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# POLITICAL ELITES, IDEAS AND FOREIGN POLICY:

Explaining and Understanding  
the International Behavior of Small States  
in the Former Soviet Union

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**ILIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
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**Explaining and Understanding the International**  
**Behavior of Small States in the Former Soviet Union**



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*November 2011*

*Giorgi Gvalia  
Bidzina Lebanidze  
Zurab Iashvili*



## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FPS</b>	Foreign Policy Strategy
<b>IPAP</b>	Individual Partnership Action Plan
<b>MAP</b>	Membership Action Plan
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NSC</b>	National Security Concept

## PREFACE

What explains change and continuity in the foreign policy behavior of small states? This question is important given the proliferation of small states over the past century, but it has been almost entirely overlooked in International Relations scholarship. In contrast, the International Relations literature places a strong emphasis on the international behavior of great powers. Even when researchers analyze small states in the context of international relations, external/international factors, rather than state- or individual-level factors, are often accorded primary explanatory power. The conventional wisdom on small states assumes that the international system is the most relevant level of analysis and that small states are more likely to bandwagon with the threatening great powers rather than balance against them. In the present study, we aim to demonstrate why this perspective on small states is important but insufficient and why ideas and identities could play a greater role in explaining the foreign policy behavior of small states than has been generally appreciated. After discussing the limitations of the conventional wisdom, we explore the roles of ideas and identities in foreign policy and present a general theoretical framework that incorporates them directly. We test this claim through a chronological case study of Georgia's foreign policy behavior, drawing upon original interviews and primary source materials. We find that Georgia's foreign policy is quite poorly predicted by the conventional wisdom on small states, but is largely compatible with a framework that explicitly incorporates the influence of elite ideas.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

What explains change and continuity in the foreign policy behavior of small states? Given the proliferation of small states over the past few decades, this topic is increasingly relevant, but it has been overlooked almost entirely in International Relations scholarship. In contrast, the International Relations literature places a strong emphasis on the international behavior of great powers. Until recently, small states were only considered an appropriate research topic for the antechambers of the discipline. Even when researchers analyze small states in the context of international relations, external/international factors, rather than state- or individual-level factors, are often accorded primary explanatory power.<sup>1</sup> The conventional wisdom assumes that small states simply bandwagon with threatening great powers, thus providing little in the way of interesting international behavior.<sup>2</sup> In this study,

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1 Fredrik Doeser, "Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy Change in Small States: The Fall of the Danish Footnote Policy", *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 46, No 2, (2011), p. 222.

2 For the conventional wisdom on the foreign policy behavior of small states, see Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 184-5, 195; Stephen M. Walt, *Origins of Alliances* (Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 21-31; James Rosenau, "Pre-theories and Theories of International Politics," in R. Barry Farrell, ed., *Approaches to Comparative and International Politics* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1966), pp. 47-8; Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the security dilemma," *World Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (January, 1978), pp. 172-3; Randall L. Schweller, "Domestic Structure and Preventive War: Are Democracies more Pacific?" *World Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (January, 1992), pp. 253, 264-8; Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (Frank Cass Publishers, 1990) pp. 3, 261-2; Robert O. Keohane, "Lilliputian's dilemmas: Small States in International Politics," *International Organization*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Spring, 1969), pp. 291-310;

we demonstrate why this perspective on small states is deficient. Structural pressures are undoubtedly important, but we show that the elites' ideas could play a more important role in explaining the foreign policy behavior of small states than has generally been appreciated. We explore this claim through a detailed case study of Georgia's foreign policy behavior using unique interviews with the National Security elite in their native language and primary source materials.

Despite strong external structural (economic as well as military) pressures for bandwagoning, the analysis demonstrates that Georgia's foreign policy became consistently and aggressively oriented toward further distancing from Russia after the peaceful change in power as a result of the "Rose Revolution" in November of 2003. Saakashvili's new government demonstrated a clear reorientation to move the country's foreign policy consistently westward and undertook concrete and ambitious internal reforms in the security, economic, and educational sectors of the country. Internationally, the government sought to intensify relations with the US, NATO and the EU while further distancing itself from Russia. Although Georgia's previous administration had also claimed to pursue a pro-Western foreign policy, in reality, the former president, Eduard Shevardnadze, never pushed his country far in this direction.<sup>3</sup> This reorientation was also evident in the new

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Christine Ingebrtsen, Iver Neumann, Sieglinde Gstohl, Jessica Beyer, *Small States in International Relations* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press); Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (Columbia University Press, 1968); Peter J. Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets: Industrial Policy in Europe* (Cornell University Press, 1985); David Vital, *The Inequality of States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

3 Many foreign policy commentators argued that Shevardnadze's foreign policy lacked aggressiveness and was aimed at achieving a balance of interests among

government's "National Security Concept" (NSC) and in the "Foreign Policy Strategy" (FPS) papers. Most of the observers of Georgia's foreign policy agree that the "Rose Revolution" significantly affected the trajectory and dynamics of Georgia's foreign policy.

Although the "Rose Revolution" and the change in power resulted in significant changes in Georgia's foreign policy, the August 2008 War with Russia and changes in Georgia's external security environment did not substantively affect the general foreign policy trajectory. We demonstrate that changes in Georgia's external security environment since the 2008 August War have only increased systemic pressures to bandwagon with Russia, yet Georgia's foreign policy displays remarkable continuity in its determination to further distance itself from the so-called Russian "sphere of influence or interest".<sup>4</sup> This pattern is somewhat puzzling from the perspective of logic grounded exclusively in economic incentives, the balance of power or the distribution of threat. To understand change and continuity in the foreign policy behavior of small states, we suggest that ideas, specifically elite ideas, are essential and cannot be black-boxed without significantly distorting political reality. We further elaborate on this claim and then test it empirically with data gathered through rare access to the highest level of foreign and security policy makers and through the analysis of national security documents.

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different regional players; see Stephen Jones, "The Role of Cultural Paradigms in Georgian Foreign Policy," in Rick Fawn (Ed.) *Ideology and National Identity in Post-Communist Foreign Policies*. Frank Cass Publishers 2004. p 103.

4 Dmitri Trenin, "Russia's Sphere of Interest, not Influence" *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol 32, No 4, (October 2009), pp. 3-22

The structure of the book is as follows. The next chapter discusses the methodological foundations of the study and the specific methods used during the research process. The third chapter of the book is dedicated to the theoretical overview. The state-of-the-art research on the foreign policy behavior of small states and gaps and limitations in the current theoretical literature are discussed and outlined. In the fourth chapter, we propose an ideational approach to studying small states' foreign policy. We situate our argument in the literature and show how it expands our explanatory scope to include small states' foreign policy behavior. In the following chapter, we discuss the elites' important ideas, describe the causal mechanisms via which ideas and identities influence foreign policy and analyze their impact on Georgia's foreign policy trajectory. Finally, we discuss the main implications and limitations of our study.



## CHAPTER II

### A WORD ON METHODOLOGY

The emphasis on the words “explaining” and “understanding” in the title of the book clearly demonstrates our general position towards the epistemological and ontological foundations of the study. The word “explaining” emphasizes that we, as political scientists, share basic positivist assumptions towards social science in general. At the same time, we believe that some of the very important variables that could affect states’ foreign and security policy behavior cannot be directly observed or used to demonstrate a strict cause-effect relationship. Nevertheless, we argue that inclusion of these variables enriches International Relations research. Thus, our use of the word “understanding” demonstrates that our focus is on not only establishing cause-effect relationships in strict positivist terms but also discovering underlying ideational frameworks that affect agents’ self-conceptions and thus their foreign policy choices. Thus, our aim is to both explain and understand the role of ideas in the foreign policy behavior of small states.<sup>5</sup>

We are well aware that our focus on ideas, and specifically on elite ideas, presents significant methodological hurdles. The major challenge of the framework is the problem of inferring a leader’s intent from political statements. As leaders can make statements for the consumption of a variety of domestic or international audiences, one cannot assume that a particular

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5 On the distinction between “Explanation” and “Understanding” approaches in International Relations Theory, see: Martin Hollis, Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford University Press, USA; First Edition (August 22, 1991)

statement by a leader is necessarily an accurate depiction of the leader's true beliefs. Although this methodological hurdle cannot be overcome completely, we take five complementary approaches to minimize it. First, we analyze political statements according to their target audiences. That is, we consider whether speeches were given to domestic or international audiences. Using this approach, we explore whether the political discourse varies by audience composition. Second, we analyze speeches over the long term. In this way, we can determine whether political discourse varies in accordance with variation in the external security environment of the country. Third, in addition to speeches, we conduct comparative content analysis of major national security documents. We compare the documents that were released in 2005 and the documents that have been published since the 2008 August War. We have analyzed selected texts purposefully by searching for specific terminology and relevant categories. In finding ideational constructions, texts were analyzed according to three textual mechanisms proposed by constructivist IR studies using content and discourse analysis: presupposition, or the preconceived notions that direct the way actors regard the context; predication, or the characteristics assigned to agents; and subject positioning, or the way identities are placed vis-à-vis one another in terms of opposition and complementarity.<sup>6</sup> These mechanisms were useful to clarify how the Georgian political elite regard the in-group, the other, and the surrounding context. Fourth, we assess whether a leader's public statement is consistent with subsequent pol-

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6 Erik Noreen and Roxanna Sjostedt, "Estonian Identity Formations and Threat Framing in the Post-Cold War Era" *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No 6 (Nov. 2004), p. 739

icy adoptions. For example, if a leader makes an anti-Russian statement but subsequently signs a cooperative agreement with Russia, the statement could not be regarded as a true representation of intent. The logic behind this approach is that political statements should be backed by some type of policy decision. Fifth, besides analyzing public statements to understand Georgia's foreign policy, we conducted approximately 40 confidential interviews with the highest level of foreign and security policy makers and analysts in Georgia in their native language. Although these strategies do not allow us to fully overcome the abovementioned methodological challenges, they significantly allay some of our initial concerns about the robustness of our inferences and possible bias in our evidence.

