

## **European People's Party and United National Movement: Transnational Party Cooperation and the Europeanization of Georgia**

### **Abstract**

This article examines the transnational cooperation between the European People's Party (EPP) and the United National Movement (UNM) as a critical lens through which to understand the party-level dimension of Georgia's Europeanization. Building on the wider context of Europarties' role in shaping political norms and integration trajectories beyond the European Union, the study addresses the existing research gap concerning the interaction between European and Georgian political parties and its implications for domestic transformation. The central objective is to analyze how affiliation with the EPP has influenced the UNM's ideological orientation, organizational development, political legitimacy, and external positioning in the European arena. Relying on qualitative analysis, the article examines official statements, party documents, secondary academic literature, and key political events, particularly the post-2008 geopolitical context, which marked a decisive turning point in UNM-EPP relations. The findings demonstrate that transnational party cooperation has functioned as a mechanism of external validation, elite socialization, and norm diffusion, while simultaneously exposing tensions between partisan loyalty and broader EU policy objectives. The study concludes that Europarty engagement constitutes an important, though often inconsistent, driver of Europeanization in non-EU states, constrained by domestic political polarization, institutional fragility, and personalized leadership structures. These insights contribute to broader debates on informal channels of European influence and suggest that more structured, principle-based cooperation could enhance democratic consolidation and reinforce Georgia's European trajectory.

**Keywords:** European People's Party (EPP), United National Movement (UNM), Georgia, Transnational party cooperation, European integration, Europeanization.

## **Introduction**

European political parties, commonly referred to as Europarties, constitute the foundations of the political groups represented in the European Parliament. They operate according to distinct political ideologies, platforms, and objectives, defined by their respective political family affiliations (Pittoors, 2022). Europarties play a significant role in shaping the European Parliament's agenda and influencing the overall direction of EU policy. Their origins and historical development are diverse, with roots closely linked to the evolution of European integration (Haute & Close, 2019). Membership in a political group within the European Parliament grants Members of the European Parliament access to essential resources, including staff support, office space, committee positions, and plenary participation, with larger groups benefiting from greater resources and influence. Historically, the European People's Party (EPP) has been the dominant force in the Parliament due to several factors. As the largest political group, it enjoys greater access to voting power and institutional resources, which enhances its capacity to shape the parliamentary agenda. Its sustained dominance is also attributed to effective leadership and strong organizational structures, characterized by well-established internal mechanisms and experienced representatives. The primary objective of Europarties is to foster European political awareness and to promote the expression of the will of European citizens, a goal primarily pursued through the development and implementation of political manifestos. Moreover, organized around differing ideological orientations and value systems, Europarties seek to exert influence at the European level while actively promoting the process of European integration (Calossi & Cicchi, 2019).

Cooperation between European parties and national parties is essential for several reasons. Although national parties remain the primary political actors within their own states, collaboration with European parties enables them to amplify their influence on EU policy-making processes. Moreover, Europarties provide national parties with a structured platform for interaction and the exchange of information, which contributes to shaping internal party dynamics, facilitating consensus-building, and fostering political cooperation. In this sense, Europarties act as a bridge between the national and European levels, simultaneously advancing European integration and contributing to the development of a more democratic European political landscape. This linkage also ensures that national concerns are taken into account within the broader framework of the European Union (Ferreira, 2024). Operating across both national and supranational arenas, Europarties play a multifaceted role in shaping the integration trajectories of various countries, including non-EU states. Through mechanisms such as influencing public discourse, supporting political dialogue, shaping decision-making processes, and transmitting European norms and values, they facilitate the gradual alignment of non-member countries with the European Union. The attitudes of national political parties towards European integration are often shaped by the EU's institutional and decision-making structures, including the evolving role of the European Parliament across different regions (König & Luig, 2017). In the specific case of Georgia, Europarties function both as instruments of the EU's strategic foreign policy and as channels for exporting European-style party competition (Chrysosgelos, 2017).

It is important to note that Europarties function as a critical mechanism for national political parties, including those in Georgia. Without sustained engagement and communication with European parties, it is virtually impossible to assess the extent to which Georgia can achieve

meaningful integration into the European Union. Given the importance of this issue, it is paradoxical that, within Georgia's academic community, civil society, and media, cooperation between national parties and European parties has been examined only in a partial and fragmented manner.

