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# **The Idea of the Eastern Neighborhood: Poland's Strategic and Normative Engagement with Georgia**

CEERES Master's Thesis

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## **Abstract**

### **Title: The Idea of the Eastern Neighborhood: Poland's Strategic and Normative Engagement with Georgia**

Poland's Eastern policy significantly impacts the broader Eastern Policy of the whole Euro-Atlantic bloc. Recent geopolitical turmoil, namely the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, shape the strategic landscape of the whole continent and primarily that of Central and Eastern Europe. As one of the EU's largest countries with the highest per capita military spending and the bloc's Eastern frontier, Poland is both directly affected by and highly motivated to influence developments in this region. Its historical experience and identity grant it even more value and strategic role. While Poland's Eastern Policy in relation to its direct neighbors, like Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, and Russia, is well-covered in academia, its relations with indirect neighbors, including the South Caucasus, remain relatively unexplored, even though this dimension has become a quite significant part of Polish Eastern Policy during the last two decades. This MA thesis addresses this gap by examining Poland's Eastern Policy through the case study of its engagement with Georgia, incorporating theoretical analytical lenses of contesting International Relations Theories – realism, liberalism, and constructivism.

MA Thesis "The Idea of the Eastern Neighborhood: Poland's Strategic and Normative Engagement with Georgia" on the one hand seeks to explore key drivers explaining Poland's engagement with Georgia and dynamics of bilateral relations, and on the other hand, aims to contribute to the long-lasting debate among contesting IR Theories, examining whether realism, liberalism and constructivism best explain Polish motivations in relation with Georgia and what dynamics and patterns emerge amid this debate.

The research uses a mixed method. It is an outcome-centered explanatory study analyzing Polish foreign policy towards Georgia in the period between 2004-2024. The study combines quantitative analysis, analyzing the frequency of high-level meetings between Georgian and Polish officials, and qualitative content and critical discourse analysis – exploring change and continuity in discourses of those meetings.

The study finds that the drivers of Poland's engagement vary across time and administrations, reflecting a combination of liberal (liberal intergovernmentalism and institutionalist),

constructivist, and neoclassical realist principles. Early engagement is primarily shaped by liberal intergovernmentalism and institutionalism, while the peak of bilateral exchange combines constructivist ideals rooted in the Jagiellonian Mission and realist strategic interests, including energy diversification and security considerations. Policy intensity and focus shifted over time and were explicitly influenced by changes in political leadership in both countries.

**Keywords:** *Poland, Foreign Policy, Eastern Policy, Georgia, IR Theories, neoclassical realism, liberal intergovernmentalism, liberal institutionalism, constructivism*

## Streszczenie

**Tytuł:** „Idea Wschodniego Sąsiedztwa: Strategiczne i Normatywne Zaangażowanie Polski wobec Gruzji”

Polityka wschodnia Polski w znacznym stopniu wpływa na szerszą politykę wschodnią całego bloku euroatlantyckiego. Ostatnie zawirowania geopolityczne, w szczególności rosyjska inwazja na Ukrainę w 2022 roku, kształtują strategiczny krajobraz całego kontynentu, a w szczególności Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Jako jeden z największych krajów UE o najwyższych wydatkach wojskowych per capita i wschodnia granica bloku, Polska jest zarówno bezpośrednio dotknięta wydarzeniami w regionie, jak i silnie zmotywowana do wpływania na jego rozwój. Jej doświadczenie historyczne i tożsamość nadają jej dodatkową wartość i strategiczną rolę. Podczas gdy polityka wschodnia Polski w stosunku do sąsiadów bezpośrednich, takich jak Ukraina, Litwa, Białoruś i Rosja, jest dobrze opisana w literaturze naukowej, relacje z sąsiadami pośrednimi, w tym Kaukaz Południowy, pozostają stosunkowo mało zbadane, mimo że wymiar ten stał się istotnym elementem polskiej polityki wschodniej w ciągu ostatnich dwóch dekad. Niniejsza praca magisterska wypełnia tę lukę, analizując politykę wschodnią Polski na przykładzie jej zaangażowania wobec Gruzji, przy wykorzystaniu teoretycznych perspektyw rywalizujących nurtów teorii stosunków międzynarodowych – realizmu, liberalizmu i konstruktywizmu.

Praca magisterska „Idea Wschodniego Sąsiedztwa: Strategiczne i Normatywne Zaangażowanie Polski wobec Gruzji” z jednej strony stara się zidentyfikować kluczowe czynniki determinujące zaangażowanie Polski wobec Gruzji oraz dynamikę stosunków dwustronnych, a z drugiej – wnosi wkład w trwającą debatę między konkurującymi teoriami stosunków międzynarodowych, badając, czy realizm, liberalizm i konstruktywizm najlepiej wyjaśniają motywacje Polski wobec Gruzji oraz jakie wzorce i dynamiki wyłaniają się w tej debacie.

Badanie wykorzystuje metodę mieszaną. Jest to badanie wyjaśniające o charakterze outcome-centered, analizujące politykę zagraniczną Polski wobec Gruzji w latach 2004–2024. Łączy analizę ilościową, badającą częstotliwość spotkań na najwyższym szczeblu między polskimi a gruzińskimi przedstawicielami, z analizą jakościową treści i krytyczną analizą dyskursu – badającą zmiany i ciągłość w dyskursach tych spotkań.

Wyniki badania wskazują, że czynniki determinujące zaangażowanie Polski zmieniały się w czasie i w zależności od administracji, odzwierciedlając kombinację zasad liberalnych (liberalny intergovernmentalizm i instytucjonalizm), konstruktywistycznych oraz neoklasycznego realizmu. W początkowym okresie zaangażowanie kształtowały głównie zasady liberalnego intergovernmentalizmu i instytucjonalizmu, podczas gdy szczyt wymiany dwustronnej łączył ideały konstruktywistyczne oparte na Misji Jagiellońskiej z realistycznymi interesami strategicznymi, w tym dywersyfikacją energetyczną i kwestiami bezpieczeństwa. Intensywność i ukierunkowanie polityki zmieniały się w czasie, wyraźnie zależnie od zmian w kierownictwie politycznym obu państw.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Polska, polityka zagraniczna, polityka wschodnia, Gruzja, teorie stosunków międzynarodowych, neoklasyczny realizm, liberalny intergovernmentalizm, instytucjonalizm liberalny, konstruktywizm

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## Introduction

“Has befallen Georgia today may befall Ukraine tomorrow, the Baltic States a day after, and then perhaps also my own country: Poland...” - *Lech Kaczyński* (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2008b).

“\_ Why, in fact, everyone in the post-Solidarity elite believed that Georgia needed to be dealt with? \_ Because it was an American project...” - *Radosław Sikorski* (Kowal, 2021, p. 19).

“Our [Georgian and Polish] histories are similar, though, for both the nations had to fight a tough fight for their independence. Both at one time fell victim to Russian imperialism. This happened more or less in the same time.” - *Lech Kaczyński* (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2008a).

Those words, filled with different sentiments, sometimes even contrasting ones, rooted in distinct feelings of idealism and pragmatism, have been said by different Polish leaders and policymakers in relation to Georgia on different occasions. When examined closely, identity-based idealism and pragmatism can be situated within broader concepts such as identity politics and realpolitik. Some more inductive reasoning may guide a reader to the broader umbrellas of often contesting international relations theories, such as constructivism, realism, and other “isms” that seek to explain international relations. Using international relations theories is in a specific context - Polish-Georgian relations are the topic of this thesis. The thesis examines the drivers of Polish foreign policy towards Georgia, engaging in a debate among various “isms” that have surfaced in international relations theories over the past few decades, more precisely, realism, liberalism, and constructivism.

## Thesis topic, puzzle, objectives, and questions

**The overall topic** of the thesis is the drivers of Poland's Eastern Policy, with a case study of Georgia analyzed within the spectrum of international relations theories – Realism (Neoclassical realism), Liberalism (Liberal Intergovernmentalism and Liberal institutionalism), and Constructivism.

## **Research puzzle**

The thesis aims to understand the drivers of Poland's Eastern Policy with a specific focus on its engagement with Georgia from the lenses of different theoretical approaches. It investigates changes and continuity in the geopoliticization of Poland's Eastern Policy from the perspective of *Realism (Neoclassical Realism)*, *Liberalism (Liberal intergovernmentalism and liberal institutionalism)*, and *Constructivism*.

Going back to the very first sentences of the introduction and considering what comes ahead, both official statements of Polish foreign makers and the content of bilateral exchanges during the past twenty years demonstrate that drivers of Poland's foreign policy in relation to Georgia derive from different factors, some rooted in pragmatic motives and some emerging from identity-based sentiments and constructed visions. In essence, Puzzle is theoretical. It aims to research Polish Eastern Policy and specifically its engagement with Georgia while elaborating on the explanatory power of IR theories – namely realism, neoclassical realism, liberal governmentalism and liberal institutionalism, and constructivism. To achieve this objective, the thesis also has empirical parts that aim to dig into the basic principles of Polish foreign policy, which provide fact-based arguments in favor of different IR Theories.

The first and quite easy-to-solve riddle that will be addressed at the outset is whether one theory is sufficient, or Poland's foreign policy reflects a layered and dynamic mix of motives rooted in different theories all at once. It won't be unexpected to state that already at the beginning, as a part of the literature review, the answer to this question will be quite clear, leaning in favor of a complex and multi-layered scenario, supporting the relevance of all three counted IR Theories to be relevant in different aspects of Polish foreign policy. What's more (and precisely - really) puzzling is, in the case of a multilayered configuration, which theoretical explanations are leading, and which are of less importance. One more aspect of the puzzle is whether the configuration of multilayered theoretical explanations is consistent and the same, or whether it changes in different episodes of Georgian-Polish relations during the past two decades. To solve this theoretical riddle, the thesis also digs into more empirical factors, namely explaining principles of Polish Eastern Policy, those that are later used in theoretical categorization and analysis from a perspective of time. It's worth highlighting that change and continuity of those empirical factors is a topic of analysis as well, as far as exactly patterns of those factors are

what define the relevance of different IR theories in terms of explaining Poland's foreign affairs and engagement with Georgia.

More precisely, on the one hand, this is **the Theory Testing Puzzle**, which assesses the explanatory power of different theories using an empirical case study. On the other hand, it is **the Scope Conditions Puzzle** - assessing the scope and limits of each theory and whether one theory is sufficient for a multi-theoretical and layered explanation, is more valid.

The thesis has two **objectives**. *First*, it aims to point out the key determinants of Polish Eastern Policy in relation to Georgia during the last two decades, in the years 2004-2024. This approach involves reviewing and comparing key principles of Polish foreign policy to Polish engagement with Georgia. This objective is a precondition for achieving the primary goal of the paper, namely, assessing the explanatory power of different IR theories in this case study.

*Secondly*, key foreign policy principles of Poland pointed out in relation to Georgia are categorized under the umbrellas of different IR theories, namely Realism (Neoclassical Realism), Liberalism (Liberal intergovernmentalism and Liberal institutionalism), and Constructivism. Here, there are two key subobjectives. One – the thesis aims to explain in the reality of a metatheoretical and layered issue, which theoretical views among those listed are the key drivers and which are secondary. In other words, the expectation is that some drivers rooted in particular explanations might be key drivers of political action, while others might serve as contributive but independently not sufficient factors. Second, it is expected that the configuration of principles of Polish foreign policy in relation to Georgia might have been changing during the last 20 years. If one theory might have had leading power explaining Polish engagement with Georgia in the late 2000s, another one might have taken the lead in the 2010s. Respectively, another objective is to analyze continuity and change in principles best explaining Polish engagement with Georgia and, respectively, tracing the dynamics of three IR theories being the best fit for explaining Polish Eastern Policy and its relations with Georgia in a particular period of time.

Research **questions** are listed accordingly:

- Empirically driven question - what are the principles and factors that define Polish Eastern Policy, namely in relation to Georgia? Do and how they change over time and if yes, what causes those changes?

- Main theory-grounded list of questions is – which theories accommodate best those factors? In a multi-theoretical and layered context, which IR theory serves as a primary explanation of Polish engagement with Georgia, and whether or not there is a continuity or a change in dynamics over time when different theories serve as key explanatory factors over different parts of the last two decades' history?

## **Relevance and topicality of the subject**

Considering geopolitical reality, especially in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and the role of Poland in Europe, it can be assumed that Polish foreign policy is quite an important topic in academia. There are also a number of works about Poland's engagement with its Eastern neighbors, especially the ones about Polish foreign policy with Ukraine or Russia. Though little has been written about Poland's engagement with Georgia, which is not as crucial an actor for Poland as former ones, but still holds a place in Poland's Eastern policy, and at some points of recent history as a priority dimension as well. Before that, more will be discussed about the relevance of the topic.

The first primary question is, *why does Polish foreign policy matter at all?* Polish foreign policy matters considering the fact that Poland is one of the most important actors in Europe, as noted above, especially following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February, 2022. In the context of escalation between the West and Russia, Poland is the biggest frontier country of NATO and the EU, which lies between Old Europe and Russia. Besides, it is one of the fastest-rising states, with rising security functions and political weight within Euro-Atlantic structures, with the highest spending of GDP per capita rate on military in Europe, and with one of the largest armies of the region (Atlantic Council, n.d.) (World Bank, n.d). Poland also has significant experience in interacting with Russia throughout its history, giving it unique perspectives and instruments for having ambition in terms of impacting responses of the NATO and the EU to security threats deriving from the Eastern flank of the alliance. The political weight of Poland increased in line with its reputation and significance in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war, especially taking into consideration its role in terms of supporting Ukraine after February 24, 2022, namely in the area of humanitarian and military aid. At the outset of the war, Poland received the largest number of Ukrainian refugees. According to Intereconomics, Poland received about 3.5 million Ukrainian refugees during the first two

months of the invasion (Duszczyk & Kaczmarczyk, 2022). As for Summer 2025, according to the data provided by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Poland holds the second place according to the number of Ukrainian refugees allocated, with a total number of 1,000,320 persons, with only Germany ahead with a total number of 1,227,090 persons hosted (UNHCR, n.d., data retrieved August 15, 2025). Poland is also, and it is also one of the key suppliers of arms to Ukraine. According to Statista, Poland is the third largest arms supplier to Ukraine in the years 2022-2024 (Statista, 2023). Poland has an important contribution in terms of aid as well. According to the Kiel Institute for World Economy, among countries (Respectively, the EU excluded), Poland is ranked number 11 in terms of total aid to Ukraine and number 9 in terms of military aid (Kiel Institute for the World Economy, n.d., Data retrieved on August 15, 2025). Respectively, the more weight and role Poland has in the Russian-Ukrainian War, the more say it can have in terms of the whole bloc's Eastern Policy. In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war being in the center of the Euro-Atlantic security order, Poland's active role ensures that Polish foreign policy acquires academic and geopolitical significance.

