EUROPEAN BUT NOT QUITE: TRACING THE POTENTIALITY OF EVERYDAY RESISTANCE THROUGH GEORGIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

The study traces the discursive ambivalence characteristic of the Georgian political elite, which publicly advances the 'solid European aspirations' narrative but simultaneously opts for the modification/re-interpretation of the European standards at the local level. In contrast to the existing critical statebuilding literature, which examines this conundrum using the traditional binary understandings of power and resistance, this research contends their interconnected nature. By building a novel theoretical framework based on the potentiality of the local counter-conducts, it underscores the importance of dimensions such as context, temporality and spatiality. Accordingly, the research aims to understand the prevalent European enthusiasm of Georgia through intermingled power-resistance dynamics and provides a detailed contextual examination of the specific patterns present in the Georgian elite discourse. The research identifies three discursive practices, by which the Georgian side accommodates the 'European rationalities' but reflexively creates space for the expansion of the individual agency. These practices include exaggerated reform compliance, deployment of the local ownership rhetoric, and the advancement of the 'Return to Europe' narrative.

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Introduction

"I am Georgian and, therefore, I am European" – the statement made by the Georgian Prime Minister at the Council of Europe back in 1999 inhabits all the ambiguous characteristics of the omnipresent European identity of Georgia. On the one hand, Europeanness is associated with freedom, democracy, independence and sustainable development; therefore, European integration remains the main priority of the Georgian foreign policy.[1] In her annual address in 2019, the President of Georgia declared: "Our path to Europe … is clear and irreversible! Internal challenges of the EU cannot impact us and divert us from our course."[2] One could argue that the European Identity of Georgia and the necessity of aspiring to the EU standards are taken for granted by the political elite, as at the level of political discourse, there is no conscious attempt of challenging or even questioning this narrative.[3]

On the other hand, the developing Georgian economy is having a hard time following the developmental standards set by the EU.[4] Not to mention, having a strong EU presence in the country automatically creates incentives for the local incumbents to institutionalise reforms that constrain their sphere of influence and question the already existing social and political formations.[5] A recent study about the local perceptions towards the European identity of Georgia has revealed that the local elite discourse vis-à-vis the EU reform-assistance practices is multi-layered. While the representatives of the current and former governments publicly

[1] Martin Müller, "Public Opinion Toward the European Union in Georgia," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 27, no. 1 (January 2011): 65, https://doi.org/10.2747/1060-586X.27.1.64.
[2] "President's Speech on 16th Batumi International Conference," Official web site of the President of Georgia, accessed March 31, 2021, https://www.president.gov.ge/eng/pressamsakhuri/siakhleebi/saqartvelos-prezidentis-sityva-batumis-me-16-saert.aspx.
[3] Donnacha Ó. Beacháin and Frederik Coene, "Go West: Georgia's European Identity and Its Role in Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy Objectives," *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 6 (July 2014): 925, https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2014.953466.
[4] Grzegorz Gromadzki, "The Eastern Partnership after Five Years: Time for Deep Rethinking," *Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union*, Policy Paper (February 2015): 18, https://doi.org/10.2861/804180.
[5] Licínia Simão, *The EU's Neighbourhood Policy towards the South Caucasus* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 229, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65792-9.

maintain a rigid reform-oriented stance, in practice, they tend to "advocate for the selective incorporation of the EU standards and even criticize local NGOs for their uncritical attitude towards them."[6] As a result, one can observe the emergence of a double articulation within the Georgian domestic setting, where the local elite seeks to subvert the linear imposition of the EU rationalities but simultaneously stresses a firm willingness of conformity.

The existing statebuilding literature looks at this disconnect as a specific manifestation of power-resistance interplay. On the one hand, the EU reform-assistance practices can be considered as a form of neoliberal governmentality,[7] under which the EU constructs a particular image of a self and seeks to mould and discipline others by spreading certain norms and rationalities at the level of political discourse.[8] The programs implemented under the EU mandate are perceived as an instantiation of the discursive agenda, enabling the EU to externally project its model of developmental idealism upon every political and institutional body in the target societies.[9] The concept of developmental idealism denotes the aggregation of successful governing practices needed to be shared and embodied by others for the common good.[10] The governmentality approach opts for the strategic use of discourses to mould the

[6] Lia Tsuladze, "Managing Ambivalence: An Interplay Between the Wanted and Unwanted Aspects of European Integration in Georgia." In *The Unwanted Europeanness?* edited by Branislav Radeljić, (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2021): 163. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110684216-007.

[7] See: Beste İşleyen, "The European Union and Neoliberal Governmentality: Twinning in Tunisia and Egypt," *European Journal of International Relations* 21, no. 3 (September 2015): 672–90, https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066114554446; Cris Shore, "'European Governance' or Governmentality? The European Commission and the Future of Democratic Government: European Governance and the Future of Democratic Government," *European Law Journal* 17, no. 3 (May 2011): 287–303, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0386.2011.00551.x.

[8] See: Jennifer Mitzen, "Anchoring Europe's Civilizing Identity: Habits, Capabilities and Ontological Security," *Journal of European Public Policy* 13, no. 2 (March 2006): 270–85, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501760500451709; Jan Zielonka, "Europe's New Civilizing Missions: The EU's Normative Power Discourse," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 18, no. 1 (February 2013): 35–55, https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2013.750172.

[9] See: Milja Kurki, "Governmentality and EU Democracy Promotion: The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and the Construction of Democratic Civil Societies," *International Political Sociology* 5, no. 4 (December 2011): 349–66, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-5687.2011.00139.x; Sandra Pogodda et al., "Assessing the Impact of EU Governmentality in Post-Conflict Countries: Pacification or Reconciliation?," *European Security* 23, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 227–49, https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2013.875533.

[10] Julia Gallagher, "Can Melanie Klein Help Us Understand Morality in IR?: Suggestions for a Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Why and How States Do Good," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 38, no. 2 (December 2009): 296, https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829809347534.

diverse identities and interests of others, which consequently shapes the ideas of what an ideal state is and, accordingly, accounts for the desire for conformity by the locals.[11]

The ideational debate goes even further and incorporates the agency of target societies, as the process of discourse formation cannot be ascribed to the originator *per se*. The previous research underscores the discursive patterns revealing instances when the same disciplinary discourse is being mitigated using different resistance mechanisms.[12] By emphasizing country-specific mechanisms, the existing literature seeks to perceive local contestation/counter-conduct as an explicit, strategic practice aimed at creating new power asymmetries by redefining imported global norms.[13] Resistance, in this case, can be understood as a deliberate, intent-based practice by which local agents seek to repel externally imposed rationalities and advance their individual epistemic voice.

This research seeks to nuance the above-mentioned nexus by looking at the "Georgian unquestioned compliance" beyond the orthodox understandings of power and resistance. The main inconsistency within the existing perspective is its fixed perception of local action as *a priori* conforming or subversive when, in reality, power-resistance practices can be entangled, co-constitutive, and, thus, more dynamic. Michel Foucault underscores that resistance is never separated from power, as it represents an integral part of it.[14] Additionally, as Alen Toplišek argues: "In the performativity of counter-conduct, there is also conducting power and within conducting power a performative potentiality for counter-conduct."[15] Taking into account the

[11] See: Michael Merlingen, "From Governance to Governmentality in CSDP: Towards a Foucauldian Research Agenda," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 49, no. 1 (January 2011): 154, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2010.02133.x.; Timothy Edmunds and Ana E Juncos, "Constructing the Capable State: Contested Discourses and Practices in EU Capacity Building," *Cooperation and Conflict 55,* no.1 (July 2019): 6, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836719860885.

