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Eteri Tsintsadze-Maass

University of Kentucky, eteri.ts@uky.edu

Author ORCID Identifier:

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6583-8934>

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Eteri Tsintsadze-Maass, Student

Dr. Daniel Morey, Major Professor

Dr. Justin Wedeking, Director of Graduate Studies

WHY WEAK STATES BALANCE:
NATIONAL MOBILIZATION AND THE SECURITY STRATEGIES
OF POST-SOVIET STATES

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By
Eteri Tsintsadze-Maass
Lexington, Kentucky
Director: Dr. Daniel Morey, Professor of Political Science
Lexington, Kentucky
2020

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<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6583-8934>

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

WHY WEAK STATES BALANCE: NATIONAL MOBILIZATION AND THE SECURITY STRATEGIES OF POST-SOVIET STATES

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the 14 post-Soviet states adopted dramatically differing security strategies towards Russia: some sought security by bandwagoning with Russia while others strove to balance against it. Why did states with similar experiences under Soviet rule and similar asymmetric power positions vis-à-vis Russia adopt such diverse security strategies in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's disintegration? In contrast to prevailing theories focusing on power, economic interdependence, and cultural similarities, I propose that these variations in post-Soviet states' security strategies can be best explained by their diverse experiences with national mobilization. The central argument of this study is that particular historical developments prime national mobilization, leading nations to see themselves as unique socio-political units worthy of independence and driving their leaders to interpret their former ruler as a primary security threat they must balance against. I test this national mobilization theory against its main alternatives through an in-depth analysis of the historical processes of national identity formation and recent security strategies of the post-Soviet states, shedding new light on mobilized identities' role in international security. This dissertation includes a broad correlational analysis between the proposed causal factors and the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states' foreign policy choices as well as two chapters containing in-depth case studies of Georgia and Kazakhstan, utilizing process tracing methods to test the specific causal mechanisms at play.

KEYWORDS: National Mobilization, Weak States, Security Strategies, Foreign Policy, Post-Soviet Politics

Eteri Tsintsadze-Maass
(Name of Student)

11/24/2020
Date

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By
Eteri Tsintsadze-Maass

Dr. Daniel Morey

Director of Dissertation

Dr. Justin Wedeking

Director of Graduate Studies

November 24, 2020

Date

DEDICATION

To Richard, Ani, and Lily

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

How do newly independent states confront their former ruler? Fifteen independent states emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, covering areas from Eastern Europe to Central Asia. As its primary legal successor state, Russia inherited the vast majority of Soviet land, population, and industry, emerging as a vastly superior economic and military power compared to the other fourteen post-Soviet states (Saxer 1991, 702, Brzezinski and Sullivan 1997, 3). Despite occupying similar asymmetric power positions vis-à-vis Russia, however, the other fourteen adopted dramatically differing security strategies in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's disintegration. Where some prioritized cooperation with Russia, others sought to balance against it, and still other adopted ambivalent or neutral foreign policies. This variation is puzzling given the fact that they were all part of the same extremely interdependent system for decades and went through many similar social, economic, and political processes under centralized Soviet rule. Why did some post-Soviet states immediately seek to balance against Russia by reorienting themselves towards the West (e.g., the Baltic States, Georgia) while others preferred to bandwagon with Russia by maintaining their economic and military cooperation (e.g., Belarus and Kazakhstan)?

Answering this question will help us understand what drives patterns of asymmetric international conflict and cooperation. This is particularly important because conventional theories of international relations are unable to offer a compelling solution to this puzzle. Perspectives that assume strong states largely dictate the course of international relations in their neighborhoods cannot explain why Russia's influence in its neighborhood proved so imperfect. Those that see states as rational actors responding to

their position in the distribution of international power cannot explain why some post-Soviet states treated Russia as their main security threat while others approached it as their main strategic partner. Contrary to conventional theories that prioritize strong states and structural factors in international relations, this study proposes a shift in focus to the national security strategies of weak states, which I argue are prominently influenced by their internal characteristics.

I argue that the post-Soviet states' diverse experiences with nationalism, the strongest collective identity within states, can explain variations in their foreign policy choices towards their powerful former ruler. This theory, which I call *national mobilization theory*, suggests that if a nation combines historical experiences such as struggles for independence and interstate conflicts with effective information dissemination mechanisms such as public education and mass media, its population becomes horizontally connected and primed to see itself as a unique socio-political unit. After gaining formal independence, populations mobilized in this manner exhibit a pronounced us-vs.-them mentality towards their former ruler, becoming especially likely to prize their independence, interpreting their former ruler as their primary security threat, and incentivizing their leaders to confront it with balancing policies. Although my primary purpose is to explain recent variations within the post-Soviet region, the logic of national mobilization theory may also apply to other regional or historical cases of weak states emerging from domination by a stronger state.

Beyond its theoretical contributions, this study's empirical contents address a subject of great importance for current affairs. Although Russia's power cannot match the Soviet Union's, recent actions such as its annexation of territory in Ukraine and Georgia,

its support of Assad's regime in Syria, and its cyberattacks on Western democratic elections demonstrate that the post-Soviet space has once again become a center of regional and international turmoil. The region is not lacking for intrastate and interstate conflicts, and it has seen substantial realignment by some states (e.g., the expansion of NATO and the European Union and the contraction of the CIS). The multitude of past, current, and potential conflicts involving this part of the world combine with Russia's current assertiveness on the global stage to merit further scrutiny of the region.

This chapter proceeds in five sections. The first examines why weak state security strategies matter, situating this project within the broader international security literature. The second section summarizes my central argument regarding how national mobilization drove the various post-Soviet states to adopt differing security strategies toward Russia. The third section examines the current role of nationalism in international relations theory, shedding light on its often assumed but rarely systematically studied effects on interstate relations and defining my central concept of national mobilization. The fourth section examines conventional explanations for variations in asymmetric security strategies, highlighting their inability to persuasively explain the puzzle at the heart of this study. The fifth section offers a roadmap that previews the chapters that follow.

1.1 Weak State Security Strategies

As weak states have proliferated in the post-colonial and post-Cold War world, questions related to their foreign policy behavior have grown in importance, bearing on areas including alignment and re-alignment, nuclear proliferation, and interstate conflict

and cooperation. Yet research in international relations remains dominated by studies of the great powers as studies of weak states pale in comparison (Hey 2003, 5, Keohane 1969, 291-292). The major international relations theories are often derived from the experiences of the great powers and tested with reference to them, with implications for weak states mentioned in passing as logical extrapolations if at all (Waltz 1979, 194-195, Walt 1987, 23-25). Moreover, many scholars continue to assume that the “domestic determinants of foreign policy are less salient in weak states” because their behavior is predetermined by systemic factors even more so than great powers, leaving them with “less room for choice in the decision-making process” (Handel 1981, 3-4, Sutton 1987, 20).

Even as a growing body of research has begun focusing on weak states, the dominant framework continues to portray them as unitary rational actors facing limited options, with scholars theorizing about how they suffer what they must within an international system dominated by the strong (Hey 2003, Rothstein 1968). Cases when weak states challenge stronger opponents are usually explained by appealing to particular strategic and material circumstances that warp cost-benefit calculations enough to enable such a seemingly irrational choice (Avey 2019). There is no denying great powers’ impressive capabilities to shape and reshape international systems, and as a result the often-treacherous seas that weak states must navigate with their foreign policy choices. That said, this study stands as a testament that approaches primarily concerned with systemic factors and power capabilities are at best insufficient to explain weak states’ foreign policy choices.

The primary focus of this study is the foreign policies and security strategies of weak states in the post-Soviet context. Despite possessing vastly superior economic and military capabilities, the strongest state in the region was unable to dictate its weak neighbors' foreign policies. Moreover, I demonstrate that the primary driver of the weaker post-Soviet states' foreign policy decisions lay with their internal characteristics rather than their external incentives. Although all weak states may face profound threats to their political autonomy, the extent to which they prioritize that autonomy over strategic, economic, and other concerns depends on their level of national mobilization, which shapes their threat perceptions and hence their security strategies. In making this argument, I contribute to the field of international relations by bridging the literatures on weak state foreign policy and nationalism, which offers the key to explaining the puzzle at the heart of this study—the variation of the post-Soviet states security strategies towards Russia. Although I test national mobilization theory in the context of the post-Soviet states' security strategies in the immediate aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the logic by which it operates is general enough to be applied to other regions and time periods as well in future research.

This study's findings should be of interest to scholars of international relations as well as foreign policymakers. It sheds light on the dynamics behind weak states' decisions to cooperate with or balance against their stronger peers and in so doing provides insights into the potential for regional systemic change via realignment. In contrast to conventional theories of international relations, which struggle to understand weak states that defy their structural incentives, national mobilization theory offers a more nuanced and historically rich account of weak states' security strategies. Although

states' identities and foreign relations are continuously made and remade, my research shows that particular patterns of national experiences can provide relatively stable effects enabling us to better explain and predict weak states' behavior.