The question then is, *why Eastern Policy of Poland matter?* The Eastern Policy of Poland is an important topic considering the fact that it is a central topic for Warsaw, namely in terms of dealing with main threat - security challenges deriving from East, namely from Russia. This sentiment is not only outcome of contemporary geopolitical reality, but rather factor embedded deeply in Poland's historical memory and strategic culture. Eastern dimension is a priority for Polish foreign policy, as it sees the strengthening of democratic institutions in the East as a factor reinforcing its own security, and it was highlighted in Poland's security documents, such as the National Security Strategy for Poland 2007, referring to immediate neighbors, such as Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus, and non-direct neighbors, likewise South Caucasian states (Klatt, 2011, p. 62). Bieńczyk-Missala (2016, p. 103) also underlines that the East dimension is a focus of Poland within the EU itself as well, that it contributes to the Eastern Policy of the EU in the way of initiating and supporting formats such as the Eastern Partnership. Talking about the actors – namely states in the East, it can be stated that the key priorities of this area are one the one hand Russia (as a security threat) and direct neighbors - Ukraine, Lithuania, and Belarus, countries that lie between Poland and Russia. Ukraine and Lithuania are key partners and, from a realpolitik perspective, frontier states and strategic stabilizers for Poland in the context of dealing with threats deriving from Russia. Belarus, due to its presence as an authoritarian satellite state of Russia, ends up being a security challenge to Poland in the wider Russian security threat picture. The South Caucasus ranks lower on the priority list of Polish

Eastern Policy after direct neighbors, though is still perceived as an important part of wider chain of supposedly democratic states making a chane around Russia and a potential source of energy diversification in terms of Caspian Sea resources (though this topic was more relevant in the late 2000s) (Bornio et al., 2021). Fitting Eastern neighbors and Eastern policy in the wider Polish foreign policy picture, long story short, the idea is the following: Russia is a key security challenge for Poland, threatening it from the East. In this context for Poland, Euro-Atlantic enlargement in the East is a primary mean of dealing with the Russian security threat. Respectively, Eastern enlargement of both the EU and NATO is a foreign policy priority of Warsaw, with Georgia being one of the potential parts (in late 2000s - one of the, if not the most promising) of that large picture.

Last, not least, the question of relevance refers to Georgia as well. *Why Georgia matters in Polish foreign policy?* Namely, Georgia, in general, is a key partner and priority for Poland in the South Caucasus itself (Which, as noted above, is a secondary priority of Polish Eastern Policy after direct neighbors). Georgia is seen as a part of a wider chain of preferably democratic countries surrounding Russia, which are potentially part of the Euro-Atlantic space in the future, which is one of the ways for providing security for Poland, especially in the East. Although currently the scope of Polish-Georgian relations is quite limited, considering the outcomes of political crises that started in Georgia after 2022 and culminated in 2024, leading to deviation of Georgia from the Western vector. Notwithstanding this fact, the country's broader strategic relevance within Polish Eastern Policy warrants continued scholarly attention

Concerning the **theoretical relevance**, the study of Polish foreign policy in relation to Georgia engages directly with ongoing debates in IR theory. February 24th, 2022 - Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine raised concerns about the questions of survival, self-help, and security, contributing to the increasing significance of realism in explaining IR. Meanwhile, those developments also challenged the EU as a rule-based, norm-driven institution, bringing neoliberal institutionalism into focus as a tool for explaining how institutions work and especially respond during times of crisis. Besides, Poland's history, collective memory, and identity-based motivations put an additional layer of analysis, making constructivism relevant in terms of grasping how norms, identity, and perception share policy outcomes. Respectively, this thesis not only examines an empirically significant case, but rather tests and integrates multiple theoretical perspectives that are relevant due to ongoing geopolitical developments.

## **Outline of the Paper**

The paper starts with a Literature review and a Theoretical Framework. Literature review overviews three categories of existing literature: First, literature about general principles of Polish foreign policy; Second, literature specifically about Poland's Eastern Policy; Third, literature concerning Poland's engagement in the South Caucasus and relations with Georgia. Literature review comprises sources both possessing a theoretical framework and those that are purely empirical as well. The theoretical framework comprises two parts: the First part is an overview of the theoretical foundations of International Relations theories – Realism (and Neoclassical realism), Liberalism (Liberal intergovernmentalism and liberal institutionalism), and Constructivism. The second part concerns concepts characterizing studies of Poland's foreign policy, namely Piast and Jagiellonian security concepts and ideological paradigms of Józef Piłsudski, Roman Dmowski, Jerzy Giedroyc, and Juliusz Mieroszewski. Once both basic principles of Poland's Foreign Policy are explained and the theoretical tools that will be used are also introduced, there is a synergy. Theoretical lenses are used to analyze drivers of Polish foreign policy, and, namely, its Eastern dimension.

The literature review and the Theoretical Framework is followed by the Research methodology chapter. The research methodology chapter introduces research design, later it elaborates on research methods, and eventually overviews the sources, explaining the limitations of those sources too.

Next comes the Findings and Analysis chapter. First, the quantitative data is analyzed, providing an overview of the dynamics of Polish-Georgian relations in the years 2004-2024. Then it is followed by qualitative analysis. Namely, Polish-Georgian relations are divided into different chronological periods. In case of each period there a context is given, explaining the factors driving Polish engagement with Georgia most, and analyzed through the lenses of contesting IR Theories. Last but not least, the analysis chapter goes back once again to the initial questions of the paper and wraps up the final answer to the questions asked. The conclusion of the Thesis is accompanied by prospects of developing research too.

## **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **Literature about the Foreign Policy of Poland, including Eastern Policy and relations with Georgia**

The literature reviewed for this thesis can be divided into three groups based on their scope.

*The first category* is a literature review of the broader foreign policy of Poland. It is important to review this category because, on the one hand, it allows the reader to grasp the key priorities of Polish foreign policy, where Eastern policy stands among those priorities, and where exactly Georgia lies in Polish Eastern policy; and on the other hand, it gives the reader a chance to understand later how the foreign affairs of Poland with Georgia might be impacted by other priority areas of the foreign policy of Warsaw, such as relations with the United States, the EU, and the Russian Federation.

*The second category* is literature specifically reviewing the Eastern policy of Poland. The Eastern Policy of Poland constitutes one of the key priority areas within Polish Foreign Policy, alongside relations with the US and the EU. Overviewing Polish Eastern Policy gives more detailed insights about Poland's engagement with its Eastern neighbors, including Georgia. Reviewing literature on Poland's Eastern Policy gives the reader a chance to understand the peculiarities of Polish relations with Eastern neighbors in general, that is important to understand the patterns, that might be relevant in terms of Polish engagement with Georgia as well.

*The third category* is a literature on Polish foreign policy in relation to the South Caucasus / Georgia. This represents the narrowest level of the review and of the thesis as a whole, focusing primarily on Polish foreign affairs in the South Caucasus and, specifically, with Georgia. Literature from this category, even being most scarce, gives the most insights about peculiarities of Polish engagement with Georgia, details and nuances, that otherwise may not appear in more general texts about Polish foreign policy or Poland's Eastern Policy.

### ***Literature overviewing broader Foreign Policy of Poland and theoretical variations – Fundamentals of Polish Foreign Policy***

Literature overviewing the broader foreign policy of Poland is a good starting point simply because it creates an overall understanding of key principles in Poland's foreign policy and its priorities. That is essential to better understand the peculiarities of Poland's foreign policy in relation to specific regions and countries. The literature overviewing broader Polish foreign policy can be divided into two categories. First, a literature that covers basic principles of Polish foreign policy without a strong and determined theoretical framework. And the second, covering Polish foreign policy from the perspective of a particular theoretical framework.

In the first category lies the ***Ryszard Zięba book, Poland's Foreign and Security Policy*** (2020), which covers the period between 1989-2020. It is worth mentioning that Zięba's book is one of the few resources in the form of a book that covers almost the whole period since the Cold War in a quite well-structured and clear manner. Though there are two concerns: First, it doesn't cover the significant developments since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, simply because the book was published in 2020. And second even though book is a great source for a person interested in the foreign policy of Poland to understand the foundations of Polish foreign policy and its key dimensions, the author sometimes leans to controversial judgements, being hypercritical towards Poland's exclusive engagement with the US, often using quite overly emotional wordings, and at the same time being noticeably soft on Russia.

Another work is ***Agnieszka Bieńczyk-Missala's Poland's Foreign and Security Policy: Main Directions*** (2016), which provides quite a balanced account about internal and external aspects of Polish foreign policy in areas such as Poland and the EU, bilateral relations with the EU member states, Poland and Eastern Neighbors, and affairs beyond Europe.

The sources listed above provide overall common ground, and the basic principles of Polish foreign policy are listed below accordingly. The United States is the key security guarantor for Poland. It is affirmed by Bieńczyk-Missala (2016, p. 107) that cooperation with the United States is one of the main pillars of Poland's security. Moreover, Bieńczyk-Missala (2016, p. 102) also highlights that NATO's significance is also impacted by the reality that acts for Poland as a factor for developing a security policy in cooperation with the US. Bieńczyk-Missala adds (2016, p. 103) that there is a bipartisan consensus on the significance of

strengthening ties with the US. Bieńczyk-Missala also states (2016, p. 104) that even in terms of globally controversial situations, Poland's security interests often required close cooperation with Washington, such as in the case of supporting the Iraq War. Zięba (2020, pp. 95-100) sees the US as a key security partner for Poland as well, but he approaches the topic from a more critical perspective. He highlights that indeed Poland is seeking a close partnership with the US, but Zięba, himself more in favor of balanced ties in terms of security policy with Europe and a softer stance on Russia, argues that Poland gradually received traits of bandwagoning with the US and formulates bilateral engagement in quite a controversial way, giving the chapter the title – *Strategic Partnership or Self-vassalization?* (Zięba, 2020, p. 102). Zięba overviews the US-Polish relations from a more critical perspective in the episode about the Iraq War as well, stating that Poland pursued an extremely pro-American policy in this controversial issue, though it didn't receive as much as it expected (Zięba, 2020, p.102).

Papers and books about broader Polish foreign policy also put Russia at the center of Polish foreign policy, assessing it as a main threat for Polish security. Zięba dedicates a separate chapter, "*Russia as a Main Problem in Polish Foreign and Security Policy.*" Both Bieńczyk-Missala (2016, p. 103) and Zięba (2020, pp. 69-71) agree that relations with Russia present the greatest challenge also in the context of contesting understandings of the European security and post-Soviet space by Moscow and Warsaw, the former trying to maintain those post-Soviet countries in its own sphere of influence, the latter supporting their close ties with the Western institutions. Zięba's book, as noted, emphasizes the Russian problem as well, tracing it back to historical controversies (Zięba, 2020, pp. 55-60). Later it overviews the attempts of normalization in the mid-2000s and the significance of symbolism in Russian-Polish historical controversies, still impacting the present (Zięba, 2020, pp. 60-65). He (2020, p. 76) also adds the points about issues related to energy security deriving from Russia's energy-blackmailing experience.

Another main pillar of Polish foreign policy based on the literature is the EU. Though, the Polish stance towards it is quite twofold. On the one hand, Poland sees the EU as a key sphere of realizing its economic potential; on the other hand, different Polish administrations are more or less alerted about integration beyond limits, and it is not only the story of the Law and Justice Party. Ryszard Zięba, in the chapter called "*The Dialectic of Strengthening and Weakening the European Union,*" states that Poland had been against the federal concept of the EU already from the beginning, supporting more intergovernmental nature of the EU (Zięba, 2020, p. 133).

Minister Bartoszewski, who served at the beginning of the 2000s, when Poland was joining the EU, was against the final product in the shape of a “European federation” (Zięba, 2020, p. 134). Though, some other ministers, like Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, were more open for such suggestions in the indefinite future, when the EU might have become a federation (Zięba, 2020, p. 135). This point is also backed up by Bieńczyk-Missala (2016, p. 104), who states that Poland was from the beginning more supportive of the European Union of sovereign states rather than a federation. When it comes to Poland supporting more sovereignty within the EU, Zięba also demonstrates Poland’s four postulates in 2003 in reference to the Constitution for Europe that was sought to be adopted, among them favoring the weighted voting system as it was under the Treaty of Nice, rejecting the current double-majority system that was later approved by the Treaty of Lisbon, favoring the one-country-one-vote system, ensuring participation of all members in the decision-making system, and highlighting the role of NATO in the Euro-Atlantic security system and including reference to the Christian tradition in the preamble of the constitutional treaty (Zięba, 2020, p. 135). Both Zięba (2020, pp. 138-139) and Bieńczyk-Missala (2016, p. 104) agree that Poland was reluctant to accept the Lisbon Treaty, which it found as a threat for leaving less decision-making power to member states. Zięba highlights that Poland was also cautious about joining the European Security and Defence Policy, having fears that it might substitute Poland’s key security pillar – NATO and threaten exclusive relations with the US (Zięba, 2020, p. 144). So Poland seeks to make sure that European security is complementary to the Euro-Atlantic security and not a substitute for it. Poland had difficulties with Brussels when the migration crisis hit the EU, objecting to the open border policy (Zięba, 2020, p. 159). Discussing the migration crises and issues of Poland in relation with Brussels, Missala (2016, p. 106) highlights that for Poland, security and cultural factors were significant determinants while rejecting refugees from the Middle East. Though, it is worth noting that there is difference between the Law and Justice (PiS) and the Civic Platform (PO) administrations with the EU, former being more cautious and critical, the latter more open for working with the Brussels.

Eastern Policy is a significant part of both Zięba’s book and Missala’s paper, stating that it is perceived as one of the key foreign policy priorities of Poland in academia. Zięba (2020, p. 173-197) describes Poland’s objective in the East in quite a precise and explanatory manner - “Poland pushes NATO and the EU Eastward”. The Eastern policy of Poland is created around several considerations. First, a significant part of Eastern Policy is relations with Russia, which was explained above. One of the primary objectives of modern-day Poland is to secure its

Eastern borders, especially in the context of eliminating the Russian threat, by way of supporting democratization and Euro-Atlantic integration of Eastern neighbors, primarily Ukraine (Bieńczyk-Missala, 2016, p. 113). Historical factors and identity-based considerations also drive Poland's Eastern policy. Especially historical and mnemonic difficulties with Eastern neighbors play a role in contemporary politics as well. Georgia, as a part of the South Caucasus region, is a part of Poland's Eastern policy as well (Bieńczyk-Missala, 2016, p. 113-115). Though, on the one hand, there is less pragmatic interest compared to the case of direct neighbors (such as Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania), on the other hand, because of a lack of mnemonic and historical controversies, there are fewer difficulties in contrast with direct neighbors. Moreover, historical sentiments quite often play a very positive role in Polish-Georgian relations, especially those ones tracing back to 1920s, when countries faced similar challenges during period of independence and later significant part of Georgian elites, including military officers, emigrated to Poland following forced incorporation of Georgia by Soviet Russia.

There are some papers about general Polish foreign policy that have some theoretical foundations as well. For instance, *Foreign Policy as the Continuation of Domestic Politics by Other Means: Pathways and Patterns of Populist Politicization* by David Cadier (2024) follows the logic of Second Image Theory by Kenneth Waltz or Two-Level Games by Robert Putnam. The paper analyzes the impact of domestic politics and internal partisan political interests on the formation of the foreign policy of Poland.

Another paper with a strong theoretical background, broadly overviewing Polish foreign policy, is *Tomasz Pawluszko's The Foreign Policy of Poland and the Problem of Political Rationale* (2022). The latter overviews Polish foreign policy from three perspectives - Realism, Liberalism and Constructivism. It highlights which features of Polish foreign policy can be explained by those three key international relations theories.

### ***Literature overviewing the Foreign Policy of Poland in its priority areas (the US, the EU and Eastern Policy) and theoretical variations***

The second category is the literature that analyzes the drivers and determinants of Polish foreign policy in relation with its key priority areas - relations with the US, relations with the EU and Eastern Policy.

The reason why the relations with the US and the EU are highlighted in this literature review is the following: The state of affairs with those actors is strongly intertwined with the logic of Polish engagement in Eastern policy, including Georgia. For example, in his interview with Paweł Kowal, Radosław Sikorski stated that one of the primary reasons why Poland engaged with Georgia in the early 2000s was the fact that there was US interest in the region, and Poland, motivated to have close ties with the US, was engaged to support the US in this regard (Kowal & Sikorski, 2021, p. 19). The reason why the literature about the EU in Polish foreign policy should be reviewed is the following: Polish relations with Brussels also significantly impact Polish engagement with Eastern neighbors, including Georgia. For example, Kazharski believes that Poland seeks to be the one that “writes the Eastern Policy software for the EU” (Kazharski2023, p. 107). Thus, the literature overviewed here also comprises those sources that are not directly linked to Poland’s Eastern Policy but refer to relations of Poland with the actors and the state of affairs that strongly define Polish Eastern Policy as well.