National political parties are affiliated with European parties according to their formal status within those political families. For instance, within the European People's Party (EPP), the United National Movement (UNM) holds the status of an Associated Member Party, while European Georgia is classified as an Observer Member Party. The key difference between these statuses lies in the degree of participation and influence. Associated member parties are more actively involved in the activities and structures of the EPP; however, they do not possess voting rights in its formal decision-making processes. The role of observer parties is even more limited: although they may attend meetings and engage in dialogue, they are unable to participate fully in the EPP's internal functions and likewise do not enjoy voting rights. In short, associated member parties maintain closer and more active relations with the EPP than observer member parties.

It is noteworthy that the relations between European and Georgian political parties remain significantly understudied in Georgia, as reflected in the limited availability of academic literature on this topic (Grdzlishvili, 2023). Consequently, an informational vacuum persists, which must be addressed in order to adequately examine one of the key prerequisites and stages of Georgia's integration into the European Union. Despite their ideological differences, Georgian political parties engage in partnerships with European parties not only as a channel for the transfer of policy ideas - such as decentralization, minority rights protection, and free trade with the European Union - but also as a means of enhancing domestic legitimacy and political prestige. Through these affiliations, parties seek to demonstrate that, even within an unstable party system, they are modern, European, and credible political actors (Shagina, 2017). For the academic community and political science researchers, this issue merits sustained attention, as the relations between European and Georgian parties constitute not merely a narrow subject of inquiry, but an essential component and prerequisite of Georgia's full integration into the European Union.

### **Georgian and European Political Parties: Motives for Cooperation**

First, it should be noted that, despite the absence of any guaranteed path to European Union membership, political parties in non-EU countries voluntarily pursue cooperation with European parties. Their motivations are largely shaped by a cost-benefit calculation, with primary emphasis on enhancing domestic legitimacy and achieving international recognition. At the domestic level, Georgian parties use their affiliation with a Europarty family to assert and legitimize their European identity. Regions outside the European Union, such as the South Caucasus, are often characterized by instability and political volatility, and parties operating in such environments are therefore subject to constant transformation. In this context, Georgian parties that are members of Europarties draw upon both internal legitimacy and external recognition to underline their seriousness and credibility. By obtaining international endorsement through Europarty membership, Georgian political parties seek to strengthen their domestic standing and leverage accumulated trust to influence internal political

processes. Affiliation with European partners also serves as a way for relatively immature party structures to compensate for institutional weaknesses. From the perspective of these national parties, membership in a Europarty signals loyalty to a community of established and reputable political actors. In many cases, this European affiliation has helped local parties not only to define and consolidate their own identity, but also to distinguish themselves from populist political forces. Europarties are frequently referenced in the public statements and election campaigns of Georgian political parties as a way of emphasizing their affiliation with the European political family or their aspirations towards European Union membership. For national parties, such affiliation serves not only to signal seriousness and credibility, but also to attract new and reassure existing pro-European voters (Grdzlishvili, 2023, pp. 80-82). At the same time, local parties tend to stress their European connections in voter communication precisely because public awareness of European parties is generally limited, and few voters are able to distinguish between them. While governing parties can legitimize their reforms and policies through cooperation with European parties, opposition parties, conversely, can use these links to gain additional channels of influence, potentially altering the domestic balance of power. For instance, the European People's Party (EPP) publicly supported the government of Georgia's third president, Mikheil Saakashvili, and its progress on the path towards European integration.

Georgian political parties sometimes justify their cooperation with European parties from a geopolitical perspective as well. Although such cooperation is often opposed by pro-Russian forces, it can promise tangible support on sensitive geopolitical issues. For example, for the United National Movement, affiliation with the European People's Party (EPP) meant securing backing in the context of the August 2008 Russo-Georgian war, as the EPP's firm stance against Russian aggression directly influenced the UNM's decision to join this Europarty. The EPP consistently expressed support for the UNM and actively condemned Russia's actions on Georgian territory. It is also important to note that through regular bilateral meetings and visits, Georgian political parties become more familiar with European institutions and gain opportunities to lobby for EU integration. Direct access to European party elites enables domestic actors to discuss political issues personally and through reliable channels, thereby strengthening their EU-oriented aspirations, especially since Europarties play a significant role in shaping EU's neighborhood policy. In some cases, affiliation with a Europarty directly reflects a party's European choice; for instance, both the United National Movement and European Georgia were motivated to join the EPP in order to bolster support for the country's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. Another key motivation for cooperation is knowledge transfer. Engagement with Europarties allows Georgian political parties to acquire experience in building modern, European-style organizations and, by aligning themselves with ideologically compatible European families, to position themselves more clearly on the political spectrum. Through trainings and seminars on policy development, ideologically weak, post-communist parties seek to crystallize their identities and strengthen their programmatic profiles. In their pursuit of internal legitimacy and international recognition, Georgian parties often prefer to cooperate with strong European parties. For example, after the change of government, it was crucial for Georgian Dream to rebalance political power and gain domestic legitimacy, which it achieved, among other means, through cooperation with the Party of European Socialists (PES). As the United National Movement already had close

