

Vodka or Bourbon? Foreign Policy Preferences Toward Russia and the United States in Georgia

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While the efforts of great powers to export their regimes to small states is well studied in the literature, the role of mass opinion in small states where great powers compete for influence remains under-theorized as a factor that can shape small state preferences over foreign alliances and policies. This paper investigates the causes of individual-level variation in foreign policy preferences toward major powers in small states with big neighbors. Using recent public opinion data from Georgia, we propose a conceptual framework based on three factors—political paternalism, economic status, and religiosity—to explain why some individuals in small states prefer closer ties with different major powers. We find support for all three factors influencing foreign policy attitudes toward Russia, but not America. As great powers continue to pursue policies that encourage their preferred political orders in small states, the analysis of foreign policy preferences in such states will become increasingly vital to our understanding of world politics.

Russia's resurgence, including its ongoing intervention in Ukraine and its previous actions in Georgia and Moldova, sent a clear signal to all former Soviet Union member states that there will be deadly consequences, in addition to energy and economic sanctions, for turning away from Russia and pursuing closer ties with the West. The tepid US response to these crises has also made it obvious that the United States is unwilling to use military force against Russia to defend its interests in non-NATO countries, particularly those on Russia's periphery. Some have even called into question NATO's resolve to respond militarily in the event of a Russian invasion into NATO countries, chiefly the Baltics, which has recently engaged in a series of war games in anticipation of a potential Russian invasion.¹

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¹For example, Lithuania conducted a country-wide war game in summer 2015, Operation Lightning Strike, involving separatist insurgents, supported by the fictional country of Udija, which seized a government building (Scrutton and Sytas 2015)

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NATO recently conducted military exercises in all three Baltic republics and in Poland (MacAskill 2015). However, as Georgians and now Ukrainians are keenly aware, the greatest security risk to countries in Russia's "near abroad" is not a direct armed conflict with the Russian armed forces, but the threat of *Nelineinaia voina*, or non-linear war (Hoffman 2009; Gerasimov 2013; Voronov 2015; Galeotti 2014; Finucane 2015; Giles 2015; Popescu 2015; Siroky 2015). One of the main political objectives of non-linear war (as Russia yields it) is to prevent neighboring countries from joining the EU and NATO by increasing domestic instability, preventing adverse regime changes, and backing friendly client-puppet governments. Recently, an article presented a "hypothetical situation" in which Russia backed "internal opposition" in the Russian-speaking city of Narva, Estonia. Locals start to protest to redress their grievances against the government. Then motorcycle gangs entered the fray and soon bombs went off in the railway station (Stuttaford 2015). The whole neighborhood seems worried that "the Russians are coming." (Siroky 2015)

This paper deals with foreign policy preferences in an important and strategically located country on Russia's southern rim—Georgia—that Russia sees as legitimately and firmly within its sphere of influence, but many local elites in Georgia view it as a staunchly Western-leaning country (Gvalia et al. 2013). Although survey numbers indicate that more respondents would prefer that their government forge closer *political* ties with the United States than with Russia (77 percent yes for the United States and 51 percent yes for Russia), and, to a lesser extent, *economic* ties (67 percent yes for the United States and 57 percent yes for Russia), the numbers reflect a divided public. The election of Bidzina Ivanishvili, and his successor Irakli Garibashvili, who both promised to mend relations with Russia, following the defeat of the pro-Western Mikael Saakashvili, clearly reflect this split in public opinion toward Russia and the West in Georgia (Mueller 2014).

Whereas much of the literature on foreign policy has adopted an elite-driven perspective, and often relied on macro-level indicators, this paper takes a distinctly micro-level approach that focuses on estimating public preferences and their determinants. Elites may of course choose to ignore the public in the foreign policymaking process, but will generally have an easier time rallying public support for their policies when the public's preferences are not at variance with elite foreign policy preferences. Public opinion in Georgia arguably led to the bottom-up Rose Revolution in 2003, and to the ouster of its leader, Mikheil Saakashvili, roughly one decade later. Euromaidan in Ukraine was sparked by just such a disjuncture between elite and mass preferences over foreign policy toward the EU—the Yanukovich government had suspended preparations for signing of the EU Association Agreement, yielding to Russia's objection, when a significant portion of the Ukrainian public favored signing the Agreement. Through internal resistance, which then escalated into an armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia that has taken over 8,000 lives so far, public preferences can significantly shape foreign policy and even regime survival.

While public opinion in Georgia toward the West has been usefully studied in the context of the European Union (Müller 2011), attitudes toward closer political and economic ties toward Russia and the United States have not yet been systematically analyzed or directly compared with each other. In developing and testing a micro-level theory of foreign policy preferences toward Russia and the United States, we aim to build on the large literature on public opinion and foreign policy (Jelen 1994; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Anderson and Reichert 1996; Ribuffo 1998; Tucker, Pacek, and Berinsky 2002; Daniels 2005; Baumgartner, Francia, and Morris 2008; Müller 2011). To this end, the article proceeds in four parts. First, it discusses Georgia as a "battleground state" where the issue of Russia versus West is a fundamental political cleavage in domestic politics. Next, it builds on the literature to develop a micro-level theory that aims to explain why some

individuals prefer closer ties with Russia and why others prefer closer ties to the United States, which leads to three testable hypotheses. The third section presents the data and methods.

Utilizing a nationally representative survey of public opinion in Georgia, conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Center in 2011, the results indicate that those respondents who regularly attend religious services, prefer a more paternalistic government, and are dissatisfied with their economic status express a more pro-Russian foreign policy orientation. Conversely, the opposite of these results do not hold for positive assessments of Georgian relations with America. In other words, the determinants of pro-US or pro-Russian foreign policy preferences are not mirror images of one another, and should thus be analyzed separately. After discussing the substantive magnitude and meaning of these effects, and comparing these results to prewar survey data in 2007, the article concludes by highlighting the implications and limitations of this study for understanding public opinion and foreign policy in small states, especially in the post-Soviet region.

