Europeanization of Political Parties beyond the EU

(The Case from Georgia)

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Abstract

'Europeanization and party change' is a relatively new area within Europeanization studies. Moreover, there is a lack of literature on Europeanization of the political parties in the non-candidate countries, specifically, the Eastern Neighborhood countries (ENP). Considering this, the underlying research seeks to fill this gap by taking a case from Georgia, as one of the ENP countries and examine a process of Europeanization of political parties in the period between the 2004 and 2016 parliamentary elections. The study offers a review of two stands of Europeanization literature: external Europeanization and Europeanization of political parties. Political party Europeanization is conceptualized by means of addressing a programmatic change, relations beyond the national political system and patterns of party competition. Content analysis of parties' election manifestos, as well as the web sites of Georgian and Euro parties and media sources reveal evidence of Europeanization on formal, discursive level. However, the parties are not consistent in promoting European values such as democracy, anti-corruption efforts, human rights and freedom and increased Europeanization is not matched by tangible improvements in the country's democracy, human rights and anti-corruption rankings. The thesis argues that, the political parties, as policy actors, used European discourse and channels of Europeanization strategically to reach their political goals in terms of gaining domestic electoral support and international legitimization, leaving less room for in-depth norm internalization and political socialization. Constructivist ("logic of appropriateness") understanding of Europeanization can offer an explanation to this, which stresses that, the actors are not selflessly embedded in the social structures, but use discourse in a strategic way to reach their goals. On a broader level, the research also discloses the limits of

EU's normative power and top-down Europeanization approach in a non-stable political and

geopolitical environment near EU's neighborhood.

List of Abbreviations:

AA	Association Agreement
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
APG	Alliance of Patriots of Georgia
ACRE	The Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe
CRCC	Caucasus Research Resource Centre
CDM	Christian-Democratic Movement
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
DMUG	Democratic Movement- Unified Georgia
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EPP	European People's Party
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU	European Union
EUMM	EU Monitoring Mission and EU Special Representative
GD	Georgian Dream
GLP	Georgian Labour Party
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISG	Industry will Save Georgia
IPA	International party assistance
IRI	International Republican Institute
NR	New Rights
NDI	National Democratic Institute

PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PES	Party of European Socialists
RPG	Republican Party of Georgia
UNM	United National Movement
UO	United Opposition
WB	World Bank

Introduction

The impact of European integration process and governance on domestic political systems, politics and policies has been recognized on member states and quasi-member states of the European Union (EU). However, EU's eastern expansion after the dissolution of the Soviet Union has had a remarkable influence on transformation and democratization of the newly emerged independent states in the post-communist Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) as well as beyond its membership region. Correspondingly, the study of Europeanization started to also include the countries without prospective membership in the foreseeable future. The main questions literature on Europeanization beyond Europe deals are to what extent and under which conditions has the EU been able to Europeanize these countries and what are the mechanisms of Europeanization beyond the EU. (Schimmelfennig, 2015: 5). Further, while exploring different dimensions of the process: such as national public policies, domestic institutions and national politics: (political parties and interest groups) (Ladrech, 2009: 10), the scholars have mostly looked at EU's top-down effect on domestic regime and policy change, and somehow have overlooked the role of domestic actors in strategic usage of channels of Europeanization and pro-EU discourse.

The extent to which political parties have been influenced by the EU have raised interests among the scholars and practitioners, however, 'Europeanization and party change' is a relatively new area within Europeanization studies. Puzzle in this strand is that, unlike domestic institutions or policies, national parties are not embedded in formal relations with the EU and therefore, Europeanization dynamics that stems from "goodness of fit" or "misfit "or a legally dominant role of the European Commission (EC) in other domestic policies is not easily applicable to the analysis

of Europeanization of political parties. (Ladrech, 2009: 6-7) And yet, despite the EU's minimal direct (legal) effect on parties, it does not mean that there is no recognizable indirect impact of the EU on national political parties, as scholarship on Europeanization of the political parties identifies evidences that parties have subjected to an indirect influence of the EU manifested in the changes across several dimensions. (Mair, 2007: 154-166). Thus, in the case of parties, employing Europeanization approach is valid when one depicts EU influences as indirect. (Ladrech, 2009:9-10). Nevertheless, a picture is more complex and puzzling in the cases of the post-communist neighboring (associated) countries as in these countries the EU's institutional and structural pressure are relatively weaker because of absence of membership perspective. However, it is argued that, even in the absence of conditionality, socialization and lesson-drawing can contribute to norm internalization, as Europeanization might occur, because the countries perceive EU norms and values as appropriate solutions for domestic uncertainties. (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005). This is an interesting case for the political actors, as it poses the questions to what extent Europeanization is based on actual in-depth internalization of rules and norms and to what extent the process takes place due to superficial and declaratory associations with EU norms based on policy actor's strategic calculations. In this regard, Georgia, as a non- member state of the EU nor a prospective candidate, provides a case for examination. European integration has become a predominant policy discourse permeating all major national policy areas, even in the absence of a formal membership perspective. At the same time, European integration has been supported by an overwhelming majority of the Georgian public. Having said this, the underlying research seeks to examine a process of Europeanization of political parties in Georgia, a neighboring, associated country of the EU without a credible prospect of formal membership. As parties play an important role in shaping domestic political processes and policies, they appear to be one of the key

institutional actors in the European integration process of Georgia. The way they perceive and frame European integration issues and convey it to public can play a big role in shaping pro-or anti-European sentiments within a country and effect a direction of foreign policy course. At the same time, political parties as actors, can be indirectly influenced by the EU, which is reflected in a way they adopt to a changed environment. EU-generated constraints may have indirect effects on national parties' programs, patterns of party competition or manifested in increased translational cooperation beyond the national party system (Ladrech, 2009: 10) Thus, it becomes important to determine a nature and degree of Europeanization of political parties and examine to what extent EU has impacted the Georgian political parties. In the light of the above discussed, the research will be guided with the following questions: Have the EU integration issues, policies and norms become prominent in the election manifestos of Georgian political parties between the parliamentary elections of 2004-2016? To what extent and how the channels of Europeanization have been used by national political parties? I will argue that, despite a growing level of Europeanization of Georgian political parties on a discourse level, in practice, there is a little evidence of in- depth internalization of the EU norms and values and political socialization and parties employ the channels of Europeanization and European discourse strategically to reach their political goals and gain domestic and international legitimization.

In terms of analytical framework, the research will refer to two strands of Europeanization literature, that of external Europeanization and Europeanization of political parties. Post-Communist literature on democratizing and Europeanization will be also consulted to place a study in a respective context. The work will base its analysis of Europeanization of Georgian political parties on the framework developed by Ladrech (2009) which measures different dimensions of

Europeanization within the parties. In respect to theoretical terms, the work will refer to explanations based on rational choice or (cost benefit calculation) and sociological (constructivist) institutionalism or (norms internalization). However, Europeanization of Georgian political parties will be conceptualized through an application of March and Olsen's 'logic of appropriateness' (2006:8) and explanations regarding the motives of policy actors (political parties) from non-EU countries to get adapted to EU 's rules and norms will be provided from a constructivist perspective. Thus, in line with constructivist logic, it will be acknowledged that, the EU has an impact on behavioral practices, becoming part and parcel of the 'social furniture', which social and political actors routinely interact with. However, the actors are not selflessly embedded in the social structures, but can use discourse in a strategic way to further their goals. (Risse, 2004:148).

Methods

In order to reach the objectives of the research, the study will use the textual analysis of the individual parties' manifestos as well as the web sites of the national parties and respective Euro parties and media sources featuring the translational cooperation of Georgian and European parties.

Longitudinal analysis of the party manifestos begins from 2004 and lasts to 2016. These years were taken, because this period marked a turning point in Georgia's democratic transition and development of the political system. Further, the time frame selected allows to account for the shift in party's perception of European integration issues as well as to document whether the ties of the parties got strengthened with the European counterparts. In 2004, after a peaceful Rose Revolution, the first parliamentary election was held, which was validated both by domestic and international

institutions. Further, in the same year, Georgia became a part of ENP, an instrument of Georgia's democratization and Europeanization. Up to now, 2016 marked the last year of parliamentary elections held in Georgia and was taken as an end date of a research to provide an up- to -dated information on the topic investigated.

The major data sources of the underlying work are represented by parties' electoral programs and manifestos. In this regard, the data will be taken from the Manifesto Research Group (MRG). It offers a valuable information on salience of different issues (including the European one) for parties' programmatic content. At the same time, the data set provides an opportunity of conducting a longitudinal analysis at intra state levels. More specifically, the following set of analytical variables will be used. Such as: 108-European Union positive, 202-democracy, 201-Freedom and Human rights, 401-pro- market economy, 324- political corruption, 110- European Union Negative, 1011- Russia Positive. These are set of key words for Georgia's context that will help reveal the content of party programs and establish frequencies to assess the degree of variation among political parties. Accordingly, the parties will then be ranked in respect to how strongly their main policy documents reflect their commitment to European integration, including EU norms and values, such as democracy, freedom and human rights and market economy, as well as how parties position themselves on Russia. Overall, 4 parliamentary elections will be analyzed comprised of the programs and manifestos of those parties which had crossed the threshold and made it to parliament (overall, 9 different parties).

As it was stated, the research also aims to measure Europeanization of political parties in terms of party ties with the European counterparts. In this regard, the study will examine websites and

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official statements and press releases of European Party Federations and Georgian political parties, as well as EURONEST alongside with news portals, both national and international.

Considering the above mentioned, the thesis will be structured in the following way: Chapter One provides a literature review on current Europeanization debates, referring to developments both within EU borders and beyond. Afterwards, the work addresses conceptualization of political party Europeanization and points out a research gap in the existing literature and then lays out a methodological approach for addressing that gap. The second chapter begins with an introduction to the Georgian political system and provides characteristics of Georgian political parties considering the Soviet legacy, afterwards, the study presents a short overview of political discourse on European integration. Chapter Three presents the empirical findings of this research, which assesses the different levels of Europeanization among selected political parties and examines if and how the parties used channels of Europeanization manifested in partisan and parliamentary cooperation. The final chapter of the thesis offers an interpretation of the findings in the light of the addressed theoretical framework. The thesis ends with short concluding remarks.

Finally, one should also refer to the limitation of study. It is understood that, the single case studies may have limited generalization capacity. Specifically, Europeanization has many dimensions and it is a complex analytical concept, parties in their manifestos might not be able to cover thoroughly all relevant issues or may be devoid of capacity to adequately elaborate or include them in the manifestos. However, one should emphasize that, the election programs could be regarded as set of key central statements of party positions, as they are representative statements for the whole party, and not statements of one group within the party. (Voklens et al., 2009: 234-251). Moreover,

as they come out before every parliamentary election, they give an opportunity of examining the changes of parties' positions over time. Thus, the thesis will help to fill a research gap in Europeanization of political parties in non- member countries through the case study of Georgia, the country which has been studies less in this regard. Empirical analysis undertaken within the single case study, accompanied by the accounts of the internal and external events is likely to provide a new scientific data and increase knowledge in the strand of Europeanization of political parties.

Chapter 1. 'The Many Faces of Europeanization'
1.1 Defining Europeanization within and beyond EU: A Literature Review

As it has been mentioned in the introduction, the underlying research will use Europeanization as an analytical framework. This model will be helpful to gain an insight into understanding a broader process the ENP countries are undergoing, (part of which is Georgia) and to analyze how Europeanization impacts the domestic political process and agendas of the policy actors, including of the one of the key institutional actors, that of the political parties.

Literature on Europeanization discusses different conceptions of Europeanization. One of the main goals within Europeanization scholarship has been to study the impact, the EU has had on its member states or /and candidate countries or even beyond its borders. From a traditional European integration research agenda, the perspective slowly has shifted and integration has become an independent variable, denoting influence of EU on the politics of its member countries. (Jacquot and Woll, 2003:2). Thus, diverse studies have been revolving around a definition of the Europeanization, as prominent scholars have attempted to explain this process. Provision of an

exhaustive review of the definition of this analytical framework falls beyond the goal of this research, however, one should refer to key definitions to place the undelaying work in the existing scholarship and guide the empirical investigation of this thesis.