Furthermore, this particular case study, we argue, falls in the category of *least likely* cases.<sup>7</sup> As a result, conventional wisdom would predict little impact of ideational variables on the dependent variable of our study. As small states' foreign policy behavior is conceived to be the "backyard" of Structural Realist approaches, Georgia's foreign policy should present an easy case for Realist approaches but a hard one for ideational theories. In addition, because Realists argue that ideational factors are even less important when national security, or "High Politics," is at stake, ideational variables should exert no significant influence on the issues of national security. In contrast to this conventional wisdom, our analysis demonstrates the impact of collective ideas in cases where national security is at stake.

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7 Regarding the use of *Most Likely* and *Least Likely* Cases in International Relations Research, see: Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, "Case Study Methods," in: Christian Reus-Smit, Duncan Snidal, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, (Oxford University Press, 2008. p.505)

## CHAPTER III

### SMALL STATES AND FOREIGN POLICY: WHAT WE THINK WE KNOW

Standard approaches to the foreign policy behavior of small states make two crucial assumptions. The first assumption is that the international system is the most relevant level of analysis.<sup>8</sup> It follows that there is no need to unpack the so-called “black box” of the state or to look more closely at its leaders and their ideas. Second, it is assumed that small states are more likely to bandwagon with a threatening great power than to balance against it. From the first assumption, it follows that variables other than the distribution of power and external threat (in either international or regional systems) exercise minimal influences on the foreign policy behavior of small states. The inclusion of ideas and belief systems, political culture, domestic politics and public attitudes detracts from a more parsimonious explanation grounded in the small state’s position within the international or regional system and in its external security environment. Treating small states in this manner offers the most economical account of their behavior and, the argument goes, generally obscures only small amounts of variation, most of which is theoretically uninteresting.<sup>9</sup>

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8 Kenneth N Waltz, *Man, The State and War* (Columbia University Press, 2001); J. David Singer, “International Conflict: Three Levels of Analysis,” *World Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 3. (Apr., 1960); Barry Buzan, “The Level-of-Analysis Problem,” in Ken Booth and Steve Smith, eds., *International Relations Theory Today*, (Philadelphia, P.A.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

9 For a critique of the conventional wisdom surrounding small states’ foreign policy behavior, see Miriam Fendius Elman, “The Foreign Policies of Small

Michael Handel, for example, argues that “the international system leaves them [small states] less room for choice in the decision-making process. Their smaller margin of error and hence greater preoccupation with survival makes the essential interest of weak states less ambiguous. Kenneth Waltz’s third image is therefore the most relevant level of analysis.”<sup>10</sup> James Rosenau argues similarly that the international environment is even more relevant for small states than it is for great powers.<sup>11</sup> However, he argues that domestic pressures often outweigh international ones in the calculations of great powers’ leaders. Jack Snyder also maintains that the external environment is more constraining for small states.<sup>12</sup> Bo Huldt echoes this point: “a small state is more vulnerable and has fewer alternatives than a major power.”<sup>13</sup>

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States: Challenging Neorealism in its Own Backyard,” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 25, No. 2, (Apr. 1995), pp. 171-217.

- 10 Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (Frank Cass Publishers, 1990). p. 3.
- 11 Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 194-195. David Skidmore takes a similar position; see David Skidmore, “Explaining States Responses to International Change: The Structural Sources of Foreign Policy Rigidity and Change,” in Jerel A. Rosati, Joe D. Hagan, Martin W. Sampson III, eds., *Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Change*, (University of California Press, 1994). pp. 50-56; Martin W. Sampson, “Exploiting the Seams: External Structure and Libyan Foreign Policy Changes,” in *Ibid.* p. 90; Rosenau, “Pre-theories,” pp.47-48.
- 12 Jack Snyder, *Myth Of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991). p. 20. Also, see Bo Huldt: “a small state is more vulnerable and has fewer alternatives than a major power; Cited in John Rogers, “The Foreign Policy of Small States: Sweden and the Mosul Crisis, 1924-1925,” *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 16, No. 3, (2007). p. 354; Jeanne A. K. Hey, “Introducing Small State Foreign Policy,” in *Small States in World Politics*, p. 6.
- 13 Cited in John Rogers, “The Foreign Policy of Small States: Sweden and the Mosul Crisis, 1924-1925,” *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 16, No. 3, (2007). p. 354; Jeanne A. K. Hey, “Introducing Small State Foreign Policy,” in *Small States in World Politics*, p. 6.

The second assumption is that small states are more likely to bandwagon with the threatening great power than to balance against it.<sup>14</sup> Structural realists typically argue that states balance rather than bandwagon, but this claim applies primarily to great powers. “The hypothesis regarding balancing behavior,” writes Jack Levy, “refers to the great powers more than to other states. Great powers balance against potential hegemony, whereas weaker states in the proximity of stronger states do what is necessary to survive... bandwagoning with the strong instead of balancing against them.”<sup>15</sup> Stephen Walt takes a similar view.<sup>16</sup> “In general,” he writes, “the weaker the state, the more likely it is to bandwagon....balancing may seem unwise because one’s allies may not be able to provide assistance quickly enough...States that are close to a country with large offensive capabilities (and far from potential allies) may be forced to bandwagon because balancing alliances are simply not viable.”<sup>17</sup> When confronted with a threatening

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14 Eric J. Labs, “Do weak states bandwagon?” *Security Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Spring 1992) pp. 383-416.

15 Jack S. Levy, “The Causes of War: A Review of Theories and Evidence,” in Philip E Tetlock, et al., eds., *Behavior, Society and Nuclear War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). p. 231; Cf. Labs, “Do Weak States Bandwagon,” p. 385.

16 Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*. “Although strong neighbors of strong states are likely to balance, small and weak neighbors of great powers may be more inclined to bandwagon. Because they will be the first victims of expansion, because they lack the capabilities to stand alone, and because a defensive alliance may operate too slowly to do them much good, accommodating a threatening great power may be tempting.” (Ibid., p. 31 and p. 25); Cf. Stephen M. Walt, “Alliance Formation and Balance of World Power,” *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 4. (1985); Stephen M. Walt, “Revolution and War,” *World Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 3. Apr., 1992; Stephen M. Walt, “Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia,” *International Organization*, Vol.42, No. 2. 1988; Stephen M. Walt, “Alliances in a Unipolar World,” *World Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (January 2009).

17 Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, p. 25, p. 29.

great power, small states are expected to bandwagon and accommodate the interests of stronger states. The propensity towards bandwagoning increases with the size of the threat, the proximity of the threat, the offensive military capabilities of the threatening power and the distance of the defensive alliance partner, which may take action too slowly or, in the worst-case scenario, not at all.

### **Major Structural Realist Predictions**

#### **Major Observations:**

*H 1* - Variations in small states' foreign policies are conditioned by the variations in their external security environment, mainly the nature and extent of external threats.

*H 2* - In response to a threatening great power, small states are more likely to rely on the strategy of bandwagoning than balancing.

#### **Factors Conducive to Bandwagoning Behavior**

The propensity towards bandwagoning increases if the following conditions are present:

*H 2. 1* - The threatening power is much stronger than the threatened one.

*H 2. 2* - The threatening power lies in close proximity.

*H 2. 3* - The threatening power has strong offensive military capabilities.

*H 2. 4* - Credible balancing alliances are not viable.

Widely accepted accounts in the literature such as these have tended to discount Waltz's original position on the issue.<sup>18</sup> "A neorealist theory of international politics," he famously wrote, "explains how external forces shape state behavior, but says nothing about the effects of internal forces. Under most circumstances, a theory of international politics is not sufficient and cannot be made sufficient, for the making of unambiguous foreign policy predictions..."<sup>19</sup> Although Waltz criticizes first- and second-image explanations of international politics, his position on foreign policy is that such choices cannot be explained without them.<sup>20</sup>

In seeking to understand the foreign policy behavior of small states, we do not wish to revert to the other extreme and suggest that structural factors are unimportant. However, we agree with Waltz that they are not plainly sufficient to explain foreign policy. How a small state will respond to changes in

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18 Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 72. On the argument that Neorealism is more accommodating of domestic-level variables than Liberalism, see Jennifer Sterling Folker, "Realist Environment, Liberal Process and Domestic-Level Variables," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 1, (1997) pp. 1-25.