links with the EPP, Georgian Dream likewise sought a European partner to support its national interests, and in this case, that partner became the PES (Shagina, 2017, p. 36).

For some Georgian political parties (particularly European Georgia and the United National Movement) cooperation with the European People's Party (EPP) is also closely linked to the issue of influencing the ruling party. As is well known, national political actors engage in political competition both domestically and internationally; consequently, local parties often frame the intensification of internal rivalry in terms of the degree of international support they receive. Given that a clear majority of Georgia's population supports EU membership, European institutions naturally represent an important source of domestic legitimacy for political parties. In this context, any decline in the internal legitimacy of local parties may be associated with difficulties or failures in their cooperation with European parties. Accordingly, Georgian political parties (especially those in power) generally expect European parties to express political support for them. It appears that Georgian political parties justify joining Europarties on the grounds of seeking international recognition, strengthening domestic legitimacy, advancing their political agendas, and facilitating the transfer of organizational and political knowledge. Furthermore, cooperation between European parties and Georgian political parties can also be understood as an effort to refine and clarify their ideological profiles (Kakhishvili, 2018, pp. 6-7).

As is well known, Georgian political parties participate in congresses and working groups organized under the auspices of Europarties and contribute to seminars and training programs conducted either by Europarties themselves or by their respective groups in the European Parliament. Nevertheless, the primary incentive for such cooperation remains the enhancement of domestic legitimacy and political influence, functioning as a protective mechanism against potential pressure from dominant ruling parties and state institutions. The fact that a national party enjoys the support of a European party family serves as a valuable asset in its relations with both domestic partners and political competitors. Although European parties do not provide direct financial support to their affiliated national parties, cooperation may facilitate access to funding through political foundations, for example via German foundations linked to political parties. Despite the rational basis of cooperation for both sides, in practice the engagement of Georgian political parties with European parties is often less consistent and strategically grounded. This inconsistency can be attributed to a high degree of political personalization, a weak democratic political culture, deficiencies in intra-party democracy, and various behavioral constraints. From a rational-institutional perspective, European parties tend to demonstrate much greater consistency in their cooperation, largely as a result of their more pluralistic and democratic organizational structures. The importance of cooperation with European parties for Georgian political parties continues to grow, as this process is directly linked to the broader issue of Georgia's Europeanization. Nevertheless, it remains an open question whether Georgian parties fully understand the significant potential of such cooperation and whether they are capable of using it effectively both in the interest of the country and for the advancement of democratic processes within Georgia (Lavrelashvili, 2016).

## **European People's Party and United National Movement**

The European People's Party (EPP) was founded on July 8, 1976, in Luxembourg and today represents a Pan-European political family uniting Christian-democratic, conservative, and liberal-conservative parties. Originally established primarily by Christian-democratic parties, the EPP has since expanded significantly in both size and influence. Operating under the motto "United in Diversity," the party seeks to unite European citizens around shared values and objectives, including promoting economic prosperity and innovation, ensuring a safe and free Europe, strengthening civil society, building a resilient and cohesive European Union, and addressing climate change, among other priorities. The EPP has been the largest political group in the European Parliament since 1999 and the dominant political force in the European Council since 2002.<sup>1</sup>