In the light of the above mentioned, first, one should highlight that, the definitions provided by the scholars reveal number of common themes and one can state that, Europeanization is mainly understood as a process of rule and/or norm export or institutional approximation. For example, in his definition of Europeanization, Radaeli defines it as:

"Processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies". (Radaelli, 2003).

Ladrech proposes that, one of the key features of Europeanization is the reorientation of domestic organizational logics. However, he emphasizes that, harmonization of domestic practices would vary across Europe due to a mediating impact of the internal developments and pre-existing domestic structures within the countries. (Ladrech, 1994: 71-72). Having recognized Europeanization as a two-way process, Bulmer and Burch emphasize a political dimension of the process. In their studies, the scholars highlight that, national elites' perception had greatly shaped the administrative responses to the external pressures. (Bulmer and Burch, 1998: 608). Sedelmeier in his conception of Europeanization emphasizes that, the impact of the EU on candidate countries is differential across countries and issue areas. (Sedelmeier, 2006:3).

Thus, the definitions of Europeanization referred to above reveal common characteristics: they analyze Europeanization as a process of rule and/or norm export or institutional approximation and address the dimensions of the process such as a national public policies and domestic institutions and politics including actors, such as the political elites. This research will be built upon the Radaeli's definition, as it accommodates the dimension of the Europeanization process, I am investigating, the politics. Specifically, it will be useful to gain insights into what kind of pressures are to be expected on the parties because of Europeanization and to analyze to what extent Europeanization has become a part of a political discourse.

The EU's relations with the countries beyond its region, has slowly become an emerging theme within the Europeanization literature and Europeanization as an analytical model has been applied to neighboring countries as well. In her article, *EU External Governance in Wider Europe*, Lavenix discusses an expansion of the 'legal boundary' of the Union with only limited openings of its 'institutional boundary' in a changed geopolitical setting. In this context, she suggests that, Europeanization beyond Europe might consist of 'external projection of the internal solutions'. (Lavenix, 2004: 695). Respectively, the literature on Europeanization also started to abundantly talk about mechanisms/instruments of Europeanization beyond the EU, distinguishing between the direct and indirect instruments of Europeanization. For the scope of the research, it is worth to shortly review those mechanisms that have been applied towards the ENP countries, part of which is Georgia. This is useful to highlight some similarities and differences in terms of legacies and cleavages existing in this region.

Conditionality and socialization are the two main mechanisms of the EU's impact which are extensively referred in the literature. Schiemmelfenig points out two mechanisms:

1. conditionality: (implies a diffusion of EU governance rules through setting certain conditions for the external actors to which they shall comply (trade agreements, accession treaties, association treaties) and 2. socialization, which comprises of teaching of EU governance rules to external actors, for example, multilateral platforms like ENP and, Eastern Partnership (EaP). (Schimmelfennig, 2009: 6-7).

An interesting question the literature also deals refers to the incentives of the actors from non- EU countries to get adapted to EU 's rules and norms. In this regard, March and Olsen distinguish between two drivers of Europeanization, "logic of consequences" or the "logic of appropriateness". The first one assumes that, the actors choose the behavior that maximizes their utility under the circumstances, (driver of Europeanization is thus, conditionality); "the logic of appropriateness" implies that, the actors choose the behavior that is appropriate according to their social role and the norms in each situation (Europeanization is implemented by social learning, meaning that, the states adopt to EU rules if they see them as solutions to their domestic problems). (March and Olsen (1989), as cited in Schimmelfennig, 2015: 6-8)

In relation to the responses of the target countries towards adaptational pressures caused by Europeanization, literature on Europeanization distinguishes between the two analytically distinctive approaches: rational institutionalism and sociological (or constructivist) institutionalism. Both are useful to understand how political parties perceive Europeanization and

to identify the rationale behind the behavior of these policy actors, to incorporate the European norms and rules in their agendas and discourses.

Sociological (or constructivist) institutionalism strand analyzes the EU as a value based system, so called 'normative power', since the founding principles of the EU incorporate peace, liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. In the context of Europeanization, normative 'logic of appropriateness' is pursued, as the actors are guided by the collective understanding of what constitutes of socially acceptable behavior. Thus, through adhering to the social expectations, new rules, norms and practices and structures emerge, which can be incorporated into the domestic structures. (March and Olsen, (2006) as cited in Börzel and Risse, 2000: 3-4). In the frame of this approach, it is also assumed that, the government is more likely to be open to persuasion by the EU and to consider the rules that the EU promotes as positive, if a target country's elites and public positively identifies with the EU. (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005:19). According to the constructivism, the EU's influence is conditioned by the extent to which there is a "cultural match" or "resonance" between EU demands and domestic rules and political discourses. (Sedelmeier, 2010:13).

The rationalism approach is rooted in the 'logic of consequentialism' and perceives the players as rational, purposeful and goal oriented actors acting based on the cost benefit calculations. In the context of Europeanization, misfit between European and domestic processes, policies, and institutions is regarded as an evolving political opportunity structure which offers actors (societal and/or political) additional resources to exercise influence by offering legal and political resources to pursue domestic change. (Borzel and Risse (2000) as cited in Featherstone and Radaelli., 2003

:58). In this regard, two major domestic factors are identified which can either facilitate or impede the changes in response to the EU adaptational pressures. These are: 1) formal domestic institutions (which can provide actors with material and ideational resources) and 2) the presence of multiple veto points in country's institutional structure. (Sedelmeier, 2010:10).

From the above discussed arguments from the literature, one can conclude that, Europeanization is not only a one-way process. This theoretical approach does not only envisage a compliance with EU norms and rules by the third countries, rather, it also assumes that non- EU countries 's domestic governance structure, political institutions and, as well presence of other competing external powers also matters. One should not also downplay the role played by domestic actors as to merely veto plyers blocking structural pressures from the EU (Bailey, 2002), but conceive them as strategic players that can use both Europeanization channels and European discourse to attain their political goals.

Finally, as it has been already pointed out in the introduction, the research will be grounded in constructivist logic. In the case of political parties, it provides an appropriate framework to explain the rationale behind their incentives to get adapted to EU norms and rules. As it had been already emphasized, the national parties are not embedded in formal relations with the EU and therefore, Europeanization of political parties can't be driven by conditionality and "logic of consequences". Accordingly, in line with constructivist ('logic of appropriateness') logics, it will be assumed that, even though the EU has an impact on behavioral practices of the domestic actors, the actors are not selflessly embedded in the social structures, but can use discourse in a strategic way to further their goals. (Risse, 2004:148). Furthermore, norm compliance relies on socially constructed

strategic calculation based on legitimacy concerns rather than automatic and passive internalization (Juncos and Pomorska, 2006). Thus, in this research, the political parties will not be considered as merely passive takers of the norms transferred by the EU through Europeanization channels, but strategic actors that use both Europeanization channels and European discourse to attain political goals.

1.2 Conceptualization of Europeanization of Political Parties

European integration influences the operating environments of not only governments but other actors as well, including parties, as one of the key institutional players in a modern democracy and policy making process. As it has been noted, 'Europeanization and party change' is a relatively recent area within Europeanization studies. (the post Maastricht Treaty (1992) period). The scholarship ranges from political party analysis focused on domestic political systems to a single country cases and cross-national studies. For the scope of this research, it is relevant to refer to how Europeanization is conceptualized and applied concretely to party research. Drawing on this will be useful to gain insight into what has been exactly Europeanized in the case of Georgian political parties in the absence of the EU membership.

Mair first drew attention to making a distinction between a direct and indirect effects of the EU on party competition. Specifically, he questioned if Europeanization had directly contributed to formation of the new political parties or if it had enhanced preexisting dimension of party politics and competition. (Mair, 2007: 158). The researchers agree that, there has been a minimal direct impact of EU in this area. The major question remains how the European integration matters for party politics and party systems. In this regard, one should highlight contribution of Robert Ladrech, (2002) who identified five dimensions of investigation for evidence of Europeanization.

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Specifically: 1) policy/programmatic content; (2) organization; (3) patterns of party competition; (4) party-government relations; and (5) relations beyond the national party system. (Ladrech, 2009:10). As it has been mentioned in the beginning of the research, I will explore Europeanization of political parties based on the analytical framework developed by Ladrech. However, out of the 5 criteria, I will focus on the following: 1. Policy/programmatic content- here I will explore how committed parties are to EU integration in their manifestos and electoral platforms, how much EU or European norms and rules are referred to in these documents. 2. Patterns of party competition: I will investigate how important the EU becomes in national elections and party identities, whether salience of European integration issues has become more prominent, if there is a convergence or divergence among parties on European integration issues. 3. Relations beyond the national party system. (by this, I mean to scrutinize how connected parties are with fellow party families in the EU and how they use this channel). These criteria listed will help to explain the extent of Europeanization and also fits best to account for the mixed proportional Georgian political system. The rest of the criteria are not relevant for Georgia's case. Namely, if we refer to party-government relations, the hypothesis here is that, the "expanding policy competence of the EU may lead to tensions between the party in public office and the party on the ground", (Ladrech, 2009:10). Since it is a non- EU member country, this can't be applied to the case for Georgia. Regarding the criteria of organizational change, Georgian parties have not undergone much internal organizational change and within the parties the EU related posts have not been created either (Bader, 2010: 1085-1107).

Literature on party Europeanization also deals with comparing of the EU's influence in old and new member states with communist legacies. According to the findings of the studies of the

Europeanisation of political parties in the older member states, the EU has a limited influence on national party systems in old members. Whereas, the EU's impact in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) turns out to be more substantial. The unconsolidated party systems of the eastern candidate countries were more prone to external influence (Dakowska, 2002; Lewis, 2003; Pridham, 1999; Pridham,2005; Spirova, 2008. as cited in Sedelmeier, 2011: 20-23). However, the impact of European integration on national political parties within these countries varied considerably across countries and parties. (Poguntke, 2007: 747–771).

The findings of scholarship on Europeanization of political parties in the post-communist countries outlines both similarities and differences regarding the Soviet legacy and cleavages in these countries. These studies point out that, European integration has become a part of the national political discourse, communicated through various forms and channels by the different policy actors, including government, political parties, civil society groups. For example, Vachudovaa, and Hooghea in their studies based on the post-communist CEE countries, reveal that, the ideology is the strongest predictor of a party's position on EU integration. According to the authors, the communist legacy and the EU accession process created a ground, wherein political parties were affiliated on a single axis. However, throughout the time, the EU accession process made the parties to shift away from authoritarian-nationalist and hard left economic positions and adapt to the integration process which was respectively reflected in their party positions (Vachudovaa and Hooghe, 2009:179-212). Pridham, analyzes a transnational party cooperation as a way of evaluating the Europeanisation dynamic in party development in the new democracies in CEE countries. In the context of general debate about a relationship between party system consolidation

and democratic consolidation, he finds out, there is variance of degree of Europeanization across countries. (Pridham, 2001:1-17.)

Furthermore, the case studies have been produced comparing mechanics of party system and party Europeanization, which refer to the similarities regarding the legacies and cleavages. Such as for example, the study *Europeanization and Party System Mechanics: Comparing Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro,* finds that, like in all Central European post-socialist countries, there is a close link between democratization and a declaratory pro-EU policy, which is reflected in party's policies. Further, the party system has been institutionalized enough to be able to respond to dual pro-Europeanization pressures (voters' preferences as well as EU actors' pressures) at a satisfactory level. (Hapner, 2008: 15-16). Single case studies on countries such as Czech Republic, Cyprus, Montenegro, Lithuania, have been seeking to examine the impact of the process of Europeanization on the relevant political parties and party programmes, but also on the structure and content of party politics and policies between the preselected period of parliamentary elections. (Vučković, 2016; Pigeonnier, 2012; Katsourides, 2003; Hloušek and Pšeja, 2009). The Study by Ishiyama, which looks at individual parties in Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia finds that, domestic political considerations play a more significant role in shaping these parties. and only Europeanization does not explain the evolution of political parties in post-communist politics. (Ishiyama, 2016: 1-27).