[12] Annika Björkdahl and Ivan Gusic, "'Global' Norms and 'Local' Agency: Frictional Peacebuilding in Kosovo," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 18, no. 3 (July 2015): 265–87, https://doi.org/10.1057/jird.2015.18.

[13] Annika Björkdahl and Kristine Höglund, "Precarious Peacebuilding: Friction in Global–Local Encounters," *Peacebuilding* 1, no. 3 (September 2013): 289–99, https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2013.813170.

[14] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1: An Introduction.* (New York: Random House, 1978): 95.

[15] Alen Toplišek, *Liberal Democracy in Crisis: Rethinking Resistance under Neoliberal Governmentality* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 149, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-97937-3.

latter proposition, I seek to explore the discursive ambivalence of Georgia in greater detail by analysing it through the complex interplay of power relations. Motivated by this aim, the research asks the following question: How to account for the prevalent European enthusiasm of Georgia in the context of the intermingled power-resistance dynamics? The thesis traces the discursive sequence stemming from the Georgian society, deconstructs the current understanding behind it and problematises the linear perception of the predominant patterns in the country's elite political discourse.

By doing so, the study develops a novel theoretical framework, which perceives *potentiality* as a primary tool to make sense of mundane counter-conducts by looking at different contextual scenarios, in which the acts, actions, and/or utterances that are born as a result of power could have the potential to undermine, challenge or/and modify the linear imposition of it.[16] The potentiality framework looks at power and resistance as co-constituent units, which are inseparably entangled in different spatial and temporal dimensions. The framework argues that, as societies become more complex, the sites, agents or even mechanisms of power/resistance change, adapt and diversify accordingly.[17] Therefore, no attempt of providing a fixed understanding of their effects or outcomes can be successful. Hence, there is an inevitable need to move towards analysing actions on their own terms in specific settings and explore how contexts and discourses matter in the analysis.

The contribution of this study is, therefore, twofold: First, by focusing on the 'uncontested European enthusiasm,' it provides a comprehensive outlook on the EU-assistance related ambivalence prevalent in the Georgian political discourse and second, it builds a novel framework using a conceptually informed empirical engagement. While the detailed illustration of the provided framework will be provided in the upcoming chapters, it is essential

[16] Anna Johansson and Stellan Vinthagen, *Conceptualizing "Everyday Resistance": A Transdisciplinary Approach* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020).
[17] Ibid.

to clarify its theoretical foundations. The proposed potentiality framework is inspired by a relatively nascent work of Stellan Vinthagen and Anna Johannson, who have successfully managed to utilise spatial and temporal contexts to account for everyday resistance in different social and cultural settings.[18] Nonetheless, while their research still predominantly focuses on limited anthropological case studies such as work environments and refugee camps, it has not been extensively utilised by the resistance scholarship, and, therefore, its empirical outreach remains relatively narrow. By utilising their epistemological viewpoints, this study seeks to adjust the framework to the context of critical statebuilding. Zooming on the EU-Georgia relations, it demonstrates how specific affirmative practices could have the potential to influence the established power relations. Therefore, the research serves as an attempt to broaden the empirical scope of the everyday resistance literature.

Based on the illustrative empirical section, which consists of the comprehensive contextual discourse analysis of the political speeches of the Georgian officials, the study identifies three major affirmative discursive patterns prevalent in the Georgian political discourse that reveal the characteristics of the potentiality approach: *exaggerated reform compliance* – a practice by which the Georgian side reflexively drives the EU's attention away from the reform outcomes, *deployment of the local ownership rhetoric* – allowing the locals to find meaningful interpretations of the proposed reforms and *advancement of the "Return to Europe" narrative,* which accentuates the importance of the pre-existing convergence of norms and values, thus making the local side a subject of lesser change. The thesis argues that within the scope of the potentiality framework, the solid Europe-centric enthusiasm of Georgia can be perceived as a double articulation, which nests on the complex intersection of regulation and everyday resistance. The research finds that while the Georgian political elite accommodates the EU's disciplinary discourse by demonstrating the continuous effort of social and

[18] Johansson and Vinthagen, *Conceptualizing "Everyday Resistance."*

institutional compliance, the newly formed social and political identities reflexively create space for the preservation of individual agency.

The research proceeds as follows: First, it tries to elucidate the EU-Georgia relations according to the governmentality framework to pinpoint the rationalities used by the EU to shape the reform-related practices in Georgia. Following this, the potentiality framework is discussed in greater detail by underscoring specific characteristics of detecting, making sense of, or interpreting it in various contexts. The third part provides a close analysis of the Georgian political discourse, which demonstrates how specific attempts to accommodate the EU's disciplinary discourse could have the potential to reflexively advance the local agency in various temporal and spatial contexts. Lastly, the paper ends with concluding remarks by summarising the main findings and pinpointing suggestions for future research.

Chapter 1. EU-Georgia Relations through the Governmentality Framework

This research advances by introducing the broader picture of existing power dynamics among the European Union and Georgia. Most importantly, by focusing on the governmentality framework, this chapter follows the critical scholarship on EU statebuilding and makes sense of the omnipresent mechanisms by which the EU seeks to mould Georgian reform-related rationalities. Hence, the chapter introduces the international side and creates a foundation for introducing the resistance literature.

1.1 Defining Governmentality

Michel Foucault has underscored the practices of regulating the subjects' behaviour based not on the direct form of imposition but the individual freedoms and self-governance.[19] The novelty within the Foucauldian sense of governmentality lies within the embedded rationality of government, where the exercise of power is no longer deduced to the principality of the ruler but is based on the intertwined network of three movements: government, population, and political economy.[20] Governmentality is envisaged as "[t]he ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power."[21] Governmentality ascribes the principal form of knowledge political economy to the population and positions it as the target of the exercised power relations.

When it comes to the form of power, governmentality establishes a specific relationship with the notions of sovereignty and discipline, but at the same time, reveals its unique

[19] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2007).
[20] Michel Foucault et al., eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 102.
[21] Ibid.

characteristics in different manifestations.[22] Sovereignty represents the universally accepted 'state government,' which is enforced through the judicial and executive arms of the state. Discipline narrows down the scope and focuses on ordering and regulating the individual, body, forces, and capacities in a given domain. While using both the mechanisms mentioned above, governmentality looks at individuals as members of the population, "as resources to be fostered, to be used and to be optimised."[23]

Instead of changing the other forms of power, governmentality modifies them, ascribes them the notions of welfare, prosperity, and happiness. This allows it to reshape the conduct of an individual and create a model to strive for. According to Foucault, it is a form of governance, which aims to shape the conduct of others from a distance by utilising networks of techniques, procedures, practices, and institutions.[24] This process is being executed using productive power, which determines how the social capacities of actors are produced and how these processes shape the actors' interests and self-understandings. Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall explain the working of the productive power in details. Productive power mainly concerns discourse, which is based on the "systems of knowledge, through which meaning is produced, fixed, lived, experienced, and transformed."[25] Therefore, discourses are able to construct social identities as they ascribe specific meaning to them.