This literature review includes two articles that primarily focus on Polish relations with the US while also explaining how security concerns arising from Poland’s Eastern Neighborhood influence Warsaw’s engagement with the US. Those papers are *Alexander Lanoszka - Poland in a Time of Geopolitical Flux* and *Konrad Racja’s Poland’s Response to Donald Trump’s Actions* (2020). The former article explains how Poland's foreign policy adjusted in response to the changing approaches of US foreign policy during the administration of Barack Obama and during Donald Trump's first term, particularly due to rising threats from the East. The latter overviews the adjustment of Poland’s foreign policy in line with geopolitical changes resulting from Trump’s second term since 2024.

There are articles reviewing Polish foreign affairs with the EU, giving insights about the impact on Eastern policy as well. *Jacek Więclawski’s Poland in the European Union - Reaching Beyond the Liberal Perspective of Analysis* (2016) is an article with a strong theoretical basis,

arguing that there are limitations of liberal theory explaining Poland's engagement with the EU, providing alternative explanations based on a neoclassical realist prism. Another paper, titled *A Strategy for Europe from National Perspectives: Poland* (2025), authored by *Justyna Gotkowska and Łukasz Maślanka*, analyzes how Poland should adapt to the increasing threats from the East regarding the growing importance of European defense capacity.

There are three papers in relation to Poland's Eastern Policy that are reviewed in this literature review. All of those articles are based on theoretical lenses and foundations. *Aliaksei Kazharski's "To Whom the Sirens Wail" - Poland's Post-2022 Geopolitical Debates on CEE* (2024) provides the insights about the changing nature of Poland's security environment and Central and Eastern European policy in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The article concentrates on Poland's understanding of Russia's attack on Ukraine, assessing the role of Polish self-perception and identity in terms of perceiving the war in its East. The paper provides lenses of Liberal, Conservative, Left-liberal narratives dominating Poland in terms of understanding current geopolitical realities. *Andrzej Skeptyczki - Polish Take on Realism: Poland's Policy Towards the Former USSR* (2021) overviews Polish Eastern Policy from a pure realist perspective. It points out the ideological foundations of Polish Foreign Policy - approaches of Józef Piłsudski, Roman Dmowski, Jerzy Giedroyc and Juliusz Mieroszewski. The author also highlights the stages of Polish Eastern Policy that have occurred since 1989. Skeptyczki analyzes the concept of a buffer zone between Russia and Poland in terms of Poland's Eastern Policy as well. Last not least, *Malgorzata Klatt's paper, Poland and its Eastern Neighbours: Foreign Policy Principles* (2011) provides analysis of Poland's Eastern Policy from the point of view of constructivism. Namely highlighting the essence of Polish national identity, memory, and historical narratives driving foreign policy sentiments and preferences in relation with direct and indirect Eastern neighbors, such as Ukraine and Georgia. Klatt overviews the Eastern Partnership program and engagement of Poland with it from this perspective as well.

### ***Literature overviewing the Foreign Policy of Poland in relation to South Caucasus and Georgia***

It is worth mentioning that, in contrast with the categories of literature pointed out above, the papers regarding Poland's engagement with Georgia are quite scarce. While in general Polish Foreign policy and Poland's Eastern Policy are both more or less well researched, Poland's

engagement in the South Caucasus and specifically with Georgia isn't well researched in academia. Respectively, the literature provided here is composed of different types of sources. A significant contribution is the paper by *Paweł Kowal - Gruzja w polityce Polski w latach 1991–2009 [Georgia in Polish politics in 1991–2009]*. Experts of the area overview Polish-Georgian relations within the wider Polish-South Caucasian affairs framework during a discussion transcribed as *Editorial Survey: South Caucasus in the International System and In Polish Foreign Policy*—which in essence is a transcript of a conference attended by experts of international relations and political science, explaining and elaborating on Polish engagement with Georgia (2021). One of the most valuable contributions is the interview of Paweł Kowal with the foreign minister of Poland, Radosław Sikorski, with the title *“2008 in Polish-Georgian Relations.”* It is worth highlighting *Giorgi Beroshvili’s MA thesis, “Impact of Foreign Policy on Development Aid: Polish Democratic Assistance in Georgia”* (2023), as well, which overviews Polish engagement with Georgia from an institutional perspective, in terms of Poland supporting the development and democratization of Georgia in the last decade.

The paper by *Paweł Kowal - “Georgia in Polish politics in 1991-2009”* (2021) overviews both developments and drivers of Polish foreign policy in relation to Georgia from different theoretical perspectives. It comprises realist incentives of Poland to engage with Georgia based on Kowal's interview with Radosław Sikorski, namely with the part regarding the motivation of Poland to engage with Georgia because of the US interest in the South Caucasus and the role of Poland as a “subcontractor” of the United States, and also constructivist and identity-based components, such as Poland's historical and national sentiments and Promethean view of politics in this area (Kowal & Sikorski, 2021, p.19). The paper also highlights the realist incentives of Poland based on the energy-realism principle, namely the motivation to cooperate with Georgia as a potential transit of Caspian Sea gas and oil, which was a relevant topic of discussion in the second part of the 2000s. The participants of the conference presented by Editorial Survey also discussed similar topics from the points of view provided by different theories. In this context, another realist incentive for Poland is the inclusion of Georgia as part of a broader network of democratic buffers surrounding Russia, which poses an existential threat to Poland. The participants of the discussion also mentioned two key concepts of Polish security policy - the Piast concept and the Jagiellonian concept, Polish foreign and security policy concepts, that will be explained later in the next chapter.

Last but not least, the interview with Radosław Sikorski conducted by Paweł Kowal (2021) overview Polish engagement in the East, namely with Georgia, from a more pragmatic lens. The interview goes in-depth about Poland's motivation to engage with Georgia in the 2000s, namely incentives linked to the US presence in the region, Poland's role in supporting Georgia's MAP in NATO, and topics such as engagement in the August War of 2008 and afterwards establishment of the Eastern Partnership. The paper also points out differences between the Civic Platform and Law and Justice Party approaches to the region.

### **Theoretical Foundations: Realism, Liberalism and Constructivism and Polish security and foreign policy concepts**

The thesis overviews the Polish Eastern Policy - namely engagement with Georgia from two different groups of theoretical perspectives. First, those are international relation theories - *Realism, Liberalism* and *Constructivism*. Moreover, analyzing explanatory power of those distinct IR Theories is one of the primary objectives of the thesis. Though, conceptual character of analyzing Polish foreign policy also has local features - namely the Polish foreign security concepts - *Jagiellonian* and *Piast security concepts* and ideological foundations created by prominent Polish political actors of the XX century - *Dmowski, Pilsudski, Mieroszewski and Giedroyic*. Despite the fact, that thesis mostly concentrates on IR Theories (realism, liberalism and constructivism), it does so in synergy with those Polish political science concepts, because they are center of Polish foreign policy and political thought. Respectively, Eventually, the theoretical framework based on general theories of realism, liberalism and constructivism synergized with Piast and Jagiellonian Concepts and Doctrines by Dmowski, Pilsudski, Mieroszewski and Giedroyic will be used to analyze main drivers of Polish foreign policy based on existing literature

### **Overview of Contesting theories – Realism, Liberalism and Constructivism**

In academia, realism, liberalism, and constructivism are contesting dominant theories that aim to explain actors (for some states, for some international organizations, and other non-state institutions) in the international system and the former's logic of behavior in the latter. Realism mostly sees the world as anarchic, where the states as the key units aim to simply survive, often referring to the significance of self-help. Liberalism points out that even though states are the

main actors, there are other important non-state actors as well, and in essence, they can cooperate with one another rather than only compete, though in the way of cooperation, they achieve their objectives as well. As for constructivism, its vision is that the interests of states as main international arena actors are mostly constructed based on norms, ideas, and historical experiences and that other factors, such as resources and material gains, are given meaning in social context as well.

### ***Realism***

In an anarchic system, states, as the primary and selfish actors, aim to survive and must maximize their power to do so. Power is measured in different terms, such as material – military and economic and non-material, as diplomatic features (Donnelly, 2005, p. 29). The key idea of realism is self-help, which states pursue mostly in a zero-sum game manner. One of the prominent scholars in realism, Morgenthau, states that “all politics is a struggle for power (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 13).” For realists conflict is not only a product of anarchy, but also expression of human nature, which alongside with other characteristics, is an outcome of lust, pride and quest for glory (Donnelly, 2005, p. 31).

### *Neoclassical realism*

Most of the international relation theories have sub-categories, that even though in essence are in accordance with the basic principles of main theory, still vary in terms of understanding specific aspects of it. In case of realism, there are different sub-categories, such as classical realism, neo-realism, neoclassical realism... The thesis will explain particular phenomenon with the acquisition of specific type of realism - neoclassical realism that fits most the context of empirical data. Neoclassical realism is often called a “theory of foreign policy” (Dawood, 2016). Neoclassical realism is based on different principles. First - it emphasizes on systemic pressure and limitations, such as distribution of power and relative power capabilities (Devlen & Özdamar, 2009, p. 137). Secondly, it concentrates on leader’s individual agencies, their beliefs, perceptions and misperceptions about international system and choices that they make (Devlen & Özdamar, 2009, p. 136) (Steinsson, 2017, p. 599). Third, it highlights the significance of domestic politics constraints impacting foreign policy decisions of policy-makers (Devlen & Özdamar, 2009, p. 136). Those features quite explicitly fit the principles that were pointed out in empirical part about Poland’s foreign policy in literature review.

*Liberalism* argues that although the international system is anarchic, still natural condition for representative states (and not autocratic ones) is cooperation for fulfilling their potential, rather than war (Burchill, 2005, pp. 58-59). Liberalism also points out factors, such as domestic preferences, that impact the behavior of states (Burchill, 2005, p. 59). Namely, this logic is more valid in terms of democratic states. Liberalism also gives ground to *democratic peace theory*, arguing that democratic states don't go to war with one another simply because the war and destruction are not in the interests of the masses, who are the source of legitimacy for democratic states (Burchill, 2005, p. 60). For liberalism, economic interdependence matters as well – arguing that countries that are interested in maximizing their profit and improving economic levels, simply because they are dependent on one another, try to avoid conflict (Burchill, 2005, pp. 62-64). In liberalism, even though countries are central actors of the international system, there is significance to international institutions and law-based relations as well, highlighting the importance of international institutions (Burchill, 2005, pp. 64-66).

#### *Liberal intergovernmentalism and Liberal institutionalism*

Similarly to the case of realism, particular sub-categories of liberalism are better equipped to explain Polish engagement in the East and namely with Georgia. *Liberal intergovernmentalism* and *liberal institutionalism* are the sub-categories that manage to specialize better in this specific context, especially when it comes to analyzing Polish engagement from the EU-centric perspective.

Key assumptions of liberal intergovernmentalism are that: First - states, as primary actors in anarchy manage to achieve their objectives not through the means of confrontation, but rather in the way of negotiation and bargaining (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, p.65); Second - states are rational actors, that manage to make calculations and in this way choose the optimal way to achieve their objectives (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 65). Those principles can be quite well-sensed in the previous chapter when there was a discussion about Poland pushing its proposal about Eastern Partnership through the means of choosing the way of allying with a credible partner within the EU - Sweden, and in this way bargaining the proposal with Brussels. Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig also provide a vision of how the process takes place, first - state setting preferences, second - bargaining with others, and third - creating the institutions to back up those achievements based on its preferences (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, pp. 65-69) (Moravcsik, 2018, pp. 1649-1655). It's worth highlighting that liberal intergovernmentalism is one of the key theories, alongside neofunctionalism and

federalism, that explains the EU integration process. Respectively, it is not surprising that liberal intergovernmentalism indeed possesses the capacity to explain insights of Polish engagement in the East from an EU-centric perspective.

Liberal institutionalism concentrates on the institutions itself. According to it, cooperation between states is formalized in the form of institutions and states, that according to liberal logic, pursue absolute gain, maximize their benefits through those institutions (Burchill, 2005, pp. 64-66). Institutions formalize expectations, monitor compliance of the actors with the rules of the game, also sanction those, that break the rules and in this way builds the trust among the members of the institution (Burchill, 2005, pp. 64-66).

For *constructivism*, the key basis is ideas, beliefs, norms, and identities that impact state behavior. Things matter not because of their material essence, but because of the meaning that is given by people. Respectively, identity and beliefs, in the case of states – national identities, cultures, and ideologies are key shaping factors for their actions. International norms that regulate the behavior of states in the international arena are also based on shared norms as well (Reus-Smit, 2005, pp. 198-200). Respectively, the essence of anarchy is neither objectively hostile nor objectively cooperative; it is shaped by the way states give it meaning to it. Constructivists make three basic assumptions: First, normative and ideational structures, likewise material ones, shape the behavior of both states and individuals; Second - non-material structures conditioning actors' identities is important, because identities form interests, that later turn into actions; Third - agents and structures are mutually constituted, which means that structures form identities of actors and practices of those actors create structures as well (Reus-Smit, 2005, pp. 196-198).

## Overview of Polish Foreign Policy Concepts

It is worth mentioning that when one analyzes Polish foreign policy, the theoretical and conceptual framework should not be limited to only globally known concepts and theories, such as realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Modern Polish foreign policy has roots in history. Throughout centuries, different concepts evolved in Polish political thought, and the one analyzing Polish foreign and security policy should be capable of doing so with the understanding of existing theoretical concepts, such as Piast and Jagiellonian foreign security concepts and *ideological paradigms of Pilsudski, Dmowski, Mieroszewski and Giedroyc*. The following chapter will overview key theoretical foundations of Poland's foreign and security policy that create broader Polish strategic culture. The argument that one should be aware of those concepts while engaging with Polish foreign policy is also supported by the fact that those concepts are used by scholars and experts as well, for example participants of the discussion panel about the role of the South Caucasus in Polish foreign policy also often referred to those concepts, likewise Radosław Sikorski himself referring to Law and Justice party's "reorientation towards Promethean-Jagiellonian policy", highlighting its relevance in Polish academia (Bornio et al., 2021, p.68) (Kowal & Sikorski, 2021, p. 19).

### *Two foreign security concepts: Piast and Jagiellonian and their legacy in the ideological paradigms of*

There are two security concepts dominating Polish strategic culture historically and in modernity. Both of them are named after corresponding dynasties from the history of Poland - Piast Dynasty and the Jagiellonian Dynasty.

The **Piast Concept** is rooted in Piast dynasty, symbolizing Poland's integration into Western Christian civilization, viewing Poland as eastern outpost of it (Yelova, 2023, p. 82). Respectively, the essence of Piast concept is maintaining Poland as close to Western civilization as possible (Yelova, 2023, p. 82). Piast concept is also rooted in Sarmatian myth, according to which Poles has Sarmatian ancestry, highlighting their antiquity and essential connection to Europe (Yelova, 2023, p. 82-83). Piast concept has an experience of being applied in twofold way. In past, the idea of Poland's uniqueness and vision of being last bastion of the Western civilization in the East was used by **Roman Dmowski** in his nationalist visions, that also aimed to consolidate territories where Poles have ever lived, creating a monoethnic

unitary Polish state (Yelova, 2023, p. 82). Dmowski was also famous for his distrust in Germany and Russia, emphasizing the significance of Poland being strong enough to deal with threats deriving from them (Strilchuk & Dobrzahnskyi, 2021, p. 221). Though, in modernity Piast concept was applied in totally different way as well, being devoid of its nationalist elements, in modern-day reality its two features: Closeness with Western civilization and lack of interest in Eastern projects inspires the political agenda of EU-oriented political actors, such as center-left “Civic Platform”, that indeed concentrates on Poland’s integration with the EU and lacks enthusiasm in fully engaging Eastern policy.