Nevertheless, on another spectrum, the literature also talks about Euroscepticism in the political parties. Meijers in his article examines if the support for Eurosceptic challenger parties influences mainstream party position change on European integration in Western Europe. The key finding is

that, the electoral success of Eurosceptic challenger parties can incite mainstream parties to be less supportive of European integration. (Meijers, 2015: 1-11). In their studies, Taggart and Szczerbiak aim to extend an understanding of Euroscepticism from its study in Western Europe and bring a new insight into party systems in CEE. Presenting research according to the location, electoral strength and type of Euroscepticism in the party systems of these countries, the study distinguishes between hard and soft Euroscepticism. (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2002: 23–41). Yet, another study based on the cases of Poland and the Czech Republic, discusses Euroscepticism from national identity perspective, emphasizing the effect of mutually overlapping identities and European identity versus national identity. (Riishøj, 2004: 503-535). Using case studies of parties in Poland and Hungary in 1998-2004, the article by Mikulova argues that party systems in the region only underwent "Potemkin Europeanisation", façade changes, mainly enjoying a liberal consensus thanks to a camouflage effect of the Europeanisation processes in 1998-2004 (Mikulova, 2014: 163–86).

Thus, from the above-mentioned analysis one can see that, the party politics in the Post-Communist Eastern European countries in the context of Europeanization, unlike the Western European old states, is analyzed from a perspective of democratization process. Nevertheless, besides underscoring commonalities, a sub-regional and country case difference is recognized.

Finally, one should emphasize that, unlike the Eastern European Post-Communist countries, there is a lack of abundant literature on Europeanization of political parties on the ENP Countries. However, the scholars have produced some works. Schmidtke and Chira-Pascanut in their study based on Moldova, demonstrate that, the effects of Europeanization do not exclusively rest on the

incentives offered by the EU, but on the willingness of the elite and population to adopt the norms and on external factors, such as the politics of Russia. (Schmidtke and Chira-Pascanut, 2011: 467-485). Gawrich, Melnykovska and Shcweicker, based on the case of Ukraine, broadly examine Europeanization through investigating ENP as an instrument of this process. The scholars indicate to substantial asymmetries in this policy based on the analysis of preselected dimensions, such as democracy promotion and economic cooperation. They conclude that, there have been inconsistencies in application of ENP concepts and instruments: because of top-down formulation of EU interests and weak conditionality, the benefits of ENP have not been fully enjoyed in this country. (Gawrich, Melnykovska and Shcweicker, 2010:1209-1235). Yet, another study on Ukraine, carried out by Wolczuk, highlights that, none of Ukraine's key political forces and parties object to integration with the EU, however, none of them are committed enough to implementing the reforms. While the elites and politicians acknowledge the benefits of participation in European integration, they have not moved beyond declarations. Thus, the author concludes that, Ukraine is a case of "declarative Europeanization", wherein "European choice" is proclaimed without endorsing it in the domestic context. (Wolczuk, 2003:1-28). Börzel and Pamuk aim to capture, a "dark side of Europeanization", as they conceptualize ENP as an instrument that provides constraints and opportunities to both supporters and opponents of the EU's reform agenda. Both EU's capacity to push forward reforms and preferences of domestic actors determine which of these will be empowered. Based on examining three countries, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, they conclude that, the different record of success in these countries in terms of domestic institutional changes triggered by Europeanization depends on to what extent these changes empower incumbents. Rather than transforming structures, Europeanization helps to stabilize the political and economic structures of neighborhood countries. (Börzel and Pamuk, 2011:1-27).

In sum of this sub-chapter, one should emphasize that, incorporation of the findings of the existing literature on Europeanization of political parties of the former eastern communist countries will be helpful in gaining insights into common legacies and cleavages Georgia shares with these countries.

1.3. Research Gap

As it has been already identified, there is a lack of literature on Europeanization of the political parties in the non-candidate countries, specifically, the ENP. Considering this, the aim of the underlying research is to fill this gap by taking a case from Georgia, as one of the ENP countries. Before I discuss why Georgian case can be illustrative in this regard, I will briefly overview to what extent Europeanization has become an attention of scholarly work regarding Georgia's case.

Europeanization in Georgia's case is addressed from different perspectives, such as: Georgia's European integration is discussed through the lens of democratization process in the work of *Getting Georgia Right*, (Cornell, 2013: 1-67). Others have approached Europeanization in the context of solving of 'frozen' conflicts of Abkhazia, Ossetia. (Nodia, 2011:1-15) or from national identity lens (Mestvirishvili, 2011; Beacháina and Coeneb, 2014). Comparative study by Dobbins and Khachatryan, look at Europeanization in the context of higher education trying to explain how both countries' models of higher education governance have changed through the period of political transformation and geopolitical tensions. (Dobbins and Khachatryan, 2015: 189–207). Cianciara in her article focuses on testing of 'top down Europeanization' approach and advocates 'usage of Europe approach' by domestic actors (political parties) in search of their legitimization. The study concentrates on transnational cooperation of parties in Ukraine and Georgia for the years

of 2005-2014. (Cianciara, 2016: 391-411). Timuş in her study, investigates effects of European integration and EU's external governance on the cases of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. The work explores the influence of European integration process on party systems and party politics and in these three countries from the first parliamentary elections until 2006 legislative elections. (Timus, 2008:1-22).

Nevertheless, against the background of the enhanced relationship with the EU and because European integration has become topical in domestic election campaigns, updated and comprehensive scholarly works have not been produced on different dimensions of Europeanization of Georgian parties. Thus, in the light of the lack of attention, the underlaying thesis aims to fill in the gap in the literature through evaluating the extent of key Georgian political parties' Europeanization.

Thus, stemming from the research goal, a single case of Georgia will be included in the research design. Georgia makes a case for several reasons. Firstly, because of its aspiration toward European integration and strengthened partnership with EU both in bilateral and multilateral formats even in the absence of credible membership perspective. Secondly, Georgia can be illustrative of the post-communist non- EU countries, wherein an European integration has become a part of the national political discourse, influencing the operating environments of different policy actors, including parties. (Timus, 2008:4). In the light of this, the study could be potentially useful for gaining insights into an understanding of the similar processes in the mentioned region and could be used as a starting point for conducting comparative studies with the most similar cases, such as Ukraine or Moldova. (Schmidtke and Pascanut, 2011; Gawrich, Melnykovska,

Schweickert, 2010). Finally, there is a presence of political system and functioning political parties that is sufficient to investigate the extent of Europeanization of political parties. Hence, Georgian case provides enough empirical material to conduct a longitudinal case study to understand a nature of Europeanization of the political parties.

Chapter 2. Europeanization of Georgian Political Parties
2.1 Background on Political System and Political Parties in Georgia

Georgia gained an independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Similarly, to the former socialist countries, it went through a process of the post-socialist transition to embrace institutional transformation in different subsystems such as economic, political, administrative and social. As the country declared its commitment to build a democratic political system and embrace a rule of law, it had to fight the systemic corruption, economic and political instabilities, and secessions movements first in Abkhazia and later in South Ossetia. 2008 Russia-Georgia War left the country in a critical situation as it brought a severe blow to the country's social economic and political development. This was also reinforced by an internal political crisis within the government and opposition. (Kikutadze, 2015: 55-66).

In a process of consolidation of democracy, Georgia experienced a breakthrough in 2012, its first democratic transfer of power occurred since its independence. Parliamentary elections resulted in a defeat of the ruling United National Movement (UNM) and victory for the Georgian Dream (DG) coalition. In 2013, Georgia successfully concluded negotiations for an Association Agreement (AA) with the EU and it was signed in 2014. Having marked a new stage of enhanced relationship with the EU, the agreement presents a mechanism of Europeanization of Georgia and serves as an

incentive for the country's further modernization and democratization. (Cornel, 2013: 5-9). In this process, political parties can make significant contribution and thus, it becomes interesting to analyze an effect of Europeanization on Georgian parties and explore how European integration discourse have been employed by the major political parties.

In order to evaluate an extent of Europeanization of Georgian political parties, it is essential to establish a context through highlighting the major characteristics of the Georgian national parties. Since the thesis aims to focus on political parties as such and not on political system, Georgian political system will be referred briefly.

In Georgia, there have been changes and attempts to alter electoral rules before most of the elections and the constitution has underwent six major revision since independence in 1991. In 1995, a new constitution was approved, which strengthened the presidential-democratic form of government, (with a strong executive branch and a 150-seat unicameral parliament). In 2013, the constitutional amendments were proposed and gave the prime minister more power at the expense of the president. (Godoladze, 2013:1-26.)

Georgia has so-called mixed election system, with a heavy majoritarian component, wherein, both proportionate and majoritarian election systems co-exist. The Georgian Parliament comprises 77 members elected in proportionate election system (candidates nominated through party lists) and 73 members elected through majoritarian election system. Those political unions and election blocs who gain at least 5% of votes are given mandates. As to majoritarian election system, at least 30% of votes in relevant majoritarian election district is a prerequisite. (ISFED, 2015).

According to the data of the Public Registry of Georgia, from 1997 to 2017, 242 parties have been registered as the political parties. (Public Registry of Georgia, 2017). However, this does not automatically translate into a multiparty system of Georgian political system, as majority of the parties are not all operational. In the period of the parliamentary elections held within the years of 2004 to 2016, number of parties which has crossed the threshold (threshold changed from 7% to 5% from 2008 onwards) with proportionate system and made it to the parliament fluctuated from 2 to 5 (Central Election Committee of Georgia, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016).

The legacy of decades of communism has left its mark on the development of the political system and political parties in Georgia. Since 1991, changes of power went hand in hand with a radical shift of political party landscape, as the parties entered and left the politics between the elections. Apart from this, a volatility has also been observed in changing electoral alliance. Factors like institutional arrangement (executive- legislative relations) and electoral legislation had a negative impact on party system development, therefore, two kinds of parties have been dominant, parties of power which have been dependent on the regime's resilience or parties which had a limited influence (Bader, 2010: 1085-1107).

One of the legacies of the communist regime, which has been characteristics of Georgian party system is merging party and state, so called capture. Unlike European parties, who form a coalition after they enter the legislative body, in Georgia, the winning party oftentimes win with a majority and there is "need "of forming a coalition after they make it to the parliament. For example, if before constitutional changes, the party power was developing around the strong executive

presidents, such as under presidencies of Shevardnadze - *Citizens Union of Georgia* or under Saakashvili - *United National Movement*, later, from 2012, the power of party revolved around the leader and influential founder of the ruling party *Georgian Dream*. (Zanelatti, 2018: 1-2). Another distinctive mark of the Georgian political parties, is polarization on political rather than ideological grounds. Unlike, the Left and Right differences across Europe, Georgian political parties differ from one another not by their ideologies but rather, their political polarization revolves around a pro-regime anti regime lines and parties are very often associated with the leaders rather than programs or ideologies. Oftentimes, the legitimacy is established based on the faults of the political openness rather than programmatic content or ideology. (Zanelatti, 2018, 3-5).

Thus, one can see that, Georgian parties have not been formed out of social cleavages, therefore it is not surprising that, they have witnessed a low trust of the public. In several opinion polls, political parties appear to be as one of the least trusted institutions in Georgia (NDI, 2016; IRI, 2016).

Thus, increasing party volatility and vague political articulation, decreasing party legitimacy and popularity, rising anti-party sentiments have been an obstacle for the Georgian party systems evolution, which in turn effected negatively on the quality of consolidation of democracy (Democracy Reporting International, 2017: 1-15). Even though that Georgian parties have been a target of the International party assistance (IPA) since the 1990s, as a part of the democracy assistance initiatives, it had limited effects on them. (Bader, 2010: 1085-1107). *Democracy Index 2017* features Georgia as a hybrid regime, with an overall score of 5.93, occupying 79th place out of 167 countries. (The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index, 2017).

2.2 EU-Georgia Political Relations and Political Discourse on European Integration

Stemming from Georgia's adherence to values of western liberal democracies and aspiration toward the Europe, the EU integration has been a recurrent theme in Georgian political discourse. A relationship and partnership with EU started from the first institutional framework of cooperation, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) signed in 1996 and has evolved into a strategic partnership though Association Agreement (AA) concluded in 2014, providing a model for the country's Europeanization and democratization. (EU-Georgia Association Agreement, 2014). The Delegation of the European Commission to Georgia, started functioning in 1995 and later in 2009, was transformed as one of European Union Delegations around the world. (Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, 2018).