1.2 My Argument

I argue that weak states' level of national mobilization profoundly shapes their security strategies towards their strong neighbor. More specifically, the disintegration of the Soviet Union saw its weaker successor states adopt radically different security strategies towards Russia because those states had manifested diverging levels of national mobilization by the end of 1980s. My theory's central predictions are that those post-Soviet states with highly mobilized national identities should have principally valued their political independence, exhibited a strong us-vs.-them mentality vis-à-vis Russia, perceived Russia as their primary security threat, and prioritized balancing against it. On the other hand, those post-Soviet states with relatively low national mobilization should not have valued their political independence as much, exhibited a markedly less antagonistic mentality towards Russia, been more likely to see Russia as a potential partner than as a uncompromising security threat, and hence prioritized cooperation with it. These divergences represent important contributions to international relations theory, showing that states confronted with similar external constraints nevertheless adopted vastly different interpretations and responses based on their internal characteristics—specifically their level of national mobilization.

Many factors bear on a state's foreign policy formation, but not all factors are equally salient to all states all the time. I engage alternative theories that expect power

calculations, economic incentives, or cultural similarities to be the main determinants of a state's foreign policy. I do not deny the potential importance of these factors for understanding state behavior in general—in some situations they might have strong explanatory and/or predictive power—but I demonstrate that there are also important cases when national mobilization overcomes those other factors to drive a state's foreign policy. This implies that research that primarily looks at systemic factors and exogenous interests may benefit from incorporating states' internal variations in order to eliminate blind spots that prevent more accurate predictions.

This should be particularly clear when we consider this study's two in-depth case study chapters, each of which analyzes a case when a state's foreign policy choices directly violated conventional expectations. First, Georgia prioritized balancing against Russia after the Soviet Union's dissolution despite being economically and militarily weak, lacking credible guarantees from external powers, and risking retaliation by ostracizing its most powerful neighbor. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan was arguably the post-Soviet state that most prioritized cooperation with Russia despite being far more economically viable than the other post-Soviet states thanks to its oil and gas resources and despite having a potential path to unilateral security in the form of the nuclear weapons it inherited from the Soviet Union.

The foreign policy choices of Georgia and Kazakhstan defy conventional expectations but accord with national mobilization theory owing to the stark contrast in national mobilization between the two. Georgian leaders' interviews, official statements, and transcripts of congressional debates show that their positions were infused with nationalist sentiments, regularly bringing up self-determination and a historic duty of full

independence, referring to Russia as a centuries-old security threat that could not be trusted, mentioning honor and sacrifice as expected steps on the route to independence, and the like. Meanwhile, such sentiments were largely absent from Kazakhstan as its President Nazarbayev openly talked about sacrificing autonomy and sovereignty for material benefits. On rare occasions when he voiced potentially nationalist sentiments such as referencing a historic struggle against empires or the cultural heritage of Kazakhs, he would quickly clarify that Kazakhstan and Russia were kindred nations destined for peaceful coexistence and cooperation. These two experiences reflect a broader pattern visible across all fourteen post-Soviet states as those that had undergone deeper national mobilization strove to break away from Russia's influence while those that had not were more likely to bandwagon with it.

1.3 Nationalism and National Mobilization

Despite near-consensus among scholars regarding causal connections between nationalism and international behavior, many major international relations theories still have not incorporated nationalism as an independent variable. For example, several prominent realist scholars recognize nationalism as a profoundly important phenomenon (Carr 1945, Mearsheimer 2001, 365), yet its effects are often taken for granted, "assuming it without proof or explanation" (Van Evera 1994, 5, Posen 1993, 80). Empirical works on nationalism remain exceptions in the field (Wimmer 2012, Schrock-Jacobson 2012). Scholars often conflate nationalism and statism, but distinguishing between the two is essential for parsing out their causal effects (Gilpin 1981). While a state and a nation might sometimes have similar goals, they reflect two distinct concepts: states are political institutions, formed and acting in accordance with international norms,

while nations and national identities are formed by and refer to domestic societies. As Peter Katzenstein put it, “States’ identities are primarily external; they describe the actions of governments in a society of states. National identities are internal; they describe the processes by which mass public acquire, modify, and forget their collective identities” (Katzenstein 1997, 118).

The most insightful and influential works on nationalism to date have considered the question of its origins (Kohn 1967, Smith 1983, Gellner 1983). There is a broad consensus among leading scholars in the field that nationalism is a socially constructed and relatively modern phenomenon associated with political, technological and social transformations (Anderson 1991, Hobsbawm 1992, Hroch 1985). These works gave rise to scholarship further highlighting the importance of economic, cultural, and political factors in the formation of nationalism (Hechter 2000; Laitin 2007; Hutchinson 2000; Smith 1986; Mann 1995; Tilly 1990), while scholarship on the consequences of nationalism for interstate relations has fallen behind.

Nationalism’s significance has not readily translated into clear definitions. In Benedict Anderson’s (1991, 3) words, “Nation, nationality, nationalism—all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyze.” In line with prominent works in the field, a *nation* is defined here as a large, socially-mobilized group of people who see themselves as sharing a common identity that justifies pooling their political interests and that differentiates them from other political entities enough to warrant their own state. *Nationalism* is the pride in and loyalty to their nation that inspires those people to maintain and strengthen their nationhood.

The main theoretical concept I develop throughout this study is *national mobilization*. Scholars of nationalism often mention phases of development in national consciousness and nation-building. It is a process associated with intellectuals conceptualizing national narratives, nationalist agitators spreading those narratives, and socio-economic changes enabling connectivity among ever larger numbers of individuals (Hobsbawm 1992, 10, Hroch 1985, 22-23, Anderson 1991). Building on these past works I use the term *national mobilization* to refer to the process of building a critical mass of people who are not only nationally conscious but politically active and eager to defend their national interests. Not all nations are similarly mobilized, and a given nation can be more or less mobilized depending on the time period under consideration.

This study demonstrates how variation among states' national identities and the forms through which those identities are primed and activated can explain otherwise-puzzling variations in asymmetric security strategies. Explaining international relations is always challenging as relationships tend to evolve, change, improve or deteriorate due to various external and internal factors over time. This is particularly true when developing explanations based on phenomena that are socially constructed rather than material factors—when employing a cultural approach, there is a risk of ending up with idiosyncratic explanations. However, I argue that we can observe stable patterns in the processes of national mobilization across states, and that those patterns can help us explain post-Soviet states' varying responses to similar structural constraints. Furthermore, it is essential that we do so despite the associated challenges given the significant gaps left by conventional theories. Most importantly, I aim to show in this study that some questions of international conflict and cooperation, arguably the core

research agenda of conventional international relations theories, are best answered not by material factors at the international systemic level like the distribution of power or economic interdependence, but rather by domestic-level ideological factors and the domestic political incentives they create for state leaders. As a result, the primary emphasis in this study rests with the mobilization of national identities that influences states' interests, their perceptions of their powerful neighbor, and hence their foreign policy choices.

1.4 Existing Approaches

The two most conventional approaches to understanding international relations, realism and liberalism, share an overarching analytical framework that sees states as the most important actors in an anarchic international system, the structure of which affects their rational calculations (Powell 1994, 343-344, Jervis 1999, 43-44). Although the liberal approach relaxes some realist assumptions in examining the ability of international institutions to overcome international fear and uncertainty, both approaches treat states' interests as exogenous and stable, and thus both approaches expect to see broad and predictable patterns in international behavior driven by international systemic characteristics (Katzenstein 1996, 11-15, Jervis 1999, 43-44). These similarities lie at the core of their inability to explain the stark variations in foreign policy choices among the weak post-Soviet states.

1.4.1 Realism

Realist theories base their analysis of international behavior on the distribution of military power among them, relegating other types of causal factors to a secondary status

useful primarily to explain divergences from the assumed baseline of rational strategic behavior. The realist tradition in international relations has generated an impressive number of seminal studies featuring substantial diversity and regular intra-paradigmatic debate. Yet it is nevertheless possible to isolate a shared set of assumptions and predictions about the international system across the realist tradition, “a set of normative emphases,” and in doing so to assess the ability of realist logic to explain the puzzle at the core of this study (Ferguson and Mansbach 1988, 79).

Realists emphasize the self-serving nature of human beings and the absence of international authority, leading to a perspective on international relations dominated by power and security concerns (Morgenthau 1946, Waltz 1979, Gilpin 1981, Schweller 1997). Realists tend to treat states as unitary actors whose international behavior is driven by rational calculations regarding how to best achieve security given their relative power. Uncertainty regarding other states’ intentions fuels fear of those that are powerful, proximate, and potentially aggressive, driving them to see those states as the main threats to their continued survival (Walt 1987). As a result, the primary foreign policy challenge from the realist perspective consists of deciding how to deal with those threats—whether to balance against them through internal military buildups or external alliances, or to bandwagon with them and hopefully avoid their wrath (Mearsheimer 1994, Walt 1987, Waltz 1979). Seeking to control their own fate as much as possible, states should pursue internal balancing strategies where feasible, external balancing strategies where necessary, and bandwagoning strategies where desperate (Parent and Rosato 2015). Accordingly, realists hold that states’ foreign policies and the resulting patterns of international conflict and cooperation can be best understood by the availability of

opportunities to employ balancing strategies with realistic hope of success (Rosato 2011, 2).