In contrast, the Jagiellonian concept has roots in Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Jagiellonian dynasty, which in essence, was a model of a multinational, noble republic-state (Yalova, 2023, p. 84). The key features of it were being of anti-Russian orientation, acting as defender of Western Christian civilization, and possessing a civilization mission of spreading Christian civilization in the East. Jagiellonian dynasty in essence had an objective of expanding in the East, though in difference from Russia’s conquering nature, its expansion was meant to be peaceful, cultural, political and religious (though it contested with historiography of some Eastern peoples, including Ukrainian’s) (Yelova, 2023, p. 84).

Up to modern geopolitical context modifications of Jagiellonian ideas were the concepts of **Intermarium** and **Prometheism**. The former envisaged creating federation of states between three seas - Adriatic, Baltic and Black Seas (Yelova, 2023, p. 85). The latter was a concept created by **Józef Piłsudski** - Poland’s Chief of State in the years 1918-1922 and Marshal. Prometheism envisaged supporting independence movements of people’s of Russian empire, such as Ukrainians, Belarusians, Georgians and etc. with the objective to weaken Russia (Yelova, 2023, p. 84-85). It can be stated, that Poland’s policy, especially the policies of Law and Justice party, actively engaging with the East, supporting creation of chain of democratic states surrounding Russia with the objective of providing security for Poland itself significantly echoes those ideas of Piłsudski.

Ideas **Jerzy Giedroyc** and **Juliusz Miroszewski** are the most modern and liberal modifications of Jagiellonian ideas. Central point of Giedroyc and **Miroszewski** is reconciling with neighbors, accepting postwar borders and supporting independence of Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania (ULB countries), that is perceived as a precondition for a free Central and Eastern Europe (Yelova, 2023, p. 86-87).

## **Tools acquired: Poland's Eastern Policy and engagement with Georgia from the theoretical lenses of neoclassical realism, liberalism(s) and constructivism**

### **Key Developments in Polish-Georgian Relations**

The 1990s marked a period of delay in Polish-Georgian relations. On the one hand, Poland was on its way to transformation, dealing with domestic problems, and also trying to ensure security in the near abroad and launch an integration process with Euro-Atlantic structures. On the other hand, Georgia was going through even harder domestic turmoil, experiencing both conflicts in breakaway regions and civil war and violence, making it a less attractive destination for Poland to carry out foreign policy activities with.

In the early 2000s, Polish-Georgian bilateral relations took on real significance. There are two key factors leading to it:

- 1) Poland finalized integration with the Euro-Atlantic structures and gained a chance to concentrate more on Eastern Policy. In 1999, Poland became a member of NATO (NATO, n.d). In 2004, it finished its accession to the European Union. Thus, now Poland had already more time and capacity to care more about its Eastern Policy, also from the perspective of its presence within those two organizations (Government of the Republic of Poland. n.d.). .
- 2) Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003. In 2003, because of the Rose Revolution, a new generation of leaders came into power in Georgia, led by Mikheil Saakashvili. Since the second part of the 1990s, Georgia has already interested in integration with the West, though the new government catalyzed this process significantly and made significant announcements about Georgia's Euro-Atlantic path. Respectively, not only Poland but also Georgia was ready for significant bilateral exchange and cooperation.

The hype of Polish-Georgian relations was in the years 2006-2008. By 2005, in the government of Poland, came the Law and Justice party, headed by Lech Kaczynski as president. Before launching full Jagiellonian-Neopromethean mode, Lech Kaczynski's government made last attempts to rationalize relations with Russia. Though Stefan Meller's Mission to Russia didn't make any significant progress in terms of reconciliation with its Eastern neighbor, thus, time after time, the Jagiellonian concept and policy of Poland became crystallized, with maximum

efforts to support Georgia and Ukraine on their Euro-Atlantic integration path, counterbalancing Russian influence in the Eastern neighborhood (Zięba, 2020, p.63-65). Poland was a firm supporter of granting Georgia and Ukraine MAP (Membership Action Plan) in 2008 during the Bucharest Summit (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2008c). Polish engagement with Georgia was also impacted by the active interest of George Bush's administration in the region. In just three years, from 2006 up until the end of 2008, Polish and Georgian presidents met with one another at least 16 times on different occasions, including 7 visits of Lech Kaczyński to Georgia and 3 visits of Mikheil Saakashvili to Poland (the rest taking place during international summits in Vilnius, Kyiv, Bucharest, and Baku) (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2006a-2008a-f). The peak of Polish-Georgian bilateral relations was the year 2008 (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2008a). During one of his visits to Georgia, Polish President Lech Kaczyński even joked that he has “lost count of the number of times we have been meeting each other with Mr. President for the last two years. (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2008a)”

Regardless of the active Polish lobby and firm US positioning, Georgia, together with Ukraine, didn't receive a MAP in May 2008. In a few months after the Bucharest summit, in August 2008, Russia launched an invasion of Georgia. On the 12th of August President Kaczyński visited Tbilisi, when the country was still under Russian attack, and made a famous statement, at some point even a prophecy, referring to Russian aggression against Georgia as being unpunished as a prerequisite for future aggression against Ukraine, and who knows, later against the Baltic States and Poland itself as well (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2008e).

Since 2009, relations between the two countries have become less intense, though they have kept on developing. In 2009, Poland and Sweden co-created the EU Eastern Partnership program, which led Georgia, together with Moldova and Ukraine, to the Association Agreement in the future, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement, and the visa-free regime. In 2010 Lech Kaczyński, together with his wife and dozens of other Polish government members, died in a tragic aviation catastrophe (Civil.ge, 2010b). Likewise, in the years before, from 2009 to 2024, Poland was a key supporter of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, engaging in occasional bilateral exchanges at the presidential and head-of-government levels, although these exchanges were not as intense as they had been previously. 2024 became the year when, as a result of several controversial laws regarding Media and civil

society being adopted in Georgia and also controversial elections took place, criticized by the West, leading to the freezing of Georgia's EU integration path, significantly deteriorating relations with Poland as well, leading to the imposing of sanctions by Poland against some of the Georgian authorities.

### ***Liberal Features of Polish Foreign Policy***

Liberal intergovernmentalism states, that countries try to promote their own interests through interstate bargaining and institutional choice. One of the key features of Polish Eastern Policy is that it tries to be the initiator, expert, and leading power in terms of the EU's Eastern Policy. As pointed out by Kazharski (2023, p. 107), Poland tries to write the "software" of Western policy towards the East. This logic clearly fits in liberal intergovernmentalist theory. Historically, Giedroyc, one of the prominent Polish figures described above, also had similar views, such as Poland being a bridge between West and East.

Another aspect of Poland's liberal intergovernmentalist approach in relation to the East involves supporting multilateral engagement on behalf of the EU and NATO. One of the key examples of this is the fact that the Eastern Partnership program of the European Union was initiated by Poland and Sweden in the late 2000s. Moreover, Poland was trying to push such a policy specifically framed for Eastern Neighbors of the EU already upon its acceptance in the European Union. It is not surprising that such multilateral engagement policies historically proposed by Giedroyc in modernity are mostly initiated and favored by Civic Platform. though the Law and Justice Party is also a strong supporter of Euro-Atlantic integration policies towards the East. Despite this, the Law and Justice party maintains robust bilateral communication with its Eastern neighbors.

### ***Realist Features of Polish Foreign Policy***

There are several developments and patterns in Polish Eastern Policy that fit the logic of realism.

#### ***Balance realism***

Kazharski (2023, p. 107) develops a view that the right wing in Poland, actively engaging in the East and supporting enlargement of the EU in this dimension, tries to create a kind of

alliance with neighbors and lead this alliance to balance the Franco-German dominance within the EU. This clearly fits realist, neorealist, and structural realist logic. Those developments are visible during Law and Justice Party administrations that support regional integration projects, such as the 3 Seas Initiative or the Visegrad Group. Once again, here are visible echoes of some components from both the Jagiellonian Concept (supporting active engagement with the East) and Piłsudski's and Dmowski's ideas (mostly referring to distrust with Germany).

### *Eastern Buffer Logic*

One of the key drivers of Poland's Eastern Policy is an interest in buffer states between Poland's borders and Russia. It is worth mentioning that buffer state logic, even though it is traditionally part of realist logic, is mixed with liberal institutionalism in this very specific case because Poland is not simply interested in having random buffer states in the neighborhood but rather supports democratic Eastern neighbors and their aspirations of being part of the wider Euro-Atlantic space. Thus, this is a driver formed of realist and liberal institutionalist logics. The argument is very well developed in the paper by Szeptycki (2021), who states that the presence of a democratic chain of countries around Russia will grant Poland relief as a border country. First layer of priority countries are Ukraine, Lithuania, and potentially Belarus (which currently serves as a primary security threat channel from Russia, but if it was pro-Western democratic state, it would have been a different case), though there is also indirect layer which comprises of other neighboring countries of Russia, including Georgia. This logic is a blend of realist and liberal institutionalist logics (Bornio et al., 2021, p.64). On the one hand, buffer logic is rooted in the essence of realism in general, though in this very specific case, the significance of those buffer states being democratic and part of Euro-Atlantic sphere, brings in action elements of liberal institutionalism.

### *Energy realism*

Another aspect of Polish foreign policy explicitly fitting realist logic is the pursuit of Poland to diversifying energy resources and thus decreasing dependency on Russian energy resources. This objective explicitly dominated Polish Eastern Policy, especially during Lech Kaczyński's time in the late 2000s. Kaczyński was frequently attending GUAM Summits as well, to ensure a connection between Caspian Sea resources and the Odessa-Brody pipeline. This was an explicit demonstration of energy realism by Poland (Szeptycki 2021, pp. 135-137).

Georgia fills Poland's energy realism long-term objectives as a transit country, potentially transferring Caspian Sea resources. That was more relevant in the late 2000s, when Kaczynski's government was strongly supporting connecting Caspian Sea resources, primarily deriving from Azerbaijan (but in the long-run, potentially from Central Asia as well) with Odessa-Brody Pipeline, through Georgia. This was extremely important for Poland to decrease energy dependence on Russia (Bornio et al., 2021), (Kowal, 2021).

#### *Polish security dilemma - Offensive or defensive realism?*

Szeptycki (2021, pp. 133–134) also points out that in the foreign and security policy practices of Poland, there is an ongoing debate or contest between offensive and defensive realist practices. The cautious approach characterizing the Civic Platform Party (especially in the late 2000s and early 2010s), which has a fundament in Piast Foreign Policy logic and also has a basis in Giedroyc ideology, concentrates on strengthening the ties with Western institutions, ensuring security in this way by developing intra-institutional ties and links. Defensive realism shares this characteristic together with liberal institutionalism. The second side of the debate consists of supporters who advocate for active Polish engagement in Eastern politics. They proactively work on initiatives to broaden and strengthen the democratic buffer of pro-Western countries, creating a chain that surrounds Russia and eliminates the threat. This approach aligns with the logic of offensive realism and echoes the Jagiellonian concept of Polish foreign security policy, incorporating elements from Piłsudski's ideology.

#### *Self-help, as a characteristic*

The Law and Justice party highly emphasizes the essence of the nation-state as well, believing that sovereignty and maintenance of the nation-state are essential, as the nation-state is the only way of ensuring security in the chaotic world (Kazharski, 2024). This is another characteristic of realism, which highlights the essence of the chaotic world and the role of the nation-state in this chaotic world, with the objective of survival primarily secured in the way of self-help.

#### *Primary foreign policy objectives impacting secondary ones*

In the mid-2000s the US, namely George Bush's administration, was actively engaging with Georgia, having it as close ties as possible. Meanwhile, Poland was ruled by Law and Justice party, which is more interested in Atlanticism and exclusive bilateral ties with the US rather than their political competitors (which are also prioritizing the US-Polish relations, but concentrate more on wider NATO and EU framework and have more balanced approach in

contrast with the PiS's hyper-American stance), thus such synergy also impacted Poland's increased enthusiasm of Poland to engage with Georgia, also as kind of "sub-contractor" of the US, as labelled by Radosław Sikorski, back then Foreign Minister of Poland (Kowal & Sikorski, 2021, p. 19) (Kowal, 2021, p. 104). Sikorski's points, referred to by Kowal & Sikorski (2021) in his article, regarding the US engagement in the region (South Caucasus) as a driver of Polish engagement with Georgia, is a pure demonstration of realist approach. During those times Poland was following most of the initiatives of the US, including controversial Iraq War. Some believe, that Poland followed the policy of "bandwagoning" in relation with the US, which in this very specific case is explained as positioning in line with superior power in order to receive some benefits. Sikorski's view of Poland's positioning in relation to Georgia as encouraged subcontractor of the US in the region, if accepted, fits into this paradigm.

Kowal's interview with Sikorski (2021) also points out one more interesting detail about the US factor in Polish-Georgian relations. Kowal states, that Kosovo's precedent was quite a problem for Georgia, as far as the country also had an issues with break-away regions (Also Kosovo's bn case was used by the Kremlin as a justification for supporting separatism in Georgia). Later he asks Sikorski, if he take into account this factor when supported the US Stance on Kosovo's independence. In his response, Sikorski states, that he was already having issues negotiating with Americans regarding decision of sending Patriot anti-Aircraft systems to Poland and he didn't want to create another front with them. This point also demonstrates how complex International Relations are and how intertwined Polish policies can be with two different states at opposite ends of the World.

State of affairs with one big actor impacting state of affairs with smaller one was the case in the context of Stefan Meller's failed mission to Moscow as well. If the mission had been a success in 2005, it would have led to reconciliation with Russia, and in this hypothetical scenario it is highly expected that Poland would have been more cautious and balanced with Eastern neighbours, there might have been more Piast play in action rather than pure Jagiellonianism if Russia had played out as a more constructive power. The same can be said about attempts of Reset policy in the late 2000s under Donald Tusk's administration (Kowal, 2021, p. 112).

### *Systematic Constraints impacting Polish engagement with Georgia*

Another factor is the situation in the West itself. In the 2000s, the West was in its prime, both from a political and economic standpoint. Respectively, it had more capacity to engage. In the early 2010s, the West had different issues, including the migration crisis, economic challenges, etc. Consequently, Poland's objective in response to the issues facing the wider West was to maintain the status quo in its relations with indirect Eastern neighbors, including Georgia. Besides, factor impacting Polish capacity to engage with Georgia is current state of politics within Georgia itself. As noted by SOURCE, Poland was prepared to engage to the fullest extent that Georgian authorities and society were willing to accept.

### *Domestic politics impacting foreign affairs*

In the existing literature, there is also a view that Poland's external policy is impacted by the internal affairs of the country and the bipartisan contest in local politics. Radosław Sikorski believes that Poland's active engagement in Georgia in the late 2000s was also due to existing constitutional friction. During the times of cohabitation, the president was from the Law and Justice Party, but the government was formed by the Civic Platform in a coalition majority government with the agrarian centrist Polish People's Party. According to Sikorski, Lech Kaczyński was trying to have anti-Russianism as an exclusive policy for himself, basing political capital upon it (Kowal & Sikorski, 2021, p. 20).

According to the discussion in Editorial Survey - *Kaukaz Południowy w systemie międzynarodowym i polskiej polityce wschodniej* [South Caucasus in the International System and in Polish Eastern Policy], there was a difference between the Law and Justice Party and Civic Platform in relation to the Eastern Partnership program as well. The program was supported by Civic Platform, though the Law and Justice party was critical about it due to the fact that it wasn't granting member states an official membership guarantee (Bornio et al., 2021, p. 72).

The difference between Civic Platform and the Law and Justice Party also was in engagement efforts. Civic Platform had more balanced Piast-style calculations in relation to Georgia, engaging as far as it wouldn't lead to direct conflict with Russia, while the Law and Justice party, with purely crystalized Jagiellonian views, was engaging with maximum efforts regardless of the position of the Kremlin.

### *Personal characteristics of leaders*

One of the factors perceived as a driver of Polish-Georgian relations is definitely a personal factor: chemistry between leaders of two countries. That was evident in the period between 2005 and 2010, when the two countries were represented by President Lech Kaczyński and President Saakashvili (Kowal, 2021, p. 112).