Georgia as a “Battleground” State

Since regaining independence in the early 1990s, Georgia has found itself in a vulnerable domestic and international position. Weak state institutions, inexperienced political elites, difficult socio-economic conditions, a coup d'état, separatist conflicts in several regions, and a resurgent Russia have defined Georgia's political scene for the past 20 years (George 2009, 2010). While Russia has been very active since the early 1990s, after a brief respite, the United States and Europe entered the game late, and have been largely unable to formulate a coherent strategy toward the small states situated between Black and Caspian Seas. This lack of a well-defined Western approach to the region has provided Russia with an opportunity to set the rules of the game in the region. As the most Western-leaning country in the region, Georgia has played a pivotal role in a new US strategy to pursue energy resources outside the Middle East, in particular through the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline. In response to increased US involvement in the region, which coincides with Georgia becoming more proactively Western in its foreign policy, Russia has also intensified efforts to reestablish its influence.

Whereas the United States and the West have generally relied on soft power in the region, Russia has more often used its hard power advantage (e.g., energy and security) to underpin its interests in the region. After the government of President Mikheil Saakashvili proclaimed that integration into NATO and EU was the ultimate objective of Georgia's foreign policy, Russia pushed back, using economic sanctions (e.g., the 2006 embargo on Georgian products) and direct military action (in 2008). “In the wake of the 2008 conflict with Georgia,” wrote one scholar, “Russia has re-established itself as the dominant actor in the South Caucasus, consolidating its military presence in the region and reinforcing its already substantial diplomatic and economic levers” (German 2011, 1). According to another study, Russia desires that “the majority of CIS countries take part in the Russia-oriented security system (CSTO), and its integration project (the Eurasian Union), and demands a leading role in the CIS countries' energy complex” (Kakachia 2011, 16).

Scholars have suggested that the Kremlin follows a two-pronged strategy, *bolstering* friendly regimes and *subverting* unfriendly regimes (Ambrosio 2009, 105–31) to achieve managed stability and managed instability in its neighborhood (Tolstrup 2009, 922–9–44). Both strategies aim to keep the West out of its self-proclaimed sphere of interest. The West also rewards and punishes regimes in post-Communist Europe, but largely using political conditionality (Kelley 2004; Vachudova 2005). Post-Soviet states have to deliver on democratic and economic

reforms in order to receive rewards tied to accession and deeper integration to the EU and NATO. Russia has sought to block these Western carrots, and to neutralize the sticks. Georgia is one of several post-Soviet “battleground” states in which these methods can be seen in action as Russia and the West vie for influence. Despite this, no micro-level analysis of individual attitudes toward Russia and America in such battleground states has been conducted.

In the Republic of Georgia, there are a number of instances in which we have seen governing elites in Georgia respond to public opinion, which underlines the importance of mass opinion in battleground states. The most obvious instance of public opinion shaping elite behavior was the Rose Revolution in 2003. Following the disputed results of the 2003 parliamentary elections in Georgia—where exit polls showed a victory for the United National Movement, founded by Mikheil Saakashvili, but official government returns showed a victory for the party of then-president of Georgia Eduard Shevardnadze—massive public protests occurred across all major cities in Georgia (Jones 2009). The end result of these public demonstrations was the resignation of President Shevardnadze and the eventual election of Mikheil Saakashvili. In 2007, public opinion would once again impact President Saakashvili, as widespread protests against allegations of corruption within his administration resulted in early presidential elections (BBC 2007). In 2008, President Saakashvili’s administration held a referendum asking the Georgian people whether they wanted Georgia to apply for membership in NATO. Approximately 80 percent of Georgia’s people voted “yes.” Following this referendum, the Georgian government took part in the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest and requested to embark on the process of NATO membership, although the application was denied due to ongoing internal conflicts (BBC 2008).

Public Opinion and Foreign Affairs

The first wave of research on public opinion toward foreign policy argued that the average citizen was far too busy with their daily lives to have any opinion on foreign policy (Lippman 1922, 1925; Almond 1960; Converse 1964), but the Verba–Stanford surveys regarding public opinion toward the American war in Vietnam changed this understanding, and led to the view of public opinion that publics were in fact well informed (Verba et al. 1967, 319–20; Verba and Brody, 1970). This set the foundations for the second wave of public opinion research (Caspary 1970; Mueller 1973; Shapiro and Page 1988), which focused on the drivers and determinants of public opinion, and this has been followed by research highlighting how public opinion may influence elite decisions by defining acceptable government policy.

Our objective in this paper is to focus on three conceptual factors that have been theorized in the literature and to develop and test hypotheses about how they shape foreign policy preferences: religiosity (Baumgartner, Francia, and Morris 2008; Jelen 1994; Ribuffo 1998; Daniels 2005), economic status (Gabel and Palmer 1995; Anderson and Reichert 1996; Tucker, Pacek, and Berinsky 2002), and attitudes toward the role of government (Müller 2011). The literature on the role of religion in influencing foreign policy preferences (Guth 2009; Warner and Walker 2011) generally suggests that religious conservatives take a more traditional, hawkish, and nationalist positions on domestic and foreign policy (Jelen 1994; Ribuffo 1998; Guth 2004; Jacobson 2005; Daniels 2005). Jelen (1994) and Wittkopf (1990) show that Protestants in the United States are generally more conservative in foreign policy matters than Catholics, and that Catholics are more likely to oppose aggressive foreign policies and the use of force to solve issues in international relations. Baumgartner, Francia, and Morris (2008, 176) find that conservative Christians were more likely to approve of President Bush’s handling of the Iraq War, the war on terror, and Bush’s overall foreign policy than other

religions, and that religiously conservative individuals more often accepted President Bush's justifications for the Iraq War than other citizens (Guth 2004).

Finally, scholars who explore the relationship between religion and foreign policy have also noted that shared religious traditions between states may lead to the citizens and elites of states having a significant level of affinity and shared norms with states that also embrace their religious identity (Carment, James, and Taydas 2009; Ellis 2010; Fox, James, and Li 2009; Sandal and Fox 2004; Warner and Walker 2011; Mirilovic and Siroky 2015). At the micro level, we therefore expect that those with higher levels of religiosity in Georgia will be more likely to prefer closer ties to Orthodox nations, in this case Russia. Other research has explored this "shared affinity" argument and found that hostility toward other cultures plays a powerful role in motivating the foreign policy preferences of individuals (McLaren 2002; De Vreese and Boomgaarden 2005; De Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Semetko 2008).