Based on the Foucauldian analysis, critical scholars perceive the concepts of 'problematisation' and 'responsibilisation' as the primary tools for Western societies to mould the less developed societies to achieve the aforementioned institutional practices. The 'problematisation' discourse seeks to divide the interveners and their targets into two

[22] Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, (Los Angeles, London: SAGE, 2010), 29.
[23] Dean, *Governmentality*.
[24] Jonathan Joseph, "Resilience as Embedded Neoliberalism: A Governmentality Approach," *Resilience* 1, no. 1 (April 2013): 38–52, https://doi.org/10.1080/21693293.2013.765741.
[25] Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, "Power in International Politics," *International Organization* 59, no. 1 (2005): 39–75, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818305050010.

fragmented categories: more capable and less capable states. According to this logic, due to their inability to ensure their development, the less capable states are predestined to seek help from the capable ones. The interveners are attributed with the highest degree of capability and are framed as having an idealised model of democracy, security, and good governance.[26] As Edmunds and Juncos argue, the interveners are represented as "one-size-fits-all" models, ultimate political formations, which the other, less capable states should try to look up to. Local, traditional, informal, and other distinctive forms of a capable state must be eradicated, leaving no space for generic international alternatives. While the missions are primarily justified to improve social life, this dominant discourse is "context-transcendent and non-negotiable."[27]

1.2 Exporting Western Governmentality to Georgia

The above-mentioned perspective can be considered as the guide to uncover the *modus operandi* to export neoliberal rationalities; therefore, I use the same approach to showcase the omnipresent exportation of Western governmentality in Georgia. The manifestations of the responsibilisation discourse are traceable in the political speeches of EU nationals. For instance, in 2011, at the Batumi International Conference: "Georgia's European Way – the EU and its European Neighbours," Stefan Füle underscored the need for the Georgian state to choose the European way as the primary goal to achieve political and economic development:

> I believe there is another Georgia beyond the splendid boulevards of Batumi. A Georgia that needs sustainable growth. A Georgia that needs to reduce social and regional inequalities. A Georgia that needs to create jobs for its workers and higher standards of living for its people. This is the European way. If Georgia seriously chooses to pursue this way, it needs to undergo very comprehensive and resolute reforms. But at the end of this journey, there will be sustainable, balanced and long-term development for everyone.[28]

[26] Edmunds and Juncos, "Constructing the Capable State," 7-8.
[27] Michael Merlingen, "Applying Foucault's toolkit to CSDP." In *Explaining the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy: Theory in Action*, eds. Xymena Kurowska and Fabian Breuer (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 205.
[28] "Stefan Füle European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Key address," European Commission, accessed April 24, 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_11_535.

Apart from skillfully illustrating the pervasive factors responsible for the severe social and economic challenges in Georgia, the statement additionally underscores the embedded superiority of the EU as a political entity. The amalgamation of the two key factors serves as an effective way to create an omnipresent narrative, which would encourage the country to undergo heavy institutional reforms, framing them as a guarantee for a better future for everybody.

Another way to look at EU governmentality practices is to problematise the term 'local ownership' and add new connotations to it. While in the traditional understanding, local ownership represents the process when domestic actors control both the design and implementation of the political processes,[29] this same discourse can be utilised as a management tool to advance the political agenda of the interveners.[30] In the Foucauldian understanding, the primary tool to enforce local ownership is *responsibilisation*, which is "about interpellating individuals in a certain way" and entails mechanisms to turn individuals into subjects who consider themselves as free and responsible for their actions.[31] In EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, for example, local ownership discourse is used to "to socialise locals into their way of thinking and to persuade them to accept the proposed reforms as in their own best interest and thus to implement them effectively."[32] This way, the interveners manage to keep the influence on deciding the outcomes of the interventions; however, at the same time, they avoid the responsibility for their outcomes. Local ownership-based responsibilisation practices exceed mere rhetoric, which

[29] Timothy Donais, "Empowerment or Imposition? Dilemmas of Local Ownership in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Processes," *Peace & Change* 34, no. 1 (January 2009): 3, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0130.2009.00531.x.
[30] Merlingen, "Applying Foucault's toolkit to CSDP," 205.
[31] Thomas Biebricher, "(Ir-)Responsibilization, Genetics and Neuroscience," *European Journal of Social Theory* 14, no. 4 (November 2011): 471, https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431011417933.
[32] Merlingen, "Applying Foucault's toolkit to CSDP," 205.

involves an attempt to impose political rationalities developed within one polity to shape the behaviour of the other.[33]

The techniques used by the EU to responsibilise the targets are country-specific and can vary from advising and mentoring to capacity building and joint-planning.[34] Considering the limited scope of this research, I will only discuss two of them: joint-planning and evaluation. Joint planning is a relatively common instrument utilised by the EU to increase the local ownership of the target countries by signing Joint Action Plans (JAP) with host governments and establishing joint monitoring and evaluating bodies. While the primary objective of the practice seems effective, in practice, it only serves to "inculcate in the locals a sense of ownership and responsibility for the implementation of objectives that are not of their own making."[35]

If we look closely at the official EaP documents and statements, the representations of the above-mentioned discourse can be detected. For instance, in March 18, 2020, Joint Communication on the "Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020 – Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all," the EU outlined the long-term cooperation agenda. The document stresses that the EaP program contributes to the overall goal of increasing the local ownership, stability, prosperity, and resilience of the EU's neighbours by stating the following: "Together with national authorities, the EU and its Member States have taken key steps to ensure joint programming where possible."[36] On the surface, this statement underscores the importance of the local agency in reform design; nonetheless, in practice, all of the key deliverables of 2020 for Georgia - the reforms that the country has to implement in

[33] Filip Ejdus, "Local Ownership as International Governmentality: Evidence from the EU Mission in the Horn of Africa," *Contemporary Security Policy* 39, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 40, https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2017.1384231.
[34] Ibid., 38.
[35] Ibid., 39.
[36] "Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020- Reinforcing Resilience- an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all," European Commission, accessed March 18, 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/joint_communication_on_the_eap_policy_beyond_2020.pdf

the nearest future, are a replica of the standard EU requirements, lacking any modification from the local level.