Although the most prominent realist works focus on great power dynamics, the conventional wisdom regarding weak states that emerges from the realist tradition is that weak states tend to bandwagon with threatening great powers. As Walt (1987, 24) puts it, “Small states bordering a great power may be so vulnerable that they choose to bandwagon rather than balance, especially if a powerful neighbor has demonstrated its ability to compel obedience.” Extreme power asymmetries place weak states at the mercy of their stronger peers, encouraging bandwagoning “simply because it is not sensible to tangle with them” (Waltz 1979, 113). Bandwagoning should be especially appealing to weak states facing overwhelmingly powerful neighbors, whose proximity makes them “capable of rapid and effective action” that maximizes the “special peril of defection” in international security (Walt 1987, 31). In seeking to explain variations among the weaker post-Soviet states’ policies towards Russia, realist logic looks for variations in the distribution of power among them and in the engagement of powerful third parties as potential allies, assessing the feasibility of balancing strategies for each post-Soviet state based on its external circumstances rather than examining its unit-level characteristics.

Applying realist logic to the post-Soviet region produces several predictions about the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states’ behavior towards Russia in the aftermath of the Soviet Union’s collapse. First, realism predicts that *all fourteen newly independent states should have interpreted Russia as their greatest potential threat*. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the asymmetry of the power distribution between Russia and its fourteen post-Soviet neighbors was overwhelming—Russia’s military and economic capabilities

were at least three times larger than the next strongest state in the group, Ukraine, and dwarfed the capabilities of most other post-Soviet states (Singer 1988). Given this extreme disparity, realist logic predicts a relatively uniform threat perception across the weaker post-Soviet states.

Even using Stephen Walt's broader conceptualization that accounts for not just aggregate power but also the geographic proximity of the threat, its offensive capabilities, and perceptions of its aggressive intentions, Russia should still have been considered the primary threat by all fourteen weaker post-Soviet neighbors (Walt 1987, 275). For each of the fourteen Russia met all of the above criteria, possessing far greater aggregate power, existing in close proximity (bordering most), maintaining substantial offensive capabilities, and having dominated those states under Soviet rule and also earlier under the Russian Empire. Yet not all of the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states did interpret Russia as their major security threat after the collapse of the Soviet Union, so this expectation should spark initial skepticism towards realism's ability to explain these states' behavior after the Soviet Union's collapse.

Given the proximate and overwhelming threat they faced, realism also predicts that *the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states should have sought to balance against Russia if possible, or else to bandwagon with it if balancing seemed futile*. Most realists maintain that "balancing, not bandwagoning, is the behavior induced by the system" (Waltz 1979, 126). States can balance internally by increasing and mobilizing their own military forces or externally by forming alliances to counter their common adversary (Walt 1987, 5-6, Waltz 1979, 118). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, the power disparity between Russia and its neighbors was so high that none of the fourteen weaker post-

Soviet states could realistically hope to counter the potential threat of Russia via internal balancing. Even a defensive alliance involving all fourteen weaker post-Soviet states—assuming such a cohesive coalition was even possible—would not have possessed enough aggregate military power to counter Russia (Abdelal 2001, 5).

That said, a peculiar set of circumstances in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse did open the possibility of internal balancing to three post-Soviet states. Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan inherited nuclear weapons from the former Soviet military, creating a unique opportunity to ensure their own unilateral ability to deter potential Russian aggression and enabling them to balance against it despite their relatively weaker economies and conventional militaries. According to the realist perspective, the leaders of these countries should have recognized this nuclear capability as a priceless guarantee of their states' survival and hence should have pursued an internal balancing strategy towards Russia. As Mearsheimer (1993, 57) wrote at the time, "Ukraine's nuclear weapons would be an effective deterrent against a Russian conventional attack or nuclear blackmail". Contrary to realist expectations, however, all three countries chose to hand over their nuclear weapons to Russia rather than seize the opportunity to balance against it. Two of those states, Belarus and Kazakhstan, were actually among the most eager bandwagoners, prioritizing cooperation with Russia throughout the period during and after the Soviet Union's collapse. Their conduct further calls into question the sufficiency of realist logic to explain international security behavior.

For weak states that are incapable of dealing with their primary threat via internal balancing, realism predicts that they should pursue external balancing strategies wherever

those strategies offer a realistic chance of success. In other words, weak states should seek security through alliances wherever powerful partners are willing and where their combined strength appears sufficient to deter an attack. Where such allies are unavailable, however, weak states should seek to bandwagon with their overwhelmingly powerful neighbor, with the weakest among them trying hardest to secure any relief from their profound vulnerability. Balancing activities in the absence of external security guarantees are especially perilous because they give the powerful state an incentive to launch preventive actions, as has been demonstrated for example in situations of nuclear proliferation (Debs and Monteiro 2017)

In the aftermath of the Soviet Union, the very opposite was the case. Some of the weakest post-Soviet states at the time of their independence (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Georgia) did not even consider bandwagoning with Russia as an option. Instead, those states urgently sought to cut ties with it and to secure external alliances even when potential allies were not forthcoming. Those states saw their path to salvation in aligning with NATO (the only possible countervailing alliance in the early 1990s), behavior that accords with realist logic to the extent that NATO membership appeared achievable. Despite the fact that the Baltic states later became members of NATO, though, during the early 1990s the United States was not willing to offer NATO membership to any post-Soviet states (nor even central European states), as its leaders prioritized German reunification and verbally foreswore further NATO expansion to secure Russia's acceptance of that objective (Shifrinson 2016, Maass and Shifrinson 2017). Without any reliable Western allies, the open pursuit of NATO membership by weak post-Soviet states risked immediate retaliation from Russian leaders seeking to regain regional

influence. Nevertheless, the three Baltic States remained resolute in their Westward orientation for more than a decade before they were finally admitted to NATO in 2004. Georgia, Ukraine, and to some extent Moldova, also pursued NATO membership (so far unsuccessfully) despite punishments from Russia.

To summarize, after the collapse of the Soviet Union not all fourteen of the weaker post-Soviet states interpreted Russia as their major security threat. Those that inherited the strongest potential deterrent from the Soviet Union handed over their nuclear weapons to Russia instead of using them to balance against it, and some of the weakest post-Soviet states refused to bandwagon despite having no ready-and-willing allies guaranteeing their security against Russian retaliation. Realist theory fails to explain this variation in the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states' security strategies, demonstrating a need to move away from explanations primarily concerned with the distribution of power among states in order to solve this puzzle.

1.4.2 Liberalism

The liberal approach to international relations encompasses a large variety of theories highlighting factors like economic interdependence, democracy, and international institutions. Although liberalism concurs with realism in viewing states as the primary actors in an anarchic world, two essential assumptions of the liberal approach lead it to see more room for cooperation between states than realists do. First, states are largely motivated by economic incentives and absolute gains that incline them to seek cooperation with other states. Second, this cooperation is facilitated by international institutions that dampen security concerns by providing channels of communication, reducing the costs of transactions, building mutual trust, and establishing a robust system

of norms (Keohane and Martin 1995, 41-42, Keohane 1984). As a result, liberal studies of international conflict and cooperation tend to center on states' economic interests and complex interdependence (Moravcsik 1998, 3-4, Keohane and Nye 2011). Liberal explanations for the variations among the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states' policies towards Russia should therefore focus on assessing the economic incentives and institutional arrangements available to them in the aftermath of the Soviet Union.

Despite its own economic troubles during the 1990s, Russia represented a relatively large neighboring market that offered important opportunities for each of the other post-Soviet states as a trading partner, and even after the Soviet collapse Russia was willing to give large subsidies to the fledgling economies of its post-Soviet neighbors and to forgive their debts if they chose to cooperate (Abdelal 2001, 15). Among its constituent republics, the Soviet Union had operated an extremely interdependent economic system manifested in trade, cultural ties, transportation networks, people's mobility, etc. (Kubicek 2009, 240). Liberal logic predicts that the widespread opportunities for economic gain by maintaining these institutionalized interdependences should have given most weaker post-Soviet states strong incentives for cooperation if not full economic reintegration after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As Matthew Evangelista writes, "It is hard to argue that the policies of the republics in trying to break away from Moscow were driven strictly by pursuit of economic utility" as "virtually all of them stood to lose" (Evangelista 1996, 183-184).