The literature has also long emphasized the role of social and economic status in molding foreign policy preferences (Gabel and Palmer 1995; Anderson and Reichert 1996; Kucia 1999; Tucker, Pacek, and Berinsky 2002; Caplanova, Orviska, and Hudson 2004; Müller 2011). Gabel and Palmer (1995) and Anderson and Reichert (1996) argue that socio-economic status drives the different cost-benefit analysis individuals make in regard to foreign policy (in this case, EU and NATO vs. CIS integration). These studies show that higher-income-level respondents harbor more positive attitudes toward the EU. Tucker, Pacek, and Berinsky (2002) found that those who were "economic winners," as defined by the respondent's self-evaluation, were more likely to be supportive of European integration in a study of post-Soviet countries, including Georgia. Kucia (1999) also showed that respondents focused on the prospect of economic and financial benefits of EU membership for the individuals themselves. Respondents who expected more positive benefits from EU membership held more positive attitudes toward the EU and toward EU integration (Caplanova, Orviska, and Hudson 2004). In Georgia, Müller (2011) also found that expected economic benefits and higher income levels were positively associated with pro-European Union attitudes.

Finally, an important strand in the literature indicates that attitudes toward the role of government also impinge on foreign policy preferences. For example, White, Korosteleva, and McAllister (2008) found that respondents who supported EU membership were more likely to favor Western-style democracy and to oppose a paternalistic form of government. EU supporters were also more likely to support a market economy than a planned economy of the Soviet type. In Georgia, Müller (2011) found that having a paternalistic attitude toward the role of government predicted negative attitudes toward the European Union. Additionally, Chkhaidze, of the Caucasus Resource Research Center, shows that respondents who were older, less educated, and more religious in Georgia tend to prefer a more paternalistic government (Chkhaidze 2014).

Theory and Hypotheses

We build on these studies and insights about the possible role of political paternalism, economic status, and religion to examine public opinion in Georgia on forging closer political and economic ties with Russia and the United States. Whereas previous studies have examined attitudes toward the European Union, NATO, or "the West," there are few studies focusing on attitudes and foreign policy preferences in former Soviet states about increasing ties with Russia, which has played an increasingly important role in the former Communist world, and increasingly in Western Europe. In many post-Communist countries, mass opinion is divided over the proper direction for the country in terms of external alliances—the recent events in Georgia and Ukraine testify to this cleavage.

(Bustikova 2015) Moreover, a fair number of people believe that the two poles are *not* mutually exclusive; and that the country can forge stronger ties with *both* Russian- and Western-backed institutions. Therefore, it might be misleading to assume that the drivers of pro-Western attitudes are just the reverse of pro-Russian attitudes. We relax this standard assumption by providing a comparative (and separate) analysis of attitudes regarding aligning Georgia with the United States and Russia.

First, building on previous research that has focused on the role of religion in the development of foreign policy attitudes (Jelen 1994; Ribuffo 1998; Guth 2004; Daniels 2005; Jacobson 2005; Baumgartner, Francia, and Morris 2008), we argue that the influence of the Orthodox Church in Georgia has increasingly polarized domestic politics by taking public positions on foreign policy and “defending” national culture against the influences and ideas of Western Europe and America (Flintoff 2013). Most observers argue that the Georgian Orthodox Church does not feel comfortable with the country’s pro-Western aspirations. Kekelia et al. (2013) found that the Georgian Orthodox Church perceives Westernization and globalization, as well as activities carried out by NATO and the European Union, as undermining faith, tradition, and national culture. For example, in 2010, Georgian patriarch Ilia II openly argued that Georgian students should refrain from going abroad for their studies (Kekelia et al 2013). If we take into account the fact that the major destinations for Georgian youth for their studies abroad are Europe and the United States, it is not very difficult to understand that Ilia II, who is one of the most trusted elites for the Georgian public, meant the West, excluding Russia. Ilia II also publicly criticized Europe and the West in a number of highly visible public speeches (Merbaghishvili 2012). According to Kekelia et al. (2013), most clergymen are loyal to Russia. Regular church attendance and exposure to these views should therefore positively shape individual attitudes toward Russia. In terms of the evolution of state-church relations since Georgia regained independence, it becomes clear that the church has increasingly tried to be an important political actor, often vetoing and criticizing government policies, and trying to shape public opinion.

During the late years of Eduard Shevardnadze’s presidency, the Georgian Church opposed Georgia’s intensification of relations with the West. As one observer notes:

Instead of striving to join the European family, the Church created a new ideological narrative, the counterpart to secular nationalism. Georgian nationalism was always characterized by anti-Russian and pro-Western discourse. However, the Patriarchate began demonizing the West and emphasized the importance of shared religion with Russia. The Patriarch’s statements, like the statements of the majority of the clergy, were mostly anti-Western and anti-liberal. “The West,” the Patriarch said, “is the world where everything is permitted and violence dominates. It is materially rich, but spiritually poor.” Moreover, he argued, if a country abandons its religious and national ideology, liberalism will aid Georgia’s enemies and “will totally destroy the country.” (Chitanava 2015, 42)

During Shevardnadze’s presidency, the Georgian Church strongly encouraged opposition to religious minorities and some non-governmental organizations and media (Chitanava 2015, 43). Since the Rose Revolution, state-church relations became even more complicated. The Saakashvili government pursued the rapid modernization of the country and intensification of relations with the West, which brought it further into conflict with the Church that has tried to publicly influence policy regarding abortion, gay rights, and pardoning (Ilia wanted the power to commute sentences separately from the government). However, alongside pro-Western initiatives and the promotion of liberal democracy, Saakashvili embraced the church in symbolic acts, such as during his inauguration at the historic Holy Gelati monastery, where he received a blessing from Ilia II. The period of 2003–

2012 can thus be characterized as a “pseudo-friendship” between the state and the church (Chitanava 2015, 44–45).

After the electoral defeat of the National Movement in October 2012, when billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili and the Georgian Dream coalition came into the power, the new government has attempted to normalize relations with Russia, which removed much of the ideological church-state confrontation and has strengthened the church’s political power and reach into politics. As Chitanava notes, “In 2012, the Orthodox clergy directly intervened in the parliamentary pre-election campaign and their support significantly contributed to the victory of the Georgian Dream coalition and Ivanishvili” (Chitanava 2015, 48–52). The church has also begun to more actively engage in issues related to the foreign policy. The narrative of two countries “having the same faith” was always prevalent inside the church, but the Orthodox clergy has even more actively promoted it in recent years. In 2013, at his meeting with Vladimir Putin in Moscow, Patriarch Ilia II asserted that the war in 2008 was a “mistake” and that it was neither the fault of Russia nor Georgia, but of “particular persons” (implying President Saakashvili)—“The love between Georgia and Russian will be eternal,” said Ilia II.