On the instrumental level, such as reform monitoring and evaluation, responsibilisation practices are also noticeable. For instance, in 2012, the European Union reassessed its neighbourhood policy and set new priorities for the Eastern Partnership states. The existing approach, which would envisage the Europeanisation of these countries as a single homogenous process, was replaced with a more sophisticated alternative. An incentive-based "More for More" program was implemented to increase the adaptive capabilities and decrease complexity and uncertainty. The "More for More" plan would mean that the countries that would manage to implement the reforms more successfully would develop stronger partnerships and, therefore, get more benefits from the European Union.[37] The aforementioned joint communication of March 2020 stresses that:

> The incentive-based approach needs clearer guidance on specific reform priorities, with objective, precise, detailed and verifiable benchmarks. Reform progress should lead to increased funding and investment. Serious or prolonged stagnation or even backsliding in reform implementation should lead to EU funding being adjusted downward.[38]

This statement serves as the direct representation of the responsibilisation discourse, as it aims to incorporate the need of the local ownership, but, at the same time, depict the proposed reforms as the only possibility for achieving stability and sustainable economic growth. Therefore, the target countries should regulate themselves to maintain assistance from the EU and comply with the externally imposed standards as much as possible. In case of the successful internalisation of the responsibilisation discourse, one shall expect the target society to embody and enforce the utilised techniques and reproduce them accordingly. What we call internalisation and/or reproduction is a process to make a country consider itself as an object

[37], "The European Neighbourhood Policy | Fact Sheets on the European Union," European Parliament, accessed May 9, 2021, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/170/the-european-neighbourhood-policy.
[38] "Eastern Partnership, European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations," European Commission, accessed May 9, 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/eastern-partnership_en.

to be modified. The country at the receiving end should "distance itself from itself—treating itself as an object to be changed, discussed, and evaluated."[39] Therefore, the wish to stick with the status quo should not exist; reforms should be prioritised above everything else.

In sum, this chapter served as an illustration for the working of the EU's discursive mechanisms to transport its version of developmental idealism in Georgia. Nonetheless, one shall also consider that governmentality practices are based on the rationality of the interveners, where locals can potentially adapt to their nature and navigate through them in various contexts.[40] Interestingly, the local subjects cannot stop being governed even when they resist but still constitute to the existing power relations.[41] Not to mention, by problematising the orthodox binaries between power and resistance, one can observe that resistance has "the potential to reinforce and bolster, as well as, undermine and challenge dominant forms of global governance."[42] This further demonstrates the need to dive deeper into the power dynamics and explore certain acts as not exclusively repressive or resistant but comprehend the realities produced through them. The next chapter will theorise the nature of everyday resistance and provide a comprehensive contextual definition later to be utilised into the analysis.

[39] Helle Malmvig, "Free Us from Power: Governmentality, Counter-Conduct, and Simulation in European Democracy and Reform Promotion in the Arab World," *International Political Sociology* 8, no. 3 (September 2014): 301, https://doi.org/10.1111/ips.12055.
[40] Erlend Grøner Krogstad, "Local Ownership as Dependence Management: Inviting the Coloniser Back," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 8, no. 2–3 (July 3, 2014):105–25, https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2014.901030.
[41] Louiza Odysseos, "Governing Dissent in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve: 'Development', Governmentality, and Subjectification amongst Botswana's Bushmen," *Globalizations* 8, no. 4 (August 2011): 440, https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2011.585845.
[42] Carl Death, "Counter-Conducts: A Foucauldian Analytics of Protest," *Social Movement Studies* 9, no. 3 (August 2010): 236, https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2010.493655.

Chapter 2. Introducing the Local Side

The intention to examine resistance in different social settings is not new to the International Relations scholarship, as one should not neglect the fact that actors at the other end "have their own agency, which is grounded in particular culturally infused ways of knowing and doing things."[43] For instance, critical and post-colonial approaches to international intervention and statebuilding have uncovered and challenged the naïve and Euro-centric approach of the interveners, who seem to underestimate the vast social, political, and cultural diversity of the local societies.[44] This so-called 'local turn' acknowledges the agency of different social groups and tries to contextualise their epistemic voice to theorize global-local encounters in the realms of compliance, adoption, adaptation, co-option, resistance and rejection.[45]

The local turn seeks to understand the locally-driven peacebuilding as a form of resistance against the universal dominant discourse. In the Foucauldian sense, the dominant discourse can be understood as a neoliberal hegemonic project with a totalising nature of internationals, which have retained the romanticising "colonial gaze" over the locals and blamed them for the existing hierarchical division. In this context, the EU reform-assistance practices can be seen as the instantiation of the aforementioned 'neoliberal hegemonic project,' where the disciplinary power of the EU is expected to face signs of resistance. Nonetheless, the immediate question that arises is how resistance itself can be defined and what could and could not be possibly understood behind the term. When it comes to the example of Georgia, can we presume that resistance is a deliberate conscious effort, or is it a result/side-effect of

[43] Merlingen, "From Governance to Governmentality in CSDP," 204.
[44] See: Béatrice Pouligny, "Civil Society and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Ambiguities of International Programmes Aimed at Building 'New' Societies," *Security Dialogue* 36, no. 4 (December 2005): 495–510, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010605060448; Meera Sabaratnam, "Decolonising Intervention: International Statebuilding in Mozambique." London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017.
[45] See: Ejdus, "Local Ownership as International Governmentality"; Malmvig, "Free Us from Power."

mundane practices that are entangled with power? Should resistance be implicitly effective or/and successful? Therefore, given the nature of this research, there is an inevitable need to engage in the conversation with the 'resistance' literature, propose a fixed understanding of the concept and incorporate it adequately into the proposed framework.

2.1 Conceptualizing Everyday Resistance

Foucault himself claimed that "where there is power, there is resistance."[46] Resistance is an integral part of every power relation, and, therefore, positioning it accurately is crucial to grasp the nature of power itself. In general, the usage of the term has been somewhat ambiguous, as certain definitions allow us to detect resistance almost everywhere, while others ascribe a very straightforward definition to the concept and limit its operational outreach.[47] One possible way to assess resistance is by understanding it as a routinely exercised practice, which is not necessarily explicit and formally recognised, but by nature, can undermine/challenge power.[48] James C. Scott, for instance, provides an interesting perspective on invisible power relations by pointing out that oppression and resistance are constantly intertwined. By focusing on the explicit manifestations of political actions, such as social movements and rebellions, one can easily miss the critical forms of everyday resistance.[49] By looking at the examples of peasants' life, one can find non-observable ways to respond to the dominating discourses. Scott uses the notion of "transcripts" – established ways of speaking, acting, and behaving to fit particular social settings. Scottian analysis entails a large variety of

[46] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* 95.
[47] Rose Weitz, "Women and Their Hair: Seeking Power through Resistance and Accommodation," *Gender and Society* 15, no. 5 (2001): 669, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3081969.
[48] Johansson and Vinthagen, *Conceptualizing "Everyday Resistance,"* 30.
[49] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

mechanisms countering the abuse of power, such as linguistic tricks, metaphors, and euphemisms.