Applying its logic to the puzzle of this study, liberalism predicts that *the newly independent states that had strong incentives to continue preexisting economic ties should have cooperated with Russia*. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, both the

economic and institutional interdependence that liberal scholars identify as producing incentives for cooperation were far stronger between the weaker post-Soviet states and Russia than in most other contexts looking beyond the post-Soviet space. Most of these states emerged in the early 1990s with struggling economies, and they had a lot to lose and not much to gain by refusing to cooperate with Russia. The exceptions were oil-rich Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. While they too were part of the extremely interdependent Soviet system and had to work hard to develop into full-fledged independent economies, unlike the other twelve they stood to gain by cutting economic ties with Russia, leaving the ruble zone, and switching to world prices (Goldberg, Ickes, and Ryterman 1994, 310, Tarr 1994, 12-13). Thus, liberal logic would expect Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to be the only ones among the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states to seek economic independence from Russia.

Liberal arguments rooted in economic and institutional interdependence appear inadequate to explain the variations among the fourteen post-Soviet states' foreign policy choices towards Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, several of them interpreted cooperation with Russia as threatening to their independence instead of treating it primarily as a mutually beneficial economic arrangement. Some of the most heavily dependent economies, the three Baltic countries and Georgia, refused to join the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the organization that was put forward to facilitate cooperation among the Soviet Union's various successor states, and even some of the states that joined the CIS opted not to join its various sub-institutions and refused to ratify some Russian-backed CIS agreements (Kuzio 2000). Meanwhile, Kazakhstan

disregarded its economic incentives for independence and emerged as one of the most fervent supporters of close economic cooperation with Russia.

Liberal scholars may assume that some of the post-Soviet states expected other trade partners to offer viable alternatives for future economic growth that might overwhelm the short-term negative effects of cutting ties with Russia. However, their decisions to cooperate or not cooperate at the time of the Soviet collapse suggest that they made up their minds long before any guarantees of economic partnerships from external states were forthcoming. The Baltic States were very determined to cut ties with Russia and seek economic cooperation with the European Union (EU), never wavering from this path despite enduring economic punishments from Russia for their Westward orientation and achieving EU membership only in 2004. On the other hand, Belarus (geographically as close to Western Europe as the Baltic States) as well as some of the Central Asian states opted for tighter economic cooperation with Russia. These observations cast initial doubt on the sufficiency of liberal logic to explain post-Soviet foreign policy, and later chapters will further evaluate liberalism's predictions against the evidence regarding the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states' choices in regard to cooperation with Russia.

1.4.3 Cultural Similarity

While not as prominent as realist and liberal theories, some scholars and many pundits argue that international cultural similarities affect states' foreign policy choices. Namely, this view holds that states sharing ethnic, linguistic, or religious similarities should be more inclined to cooperate, while culturally distinct states should be more conflict prone. The most prominent advocate of this approach was Samuel Huntington (1996, 155), who predicted that patterns of international conflict and cooperation in the

post-Cold War world would be driven most prominently by cultural differences and similarities because “countries tend to bandwagon with countries of similar culture and to balance against countries with which they lack cultural commonality.” He conceptualized cultural similarity as largely based on religion, classifying states into broad cultural identities as “civilizations,” three of which include post-Soviet states: Orthodox (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia); Western (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia); and Islamic (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan).

Following cultural similarity logic, *states representing the Orthodox civilization should be more likely to bandwagon with Russia, while states representing the Western and Islamic civilizations should be more likely to balance against Russia.* This prediction fails at face value. Although Huntington’s “Western” countries did interpret Russia as their primary threat in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, several countries representing the “Orthodox” civilization did so as well. Moreover, most of the states representing the “Islamic” civilization did not and instead developed positive relationships with Russia.

Several major problems render Huntington’s theory inadequate to explain the security policies of the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states. First, it attempts to create a parsimonious theory while relying on context- and time-specific cultural variables. Second, it overlooks striking internal diversities within the broad cultural category of civilization. Third, its predictions are based on relatively passive cultural attributes (e.g., ethnicity, language, religion), which by themselves are not strong determinants of states’ behavior unless activated by more dynamic socio-political processes.

It is unfortunate that Huntington's work garnered so much attention because more nuanced cultural approaches have much more to offer scholars of international security. I argue that the key to unlocking their potential lies in shifting the emphasis from passive distributions of cultural attributes to more dynamic domestic ideological processes such as shared experiences that mobilize communities and unify them into nations. Those processes affect their self-image, their perceptions of even an overwhelmingly powerful neighbor, and hence their foreign policy choices. In other words, cultural attributes such as ethnicity, religion, language, are not static factors—they evolve, change, are activated and deactivated. The best way to study the effects of cultural factors is not by adopting a primordial perspective but by building on the recent constructivist tradition in international relations. In the following chapter I situate national mobilization theory in the scholarship of constructivism and outline its theoretical arguments and predictions.

1.5 Roadmap

The chapters that follow examine the role of national mobilization in driving variations across the weaker post-Soviet states' security strategies. Chapter 2 lays out national mobilization theory, detailing how nations mobilize and how the processes involved in their mobilization affect their subsequent foreign policy choices. It goes on to contrast the testable predictions of national mobilization theory against those of the various current conventional theories discussed above. Finally, it discusses the methodologies used in the chapters that follow as well as the reasoning behind the case selection.

Chapters 3-5 test the empirical validity of national mobilization theory against the conventional approaches in two ways. First, Chapter 3 conducts a correlational analysis across all fourteen post-Soviet states' foreign policy choices towards Russia in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse. Operationalizing each theory's core concepts using multiple relevant proxy variables, it seeks to establish which theory best predicts the variations in security strategies by investigating their correlations with the theories' respective independent variables. Although the relatively small number of cases precludes more robust statistical analysis, these comparisons provide useful overviews of the patterns of incentives facing the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states and ultimately offer substantial evidence in favor of national mobilization theory.

Chapters 4 and 5 test the causal logic of national mobilization theory more deeply against those of the alternative theories through in-depth case studies of Georgia and Kazakhstan. Chapter 4 answers the question: why did Georgia prioritize balancing against Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union? My central argument is that Georgia's relatively high national mobilization by the year 1990 was the primary factor driving its post-Soviet foreign policy choices towards Russia. Across several in-depth case studies focusing on the historical development of Georgian nationalism and Georgia's post-Soviet foreign policy decision making, this chapter reveals how high national mobilization drove Georgia's leaders to prioritize balancing strategies against Russia despite the fact that their strategic and economic incentives as well as cultural similarity all should have inclined them towards bandwagoning.

Chapter 5 similarly asks: why did Kazakhstan prioritize bandwagoning with Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union? In contrast to the Georgia case,

Kazakhstan's relatively low level of national mobilization by the year 1990 enabled its leaders to drive its post-Soviet foreign policy towards Russia rather than away from it. Across case studies of Kazakhstan's national history and post-Soviet foreign policymaking, this chapter establishes how Kazakhstan's political development resulted in a far less mobilized nation than Georgia in 1990 and, as a result, how nationalism played a relatively minor role in Kazakh leaders' approach to foreign policy which freed them to respond more strongly to other incentives.

Finally, Chapter 6 concludes by summarizing the main findings of the study, discussing its main scholarly contributions, and exploring possible applications of its theoretical framework beyond the former Soviet Union.

CHAPTER 2. NATIONAL MOBILIZATION THEORY

Although their omnipresence in current international politics and daily vocabulary make them seem antique, the concepts of nation, nationality, and nationalism are fairly modern phenomena (Anderson 1991, 5, Hobsbawm 1992, 3). Due to its ideational nature, the most relevant perspective for exploring nationalism's effect on state behavior is constructivism, which advances the view that core aspects of international relations are socially constructed through historic processes and interactions rather than given by nature or dictated by structure (Wendt 1999, 1-5, Adler 1997). Constructivism shifts IR theory's emphasis from power politics and material forces to ideas, identities, norms, and international society (Katzenstein 1996, Ruggie 1998). The constructivist conceptualization of structure sees it as "a social rather than material phenomenon" with ideas as an essential determinant of both state power and interests (Wendt 1999, 20).

The essential departure of the constructivist approach from other conventional approaches to international relations is the endogenization of state interests. Instead of treating interests as exogenous and fixed, it holds that social actors are actively engaged within the domestic and international cultural contexts where identities and norms are formed, shaping their interests and actions (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001, Wendt 1992). Constructivist scholars have produced middle range theories on numerous issues of international relations, and over the past few decades their research has filled both theoretical and empirical gaps left by the realist and liberal approaches (Adler 2013, Katzenstein 1996). Constructivism has produced particularly robust theoretical and empirical research on the creation and diffusion of ideas and norms as well as on the formation of international society, state identities, and security communities of states

(Tannenwald 2007, Finnemore 2004, 1996, Checkel and Katzenstein 2009, Reus-Smit 2011, Pouliot 2010).