19 Waltz, "International Politics is not Foreign Policy," *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Autumn 1996, p. 57. On the alternative argument that Neorealism could be used as a theory of foreign policy, see Colin Elman, "Horses for Courses: Why Not Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy?," *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Autumn 1996), pp. 7-53; Cf. Peter Gourevitch, "The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics," *International Organization*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Autumn 1978), p. 911; Peter Gourevitch, "Domestic Politics and International Relations," in Walter Carlsnaes, et al., eds, *Handbook of International Relations* (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), p. 310.

20 On the issue of integrating domestic and international factors in theories of foreign policy, see Benjamin O. Fordham, "The Limits of Neoclassical Realism: Additive and Interactive Approaches to Explaining Foreign Policy Preferences," in Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffery W. Taliaferro, eds., *Neoclassical Realism, the State and Foreign Policy*, (Cambridge University Press, 2009). pp. 251-279.



its external security environment cannot be deduced solely from the characteristics of the external environment, although these forces are clearly important. Testing structural realist predictions of foreign policy behavior in the post-Soviet world, William Wohlforth came to a similar conclusion. “Structural realism is of little utility in explaining much of the variation in local responses to Russia,” he writes. “Even when we add conditional variables to the theory to derive more discrete hypotheses, it fails to add much to the explanation of why Kazakhstan is such a faithful bandwagoner despite its proximity to Russia; why Turkmenistan eschews all external balancing of any kind, while Tajikistan cozies up to Russia; and why Belarus has been such a faithful bandwagoner, despite relative power and a geographical position similar to the Baltics.”<sup>21</sup>

As a result, particularly in the post-Soviet world, some have suggested that economic dependence, especially energy dependence, is the key to understanding the foreign policy behavior of post-Soviet states vis-à-vis Russia. When economic dependence on the hegemon is high, balancing against it is difficult, costly and unlikely.

Paul A. Papayoanou holds that when there is a high degree of economic interdependence among status-quo and revisionist powers, it becomes difficult for status-quo powers to pursue balancing strategies against aggressive revisionist states.<sup>22</sup> In his study of responses to Russia, Eric Miller finds

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21 William C. Wohlforth, “Revisiting Balance of Power Theory in Central Eurasia,” in T.V. Paul, James Wirtz, Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford University Press, 2004) p. 232.

22 Paul A. Papayoanou, “Economic Interdependence and the Balance of Power,”

evidence supporting this claim.<sup>23</sup> Miller predicts that when internal threats and economic dependence are high, leaders are more likely to adopt a strong pro-Russian alignment. When internal threats are low and economic dependence is high, leaders are more likely to adopt a weak pro-Russian alignment.<sup>24</sup> In both cases, bandwagoning behavior is expected because anti-Russian foreign policies would hamper access to the hegemon's market and its energy resources.<sup>25</sup> The argument that economic dependence impacts states' foreign policy preferences has clear domestic political and economic implications as well. For instance, if states that are heavily economically dependent on Russia pursue foreign policies that are not in accordance with Russian preferences, economic decline and collapse is possible. Deterioration of domestic economic conditions can severely damage the ruling political elite's chances of reelection as the severe economic conditions will encourage widespread dissatisfaction within the popula-

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*International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (March, 1997) pp. 113-140.

- 23 Miller's study represents one of the first attempts to apply general theories of international relations to the alignment patterns of post-Soviet international politics. Miller's emphasis on internal threats to regimes is derived from Steven David's theory of *Omnibalancing*. See Steven R. David, *Choosing Sides: Alignment and Realignment in the Third World*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Steven R. David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 2. (Jan., 1991). For a similar argument, see Michael N. Barnett and Jack S. Levy, "Domestic Sources of Alliances and Alignments: The Case of Egypt, 1962-73," *International Organization*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 369-395.
- 24 Eric A. Miller, *To Balance or Not to Balance: Alignment Theory and Commonwealth of Independent States*. (Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006). pp. 31-32.
- 25 On the role of economic variables in foreign policy, see Corinna Freund and Volker Rittberger, "Utilitarian-Liberal Foreign Policy Theory," in Volker Rittberger, ed., *German Foreign Policy Since Unification: Theories and Case Studies*, (Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 68-104.

tion who primarily benefited from the existing economic relations. In the most severe case, economic crisis may even bring about a regime change.<sup>26</sup>

### **Major Predictions of Economic Dependence Theory**

**H 1** - Economic dependence constrains a state's ability to pursue pro-independence foreign policies.

**H 2** - Variation in a state's foreign policy aims and strategies is the result of variation in its level of economic dependence on another state.

#### **Major Observable Implications**

**H 3. 1** - When economic dependence is high, a state is more likely to adopt a pro-dependence foreign policy.

**H 3. 2** - When economic dependence is low, a state is more likely to adopt a pro-independence foreign policy.

Neither of these arguments takes the role of ideas very seriously, and both arguments are purely material accounts. We argue that ideas play a much greater role in explaining the foreign policy behavior of small states in the post-Soviet world, and perhaps elsewhere, than has generally been appreciated. In the next chapter, we develop a general framework that explicitly incorporates ideas as drivers of change and continuity in the foreign policies of small states. We then explore the implications of a more sustained focus on the role of ideas through a detailed case study of Georgia's foreign policy behavior, using unique interviews with individuals at the highest levels of the National Security elite and primary source

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<sup>26</sup> Eric A. Miller, *To Balance or Not to Balance: Alignment Theory and Commonwealth of Independent States*. (Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006). p. 22.

materials in their original language. In the course of developing this argument, we also show why alternative explanations based purely on material logic and motives cannot fully explain the patterns in small states' foreign policy behavior in the post-Soviet world and possibly beyond.

## CHAPTER IV

### IDEAS AND FOREIGN POLICY

Although studies stressing the role of ideas in international relations theory were common during the late 1980s and early 1990s, they have since largely disappeared.<sup>27</sup> The resurgence of ideational approaches was principally a response to the indeterminacy of materialist theories, such as Neorealism and Neoliberalism, and their inability to account for the end of the Cold War.<sup>28</sup>

Keohane and Goldstein, for example, argued that at least

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- 27 On the evolution of cultural theories in security studies, see Michael C. Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1998), pp. 141-170.
- 28 Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring, 1992); Alexander Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1. (Summer 1995); Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 2, (June, 1994), pp. 384-396; Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1999); Peter Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security* (Columbia University Press, 1996); Richard Ned Lebow, Thomas Risse-Kapen, eds., *International Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia University Press 1995); John S. Duffield, "Political Culture and State Behavior: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism," *International Organization*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (1999), pp. 765-803; Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (Cornell University Press, 2002); Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the end of the Cold War* (Yale University Press, 1997); Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett, eds., *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East* (Cornell University Press, 2002); Judith Goldstein, *Ideas, Interests and American Trade Policy* (Cornell University Press, 1993); Vendulka Kubalkova, ed., *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World* (M.E. Sharpe, 2001); Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change* (Cornell University Press, 1993); Jeffrey W. Legro, "The Plasticity of Identity under Anarchy," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2009), pp. 37-65

some of the empirical anomalies in international relations and foreign policy could be resolved once ideas were taken into account.<sup>29</sup>

We build on their early effort and show empirically that the “anomaly” of Georgia’s foreign policy behavior is explicable once we account for the role of elite ideas. We define ideas, following Keohane and Goldstein, as “beliefs held by individuals that affect foreign policy outcomes.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, ideas are independent or intervening variables that explain variation in outcomes.<sup>31</sup> We build on this approach by incorporating a more conventional constructivist framework that does not take state interests and preferences as exogenously determined.<sup>32</sup> Following Wendt, we partly endogenize these state-level preferences to the leaders.<sup>33</sup> Although Structural Realism is silent on the possibility that state interests may vary because of variation in some state – or individual-level variables, social constructivists, such as Telhami and Barnett, argue that the environment in which agents/states act is both social and material and that this setting provides agents with an understanding of their interests.<sup>34</sup> As a result,

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29 “Although we concede that the rationalist approach is often valuable a starting point for analysis, we challenge its explanatory power by suggesting the existence of empirical anomalies that can be resolved only when ideas are taken into account,” Goldstein and Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy*, p. 6.

30 Ibid. p. 3

31 Goldstein and Keohane (1993, p. 6) criticize “reflectivist approaches” to theorizing about ideas. Their most important concern is related to the anti-empiricist nature of most of the reflectivist works.

32 On the comparison of Rationalist and Constructivist approaches to ideas, see: Nina Tannenwald, “Ideas and Explanation: Advancing the Theoretical Agenda” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol, 7, No, 2, 2005, pp. 17-20.