While speaking about the forms of everyday resistance in Eastern European prisoners, Scott claims that "exaggerated compliance and perfectly ordinary behaviour, when generalised and coded, can constitute relatively safe forms of resistance."[50] Scott argues that exaggerating compliance – by openly showing contempt for proceeding – makes the usage of a strong counter-action by the power-holder more difficult. When the target demonstrates a strong willingness to proceed, the suppressive punitive measures become more difficult to enforce. In addition, Scott precludes that the advanced forms of everyday resistance can obtain an oral form, as they can provide seclusion, control, and even anonymity, which makes them ideal vehicles for resistance.[51]

Nonetheless, the ideational contributions of Scott to the everyday resistance literature have been extensively criticised for romanticising the locals and misinterpreting the mundane actions that, in reality, do not intend to subvert the existing power hierarchies.[52] Scott ascribes a specific consciousness or motive to people's everyday actions, as he argues that resistance is always intent-based. In Scottian analysis, the intent is the only possible way to label an action as resistance since the desired outcome might not always be successful. Therefore, according to Scott, 'any act' that is being performed by a subordinate class *intended* to undermine the superordinate classes can be automatically perceived as resistance.[53]

Accordingly, it can be argued that this particular approach creates an incomplete, one-dimensional picture of everyday resistance, which imposes a taken-for-granted definition of its

[50] Scott, 139.
[51] Scott, 160.
[52] Dipankar Gupta, "Everyday Resistance or Routine Repression? Exaggeration as a Statagem in Agrarian Conflict," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 29, no. 1 (October 1, 2001): 89–108, https://doi.org/10.1080/714003934.; Susan Gal, "Language and the 'Arts of Resistance,'" ed. James Scott, *Cultural Anthropology* 10, no. 3 (1995): 407–24.
[53] Asef Bayat, "From `Dangerous Classes' to `Quiet Rebels': Politics of the Urban Subaltern in the Global South," *International Sociology* 15, no. 3 (September 1, 2000): 533–57, https://doi.org/10.1177/026858000015003005.

agents and their motives. The inconsistencies in the aforementioned framework can be summarised in two key assumptions: First, resistance does not always entail an explicit intent, as the assessment of an intention is most of the times impossible.[54] Second, actors' intentions are not always decisive when it comes to labelling an act as resistance. People's everyday actions are by default characterised with intentions; nonetheless, they are not mandatory to be of an ideological or antagonistic nature.[55] Intents such as "to survive, solve a practical problem, fulfil immediate needs, follow a desire, "cut corners", gain status among peers, take a pause or something else" can also have meaningful consequences in different temporal and spatial contexts.[56]

Therefore, while speaking about everyday resistance, one should problematise the intent-based application of the term and focus on the actual practices occurring daily. This would allow us to make better sense of the everyday resistance not as a conscious effort or a deliberate strategy but broaden its definition by including the aspects of potentiality and context. The next chapter will be the attempt to introduce a novel framework to achieve that.

2.2 Beyond Intent: Everyday Resistance in the Dimension of Potentiality

Stellan Vinthagen and Anna Johannson come up with an alternative theoretical framework, which enables us to come up with a more refined approach on what to call everyday resistance, how to distinguish it from actions that are simply different and provide a more comprehensive contextual analysis.[57] Vinthagen and Johannson propose that while looking at the resistance practices, one should move away from assessing the conscious intent of the subordinate group or a potential effect or outcome of the process. Instead, it is the action, the

[54] Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner, "Conceptualizing Resistance," *Sociological Forum* 19, no. 4 (December 2004): 542, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11206-004-0694-5.
[55] David Jefferess, *Postcolonial Resistance*, *Postcolonial Resistance* (University of Toronto Press, 2016), 40.
[56] Johansson and Vinthagen, *Conceptualizing "Everyday Resistance,"* 49.
[57] Johansson and Vinthagen, *Conceptualizing "Everyday Resistance."*

mundane act, the agency itself has to be examined based on the *potential* of undermining power.[58] One should focus on particular contexts, as "it is through particular power discourses situated in certain contexts that resistance and power is framed and understood in which actors understand themselves and their identities."[59]

Therefore, tracing the everyday acts of resistance can be only be achieved through the careful contextual examination of the potentiality of various tactics, opportunities, and individual choices in different temporal and spatial dimensions.[60] Giorgio Agamben first described potentialities as the main tools of power to reform colonial apparatuses and counter the ontological violence from the "sovereign autoconstitution of being."[61] For Agamben, potentialities remain the aspects of everyday life that cannot be possibly governed by bare power.[62] Everyday resistance can sometimes represent a mundane, repetitive social action, which does not have a predetermined target. This would also entail actions that are used singularly within a specific circumstance, as "there are no guarantees that a particular tactic will work – or work the same way twice."[63]

In order to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the potentiality aspect of everyday resistance, one has to first carefully examine how specific practices, agents and power configurations are entangled spatially and temporally. Accordingly, there is a need to include two dimensions into the analysis: Space and Time.

The spatial dimension of resistance challenges the orthodox understanding of space as a fixed, predetermined and unchangeable domain. Doreen Massey, for instance, has proclaimed

[58] Ibid., 54.
[59] Stellan Vinthagen and Anna Johansson, "Everyday Resistance: Exploration of a Concept and its Theories," *Resistance Studies Magazine*, no.1 (2013):18-19.
[60] Vinthagen and Anna Johansson, "Everyday Resistance": 24.
[61] Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*. (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2020), 90.
[62] Mikko Joronen, "'Refusing to Be a Victim, Refusing to Be an Enemy'. Form-of-Life as Resistance in the Palestinian Struggle against Settler Colonialism," *Political Geography* 56 (January 2017): 98, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2016.07.005.
[63] David Butz and Michael Ripmeester, "Finding Space for Resistant Subcultures," *Invisible Culture, no.2* (1999): 5.

that all spaces embody the following characteristics: 1. Space is relational, as it presents the result of relations of both past and present. 2. Space is a dimension of multiplicity, as more than one action or phenomena inhabit a particular space. 3. Space is a process, constantly made, unmade and remade. [64] It is always under construction and can never be fully formed or shaped. Therefore, the production of space is a social and political continuum, where agents have different opportunities of claiming agency for themselves.[65] Accordingly, while applying this perception to the everyday resistance practices, one has to always take into account that space, which is condensed by power struggles and conflict, allows individuals to empower/disempower themselves through different discursive mechanisms. Massey calls this the geometry of power, where space is always an amalgamation of different threads of political power, which can be subsequently challenged or modified by its constituents.

The temporality of resistance, on the other hand, accentuates the crucial importance of time to make sense of the mundane counter-conducts. Since everyday resistance is most of the times implicit, it has to use interchangeable tactics that "are based on routine, familiarity and regular social life."[66] These tactics are utilised to create non-conforming spaces within given repressive environments, but in order for them to be effective, they have to change, reinterpret, manipulate events and turn them into openings.[67] As Vinthagen and Johannson argue: "The tactic must take those opportunities that come about in each moment, exploit the gaps that arise in the power's surveillance and control; surprise, enshroud, employ subtlety and play tricks on the power."[68] While the aforementioned temporally situated tactics might not be successful in all cases, however, there is always a potential that the practices will alter the status quo.

[64] Doreen Massey, "Concepts of Space and Power in Theory and in Political Practice," *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica*, no. 55 (2009): 17.
[65] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London, Sage Publications, 2005).
[66] Vinthagen and Johansson, "Everyday Resistance": 136.
[67] Ibid., 137.
[68] Ibid.