While much constructivist research has focused on international norms and society, there has also been a growing emphasis on how domestic societal and cultural factors affect states' foreign policy choices (Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996). Kier (1997) has provided a detailed account of how historical experience and local cultures, not rational material calculations or the demands of the international system, shape choices between offensive and defensive military doctrines. Berger (1998) has analyzed how international and domestic forces ingrained antimilitarism into Japan's and Germany's national culture, affecting the subsequent national security strategies of those states. Such works make a strong case that, for a better understanding of international relations, we need to investigate how states' historical and domestic contexts shape their identities in ways that affect their foreign policy choices.

Even as they criticize conventional approaches for treating state interests as exogenous, however, studies that highlight the causal role of cultural factors only rarely explore how cultural norms and identities are formed, making them frequently prone to treat those cultural factors as exogenous themselves despite acknowledging the socially constructed nature of identities (Kowert and Legro 1996). I argue that if we are to construct a reliable theory connecting national identities to foreign policy, we need to show where these national ideas and identities come from and why they drive foreign policy differently in different states. This can be accomplished by going deeper into the causal story and exploring the particular sources of nationalism within states, their predictive powers, and the level of generalizability across similar cases.

I build on constructivist approaches and works in the scholarship of nationalism in exploring national mobilization—the processes of the formation of collective national identities—and how those processes affected the post-Soviet states’ interests, perceptions, and foreign policy choices. This is not to say that material resources or institutional factors are irrelevant; international behavior does not happen in isolation and various material and ideational factors affect foreign policy choices simultaneously. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, basing our analysis solely on structural material factors does not take us very far in explaining the puzzle at the heart of this study. I argue that state-level variations in national mobilization can have stronger explanatory power than conventional material logics in accounting for the diverse asymmetric security strategies adopted towards Russia by the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states.

2.1 National Mobilization Theory

This study aims to explain why weak states choose to adopt balancing or bandwagoning strategies when confronting a much more powerful neighbor. Unlike conventional theories that see the distribution of power or economic and institutional interdependence as the central determinants of states’ foreign policy choices, the theory advanced here proposes that a state’s history and domestic ideological environment profoundly affect its security strategy. In short, the national mobilization of a state can dramatically shape how it perceives a powerful neighbor, influencing the way its leaders confront the decision between balancing and bandwagoning.

My central argument is that particular historical developments prime national mobilization, leading nations to see themselves as unique socio-political units worthy of

independence, and driving their leaders to interpret their former ruler as an unparalleled security threat they must balance against. If national mobilization is strong in a given country, it means that a critical mass of that country's population considers itself distinct enough from other groups to champion its own self-government, striving for a higher level of political autonomy than might be demanded by a nation that is less highly mobilized. This occurs in two ways—one internal to national leaders and another embedded in the relationship between leaders and the national public. First, leaders who have personally internalized their society's nationalism are more likely to see their nation as fundamentally distinct from their neighbors and hence to prioritize their nation-state's policy autonomy vis-à-vis those neighbors. Second, leaders of highly mobilized nations enjoy fertile domestic political conditions to reinforce their control of the state by further inciting nationalism among their population and anchoring their personal authority in national unity and independence. Regardless of their personal convictions, leaders of highly mobilized nations are constrained by public pressures and incentives to adopt policies that are in line with widespread national narratives.

This ideological prioritization of autonomy (both within leaders themselves and across society) makes it more likely that leaders will interpret an overwhelmingly powerful neighbor as a threat that must be balanced against even in the face of a stark military disadvantage. As a result, states that have experienced a high degree of national mobilization should be more likely to rule out the prospect of bandwagoning and adopt balancing strategies instead, while those that are not highly mobilized should be more likely to accept bandwagoning as the path of least resistance. Figure 1 depicts the logic of

national mobilization theory in the form of an arrow diagram, which the following sections develop in greater detail.

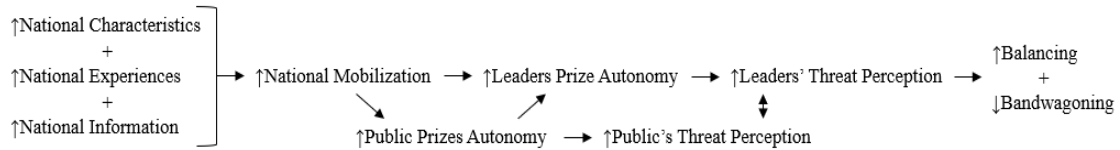


Figure 2.1 National Mobilization Theory Arrow Diagram

2.2 Sources of National Mobilization

Why do some states experience national mobilization differently from others? Nationalist sentiments among modern international leaders may seem nearly ubiquitous, yet there exists considerable variation in the depth and style of nationalism across states. Seminal works trace the emergence of nationalism to only the eighteenth century, implying that it is unlikely to have already saturated all societies in identical ways and to the same degree (Anderson 1991, Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1992, Hroch 1985). Certainly there have always been shared cultures, solidarities, and kinships among people, but until technological and political transformations made it possible for larger numbers of people to connect directly or indirectly and replace hierarchical political systems with more horizontal ones, individuals' primary identification was much narrower than the nation—often they were commanded by presumed divine rulers rather than nations (Mann 1995, 44-45, Hall 1995, 10, Breuilly 1994).

Nationalism is a modern phenomenon, but even in the modern world it is not uniformly experienced. Its emergence is linked not only to particular national characteristics such as ethnicity, language, and religion, but more importantly to the

processes of modernization and industrialization that connect people horizontally (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Gellner 1983). Nationalism is created and strengthened through processes of economic growth, urbanization, expanding education and literacy, and the spreading of standardized cultural narratives. Under these conditions, a large group of people become socio-politically mobilized, creating the solidarity of an “imagined community” through their access to similar information and shared experiences (Anderson 1991, Hobsbawm 1992). These underlying processes responsible for driving nationalism’s emergence do not happen simultaneously everywhere or take the same form in every context, and thus every nation goes through its own path of formation (Connor 1990, Hroch 1985).

Instead of treating nationalism as a uniform concept, national mobilization theory distinguishes among three sources of national mobilization: *national characteristics*, *national experiences*, and *national information*. This more nuanced conceptualization of nationalism helps us to parse out causal processes, as well as to clarify why earlier studies relying solely on national characteristics have proven inconsistent at best in explaining states’ international behavior. Alongside the relatively stable descriptive characteristics that national populations frequently use as markers to distinguish themselves from other groups, national mobilization theory builds on seminal works in the field in proposing that two other sources of nationalism—shared experiences and information dissemination mechanisms—are even more important determinants of a nation’s mobilization and hence its threat perception and foreign policy choices.

2.2.1 National Characteristics

Shared characteristics such as ethnicity, language, and religion have frequently acted as important building blocks of national identity, used by members of the nation and its leaders to distinguish themselves from other nations and to justify their social and political uniqueness. Some scholars argue that ethnicity is the core of all forms of nationalism, emphasizing blood ties to the community and seeing “the boundary of the nation as circumscribed by the boundary of a particular ethnic group” (Motyl 2001, 151, Smith 1991, 19-42, Connor 1994). Yet while ethnic kinship may be subjectively experienced as something concrete to unite around, ethnic identities themselves are socially constructed—based more on a shared belief in common ancestry than on any fact-based origin common to all members of an ethnic group. Some emphasize the importance of shared language as a central element of nationalism, while others point out that what matters is not what specific language a given group speaks but how accessible that language is as a medium to connect people and create the “imagined community” (Anderson 1991, 69-84, Hobsbawm 1992, 58-60). Religion is another factor often closely intertwined with nationalism given that its ancient roots and standardized rituals offer a strong unifying experience (Hobsbawm 1992, 67-68). That said, no specific religion, ethnicity, or language is either necessary or sufficient to produce a nation and nationalism. There are far more ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups than there are nations, and many nations include multiple ethnicities, languages, and religions. In fact, such characteristics can sometimes dampen national loyalties as they cut across national lines (e.g., pan-Slavic or pan-Islamic identities).

As a result, while such national characteristics are important elements of nation-building, their predictive power for international behavior is limited. I argue that such attributes become relevant when they are activated in conjunction with other elements in processes of national mobilization. What matters more than such relatively static characteristics are the more dynamic shared experiences and shared information that emotionally connect large numbers of people, construct the social meanings of their cultural attributes, and generate horizontal national mobilization.

2.2.2 National Experiences

National experiences are significant historical events and processes experienced in common by large numbers of people, which offer a foundation of collective memories on which those people can unite into a distinct and coherent socio-political unit. Through the memories of these experiences (both positive and negative), members of the community become emotionally linked, laying the groundwork for a collective identity (Calhoun 1997, 51-53). Even as current retellings often mix myth and reality in exaggerating and glorifying past experiences, having specific factual reference points that the entire national population recognizes and with which it identifies is crucial for successful national mobilization. More traumatic or jubilatory events that affected broad swathes of the national population serve this purpose more strongly. Interstate wars regularly rank among the most important junctures, prompting leaders to frequently latch onto those conflicts in their efforts to anchor their nation's collective memory and sense of community. As scholars of state formation have argued, national sentiments can be created through wars, which are used as assets for further mobilization (Mann 1993, 117, Tilly 2002, Posen 1993).