In sum, the Georgian Church is a significant political player and its influence over many issues of domestic and foreign policy, which has increased in recent years, has important implications for Georgian politics. Religious institutions are the most trusted institutions in Georgia (Charles 2010), and can directly influence policymakers as well as public attitudes about policy. As a result, in seeking to explain the determinants of Georgia’s foreign policy, the church is an important actor that should be taken into account. Consistent with the work of Baumgartner, Francia, and Morris (2008), which found that religious ties influence foreign alignments and alliances, we argue that the Orthodox Church in Georgia has pushed for closer relations with their fellow Christian Orthodox neighbors, especially Russia. However, Müller (2011) found that religiosity did not influence preferences against (or in favor of) closer ties to the EU. It is therefore unclear whether, and if so the extent to which, religiosity in Georgia may play an important role in pro-Russian attitudes. To test this conjecture, we propose the first hypothesis.

H1: More religious individuals will be more likely to favor closer ties with Russia.

Previous studies found that attitudes toward the role of government influenced attitudes toward the EU (White, Korosteleva, and McAllister 2008; Müller 2011). This can be interpreted in at least two ways. First, post-Socialist states have a recent history of strong governmental paternalism, and this tradition is perceived to be alive and well in Putin’s Russia (Kutchins 2007; Lipman 2007). By this logic, attitudes more in line with government paternalism should be positively correlated with pro-Russian attitudes.² Second, some analysis has uncovered nostalgia among citizens for the days of communist rule (Miller, Reisinger, and Hesli 1996; Velikonja 2009). Respondents longing for the “glory” days of the more paternalistic, Russian-dominated Georgia are likely to prefer a more paternalistic style of government today, and to express a desire for closer ties with Russia. This leads to our second hypothesis.

H2: Individuals with a paternalistic view of government will be more likely to think their country should forge closer political and economic ties with Russia.

Our third and final hypothesis focuses on an individual’s perception of their economic status. Respondent perception of being economic “winners” and “losers” have been a staple in the literature on public opinion. Individuals more

²Paternalism is defined as “the interference of a state or an individual with another person against their will motivated by a claim that the person interfered with will be better off or protected from harm.” Simply put, paternalism refers to treating people as if they were children (Dworkin 2010).

satisfied with their income often have more pro-European attitudes (Tucker, Pacek, and Berinsky 2002; Caplanova, Orviska, and Hudson 2004; Müller 2011). Individuals who feel like they have “lost” in the post-Communist transformation should be more supportive of aligning Georgia with Russia (Gabel and Palmer 1995). Those “losing” in the current system, which is oriented toward pursuing close relations with the West, may believe that they would be “winners” in a system with closer ties to Russia (Tucker, Pacek, and Berinsky 2002). Furthermore, the literature on retrospective evaluation (Duch 1995; Miller, Reisinger, and Hesli 1996; Hesli and Bashkirova 2001) leads us to expect that some respondents may see themselves as having been better off in Soviet times than they are now. Respondents may also be resentful that they did not benefit as much as others from the transition. These conjectures lead to our third and final hypothesis:

H3: *Economic “losers” are more likely to favor closer ties with Russia.*

We then test the converse of these three hypotheses with regard to closer ties with the United States, which provides a comparative anchoring for interpreting the substantive effects.

Data and Methods

Using a recent nationally representative public opinion survey conducted in Georgia by the Caucasus Research Resource Center in 2011, the analysis tests three main hypotheses about foreign policy preferences toward both Russia and the United States, and then compares these results to similar data from before the 2008 war.³

The Dependent Variables

We utilize two questions as dependent variables in the analysis. In the first set of models, the dependent variable is measured using the survey question “In your opinion, should Georgia have the closest *political* cooperation with Russia?” The allowed responses were “yes” and “no,” and 1,612 respondents answered the question. In the second set of models, the dependent variable was derived from the follow-up survey question “Should Georgia have the closest *economic* cooperation with Russia?” This question had 1,613 responses and again included two possible answers: “yes” or “no.” The questions regarding opinion toward America were the same as above, only replacing America with Russia.

The Independent Variables

Religiosity: Our measure of religiosity is based upon the respondent’s answer to the survey question “Please tell me, how often do you attend religious service?” This is a self-reported question to which respondents were limited to one answer from five options that included “never,” “less often than special religious holidays,” “only on special religious holidays,” “at least once a month,” or “once a week or more often.”

Attitudes towards Role of Government: Our indicator of attitudes toward the role of government was derived from responses to the question “Please indicate which of the following statements you agree with and to what level? Statement 1: People are like children; the government should take care of them like a parent.” Here,

³A newer study was conducted by the CRRC in 2013, but issues surrounding the implementation of a new survey technology rendered these more recent data problematic. Further, due to separatist conflicts in Georgia, ethnic Georgians were oversampled in the 2011 survey. Finally, answers of “don’t know” or “no answer” and responses with missing data were dropped from analysis.

respondents were limited to one answer selection on a four-point scale: 1 means that they agree completely that the government should behave like an employee of the people, and 4 indicates that they agree completely that the government should act like a parent.

Satisfaction with Income: Our satisfaction with income variable is derived from responses to the survey question “Please tell me to what extent is your current income enough for your household?” Respondents were offered responses of “is not enough at all” (1), “is hardly enough” (2), “is enough” (3), and “is absolutely enough” (4).

Control Variables: We also control for factors that shape the information available about Russia, Russians, and the Russian language, as well as English and the English language, which can influence foreign policy preferences (White et al. 2002). By allowing for more meaningful interaction with people from other countries and their cultures, as well as providing indirect opportunities for information gathering through literature, film, and media, exposure and information should positively affect attitudes toward foreign countries.⁴ When individuals know multiple foreign languages, it stands to reason that this effect will be somewhat diluted compared to individuals who only know one foreign language. Respondents were asked: “Please tell me, which of these levels best describes your ability in the following: Russian (English).” Responses to the question were limited to one answer selection from among the following four answer options: “no knowledge,” “beginner,” “intermediate,” and “advanced.” We then collapsed the responses into a zero/one indicator with one consisting of those that answered knowing at least “beginner” Russian (English) but did not also know any other foreign language. Zero consisted of all those who either did not know Russian or knew a level of Russian but also knew another second language.