33 Wendt Alexander, *Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics* (International Organization, 46:391. p. 425)

34 Shibley Telhami, Michale Barnett, “Introduction: Identity and Foreign Policy

foreign policy choices are determined by not only the external security environment and strictly material interests but also the ideas and identities of the relevant foreign policy actors who interpret the external security environment and their material interests.<sup>35</sup> “Whether the elite views its state as a democracy, a great power, an empire, a victim, or a carrier of civilization,” writes Suny, “is key to its understanding of the state’s interests.”<sup>36</sup>

That ideas may matter in interpreting the world says little, however, about whose ideas and which ideas matter most or how they matter causally. We hypothesize that in transitional states such as Georgia, political elites will be more important and instrumental in defining foreign policy goals and priorities compared to the general public.<sup>37</sup> Although we do not wholly devalue the role of public opinion, we assume that elite opinion largely shapes the foreign policy agenda, where-

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in the Middle East,” in Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett, eds., *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East* (Cornell University Press, 2002). p.2; Christian Thorun, “Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia’s Conduct Towards the West,” (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 22; On the role of ideas in Classical Realism, see Michael C. Williams, “Why Ideas Matter In International Relations: Hans Morgenthau, Classical Realism, and the Moral Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization*, Vol. 58, No. 4, 2004, pp. 633-665.

35 As Thorun wrote: “social Constructivism offers solutions at a point where Realism fails: it specifies how a state defines its interests and how a state chooses among foreign policy alternatives.” See Christian Thorun, *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia’s Conduct Towards the West* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). p. 24.

36 Ronald Grigor Suny, “Provisional Stabilities: The Politics of Identities in Post-Soviet Eurasia,” *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 3, (1999-2000), p. 140.

37 As for the role of the public’s attitude towards Georgia’s foreign policy, it should be mentioned that an absolute majority of the population supports Western-oriented foreign policy. Regarding this issue, see Martin Muller, Public Opinion toward the European Union in Georgia (Post-Soviet Affairs, 2011, 27, 1, pp. 64-92).

as public opinion sets the bounds of what is acceptable.<sup>38</sup> In our analysis, we therefore focus on the ideas of the highest levels of the foreign and security policy elite: the president, the prime minister, key members of the parliament and high-level foreign-security decision-makers.<sup>39</sup>

In his analysis of Germany's foreign policy behavior since unification, John S. Duffield suggests that the ideas and beliefs of German political and administrative elites are of utmost importance for three interrelated reasons. First, elite political culture or ideas are easier to describe and measure comprehensively. Second, political culture or ideas as revealed in the attitudes of elites are likely to be more elaborate and detailed. According to Duffield, "political leaders and policymakers often have quite sophisticated and complex political belief and value systems, which are also usually more coherent and logically consistent than those of ordinary individuals". Third, political and administrative elites are directly involved with the issues related to the foreign and security policy of the country. For this reason, "elite attitudes are likely to have much more immediate bearing on state behavior than will those of general public".<sup>40</sup> Although elites are instrumental in defining the foreign policy

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38 Regarding this issue, see Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics* (Rowman&Littlefield Publishers, 2009), p. 61. On the role of public versus elite opinion in Georgia, see Muller, "Public Opinion Toward the European Union in Georgia."

39 On the issue of relevant foreign policy actors, see Norrin M. Ripsman, "Neoclassical Realism and Domestic Interest Groups," in Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffery W. Taliaferro, eds., *Neoclassical Realism, the State and Foreign Policy*, (Cambridge University Press, 2009) pp. 170-193; Robert D. Putnam, "Studying Elite Political Culture: The Case of 'Ideology,'" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 65, No. 3, (1971), p. 651.

40 John S. Duffield, *Political Culture and State Behavior: Why Germany Confronts Neorealism?* (International Organization, Vol, 53, No. 4, 1999, p. 794).



strategies of the state, internal divisions always exist in some measure. The under-balancing of Hitler (by Great Britain and France) was mainly, Schweller argues, the result of division of French and British political elites on the nature and extent of the threat that Hitler posed to their respective states. Balance of Power and Balance of Threat theories argue that states will balance emerging powers and threats, but only when there is a consensus among policymaking elites to do so.<sup>41</sup>

To determine whether there is a consensus, the analyst must specify precisely which ideas require consensus. In this article, we distinguish between two types of ideas: The first comprises *ideas about the state*, which concern the country's identity, national values, international status and national interests. Ideas about the identity of the state prescribe how the foreign policy leadership understands a foreign policy challenge and how it defines the state's national interests. This type of idea defines the interests with and against which the state identifies and aligns itself.<sup>42</sup> The concept of *national interest* is of particular importance here as "it is through the concept of the national interest that policy-makers understand the goals to be pursued by a state's foreign policy".<sup>43</sup> The second set of

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41 Randall L. Schweller, "Unanswered Threats," 169-170.

42 On the uses of the self and other in world politics, see Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the other: The East in European Identity Formation* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Andrei P. Tsygankov, "Self and Other in International Relations Theory: Learning From Russian Civilizational Debates," *International Studies Review*, Vol. 10 (2008), pp. 762-775; David J. Gilbert, Ainius Lasas, and Jeremy W. Lamoreaux, *Continuity and Change in the Baltic Sea Region: Comparing Foreign Policies* (Rodopi, New York, 2008, p. 18); On ideas in Russian foreign policy, see Christian Thorun, *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia's Conduct Towards the West* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 22.

43 Jutta Weldes, "Constructing National Interests," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 3, (1996), p. 276. Regarding the critique of

ideas is *ideas about strategy*, which concern the leader's understanding of causality, or how their actions will produce outcomes and reactions. These ideas help decision makers make probabilistic judgments and cope with uncertainty.<sup>44</sup> For Goldstein and Keohane, however, ideas "have their broadest impact on human action when they take the form of world-views."<sup>45</sup> These world-views or paradigms define the actor's identity and its interests. In this study, we explore not only the broad worldviews or paradigms of Georgia's political elite regarding their country's identity, but also investigate whether there is consistency between these broader world-views and their *ideas about strategy*, which speak to the leader's understanding of causality.

Although this typology might be helpful, it does not itself explain *how* ideas influence the foreign policies of the state.<sup>46</sup> We argue that ideas can influence policy through two causal mechanisms. First, ideas influence an actor's *perception* of the external environment, and thus the framing of the situation, and the interpretation of the outcomes.<sup>47</sup> Second, ideas serve as *road maps* for individuals that narrow the range of available policy options and ensure consistency in decision-making

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Realist conceptualizations of National Interest, see, Michael C. Williams, "What is the National Interest? The Neoconservative Challenge in IR Theory", *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 11, No. 3, (2005), pp. 307-337

44 Thorun, *Explaining Change*, p. 23; Cf. Goldstein and Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy*, p. 10.

45 Cited, in Mark M. Blyth, "Any More Bright Ideas? The Ideational Turn of Comparative Political Economy", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Jan., 1997), p. 240

46 Nina Tannenwald, "Ideas and Explanation," pp. 13-42.

47 Nina Tannenwald, "Ideas and Explanation," p. 17; Donald A. Sylvan, "Introduction," in Donald A. Sylvan and James F. Voss, eds., *Problem Representation in Foreign Policy Decision Making*, (Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 3.

despite changes in material conditions.<sup>48</sup> Ideas, in this sense, act as constraints in decision-making process, since some of the possible policy options will be ultimately rejected because they contradict deeply embedded ideas. It is for this reason, according to one scholar, that “culture promotes continuity in behavior...[because it] promises to be particularly useful for explaining cases of puzzling or unexpected constancy in foreign and security policy.”<sup>49</sup> The case of Georgia’s foreign policy behavior, which we analyze in the next chapter, certainly qualifies as a puzzling instance of continuity in foreign policy behavior.

Thus, the theory that we propose emphasizes the political elites and their ideas as key drivers of change and continuity in the foreign policy behavior of small states. By focusing on the importance of elites and their ideas, we challenge the structural accounts of small state’s foreign policy which “black-box“ the state and omit the variables at the individual and state levels of analysis. In contrast to structural realist approaches, we assume that state leaders’ conceptualization and definition of their country’s national interests and of ways to best achieve them, cannot simply be assumed but instead must be examined. Accordingly, we argue that a direction that a state will choose in foreign policy will be determined not

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48 Goldstein and Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy*, p. 10-12. Regarding this issue, see: Desch, “Culture Clash,” pp. 141-170; David J. Elkins and Richard E.B. Simeon, “A Cause in Search of Its Effect, or What Does Political Culture Explain,” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1979, pp. 127-145; Albert S. Yee, “The Causal Effects of Ideas on Policies,” *International Organization*, Vol. 50, No. 1, (1996), pp. 69-108; Stephen Saideman, “Thinking Theoretically About Identity and Foreign Policy,” in Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett, eds., *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, (Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 171.

49 Ibid.

only by external constraints and opportunities, but also by the political elite's world-views on the identity of the state and its ideas on strategy. Although a state's external environment is an important, we find that elite ideas could provide us with greater leverage in explaining change and continuity in foreign policy. Material factors matter, but so do ideas.<sup>50</sup>

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50 Regarding the argument for combining material and ideational forces in international relations see: Georg Sørensen, "The Case for Combining Material Forces and Ideas in the Study of IR," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 14, No 1, (2008) pp. 5-31.

## CHAPTER V

### THE IDEAS AND TRAJECTORY OF GEORGIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

To examine the roles of structural and ideational logic in Georgia's foreign policy behavior, we now describe the changes in the Georgian foreign policy trajectory over time. Despite several changes in the external security environment, Georgia's foreign policy behavior has remained fundamentally unaltered since 2003. Even the August 2008 War, the subsequent occupation of roughly 20% of Georgia's territory and Russia's recognition of these territories as independent states did not bring about any significant modification of Georgia's foreign policy behavior toward Russia.