When it comes to specific techniques that could be potentially labelled as everyday resistance, Vinthagen and Johannson mention *accommodation* as the most effective way to display the aspect of potentiality. In most cases, accommodation is perceived as mere obedience, where the subordinate group simply accepts the dominance of the ruling group and accordingly reproduces it.[69] Nonetheless, no attempt of exact repetition can be eventually successful, as it is impossible to act exactly according to hegemonic norms and dominant discourses. The copied image will always be different through mistakes and misunderstandings.[70]

The concept of accommodation very well resonates with Homi K. Bhabha's concept of mimicry and entails the aspect of non-conscious intent from the local side. Using the Lacanian conceptualisation, Homi K. Bhabha describes the practice as "the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite."[71] Mimicry as a practice reflexively emerges from succumbing oneself to power. The process of imitation, according to Bhabha, originates when the target becomes threatened by the "displacing gaze" of the disciplinary double. At the initial stages of the process, mimicry can be considered as an advanced strategy of survival. Theodor Adorno, for instance, calls this process the *original mimesis*, by which he means an established behaviour between a self and its environment, in which the self – probably mostly unconsciously – makes itself similar to its environment, assimilates it and runs the risk of losing itself somehow.[72]

Nonetheless, within the same survivalist instinct, imitation also enables the colonised to try on the colonisers reflected image on the self. The reflected image, however, fixes the

[69] Ibid., 57.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1984): 126, https://doi.org/10.2307/778467.
[72] Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 21.

coloniser subject as a 'partial presence' and transforms it into a visual, incomplete presence.[73] To put it in simpler terms, mimicry enables the colonised to see the fragility of the colonial rule while realising that the coloniser is not always separate or superior to the colonised. Ling, for instance, further elaborates that the desire of mimicry should be seen as a deeper level of engagement that produces hybridised set of practices and identities.[74] Mimicry, therefore, cannot be deduced to an intent-based practice, which by nature aims to subvert hegemonic discourses, but a routinely exercised practice of accommodating power, which has the potential to undermine the colonial discourse by demonstrating its inconsistencies.

In conclusion, one could argue that the theoretical directions based on the potentiality of the action can be utilised as a fundamental layer for making sense of the various practices of everyday resistance. While Scott provides a more holistic, intent-based understanding of resistance, introducing the potentiality approach could be helpful to make a better sense of the local action itself and come up with more credible assumptions on how to understand local actions. While the application of the newly proposed theoretical framework on the selected empirical case will be displayed in the following chapter, one should still underscore that the empirical analysis will seek to identify the mundane practices that are omnipresent within the Georgian political discourse and illuminate them on their own terms. By utilising the potentiality framework, the research will accordingly consider specific spatial and temporal contexts to make sense of the local actions. One shall observe how the Georgian side exercises different mundane discursive power accommodation practices and whether these same practices have the potential to correspond to the European idealised forms of governance, in addition to exploring how these practices interact with power itself.

[73] Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," 127.
[74] L. H. M. Ling, "Cultural Chauvinism and the Liberal International Order: 'West versus Rest' in Asia's Financial Crisis." in *Postcolonialism and International Relations,* eds. Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair (Routledge, September 2, 2003), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203166345-7.

Chapter 3. Making Sense of the Georgian Local Action

Since the research revolves around locating and unfolding the discursive ambiguities within the Georgian context, I look at the manifestations of internalisation-resistance interplay in various documents, statements, and speeches of Georgian nationals. In particular, the speeches of the most prominent Georgian political figures are analysed. I zoom in on the statements made by the current and former presidents and prime ministers since the establishment of the Eastern Partnership initiative (EaP) in 2009. The launch of the EaP initiative has been selected as a starting point because it represents one of the most fundamental projects among the EU and Georgia. In particular, the Annual Addresses made by these politicians, speeches delivered for individual cultural and political events, and their speeches delivered within the EU platforms are prioritised. It is crucial to provide the contextual interpretation of certain adjectives, keywords, and phrases in these sources, as they happen to include the meanings linked with the above-mentioned discourses the most.

My research covers the timeframe starting from 2009 to the present moment. The decade long timeframe was feasible due to the limited number of political statements and speeches produced during the period. Georgia experienced significant changes in political climate within the last ten years. Due to the three elections that occurred during the timeframe, the period incorporates three presidents and four prime ministers; therefore, analysing different individuals will create more robust results. Political speeches have been retrieved from the official websites of the political leaders, such as the official pages of the president and prime ministers of Georgia, as well as the website of the Georgian government. In selected cases where the speeches have not been accessible in any other language than Georgian, the author has provided their own translations.

According to Vinthagen and Johannson, the everyday transcripts to resist governmentality practices are neither intentional nor outcome-oriented but represent mundane practices that are spatially and temporally entangled with power.[75] Therefore, the "weak" could resist not only by being against but "by making use of the liberalist discourse" and utilising its technologies and resources.[76] This chapter argues that while the Georgian society accommodates the EU responsibilisation discourse by demonstrating the continuous effort of social and institutional compliance, the newly formed social and political identities could reflexively create space for contestation. The internalisation of the discourse is prevalent while looking at the prevalent narratives existing in Georgia; nonetheless, in various contexts, the same process allows the locals to retain the degree of difference enough to defy its absolute authority.[77] Such processes in the case of Georgia include exaggerated reform compliance, deployment of the local ownership rhetoric and the advancement of the 'Returning to Europe' narrative.

3.1 Exaggerated Reform Compliance

As mentioned earlier, Georgia has expressed the will to engage in the political reforms even before being included in the European Neighborhood Policy and has been pursuing the narrative of a 'success story' ever since.[78] The Georgian side constantly overstates the ambitions inherent to the Georgian society, while all the alternative outlooks, which question or even problematise European aspirations, are continuously scrutinised.[79] It is noteworthy that

[75] Vinthagen and Anna Johansson, "Everyday Resistance".
[76] Malmvig, "Free Us from Power," 296.
[77] Oliver Richmond, "A Pedagogy of Peacebuilding: Infrapolitics, Resistance, and Liberation1: A Pedagogy of Peacebuilding." *International Political Sociology* 6, no. 2 (June 2012): 118. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-5687.2012.00154.x.
[78] Lili Di Puppo, "The Construction of Success in Anti-Corruption Activity in Georgia," *East European Politics* 30, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 116–17, https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2013.846260.
[79] Di Puppo, "The Construction of Success in Anti-Corruption Activity in Georgia."

an extremely high level of confidence is evident in almost every speech and political report, as the Georgian officials not only want to show that they believe in their path towards the EU, but they seek to frame reforms as inevitable outcomes. Mikheil Saakashvili, the initiator of the reforms, always underscored the vast desire of the Georgian people to follow the European developmental model, as he notes: "What was possible in the West … I thought it was possible in Georgia too. It had to be possible because the people of Georgia really, honestly, deeply, fundamentally wished it."[80] The current government is pursuing the same rhetoric. The current president of Georgia, Salome Zurabichvili, for instance, continuously underscores the inevitability of complying with the Western-led developmental incentives.

> Our path to Europe and NATO is clear and irreversible! Internal challenges of NATO and the EU cannot impact us and divert us from our course, not only because this goal is stated in our constitution, but because there is no other way in reality, no alternative to this path, another perspective for free advancement. Therefore, the Georgian population won't make another choice. It is a great pity that sometimes fake news about our country's aspirations is spread abroad, saying that Georgia is changing its course.[81]

The statement above, nonetheless, can be interpreted in two different but mutually constitutive ways. On the one hand, Georgia tries to accommodate imposed rationalities by showing the vast intent to proceed. This process of accommodation is indeed intentional, as the message is aimed towards specific European audiences. The president herself accentuates the disinformation being spread abroad, by which she tries to display the solid Georgian aspirations to her European counterparts. The narrative regarding the inevitability to enforce the reforms can be easily understood as a translation acceptable for the EU – a rational

[80] "President of Georgia Addressed to the Georgian Society," The Administration of the President of Georgia, accessed May 9, 2021, http://www.saakashviliarchive.info/en/PressOffice/News/SpeechesAndStatements?p=8508&i=1.
[81] "President's Annual Address," Official web site of the President of Georgia, accessed April 3, 2021, https://www.president.gov.ge/eng/pressamsakhuri/siakhleebi/salome-zurabishvili-chveni-gza-evropisa-da-natoske.aspx.

survivalist instinct, as Georgia is well aware that any possible misstep will result in the downward adjustment of the provided funding.