Information and contact also come from traveling to a country (White et al. 2002; Müller 2011). Traveling to another country may also signal that you have family members or friends in that country, which might be correlated with positive attitudes toward that country, all else equal. Cultural exchanges that governments promote with foreign countries are premised on this assumption, and some studies have uncovered evidence of their efficacy (Atkinson 2006). Georgians who have traveled to Russia may have positive ties to Russia and have learned information in contrast to the information in the Georgian media. We therefore measure whether the respondent has traveled to Russia. This variable was derived from the responses to the question “Have you or a family member traveled to Russia since 1993?” Responses were limited to one answer selection, either “yes” or “no.” We also account for age and education levels (Anderson and Reichert 1996; Hooghe and Marks 2005; Lubbers and Jaspers 2011).

Numerous researchers emphasize the role of partisanship in motivating foreign policy preferences (Zaller 1992; Evans 1998; Hooghe and Marks 2005; Hellström 2008; Markowski and Tucker 2010). However, in many battleground states, political party systems are quite weak relative to personalistic political affinities. We therefore control for attitudes toward then-President Mikheil Saakashvili, which is measured as the level of trust the respondent had for President Saakashvili on a one-to-five scale. Given the politicization of Georgian ethnic identity, we account for whether the respondents are ethnically Georgian using a dichotomous indicator (McLaren 2002; De Vreese and Boomgaarden 2005; De Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Semetko 2008). Finally, due to well-documented political differences between urban and rural electorates, we account for whether the respondent lived in an urban or rural setting.

⁴Of course, learning a foreign language may already indicate a positive predisposition toward countries that use that language. Without additional longitudinal data, we cannot determine whether this is a cause or rather an effect that is subsequently reinforced.

Results and Discussion

The results for the full models in Tables 1 and 2 show that attitudes on ties with Russia are driven by all of our three theorized factors—religiosity, role of government, and economic satisfaction. Respondents who more frequently attend religious services, prefer paternalistic government, and were economically unsatisfied with the transition were more likely to favor closer political and economic ties with Russia. In addition to our main hypotheses, the analysis also suggests that those who live in urban settings are less supportive of forming closer political ties to Russia. There is also a visible age-cohort effect—older respondents are much more likely to favor closer political ties with Russia.

Next, we turn to the results for closer political and economic ties with the United States. The results for the full model in Tables 3 and 4 show that attitudes toward forming closer political ties *with the United States* are driven solely by age-cohort effects, but in the opposite direction of Russia, such that older respondents are much *less* likely to favor closer ties with the United States. Across political and economic ties with the US models, we find no support for any of the three main hypotheses. These findings lend credence to those who argue that the drivers of pro-Russian and pro-American attitudes are not simply opposites, that is, driven by the same key variables with opposite signs on their coefficients. While pro-Russian attitudes are driven by increased religiosity, a preference for paternalistic government, and economic dissatisfaction, pro-American attitudes appear to be largely driven by cohort effects.

To interpret these results, we present marginal effect plots for each possible response of the three variables implied in the main hypotheses for the Russian models only, due to the lack of significance in the American modes. All marginal effect plots are based on Model 8 in the relevant table (1–4), holding all other variables at their mean values. Figure 1 illustrates the substantive effects of the three predictors for political ties to Russia (Table 1, Model 8). At the lowest level of self-reported religiosity (never attending religious service), there is a 45 percent probability of supporting closer ties to Russia, whereas a respondent with the highest level of self-reported religiosity (attending church more than once a week) has approximately a 60 percent probability of supporting closer political ties to Russia—a 25 percent increase in the predicted probability of supporting closer political ties to Russia. Moving next to the impact of attitudes toward the role of government, a respondent having a strong belief that the government is an employee of the people has about a 30 percent chance of supporting closer political ties to Russia, whereas a respondent with the highest level, having a strong belief that the government is a parent to the people, has approximately an 85 percent chance of supporting closer political ties to Russia, which represents a 55 percent increase. Finally, a respondent with the lowest level of satisfaction with their income has about a 75 percent chance of supporting closer political ties to Russia, while a respondent with the highest level of satisfaction with their income has only a 10 percent probability of supporting closer political ties to Russia, which represents a 65 percent increase.

Figure 2 depicts the impact of the same three predictors on closer *economic* ties with Russia. A respondent with the lowest level of self-reported religiosity (never attending church) has an approximately 50 percent chance of supporting closer economic ties to Russia, whereas a respondent with the highest level of self-reported religiosity (attending church more than once a week) has a 65 percent chance of supporting close economic ties to Russia—a 15 percent increase. A respondent with the lowest level of support for paternalistic governance has a 45 percent chance of supporting closer economic ties to Russia, which jumps 30 percent to 75 percent for a respondent with the highest level of support for a

Table 1. Factors influencing support for political ties to Russia

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Age	.01 (.0)*	.01(.0)*	.01 (.0)*	.01 (.0)*	.01 (.0)*	.0 (.0)*	.0(.0)*	.0 (.0)*
Education	.03 (.0)	.03 (.05)	.01 (.1)	.02 (.05)	.0 (.05)	.03 (.0)	.0 (.05)	.0 (.05)
Language	-.13 (.1)	-.14 (.1)	-.11 (.1)	-.13 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.03 (.03)	-.12 (.03)	-.1 (.1)
Travel	-.28 (.1)	-.3 (.1)	-.24 (.1)	-.26 (.1)	-.3 (.1)*	-.2 (.1)	-.2 (.1)	-.3 (.1)
Orthodox	-.21 (.2)	-.21 (.2)	-.17 (.2)	-.23 (.2)	-.3 (.2)	-.2 (.2)	-.2 (.2)	-.3 (.2)
Urban	-.23 (.1)*	-.23 (.1)*	-.23 (.1)*	-.23 (.1)*	-.2 (.1)*	-.2 (.1)*	-.23 (.1)*	-.2 (.1)*
Ethnic Georgian	.33 (.2)	.35 (.2)	.35 (.2)	.3 (.2)	.4 (.2)	.4 (.2)	.4 (.2)	.5 (.2)*
Trust in Pres	.01 (.0)	.01 (.0)	-.02(.0)	-.01 (.0)	-.01 (.0)	-.01 (.0)	-.01 (.0)	-.01 (.0)
Religiosity		.1 (.0)*				.1 (.0)*	.1 (.0)*	.1 (.0)*
Role of government			-.1 (.05)*		.7 (.1)*		-.1 (.05)	.7 (.1)*
Economic satisfaction				-.23 (.07)*	-.1.2 (.2)*	-.2 (.1)*		-.1.3 (.2)*
Constant	-.5 (.3)*	-6 (.3)	-.12 (.4)	.13 (.4)	.34 (.4)	.0 (.4)	-.3 (.4)	.2 (.4)
<i>N</i>	1,528	1,527	1,460	1,512	1,452	1,511	1,459	1,451
AIC	2118.7	2115.7	2018.1	2090.4	1965.6	2087.6	2015.3	1960
BIC	2166.8	2169	2071	2143.6	2023.7	2146	2073.5	2023.5
Log-Likelihood	-1050.4	-1047.9	-999	-1035.2	-971.8	-1032.8	-996.7	-968

Note: Coefficients and standards errors. All models are logistic regression.