The EU plays a significant role in Georgia: it is Georgia's largest trading partner. It provides over €100 million to Georgia annually in technical and financial assistance, benefits such as a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) and visa facilitation, and supports Georgia in dealing with its breakaway regions through the EU Monitoring Mission and EU Special Representative (EUMM). The EU is committed to recognition and support of Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders (European Union External Action, 2016.) The EU Georgia relations has been flowing successfully in multilateral cooperation formats as well. Georgia has showed commitment towards fulfilling its obligation though implementation of actions plans within ENP launched in 2004 and its eastern dimension under EaP initiated in 2009. In 2016, the

EU Global Strategy acknowledged Georgia as an example of the state and societal resilience in the eastern neighborhood. (European Union External Action ,2016.)

In the light of the mentioned, it worth to briefly mention that, in general, public and political discourse on Georgia's aspiration toward the EU is either tied to strategic goals: country's economic, security needs and its democratic development, or to an idealism based on adherence to shared values and principles and norms. Famous Georgian scholar and diplomat Alexander Rondeli emphasized both aspects and dubbed the aspiration of Georgian politicians to integrate their country into EU structures as "strategic idealism". (Rondeli, 2001:9)

It is essential to refer to Georgian public attitude towards the EU. Overall, a positive attitude towards European integration is reflected in the public opinion polls undertaken throughout the last years. However, the support has been fluctuating from 78% in 2013 to 62% in 2016. At the same time, the public's expectations are high (up to 56% of population) regarding the benefits to be derived from the European integration process. (National Democratic Institute (NDI); Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRCC), 2011, 2015, 2016).

Georgian political parties have showed an interest in European integration though with a varying degree. The major key parties that are active on a political arena have been explicitly associating themselves as pro-European, declaring the Euro-Atlantic integration as a foreign policy priority. For example, the former ruling party *United National Movement* (UNM), current ruling party *Georgian Dream* (GD). However, the latter also focuses on normalizing relations with Russia. Unlike these parties, another parliamentarian party, *Alliance of Patriots of Georgia* (APG) does

not have a pro-European platform. *Free Democrats* (FD) and *Republican Party of Georgia* (RPG) have been also running on pro-European programs. Other parliamentarian center right parties such as *New Rights* (NR) and *Industry Will Save Georgia* (ISG) and left center *Labor Party* (LP) have taken a rather neutral stance on European integration; *Christian Democratic Party* (CDP) which was accredited by *Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists* (ACRE), was a short-lived party (2008-2014) which after its leader left political arena got united with the pro-Russian, *Democratic Movement- Unified Georgia,* (DMUG).

Having provided a background information on the party's leanings and characteristics, the rest of the research will be devoted to analyses of a nature and degree of Europeanization among these parties. Further, the research will trace whether there has been a shift on salience of European integration issues throughout the time and which exogenous factors, including domestic and external constraints impacted on Europeanization of Georgian political parties.

2.3 Nature and Degree of Europeanization of Georgian Political Parties

This sub-chapter will present the findings of the qualitative analysis of party manifestos as well as web sites of the respective Georgian and euro-parties, news agencies and press-releases to highlight and interpret the pan- European ties of Georgian political parties.

As it has been already mentioned, to gain qualitative insights into the EU's impact on Georgian political parties, analytical framework provided by Ladrech (2009) has been applied, with a focus on the following dimensions: 1. Policy/programmatic content. 2. Patterns of party competition 3. Relations beyond the national party system. In line of this, the study examined the influence of

process of the Europeanization of political parties in Georgia between the 2004 and 2016 parliamentary elections though in-depth content analysis of election manifestos of 14 selected parties.

Before presenting the findings, to establish a context, I have created a list of the political parties according to the years they have won the parliamentary elections. The list below also features the year of foundation of the parties and their ideological profile.

Table 1. List of Analyzed Political Parties in Georgia

Party Name (English translation) and Year of Foundation	Ideology	Elections
United National Movement (UNM) (2001)	Liberal conservatism, pro Europeanism, civic nationalism	2004, 2008, 2012, 2016-parliament 2004-2008 government
Industry will Save Georgia (ISG) (1999)	Right center	2004, 2012, 2016 - parliament
New Rights (NR) (2001)	Right center	2004, 2008 - parliament
Christian-Democratic Movement (CDM) (2008-2014)	Christian Democracy	2008- parliament
Georgian Labor Party (GLP) (1995)	Social democracy	2008- parliament
Ad hoc election block United Opposition (UO) (comprised of National Council and New Rights) (2008)	Right center	2008- parliament
Republican Party of Georgia (RPG) (1978)	Liberalism	2008 parliament, 2012- government (part of coalition with GD)

Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia (GD) (2012)	Social democracy, pro Europeanism	2012, 2016 both parliament and government
Alliance of Patriots of Georgia (APG) 2012	Conservatism	2016- parliament

As it has been mentioned above, one of the evidences of Europeanization can be revealed in relations of Georgian parties beyond the national party system. This can be manifested either in increased ties with parties of the European countries or/and political parties at the EU level, known as the Euro-Parties. Proceeding from the scope of the research, I have focused on the latter.

In order highlight the relations beyond the national party system, I have examined the web sites and press releases of the Georgian political parties as well as respective European parties together with the news agency stories featuring the cooperation of the sides. As the Table 2 shows, out of 8 individual parties that have won the parliamentary elections during the examined period, 4 of them are connected to the fellow party families at the EU level. In this respect, one should emphasize that, before any party becomes a member, there are formal procedures to follow. The parties are assessed to which degree their structure, ideology and policy are compatible with the respective euro-party. However, Euro parties do not allow a full membership of the political parties of the non-member states, only Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE) is an exception. (Lavrelashvili, 2017).

Table 2. List of Parties According to EU Affiliation

Party Name (year of foundation)	European Affiliation
United National Movement (UNM) (2001)	An observer European People's Party (EPP) since 2008
Industry will Save Georgia (ISG) (1999)	None
New Rights (NR) (2001)	None
Christian-Democratic Movement (CDM) (2008-2014)	The Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (ACRE) since 2012
Georgian Labor Party (GLP) (1995)	None
Republican Party of Georgia (RPG) (1978)	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE), full member since 2007
Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia, (GD) (2012)	Party of European Socialists (PES) since 2015.
Alliance of Patriots of Georgia (APG) (2012)	None

The United National Movement (UNM) became an observer member of European People's Party (EPP) in 2008. The status of membership is highlighted on the web sites of both sides. (UNM, 2018; EPP, 2018). Georgian press features stories revealing support of EPP for its partner in different occasions, such as for example, the statement was made by the head of party supporting the UNM and condemning Russia's aggression in 2008; in their turn, leaders of UNM including

the former president Saakashvili, often attend the congress and different meeting organized by EPP. (*Interpressnews,* 2008; *Liberali,* 2013).

Georgian Dream (GD) became an observing member of the Party of European Socialists (PEC) in 2015. The party, similarly to UNM, also participates in annual events of its partner EU party, such as congress, trainings, seminars (*Kvira*, 2016). The GD members also attended a working meeting held in the format of EaP summit in 2015 (Georgian Dream, 2015).

Since 2007, the Republican Party of Georgia (RPG) has been a full member of Alliance of Liberals and Democrats, (ALDE), being the only euro party that allows a full membership for the political parties of the non-member states (ALDE, 2018). The president of the party, Van Baalen, visited Georgia to support and share advice for ALDE Party's Georgian member party for the parliamentary elections in Georgia held in 2016. (ALDE, 2015).

In 2012, Christian Democratic Party of Georgia (CDP) became a member of The Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (ACRE). The party was quite active in terms of development of cooperation with Christian democratic parties of individual European countries as well, however, the it was a short-lived unity as its leader left the politics in 2014. (Christian-Democratic Movement, 2012)

The EU institutional influence on domestic parties can be also evidenced in the parliamentary parties' participation in the EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly, which is a parliamentary forum encouraging a political association and further economic integration between the European Union

and the EU's Eastern European partners. Being responsible for parliamentary consultation, supervision and monitoring, EuroNest strengthens the EaP through different formats, including standing committees and several working groups, plenary and bureau work. (EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly, 2018). Together with delegation from European Parliament, (EP) it also consists delegations of EaP countries. In this regard, one should mention that, a delegation from Georgian parliament takes part in plenary sessions as well as in working groups, the latter featuring diverse issues such *Political Affairs, Human Rights and Democracy, Economic Integration, Legal Approximation and Convergence with EU Policies*. Georgian parliament reports and updates its engagement in the EuroNest via the official site of the parliament. (Parliament of Georgia, 2018).

Thus, in terms of Europeanization of parties regarding establishing ties with EU parties, Georgian parties show evidence of Europeanization at a formal level. However, the question is how they use this channel of Europeanization. This is important to determine whether socialization took place. According to the literature, participation in transnational networks should be of high frequency and intensity and interaction should take place in a relatively depoliticized environment, thus, as a result of persuasion and learning processes domestic actors could redefine and reinterpret their preferences, values and behavior (Checkel and Moravcsik, 2001: 219-49). In the case of Georgian political parties, none of the mentioned criteria have been fully met. Analysis of EURONEST and parliaments' websites alongside with meetings' agendas and news stories provide clarification in this regard. Tracing the dynamics of the relations among governmental Georgian parties and the EU parties, one can see that, both UNM and GD became the members of the respective EU parties under politicized environment. UNM received an observer member status in the EPP in 2008, in the wake of the domestic political crisis revolving around presidential and parliamentary elections.

In the context of associated doubts about Georgia's democratic record, conditionally could not have been applied, and membership had been most likely granted out of strategic calculation from European side. In its turn, when moved to opposition, UNM also strategically used this channel of cooperation to exercise pressure on GD 's government as it started to organize EPP leadership to delegitimating the ruling GD as anti-democratic and anti-European and present themselves to the electorate as the only pro-European force. (EPP 2014; UNM, 2014). GD also obtained an observer status in PES under politicized context, in 2015, shortly after signing the AA with EU and against the background of allegations of the ruling party as anti-European and anti-democratic by its opposition. However, in the absence of partisan channel of influence, GD focused on parliamentary cooperation as it was a good opportunity to position itself as a pro-western power not only at the EU level, but on a domestic arena as well, as it was a good response to the opposition accusing the party for being anti-European. (Georgian Dream, 2016; Parliament of Georgia, 2016). Thus, one can argue that, pro-European opposition party used the partisan channels to de-legitimization the ruling party, the ruling party tried to counter those efforts and increase their international legitimacy. (Ciancara, 2016: 391-411). In terms of frequency of the interaction of Georgian and European counterparts at a parliamentary level, one should point out that EURONEST has one plenary session a year and meetings of four thematic committees takes place twice a year. Additionally, the reports are frequently prepared by officials from European Parliament's secretariat (EuroNest, 2018). Thus, logically, such format is expected to produce limited socialization effects. Therefore, effects of top-down Europeanization though partisan and parliamentary channels of cooperation can be viewed as limited. (Ciancara, 2016: 391-411).

Whether partisan and parliamentary cooperation can be associated in changed attitudes of Georgian parties with references to EU norms and values or should this channel of cooperation be considered as a superficial alignment with European agenda based on strategic calculation will be also revealed in analysis of the content of their election manifestos.

In the next part of the thesis, I will present the results of the analysis of manifestos content of those parties which have crossed the threshold in each year of parliamentary elections. As it has been highlighted earlier in the thesis, the analytical variables and scores are based on the *Manifesto Project,* (Manifesto Project, 2018). However, I have separately examined the content of each manifesto to interpret the scores and the way each variable has fleshed out in actual texts. The analytical variables I have selected give opportunity to shed light on whether parties are committed to EU integration issues in their manifestos, but also to highlight how consistent they are in promoting European values such as democracy, anti-corruption efforts, human rights and freedom and market economy.