The analysis of the content of Georgian foreign policy thinking from 2003 to 2011 suggests that Georgia's main foreign policy beliefs remained the same over this time period. The pro-Western pillar aiming at integration into Euro-Atlantic structures has remained in the avant-garde of Georgia's foreign policy thinking since the Rose Revolution. Even the 2008 August War and the occupation of Georgia's territory by Russia did not significantly affect the main elements of ideas embodied by policymakers. Below, we describe the main ideas that Georgian political elites view as given and incontestable throughout the entire investigation period. Based on this analysis, three broad foreign policy worldviews or paradigms could be discerned. First, Georgia is a European country and no longer a post-Soviet state. Second, the most important post-revolutionary project is the modernization of

the country and the building of a strong state according to Western standards with no links, except historically, with the failed Georgian state of the 1990s. Third, the modernization of the country is possible only through the close association and integration with European and Euro-Atlantic political-military institutions such as NATO and the EU.

Primary among the ideas that drive Georgia's position vis-à-vis Russia is Georgia's self-identity. Georgia views itself as a "European country" (and thus not a post-Soviet state): "I am Georgian, therefore I am European," noted a senior parliamentarian.<sup>51</sup> "And Georgia," proclaimed the newly elected president, Mikheil Saakashvili, "is not just a European country, but one of the most ancient European countries...our steady course is towards European integration. It is time Europe finally saw and valued Georgia and took steps toward us."<sup>52</sup> According to Georgia's post-revolutionary political elite, the most important post-revolutionary project was to generally modernize the country and the society, which was possible only through close association and integration with European and Euro-Atlantic political-military institutions, such as NATO and the EU.

This "European idea" has always been present in Georgia, but it has assumed increasing prominence in political discourse, especially since the "Rose Revolution." This regime change ushered in the functional equivalent of a Velvet Revolution in the Caucasus – a peaceful and democratic transfer of

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51 Former chairman of the Georgian parliament, Zurab Zhvania. Cited in Stephen Jones, "The Role of Cultural Paradigms in Georgian Foreign Policy," in Rick Fawn, ed., *Ideology and National Identity in Post-Communist Foreign Policies*, (Frank Cass, 2004), p. 90.

52 Cited in Martin Muller, "Public Opinion toward the European Union in Georgia," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (2011), pp. 64 -65.

power – to a region not widely renowned for its democratic or peace-loving character. The revolution brought to power new, mainly young and Western-educated politicians. Saakashvili's government has implemented concrete and ambitious pro-Western reforms in the security, economic, and education sectors. Internationally, the new government has sought to intensify relations with the US, NATO and the EU while distancing itself from Russia.<sup>53</sup> The new government's NSC and the FPS papers underscore this fundamental reorientation in Georgia's foreign policy following the Rose Revolution. According to the first passage of FPS for 2006-2009, "After the Rose Revolution, Georgia embarked on a comprehensive reform process aimed at establishing democratic governance and the rule of law, securing sustainable economic growth and restoring territorial integrity – in sum, turning Georgia into a European State with strong institutions, fully integrated into European and Euro-Atlantic structures."<sup>54</sup> The "strategic goals and objectives" defined in the FPS best describe the re-orientation of Georgia's foreign policy: whereas "European and Euro-Atlantic integration" is listed as one of the four main objectives, there is no separate chapter that regulates relations with Russia. Russia is viewed in the FPS as a "neighbor" with which Georgia strives to engage in "good-neighborly" and

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53 Eduard Shevardnadze, Saakashvili's predecessor, also claimed to pursue a pro-Western foreign policy, but the "Silver Fox," as he was sometimes called, never veered far from Russia's orbit. Many foreign policy commentators argued that Shevardnadze's foreign policy was aimed primarily at achieving a balance of interests among different regional players; see Stephen Jones, "The Role of Cultural Paradigms in Georgian Foreign Policy," in Rick Fawn (Ed.) *Ideology and National Identity in Post-Communist Foreign Policies*. Frank Cass Publishers 2004. p 103.

54 [http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=GEO&sec\\_id=562](http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=562), Foreign Policy Strategy 2006-2009 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p.3

“equal” relations limited mostly to economic concerns.<sup>55</sup> The same view accounts for the post-revolutionary NSC adopted in 2005. Integration into NATO and the EU is listed as a top priority of Georgia’s foreign policy:

*“Georgia, as a Black Sea and South-Eastern European state, has historically been a geographic, political and cultural part of Europe. Therefore, integration into European and Euro-Atlantic political, economic and security systems is the firm will of Georgian people. Georgia welcomes NATO and EU enlargement and believes that integration of the Black Sea states into NATO and the EU will significantly reinforce the security of the Black Sea region as the South-Eastern border of Europe. Integration to NATO and the EU represents a top priority of Georgian foreign and security policy.”*<sup>56</sup>

At the same time, the relationship with Russia is clearly downgraded in the document. It even lacks the word “strategic”, which is used to describe the partnerships with other neighboring states of Turkey and Ukraine:

*“Georgia aspires to build cooperation with Russia upon the principles of good neighborly relations, equality and mutual respect. Georgia would welcome transition of Russia into a stable democratic state with a functioning market economy and respect for European values. Democratization and foreign policy predictability of the Russian Federation would positively influence Georgia’s and the regional security environment.”*<sup>57</sup>

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55 [http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=GEO&sec\\_id=562](http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=562), Foreign Policy Strategy 2006-2009 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p.21

56 <http://www.mod.gov.ge/index.php?page=-10&Id=3&lang=1>, National Security Concept of Georgia, 2005

57 <http://www.mod.gov.ge/index.php?page=-10&Id=3&lang=1>,



Georgia's focus on its European credentials and orientation toward Western institutions such as NATO has resulted in a marked deterioration of relations with Moscow. In 2006, Russia imposed an economic embargo against Georgia, which included the country's major agricultural products, such as wine and mineral water. Russia also severed all transportation and postal links with Georgia.<sup>58</sup> Although the Russian market was critical for Georgia, the economic embargo did not sway its political elites to appease Russia and change course. Even after the 2008 August War, which resulted in the stationing of Russian offensive military forces only 25 miles from the capital, Georgia continues to pursue a Western-oriented foreign policy. Russia has deployed offensive weapons, such as SS-21 short-range ballistic missiles, within reach of much of Georgia, including the capital, Tbilisi. Russia also deployed S-300 air-defense systems in Georgia's occupied territories, thus covering the airspace of all major Georgian airports from the Black Sea in the west to the country's eastern borders. Some ten thousand Russian military forces are stationed in Georgia. In strategic and military terms, Georgia is clearly in a more vulnerable position than it was before the 2008 August War. Despite these significant changes in its security environment, the continuity rather than change in Georgia's foreign policy priorities and dynamics is notable.

For the young and Western-educated political elite of Georgia who came to power after the peaceful upheaval in

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National Security Concept of Georgia, 2005

58 On how economic dependence determines the bandwagoning behavior of post-Soviet states towards Russia, see: Eric A. Miller, *To Balance or Not to Balance: Alignment Theory and Commonwealth of Independent States*. Ashgate, 2006.

2003, the “Rose Revolution” was nothing less than a cultural revolution. The “idea” of the revolution was to transform “a post-soviet society into a European one,” to make a clear break from “the old Soviet ways of doing political business,” and to turn as much as possible from the East to the West.<sup>59</sup> “This is not,” declared Saakashvili to the United Nations, “a new path for Georgia, but rather a return to our European home and our European vocation-which is so deeply enshrined in our national identity and history.”<sup>60</sup> According to this view, the Rose Revolution was, in Saakashvili’s words, “a long, difficult process of reforms that aims at turning a post-soviet society into a European one.”<sup>61</sup> As already mentioned, the 2005 NSC and its 2011 update feature Euro-Atlantic integration as a fundamental element, receiving an entirely separate chapter in each document.<sup>62</sup>

The NSC represents a clear rejection of the so-called “Russian way” and a fundamental shift in the perception of Russia

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59 [http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=228&info\\_id=4834](http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=228&info_id=4834)

President Saakashvili addresses an international forum in Tallberg, Sweden; [http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=228&info\\_id=4115](http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=228&info_id=4115)

2010-01-31; M. Saakashvili ‘Interview with M. Saakashvili’, *BBC*, 25 February 2004, available at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking\\_point/3389757.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/3389757.stm), (accessed: 15 March 2011).; Cf. [http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=228&info\\_id=4848](http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=228&info_id=4848)

60 [http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=228&info\\_id=4730](http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=228&info_id=4730)

2007-09-27 Remarks by H.E. Mikheil Saakashvili at the 62nd Session of the United Nations

61 [http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=228&info\\_id=4115](http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=228&info_id=4115) 2010-01-31

62 The National Security Concept of Georgia, 2005. The new version of this document is in preparation. The draft was already presented to the Parliament of Georgia and the representatives of civil society for wider discussions.

from being a “complicated but necessary partner” under Shevardnadze, to an “unpredictable blackmailer” and finally to the “existential enemy” under Saakashvili’s administration.<sup>63</sup> A senior-level foreign policy maker in Georgia explained to us that “bandwagoning with Russia is not an alternative for Georgia, not because we think that Georgia will cease to exist as a state...but because bandwagoning with Russia means a return to the Georgia of the 1990s, when it was a failed, corrupt and criminal state, with no hopes of ever becoming a normal, modern and European state...”<sup>64</sup> The chairman of the Committee on European Integration in the Georgian parliament states that the ultimate aim is to form a modern nation-state; therefore, this aim determines how one chooses foreign partners. “The ultimate aim of the government of Georgia is the modernization of the country and the society. What we do then internationally is determined by this aim. This is why it becomes impossible to be with Russia...”<sup>65</sup> A top-level advisor to the Prime Minister added during our conversation that the 2008 August War did not undermine Georgia’s determination to pursue a Western-oriented foreign policy: “The war did not frighten Georgia... There is no choice, even neutrality is no choice. Georgia has only one choice: it goes back to 1921, or it continues to pursue a Western-oriented foreign policy.”<sup>66</sup>

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63 [http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=228&info\\_id=4134](http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=228&info_id=4134)

2009-08-07 Speech delivered by Mikheil Saakashvili, the President of Georgia, at a ceremony dedicated to the anniversary of the 2008 August War.