* $p \leq .05$

paternalistic government. Finally, a respondent with the lowest level of economic satisfaction has a predicted 75 percent chance of supporting closer economic ties to Russia, but a respondent with the highest level of economic satisfaction has a 65 percent lower chance (only 20 percent) of supporting closer economic ties to Russia.

Analysis of Pre-2008 Data

The 2008 war between Russia and Georgia was a crucial moment in the post-Soviet world and for Russia's role in it. In order to better understand the impact the war may have had on public opinion toward Russia and America, we turned to the 2007 Caucasus Barometer Survey, also conducted in Georgia. We tried to maximize comparability with the post-2008 data to the greatest extent possible.⁵

At the aggregate level, 75 percent of respondents were in favor of establishing closer political ties with the United States in 2007, compared to 77 percent in 2011. There were somewhat larger changes in attitudes toward economic ties: 75 percent of those surveyed were in favor of stronger economic ties with the United States in 2007, compared to 67 percent in 2011. Neither change was as dramatic as the shift in attitudes toward Russia since the war; in 2007, 79 percent of those surveyed were in favor of establishing closer political ties with Russia, compared to only 51 percent in 2011. The desire for closer economic ties with Russia also decreased after the war: 82 percent were in favor of forging closer economic ties to Russia in 2007, compared to just 57 percent in 2011. While the aggregate attitudes toward the United States were more or less stable before and after the war, the numbers clearly dropped for Russia.

In the full models of the prewar survey data, we find that opinion toward Russia was not driven by any of our included variables, except being Orthodox Christian in the case of close economic ties to Russia. Due to the absence of a question on

⁵Survey questions regarding a number of our key variables were not available in the 2007 survey. In addition, questions regarding several control variables to Russia and America were missing in 2007. Also, there are concerns about the quality of pre-2009 data from the CRCC. We present the analysis of 2007 data with these caveats in mind.

Table 2. Factors influencing support for economic ties to Russia

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Age	.0 (.0)*	.0 (.00)*	.0 (.0)*	.0 (.0)*	.0 (.0)*	.0 (.0)	.0 (.0)*	.0 (.0)
Education	.1 (.0)	.1 (.0)	.1 (.1)	.1 (.0)	.1 (.1)	.1 (.1)	.1 (.1)	.1 (.1)
Language	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.2 (.1)
Travel	-.4 (.1)*	-.4 (.1)*	-.4 (.1)*	-.4 (.1)*	-.4 (.1)*	-.4 (.1)*	-.3 (.1)*	-.4 (.1)*
Orthodox	-.05 (.2)	-.1 (.2)	-.0 (.2)	-.1 (.2)	-.1 (.2)	-.1 (.2)	-.0 (.2)	-.1 (.2)
Urban	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)
Ethnic Georgian	-.3 (.2)	-.3 (.2)	-.2 (.2)	-.2 (.2)	-.2 (.2)	-.2 (.2)	-.2 (.2)	-.1 (.2)
Trust in Pres	.0 (.0)	.01 (.0)	-.0 (.0)	-.0 (.0)	-.0 (.0)	-.0 (.0)	-.0 (.0)	-.0 (.0)
Religiosity		.1 (.0)*				.2 (.0)*	.1 (.0)*	.2 (.0)*
Role of government			-.2 (.05)*		.3 (.1)*		-.1 (.1)*	.4 (.1)*
Economic satisfaction				-.2 (.1)*	-.8 (.2)*	-.2 (.1)*		-.8 (.2)*
Constant	.1 (.3)	-.1 (.4)	.5 (.4)	.7 (.4)	.8 (.4)*	.4 (.4)	.3 (.4)*	.6 (.4)
N	1,530	1,529	1,463	1,514	1,455	1,513	1,462	1,454
AIC	2097	2086	1987	2068	1961	2057	1977	1948
BIC	2145	2140	2040	2122	2020	2116	2035	2012
Log-likelihood	-1039.3	-1033	-983.5	-1024.2	-969.7	-1017.7	-977.5	-962.1

Note: Coefficients and standards errors. All models are logistic regression.

* $p \leq .05$

Table 3. Factors influencing support for political ties to America

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Age	-.02 (0)*	-.02 (0)*	-.02 (0)*	-.02 (0)*	-.02 (0)*	-.02 (0)*	-.02 (0)*	-.02 (0)*
Education	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.0 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)	-.1 (.1)
Language	13.9 (456)	13.8 (456)	13.1 (456)	13.8 (456)	13.8 (456)	13.9 (456)	13.8 (456)	13.8 (456)
Travel	1.15 (.8)	1.15 (.8)	1.16 (.8)	1.16 (.8)	1.17 (.8)	1.16 (.8)	1.16 (.8)	1.16 (.8)
Orthodox	.0 (.2)	.0 (.2)	-.0 (.2)	.0 (.2)	-.0 (.2)	0 (.2)	-.0 (.2)	-.0 (.2)
Urban	-.2 (.1)	-.2 (.1)	-.2 (.1)	-.2 (.1)	-.2 (.1)	-.2 (.1)	-.2 (.1)	-.2 (.1)
Ethnic Georgian	-.0 (.3)	-.0 (.3)	.0 (.3)	.0 (.3)	.0 (.3)	.0 (.3)	.0 (.3)	.0 (.3)
Trust in Pres	-.0 (.0)	-.0 (.0)	-.0 (.0)	-.0 (.0)	.0 (.0)	-.0 (.0)	-.0 (.0)	.0 (.0)
Religiosity		-.0 (0)				-.0 (0)	-.0 (0)	.0 (0)
Role of government			.1 (.1)		.1 (.1)		.1 (1)	.1 (.02)
Economic satisfaction				.0 (.1)	-.0 (.2)	.0 (.1)		-.0 (.0)
Constant	2.4 (.4)*	2.4 (.4)*	2.1 (.5)*	2.2 (.5)*	2.1 (.5)*	2.3 (.5)*	2.1 (.5)*	2.1 (.5)*
N	1,529	1,528	1,461	1,514	1,454	1,513	1,460	1,453
AIC	1611	1613	1554	1607	1554	1608	1556	1556
BIC	1659	1666	1607	1660	1612	1667	1614	1619
Log-likelihood	-796.6	-796.4	-767	-793.4	-765.9	-793.2	-766.9	-765.8

Note: Coefficients and standards errors. All models are logistic regression.

