


◆ **Research Article**

An Analysis of Georgia-EU Relations through the Expectation of Candidacy Status

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ABSTRACT

Since Georgia's inclusion in the European Neighborhood Policy program in 2006, Georgia-EU relations have been in a stable and gradual development process, taking into account the geopolitical balances in the region. During this process, the European Union provided Georgia with a political framework for integration, both at the institutional and legislative levels. Georgia, on the other hand, concluded this process positively, which resulted in the Association Agreement, and succeeded in taking its relations with the EU to the next level. This rapid reform process, which brought Georgia closer to the EU acquis, has also made the European Union the most important and influential external actor in the country. In this context, as opposed to Moldova and Ukraine, the EU's unwillingness to grant a candidate status to Georgia has created a great disappointment in Georgia. The primary goal of this article is to assess the effects of the EU Commission's decision to link Georgia's EU candidacy status to the reform conditions, following Georgia's application in 2022. Using qualitative research methods and utilizing a variety of primary and secondary sources, this study examines the problems encountered in the implementation of reforms on political polarization, oligarchization, and the protection of vulnerable minorities, which we consider will be the most difficult to resolve. The conclusions of the study are important in terms of the steps that Georgia should take to fulfill the EU candidacy status requirements, the technical assistance that the EU can provide to Georgia in this regard, and the possible implications of this process on Georgia's politics.