On the other hand, if we consider the contextual aspects of the same practice, one can argue that the demonstration of compliance could drive the EU's attention away from the actual outputs of the reforms and allow Georgia to retain its name as the "most successful example" among the Eastern Partnership countries. Helle Malmvig argues that EU-proposed reforms are perceived to be relatively slow and uneven processes; therefore, it is very hard for the EU officials to determine if the countries are genuinely undertaking the reforms or they are "resisting governing technologies by pretending to undertake them."[82] Not to mention, within a given environment, where the demonstration of the 'excess effort' has been successful, the authority finds it more difficult to enforce any kind of punitive measure on the "weak."[83] In this case, resistance becomes a side-effect of an internalised disciplinary discourse, which might/might not be deliberate but could result in the preservation of individual agency. This further demonstrates that the existing opaqueness in the EU monitoring process, in addition to an explicit demonstration of conformity from the local side, can have the potential of resistance, as it enables the locals to get away from punitive measures.

To provide an illustration of this, one can look at the Georgian corruption reform. Georgia's underdeveloped economic system has faced significant obstacles in reform implementation since the early 2000s.[84] It was not always the case for the country to successfully implement the highly demanding reforms or even ensure the sustainability of the implemented ones. For instance, Lili di Puppo argues that the main character of Georgian reforms is their higher visibility and immediate effects; nonetheless, they are not nearly as

[82] Malmvig, "Free Us from Power," 305.
[83] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance,* 139.
[84] Huseyn Aliyev, "The Effects of the Saakashvili Era Reforms on Informal Practices in the Republic of Georgia". *Studies of Transition States and Societies* 1, no.6 (2014): 23.

successful as they are perceived to be.[85] Di Puppo finds that after the reform, corruption only became invisible as it was merely distanced from the daily encounters between citizens and public servants. The anti-corruption effects, however, were still made highly visible to the international community.[86] One could argue that the omnipresent narrative on the 'absolute success' allowed the Georgian side not only to avoid punitive sanctions from the EU but even to receive the name of the 'role model' in reform implementation.[87]

3.2 Deployment of the Local Ownership Rhetoric

The Georgian government constantly frames itself to be willing to continue deep commitment towards fulfilling the upcoming wave of reforms. President Saakashvili, for instance, established an unbreakable bond between reforms and statehood and stressed the necessity of joint contribution from both sides. The Georgian state was transformed into an object of inevitable change and discussion.[88] Georgia framed itself as the most successful reformer and invited the internationals for further assistance. The president continuously asked for more cooperation, stating: "We should invest much more in it. We should develop common projects, first and foremost focusing on the necessary reforms that we should carry on together."[89]

Again, the rhetoric could be understood as a deliberate attempt from the local side to engage in the process of local ownership, which represents the keystone for the cooperation between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries. Especially the 'joint-planning'

[85] Lili Di Puppo, "Anti-Corruption Policies in Georgia."
[86] Ibid., 163
[87] Ibid.
[88] Matthew Light, "Police Reforms in the Republic of Georgia: The Convergence of Domestic and Foreign Policy in an Anti-Corruption Drive," *Policing and Society* 24, no. 3 (May 27, 2014): 331, https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2013.784289.
[89] "Address by the President of Georgia," The Administration of the President of Georgia, accessed May 10, 2021, http://www.saakashviliarchive.info/en/PressOffice/News/SpeechesAndStatements?p=8465&i=1.

mechanism enables the target societies to take control on the sophisticated process of the reforms, as according to the EU narratives, the principle is not merely a proposition for the locals but represents one of the main preconditions for ensuring the fate of the developmental outcomes and even determines the foundation for long-term cooperation with the EU.[90] On the other hand, one could argue that there is a necessity to engage with the action itself to determine how locals respond to this understanding and what mechanisms are being utilised to appropriate the language of local ownership.[91]

As Vinthagen and Johannson note, every repetition will inevitably entail mistakes and misunderstandings, but these same processes will allow the locals to find meaningful interpretations behind fixed instructions and foster their agendas.[92] Not to mention, by imposing the principle of local ownership, the EU simultaneously has to accept the fact that the proposed reforms are not being set in stone but "could be modified based on compromise at the local level."[93] It is also important to note that the EU's general idea regarding local ownership is not fully comprehensive and, in fact, it is more focused on the implementation of the reforms rather than their initiation and design.[94] Accordingly, one could argue that in specific contexts, the conscious effort from the Georgian side to reproduce the local ownership language could potentially widen the discursive space to develop alternative versions of reforms. This is being achieved only after the local side becomes socialised with the terminology of the practice and starts to act upon it accordingly.

The potential of misinterpretation/misperception of the local ownership can be traced in the Georgian political discourse. While the Georgian side perceives the guidelines received

[90] "Eastern Partnership Policy," European Commission.
[91] Merlingen, "Applying Foucault's toolkit to CSDP," 205.
[92] Vinthagen and Johansson, "Everyday Resistance."
[93] Ana E. Juncos, "EU Security Sector Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Reform or Resist?," *Contemporary Security Policy* 39, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 107, https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2017.1391625.
[94] Antoine Vandemoortele, "Adaptation, Resistance and a (Re)Turn to Functionalism: The Case of the Bosnian Police Restructuring Process (2003–2008)," *European Security* 21, no. 2 (June 2012): 212, https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2012.665884.

from the EU as preconditions to their success, they tend to reproduce the same logic of locally driven change in a similar but not identical way. Georgian president, for example, underscored the importance of 'thinking outside of the box' and openly called for the initiation of new ideas, incentives, and opportunities to aid the process of European integration.[95] On the one hand, this practice appropriates the language of local ownership and fully converges with the EU-imposed "bottom-up" approach, but on the other hand, leaves the space for an altercation. Such an elusive form of action has the potential not only to enables the locals to reinforce the status quo but to relieve the tensions produced by the established hierarchical relations.