Relations between the European People's Party (EPP) and the United National Movement (UNM) began shortly after the latter's founding in September 2001. In 2004, delegates from the UNM participated in a seminar organized by the Robert Schuman Institute, which can be regarded as the first attempt to establish contacts with the EPP. It is well known that the party was internally divided over the question of international affiliation, particularly between groups close to Zurab Zhvania (the 4th Prime Minister of Georgia) and Giga Bokeria (a member of UNM from 2004 to 2017). Zhvania's circle supported cooperation with liberal political forces, whereas Bokeria's group favored rapprochement with the EPP. In 2006-2007, the EPP sent two investigative missions to Georgia to assess the conditions for UNM's accession. These evaluations proved far more critical than the UNM had anticipated. The EPP reports highlighted ideological and organizational weaknesses, the excessive concentration of power (which resulted in a weak opposition), and deficiencies in the electoral and judicial systems. Nevertheless, the reports also praised Mikheil Saakashvili's (3rd President of Georgia) government for its achievements in combating corruption, improving the business environment, and implementing judicial and educational reforms (Lavrelashvili, 2022). The August 2008 Russo-Georgian War proved to be a turning point in the UNM's alignment towards the EPP. During this period, the EPP adopted a firm stance in support of Georgia's accession to the European Union and NATO and strongly condemned Russia's aggression. UNM representatives perceived the liberals' position on Russia's actions as comparatively less critical, which further facilitated rapprochement with the EPP. As a result, in September 2008, the United National Movement joined the European People's Party family and was granted Observer Member Party status (Shagina, 2017, pp. 68–69). At that time, less emphasis was placed on the UNM's organizational and ideological shortcomings, as the EPP viewed the acceptance of Georgia's ruling party - particularly in the context of the August 2008 war - as an expression of political solidarity (Lavrelashvili, 2022, p. 146).

One of the key factors behind the EPP's involvement in Georgia was the particular interest of its former leader, Wilfried Martens (President of the EPP from 1990 to 2013), in the countries of the Eastern Partnership. In 2011, Martens stated that Mikheil Saakashvili had established genuine democracy in Georgia and that the country had a real prospect of joining the European Union. To some extent, the UNM's integration into the EPP was justified by ideological convergence, such as support for a limited role of the state in the economy and

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<sup>1</sup> History - <https://www.eppgroup.eu/who-we-are/our-history>

shared Euro-Atlantic objectives, particularly Georgia's integration into the European Union and NATO. Initially, prior to 2008, this ideological proximity between the UNM and the EPP was broadly compatible; however, it proved to be temporary. After 2008, the UNM shifted towards a more state-oriented economic model and strengthened regulatory mechanisms, thereby increasing ideological divergence between the parties. Following the Russo-Georgian war and the 2007-2008 global financial crisis, the UNM abandoned its earlier radical libertarianism and adopted a more interventionist approach in sectors such as energy, tourism, and agriculture (Shagina, 2017). Nevertheless, membership in the EPP provided the UNM with sustained prestige, greater visibility in Brussels, and moral and political support in Europe; consequently, maintaining this relationship incentivized the party to remain overtly pro-European. Furthermore, the connection with the EPP contributed to Georgia's gradual alignment with a more European-type party system in ideological terms (Chrysogelos, 2017).

In 2010, the youth organization of the United National Movement became a full member of European Democrat Students (EDS), the student and youth political association of the European People's Party. In October 2012, parliamentary elections were held in Georgia, resulting in the defeat of the UNM and the rise to power of the Georgian Dream coalition. Shortly thereafter, the EPP publicly criticized Georgian Dream and its leader, Bidzina Ivanishvili (the 10th Prime Minister of Georgia), expressing regret in an official declaration that Georgia had retreated in terms of democratic standards. During this period, the rhetoric of both the EPP and Wilfried Martens changed markedly, with Martens condemning alleged political arrests, persecution, forced bribery of parliamentarians, and attacks on local governments. In response to this criticism, Ivanishvili published an open letter on March 14, 2013, calling on EPP representatives to send long-term observers to Georgia before drawing premature conclusions and to verify the Georgian government's stated commitment to democratic governance (Kunchulia, 2013). Overall, Martens described Ivanishvili's open letter as reasonable and stated that he was pleasantly surprised by the Georgian Prime Minister's response.

In 2015-2016, the lobbying efforts of the United National Movement made Georgia particularly visible within the structures of the European People's Party. For example, the UNM's youth wing frequently participated in events and study visits organized by the Robert Schuman Institute (RSI), the EPP's European-level educational institution based in Brussels (Lavrelashvili, 2022).