Content Analysis According to the Years of the Parliamentary Elections

Table 3

Year of Election: 2004			
Analytical variables	**Parties**		
	UNM	NR	ISG
108- European Union positive	3.84	0	0
110- European Union Negative,	0	0	0
1011- Russia Positive	0	0	0
202- Democracy	10.184	3.681	0
201- Freedom and Human rights,	2.504	1.227	0.535
401- pro market economy	2.337	1.84	0.535
324- political corruption	2.838	3.374	1.07

As one can see from the Table 3, electoral manifestos of the three main competitor parties in the 2004 elections indicate a clear interest in European integration, however, promotion and supporting of European norms and values and standards differ across the parties.

Party program of UNM was constructed on the European agenda, even a title of the program featured it, ('United Georgia through Economic and Sustainable Development and European Integration'. (UNM, 2004). Having stressed an importance on paving way to integration through embracing the EU norms, the program referred to very concrete measures to fulfil this goal, such as priority of implementation of PCA, start of harmonization of Georgia's legislation with European legislation, supporting introduction of European standards and norms in different policy areas. Particularly relevant was emphasizing the principle of democratic governance and initiation of democratic reforms, as they were pressing within a domestic context. (UNM, 2004). The thing is that, Rose Revolution leaded by UNM party chair, was triggered after manipulation of the results of the 2003 parliamentary elections. (Jakopovich, 2007:213-214). Therefore, the highest score 10.184 in democracy dimension in Table 3 can be connected to this circumstance.

The other two parties, NR and ISG did not build their programs on explicitly European agenda. Mostly, they emphasized a support for liberalization of market and acknowledged democracy as a principle of governance on a superficial level. (NR, 2004; ISG, 2004). Therefore, they score less on European norms such as democracy, freedom. (Table 3). Where there is a clear convergence among three parties is that, none of them are explicitly negative on EU integration and or are Russia positive. However, in the regard of the latter, such a position is based on the condition that

a good neighborhood with Russia is possible provided Russian military left Georgian territory. (UNM, 2004; NR, 2004; ISG, 2004).

Table 4

Year of Election: 2008					
Analytical variables	**Parties**				
	UNM	United Opposition	LP	RPG	CDP
108- European Union positive	3.84	1.563	1.449	1.553	0
110- European Union Negative	0	0	0	0	0
1011- Russia Positive	0	0	0	0	0
202- Democracy	0	25	5.797	15.2017	9.259
201- Freedom and Human rights	0	7.813	7.246	4.658	7.407
401- pro market economy	3.529	6.25	2.899	6.211	0
324- political corruption	2.353	1.563	0	1.242	0

From Table 4, one can observe that, EU integration issues are highlighted relatively less in the manifestos. This can be explained by deteriorated external relations with Russia and priority of focusing on defense policy component in the foreign policy domain and domestic political unrest. Specifically, 2008-year election was held in May right before Russia's aggression in Georgia in August, as Russia was starting to establish legal links with neighboring Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. (*Reuters*, 2008). Domestic situation also was not favorable: despite the tangible achievements in many areas of governance, pro-western Saakashvili government and his UNM party had problems in a process of state building, most visibly manifested in centralization of power and exerting stronger control over society and state institutions. Further, some reforms were left unaccomplished notably in the judicial sector, which impacted a rule of law and freedom in country. On a broader level, a weakness of communication during speedy reforms and the absence of dialogue raised a broad perception of dismissiveness towards society, leading to the large protests of November 2007. (Cornell, 2013: 29-30).

As it is seen from the Table 4, besides the governmental Saakashvili's UNM party, other 4 parties also got in the parliament. Against the background depicted above, it is not surprising that, the oppositions parties score higher in terms of mentioning the European norms, especially democracy and human rights, as these parties criticized the incumbent regime for violating human rights and antidemocratic governance and exercising political terror. High scores (such as 25; 15; 5.707.) in Table 4, on democracy index of these parties contrasted to the UNM's negligence of mentioning of these norms echoes well to the above-mentioned circumstance. Again, similarly to 2004, none of the parties are explicitly negative on European integration issues, however, contrary to the

previous year of parliamentary election, Georgia's foreign policy focus had shifted to NATO. (*Reuters,* 2008).

Embracing the European norms and standards are extensively focused by only one party - Republican Party of Georgia, as in their program RPG discusses not only importance of building strategic partnership with EU but modeling Georgia's social and economic structures according to European model. (RPG, 2008). Since this party has been a member of ALDE since 2007, such an attitude can also be associated to ALDE's contribution in framing the pro -European discourse.

In terms of Russia, only Labor Party (LP) highlights a necessity of improvement of economic ties with Russia, all other parties refer to freeing Georgian territory of Russian military presence and ceasing the mandate of so called peaceful forces in Tskinvali and Abkhazia and engage with Russia in the scope of the UN format. (UNM, 2008; RPG, 2008; CDG, 2008; LP, 2008)

Table 5

2012		
Analytical variables	Parties	
	UNM	GD
108- European Union positive	4.854	0.672
110- European Union Negative	0	0
1011- Russia Positive	0	0
202- Democracy	1.942	19.173
201- Freedom and Human rights	0	3.152
401- pro market economy	1.456	1.912
324- political corruption	0	0.362

2012 party manifestos reveal that, Georgian political parties started not only positively mention the EU but referring more specifically to the norms and principles promoted by the EU alongside with outlining the concrete instruments of enhancement of cooperation.

In 2012, as it is seen from the Table 5, only two parties managed to cross the threshold. A newly emerged opposition party under the leadership of billionaire Ivanishvili, defeated the Saakashvili's party. Indeed, this was a turning point in Georgia's democratic development as the opposition came in power not through a revolution but through an election. In fact, 'parliamentary elections displaced the then-ruling UNM as well as the 'competitive authoritarian' model it had instituted'. (Cecire, 2013: 233).

One should mention that, the GD coalition consisted of 6 different political parties of different ideology such as *Georgian Dream Democratic Georgia, Republicans of Georgia, Free Democrats, National Forum, Conservative Party, The Industry will save Georgia*. (GD, 2012). It also listed individual politicians with both pro-western and pro- Russia preferences not to mention those members whose only common denominator was their opposition towards Saakashvili. Despite of an eclectic nature of the coalition, it still managed to create a common platform based common principles and objectives, transforming it into a single party program. (Cornell, 2013: 40-57).

It is not surprising then, that the opposition GD in its program talked extensively about a necessity of ending authoritarianism and formation of truly liberal democratic state, wherein electoral democracy changed through elections not through revolutions. (GD, 2012). Therefore, the high scores in democracy and freedom index of GD party (19.173 and 3.152) as shown in Table 5, should be connected to an urge of transforming the domestic politics and necessity of building governance and public policies on these principles.

From the content of manifestos, one can evidence that, the parties started to list all concrete mechanisms of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with EU. UNM scores higher (4.854) on EU positive variable on the Table 5, as it refers to the prospects of the visa liberalization with the EU as well as a launching of the DCFTA. (UNM, 2012). The cooperation with the EU within the context of EaP, formed in 2009, is highlighted in the manifestos of both parties. (UNM, 2012; GD, 2012). One more interesting shift regarding conforming to the EU regulations and standards is evidenced in the manifesto of UNM. Specifically, there was an alteration in terms of economic policy, (UNM, 2012), as previously, this party mainly referred to deregulation, which did not correspond with the principles of EU acquis. With changed circumstances, expressed in prospects of furthering initiation of concrete mechanisms of Europeanization such as DCFTA in economic and finance sectors, the party started to adapt to the reality and EU's requirements. Another explanation can be associated with possible influence of EPP, part of which UNM became in 2008.

Even though that both parties acknowledged Russia as conflict side, content wise Russia issue is divergent across party lines. While accusing Saakashvili and his UNM party in being immature not to let Russia to exploit Georgian internal political and domestic hardship in its favor, GD is softer in its formulation of policy towards Russia. (GD, 2012).

Table 6

Analytical variables	2016 Parties			
	UNM	GD	ISG	APG
108- European Union positive	3.604	4.3	1.667	1.102
110- European Union Negative	0	0	0	0
1011- Russia Positive	0	0	0	0
202- Democracy	8.108	6.602	1.111	9.218
201- Freedom and Human rights	6.757	4.361	1.111	1.102
401- pro market economy	13.063	3.397	5.556	0.601
324- political corruption	0.901	0.666	0	0.1

2016 parliamentary election was dominated by the two parties, now previous governmental party UNM became a main opposition party to the ruling GD, though, other two parties, one of them, APG formed just in 2012, managed to cross the threshold. Based on the scores of the Table 6, and content analysis of the manifestos, one can state that, salience of European integration issue has grown across parties. On a broader level, this can be ascribed to EU generated policy constraints, manifested in signing of AA (2014) and Visa Free Liberalization (2016). (European Commission,

2014; European Commission, 2016). At the same time, increased contact with EU institutions served well for politicians for domestic legitimacy as well. GD became a member of PES in 2015 and thus, increased not only its legitimacy at international but at domestic level as well. While UNM strategically used a support of EPP to project itself as a sole pro-European party and denounce ruling GD as anti-European, therefore, as undemocratic as well. (UNM, 2016; GD, 2016).

As it has been mentioned earlier in the thesis, Georgian public has had a positive attitude towards a process of European integration, however, a support has been fluctuating from 78% (2013) to 62% (2016). (CRC, 2016). In response to a weakened public support for EU integration, the parties had incentives to increase their popularity had they reflected European agenda in their programs. Therefore, as a response to public opinion, it was logical that, all parties acknowledged a strategic importance of EU integration, with a slight variation in terms of content and measures to achieve this goal. For example, both UNM and DG talked very concretely about specific policies (economy, trade, legal harmonization, education and science) and instruments regarding integration. (UNM, 2016; GD, 2016). While the rest of the parties, very generally, acknowledged benefits of cooperation as a positive phenomenon. (ISG, 2016; APG, 2016). In its economic program, UNM, criticized the economic policy of the government as evidenced in declined foreign investment, the stagnated economy, and recession, but the party also discussed amending this situation through usage of all instruments, envisaged by the AA (2014). Therefore, compared to the DG, that UNM party scores higher (13.063) on this variable (Table 5).

Similarly, to the previous years, there is a clear convergence along the party lines about an absence of explicitly negative mention of Russia. However, there is difference in wording. UNM acknowledged that, normalization relations with Russia would depend on Russia's position shift regarding occupied territories, (UNM, 2016), while GD stressed on keeping more pragmatic relations without compensating the Georgia's national interest (GD, 2016). The other two parties ISG and APG emphasized the role of intensive diplomatic negotiations with Russia with a purpose of regaining a territorial unity. (ISG, 2016; APG, 2016).

In respect to highlighting the norms such as democracy and freedom, out of all parties, then main opposition party UNM scores higher (8.108; 6.757) (Table 6). This can be explained by domestic political unrest. Despite accomplishments of the government in many areas, such as freer business climate resulted from the ceasing of the property rights violations, progress in justice sector reforms, number of other challenges persisted. For example, purge of the former officials and party leaders, incapacity of government to reduce anti-minority agitation and repeated instances of pressure against Muslim and non-traditional religious communities across Georgia, led to a massive demonstration in May 2013. (Hammarberg 2013: 9-32). This situation was exploited strategically by UNM as in its election program, the party started to appeal to embracement of the EU norms and values to amend this situation.

3. 3 Discussion of Findings

The research findings have demonstrated that, the EU 's influence on Georgian parties is evident, however, it is limited in its scope and outcome.

First, Europeanization can be detected at a discourse level of political parties, communicated through the formal documents, manifestos. In terms of programmatic content, all parliamentary parties declaratively support Georgia's close association with EU structures and its aspiration towards further integration. None of them have been openly against European integration on a declarative level and this has not changed during the years examined. If one places this outcome in a broader context of the post-communist non- EU countries, we can identify a close link between democratization and declaratory pro-EU policy of the parties in Georgia's case as well. As democracy has become the only "game in the town", in the frame of ongoing democratic transition, anti- European discourses would have automatically translated into anti-democratic leanings of the parties. Therefore, the parties had to stick to the pro- European discourse to appear democratic and pro-western. Moreover, parties had to be able to respond to voter's preferences and reflect them in their manifestos to win the votes.