### ***Constructivist features of Polish Foreign Policy***

#### *Historical and Cultural narratives - national identity rooted in historical experiences*

Polish foreign policy is also driven by features explained by constructivism. For instance, historical and cultural narratives and experiences shape the national identity of Poland. This influences both Polish foreign policy and specifically its Eastern policy. Historical memory often defines Polish affairs with its direct neighbors, especially when in the government there are presented more conservative forces, such as the Law and Justice Party. Historical narratives also impact the perception of Russia in Polish strategic culture. Russian perception as an existential threat is defined by historical memory as well (Kazharski, 2024, p. 100). Kowal (2021, p.124) states that Zurawski vel Grajewski and Rotfeld provide insights about “Pragmatic against Romantic elements” of Poland’s Eastern Policy. Poland’s identification and chains of equivalence is rooted back in Promethean Tradition and Sarmatian Myths.

Kowal (2021, p.105), in his paper, explains the phenomenon of the social Imaginarium of Poland towards Georgia, which creates bonds between the two countries. In his paper Kowal refers to Taylor, Leder and Adamczewski as theoretical foundations providers for such explanations (Kowal 2021, p.104).

Historical ties are also part of Polish-Georgian bilateral engagement, which contributes to Imaginarium, together with realist and liberal institutionalist incentives. Kowal, namely refers to historical sentiments, such as the presence of Georgian emigrant officers in Polish army in the first part of the XX century and participation of some of them in Warsaw Uprising of 1944 (Kowal 2021, p.105).

#### *Chains of Equivalence and solidarity with Oppressed Nations*

The Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and later Russian-led wars in Ukraine in 2014 and eventually in 2022 led to a significant level of solidarity from Poland, both on elite and grass-

roots levels. These sentiments and solidarity are also historically constructed, both due to the tragic experience Poland had itself based on several partitions and later factual Soviet occupation (even though formally it was “independent”) and the ideological basis, purely visible in the Jagiellonian concept of foreign and security policy and the ideas of Piłsudski and Giedroyc, which also emphasized support of Eastern neighbors and their independence, especially in the frame of dealing with Russian imperialism (Kazharski, 2024, pp. 101-102).

### *Significance of memory politics*

Memory politics is another aspect that Poland pays significant attention to (Kazharski 2024, p. 104). For instance, while referring to Russian aggression in Ukraine, the state institutions of Poland refer to their historical moments. The Sejm Statement at the 160th Anniversary of the January Uprising made clear statements and parallels between two events - Suppression of Polish liberation in the past and Russian invasion against Ukraine in modernity, stating: “Just like 160 years ago, today, the nations living on the lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth must defend themselves against Russian military, political, and economic aggression. The relevance of the Uprising's legacy is confirmed by the content of the joint declaration of the presidents of Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine, adopted during the 2nd Lublin Triangle Summit in Lviv on 11 January. Its signatories, referring to the 160th anniversary of the outbreak of the January Uprising, directed this document against the "tyranny and oppression" of Russia (Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, 2023).”

### *Historical Parallels*

As Kazharski (2024, p. 104) points out, Poland also assesses modern narratives of Russia as similar to ones it used against Poland in history, namely referring to justifications of Russian aggression and mixing the concepts of aggressor and victim.

## Research Methodology

Thesis “The Idea of the Eastern Neighborhood: Poland’s Strategic and Normative Engagement with Georgia” provides a case study of Polish Foreign Policy in relation to Georgia based on three major approaches from International Relations Theory: *Neoclassical Realism*, *Liberalism (Liberal intergovernmentalism and liberal institutionalism)*, and *Constructivism*.

This MA Thesis is a **Outcome Centric explanatory case study** – elaborating on determinants of Polish engagement with Georgia from the lenses of competing theories, which theories explain best and to what extent based on drivers Poland has in relation with Georgia. The research design also includes **longitudinal feature** – meaning that the thesis not only explains Polish engagement with Georgia from the perspective of different theories based on determinants of Polish foreign policy in relation with Georgia, but also grasps change and continuity in this process, assuming that it is not a static picture and that Polish engagement with Georgia evolves and differs in different periods of time, respectively, giving different explanatory power to competing IR theories in this process. The period of the study is years 2004-2024. 2004 is an year, when Polish-Georgian relations started to evolve dynamically. On the one hand Poland finalized joining the EU and NATO, after achieving its essential foreign policy objectives, having more capacity to launch more dynamic Eastern Policy, on the one hand Georgia got a new government following Rose Revolution in 2003, leading to active engagement with the Western partners, among them – Poland. 2024 is simply the most up to date observable end period for the paper that can be academically studied. The key elements of analysis for the thesis are listed as following: 1. Content of official press-releases of high-level meetings between Georgian and Polish officials. In High level meetings there is a reference primarily to Presidential / Prime-Ministerial level meetings. 2 Content of Strategic documents of Poland and reference to Georgia in them.

The thesis is based on a **mixed-methods research methodology**, analyzing development of Polish Foreign Policy in relation to Georgia based on working on high-level diplomatic engagement, applying both Quantitative and Qualitative Methods.

**Quantitative methods** are applied in order to assess the intensity and dynamics of bilateral relations with the help of analyzing the annual frequency of meetings between either Heads of the States or Heads of the Government of Poland and Georgia in the years 2004-2024. Data

provided (first and foremost - frequencies, and secondly - nature of meetings, assessing the importance of meetings in terms of whether it was deliberate visits to one-another countries or it was part of sideline meetings during international summits).

*The independent variable* here is the number of meetings arranged between the Presidents or Prime Ministers of Georgia and Poland in the years 2004-2024. This variable is used as a *measurement of the intensity of relations*.

The overall objective for measuring the intensity of bilateral relations is to demonstrate dynamics, namely, which stages of bilateral relations were more important.

Measurement of the number of meetings is added by assessing the quality of meetings. It is assumed that particular types of meetings bear more significance than others. Meetings will be categorized into the following categories:

- Official bilateral visits - such as visits of Polish Presidents or Prime Ministers to Georgia and vice versa.
- Bilateral meetings on the sidelines of international summits or Multilateral meetings as a part of shared platform at different forums - sometimes Polish and Georgian top officials met with one-another in the framework of international summits, such as Bucharest Summit in 2008, GUAM Summits in Kyiv, Baku, Energy summit in Villnius and etc. It is assumed, that such meetings are important as well, but not as significant, as deliberate bilateral visits to one-another's countries. Sometimes Georgian and Polish leaders ended up on multilateral summits, being speakers of same platforms, but not having separate bilateral official exchanges. Those types of meetings are still counted, but perceived as being less important, presenting the least efforts from their sides.

**Qualitative methods**, namely discourse and content analysis of press releases, media news and strategic documents of Poland are used in order to trace the content of those meetings, thus pointing out the priority areas and narratives being present in particular periods of history of bilateral relations.

More precisely, Content Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis will be used to analyze the content of bilateral exchanges. Content analysis will provide understanding for being grasped what was said and when, to trace change and continuity of Polish policy-makers narratives in

relation with Georgia. Critical Discourse Analyses will be used to unpack latent meanings behind the words that have been used, explaining power relations.

### **Primary Sources are:**

**Press Releases and Media coverage** of bilateral meetings on Head of State, Head of Government:

- [President.pl](#) - Official Webpage of the President of the Republic of Poland
- [Gov.pl](#) - Official Webpage of the Government of the Republic of Poland
- [Civil.ge](#) - Independent Media Source founded by the UN covering Georgia
- Other Media outlets and webpages of organizations, such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, The White House, [Trend.az](#), UNIAN, Reuters and etc.

### **Why using those sources?**

The key concentration here is on the Press-releases from official web-pages, such as [President.pl](#) (Official Webpage of the President of the Republic of Poland) and [Gov.pl](#) (Official Webpage of the Government of the Republic of Poland). They provide official position of Polish governments in particular timeline without interpretation of intermediaries.

Online media sources are used with the objective of feeling the gaps in the Official Press-Releases and also aim to provide different view of the same subject. For instance, [Civil.ge](#) is Georgia-based media outlet (founded and supported by the UN) that can provide Georgian position of the same event, while webpages such as [Trend.az](#) can demonstrate the understanding of the same occasion from other perspective, in this particular case from Azerbaijan, providing complex understanding of the cases.

### ***What are the limitations of those sources?***

There are following limitations of those sources:

- 1) In majority of cases, they are briefs, rather than full transcripts of the meetings. This means that even though the thesis is based on research of primary sources, those primary sources reflect only part of the meetings, that was framed by Press Offices of particular officials. This means that significant part of data is still unavailable and can be only accessed, in case full transcripts of meetings are accessible.

- 2) Some of the data is missing. For instance, the webpage of the government of Poland has been updated at some point in recent history, thus the press releases that were accessible once upon a time aren't there anymore. This refers to official web-pages of President and Governments of Georgia as well.
- 3) The press-releases provide official statements, rather than back-door work and incentives, that might have been part of the process, but aren't visible, because they have been lost in diplomatic language or official statements. In the other words, we can't be always sure, if whatever is officially written in the statement of particular politician is exactly what they believe and mean.

Research of real incentives is theoretically possible, but practically very difficult in modernity and requires far more academic intervention in private space of particular historical figures. In order to support such statements in academic way, there should be accessed the data, that provides information about politicians or policy-makers beyond their official format. Such data in case of Oliver Wardrop is his letters to his wife, where he discusses his sentiments towards Georgia and motivations. The reason why example of Oliver Wardrop is provided here is that practically it is quite challenging to understand real incentives behind modern politicians, because such data is unavailable. In this very specific case, it is not easy to understand Lech Kaczynski's incentives and motivations in relation to Georgia in similar way it was understood in case of Oliver Wardrop, though understanding such details is important to decide, whether Polish policy was based on primarily constructivist factors and was accompanied by realist incentives, or vice-versa, was realist in essence and was just supported by constructivist elements as a facade. Respectively, assumptions made about this debate will be approximate and not 100% convincing, due to such limitations to data.

Alternative sources, that might shed light on real incentives of politicians (in this case Polish authorities in relation to Georgia), that will give more precise answer to a debate: Neoclassical realism, constructivism or liberal intergovernmentalism and liberal institutionalism as a key driver of Polish foreign policy in relation with Georgia, are for example private writings and memoirs (though Lech Kaczynski doesn't have a one, though Jaroslaw Kaczynski's memoirs and books about PiS might provide insight. Another alternative might be leaked diplomatic cables or internal reports, also off-the-record interviews, speeches in closed circles, unpublished transcripts, especially made by former policy-makers, that doesn't have any limitations on their words anymore from current political context and are usually more sincere and honest (we can state that

Radosław Sikorski's interview with Kowal made in 2021 about his activities in relation with Georgia in 2008 can be such example). Trusted advisor testimonies or biographies are another alternative as well.

## **Findings and analysis**

The following chapter will be divided into two parts: The *First part* will overview the intensity and character of bilateral meetings on the highest level between the Presidents and Prime Ministers of Georgia and Poland in the years 2004-2024. It can be noted that the intensity of such meetings is one of the indicators of the dynamics of bilateral relations between two countries, namely, demonstrating how much importance leaders grant to bilateral relations. Apart from intensity, the character of those meetings will be assessed in qualitative terms as well, so the evaluation of those meetings will be more precise not only quantity-wise, but also content-wise. *The second part* analyzes the content of those meetings. This is the major part that intends to contribute to the debate about the drivers of Polish foreign policy with Georgia. Namely, it analyzes particular details of bilateral meetings on different levels (HSO, HGO, Ministerial, and Deputy Ministers level), compares it with existing literature about Polish-Georgian relations and wider Polish Eastern Policy, and fills the gaps, either adds new insights or fills the already-existing picture with more details. The second part also uses those findings in order to complement to theoretical debates between realism, constructivism and liberalism regarding Polish Eastern policy.

## **Dynamics of bilateral relations between Poland and Georgia**

This chapter provides an overview of the dynamics of bilateral relations between Poland and Georgia based on the intensity (frequency) of meetings at the highest levels, including either the Presidents of the corresponding countries or Prime Ministers.

Two factors should be considered in this regard. *First*, in 2004-2012, Georgia was primarily a Presidential-Parliamentary Republic, with the President having significant powers, being in charge of foreign policy as well. Even though the position of Prime Minister existed, it didn't have many leverages. Since 2012, up until 2018 powers of the President weakened and the country transitioned to a more Parliamentary-Presidential governance type. The President was still elected by voters, though their powers of it were far less than before. Respectively, bilateral visits since 2012 up until 2018 were made usually with dual engagement from both the President and Prime Ministers of Georgia. Since 2018, the power of the President decreased even more in Georgia, maintaining the Presidential veto only in symbolic terms, usually being overcome with a simple majority in Parliament. The president's involvement and role in

foreign policy-making decreased even more. Since 2024, the President is no longer elected in Georgia by voters, but rather by the Electoral College, thus reducing this position to an even more symbolic level.

*Second*, Meetings between the President of Georgia and her Polish counterpart since late 2022 are discussed separately. These meetings can't be discussed in the framework of all-inclusive governmental contacts between the two countries, simply because President Salome Zurbishvili had serious tensions with the Georgian Dream government. The latter blocked Zurbishvili's visits to Europe due to their difference in positions, especially in relation to Russian invasion in Ukraine in February 2022 (President was far explicitly supportive towards Ukraine, while Georgian Dream decided "not to irritate Russia", initially expressing mild support towards Ukraine, eventually confronting with Ukrainian counterparts and wider Western political elites). Still, Zurbishvili arranged meetings with Western politicians, including several meetings with Andrzej Duda at her own expense. The confrontation between the President and the Government went so high, that Georgian Dream even initiated an impeachment procedure against Salome Zurbishvili. This development should be taken into consideration while analyzing bilateral meetings

Meetings are divided into two categories according to their nature: a) Bilateral visits and b) Sideline meetings during international or regional summits or shared platforms without bilateral exchange at all. Though there are occasions, when Georgian and Polish officials were presented on international or regional summits, but beforehand held separate bilateral meetings and press-conferences beforehand or afterwards, those occasions are counted in "Bilateral visits" as well.

## Total Number of Meetings, Bilateral visits and Sideline meetings during international summits

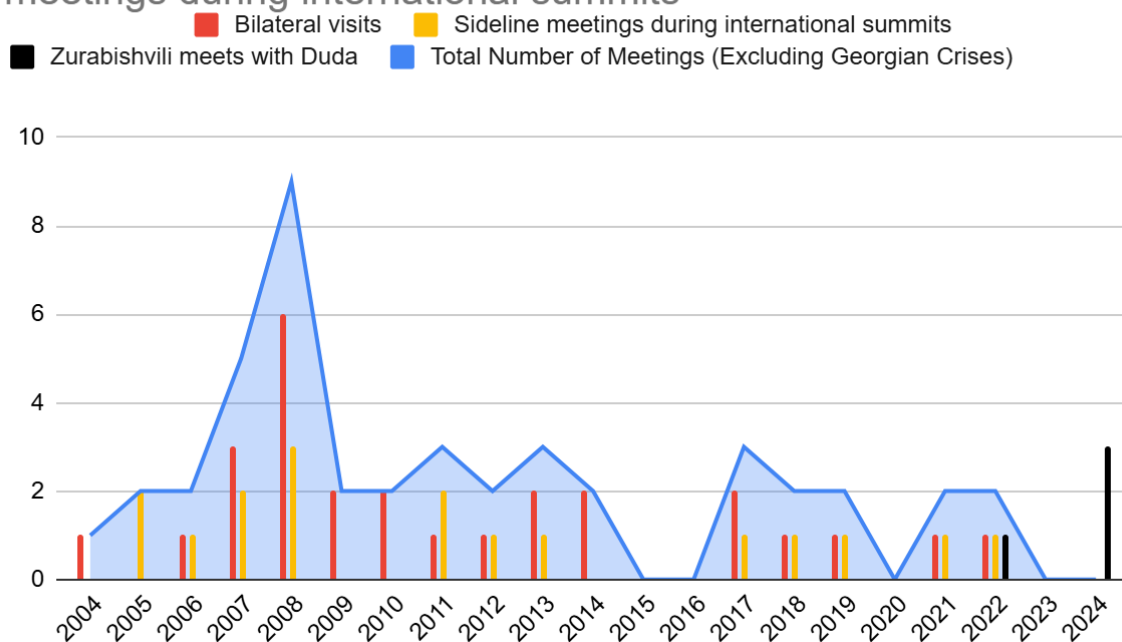


Chart 1 – Quantitative chart demonstrating the number of highest-level meetings between Poland and Georgia’s high officials – Presidents and Prime ministers.