Another example of a shared experience that bonds societies into nations and helps them define themselves as distinct from others is the past experience of being an independent political entity. When a nation is directly associated with a state possessing recognized sovereignty over a particular territory, its citizens' self-image as a nation becomes grounded in a physical presence and a shape on the map. As Hans Kohn (1939, 1013) described it, "The most important outward factor in the formation of nationalities is a common territory, or rather the state. Political frontiers tend to establish nationalities. Many new nationalities, like the Canadian, were formed entirely because they comprised a political and geographic entity." Like wars, leaders incorporate past experiences of independence into efforts to craft their nation's current self-image, motivating their co-nationals to see themselves as part of a unique group, to strive to maintain their nationhood, and to restore and/or defend their independence.

2.2.3 National Information

Societies and their leaders translate shared experiences and characteristics into a collective identity by cultivating national information, a broad pool of common knowledge, memories, and understandings spread throughout society by mechanisms such as public education and mass media. These information dissemination mechanisms facilitate the horizontal diffusion of national identity across large numbers of people, reinforcing their feelings of membership in and their allegiance to wider communities than the ones with which they interact on a daily basis (Anderson 1991, Breuilly 1994). Through such dissemination, the national public accesses similar information about its shared history, symbols, and myths—the building blocks of collective identity—and this common mentality reinforces its members' feelings of belonging and directs them

“toward a common mental preparedness for common attitudes and common actions” (Kohn 1939, 1009, Gellner 1983).

National experiences such as struggles for independence and international conflicts are essential elements for nation-building as described in the previous section, but they would not live up to their potential as shared national memories without widely-disseminated national information about those past events. Thus, national mobilization results from a synergy between shared characteristics, shared historical experiences, and the horizontal spread of shared information. Only when many people have access to the same information can human characteristics and historical events unite nations.

In sum, while all three sources of national mobilization play a part, they differ in their roles and relative importance and hence their effects on states’ foreign policies. A weak state might or might not share some national characteristics with a powerful neighbor, but ultimately what should most affect its foreign policy choices are not any cultural similarities but rather the degree to which shared experiences and effective information dissemination carried it through processes of national mobilization. Nations with past experiences of autonomous control over specific territories, international recognition of their independence, and active social and political participation by large portions of their populations should be particularly mobilized and prone to see themselves as unique socio-political units. States representing nations mobilized in this way should also be particularly prone to see powerful former rulers as threats that must be balanced against.

2.3 From National Mobilization to Threat Perception

How does national mobilization affect threat perception? Despite the relative theoretical hegemony of realist approaches based on the distribution of power among proximate states, their unique historical and domestic processes of national mobilization offer a more compelling explanation for the diverging threat perceptions and security strategies of the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states. Two states might have similar experiences of being occupied by the same imperial power and after achieving independence occupy similar regional positions of asymmetric weakness, yet varied histories of national mobilization may cause them to hold distinct interpretations of their past experiences of domination and the current threat posed by their powerful neighbor, leading them to adopt contrasting security strategies.

National mobilization affects states' threat perception in several ways. The most significant characteristic of highly mobilized nations is their prioritization of political autonomy. Unlike cultural communities of past eras, the modern nation-state that emerged parallel to the industrial revolution during the eighteenth century is distinct in prioritizing political autonomy as the central mobilizing principle (Gellner 1983, 1-5, Kohn 1967). Forming a nation implies a large number of people becoming socially mobilized as they create a shared popular culture, feeling connectedness and solidarity with each other. Higher mobilization translates into stronger solidarity among co-nationals and a collective self-image distinct enough from other nations to merit self-rule, as well as the aspiration to protect and strengthen their nationhood and political autonomy. Through the processes described in the previous section, highly mobilized

nations grow particularly determined to strive for sovereignty, and once they have gained political independence remain particularly determined to preserve it.

Not all nation-states are highly mobilized, and not all prioritize political autonomy above other preferences. Nations can exist without possessing their own sovereign states, and sometimes their desire for autonomy may be limited to cultural autonomy (Smith 1991, 74). Even after gaining formal independence, nations vary in how much they cherish their political autonomy, and since national mobilization is historically and socially constructed, this variation exists not only across nations, but also across time within each nation. This is an important distinction: in contrast to conventional systemic perspectives assuming that states uniformly value their survival as autonomous political units (e.g. Mearsheimer 2001, Waltz 1979), the perspective adopted here expects significant variations across nation-states in this regard which then produces notable variations in their threat perceptions and behavior.

How does the relative value of autonomy for highly-mobilized and less mobilized nations affect the way they perceive and react to international threats? Mobilized nations that prioritize autonomy will be more inclined to perceive powerful states that used to dominate them as irredeemable threats to their nationhood. It is important to clarify that the heightened value of autonomy amplifies a state's skepticism and fears of its past foes, so not just any powerful state would attract the same attention. This is because a nation does not emerge in a vacuum—national mobilization takes place within historical context and in relation to other nations. As a nation mobilizes, its collective identity becomes defined not purely through internal processes of shared experiences and developing unique characteristics, but also through interactions with other nations. In fact, the

formation of national identity is the very process of a nation comparing itself to other nations and differentiating itself from them: “national identity becomes meaningful only through contrast with others” (Triandafyllidou 1998, 593).

A powerful nearby state that has threatened or violated its autonomy in the recent past naturally becomes a significant “other” for the mobilizing nation to define itself against, and the memories of that past threat to its identity live on through national mythology and rhetoric, driving present perceptions of that state as an enduring threat (Triandafyllidou 1998). National mobilization actively cultivates the memories of negative past interactions with former adversaries, incorporating them into current narratives surrounding the nation’s self-image. As the importance of autonomy and the “us vs. them” divide grow starker, so do the perceptions of a powerful former ruler as an existential threat to the nation’s current autonomy.

This argument—that national mobilization drives states to view certain peers as more threatening due to their role as “others” in the construction of national identity—represents a substantial contribution to the existing literature regarding how states assess each other’s intentions. Intentions have been taken seriously as a component of threat perception dating back to Stephen Walt’s (1987) balance-of-threat theory, but recent scholarship on this subject has tended to paint all states with the same broad brush. For example, Sebastian Rosato (2015) has argued that states can never reliably discern the intentions of their powerful peers, forcing them to rely on worst-case assumptions if they want to survive. Other scholars maintain that such worst-case assumptions and the policies they provoke are almost always inefficient wastes of state resources, instead

arguing that states seek to discern each other's intentions based on their actions, words, domestic characteristics, etc. (Glaser et al. 2016).

Yet it is far from clear why we should expect all states to approach the assessment of intentions in the same way—whether always assuming the worst or rationally predicting the most probable. This study suggests that a state's experience of national mobilization has a profound impact on the way it assesses the threat posed by a powerful former ruler. State power and the fact of past domination are no doubt important, but the diversity of security strategies among the weaker post-Soviet states provides ample evidence that even nations with a similar past experience of domination and similar power asymmetries can interpret the current intentions of their former ruler very differently. Highly mobilized nations that have defined their national identity in opposition to their powerful neighbor and who prioritize their own political autonomy will be fearful of once again being dominated by that powerful neighbor, and hence will be more likely perceive it as a major security threat even where it has shown minimal provocation in its words or actions. On the other hand, less mobilized nations placing less emphasis on political autonomy will be less concerned with the risks of sacrificing autonomy and hence less likely to perceive their former ruler as an overwhelming security threat.

2.4 From Threat Perception to Security Strategy

The next question concerns how national mobilization affects states' foreign policy choices. When dealing with a powerful potential threat, states may choose between two fundamental strategies: balancing and bandwagoning. Balancing involves a state

directly opposing the threat by strengthening its internal military, economic, and organizational capabilities or forming external allies to jointly confront the threat. In contrast, bandwagoning involves joining forces with the threat in the hope that cooperation may divert its wrath and even generate spoils (Mearsheimer 2001, Walt 1987, Waltz 1979). The realist perspective expects that states seeking to survive in the international system will pursue internal balancing strategies when possible, external balancing when internal balancing is not sufficient, and bandwagoning strategies only when all balancing seems futile (Mearsheimer 2001, Morrow 1991, Rosato 2011). But this standard account of states' preferences, threat perceptions, and foreign policy strategies requires reassessment when taking into account their nationalist mobilization.

As described above, states vary in how much importance they assign political autonomy and how they interpret both the past domination and current threat posed by their former ruler. Highly mobilized nations will see a powerful former ruler as a current major security threat, and hence it makes sense that they would like to balance against it if possible. But national mobilization theory goes a step further in proposing that highly mobilized nations should prioritize balancing strategies even when a stark power asymmetry and lack of available external allies might imply that such strategies will prove futile. In such cases, a realist balance-of-power approach expects weak states to adopt bandwagoning strategies as the only option available to them with any chance to avoid attracting hostile attention from the powerful threat.