> I don't think we have to wait ten more years, at least that is my personal intuition and conviction. We have to, and when I say 'we', that means, in the first place, our citizens, look at the next stages to be achieved, the next instruments that will serve these stages, the next steps to be taken toward the only ultimate goal, that of integration, and for that, we cannot only repeat that we are happy of the success that we've had, we have to start thinking outside the box. We have to find new ways; we have to find new instruments and we have to make more efforts.[96]

3.3 "Returning to Europe" as a form of Mimicry

Georgia identifies itself as European and is trying to embody the principles and values dominated in Europe. This particular political aspiration to "return to Europe" has become the ultimate tenant for the Georgian foreign policy after regaining independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union and remained omnipresent until the present day.[97] The arguments supporting Georgia's belonging to Europe revolve around existing historical, religious and emotional ties between the two and are hardly ever questioned. Beachin and Coene, for

[95] "President's Speech on 16th Batumi International Conference," Official web site of the President of Georgia, accessed March 31, 2021, https://www.president.gov.ge/eng/pressamsakhuri/siakhleebi/saqartvelos-prezidentis-sityva-batumis-me-16-saert.aspx.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Chiara Loda, "Georgia, the European Union, and the Visa-Free Travel Regime: Between European Identity and Strategic Pragmatism," *Nationalities Papers* 47, no. 1 (January 2019): 76, https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.7.

instance, argue that "the Europeanness of Georgia is portrayed and perceived as absolute truth, and there is not much discussion in the society challenging this axiom."[98]

The emphasis on the inherent European identity of Georgia has significantly intensified during the presidency of Mikheil Saakashvili, who successfully managed to use this discourse to reimagine the character of the country and redirect its political identity.[99] Saakashvili always asserted that Georgia's European orientation was not a result of external pressure, but it stemmed from the monolithic historical connection of Georgian people to the European civilisation. In 2010, In a joint press conference with the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton, the Georgian president declared that "Georgia is not striving to become European, but it already is an integral part of it; therefore it is only returning to the European institutions."[100] Interestingly, this sense of belonging revealed to be present both on political and cultural levels, as it not only shared the fundamental European values but at the same time aimed to resemble its polity. Furthermore, after the parliamentary elections in 2012, the newly elected Georgian government pursued the same rhetoric. In his very first address, president Giorgi Margvelashvili articulated Georgia's identity in two distinct ways: European but at the same time individualistic. He later linked this unique characteristic to the state building practices, noting that:

> Georgians with their individual self-identity are Europeans and part of Western civilisation, but regrettably up until now we had no opportunity to create the Georgian state based on this individuality, and to translate Georgian traditions into the context of statehood and state institutions.[101]

[98] Beacháin and Coene, "Go West: Georgia's European Identity," 925.
[99] Ibid., 924
[100] "Mikheil Saakashvili and Catherine Ashton Hold a Joint Press-Conference," [In Georgian.] The Administration of the President of Georgia," accessed May 11, 2021, http://www.saakashviliarchive.info/en/PressOffice/News/SpeechesAndStatements?p=5318&i=1.
[101] "2014 Annual Address to the Parliament," Official web site of the President of Georgia," accessed April 3, 2021, https://www.president.gov.ge/eng/prezidenti/cliuri-mokhseneba/2014-clis-saparlamento-mokhseneba.aspx.

Considering this analysis, one could argue that the depicted image of Georgia's return to Europe is an intent-based, politically constructed narrative, which represents a result of a long process of internalising the omnipresent narrative about the superior nature of Europe and its institutions. Nodia, for instance, argues that the narrative to return to Europe stems from the country's intense desire to access 'Western modernisation' and can be translated as an effort to separate its past (Soviet Union) from the present (Europe).[102] Nonetheless, if we focus on the apparent aspect of 'individuality,' one can assume that Georgia's claim to be an integral part of the European family can no longer be reduced to mere internalisation of governmentality discourse or an identity attachment, since the discourse, on the one hand, reveals the signs of appropriation, but at the same time signals the desire to preserve the national identity of the Georgian state.[103] One could consider the desire for similarity as an expression of mimicry (similar, but not quite) and add further analytical dimension to the analysis.

L. H. M. Ling, for instance, further elaborates that the desire for mimicry should be seen as a deeper level of engagement that has the potential to produce hybridised set of practices and identities.[104] Accordingly, one can argue that "Europeanness" could metonymically facilitate Georgian national interests by putting the emphasis on the pre-existing convergence of norms and values, therefore make the Georgian state a subject of lesser change. The continuous claim of belonging to the European family is an attempt to appropriate Western values, but the same claim enables Georgia to use Europe's reflected image and assert its existing capacity for sustainable development. As the current Georgian president puts it: "We will join Europe. But we must join Europe with our values, our identity and our culture."[105]

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[102] Ghia Nodia, "Georgia: Dimensions of Insecurity," in *Statehood and Security: Georgia after the Rose Revolution*, eds. Bruno Coppieters and Robert Legvold (London, MIT Press 2005), 69.
[103] Tracey German, "Heading West? Georgia's Euro-Atlantic Path," *International Affairs* 91, no. 3 (May 2015): 908, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12286.
[104] Ling, "Cultural Chauvinism and the Liberal International Order."
[105] "2014 Annual Address to the Parliament," Official web site of the President of Georgia.

Conclusion

The thesis has made sense of the ambiguous Georgian political discourse, which overplays the 'European enthusiasm' whilst opting for a contextual interpretation of its standards. Apart from analyzing this duality in the context of traditional theories of power, domination and resistance, the study has introduced a novel framework of potentiality, which provides more in-depth analytical tools to make better sense of the power-resistance interplay in different social and political settings and analysis levels. The research answered the primary question on how to understand the potentiality of everyday resistance in the Georgian political context and hence unveiled different discursive patterns by which the local side accommodates the disciplinary rationalities of the EU. Nonetheless, within the same process, one witnesses the emergence of other discursive patterns, which in proper temporal and spatial settings could foster the preservation of local agency.

The Georgian example has first displayed that through the extensive usage of discursive practices, such as problematisation and responsibilisation, the EU indeed seeks to mould the Georgian political context to conform to the predetermined vision of the liberal logic. In order to come up with effective strategies for accommodating these practices, the Georgian society initially allows itself to become a local subject by internalising the governmentality discourse. The internalisation of the discourse subsequently translates into the acceptable language for the EU; however, it reflexively creates space for the locals to advance their own political agenda. This double articulation can be observed by zooming on mechanisms such as exaggerated reform compliance, strategic use of local-ownership rhetoric and advancement of the 'return to Europe' narrative.

This is not to argue that the potentiality of Georgian everyday resistance is constituted solely with the aforementioned strategies; however, the three are essential as they are directly connected to the rationalities inherent to the EU governmentality strategies and depict the

established discursive relationship between Georgia and the EU most accurately. The research also serves as a compelling illustration of the complex relationship between power and resistance as it understates the fact that they do not represent mutually exclusive binaries, but in various contexts, co-constitute each other. Therefore, the comprehensive image of existing power relations can be envisaged only through analysing their entangled nature.

Most importantly, the study underscores the importance of potentiality – a novel way of approaching everyday resistance and uses the Georgian example as an illustration to showcase the ways to utilise it in the statebuilding aspect. Nonetheless, it should be noted that due to the limited scope, the research provided its application to the elite political discourse. Since the idea behind the framework is to examine agency in various temporal and spatial contexts, there is a need to explore further dimensions of its epistemological coverage. One should expect the framework to travel in between different levels of analysis, varying from state to regional and even individual levels. Therefore, in the Georgian context, the potentiality framework can be utilized to make sense of the discursive ambiguities characteristic not only of the political elite but other groups such as specific organizations or entrepreneurs responsible for the implementation of the EU standards, or even the general population. In addition to discourse analysis, future research could include in-person interviews with the individual Georgian policymakers and entrepreneurs or even involve a participant observation in a locally based organization dealing with EU reform practices. This would allow the research to gain local-level experience and capture the practices that are present "on the ground" and would remain invisible on higher levels of analysis.

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