Chart 1 explicitly demonstrates the dynamics of bilateral relations between two countries based on meetings between high authorities. Years 2004-2006 were kind of “warm up”. Following the finalization of Polish integration with Euro-Atlantic structures in 2004 (in 1999 Poland joined NATO, in 2004 - the EU) and developments known as “Rose Revolution” in Georgia in 2003, two countries were ready to intensify their cooperation. First meetings were held between 2004-2006. 2007-2008 can be perceived as a hype of Polish-Georgian bilateral ties. Total number of 14 high level meetings on Presidential / Prime Minister level took place during those two years, 9 of them in 2008.

This was followed by decline in number of bilateral meetings in following years. It can be said, that overall trend and dynamics in terms of numbers remained stable in years 2009-2022, with some episodic disruptions in 2015-2016 and 2020.

Year 2022 was critical in the way after that bilateral contacts between two governments in fact froze. Though, President Zurabishvili continued her visits in Poland and meetings with Polish

counterpart up until the end of her Presidential term. Even though such meetings were taking place in the course with serious tensions between Zurabishvili and Georgian Dream governments, the latter attempting to carry out impeachment proceedings against her, also because of the fact that she was attempting to carry out a traditional pro-Western foreign policy course of Georgia on her own.

## **Tracing the highest-level bilateral exchange between Georgian and Polish officials**

### ***2004-2006: "Unity Through Democracy: Multilateral Beginnings of Polish–Georgian Engagement"***

The years 2004-2005 are the starting point of intensifying Polish-Georgian relations in recent history. In 2004-2005, the President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili held several meetings with President Aleksander Kwaśniewski. Bilateral exchange during those times emerged in the context, when Poland is a post-Socialist nation-state, that successfully managed to finalize the Euro-Atlantic integration process, and Georgia appeared as a post-Soviet state, that made first promising steps of Westernization following Rose Revolution in 2003. The meetings mostly covered broader topics, including relations with Russia and economic cooperation with one another (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2005) (Civil.ge, 2005a).(Civil.ge, 2005b). Georgia's intentions regarding natural gas extraction and transit was highlighted as well. During meeting in Crimea, Ukraine at the 80th Anniversary of Artek Youth Group, important development and initiative was mostly linked to the initiative of creating *Community of Democratic Choice*. The initiative was initiated beforehand by joining declaration by the Presidents of Ukraine and Georgia early in August, in Georgia and called for countries of Baltic, Black and Caspian Sea regions for join (Civil.ge, 2005b) Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2005). Those meetings were accompanied slightly by symbolism too, namely during meeting in Kyiv in 2005, Saakashvili was invited by Kwaśniewski - from himself on behalf of former President of the Republic of Poland Lech Wałęsa to the Solidarity 25th anniversary celebrations, hoping that at this occasion all nations would celebrate and cherish ideas of Polish August that commemorated events linked to fighting for democracy and freedom during Communist times (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2005). Talks about democracy, as a key factor linking those countries was a key topic of discussion in Vilnius

Conference 2006: "Common Vision for Common Neighborhood", where Saakashvili had a chance to meet new President of Poland - Lech Kaczynski (White House, 2006)

In this discourse, Poland is a country, that during Soviet times actively struggled for democracy and freedom and in post-Soviet reality managed to finalize transition swiftly in matter of roughly a decade and a half, joining both Euro-Atlantic structures by 2004. In this way, Poland plays a role model for post-Soviet countries, first and foremost Georgia and Ukraine, those aspiring to cover a similar path as Poland, following the Velvet Revolutions that took place during those times in Tbilisi and Kyiv. Thus, the initial bonding force between Georgia and Poland was multilateral cooperation based on the idea of friendship among newly emerged democratic countries. The unity based on a broader understanding of democratic values is a first and foremost, rooted in liberal institutionalism theory, according to which democracy is a basis of international cooperation, and institutionalized values, such as human rights and rule of law serve as factors creating explicit chemistry. Though, content of those meetings also give an impression, that engagement mostly driven by neoliberal institutionalist sentiments also included slight patterns of constructivism - namely with Kwaśniewski's reference to Solidarity Movement-related identity and energy realism, Georgia highlighting itself as potential transit of natural gas, in this context potentially offering its transit potential to Poland in future, that heavily relied on Russian energy resources back then.

***2006-2008: Emerging bilateralism - Realpolitik intertwined with Identity-based ties***

"I have lost count of the number of times we have been meeting each other with Mr President for the last two years." - noted President Kaczynski amid the visit of Saakashvili in Poland in March, 2008 (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2008b) those words demonstrate well the dynamics of Polish-Georgian relations in the years 2007-2008. Just after Polish President stated those words on the 3rd of March, 2008 at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw, he met with his counter-part seven more times throughout that year. The phase continued up until 2008 and was characterized by strong interests from realist worldview and bonds created from the view of constructivist theory. There were several aspects significantly characterizing this period. First, it was pursuit of Poland to diversify energy resources as much as Possible amid confrontation with Russia and energy-blackmail as threat deriving from Moscow, with Georgia as an essential component for transiting Caspian Sea Resources. Second, unconditional support of Poland towards Georgia's NATO membership, Warsaw

being not only supporter of granting Georgia and Ukraine MAP, but key lobbyist together with Baltic States and the US. Third, hype of constructing upon common collective memory, historical identity and sentiments, almost every consecutive meeting between two Presidents being accompanied by visiting historical sites or even creating the ones. Last not least, Poland also tried to play positive role in overcoming domestic political crises in Georgia in Fall, 2007, following November the 7th events.

### ***Energy transit***

Energy transit was definitely one of the key topics of Polish Eastern Policy in the second half of 2000s. The significance of this topic and besides, context of it is well explained by the words of Lech Kaczyński at the GUAM Summit in Baku in Summer, 2007: “Energy initiatives are extremely vital, especially in the contemporary world, in which energy crises as well as energy blackmail have occurred and can – God forbid – happen again.” - stating Kaczynski, referring to Russia’s attempts to impact European politics with energy leverages it possessed (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2007d).

Energy transit was one of the (if not only one) main topic during Saakashvili’s visit to Warsaw in August 2006, Energy Forum in Kraków in May 2007, GUAM Summit in Baku in June 2007, Villnius Conference - “Responsible Energy for Responsible Partners” in October, 2007 (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2006a) (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2007b) (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2007d) (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2007e). How tense the situation was in this context is well-explained by the episode of Kraków Summit related to President of Kazakhstan - Nursultan Nazarbayev. Summit aimed to discuss delivery of gas and oil from Caspian Sea region to Europe sidestepping Russia. Initially among with other leaders, President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan was invited to attend the summit as well, but instead Special Envoy of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan was presented at the summit. Though, exactly during those days of Krakow Energy Summit, Putin arranged a series of visits in central Asia, including visit to Turkmenistan on 10th of May together with Nursultan Nazarbayev, getting back to Kazakhstan on 12th of May. Russian newspaper “Commersant” stated, that: “On the eve of the ‘anti-Russian’ energy summit... Moscow has launched a counter-offensive... The absence of one of the major participants – Nursultan Nazarbayev – is the first success of the move (Civil.ge, 2007b).” Absence of Nazarbayev due to Putin’s visit in the region according to one of Azerbaijani media platforms was confirmed by the Embassy of Azerbaijan in

Kazakhstan - according to a source in the Kazakhstan Embassy to Azerbaijan, due to the official visit of the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, from 10 to 20 May, the Kazakhstan President cannot participate in the Krakow Summit (Trend News Agency, 2007). Absence of Nazarbayev also by noted by Lech Kaczynski during the forum itself - "Ladies and Gentlemen! The communiqué and the key political results of the summit were presented yesterday. They were arrived at following 5-6 hours of discussions. I would only like to recall that – contrary to what had been anticipated – the participation of the representative of Kazakhstan is very significant. Kazakhstan was also involved in this joint communiqué, though it was not President Nazarbayev – for reasons we all know. In my opinion this summit has ended in a success greater than it could have been expected." - Stated President of Poland on a press conference (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2007c). During this occasion President of Poland was a special guest of the Summit of Heads of GUAM States. Kaczynski confirmed Saakashvili's words during the summit and highlighted, that this summit was also attracting interest of the US and Japan, likewise it did for Poland and Lithuania. Kaczynski highlighted, that GUAM countries were compatible with the NATO and the EU both in political and cultural terms, and that they possessed the resources in a huge scale, that is not possible to find or is accessible in very small volume in Europe itself. (GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, 2007).(Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2007d). Energy transit topic remained at the top of the agenda up until the end of the decade, though eventually failed due to geopolitical circumstances.

Polish concerns related to energy security, confrontation with Russia and its engagement with Eastern neighbors in this aspect is a subject that is purely explained by the logic of neoclassical realism. The picture is so explicit, that Discourse Analysis alone well explain, that it is all about power and security concerns. Poland had an objective to get rid of energy dependence on Russia, which on the other hand was (and generally - is) political leverage for the Kremlin. This example also is a clear demonstration of another aspect emphasized by neoclassical realism - significance of internal and external constraints impacting capacity of a nation-state in international arena. Best demonstration of this was an episode related to Nursultan Nazarbayev. Regardless how much Poland tried, its capacity to achieve its objective (ensuring energy transit from Caspian Sea) was initially limited by the fact that Putin managed to maintain Nazarbayev "in his club", preventing him from attending energy summit in Kraków. In the next chapter covering the period between 2008-2010 external constraints limiting

Poland's capacity will once again be highlighted when it comes to eventual failure of the idea of transferring Caspian Sea resources to Poland in late 2000s.

*Poland as a key lobbyist for Georgia's MAP and NATO membership*

"We have talked about NATO and about how crucial it is to admit Georgia to the Treaty as soon as possible. From Poland's point of view, this is nothing new since Poland has strongly supported such intention of Georgia from the very beginning" - that was the stance of Lech Kaczyński in relation with Georgia's NATO perspective already in 2006 (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2006a). It worth mentioning, that positioning of Poland didn't change since then, though that was the time when Georgia's NATO membership perspective was quite real in practical terms, in difference from aftermath of Bucharest Summit in April 2008. Moreover, according to Saakashvili, the fact, that following Bucharest Summit declaration Georgia and Ukraine didn't end up simply empty handed and received at least official pledge about eventually joining NATO was also outcome of efforts by key supporters - Poland and Baltic States (Civil.ge, 2008a). In his interview with Rustavi 2 Saakashvili later stated: "It is not a secret; these are the Baltic States, Poland – they have fought [over the matter] like they would fight for their most desirable goals. We should remember who were beside us for this very important moment and how they fought for us (Civil.ge, 2008a)".

Such dedication of Poland supporting Georgia's NATO membership perspective might be best explained partially by neo-classical realism and partially by constructivism. On the one hand, what's more implicit in motivation and speeches of Polish officials is the sense of constructivist understanding of Poland's role. For Poland, considering its own history and experience of engaging with Russia, from the logic of chains of equivalence supporting those that are oppressed by the Kremlin is a moral duty. On the other one hand, based on Critical Discourse Analysis, considering the context, more states within NATO from the East means more buffer between Poland and it's source of primary threat - Russia. First and foremost Ukraine, but indirectly other countries such as Georgia as well, once hypothetically becoming members of NATO give Poland a relief as a border state.

*Symbolism as an essential part of Polish-Georgian relations in late 2000s*

Most of the meetings during the hype of Polish-Georgian relations was full of symbolis. In 2006 Kaczynski made a promise about erecting a monument to commemorate Georgian officers, those that served in Polish Army in the first part of the XX century and the ones that

took part in Warsaw Uprising of 1944 (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2006a). The promise was fulfilled an year later - in the Freedom Park of the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising a monument of Georgian officers serving in the Polish Army was erected (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2007b). During bilateral exchanges, Saakashvili visiting Warsaw Uprising Museum or Kaczyński paying a visit to Soviet Occupation Museum in Tbilisi was a common practice (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2007a) .(Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2006a). On November 22 2007, Saakashvili together with Kaczynski unveiled the monument of Prometheus.(Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2007f) (Turner, 2015). The meeting in November also highlighted the importance of common cultural ties. Wife of President Kaczynski - Maria Kaczynska together with the First Lady of Georgia back then - Sandra Roelofs, visited Tbilisi Historical Museum, where she was presented exhibition devoted to the capital of Georgia, part of which Polish painter - Boris Romanowski pictures of Tbilisi in 1930s (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2007f) . The first ladies also visited National Parliamentary Library of Georgia as well, the decorations of which were made by another Polish painter - Henryk Hryniewski (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2007f),

Discourse analysis of those exchanges might lead to quite general and simple assumptions related to constructivist logic of actions by Saakashvili and Kaczyński back then, mostly leading to assumption, that Polish and Georgian counterparts were attempting to promote common collective memory and understanding of common history and culture, commemorating those, that contributed to the societies of both Poland and Georgia. Though going in-depth of some symbolic acts, more hidden meanings and specific incentives about interpreting history and path of modern Georgia and Poland might be grasped. The first episode in this regard is unveiling the monument of Prometheus, which can be perceived as clear reference to Polish Promethean politics and Georgia's acknowledgement and support towards it. Promethean politics, as noted above is a concept by Józef Piłsudski, that aimed weakening Russia by the way of supporting independence movements around it and in this way, eliminating the Russian threat against Poland. So attempts of Prometheism can be seen most explicitly in the actions of Kaczyński and Saakashvili, both having understood the role of Poland and Georgia exactly in full accordance with Promethean views. This leads to the expectation that respectively, unveiling Prometheus' monument in Tbilisi during the bilateral meeting wasn't a coincidence. Neither coincidence can be visiting the artworks of Henryk

Hryniewski, a Polish painter who symbolizes the struggle of both Poland and Georgia against Russian Imperialism. Hryniewski was born in Kutaisi (Georgia) in the family of Polish exiles (those that have been forcibly expelled from Poland to another distant part of the Russian Empire back then - Georgia in XIX century (National Parliamentary Library of Georgia, n.d.) . Exiles mostly were punished because they participated in liberation movements, such as participation in the November Uprising of 1830 or January Uprising of 1863 (National Parliamentary Library of Georgia, n.d.). Hryniewski spent important part of his life in Georgia, contributing to development of fine arts in this country. His fate is also symbolic in the way he was executed by Bolsheviks in 1937 (National Parliamentary Library of Georgia, n.d.) . Thus, such symbolic interactions can't be only perceived as a random facts of Polish and Georgian Presidents exchanging visits to common cultural sites, but rather to ones, that fitted most geopolitical course of Poland and Georgia during those times, including primarily in relation with Russia, mutually understood as common historical and contemporary threat., This is the strongest argument from the modern history of Poland and Georgia for constructivist theory, demonstrating that politics is shaped not just by material power and interests, but by ideas, identity, culture, and shared meanings of things, and this is not only assumption, but declaration by Lech Kaczyński himself at the moment he was decorated with St George's Cross during his visit in November 2007 - "I am overcome with deep emotion as I receive this decoration from the hands of the President of the nation which has for centuries been resisting the Russian imperialism, the nation which for almost 18 centuries has been a Christian nation, a nation which after 1989 stood as a model of attachment of freedom, which fought to regain it after the Bolshevik revolution and has actually regained it for a few years (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2007g).