Yet national mobilization alters how these strategies are interpreted. Highly mobilized nations will not see bandwagoning with a powerful threat as a viable option for political survival. At minimum, bandwagoning inherently involves a sacrifice of external

autonomy—aligning foreign policies and subordinating military forces—that national leaders who prioritize autonomy will consider too much of a compromise of their sovereignty to tolerate. To them, such a strategy would appear to pursue survival by undermining that very survival. In addition, the emotional components of nationalism such as pride and loyalty to their nation will create potent domestic political conditions casting as treacherous leaders who adopt the unpopular position of advocating cooperation with a former ruler (widely perceived as a current enemy).

Less-mobilized nations do not prioritize political autonomy as much and hence feel less compelled to interpret a former ruler as their major security threat. As a result, less-mobilized nations might see bandwagoning as a preferred strategy—not necessarily as a desperate option to avoid attack from a powerful state, but as a potentially profitable option offering a lucrative economic and military partnership with a powerful ally. In consequence, while less nationally mobilized states' behavior might match the predicted outcome of the realist perspective on bandwagoning, the causal logic behind this foreign policy choice will be in line with the nationalist perspective—they bandwagon with a powerful state not because they care about survival per se, but because they are more willing to sacrifice autonomy in pursuit of other interests.

How do these national perceptions and preferences translate into state policies? After all, the state is not synonymous with the nation: the “state refers to a set of autonomous institutions in a given territory, while the nation denotes a type of cultural and historical community” (Smith 2008, 144). Within state institutions, particular individuals have the power to make foreign policy decisions. Conventional state-centric theories expect states to have fixed preferences (survival and economic gain being central

among them), and state leaders should act rationally to meet these preferences under given constraints. National mobilization theory departs from this view by arguing that states' preferences and behavior are not independent of their history and domestic context, that they can vary across states and time periods, and that a nation's self-image and prevalent public perceptions of its former ruler affect both the states' preferences and its leader's foreign policy decisions.

This can happen through two different mechanisms that connect national mobilization to leaders' decision making. The first mechanism is the direct one where state leaders emerging from a nationally mobilized society themselves embody the nationalist views prevalent within their society. Their own internalized nationalism makes such leaders see their nation as profoundly distinct from others and prioritize its political autonomy, driving them to interpret their former ruler as the primary current threat to balance against. In fact, it is particularly common in newly independent states to see the emergence of charismatic nationalist leaders, who become formal leaders of their respective states after demonstrating their devotion to national values and galvanizing society with their rhetoric and actions. The uncertainty associated with newly-gained independence is fertile ground for the emergence of leaders who manage to induce a sense of continuity by connecting themselves to past national heroes and a sense of national mission—they become “a bridge between the discredited past and the uncertain future” (Willner and Willner 1965, 81). These leaders utilize their status to further popularize nationalist agendas that they genuinely believe in and work to advance their nationalist goals through both their domestic and foreign policy choices.

The second mechanism is the indirect one where, regardless of their personal stance, state leaders decide to adopt nationalist views because those views are prevalent among their constituent populations. The leaders of highly mobilized nations recognize that in order to stay in power and strengthen their authority they should reflect popular sentiments, further stimulate nationalism in their respective states, and amplify calls for internal unity and independence from external powers. These leaders have incentives to harvest public support by actively targeting a powerful former ruler as their primary security threat, and in order to further strengthen their domestic political capital they prioritize balancing strategies over bandwagoning. In this scenario, the public and leaders have both incentives and opportunities to reinforce each other's nationalist perspectives and threat perceptions. A nationally mobilized society incentivizes its leaders to reflect prevalent sentiments, while leaders themselves have a unique position to influence public opinion thanks to their platform and authority, which they can use to further incite national mobilization. Thus, both mechanisms produce the same effects on state leaders' threat perceptions and their foreign policy choices.

Leaders' foreign policy choices that may seem irrational when viewed through the lens of power politics (such as balancing against an overwhelmingly powerful neighbor) become reasonable when taking into account their domestic ideological context. In cases of high national mobilization, conventional power and material calculations become secondary for state leaders' foreign policy decisions. Their behavior remains rational insofar as it is based on their preferences, but instead of preferences as conventionally understood to reflect the material interests of the state as a whole, they are guided by the preferences of their respective nations that are formed in distinct historical and local

contexts. A state representing a mobilized nation might be weak and lack allies to effectively balance against the powerful neighbor, but in the national ideological context where political autonomy is highly valued and a former ruler is perceived as a major security threat, bandwagoning with it is simply deemed unacceptable, inclining leaders to prioritize balancing despite their military disadvantage. Leaders of weak states might well know that ostracizing a powerful neighbor can have negative economic and even military consequences, but strong domestic ideological forces may override cold strategic calculations in driving their foreign policy choices. Just as nationalism motivates individuals to risk their lives for their identity, so does it motivate nations to fight for their autonomy.

High national mobilization alters state leaders' calculations by narrowing the pool of foreign policy options seen as acceptable by their society. Nationalism has an emotional component to it expressed in peoples' pride, loyalty, and readiness for sacrifice for their respective nations (Strenski 2002, Stern 1995). Leaders will fear being labeled traitors if they attempt to bandwagon with a former ruler widely suspected of aiming to dominate them again. In addition, a nationally mobilized population will incline leaders towards balancing strategies by displaying a willingness to risk retaliation and forgo hardships if they believe it is a necessary step towards their collective goals of independence, and even if only future generations will reap the benefits of this sacrifice. Thus state leaders in such cases are not acting irrationally; instead, they are responding to a domestic ideological environment saturated by national mobilization, which limits their available foreign policy choices while making public support for their preferred policies resilient.

Conversely, when nations are not highly mobilized and political autonomy is not the central priority, the main preferences of such societies center on the economic and physical wellbeing of individuals, and state leaders may adopt foreign policies based on these material calculations. The individuals whose wellbeing leaders care about may be more or fewer depending on regime type, but the role of low national mobilization is the same. Less nationally mobilized states are less likely to interpret their former ruler as a major security threat and instead free to consider it as a potential economic and security partner. State leaders have the freedom to choose cooperative strategies without fear of being framed as traitors by their respective populations if they decide to bandwagon.

From this analysis it logically follows that leaders of states with high national mobilization should be more likely to interpret their former ruler as a major security threat and adopt balancing strategies against it, while leaders of states with lower national mobilization should be more likely to base their policies on material calculations and potentially bandwagon with their former ruler.

2.5 Predictions and Tests

National mobilization theory proposes that high levels of national mobilization within newly independent states influence their choices between bandwagoning and balancing strategies towards their powerful former ruler by elevating their prioritization of autonomy and their perceptions of that former ruler as a threat. Testing this theory requires demonstrating the existence of the proposed association between its independent and dependent variables, as well as showing that this association is a result of the theorized causal mechanism. In addition to demonstrating the proposed causal association

and mechanisms at play, I evaluate the theory against the most prominent alternatives to determine to what degree each of them is confirmed or disconfirmed and to evaluate their relative explanatory powers. The analysis proceeds in two parts, including one broader and two more narrowly-focused empirical chapters. The first empirical chapter examines the correlations between the various hypothesized causal factors and the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states' foreign policy choices towards Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The latter two empirical chapters conduct in-depth case studies of Georgia and Kazakhstan that test the specific causal mechanisms at play.

The central puzzle under investigation is the variation of newly independent post-Soviet states' foreign policy choices towards Russia in the immediate aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Some post-Soviet states decided to balance against Russia, while others prioritized bandwagoning with it. Can national mobilization theory explain this variation better than the alternative theories? To determine the relative predictive powers of each theory, we need to evaluate their theoretical predictions against the data. Below I list the central predictions from each theory analyzed in the earlier sections.

Realist theory predicts that the newly independent post-Soviet states should choose bandwagoning or balancing strategies towards Russia based on balance of power logic given the opportunities and constraints created by their positions in the distribution of international power. States should balance against Russia if they possess a credible internal path to fielding a competitive military or sufficient deterrent, or if they enjoy potential allies capable of jointly deterring Russia. On the other hand, realist logic predicts that weak states incapable of balancing internally and lacking options for

external alliances should bandwagon with Russia as their best chance to avoid possible attack from that powerful neighbor. In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union, realist theory therefore predicts that the three post-Soviet states which inherited nuclear capabilities (Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan) should have balanced against Russia, while the other post-Soviet states should have bandwagoned with Russia due to their overwhelming weakness unless offered a credible and quick path to membership in an alliance capable of deterring potential Russian aggression.

Liberal theory predicts that states' foreign policy choices are primarily influenced by economic incentives and institutional interdependence. All fourteen states were highly interdependent during the Soviet Union and almost all of them, with the exception of oil-rich Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, had very tangible economic incentives to remain engaged in Russia's market. Thus, liberal theory predicts that after the collapse of the Soviet Union Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan should prioritize economic independence, while the other twelve states should prioritize bandwagoning and cooperation with Russia.