The year 2017 was less critical in terms of statements issued by the European People's Party regarding the Georgian government, largely due to the granting and implementation of visa-free travel for Georgian citizens to the European Union. This shift is reflected in the EPP's Brussels Summit in November 2017, which welcomed the visa-free regime as an important achievement for Georgia. The summit declaration also emphasized that Georgia, along with Ukraine and Moldova, needed to intensify reforms in combating corruption, strengthening democratic institutions, and addressing hybrid threats, particularly those posed by the Russian Federation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *EPP Declaration for the EU's EaP Brussels Summit* - <https://www.epp.eu/papers/epp-declaration-for-the-eu-eap-brussels-summit>

In 2018, the women's organization of the United National Movement joined EPP Women. However, despite ongoing contact and advisory support, the political influence of EPP Women on Georgian women's organizations has remained limited (Lavrelashvili, 2022).

Interestingly, the EPP offers the UNM access to European forums, training opportunities, and support during election campaigns, while also facilitating the socialization of Georgian political elites with EU norms and helping to maintain contacts with EU leaders. Nevertheless, this intensity of inter-party support has also generated certain tensions. For instance, after the peaceful electoral victory of Georgian Dream - which the European Union interpreted as a sign of democratic progress - the EPP continued to criticize the new government and defended its own partners. The EPP's support for the UNM, sometimes even at odds with the broader strategic priorities of the EU, highlights the dual nature of European parties. While the EPP has contributed to the institutionalization of Georgia's party system and its alignment with European norms, its strong loyalty to Mikheil Saakashvili's team illustrates how Europarties can simultaneously both advance and complicate the EU's broader objectives (Chrysosgelos, 2020).

On October 1, 2021, Mikheil Saakashvili, the third President of Georgia, who had returned to the country after eight years abroad, was arrested in Tbilisi in the evening on charges of illegally crossing the state border. According to the Prosecutor's Office, Saakashvili had previously been found guilty by three court instances in criminal cases related to the beating of Valeri Gelashvili and the murder of Sandro Girgvliani and had been sentenced to six years in prison. It soon became clear that the fifth President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, would not grant him a pardon, responding to the question with a firm "No, and never." In October 2021, the European People's Party issued a statement noting that Saakashvili's arrest and what it described as political persecution were increasing tension and political polarization in Georgia. In May 2022, the EPP released another official statement expressing deep concern over Georgia's democratic backsliding, pointing to the prevalence of oligarchic rule, which it argued had weakened governance, undermined judicial independence, restricted media freedom, and damaged the principles of free and fair elections. Particular attention was paid to the degrading treatment of the former president, including the alleged denial of adequate medical care. The EPP expressed regret that Georgia, once considered a leader within the Eastern Partnership, had lost its democratic credibility, thereby casting doubt on its European aspirations, emphasized the Georgian government's responsibility for Saakashvili's health, condemned the politicization of the judiciary, and called on the authorities to take more determined steps towards the European path chosen by the Georgian people.<sup>3</sup> On the first day of the EPP Congress, on May 31, Donald Tusk referred to Mikheil Saakashvili as "*our old Georgian friend, who is still in prison.*"

Following Georgia's 2024 parliamentary elections, the European People's Party issued a critical statement on October 31, asserting that on October 26 the Georgian people had once again been deprived of their fundamental freedoms and right to choose their own future, as the government led by Georgian Dream allegedly resorted to violence, intimidation, vote buying, abuse of state resources, and electoral fraud - actions that, according to the EPP, further undermined democracy, the rule of law, and the country's European aspirations. In

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<sup>3</sup> EPP Statement on Georgia suggested by UNM - <https://www.epp.eu/papers/epp-statement-on-georgia>



this statement, the EPP expressed solidarity with the Georgian people and underlined the need for a prompt and thorough investigation into the reported widespread violations, concluding that *“Georgia deserves fair elections and its rightful place among Europe's democratic nations.”*<sup>4</sup>