### *Poland's Normative Role in Georgia's internal politics and the Peak of Promethean Symbolism*

The visit of Polish President - Lech Kaczynski to Georgia in November 2007 was a special one. First, it was due to the reason, that it was first occasion, when Poland attempted to play a role of "Democracy Defender" in Georgia amid the crises. In November 2007 Georgia was experiencing significant political turmoil, with the peak on November 7th as a result of riot police dispersing opposition rally on Rustaveli Avenue and later near Rike Park. Later the developments ended with resignation of Mikheil Saakashvili on November 25th and snap Presidential Elections planned for January 5th, 2008. Lech Kaczynski and his wife visited Georgia on November 22-23rd with the official objective to attend the 4th Anniversary of Rose Revolution. Though Kaczynski held meetings both with the government and also opposition.

Kaczynski supported the decision about early elections and stated, that “it was very important decision to hold early presidential elections. I am sure Georgia will pass this important test successfully. Kaczynski said. “Although there might be some problems on this road. I am sure Georgia is on the right track (Civil.ge, 2007d).” Before that, in 2008, Lech Kaczynski visited Tbilisi in January as well (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2008a). The visit was held together with the Presidents from Baltic States and Romania in order to attend the inauguration of Saakashvili, after he secured position of the President once again as a result of January 2008 elections. Kaczynski demonstrated, that he was glad that “Crises was over, the elections were held, and the OSCE issued a positive assessment”.

This is quite an interesting episode from theoretical lenses perspective. It can be stated, that this episode is one of few cases (if not only) in the years 2007-2008 in the context of Polish-Georgian relations, that can be primarily explained by liberal institutionalist paradigm. This was an explicit case, when Poland didn't simply backed up it's geopolitical ally regardless domestic turmoil, but engaged and tried to play a positive role in terms of supporting democratic process in Georgia.

### *August War*

In August 2008, Russia invaded Georgia and occupied 20% of its territories. The President of Poland - Lech Kaczynski was one of the most devoted supporters of Georgia's independence during those days as well. With his initiative Presidents and Prime-minister from five countries - Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia gathered and visited Tbilisi on August 12. High officials joined the rally, where Kaczynski made a famous speech, where, together with supporting Georgia, he made quite a significant prediction about future aggression of Russia against Ukraine, probably proceeded by hostilities against Baltic States and eventually Poland. “ And we also know very well that today Georgia, tomorrow Ukraine, the day after tomorrow the Baltic States, and later maybe it will be time for my country, for Poland!” - stated Kaczynski during his address at Rustaveli Avenue (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2008e). He also addressed the world and demanded from them, especially from NATO and the EU to react even stronger. “Among us, there are four NATO members. There is also Ukraine, a large country. There is Mr President Sarkozy who at present presides over the European Union. But there should be 27 of us here.” - added Kaczynski and warned everybody, that without Georgia, Russia would restore its empire that served nobody's interest (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2008e).

### ***2008-2010 - Post-War Fatigue - Last exchanges between Kaczynski and Saakashvili***

Following the developments in 2008 bilateral exchanges between Georgia and Poland decreased, even though Saakashvili and Kaczyński were still Presidents. Since August 2008, up until tragic death of Lech Kaczyński, two Presidents met one-another four more times. Those visits have some peculiarities, that are important for theoretical analysis as well.

In November, 2008, during his visit, Kaczyński accompanied Saakashvili to occupation line, near Tskhinvali, where the Presidential convoy ended up under shoot-out (Civil.ge, 2008c). Even though nobody was harmed, personal risk carried out by Kaczyński with the sore purpose of demonstrating moral solidarity makes a lot of sense. It can be stated, that such actions, that bear high risk, but don't give in return much in practical terms is a way of behavior, that is mostly driven by norms values and identity, rather than rational calculations. Thus, this episode can be purely explained by constructivist theory. (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2009a) (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2009b).

In 2010 the Energy Summit was supposed to be held in Batumi. Supposedly, almost 10 Heads of the States had to take part there. Though in the last minute Summit got downgraded to Conference as far as starting from President of Ukraine (Due to electoral processes), chain of cancelations started and non of the Presidents made it to the one, even though event still took place, but on lower level (Civil Georgia, 2010).

In April 2010, a plane taking Lech Kaczynski, together with his wife - Maria Kaczynska and dozens of other Polish authorities to the Anniversary of Katyn Massacre experienced an avia catastrophe over Smolensk, Russia, killin all the passengers, including President, on the board (Civil.ge, 2010b). Number of officials, including Barack Obama had to cancel their trips to Poland to attend the ceremony of Kaczynski's funeral due to difficulties of air travel caused by volcanic eruption in Iceland. Georgian delegation also had to cancel the visit (Civil.ge, 2010c). Though Saakashvili and Sandra Roelofs somehow managed to get to Krakow. While Europe's aviation was largely grounded, Saakashvili's team planned a low-altitude flight route with stops in Portugal, Italy, and Turkey (Civil.ge, 2010c). Special clearance was arranged during each stop to navigate safely beneath or around the ash cloud toward Kraków (Civil.ge, 2010c). Amid absence of leaders such as Obama, Merkel and Sarkozy, Saakashvili's efforts to attend the funeral (which he managed to do just an hour before coffins were interred in Wawel Castle)

was quite a noticeable, for some people being a sign of special bonds with namely Kaczynski and Poland (Civil.ge, 2010c).

***2010-2015: Less realism, steady constructivist and liberal institutionalist factors in 2010s***

It worth highlighting, that since early 2010s, bilateral relations between Georgia and Poland developed, though with steady pace, intensity and character.

Poland always supported Georgia's NATO and the EU integration aspirations. Though, the former didn't see much essential progress since Bucharest Summit in terms of membership due to geopolitical reality, while the latter was steadily progressing and Poland was playing a role in that regard.

Bronisław Komorowski, President of Poland following Kaczynski's death, visited Georgia in July 2011 and declared his support towards Georgia joining European Free Trade Zone (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2011).

Later that Year, Saakashvili met with Donald Tusk, Prime Minister of Poland at Krynica Economic Forum in early September and then at Warsaw Eastern Partnership Summit in two weeks afterwards (Civil.ge, 2011). All those meetings were all about the progress and cooperation with the EU in terms of integration. Georgian side expected a breakthrough and a clear EU accession Path on Warsaw Summit, though expectations weren't met (Civil.ge, 2011). According to Donald Tusk, by that moment, neither the EU, nor member states were ready to offer something more than achieved. Though Saakashvili perceived the EU membership as an essential mission: "Getting closer to EU, membership in the EU is decisive for our development, for our security, because we can not stay alone. We live in a very difficult region, facing huge challenges. This [EU integration] is simply a matter of life and death, an existential issue. We are no longer CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] member; CIS was not giving us anything; but we should be somewhere and this somewhere is of course the European house," - noted him following the Warsaw Eastern Partnership Summit.

In October 2012, Parliamentary elections took place in Georgia. Georgian Dream Coalition formed a government and for the first time, peaceful and democratic transition in a way of elections took place in Georgia. Though, Presidential elections were to be held later in 2013. Thus, for almost an year, Georgia had times of cohabitation, with Mikheil Saakashvili, this time presenting opposition party - United National Movement as a President, and Georgian

Dream Coalition - forming a government. During the times of Cohabitation in Georgia, Saakashvili met his Polish counterparts twice in December 2012 and in April 2013 (Civil.ge, 2012) (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2013). Meanwhile back then Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili visited Poland once in July, 2013 Both meetings of Saakashvili with President Bronisław Komorowski and Ivanishvili with Polish Prime Minister - Donald Tusk were accompanied by two key points: 1) Poland was a consistent and keen supporter of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic Aspirations. 2) Georgia had to maintain internal political stability and devotion to democratic principles if it wanted to progress on the EU way, especially for fulfilling conditions for upcoming Association Agreement (Civil.ge, 2013a). And in this process, both the new government and opposition (which was mostly former government - United National Movement) had a responsibility.

In October 2013, another Presidential elections took place in Georgia. Saakashvili no longer take part in it as far as he had already finished two Presidential terms. Georgian Dream's candidate - Giorgi Margvelashvili secured the position with 62.12% of votes. In 2013-2014 Margvelashvili met with Polish counter-parts three times, once in 2013 during the visit to Vilnius and twice during bilateral visits in Poland in 2014 (Civil.ge, 2013b).

New topic on the agenda during those meetings was crises and Russian aggression in Ukraine starting in Spring 2014, as a part of conflict in Eastern Ukraine and annexation of Crimea. During meetings with Bronisław Komorowski, it was highlighted, that Poland was keen supporter of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations and that the determinism of the West was especially important in new geopolitical context, where Russia was making more aggressive stance (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2014a). The last meeting in 2014 also envisaged cooperation agreement between Poland's National Security Office (BBN) and the Office of the National Security Council of Georgia, which included timetable of mutual contacts and scope of covered topics (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2014b).

Years 2015 and 2016 were quite passive in bilateral relations between Poland and Georgia from the perspective of HSO or HGO exchanges. There are no records of such meetings, even though there was intention of meeting between President Margvelashvili and outgoing President Komorowski in Bratislava in 2015 (Civil.ge, 2015). Also Margvelashvili attended

NATO Summit in Warsaw in 2016, though neither there is a record of a meeting with Polish counterparts either on Presidential, or Prime Minister level (Civil.ge, 2016).

***2017-2022: History strikes back once again, rise of identity-based constructivism***

In 2015 Law and Justice Party returned to power in Poland. In the same year, in Presidential elections Andrzej Duda of Law and Justice Party beats Civic Platform candidate - Bronisław Komorowski. There is a clear correlation between administrations in Poland (seen from partisan view) and inclusion of memory and identity politics in relation with Georgia. Since Law and Justice party comes in power (both forming government and securing Presidential position), historical ties once again plays a significant role in formation of bilateral Georgian-Polish relations. Even though from Georgian side, the government is represented by a Georgian Dream, which is more cautious in relation with history, trying to not be bounded with very firm anti-Russian narratives. (Which United National Movement never hesitated to, always highlighting the memory of Russian imperialism and thus, being in a absolute harmony with Law and Justice party historical narratives).

In 2017 Andrzej Duda made his ever first visit in Georgia as a President. "I am an advocate of Georgia's full NATO membership, the doors of the Alliance should remain open," - that's the quotation that demonstrates his stance towards Georgia (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2017a). He also made a reference to Lech Kaczyński, assessing his own trip as a way of following "the path set out in political sense by Professor Lech Kaczyński". As a part of same visit, commemorating the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Poland and Georgia, Duda and Margvelashvili signed a declaration of cooperation, which also referred to Kaczyński's words said by President at Rustaveli Avenue, on August 12th, 2008: "We are here to express our solidarity" (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2017b). The visit was finalized another identity-based symbolic bond - opening the Avenue of Marshal Józef Piłsudski in Tbilisi. According to Press Release by the Administration of the President of Poland, Piłsudski was in favor of Georgian-Polish alliance in 1917-1921 and he saw Georgia as a part of intermarium concept. The symbolic gesture at the opening ceremony was accompanied by another symbol from the history of both countries - quotation about Piłsudski by St Grigol Peradze, Georgian professor of University of Warsaw and ecclesiastic figure, who died in Nazi camp in Auschwitz in the course of World War 2. Presidents also agrees on creating a committee, that by 2021 would have finalized the study of Georgian-Polish alliance of 1917-1921 (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej

Polskiej, 2017c). Duda also met with back then Prime Minister - Giorgi Kvirikashvili an chairperson of the Parliament - Irakli Kobakhidze (Civil.ge, 2017a). Presidents of Georgia and Poland also met with one-another in sidelines of Krynica Economic Forum in September, 2017 (The Financial, 2017).

Another bilateral visit of Georgian President to Poland took place in November, 2017 (Civil.ge, 2017b). During this meeting, Presidents discussed upcoming Eastern Partnership summit and also security cooperation, especially amid Poland's membership in the UN Security Council starting from 2018 (Civil.ge, 2017b).

In March 2018 Presidents of Poland and Georgia briefly met once again with one-another in Tbilisi, while Duda was returning from Afghanistan to Poland (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2018a).

2018 was quite a significant year. This time, Georgia celebrated 100 years of Independence. Anniversary on the 26th of May was attended by Andrzej Duda as well. Moreover, Economic Forum also took place in Tbilisi in cooperation with Economic Forum in Krynica (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2018b). Amid his visit, Duda referred to Lech Kaczynski once again. "great patron and predecessor", "for whom a free, independent, sovereign and safe Georgia was an important, if not basic, element of European security, but also, more broadly, of global security (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2018b)." Duda demonstrated once again his support towards Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. During this visit it was also highlighted, that Poland is still interested in Georgia in economic terms, referring to its importance as a part of corridor connecting India through Iran and then Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine and Poland to Western Europe and a corridor for Silk Road connecting China with Europe (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2018b).

The bilateral exchanges remained similar in later years up until 2022. In 2019 President of Georgia became Salome Zurbishvili. Zurbishvili met with Duda in May 2019, where they have discussed strengthening of bilateral ties, including economic exchange and support of Poland towards Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, with concentration on Eastern Partnership format and its role as a path towards the EU (Civil.ge, 2019a) (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2019a). In September 2019, Zurbishvili visited Poland once again

with an invitation to the 80th Anniversary of Outbreak of the World War II, when on the 1st of September Nazi Germany attacked Poland (Civil.ge, 2019b) (1TV, 2019).

President of Poland attended the anniversary of independence of Georgia in 2021 as well. Duda reiterated his support towards open door policy for Georgia in the EU and NATO, also support for Georgia's territorial integrity. There was discussion about increasing trade as well (Civil.ge, 2021a). Duda also demonstrated willingness to provide to Georgia Covid-19 vaccines on behalf of Poland (TVN24, 2021). He also visited Bust of Lech Kaczynski in Tbilisi (Polskie Radio [Redakcja Polska], 2021). Later that year, Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili organized meetings at UN General Assembly in New York.

Last visit in recent years of Polish HSO/HGO to Georgia took place in 2022. In March 2022, just after Russian full-scale Invasion in Ukraine, Prime Minister of Poland - Mateusz Morawiecki visited Georgia. In coastal city of Batumi, he met with his counter-part - Irakli Gharibashvili. Key topic of discussion was Russian aggression against Ukraine. There was discussion about sanctions policy against Russia. On his side, Gharibashvili stated, that Georgia was firmly support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and that Georgia knew what Russian aggression meant, itself paying heavy price, 20% of its territories being still occupied. Regarding Sanctions policy Gharibashvili stated, that following 2008, unfortunately nobody imposed sanctions against Russia and that most of European countries started "Refresh Policy" with Moscow. On his side, Morawiecki demonstrated full support towards Ukraine and highlighted the essence of "strong sanction packages to be adopted, executed and enforced" on Russia, that Poland is in "vanguard of constructing new and ever-reaching sanctions", added that he discussed the issue with Gharibashvili regarding "voices in Europe saying that Georgia may not be fully implement these sanctions". Overview of this discussion gives a feeling, that Morawiecki's one of aims of visit was to make sure, that Georgia would have joined sanctions policy, but regardless promises of Gharibashvili regarding supporting Ukraine as much as possible, the latter was hesitant to impose full sanctions on Russia, backing up it with the argument, that when Georgia needed such solidarity, most of Europe didn't care about punishing Russia, rather "Resetting Relations" with it following August War in 2008. Challenges related to Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, following application made by Georgian side in 2022 was discussed as well (Kancelaria Prezesa Rady Ministrów, 2022a). It is worth noting, that wording "challenges" was quite new in this context and mostly refers to Georgia's initial reaction to Russian invasion in Ukraine,

that was not fully in accordance with wider Western policy towards Russia, not to mention later confrontations and grievances that have been formed since 2022 on continuous basis. The last visit of Polish HGO in Georgia is leaving mixed feelings, both traditional positive sentiments and bitterness of disagreement between Georgia and the West in overall, that was already explicit during that moment. That meeting was symbolized with unveiling another monument of Lech Kaczynski, this time in Batumi (Polonia Institute, 2022). In two months following meeting in Batumi, Irakli Gharibashvili met with Polish counterpart during Charity Conference being organized in Poland (Kancelaria Prezesa Rady Ministrów, 2022b).