64 Authors’ confidential interview with high-level Georgian policy-maker. February 17, 2011. Tbilisi.

65 Authors’ interview with David Darchiashvili, Chairman of the Committee on European Integration at the Parliament of Georgia. January 12, 2011. Tbilisi.

66 Authors’ interview with Zurab Davitashvili, Professor of Tbilisi State University and advisor on Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister of Georgia. March 14,

Saakashvili's speeches also emphasize these objectives and strategies. He depicts his government's main aim as "turning a failed post-Soviet state into a modern European democracy" by pursuing what he calls "value-based politics and state building."<sup>67</sup> Although the empirical value of public statements intended for mass consumption may be suspect, many observers and scholars, both domestic and international, have affirmed a correspondence between these statements and actual developments on the ground since Saakashvili was first elected. Of course, not everything is as rosy as the Rose revolutionaries sometimes claim, but when using a regional baseline or a comparison to the Georgia of the 1990s, the ideas referenced in these statements ring true.

The consolidation of energy independence, economic development and Euro-Atlantic integration are the essential and mutually reinforcing elements of building a more European Georgia. Joining NATO and the EU is important not only in terms of security and prosperity but also as an external affirmation of Georgia's European identity.<sup>68</sup> According to Saakashvili, "Georgia will be a member of the North Atlantic alliance because that is our natural place. This is not conditioned by pragmatic considerations....the European and Euro-Atlantic model are the major driving forces of social, economic and political transformation in Georgia. If our neighboring country gives us a chance to realize it, Georgia will be the best

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2011. The emphasis on 1921 clearly demonstrates the importance of historical analogies in foreign policy. In 1921, the Red Army occupied the first Georgian Republic (1918-1921).

67 [http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=228&info\\_id=5492](http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=228&info_id=5492) Remarks at New York University 2010-09-23 "Conversations with Global Leaders" Presentation by President Mikheil Saakashvili.

68 [http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=228&info\\_id=4139](http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=228&info_id=4139) 2009-07-22

example of this model.”<sup>69</sup> Saakashvili consistently characterizes Georgia as an active contributor to European and Euro-Atlantic security rather than merely a consumer. Again, these claims are largely accurate: after Britain and the US, Georgia is the largest per-capita contributor of troops to Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>70</sup> The idea of being not only a consumer of but also a contributor to Euro-Atlantic security was already enshrined in the NSC of 2005:

*“Membership of NATO would not only endow Georgia with an unprecedented degree of military and political security, but would allow it to contribute to strengthening the security of Europe, particularly the Black Sea region. Georgia has already proved its readiness to share the responsibility of the collective security by sending its troops to Kosovo and Afghanistan.”*<sup>71</sup>

The argument is not that material factors are superfluous to understanding Georgia’s foreign policy behavior but rather that its leaders’ ideas and identities are frequently critical to understanding this behavior because they condition how the state will interpret and react to changes in the structural environment.

Integration into Euro-Atlantic structures is understood as an extension of domestic efforts to modernize the Georgian state. For example, the focus on reform at home is paralleled

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69 [http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=228&info\\_id=5272](http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=228&info_id=5272) 2010-06-09 The President of Georgia made a speech at the Paris Institute of Political Science.

70 Georgian Battalion Departs for Afghanistan, (Civil.Ge, 2010, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22159>)

71 <http://www.mod.gov.ge/index.php?page=-10&Id=3&lang=1>, National Security Concept of Georgia, 2005

abroad by a focus on revitalizing the armed forces. NATO is conceived of as a “political system with the highest democratic values,” not merely a security institution or military alliance.<sup>72</sup> NATO integration implies domestic reforms associated with the security and defense sectors. New, Western-style traffic police in Georgia have transformed one of the most corrupt police forces in the former Soviet Union into an exemplary policing unit since 2004. “Instead of a Soviet-styled force having almost no public support and deeply marred in corruption some six years ago, now Georgia has a police trusted by 81% of the public,” says a Jamestown Foundation analyst.<sup>73</sup> NATO integration efforts have also resulted in the reformation of Georgia’s armed forces, including the participation of Georgia’s armed forces in international anti-terrorist and peacekeeping missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. These policies have become part of the state’s identity.<sup>74</sup>

Besides the integration into the EU and the NATO, the third most important pillar of Georgia’s pro-Western policy was the deepening of relations with the US. The US was observed by the Georgian political elite as an inseparable part of the Western world into which Georgia wanted to integrate.

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72 Mikheil Saakashvili, Annual Presidential Address to Parliament (President of Georgia, Official Web Portal, 14 February 2006, available at: [http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=228&info\\_id=4796](http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=228&info_id=4796), accessed: 15 March 2011).

73 Giorgi Kvelashvili, Success of Georgia’s Police Reform is a Function of Sovereignty (Jamestown Foundation, April 21, 2010, <http://jamestown-foundation.blogspot.com/2010/04/success-of-georgias-police-reform-is.html>)

74 Mikhail Saakashvili, Remarks by President Saakashvili at the dinner dedicated to the 42nd international conference in Munich (President of Georgia, Official Web Portal, 3 February 2006, available at: [http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=228&info\\_id=4797](http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=228&info_id=4797), accessed: 15 March 2011).

It was conceived as a driving force of the Euro-Atlantic community in general and as a main supporter of Georgia's NATO membership and Western integration in particular. The post-revolutionary Georgian leadership managed to have a close relationship with the US government. Faced with passive or indifferent responses from the EU, the hopes of the Georgian elite were redirected to the other side of the Atlantic. It was believed that the US could successfully defend Georgia against Russia's possible aggression and could lobby for its interests inside NATO. The US was observed as a main partner for Georgia, but its values played an equally important role:

*"The partnership between the U.S. and Georgia is about more, and we should make it very clear the strategic interests – more than oil pipelines, more than any kind of economic or military cooperation; it's about shared values"*<sup>75</sup>

In 2008, Russia shocked the world by invading Georgia by land and bombing its infrastructure from the air. NATO countries stood by and uncomfortably jockeyed to react but ultimately failed to do anything. The invasion even became an important issue in the U.S. Presidential debates between John McCain and Barack Obama, at least for the month of August. Mikhail Gorbachev wrote an op-ed in the *New York Times*, and John McCain wrote one for the *Wall Street Journal*.<sup>76</sup> The US

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75 Mikhail Saakashvili, Remarks by President Bush and President Saakashvili of Georgia in a Joint Press Availability (available at: [http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=228&info\\_id=4847](http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=228&info_id=4847), accessed: 14. April 2011)

76 Mikhail Gorbachev, "Russia Never Wanted a War" *The New York Times*, 19 August, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/20/opinion/20gorbachev.html>), John McCain, "We are all Georgians," *The Wall Street Journal*, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121867081398238807.html> August 14, 2008.

sent humanitarian aid on a warship, the USCGC Dallas, but NATO as such largely stood by and watched. Despite NATO's quiescence during the Russo-Georgian war, Georgia's president repeated his country's commitment to NATO-led operations and even increased the number of Georgian troops in Afghanistan after the 2008 August War. "Even though Georgia is not yet a NATO member," wrote Saakashvili in *The Telegraph*, "and while we know our path to membership may be long-we see ourselves as firmly allied in purpose and values with the transatlantic community. However, this cannot just be rhetoric or an empty affiliation. Being part of such a community, even as a small country, we feel obliged and honored to contribute to our common security."<sup>77</sup> Georgia became the first country to sign the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with the North-Atlantic Alliance in 2004.<sup>78</sup> Two years later, in 2006, after successfully completing the IPAP, Georgia was granted Intensified Dialogue, the final step before receiving the Membership Action Plan (MAP). The crucial moment for Georgia's NATO aspirations was the NATO Summit of Bucharest in spring 2008. Due to internal differences within NATO, the alliance failed to grant Georgia the MAP, instead issuing vague promises that Georgia would one day become a NATO member. Even after the short but extremely destruc-

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77 Mikhail Saakashvili, "Why Georgia sends troops in Afghanistan," (in: *The Telegraph*, 14 December 2009, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/georgia/6809222/Why-Georgia-sends-troops-to-Afghanistan.html>, accessed: 17 April 2011). Saakashvili's emphasis on the longevity of NATO accession process clearly demonstrates that, in contrast to the previous euphoria regarding the belief that Georgia will become a member of NATO soon, the 2008 August War made the political elite realize that the NATO accession process is hard and will not be realized in the short term.

