. The implementation of the “foreign agents law” and halted EU integration and divergence from Energy Community commitments have undermined stakeholder engagement. These developments erode public trust and make it harder to ensure fair and equitable governance of energy resources, especially as public support for EU integration remains high.

(4) Prudent, rational and sustainable use of natural resources

Georgia’s initial focus on renewables and EU-aligned reforms supported sustainable resource use. Although Georgia’s National Energy and Climate Plan fulfills current legal obligations under the EnC Treaty in the most recent reports, it is not guaranteed that the next reports will view it the same. The sharp increase in thermal power generation (up 42.4% in 2021), growing gas dependency, and stalled wind projects mark a shift away from prudent and sustainable energy policy. Without continued alignment and investment, the progress made as a part of the international energy market risks being undone.

(5) Protection of Environment, Human Health & Combating Climate Change

As accounted for above, suspended renewable projects and increased reliance on thermal generation threatens Georgia’s environmental and climate commitments. Moreover, allowing foreign actors who benefit economically from increased fossil fuel imports a bigger influence over the energy landscape will most likely not guarantee investments in renewable energy. This prognosis not only undermines the climate goals set for 2030, but also puts public health at risk.

(6) Energy Security and Reliability

Within this period, Georgia underwent a vast decline in energy security and reliability. The increasing reliance on Russian gas and electricity imports significantly heightens the country’s vulnerability to geopolitical risks and potential supply disruptions. All factors that previously have been highlighted as weaknesses by the Ministry of Defence

considering previous attacks on energy infrastructure All together, Georgia's national policy shift has left the nation more exposed to the strategic interests of a single dominant supplier.

(7) Resilience

The resilience of Georgia's energy system has been notably weakened by the growing concentration of Russian ownership, the stagnation of Western investment, and the abrupt halt in EU integration efforts. These developments have collectively reduced Georgia's ability to adapt to external shocks, whether from market disruptions or geopolitical tensions. As a result, Georgia's energy sector has minimal flexibility in an increasingly uncertain regional environment.

6. Conclusion & Discussion

Georgia's journey through the evolving landscape of energy security underscores the profound influence of geopolitical forces in the South Caucasus and through the post-Soviet space. This study has demonstrated how external pressures, particularly from Russia, have shaped not only Georgia's energy policies but its strategic orientation. While the country almost managed to achieve its western dream, seeking integration with the European markets and possibly closing the east-west transit corridor through new pipelines, the western expansion was clearly seen as a threat to Russia who views Georgia as a part of its traditional sphere of influence.

Since the beginning, international cooperation brought vital aid, grants, and foreign investment, all of which were essential for both the reconstruction of Georgia's energy infrastructure and the gradual transition towards green energy. However, recent political developments have jeopardized this progress. Georgia's failure to fully integrate as a member of the international energy community and the European Union has diminished its influence and undermined its national interests. Domestically, the removal of the Ministry of Energy has further hindered sectoral advancement while undermining its legal and institutional framework. As a result, Georgia now risks losing the momentum it once built through international cooperation, leaving its energy sector increasingly isolated and vulnerable.

Moreover, the monopolized nature of Georgia's natural gas supply, combined with its heavy dependence on imports, creates a high threat to the country's energy security. Additionally, the recent decision to increase imports of Russian energy sources illustrates how the government has abolished securitization of energy related issues in favour of political support to remain in power, which also manifests in the analysis based on the Common Energy Law principles.

To improve its energy security once again, Georgia must diversify its energy portfolio through investments in alternative renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power. These resources have the potential to complement hydropower and reduce the

country's reliance on external energy supplies, a similar energy strategy that successfully broke the Baltic state’s independence to Russia. However, with the current administration in office it is less likely that this will be prioritized on a national agenda.

Annexes

Period	President	Prime Ministers	System type
1995-2003	Eduard Shevardnadze	-	Presidential
2004-2011	Mikheil Saakashvili	Noghaideli, Gurgenidze, Mgaloblishvili, Gilauri	Super-presidential
2012-2013	Mikheil Saakashvili	Bidzina Ivanishvili[1] *(Georgian Dream)*	Semi-presidential
2013-2018	Giorgi Margvelashvili	Garibashvili, Kvirikashvili *(Georgian Dream)*	Semi-presidential
Dec 2018 -2024	Salome Zurabshvili[2]	Bakhtadze, Gakharia, Garibashvili *(Georgian Dream)*	Parliamentary

[1] From 2010 onwards, the power from the President started to switch to the Prime minister due to constitutional amendments. Following Georgian Dreams parliamentary win in 2012 with Ivanishvili the party took control over executive powers.

[2] Following Georgia's full transition to a Parliamentary Republic System, endorsed by the constitutional changes in 2018, the President holds a ceremonial role. This change was implemented from the 2019 elections. From 2024 onwards, the President is no longer elected by the public but by an electoral college.

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