Further, evidence of Europeanization of Georgian political parties is visible in the dimension of party competition pattern as well. One can see that, salience of European integration issues grew between the four electoral cycles (2004 to 2016) in parallel with an enhanced cooperation between the EU and Georgia. After reaching concrete and tangible outcomes as a part of bilateral collaboration, such as Association Agreement, (2014), Visa Free Liberalization (2016), even the discursively EU neutral parties, such as ISG and APG acknowledged a strategic importance of EU and adjusted to the changed circumstances. Correspondingly, the EU's impact on the Georgian parties is traceable in the increased prominence of the EU policies in their manifestos. The parties started not to only refer to European integration as a goal, rather, outline concrete policies and measures (such as economic approximation, free trade, legal harmonization in different sectors)

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to reach this policy objective and used their pro-European stance to win votes domestically. Thus, this way certain visibility of the EU transformative power on domestic changes can be detected. Nevertheless, growing salience of EU issues can't be only attributed to external i.e. Europeanization pressures only, but one should consider domestically triggered factors, such as political parties responsiveness to predominantly pro-European Georgian public opinion or shifted foreign policy priority of Georgia government's foreign policy from NATO to EU and external factor such as politics of Russia towards Georgia.

Evidence of Europeanization of political parties is also manifested in the third dimension, that of relations beyond national political system as well. It is revealed in formal ties of four Georgian parties with their fellow party families on the EU level as well as in their engagement with the EU counterparts on a parliamentary level (EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly). Thus, one can see that, Georgian parties reveal evidence of Europeanization on formal level across the three dimensions used to analyze the extent of Europeanization of political parties.

Nevertheless, even though the most of Georgian parties achieved a noticeable level of Europeanization on formal, declarative level, in practice, there is not much evidence that would suggest an in-depth internalization of EU norms and values among the parties and political socialization. The analysis has showed that, the political parties declaratively emphasize the EU integration as the most important foreign policy priority, however, once in power, they are not willing to systematically and constructively pursue the norms and rules they refer to in their manifestos. To be more specific, despite some progress achieved in terms of economic freedom and improvement of liberal market economy (Index of Economic Freedom, 2018), insufficient

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progress has been achieved in the field of rule of law, protection of human rights, democracy and freedom and fight against corruption. If one looks at the scores of *Corruption Perception Index* and *Nations in Transit*, one can see that, in terms of corruption perception level, there has been no significant improvements. (Transparency International, 2016). Further, in *Freedom of the World* score, Georgia has shown some progress throughout these years, however, it is listed among partly free countries. (With an overall score of 3. (1 = most free and 7 = least free) (Freedom in the World, 2017). *The Eastern Partnership Index,* which measures a progress made by the six EaP countries towards European integration and sustainable democratic development, also reflects relatively ineffective performance. In 2015 and 2016, Georgia was fourth after Moldova, Ukraine and Armenia in *Approximation dimension*, and ranked joint third with Armenia, for EU *Integration and Convergence dimension* (Eastern Partnership Index, 2015-2016: 42-41). Moreover, political instability, mass protests and demonstrations, corruption scandals, political arrests, have been a marked feature of Georgian political scene throughout these years unveiling a true nature of Georgian political parties' Europeanization. Furthermore, parties cooperation at the EU level be it parliamentarian or partisan, is not very intense and is employed as a strategic device for international and domestic legitimization, which hinders political socialization.

Hence, one may conclude that, even though analyses shows a growing level of Europeanization at a discourse level, it is not matched with significant improvements in the country's democracy, human rights or anti-corruption rankings. Hence, political parties, as policy actors, used channels of Europeanization, be it parliamentary cooperation or partisan level and pro-European discourse strategically to reach their political goals: strengthen their influence both domestically and internationally and to keep them in power.

Thus, constructivist ('logic of appropriateness') understandings of Europeanization can offer an explanation to such kind of developments. In the absence of any formal conditionality mechanisms, the 'logic of appropriateness' has been pursued by the policy actors, i.e. political parties. They have been guided by a collective understanding of what constituted of a socially accepted behavior. Parties became open to pro-Europeanization pressures and considered rules and norms that EU promoted as positive because Georgian public positively identified with the EU and pro-European discourse was associated with democratization of the country. In the context of a high level of 'cultural match" (Sedelmeier, 2010:13) between EU demands and domestic political situation, EU rules and norms have been incorporated into political discourses of the parties. Within the same 'logic of appropriates' model, it is assumed that, policy making process is quite complex and even though the EU has an influence on behavioral practices of the domestic actors, the actors are not selflessly embedded in the social structures and can use discourse in a strategic way to further their goals. (Risse, 2004:148). Furthermore, norm compliance relies on socially constructed strategic calculation based on legitimacy concerns rather than automatic and passive internalization (Juncos and Pomorska, 2006). Thus, it is not surprising that, the political parties were not merely passive takers of the norms transferred by the EU through Europeanization channels, but rather used both Europeanization channels and European discourse as a legitimate device. In such a case, one can speak of only limited level of internalization EU norms and values and political socializing.

Concluding Remarks

Thus, based on the findings of the thesis, on a macro level, one may conclude that, even though the EU's influence is mostly positively associated on the political developments of the post-communist countries, there is a limit to EU's normative power and top-down Europeanization approach in a non-stable political and geopolitical environment near EU's neighborhood.

In the context of Europeanization of political parties' scholarship, Georgian case fits well in the strand of literature of the post-communist countries Europeanization. It can be illustrative to explain the developments of similar processes in other ENP countries, wherein process of Europeanization, involving a gradual adaptation and implementation of comprehensive European norms and rules, has been undergoing in the context of democratic transition. Thus, in this setting, the political parties as policy actors had to be able to respond to dual pro-Europeanization pressures (voter's preferences and EU's pressures generated because of an undergoing Europeanization of the country). Georgian experience demonstrates that, Europeanization does not exclusively depend on incentives offered by EU but pro-European orientations of public opinion can have some impact on political parties' programmatic content and policies as well. Another external factor that needs to be considered as well is geopolitics and competing powers of the EU and Russia in the region. This is especially suggestive to gain insights into ongoing developments in the most similar cases of Moldova and Ukraine as these countries have been often left with a choice between the two powers.

As a final assumption, one should expect that, the effect of Europeanization on domestic changes will be limited in the coming period unless the political parties go beyond the formal declaratory alignments with EU norms and values and demonstrate a true political will to consistently follow and adapt to the EU standards and do things 'in an European way'.

Appendices:

1. Georgia Corruption Index

GEORGIA CORRUPTION INDEX

SOURCE: TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL

2. Nations in Transit Index

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
National Democratic Governance	5.50	5.75	6.00	6.00	5.75	5.75	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50
Electoral Process	4.50	4.75	5.25	5.25	5.00	5.00	4.75	4.50	4.50	4.50
Civil Society	3.50	3.50	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75
Independent Media	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.00	4.00	4.00
Local Democratic Governance	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.25	5.25
Judicial Framework and Independence	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.75
Corruption	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.75	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50
Democracy Score	**4.68**	**4.79**	**4.93**	**4.93**	**4.86**	**4.82**	**4.75**	**4.68**	**4.64**	**4.61**

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Special Annex: Thesis Report

Thesis Report

Central European University / University of York

Political Communications on European Integration in non- EU Countries

(A Case from Georgia)

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Erasmus Mundus Masters Program in Public Policy

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Table of Contents:

1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) is an important actor on the international arena. In different contexts of its political history and discourse, the union has been perceived as a "normative power", "super-power" and "civilian power". Having been faced a new geopolitical reality after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the EU has started to get more actively involved into its neighborhood through new targeted foreign policy instruments towards the region. In this regard, the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was launched in 2004 with an aim of achieving the closest political association and the greatest degree of economic integration with its southern and eastern neighboring countries.[1] Later in 2008, initiation of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) marked a more strengthened and focused relations with the 6 eastern neighbors. A new political and economic context provided both, the challenges and the opportunities for the EU in a process of managing its external affairs. Considering the political, economic and security developments in the last couple of years in the region, the EU has started to recognize a particular importance of political communication tools in furthering its policy objectives in the Eastern neighborhood. Given this, the European Council in cooperation with the Member States and the EU institutions, initiated to prepare EU Strategic Communication plan on the issues related to the Eastern neighborhood and beyond. The objectives of this action plan was set as follow: effective communication and promotion of EU policies and values towards the Eastern neighborhood; strengthening of the overall media environment including support for independent media; increased public awareness of disinformation activities by the external actors, and improved EU capacity to anticipate and respond to such activities.[2] The East Stratcom Team was set up under the European External Action Service's (EEAS) to work with the relevant actors to ensure a coherence between these activities and the overall strategic objectives identified.

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[1] European Union External Action. "European Neighborhood Policy". 2016.
https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/330/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp_en

[2] European Union External Action. "Action Plan on Strategic Communication". 2015.
https://www.scribd.com/document/320377952/Action-Plan-Stratcom-pdf

The EU's Eastern expansion after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the developments of the above-mentioned policies and instruments toward the region have had a remarkable influence on the transformation and democratization of the newly emerged independent states in the East. In the context of the Europeanization process of the Eastern neighborhood countries, examining an impact of the EU policies on the formulation and implementation of the domestic policies of these countries on the European Integration is of strategic importance. In this regard, the use of political communications tools by the actors, that of the EU and the neighborhood countries, play an important role in fostering the objectives and goals of their respective policies.

In the context of the external relations of the EU, a scholarship draws on the two different strands of the nature of the EU's policies and communications: one the one hand, the EU is perceived as 'normative power' which means that its actions and policies are being formed on as a value based system. Thus, the EU incorporates its internal values such as peace, liberty, democracy, promotion of the human rights and rule of law in the bilateral cooperation instruments and polices toward neighborhood countries. Similarly, the Eastern Neighborhood countries aspire for the integration for this reason- that is, because of the shared values. Contrary to this, the rationalism approach characterizes a nature of EU 's actions and policies based on the cost-benefits calculations of the rational actor and uses the same argument to explain why the non- EU countries are in favor of the European integration. However, in practice, it is very challenging to assert that, the policies and the actions of the actors are based purely on the normative basis or self-interests and calculations. Rather, one should recognize that, in different cases and scenarios, both perspectives have had their own roles to play. Nevertheless, when referring to the EU's influence on the domestic policies of the neighboring countries, one should consider that this should not be understood as one-way process, since the polices and the political communication about European integration and Europeanization in these countries have also been strengthened by the national governments through the different communication tools and instruments. However, considering the domestic governance structures, political institutions and, as well as the presence of other competing external powers, this process have been unfolding with different scenarios for each eastern neighborhood countries.

These processes and developments raise the questions worth examining and researching. In particular, there is a lack of research on a nature and the ways of the EU's political communication tools applied towards the Eastern Neighborhood countries and the way they impact the domestic political discourse. At the same time, very few studies assessed an effectiveness of the political communication strategies and tools and analysis of their implication for the whole European integration process in the Eastern Neighborhood countries. Stemming from this, the thesis will attempt to fill this gap in the research by taking a case from Georgia, as one of the EaP countries, with the following research question: Considering the EU's external political communication tools and Georgia's communication strategy on the EU integration for the period of 2014-2017 years, how can the political communications between the EU and Georgia be evaluated: mutually supportive or contradictory.

Considering the above mentioned, the thesis report will be structured in the following manner: the introductory part will be followed by the analytical framework section in order to place a research question in a wider theoretical and academic setting. The research design and methodology part will highlight an importance of the issue under an examination and review the methods to be applied to answer the research question. The consecutive section will offer some empirics of the EU- Georgia multilateral and bilateral relations in order to highlight a nature of political communication of the two sides and to put a research question in a focused policy setting. The report will end with a short conclusion. The thesis report will be accompanied by a plan of completion of the thesis.

Analytical Framework
2.1 Europeanization

In order to put the research to be undertaken in a wider international policy setting and provide an appropriate background for it, the analyses will be carried out in the context of the EU's external policies towards the neighborhood countries, that of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the Eastern Partnership (EaP). Overviewing of these policies is essential to understand a nature of the EU's political communications. A concept of Europeanization will be also applied with a view to examine how the EU exercise its influence on the domestic structures of the Eastern

Neighborhood countries and to pinpoint what means of political communications it applies in this process.