78 For more information, see: <http://www.nato.int/issues/ipap/index.html>, accessed at: 17 April 2011



tive war with Russia in August 2008, NATO membership remains a top priority for Georgia. Despite the clearly disappointing summit of Bucharest, the government of Georgia did not doubt its pro-Western goals. The statement of the Minister of European and Euro-Atlantic Integration that “In fact we have more than we were expecting from the NATO Bucharest summit...”<sup>79</sup> became the subject of political sarcasm in Georgian society, but it confirmed the steady will of Georgia’s ruling elite not to give up its pro-Western aspirations despite the absence of support from some European states.

Tensions between Russia and Georgia have tended to increase in sync with NATO reforms. In 2006, after completing the IPAP, Russia imposed several economic and energy sanctions on Georgia: Russia doubled gas prices, may have been involved in the suspicious explosion of gas pipelines and electricity lines, and banned Georgian wines and mineral waters from the Russian market. The Georgian government responded to Russian pressures by pursuing even more reforms in the economic and energy sectors. Georgia was subsequently named the world’s top reformer in ‘doing business’ by the World Bank and International Financial Corporation.<sup>80</sup> Georgia’s government called Russia’s doubling of gas prices a “political decision” and interpreted it as the “price for freedom” that Georgia had to pay to reduce Russian influence.<sup>81</sup>

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79 “NATO envoy: Relations going in right direction, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23319>

80 Doing Business: Georgia is this year’s top reformer (World Bank, 6 September 2006, available at: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/GEORGIAEXTN/0,,contentMDK:21042336~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~theSitePK:301746,00.html>, accessed: 15 April 2011).

81 Gela Bezhuashvili and Anatoly Lieven, “Democratic Transformation in Georgia,” (Carnegie Moscow Center, Washington, D.C., 16 December 2005),

Georgia's leadership even interpreted the loss of Russia's market as a positive development: President Saakashvili personally thanked then-President Vladimir Putin "for improving the quality of Georgian wine" by banning it from the Russian market.<sup>82</sup>

In 2008, just prior to the NATO Summit of Bucharest, Russia intensified its engagement with the two separatist enclaves in Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and tensions between the two countries peaked, culminating in a five-day war in August 2008. Two weeks later, Russia recognized the two breakaway regions as independent states and called on others to follow. Venezuela, Nicaragua and Nauru were the only states to follow. The war placed Russia's offensive military forces within striking distance of all major ports, yet Georgia's foreign policy behavior appeared immune and has remained constant.

The 2008 August War in sent shockwaves through the Caucasus and represented a clear sign of Russia's resurgence in its "near abroad". It also clearly demonstrated the self-help nature of Georgia's external security environment. The Russians have deployed ballistic missile and air defense systems that

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available at: <http://www.carnegie.ru/events/?fa=842>, (accessed 14 April 2011); According to Georgia's former foreign minister, Gela Bezhuashvili, Russia punished Georgia because of "ideological incompatibility" between the two countries and because of Georgia's "democratic choice". Gela Bezhuashvili, Press conference of Foreign Minister of Georgia (Georgian Foreign Ministry, 26 December 2006, available at: [http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=GEO&sec\\_id=58&info\\_id=208](http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=58&info_id=208), accessed: 14 April 2011).

82 Mzia Kupunia, "Saakashvili thanks Putin for "improving" Georgian wines quality," *The Messenger Online*, 20 September 2010, available at: [http://www.messenger.com.ge/issues/2196\\_september\\_20\\_2010/2196\\_mzia.html](http://www.messenger.com.ge/issues/2196_september_20_2010/2196_mzia.html), accessed: 15 April 2011.

cover all major airports and seaports in Georgia, and roughly 10 thousand Russian troops are now stationed in Georgia.<sup>83</sup>

In such a strategic setting, most analysts would expect Georgia to bandwagon with Russia. Instead, Georgia has actually intensified its Western-oriented foreign policy with each escalation of the threat, consistent with our focus on the role of leaders' ideas about identity and strategy, reinforcing the belief that Georgia is pursuing the most beneficial path to modernize and build the state.

Most analysts agree that the threat from Russia was largely constant from 2003 to 2006 and then increased beginning in 2006.<sup>84</sup> Georgia's behavior during this period exhibited more balancing than bandwagoning, however. Changes in Georgia's foreign policy since the "Rose Revolution" could not be satisfactorily explained by the nature of the external threat emanating from Russia as the Russian factor (power and threat) was constant rather than variable. In addition, although Georgia was highly dependent upon Russia for trade and energy, it made foreign policy decisions that harmed its relations with Russia. As Figure 1 clearly illustrates,<sup>85</sup> Russia was Georgia's top trading partner before 2006 and accounted for almost 20 percent of Georgia's total trade. Russia was also the major supplier of strategic energy resources such as electricity and gas supplies. In 2006, Russia cut off gas and elec-

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83 "Abkhazia: Deepening Dependence," *International Crisis Group, Europe Report N°202* – 26 February 2010; "South Ossetia: The Burden of Recognition," *International Crisis Group, Europe Report N°205* – 7 June 2010.

84 On the different stages of Russia-Georgia relations, see Andrei P. Tsygankov and Tarver Wahlquist, "Dueling Honors: Power, Identity and the Russia-Georgia Divide," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 5, (2009), pp. 307-326.

85 See figure pp. 58.

tricity supplies to Georgia, and Georgia responded to Russia's pressure by engaging new trade and energy partners and further distancing itself from Russia.<sup>86</sup> Although the structural conditions of the Russian-Georgian relationship are clearly relevant, the evidence overwhelmingly shows that political elites' ideas about Georgia's identity and about strategies for affirming that identity play an essential role in explaining their foreign policy decision-making.

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86 Eric Miller contends that implementation of economic reforms influenced the post-Soviet states' access to Western resources. The availability of Western economic resources can be seen as the result of Georgia's new economic and political policies, not their cause.

## CHAPTER VI

### FOREIGN POLICY IS WHAT STATES MAKE OF IT

Ideas are real and not merely epiphenomenal: they influence foreign policy as much as the distribution of power and threat. In fact, we argue that material factors often influence foreign policy *through* shared ideas that give meaning to material variables. Although Georgia did not experience a change in its external security environment in 2003, it effected a significant change in its foreign policy dynamics. When it did experience a change in its external security environment in 2008 because of the war, its foreign policy remained largely unaffected. Where structural theories predict change, we observed continuity; where they predict continuity, we observed change. To explain the observed change and continuity, we argue that an ideational theoretical lens is needed to supplement material ones.

Conventional wisdom holds that political elites in small states usually respond to a threatening external security environment by bandwagoning. We take issue with this claim because it ignores the roles of elite ideas and preferences. The post-Rose Revolution elite intensified a pro-Western foreign policy orientation that changes in the external security environment have not fundamentally altered.

There is a high level of consensus among the political elite regarding two fundamental issues. Political elites agree on the major external threat—Russia—and they agree on which policy will be most effective in dealing with existing challenges: balancing.<sup>87</sup> The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Geor-

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<sup>87</sup> The importance of elite consensus is emphasized in Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton

gia argues that “the current political elite is crystallized and its course towards the West is well-understood. All of the political elite agree on the overall importance and necessity of a pro-Western foreign policy.”<sup>88</sup>

The major cause of the initial change (and the subsequent continuity) in foreign policy is the young elite’s Western identity. “Most of the elite were socialized in the West and, in contrast to previous elites, believe that Georgia can be transformed into a Western state, because they perceive themselves to be part of West.”<sup>89</sup> Changes in foreign policy during 2003 were not a response to a rise in the Russian threat or a decrease in the level of economic dependence on Russia. What changed Georgia’s foreign policy was the emergence of a new elite with a distinctly Western identity. The West is portrayed as something highly desirable, whereas Russia is portrayed as a degenerate model of development.

Despite intense political, economic and military pressure from Russia, the political elite in Georgia remain united in their foreign policy choices. They interpret the Russia-Georgia war as the “price of freedom” and see the major cause of the war as Georgia’s pro-Western proclivities and Russia’s desire to hinder them. Our focus on ideas not only helps to explain this change in Georgia’s foreign policy in 2003 but also sheds light upon the continuity in foreign policy since the Rose Revolution and during and after the recent war with

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University Press, 2006); Randall L. Schweller, “Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing,” *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2004, pp. 169-170.