*= $p \leq .05$.

political paternalism in 2007, we were unable to assess this factor using the earlier data. In comparison, we find that positive attitudes toward the United States in 2007 are driven by largely by the respondent's classification of their economic status and their religiosity, in line with the hypotheses. Specifically, economically better-off individuals were more likely to have positive attitudes toward forming closer political and economic ties with the United States, although the effect of religiosity was not significant. Further, more religious respondents were less likely to have positive attitudes toward forming closer political ties to America, but not economic ties. In comparison, the 2011 data showed that age was the driving factors behind pro-American attitudes. These results are reported in Tables 5–8.

Table 4. Factors influencing support for economic ties to America

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Age	-0 (.0)*	-0 (.0)	-0 (0)*	-0 (0)*	-1 (0)*	-0 (0)*	-01 (0)*	-01 (0)*
Education	-0 (.1)	-0 (.1)	-0 (.1)	-0 (0)	-0 (.1)	-0 (.1)	-0 (.0)	-0 (.1)
Language	.5 (.8)	.5 (.8)	.5 (.8)	.5 (.8)	.5 (.8)	.5 (.6)	.5 (.8)	.5 (.8)
Travel	.1 (.5)	.0 (.5)	.1 (.5)	.1 (.5)	.1 (.5)	.1 (.5)	.1 (.5)	.1 (.5)
Orthodox	.2 (.2)	.2 (.2)	.2 (.2)	.2 (.2)	.2 (.2)	.2 (.2)	.2 (.2)	.2 (.2)
Urban	-0 (.1)	-1 (.1)	-1 (.1)	-1 (.1)	-1 (.1)	-1 (.1)	-1 (.1)	-1 (.1)
Ethnic Georgian	-2 (.2)	-2 (.2)	-2 (.2)	-2 (.2)	-2 (.2)	-2 (.2)	-2 (.2)	-2 (.2)
Trust in pres	-0 (.0)	-0 (.0)	-1 (0)	-0 (0)	-1 (0)	-0 (0)	-1 (0)	-1 (0)
Religiosity		-0 (0)				-0 (0)	-0 (0)	.0 (0)
Role of government			-1 (.1)		-1 (.1)		-1 (.1)	-1 (.1)
Economic satisfaction				-1 (.1)	-0 (.2)	-15 (.08)*		-0 (.2)
Constant	1.2 (.4)*	1.3 (.4)*	1.6 (.4)*	1.6 (.4)*	1.7 (.4)*	1.6 (.4)*	1.7 (.4)*	1.7 (.4)*
N	1,528	1,527	1,461	1,513	1,454	1,512	1,460	1,453
AIC	1960	1961	1877	1945	1874	1946	1879	1876
BIC	2008	2015	1930	1998	1933	2005	1937	1939
Log-likelihood	-971	-971	-929	-962	-926	-962	-928	-926

Note: Coefficients and standards errors. All models are logistic regression.

* $p \leq .05$

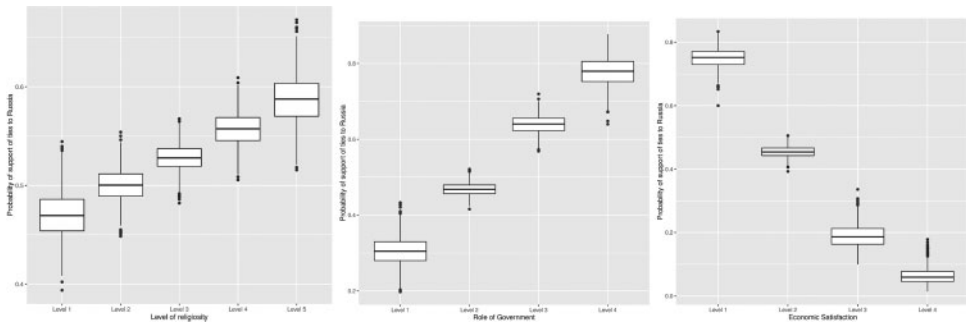


Figure 1. Marginal Effects of Factors Influencing Support for Political Ties to Russia.

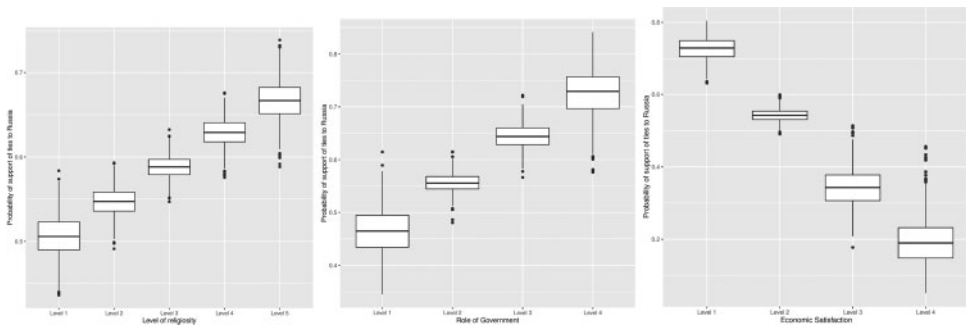


Figure 2. Marginal Effects of Factors Influencing Support for Economic Ties to Russia.