### *Downfall since 2022*

It can be stated, that since 2022, bilateral ties between Georgia and Poland, similarly to the relations between Georgia and the West in general, declined and deteriorated so much, that it reached historical minimum. Started with Georgian Dream government's controversial stance on Russian invasion in Ukraine and later the developments in domestic politics, namely linked to controversial "foreign agents" laws of 2023 and 2024, as well as elections of October 2024 and other issues linked to restricting civil freedoms and imprisonment of opposition leaders, created a serious obstacles between Georgia and the West, including Tbilisi and Warsaw.

Since late 2022, the only Georgian governmental body that maintained traditional ties with the Western partners, including Poland, was Georgian President in the years 2018-2024, Salome Zurbishvili. In years 2022-2024 she met with Andrzej Duda 4 times, in December 2022, in June, October and December 2024. In December 2022, Presidents demonstrated solidarity with Ukraine, Duda referring to Lech Kaczynski once again, stating: „Today, we both know well that we must put up a strong stand in defence of Ukraine... the Ukraine President Lech Kaczynski said could come under attack from Russia if we failed to stop Russia in Georgia (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2022). This is happening today, so, in order to prevent more warfare... the Russian aggression must be blocked by the international community. In June, 2024 leaders met in Switzerland, where Duda reiterated his support for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic path (Civil.ge, 2024a). The importance of upcoming elections in October 2024 was also highlighted (Civil.ge, 2024a). Same was reiterated by Adrzej Duda amid Zurbishvili's visit to Warsaw in October, as a part of participation in the Warsaw Security Conference (Civil.ge, 2024b). For the last time Zurbishvili met with Duda in France in December 2024 (Civil.ge, 2024c).

## Questions revisited

### *Assessing the relevance of theoretical categories and their corresponding drivers in action in time frame and comparing the effect of drivers from different theoretical frameworks with one-another amid their interplay*

This paper in difference from most of other papers generally assessing Polish foreign policy from perspective of different theoretical views is distinct in the way it doesn't prioritize any theory as superior to one another. Rather the central argument here is that the role of particular theories explaining Foreign Policy phenomenon is rather depended on the preferences of actors themselves. The argument here is that International Relations don't have universal nature in their essence rooted in either realist, liberal or constructivist principles, but rather their character depends on the worldview of policymakers. Of course it is possible that one of those theories might be dominating the international relations arena, but not because arena is in essence such, but rather because people who create it have such beliefs.

How does this approach correspond to very specific case of Polish Foreign Policy in relation with Georgia is the following: Whether liberal intergovernmentalism and liberal internationalism, or neoclassical realism or constructivist theory explains best Polish foreign policy in relation with Georgia is dependent on which beliefs and values (explained by those theories) were dominant for particular policy-makers from both side (and first and foremost - Poland, the motives of which is a researched phenomenon here). The nature and value system of Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Lech Kaczyński, Bronisław Komorowski, Donald Tusk, Andrzej Duda and other policymakers of Poland, and their corresponding worldviews, first and foremost defined the drivers of Poland towards Georgia.

One more consideration here is the assumption, that at the same time there might not be only one driver, that is in effect. For instance, by 2008 it was clear that Lech Kaczyński was driven by realistic factors for sure, including energy corridor interest, but that doesn't mean that he wasn't also inspired by Jagiellonian vision of Poland striving for supporting nations resisting Russian imperialism.

So the objective of this thesis here is to demonstrate:

- 1) Different drivers explained by different theories were in force during different periods of Polish-Georgian relations

- 2) There might be occasions, when some drivers (explained by different IR Theories) were in action at the same time
- 3) In such case, when several drivers from different theories explain foreign policy in the same period at once, it is not easy to clarify which driver is primary (unless we don't somehow research what was happening in the head of policymaker in that particular moment when decisions were made, the fact, which sometimes is not consciously aware for those decisionmakers themselves), but still elaborating on this part and looking for logic is worth trying.

So, back to the point, the observation from primary data gives the impression, that:

***Liberal intergovernmentalism and liberal institutionalism, as an primary outset factor for starting Polish-Georgian cooperation in 2004-2005***

In early 2000s, including at the outset of the exchange of interactions between Kaczyński and Saakashvili, the primary driver of Polish-Georgian relations was rooted in neoliberal institutionalist principles. During the meetings between Saakashvili and Kwaśniewski, and during first meetings including the ones in 2004-2005 between Saakashvili and Kaczyński the key topic of understanding is a general idea of “Democracies cooperating with one-another”, which was more global-phenomenon, mostly promoted by the US-led unilateral post-Cold War narrative and globalization. Even though norm-based cooperation can be explained by Constructivism as well, still, friendship of cooperation between Democracies based on human rights, civil liberties and corresponding values is the most organic features of neoliberal worldview. Those meetings even-though mention vaguely aspects such as energy cooperation, those terms are too vague and don't provide particular projects, such as it happened in later years.

***Interplay dominated by Constructivism and Neoclassical Realism in the second part of the 2000s***

Peak of Georgian and Polish relations is definitely driven by realist and constructivist factors, such as buffer-state logic, energy realism, supporting US-led initiatives on the one hand, and historical ties and Prometheanism-based Jagiellonian worldview from Polish side. The chapter won't go through this once again, because those factors were already explained with specific facts beforehand. Rather this chapter will try to elaborate on the question:

*Was Polish activity in relation with Georgia primarily rooted in the pure Jagiellonian spirit and ideals of supporting resistance of Free nation against Russian Imperialism and some pragmatic interests were just backing up this spirit?*

*Or Polish activity in relation with Georgia was primarily defined by realism(s), pragmatic Polish interests coinciding with Georgian ones, and symbolic elements rooted in constructivist logic were simply used to craft a beautiful facade of realpolitik?*

Honestly saying, this thesis doesn't have an ambition that primary sources used by it will give a 100% answer to the question. Whether Polish engagement was a pure idealistic approach or realpolitik-driven approach in interest of both nation-states adorned with historical symbolism is depended on the factors, such as what was really happening inside the conscious and subconscious mind of policymakers, first and foremost - Lech Kaczyński during his Presidency. Using Press releases and official statements, or official documents is not a best way to clarify that much internal aspects of person's mind, and research of more personal information sources (such as memoirs, or transcripts of unofficial conversations, declassified letters, letters with loved ones and etc.) can serve this purpose, though in this very specific case such data is not accessible. Still, observation on development of Polish-Georgian relations based on official statements based on primary sources can still make some cautious insights. Those insights will be clarified later in this chapter.

As for know, what is for sure is that in the second part of the 2000s, realist and constructivist-based factors were significantly visible in Polish-Georgian relations, leading it to the peak of intensity in the history of both nations.

### ***Early 2010s - Primarily driven again by Neoliberal instrumentalist features?***

Developments in the end of 2000s, such as decreasing significance of pragmatic interests (for instance initiative linking of Odessa-Brody pipeline with Caspian Sea resources eventually failed due to different reasons), also Georgia's short-run real NATO Membership perspective fading away as a result of Bucharest Summit outcome and later Russian invasion of Georgia, significantly decreased the importance of realist factors. Later some components (at least intensity) of constructivism faded away as well. For instance, clear observation is, that Civic Platform governments aren't that much hyper-sensitive about history. On the one hand, it gives them a chance, to have more reconciliatory policy in relation with neighbours, namely modern political allies, such as Ukraine and Lithuania, in difference from Law and Justice Party, which

pays significant attention to history, often pushing historical grievances with same neighbors as priority on agenda. On the other hand, based on the observation between Polish-Georgian relations, the times, when Civic Platform is in power is lacking that historical symbolism, that is evident during Law and Justice administrations. Following tragic death of Lech Kaczyński, in 2010 Bronisław Komorowski from Civic Platform won elections against Jarosław Kaczyński (Lech Kaczyński's brother). The transcripts or briefs of press-releases from later times between Presidents of Georgia and Poland clearly lacks the symbolism (moreover, it is totally absent), that was strongly accompanying the meetings and bilateral exchanges between Saakashvili and Kaczyński in the past. The years between 2010-2015 in Polish-Georgian relations was friendly and consistent, though mostly based on traditional support of Poland towards Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, with much concentration on Eastern Partnership and Georgia's relations with the EU. So it can be said, that Polish-Georgian relations mostly became devoid of symbolic interactions and significant realist short-run drivers and simply consistently depended on classic but not that much intense and specific narrative of cooperation between Democratic states and support of Euro-Atlantic integration.

### ***2015-2022 - PiS Back in Power, Jagiellonian-Promethean Spirit hits back?***

In 2015 Law and Justice party formed the government and in the same year Andrzej Duda secured Presidency in elections against Bronisław Komorowski. Since 2015 in Georgian-Polish relations from pragmatic terms nothing changes significantly, Poland was supporting Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations as usual, which means that the tandem of pragmatism and symbolism leading bilateral relations to hype back in the 2000s wouldn't have been there anymore. Though, symbolism returned to Polish-Georgian relations. Even though symbolism was not as firmly bilateral as before (Saakashvili's government was accepting both sides of Poland's Jagiellonianism, common historical ties and image of Georgia as a country firefly resisting Russian imperialism, meanwhile Georgian Dream accepted half of this image, accepting and contributing to common historical ties part, though abstaining from pushing hard on highlighting Russian imperialism, as it is not consistent narrative (even though they wouldn't deny it) with "pragmatic politics" with Russia.), return of Law and Justice Party to government still impacted rise of Jagiellonianism-based symbolic elements to bilateral relations. Though, it wasn't as intensive as before.

So the period between 2015-2022 can be assessed as a period driven both liberal institutionalism and constructivism.

This point can get back to the question regarding: *Whether Polish activity in relation with Georgia primarily rooted in the pure Jagiellonian spirit and ideals of supporting resistance of Free nation against Russian Imperialism and some pragmatic interests were just backing up this spirit?*

*Or Polish activity in relation with Georgia was primarily defined by realism(s), pragmatic Polish interests coinciding with Georgian ones, and symbolic elements rooted in constructivist logic were simply used to craft a beautiful facade of realpolitik?*

Polish foreign policy in relation with Georgia in the years 2015-2022 demonstrates, that Poland can still seek for Jagiellonian policy in relation with Georgia without any significant and in short-run tangible realist outcomes, though it is still worth highlighting, that drive and intensity is far more impressive, when such factors are in action.

### ***Since 2022***

Since 2022 there is no point in discussing drivers of Poland's foreign policy in relation with Georgia, simply because so far situation is out of the frame of both neoliberal institutionalist frame (Georgia being in opposition with it) and Jagiellonianism in this very moment can't be also a factor regardless how much Poland might aspire it simply because of the fact, that Georgian aspect of it is frozen in this very moment.

## Conclusion

Polish-Georgian relations have been on rise since early 2000s. In 2004 Poland finalized its integration in Euro-Atlantic Structures, from the same year new government was finally formed in Georgia, creating an explicit pro-Western foreign policy vector. Those two developments created a fertile ground for increasing bilateral ties. Since that time, Polish-Georgian bilateral ties increased significantly and Poland became one of the key supporters of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic path for upcoming two decades with undisrupted consistency until 2024, though with changing dynamics and intensity over time.

Drivers of Polish foreign policy in relation with Georgia can be categorized and labelled under different International Relation Theories, predominantly among groups of neoclassical realism, constructivism, liberal institutionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism. Theoretical foundations of Polish foreign policy in relation with Georgia is also grounded in Polish political thought, tracing back to Jagiellonian and Piast concepts of Polish Foreign and Security Policy and Ideological Doctrines provided by primarily Piłsudski and Giedroyc.

Referring back to International Relations theories, it can be stated that drivers categorized under those theoretical groups were relevant with different intensity during different episodes of history. Primarily at the outset of rise Polish-Georgian bilateral relations liberal institutionalism was a primary force, putting countries close to one-another based on common understanding of Democratic Choice. Later, in the peak of Polish-Georgian relations, Poland's foreign policy in relation with Georgia was driven primarily by idealist principles rooted in Jagiellonian Mission of Poland in the East, being labelled as constructivist features and pragmatic interests in the region in forms of energy diversification, security buffer against Russia and engaging in accordance with key partner's - the US interests in the region, all the drivers put under realism(s) category. In the first part of 2010s intensity of relations decreased, even though in principle remained unchanged, and Poland's engagement with Georgia was steadily ongoing mostly within the EU frame, especially in the spectrum of Eastern Partnership program. Since 2015 up until 2022 Jagiellonian symbolism and identity-based ties were set into interplay together with neoliberal institutional basis as well.

Overviewing timeframe, it can be stated that whether Poland's policy in relation with Georgia was driven primarily by liberal institutionalism, or mix of constructivist and realist principles

predominantly, was also correlated (and strongly believed that caused) by the fact who was governing those countries, primarily Poland. Approaches explained by liberal institutionalism is more a characteristic of Civic Platform's foreign policy making style, while Mix of primarily Constructivist and Realist features is rather a characteristic of Law and Justice Party administrations. Even though the thesis sheds a light into some insights of drivers of Polish foreign policy towards Georgia in the years 2004-2024, there is far more to research beyond existing literature and primary sources in order to dig deeper into the depths of organic incentives of Polish policy-makers, which is essential to assess which IR Theory explains best Polish engagement with Georgia during last two decades.

### **Potential for Future Research**

First and foremost, eventual argument that was heard throughout the course of the paper is that International Relations are too complex to be explained by a single theory, and that complexity of relations requires complexity of different theories playing a role to different extent throughout different episodes of timelines. Respectively, Realism(s), constructivism and neoliberal functionalism, even though dominate the narrative of this thesis, might not be the only theories that explain drivers of Polish foreign policy in relation with Georgia during last two decades, thus the topic can be developed into a interplay of more broader spectrum of different less widespread IR theories, such as:

- Theories explaining foreign affairs as a continuation of domestic politics.
- Role Play theories
- Theories analyzing IR from the perspective of individual as a key driver of IR Outcomes

Secondly, the one of the key aspects of the puzzle, that, due to limitations of the primary sources isn't fully solved here, is the interplay between Constructivism and Realism, namely during Law and Justice Party administrations. More specifically, even though based on developments since 2015 within bilateral relations between Georgia and Poland it is visible that constructivism can play a role without significant realist reasoning, still it is interesting to dig into the depth psychology of Polish policy makers especially in the mid 2000s. Official statements aren't sufficient source to go in such depth. Respectively, further study has a great potential, that will understand the reasoning behind Polish policymakers based on their incentives that theoretically can be researched within their psychological and ideological nature. Though practically making such research is quite challenging, due to the fact that

primary sources required to make this research is based on personal records of those actors, such as memoirs, personal letters where they talk about particular issues with their closest family members and friends (such sources even are less accessible today as far as such interactions now became part of digital universe, far more difficult to be traced rather than printed interactions from the past centuries, that more successfully were acquired as archival data by modern scholars), or psycho-ideological images of them recreated by their closest colleagues (which is still a subjective interpretation of letters rather than objective manifestation of one's true nature and inner thoughts).

Thirdly, there is a possibility of making further research based on other open-source materials (or the materials that can be accessed through official institutions, such as MFA or Presidential / Prime Minister's Office archives). For instance similarly to quantitative analysis of dynamics of bilateral relations between Presidents and Prime Ministers of Georgia and Poland, the same method can be used for studying the frequency and dynamics of bilateral exchanges on ministerial and deputy ministers, parliamentary levels. This will give more sense in terms of both frequency and qualitative data, giving more insights into the details of bilateral relations or affairs managed under multilateral frames.

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