88 Authors’ interview with Sergi Kapanadze, Deputy Foreign Minister of Georgia. May 19, 2011. Tbilisi, Georgia.

89 Authors’ interview with Ghia Nodia, Professor, Ilia State University. April 12, 2011. Tbilisi, Georgia.

Russia. Despite changes in its external security environment, Georgia has made no substantive changes to its foreign policy because the cultural paradigm has remained constant. “Georgian foreign policy,” one author noted, “cannot be explained without an understanding of the Georgian elite’s own perceptions of its culture and place in the world.”<sup>90</sup>

The foreign policy behavior of small states is an important topic in political science, especially given the proliferation of small states over the past century, but it has been largely overlooked in International Relations scholarship. Although small states are believed to bandwagon with power and threat, and therefore to display little in the way of behavior worthy of explanation, we show that this account is inadequate for understanding their foreign policy behavior. Ideas and identities play an equally important role in explaining the foreign policy behavior of small states.

Through a detailed study of Georgia’s foreign policy behavior, we show that Georgia’s foreign policy since the Rose Revolution, in contrast to previous eras, has become linear and consistently oriented towards Western integration. Despite strong systemic pressures to shift its course, Georgia’s foreign policy has displayed remarkable continuity. This behavioral pattern represents a puzzle for wholly structural approaches to the foreign policy behavior of small states and can be better explained by a focus on ideas and identities. In a rewording of Alex Wendt: “foreign policy is what states make of it.”

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90 Stephen Jones, “The Role of Cultural Paradigms in Georgian Foreign Policy,” in Rick Fawn, ed., *Ideology and National Identity in Post-Communist Foreign Policies*. (Frank Cass Publishers 2004), p. 104.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

The major aim of this book was to demonstrate the importance of elites and their ideas in the foreign policy behavior of small states. Georgia, a small state in the post-Soviet space, served as the primary case study of the analysis.

“Scholarly consensus” towards a small state’s foreign policy behavior rests on the assumptions that the international system is the most relevant level of analysis and that the major determinants of a small state’s foreign policy choices and behavior are the characteristics of its external security environment. Thus, according to conventional wisdom, the most parsimonious and efficient way to explain how small states behave in international relations is to rely on a “black box” approach and focus on the nature of the external security environment.

Theoretical and empirical analyses have demonstrated that conventional wisdom regarding the international behavior of small states is insufficient and deficient. Although structural and materialist approaches, such as Structural Realism and Economic Interdependence theory, are important theoretical frameworks, these theories could not provide satisfactory explanations of important elements of small states’ behavior. The analysis of Georgia’s foreign policy has demonstrated that theories that consider the state, individuals and their ideas in the analysis perform better than strictly systemic and materialist approaches.

Even a brief glance at other small states’ behavior in the post-Soviet space demonstrates the inability of fully structur-



al and materialist theories to satisfactorily explain much of the variation in local responses towards Russia. Why, for instance, is Azerbaijan, which has a placement in international and regional systems that is similar to Georgia's and which has always been less economically dependent on Russia than Georgia has been, less pro-Western and for most of its post-independence period, has adopted a balanced policy toward the regional and global powers that are active in the Caucasus, primarily Russia, the United States, Turkey, and Iran? In its major national strategy document, the "National Security Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan," Azerbaijan declares that "The Republic of Azerbaijan pursues a multidimensional, balanced foreign policy and seeks to establish it with all countries"<sup>91</sup>. Accordingly, Azerbaijan conducts strategic cooperation with both Washington and Moscow. Azerbaijan is a notably active member of NATO's Partnership for Peace program and has an advanced IPAP with the alliance. At the same time, Azerbaijan cooperates with Russia on security issues and allows Russia to maintain the Qabala strategic radar station in Azerbaijani territory.<sup>92</sup> Other important questions include "why Kazakhstan is such a faithful bandwagoner despite its proximity to Russia; why Turkmenistan eschews all external balancing of any kind, while Tajikistan cozies up to Russia; and why Belarus has been such a faithful bandwagoner, despite relative power and a geographical position similar to the Baltics?"<sup>93</sup> These are important questions. If structural

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91 Ministry of National Security of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "National Security Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan," Baku, 2007.

92 Avinoam Idan and Brenda Shaffer, "The Foreign Policies of Post-Soviet Landlocked States", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 2011, 27, 3, p. 255.

93 William C. Wohlforth, "Revisiting Balance of Power Theory in Central

and material accounts cannot provide satisfactory responses, naturally, researchers should strive to develop new theories with stronger explanatory power.

Our study attempted to generate a new theory with a focus on elites and their ideas about the state, its identity, national values and strategic goals. It goes without saying that there are challenges to incorporating the role of ideas and identities, which are often harder to measure and observe than purely material factors, but this of itself should not be a reason for preferring a theory that does not explain substantively important variation in international relations.

Naturally, this study has several challenges. Critics could argue that the several alternative explanations should be tested to fully examine the study's internal validity. For instance, theories that consider the importance of domestic politics and institutions or elites' domestic political and economic preferences could serve as the additional alternative explanations of the study. We agree that it would be preferable to include other domestic level explanations, but this of itself does not negate the substantively important role of ideas and identities that were highlighted in this analysis.

In addition, we are well aware that one of the most important challenges of the study is the fact that it attempts to test paradigm-level explanations of state behavior via a single-case analysis, even if within-case variation over time can help to address some of these challenges. Critics might even argue that one does not need theory to explain a single case

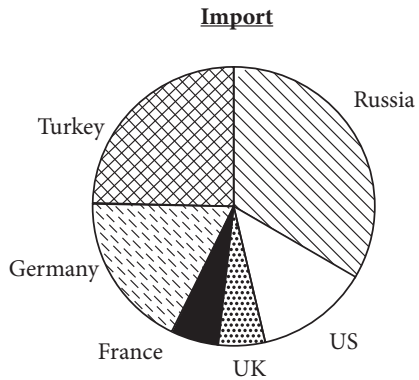
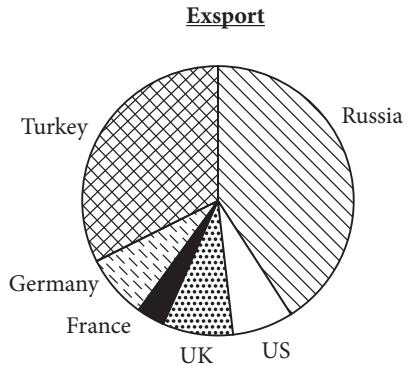
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Eurasia,” in T.V. Paul, James Wirtz, Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford University Press, 2004) p. 232.

because ideographic accounts usually do a fine job or because a theory must apply for an entire class of cases. However, we argue that the chosen approach provides a more compelling account than the alternatives and has empirical and theoretical implications for how we study the foreign policy behavior of small states. Although there are clear limitations to what can be learned from a chronological case study, there are also clear benefits, including the use of unique and original data that focus explicitly on the causal mechanism, and are difficult to collect in a large-N design. This study provides a robust plausibility test on which further studies of small states could be based. The study's claims and scope render this theory amenable to being tested in other small states to examine its external validity.

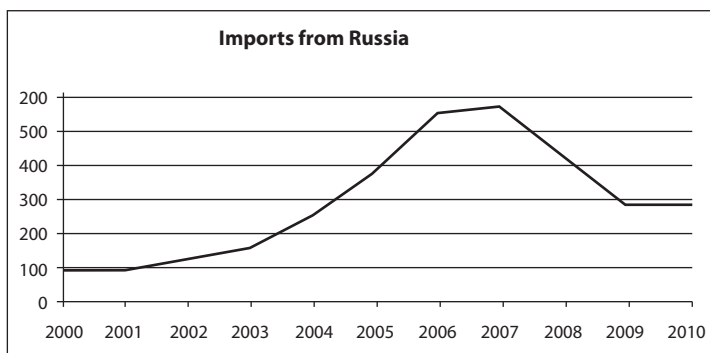
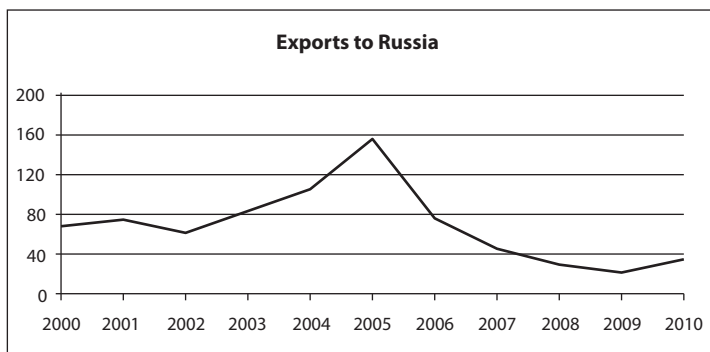
## Tables and Figures

Figure 1 – Georgian Exports and Imports by Country in 2005<sup>94</sup>



<sup>94</sup> Source: Department of Statistics of Georgia, [საქართველოს სტატისტიკის დეპარტამენტი]. [www.statistics.ge](http://www.statistics.ge)

**Figure 2 – Georgian Exports and Imports with Russia over time  
(in Mio USD)<sup>95</sup>**



<sup>95</sup> Source: [www.statistics.ge](http://www.statistics.ge). Until the Russian Embargo in 2006-2007, Georgia's trade with Russia had been increasing, especially since 2003. The rising level of trade should have tightened constraints on Georgia's alignment decisions, following the logic of economic dependence, but Georgia instead pursued balancing.

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AN INITIATIVE OF GERBERT RÜE STIFTUNG IN  
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