In January 2025, the European People's Party adopted an urgent resolution concerning the political crisis unfolding in Georgia, declaring the October 26, 2024 parliamentary elections illegitimate on the grounds of serious violations of democratic standards and the repression of post-election protests. The resolution condemns the Georgian Dream government for electoral fraud, violence, human rights abuses, and for halting integration with the European Union, and states that its legitimacy should not be recognized at the international level. Instead, it recognizes Salome Zourabichvili as the legitimate President of Georgia, calls for new and genuinely fair elections to be held under an independent administration, urges the imposition of targeted EU sanctions on Georgian Dream leaders, and demands the suspension of EU financial assistance and official contacts with the current regime.<sup>5</sup> On April 30, 2025, at the EPP Congress in Valencia, a resolution on Georgia was adopted, condemning the country's rapid democratic backsliding following the October 2024 parliamentary elections. The resolution specifically highlights the suspension of EU integration by Georgian Dream despite Georgia's candidate status, the persecution of protesters and opposition figures through massive fines, asset freezes, and dismissals from employment, as well as the imprisonment of political opponents, including 52 political prisoners and former president Mikheil Saakashvili. It denounces the emergence of a “one-party” parliament, police violence, attacks against civil society and the media, and Georgia's withdrawal from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). The EPP calls on the European Union to suspend financial cooperation with the Georgian government, impose sanctions on Bidzina Ivanishvili and the regime's elite, and halt budgetary support to the authorities while redirecting these funds to civil society. Through this resolution, the EPP also urges EU member states not to recognize either the so-called “Georgian Dream Parliament” or its appointed president, Mikheil Kavelashvili.<sup>6</sup>

According to one of the members of the United National Movement, the party's rapprochement with the European People's Party was motivated primarily by Georgia's national interests, as it sought a reliable European partner at the regional level capable of representing and promoting the country's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. At the same time, this rapprochement was also driven by lobbying considerations, since the UNM aimed to advance its political agenda beyond Georgia's borders. Through the organization of seminars, workshops, and forums, the party has sought to establish interpersonal connections with EPP representatives and to maintain close, ongoing relations with them. Georgian political parties do not receive direct funding from European parties; therefore, such formats serve as one of the key means of strengthening their partnerships. Moreover, cooperation with the EPP is

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<sup>4</sup> EPP statement on the elections in Georgia - <https://www.epp.eu/news/epp-statement-on-the-elections-in-georgia>

<sup>5</sup> Political Crisis in Georgia - <https://www.epp.eu/papers/political-crisis-in-georgia>

<sup>6</sup> Expressing Solidarity with the Georgian People and Demanding New, Free and Fair Elections - <https://www.epp.eu/papers/expressing-solidarity-with-the-georgian-people-and-demanding-new-free-and-fair-elections>

further encouraged through youth forums supported by European political families. Georgian youth are particularly interested in gaining knowledge from European parties about European values, party politics, political culture, depolarization, pluralism, and related issues. In this context, collaboration with the EPP provides the UNM with opportunities to involve its youth wing in European forums, representing an important channel for knowledge transfer and the internalization of shared democratic values [Interview with Levan Bezhashvili].

## **Conclusion**

This study has examined the relationship between the European People's Party (EPP) and the United National Movement (UNM) as a concrete example of how transnational party cooperation contributes to, and at times complicates, the broader process of Georgia's Europeanization. The analysis demonstrates that affiliation with Europarties functions as an important mechanism through which Georgian political parties seek to enhance domestic legitimacy, gain international recognition, access political networks, and strengthen their organizational and ideological profiles. In the case of the UNM, alignment with the EPP was shaped not only by ideological affinities and shared Euro-Atlantic aspirations, but also by strategic considerations linked to geopolitical insecurity, especially in the context of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and subsequent political developments. While cooperation with the EPP provided the UNM with prestige, visibility in European institutions, and support in times of domestic political crisis, it also revealed the limits and contradictions of such partnerships, as Europarty loyalty to specific actors occasionally conflicted with the European Union's broader democratic and stabilization objectives in Georgia.

These findings contribute to the existing literature by illustrating that Europeanization in non-EU states is not driven solely by formal institutional mechanisms, but also by informal, party-level networks that transmit norms, values, and political practices across borders. At the same time, the study highlights how weak democratic culture, political personalization, and inconsistent strategic engagement on the part of Georgian parties constrain the full transformative potential of Europarty cooperation. From a political perspective, the results suggest that stronger, more principled, and institutionalized engagement between European parties and Georgian political actors could play a constructive role in supporting democratic consolidation, reducing polarization, and reinforcing Georgia's European trajectory.

Nevertheless, this research is limited by its focus on a single transnational partnership, which restricts the ability to draw broader generalizations about all Europarty-Georgia relations. Future studies should therefore expand the comparative scope to include other Europarty families (such as the Party of European Socialists or ALDE) and additional Georgian parties, as well as incorporate quantitative data and elite interviews to further explore the long-term impact of transnational party networks on democratic development and European integration in post-Soviet states. In doing so, further research can deepen scholarly understanding of how party cooperation operates as both a catalyst and a constraint within contemporary Europeanization processes.

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