The changing relationship between religion and attitudes may indicate two things. Apart from their efforts to increase control over Georgia’s foreign policy and domestic political discourse, Russia may have put greater effort into

Table 5. Factors influencing support for political ties to Russia, 2007

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	.0 (.0)	.0 (.0)	.0 (.0)	.0 (.0)
Education	.03 (.05)	.03 (.05)	.03 (.05)	.04 (.05)
Language	.02 (.11)	.07 (.10)	.04 (.11)	.08 (.11)
Orthodox	.01 (.15)	-.03 (.16)	.04 (.16)	-.0 (.17)
Religiosity		-.08 (.06)		-.07 (.06)
Economic Status			.10 (.09)	.15 (.10)
Constant	1.68 (.2)*	1.98 (.3)*	1.56 (.2)*	1.81 (.33)*
N	3096	3024	3033	2964
AIC	2387.8	2321.9	2348.1	2282.3
BIC	2418	2358.0	2384.2	2324.3
Log-Likelihood	-1188.90	-1154.94	-1168.06	-1134.16

Note: Coefficients and standards errors. All models are logistic regression.

* $p \leq .05$

Table 6. Factors influencing support for economic ties to Russia, 2007

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	.0 (.0)	.0 (.0)	.0 (.0)	.0 (.0)
Education	-.04 (.06)	-.0 (.06)	-.05 (.06)	-.05 (.06)
Language	-.00 (.12)	.03 (.12)	.02 (.12)	-.07 (.12)
Orthodox	.34 (.16)*	.34 (.16)*	.36 (.15)*	.37 (.16)*
Religiosity		-.10 (.06)		-.08 (.07)
Economic Status			.16 (.11)	.2 (.11)
Constant	1.81 (.3)*	2.12 (.34)*	1.74 (.26)*	2.00 (.4)*
N	3131	3058	3066	2996
AIC	2108.4	2049.6	2054.9	2000.2
BIC	2138.6	2085.8	2091.0	2041.3
Log-Likelihood	-1049.19	-1018.80	-1021.44	-992.62

Note: Coefficients and standards errors. All models are logistic regression.

* $p \leq .05$

Table 7. Factors influencing support for political ties to America, 2007

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	-.00 (.00)*	-.00 (.00)*	-.00 (.00)*	-.00 (.00)
Education	.08 (.05)	.07 (.05)	.07 (.05)	.07 (.05)
Language	.04 (.14)	-.03 (.14)	.01 (.14)	-.06 (.15)
Orthodox	.56 (.13)*	.39 (.14)*	.58 (.13)*	.43 (.14)*
Religiosity		-.16 (.06)*		-.14 (.06)*
Economic Status			.19 (.09)*	.22 (.09)*
Constant	1.23 (.20)*	1.94 (.29)*	1.14 (.20)*	1.72 (.30)*
N	3038	2970	2981	2915
AIC	2780.8	2671.1	2710.9	2606.9
BIC	2810.88	2707.1	2746.9	2648.7
Log-Likelihood	-1385.4	-1329.6	-1349.44	-1296.44

Note: Coefficients and standards errors. All models are logistic regression.

* $p \leq .05$

cultivating pro-Russian attitudes with Georgian Orthodox religious leaders. As Kekelia et al. (2013) demonstrates, Georgian Orthodox clergy are pro-Russian and have become more so in recent years. The affinity of the Georgian clergy is a natural phenomenon based on shared religion, at one level, but is also cultivated

Table 8. Factors influencing support for economic ties to America, 2007

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
Education	.08 (.05)	.07 (.05)	.07 (.05)	.07 (.05)
Language	-.00 (.14)	-.06 (.14)	-.05 (.14)	-.11 (.15)
Orthodox	.71 (.12)*	.57 (.13)*	.74 (.12)*	.61 (.13)*
Religiosity		-.14 (.06)*		-.11 (.06)*
Economic Status			.26 (.09)*	.29 (.09)*
Constant	.96 (.19)*	1.50 (.28)*	.82 (.20)*	1.27 (.29)*
N	3,072	3,004	3,013	2,947
AIC	2798.3	2696.2	2723.3	2624.1
BIC	2828.5	2732.3	2759.32	2666
Log-likelihood	-1394.2	-1342.1	-1355.63	-1305.03

Note: Coefficients and standards errors. All models are logistic regression.

* $p \leq .05$

by strategic Russian. Finally, some of the differences between the pre- and postwar results may be driven by the absence of key control variables from the 2008 data.

Conclusion

Mass opinion in small states where great powers compete for influence remains under-theorized, but can be a significantly factor in shaping foreign policy and regime stability. This paper investigates the causes of individual-level variation in foreign policy preferences toward major powers in small states with big neighbors. Using recent public opinion data from Georgia, the paper highlights three results. First, those with lower economic satisfaction are consistently in favor of establishing closer ties with Russia, but there is no significant impact of economic satisfaction on attitudes toward the United States. Second, more religious individuals are significantly more likely to favor forming closer ties with Russia, but increased religiosity has no substantive effect of one's foreign policy preferences over forging closer ties to the United States. Third, individuals who prefer a more paternalistic government favor forming closer ties with Russia, but there is no effect on ties with the United States. We also uncover a strong age-cohort effect, with older generations being more pro-Russian and more anti-American. Attitudes toward Russia and America are clearly not just opposites. When comparing these results to the pre-2008 data, we find that the age-cohort, economic status, and education effects are robust predictors of respondent attitudes, but that religiosity no longer has a significant impact on foreign policy preferences.

As great powers continue to pursue policies to influence domestic politics and foreign policies of small states, understanding the foreign policy preferences in small states will become even more vital to our understanding of world politics. Explaining what drives people in such states to favor forming closer relations with a foreign power can help states to pursue more efficient and targeted strategies. For example, these results suggest that the Russia government should increase their support of the Orthodox Church in Georgia, so that it has more resources to mobilize the population, increase religious attendance, promote their preference for paternalistic government, and encourage the politicization of economic dissatisfaction. Indeed, Russia has already started to take into account the public attitudes in post-Soviet states, and has tried to position itself as a conservative religious power center and to promote conservative values against the decadent West in an attempt to gain support from local populations and put pressure on local elites (Ernst 2014).

This study represents an initial effort to understand public opinion toward Russia and the United States in the South Caucasus, and can serve as a point of comparison for future studies of public opinion toward Russia and the United States in the region (e.g., in Ukraine). Exploring why some segments of battleground state populations are pro-Russian and others pro-US will continue to be a crucial issue and an important avenue for future research and issue in foreign policy toward the region. While the balance between vodka and bourbon in different countries is a subject for future investigation, one thing is certain: as Russia competes with the United States for greater influence in battleground states of the former Soviet Union in the next post–Cold War Great Game, public opinion toward powerful states will continue to matter.

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