In regard to the ENP and EaP, the EU, as an international actor, goes beyond a traditional mode of foreign policy frameworks overarching multiple level and actor modes. Unlike the frameworks used in the process of accession of the candidate countries, such as for example, conditionality, logics of consequence and hierarchical relations, in the case of relations with the Eastern partners, the other mechanisms such as external governance is applied. This in turn, is connected to the indirect modes of Europeanization, as this mode envisages examination of how the EU exercises its influence on the domestic structures. [3] Thus, in this research, a reference to the concept of Europeanization will be made in the context of Europeanization beyond EU, in particular, in relation to ENP countries. In particular, the concept will be helpful to explain and to gain an insight on a broader process the EaP countries are undergoing and to analyze how EU's political communication policy has impacted on the domestic communication policies of the non- member countries, in particular, on Georgia. However, one should note that an understanding of Europeanisation as a two-way process, wherein the domestic structures do not appear as passive recipients of the EU impact, will constitute a theoretical grounding of this research. In particular, it means that Europeanization does not only envisage compliance with EU norms and rules by the third countries, rather, non- EU countries 's domestic governance structure, political institutions and, as well presence of other competing external powers greatly define the impact and effect of Europeanization. [4]

In respect to the political communication policies and strategies, it is important to identify a nature of each actor and the goal each player intends to attain. In order to analyse this, the thesis will refer to the body of literature which provides a perception of the EU and non- EU countries in the process of Europeanization. Generally, the scholars provide a different conception of the motives

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[3] Stephan Keukeleire and Jeniffer MacNaughtan. "The Eastern Neighborhood", in *The Foreign Policy of the European Union*, Palgrave Mcmmillan. Basingstoke. 2008: 256-262.
[4] Sandra Lavenex and Frank Schimmelfennig. "The EU Rules beyond EU Borders: Theorizing External Governance in European Politics". *Journal of European Public Policy* 16:6 September. 2009: 791 –812.

and goals of the EU and non-EU countries in this process. Different perspectives have been developed however, the two dominant trends of institutional thinking should be singled out: constructivism and rationalism. Constructivism strand analyzes the EU in external context, as a value based system, so called 'normative power', since the founding principles of the EU incorporate peace, liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. In the context of Europeanization, normative logic of appropriateness is pursued, which envisage that the actors are guided by the collective understanding of what constitutes of socially acceptable behavior. Thus, through adhering to the social expectations, new rules, norms and practices and structures emerge, which can be incorporated into the domestic structures. [5]The rationalism approach has roots in the logic of consequentialism and rests on an understanding of the players as rational actors acting based on the cost benefit calculations. In the context of Europeanization, the actors are in favor of Europeanization because of the calculated self-interest. However, as it was mentioned above in the introductory part, in practice, it is very challenging to assert that the policies and the actions of the actors are based purely on the normative basis or self-interests and calculations. Thus, rather than attempting to determine which stand is dominant, it will be assumed in the thesis that in different cases and scenarios, both perspectives had their own roles to play.

2.2 The EU's External Policies toward the Eastern Neighborhood: ENP, EaP

For the countries outside of its borders, the EU undertakes political communication through its external policies developed specifically for these countries, with the EU member states and European institutions involved in overseeing these policies. Regarding the Southern and Eastern Neighbors, the EU has been cooperating with them in the frame of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) launched in 2004 on a basis of the Communication Wider Europe – Neighborhood" adopted by the European Commission. In the frame of ENP, the EU cooperates with its southern and eastern neighboring countries with an aim of achieving the closest political association and the greatest degree of economic integration. The partnership is based on the common interests and

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[5] Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse. "When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change". *European Integration Online Papers* (EIoP). 29.11.2000. Vol. 4 (2000) N°15: 2. http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/2000-015a.

values. In order to demonstrate their commitment to the EU principles and values, the participating countries agree with the EU Association Agendas or ENP action plans in accordance with the principle of "joint ownership". In the frame of these agreements, the countries receive: a financial support, an access to EU market, an easy travel to the EU as well as the policy and technical support. At the same time, the EU also provides initiatives to strengthen the civil society in these countries.[6] In this regard, the theoretical discussions about the EU's external influence revolve around the analysis of the content and mechanism of Europeanization. According to Schimmelfennig's reflections on the content and mechanism of Europeanization, the ENP copies the EU's accession conditionality with differentiation being a main principle. However, conditionality proves effective, if the partner countries are dependent more on the EU than on any other external force. The scholar refers to an alternative, "self-conditionality" scenario and draws an example of the concrete countries such as Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. He argues that, these countries adopt the EU rules in order to signal their readiness to be considered as the prospective candidate countries. Moreover, he stresses an importance of presence of other external governance structures (Russia) and points out that, the competition of the EU with this power (Russia) effects on EU's bargaining power in the process of exporting of the EU governance structures there. Because of the weak effect of conditionality, Schimmelfennig agrees with the scholarship that assures that more prevalent mechanism of Europeanization in the case of ENP is socialization. [7] Referring to his theoretical insights is important to understand how theoretical implications have been translated in practice in the case of Georgia and how domestic circumstances have been fit for the changes brought by the socialization.

In 2009, the EU initiated a new pattern of relationship with the non-EU countries that differed from exiting institutional framework, - an Eastern Partnership (EaP) was introduced in order to enhance and reshape the relations between the EU and six former Soviet Union countries

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[6] European Union External Action. "European Neighborhood Policy". 2016.
https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/330/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp_en
[7] Frank Schimmelfennig. "Europeanization beyond the Member States". ETH Zurich, Zeitschrift für Staats- und Europawissenschaften. 2010: 13-15.

(Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine). Cooperation is based on respecting the fundamental values - democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. The two aspects should be singled out here: multilateral dimension of the partnership, which added to the already existing bilateral format of partnership with these countries and incorporation of civil society forms and national platforms into EaP's policies and institutions, thus, the civil society organizations were given opportunity to make input and conduct monitoring activities. Through the EaP policy, EU steps away from more bilateral EU government relations and develops a multiple actor constellation, a Europeanized system of governance. [8]

Thus, an examination of the ENP and EaP as external policies of the EU and exploration of the different perspectives of scholarship in this regard will be useful in order to establish a context and highlight the key aspects of the EU's external policies and a nature of political communications toward the Eastern Partnership countries.

3   Empirical Part: Relations between the EU and Georgia
3.1 The EU's Political Communication towards Georgia

The EU supports Georgia's ambitions for the closer ties with the EU and plays a significant role in Georgia: it is Georgia's largest trading partner and also provides a model for the country to follow in its reform efforts, as reflected in Georgia's signature of the Association Agreement. The EU provides over €100 million to Georgia annually in technical and financial assistance, benefits such as a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) and visa facilitation, and supports Georgia in dealing with its breakaway regions through the EU Monitoring Mission and EU Special Representative, while being fully committed to Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. [9]

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[8] Thijs Rommens, "The Eastern Partnership in Georgia: Europeanizing civil society?", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, XXX (2017): 1-11.
[9] European Union External Action . "EU-Georgia Relations, Factsheet. Brussels, July,2016. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/23634/EU-Georgia%20relations,%20factsheet

In terms of means of the political communications of the external policies, described above, the EU communicates it through the Council resolutions and decisions as well as Commission communications and through the messages of the political leaders. At the same time, the Strategic Communications Division ("StratComms") in cooperation with European External Action Service and the EU Institutions, works on promotion of the EU key policies and core values. In regard to specifically the Eastern Neighborhood Countries, one should refer to the East Stratcom Task Force which functions under the European External Action Service's (EEAS). It was formed in 2015 as a team of nine communication experts to promote the EU's positive narratives in Eastern Neighborhood and to address Russia's disinformation campaigns. The team attempts to achieve this goal through the development of communication products and the arrangement of the information campaigns. The communication products include analysis on the topical and relevant EU policy issues, as well as the narratives which address disinformation. The information campaigns are focused on positioning the EU's policies from a positive perspective. The team also provides support to the EU projects by highlighting EU's activities in the respective policy area. As a part of their activities, the task force produces two public, weekly newsletters highlighting the disinformation narratives: The Disinformation Review assembles and analyses pro-Kremlin disinformation articles which appear in the press and media of EU. Disinformation Digest reviews how Russian media perceive developments in the world. At the same time, the task force provides assistance to EEAS and the EU delegations in the region on communicating their policies and work; additionally, the members of the group also develop action plan for the target country.[10] One of the outcomes of the group activity, is the Action Plan on Strategic Communication (2015) which has been drafted in cooperation with the EU institutions and Member States. This document emphasizes that, the messages communicated in the region should reflect the values the EU promotes such as a commitment to democracy, the rule of law, fight against corruption, freedom of expression. At the same time, it highlights an importance of

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[10] TEPSA, Trans European Policy Studies Association. "EEAS's EAST StratCom Task Force Publishes Two Weekly Newspapers". 2016. http://www.tepsa.eu/eeass-east-stratcom-task-force-publishes-two-weekly-newsletter

communicating the messages in such a way that it resonates with the target audience, clearly explaining the actual benefits of the EU's policies and programs to them. [11]

The Delegation of the European Commission to Georgia, opened in Tbilisi, in 1995 and later (in 2009) transformed as a delegation of the EU Union is one European Union Delegations around the world. It has a status of a diplomatic mission and officially represents the European Union in Georgia. One of the functions of the delegation is to inform the public on the EU policies. The instruments used for these purposes are: press releases, publications, featured stories, facts sheets, promotion materials on respective projects.

3.2 The EU -Georgia Bilateral and Multilateral Relations

Starting of the bilateral relationship between the EU and Georgia dates back to 1992, when the EU recognized Georgia's independence. Since then, the development and enhancement of the strategic relationship with EU, pursing a steady course towards the EU integration has been a recurrent theme in Georgian political discourse. From the first institutional framework of cooperation, that of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) signed in 1996 up to the most recent one, Association Agreement (AA) concluded in 2014, the bilateral relations have been upgraded and evolved. At the current stage, it should be noted that an effective implementation of the Association Agreement will greatly contribute to Georgia's European integration process. On a domestic level, it can also serve as an incentive for the country's modernization and democratization.

Georgia has been involved and has showed commitment towards fulfilling its obligations both within the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and its eastern dimension under the Eastern Partnership (EaP). In 2016, the EU Global Strategy acknowledged Georgia as an example of the state and societal resilience in the eastern neighborhood.

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[11] European Union External Action. "Action Plan on Strategic Communication". 2015.
https://www.scribd.com/document/320377952/Action-Plan-Stratcom-pdf

The political communications on the European integration process on a governmental level are undertaken by the state institutions: from 2004, the State Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and his office has assumed the main coordination function and the Government Commission on European Integration, chaired by the Prime Minister, has been the main decision-making body. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been responsible for the political dialogue and negotiations with the EU. There are other ministries involved in their own capacities such as for example, the Ministry of Economic and Sustainable Development, which has been responsible for the development and implementation of the national action plans for the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA). The Ministry of Justice analyses the compliance of Georgian legislation with the EU laws on the governmental level before draft bills are sent to parliament. As to the other line ministries, they fulfill the respective EU linked commitments undertaken, via structural units related to the EU. [12]

In regard to the political communications on the EU and management of the European integration process, one should also refer to European Integration Index which serves as a tool to measure a progress made by the six EaP countries towards integration with the EU. Each country is measured in three dimensions – Linkage, Approximation and Management. According to European Integration Index 2014 for Eastern Partnership, Georgia was the second-best performer overall and the country that showed the biggest advances in some policy areas. It is worth considering that one of the components where a significant improvement was tracked down was in the Management of European Integration. Such an outcome has been partially ascribed to the development of a communications strategy for EU integration. This is a Georgian government's initiative to promote a public awareness about the EU integration and a main mechanism of the political communication on the EU related matters.

One of the specificities of Georgian system of managing political communication on the European integration affairs is a presence of the Information Center on NATO and the EU, which started its

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[12] Sergi Kapanadze. "The Coordination System of EU policies in Georgia " in *Improving the Coordination Policies of European Policies in Georgia based on Practices of Visegrad Countries*. Georgia's Reforms Associate. 2015: 109-123.

operation from 2013 under the Office of the European and Euro-Atlantic Integration. The main goal of the center is to improve a public awareness about the EU. A Center of this kind is a unique phenomenon in the Eastern Partnership countries.

Generally, Georgian scholars, diplomats, and politicians link Georgia's aspiration toward the EU either to strategic goals: country's economic, security needs and its democratic development, or to an idealism based on adherence to shared values and principles and norms. However, there are those, who have dubbed the aspiration as of a strategic idealism. [13] It is also interesting that; a pro-western course has been followed among the politicians of several generations and public administrations irrespective of the party politics. The EU integration issue has been listed in the public opinion polls conducted by international (National Democratic Institute (NDI) as well as by the local NGOs such as Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRCC). The surveys were conducted in 2009, 2011, 2015, 2016). Georgian public has had a positive attitude towards a process of European integration, however, throughout these years, a support has been fluctuating from 78% (2013) to 62% (2016). At the same time, the public's expectations are high (up to 56% of population) regarding the benefits to be derived from the European integration process. [14] Thus, one the one hand, weakening of the public support for EU integration will reduce the government's credibility to carry out the European integration related reforms. And on the other hand, the government has to manage high expectations of the Georgian population in regard to the European integration process and choose the right instruments and tools to communicate to the public on the actual benefits, and challenges of this process too. This has become particularly challenging in the context of an increased Russian propaganda with an aim of altering the foreign policy direction of the country.

Taking into account the above-mentioned circumstances, as well as a priority of the course towards the Euro-Atlantic integration, the Information and Communication Strategy of the Government of

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[13] Alexnadre Rondeli . "The choice of Independent Georgia". *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region - SIPRI Publications*. 2001:9 http://books.sipri.org/files/books/SIPRI01Chufrin/SIPRI01Chufrin11.pdf

[14] "Assessment of the Attitude and Knowledge towards the EU in Georgia". Research report 2009-2013. Caucasus Resource Research Center (CRRC). 2014.

Georgia on European Integration was developed for the years of 2014-2017, which serves as an important tool of the political communication on European integration process both on a domestic as well as on international levels. In 2017, a renewed document was elaborated for the subsequent years of 2017-2020. The major objective of the strategy is to increase an awareness of European integration process among the population through the provision of objective and comprehensive information on the advantages of the process as well as on the commitments the country has undertaken in this respect. At the same time, the strategy aims to provide sufficient information to the international community on the status of Georgia's integration process towards the EU. The State actors, together with the civil society representatives, as well as respective international partners and organizations are involved in the implementation of this strategy. [15]The effective/ successful implementation of these strategies is of a vital importance for the country in terms of mobilizing domestic support for the pro- western course, as well as bolstering its pro-European aspiration in the context of the foreign policy. However, one of the explicit challenges to implementing this strategy is posed by the powerful external actor - Russia. Contrary to the chosen foreign policy course of the Georgian government, Russia carries out propaganda/information warfare that aims at hampering a process of Euro-Atlantic integration. More specifically, wherever the pro-EU sentiment is stronger it tries to deepen existing divisions within the societies, Russia tries to shape a negative perception of the EU and its role in the region through Russian media and social network, Russian speaking minorities, pro- Kremlin parties. [16]

Proceeding from the above-mentioned circumstances, selection of an appropriate means of political communications and effectively delivering the key messages to the target audiences has an important role to play in a process of enhancement of the European integration process of the country.

4   Research Design and Methodology

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[15] Government of Georgia. "Communication Strategy of the Government of Georgia in the Sphere of EU Integration for the period of 2014-2017". 2017. http://eu-nato.gov.ge/en/news/4913

[16] European Parliament. "In- Depth Analysis: EU Strategic Communications , With a View to Counteracting Propaganda". *Directorate-General for External Policies*. May, 2016.

As it has been mentioned in the introductory part of the thesis report, there is a lack of research on a nature and the ways of the EU's political communication tools applied towards the Eastern neighborhood countries and the way they impact the domestic political discourse. It has also been highlighted that, very few studies have been undertaken on the effectiveness of the political communication strategies and tools and analysis of their implication for the whole European integration process in the Eastern Neighborhood countries. Considering this, the aim of the research has become to fill this gap by taking a case from Georgia, as one of the EaP countries.

The case of Georgia was selected because of the specific and intensifying relations between Georgia and EU. In other words, it makes a case, wherein a country, without a declared perspective of the EU membership and the external threat it has been facing, has been committed to the EU integration process and expressed an ambition towards Europeanization. European integration process has been undergoing in Georgia in the context of the critical domestic political transition which involves a gradual adaptation and implementation and of comprehensive European norms and rules. Despite the fact that Georgia's path toward the European integration has enjoyed a high support by the key political groups, parties and civil society members, public opinion polls and surveys conducted showed that population did not have sufficient information on the process, obligations and commitments undertaken within the framework of the Association Agreement , concluded with the EU in 2014 as well as on the benefits of the citizens to be gained as a result of the integration process. A lack of an adequate information might result in formation of misconceptions and stereotypes in connection to this process, which in turn, might pose a problem to the government to win a public support on the chosen course. In this regard, Georgia is one of the forerunners among the EaP countries, where the Information Center for EU and NATO has been operating for more than 10 years with an aim of provision of information to the public on the Euro-Atlantic integration process. A presence of the strategy of the government on communication of the EU integration indicates that the European integration issue is on the top agenda on the institutional and political levels. Therefore, Georgia provides a case to analyze the political communications on the EU from an Eastern Neighboring country perspective. Moreover, existing

bilateral relations between the EU and Georgia gives a ground to evaluate a role of the political communications undertaken by the two actors in the process of the European integration.

Taking into account the above mentioned, the thesis identified the following research question: Considering the EU's external political communication tools and Georgia's communication strategy on the EU integration for the period of 2014-2017 years, how can the political communications between the EU and Georgia be evaluated: mutually supportive or contradictory?

In order to answer this research question, the paper will look at the patterns and practice of Georgian political communication policy and analyze whether it's communication goals differ markedly from that of the EU's political communication objectives towards Georgia and to what extent it is aligned or contrasted to that of the EU approach. At the same time, the thesis will examine the objectives of the EU's political communications toward the EaP and Georgia and evaluate how the EU's political communication tools and messages compliment to Georgia's political communication strategy.

Considering a priority of the European integration course and the challenges the process faces both in the domestic and external contexts, answering the research question and investigation of the topic in general, is of a high policy relevance issue in Georgia. In this regard, the adequate capacities of the national governments to effectively communicate political and economic reforms promoted by the EU to the public greatly defines a success of European integration process in the country. At the same time, the way the EU communicates its policies toward the non- EU country could greatly affect its image and perception among the non-EU countries and negatively or positively impact to the acceptance of the EU norms and rules and values in the selected country. Thus, in practice, in the context of the European integration process of the non- EU countries it is very important to evaluate a degree of convergence of the national governments „ actual" policy goals implemented in practice and that of the stated policy goals. Of equal importance is to examine how in reality the EU's political communication tools and instruments contributes the European integration process in the non- EU countries.

Proceeding from the purpose of this research, the thesis will employ a qualitative research method. In order to understand a nature of political communications of the two actors that of the EU and Georgia, underlying research will refer to the tools/means of the political communications used by the two sides. Taking this into account, the research will examine the content and nature of the stated objectives and guiding principles of EU" s political communication policy by analyzing the respective policy documents, as well as the key messages conveyed by the EU political leadership. With the aim of determining a nature of political communication and the objectives of the EU's communication policy toward Georgia, the research will analyze Action Plan on Strategic Communication of the EU, the respective Council resolutions and decisions as well as Commission communications. It will also examine the selected communication products of the East Stratcom Task Force and the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia both operating under the European External Action Service's (EEAS).

In the case of Georgia, Communication and Information Strategy of the Government for the periods of 2014 -2017 and 2017-2020 provides key frameworks for analyzing political communication process connected to Georgia's European integration process. The latter has been developed recently and the former has been supplemented by the annual action plans of its implementation. It is noteworthy, that the government of Georgia elaborated the first document after it has acknowledged a communication gap and irregular patters of communication on the process of European integration to the public. However, the document did not refer to the threat posed by the Russian propaganda in Georgia in the process of European-integration of the country. The latest document among other goals identifies prevention of anti- western propaganda as one of the goals of the strategy.[17] Considering this, the thesis will examine how the Georgian government's political communication policy recognizes external factors that hamper European integration process and reflects it in the communication policy. On a larger scale, the thesis will analyze if Georgian communication policy echoes the EU's political messages and

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[17] Government of Georgia. "Communication Strategy of the Government of Georgia in the Sphere of EU Integration for the period of 2017-2017". 2017. http://eu-nato.gov.ge/en/news/4913

recommendations in this crucial policy document and whether the goals and objectives of Georgian government communication policy differ markedly from that of the EU or it is aligned with it.

One of the means of evaluation of the effectiveness of the use of political communication instruments is to measure a performance of the Georgian government in terms of raising an awareness of the public on European integration issues. In this regard, the thesis will refer to the public opinion polls and surveys conducted nationwide on the topic of European integration process. As it has been mentioned above, these surveys were conducted in different years and provides an opportunity to measure if the level of awareness of the population has been raised throughout the years and track the change of an attitude of the Georgian public toward the European integration process. At the same time, analysis of these surveys will also be useful to capture a perception of the EU by non- EU countries and track a national attitude towards European norms and values and a whole integration process. This is important because to some extent it can indicate if the EU through its political communication instruments and tools has communicated its policy goal to the target audience.

In order to evaluate what messages and goals of Georgian government's political communication on the EU integration, Georgian literature regarding Georgia's European aspirations and development will be referred to, in particular, the publications of Georgian experts of political and economic sciences, as well as the historians and diplomats. The respective parts of the Georgian legislation in the context of European integration and Europeanization, will be also examined, specifically, the Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU.

Since the thesis aims at providing analysis of the communication policy of the EU toward the EaP countries, it will also provide a textual analysis and interpretation of the respective Council resolutions and decisions.

The thesis will be complimented by providing a textual analysis of the speeches of the EU officials and Georgian political leaders and as well as press highlights of the milestone events among the two parties. The coverage might include conclusion of the association agreement, launching of the strategy of communication on EU, the respective high level political meetings within the frames of the Eastern Partnership Summits (2013, 2015) or bilateral high-level meeting of the EU and Georgian leaderships. The purpose of a such analysis is to gain an insight into how and why the actors pursue the selected communication strategies and what is communicated on the political level by the political leaders. Moreover, the interviews will be conducted with the policymakers, researchers and NGO representatives in order to evaluate whether Georgian government's and the EU's political communication policy is contradictory or supportive.

5 Conclusion

The underlying thesis report provides a working plan for the thesis to be written in the spring and summer of 2018. It will contribute to the existing literature on the European integration process of the non- EU countries, through a case selection of Georgia. The paper will also fill a gap in the research on the analysis of the political communication strategies and means and their implication for the European integration process. In the context of the Europeanization process of the non- EU countries, it will also provide a highlight into the ways the EU communicates its policies and messages to the non- EU countries and to what extent the policy is supportive to the non-EU countries' aspiration toward the European integration and contributes to the enhancement of the domestic policies on the EU integration. The findings will have a policy relevant implication for the Georgian political discourse because of the priority of the European integration process and the Georgian governments commitments to carry out this process successfully.

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7. Appendix:

Table 1: Work plan and timetable for completion of the Master thesis

December 23, 2017	Furthering of the knowledge related to the EU's political communication policies and instruments through the course European Public Policy;
April 30, 2018	Completion of the collection of the data and sources for the content and text analysis, including interviews, as well as acquisition of the skills of their analysis through attendance of the relevant classes and workshops
May 15,2018	Completion of the analytical part of the thesis
May 30, 2018	Completion of the methodology part
June 18, 2018	First draft of the thesis
June 29, 2018	Revised and final draft of thesis
July 1, 2018	Submission of the thesis
September 10-14, 2018	Oral defense of the thesis

Mundus MAPP Thesis Report Author's Declaration Form

I, the undersigned _E. Chikhladze_ hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis report. To the best of my knowledge this thesis report contains no material previously published by any other person except where proper acknowledgement has been made. This thesis report contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

This is a true copy of the thesis report, including final revisions.

Name (printed): _Ekaterine Chikhladze_

Date: _25.08.2017_

Signature: _E. Chikhladze_