Cultural similarity approaches propose that states base their balancing and bandwagoning choices on cultural similarities. As a result, this perspective predicts that post-Soviet states representing the Orthodox civilization (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia) should have bandwagoned with Russia, while those representing the Western and Islamic civilizations should have viewed Russia as a greater threat and hence worked to balance against it.

In contrast, national mobilization theory proposes that states with highly mobilized nations should especially value political autonomy, be more likely to view

their former ruler as an existential threat, and prioritize balancing, while states with less national mobilization should be more likely to bandwagon with their powerful neighbor. Therefore, it predicts that the post-Soviet states that were highly mobilized as nations by the time the Soviet Union was disintegrated (e.g., the Baltic states and Georgia) should balance against Russia, while the post-Soviet states that were less nationally mobilized by that time (e.g., the Central Asian states and Belarus) should be more likely to bandwagon with Russia.

In Chapter 3, I utilize historical data on these dependent and independent variables to examine whether states' respective levels of national mobilization are associated with their balancing/bandwagoning choices towards Russia, comparing that correlation with those produced by alternative explanatory factors such as the post-Soviet states' relative power and alliance prospects, economic incentives and interdependence, or cultural similarities to Russia. Demonstrating a strong association between its proposed independent and dependent variables while simultaneously showing the relative weakness of alternative explanations, this comparative analysis represents an important test for the theory that establishes a baseline of plausibility for it. This confirmation is especially significant given that the alternative theories represent the established conventional wisdom, and by contradicting their logic national mobilization theory enters the analysis with relatively low prior confidence in the existence of a causal relationship between its proposed independent and dependent variables.

The reasoning behind selecting these fourteen post-Soviet states for the general correlational analysis is manifold. First, it provides substantial variation in the phenomenon that the study aims to explain: the weaker successor states' balancing and

bandwagoning choices towards their powerful former ruler. National mobilization theory may also be applied to other cases of empires splitting into fewer successor states, but our ability to test it benefits greatly from this variation in the dependent variable. Second, this selection of states displays significant variation in the experience of national mobilization, the central independent variable of the study theorized to be the key predictor of states' foreign policy behavior. In addition, the fact that the post-Soviet states endured many similar experiences under centralized Soviet rule for multiple generations controls for many potential socio-institutional factors, offering rich ground for most-similar case comparisons. Finally, the many conflicts and enduring instability of the region, combined with Russia's importance on the global political stage merit further scrutiny to better understand these dynamics.

This correlational analysis offers only an initial corroboration of the theory. It alone is insufficient to make persuasive inferences about whether the post-Soviet states' security strategies were driven by national mobilization theory's causal logic. Good theory testing requires not only the demonstration of the existence of the hypothesized association between variables, but showing that the proposed causal mechanism is in fact what is connecting the cause and effect. Chapters 4 and 5 conduct in-depth case studies that empirically test whether the course of events and decisions in Georgia and Kazakhstan reflect national mobilization theory's causal logic or whether factors highlighted by the alternative theories offer a better explanation for those countries' behavior.

Why were these two cases selected for deeper analysis? The in-depth case studies serve a different goal from the correlational chapter in testing the causal logic between

variables, and thus the relevant criteria for selecting cases are different. When testing a theory's causal mechanisms through process tracing, one of the most meaningful avenues for analysis is to select representative cases—where both the proposed cause and effect are either present or absent—and to evaluate whether one is in fact connected to another through the theorized causal logic. The cases of Georgia and Kazakhstan represent clear cases of balancing and bandwagoning security strategies toward Russia as well as distinct cases of high and low national mobilization. Georgia was one of the first states to declare independence from the Soviet Union even before it officially disintegrated and Georgia also declined to join the CIS, the Russia-led organization to facilitate cooperation among newly independent post-Soviet states. In contrast, Kazakhstan was the last member to reluctantly leave the Soviet Union, and it immediately joined the CIS with the goal of reintegration with Russia.

In addition, both Georgia's and Kazakhstan's foreign policies towards Russia represent puzzles for conventional perspectives. Each of the alternative theories predicts that the militarily and economically weak Georgia which shared Orthodox civilization with Russia should have bandwagoned with it. Yet Georgia prioritized balancing against Russia in defiance of balance-of-power calculations, economic incentives, and cultural similarity. In the case of Kazakhstan, the realist, liberal, and cultural-similarity theories predict that this post-Soviet state rich with natural resources, representing the Islamic civilization, and emerging from the Soviet Union with nuclear capabilities should have balanced against its powerful former ruler. Yet Kazakhstan prioritized bandwagoning and was enthusiastic to reintegrate with Russia both economically and militarily in the aftermath of the Soviet Union.

These case studies utilize process-tracing methodology, which is the best tool available to establish causality by tracing within-case empirical material demonstrating the workings of causal mechanisms at play (Beach and Pedersen 2019, George and Bennett 2005, Mahoney 2012). This approach requires explicit theoretical unpacking of the causal logic as well as empirical demonstration of the presence or absence of the expected observables at each step of the causal chain (Beach 2017, Russo and Williamson 2007, Illari, Russo, and Williamson 2011, Machamer 2004). Process tracing conducted in this manner allows us to establish a strong case for causality between the independent and dependent variables by demonstrating that the sequence of events and the available evidence of actors' motivations match the theorized expectations.

In the case study of Georgia, I seek to answer the following question: Why did Georgia prioritize balancing against Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union? The central task is to establish whether Georgia's high national mobilization was in fact what led it to prioritize balancing strategies against Russia, or if other theories provide better explanations for this outcome. In brief, national mobilization theory predicts that Georgia, having undergone a relatively intense process of national mobilization, should have experienced a correspondingly intense national identity framed in "us vs. them" terms against Russia. Its people and leaders should have placed an especially high value on their national political autonomy. Seeing Russia as the greatest threat to that autonomy, they should have rejected bandwagoning as entailing an unacceptable sacrifice of autonomy and instead prioritized balancing against their powerful former ruler. In contrast, realist theory predicts that Georgian leaders should have based their threat perceptions on power realities and their security strategies on systemic incentives and

constraints; liberal theory predicts that Georgian leaders should have chosen their partners and adversaries on the basis of economic opportunities and international institutions; and cultural-similarity theory predicts that Georgian leaders should have seen states sharing their Orthodox civilization as less threatening than those embodying alien civilizations.

The second in-depth case study, on Kazakhstan, seeks to answer the question: Why did Kazakhstan prioritize bandwagoning with Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union? In answering this question I test the prediction that a state's low national mobilization makes it more likely to bandwagon with its former ruler. Here national mobilization theory predicts that Kazakhstan, as a less-mobilized nation by the 1990, should have a less pronounced "us vs. them" mentality towards its powerful former ruler. Its people and leaders should assign less value to their national political autonomy, allowing their leaders to reach a more benign interpretation of Russian intentions and view the sacrifice of foreign policy autonomy involved in bandwagoning as a worthwhile tradeoff to achieve economic and security benefits. In contrast, realist theory predicts that Kazakh leaders should have based their threat perceptions on power realities and should have seen their nuclear inheritance as a profound balancing tool; liberal theory predicts that Kazakh leaders should have prioritized economic and institutional considerations; and cultural-similarity theory predicts that Kazakh leaders should have seen powerful neighbors not sharing their Islamic civilization as profound threats.

Each of these in-depth case studies provide an opportunity for more credible inferences about the theory's proposed causal logic by unpacking causal components that can be confirmed or disconfirmed by the gathered data. This approach requires more

nuanced historical data on the sequence of events under investigation as well as the motivations behind leaders' decisions. I use primary and secondary sources to assess the prevalent national preferences in states, public and leaders' threat perceptions, leaders' foreign policy choices, and their motivations and reasoning for selecting particular policies. While secondary sources provide valuable information about the sequence of important events, actions, and contextual motivations of actors, primary sources such as transcripts of congressional debates, official statements, and testimonies of actors offer unique evidence bearing on which causal logic was at play. The detailed elaboration of causal mechanisms on one hand leads to better causal theories as they allow thorough logical scrutiny, and on the other hand by making possible the empirical study of each causal component it leads to the possibility of stronger causal inferences about the theorized causal process (Beach 2017).

In addition to secondary sources, the Georgia case study benefited from two summers of field work in Tbilisi, Georgia, including research at the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia and the Central Archive of Contemporary History. From these two main sources I was able to gather theoretically important historical data on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Georgia, as well as primary accounts of Georgia's leaders decision-making processes in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. The Kazakhstan case study was bolstered by numerous primary and secondary sources made available by a research fellowship at the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

CHAPTER 3. EXAMINING POST-SOVIET SECURITY STRATEGIES

What explains variations in the weaker post-Soviet states' foreign policy choices towards Russia in the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union? As Chapter 2 discussed, national mobilization theory aims to improve upon the shortcomings of previous explanations based on realism, liberalism, and cultural similarity. For first-cut correlational analysis across all fourteen weaker post-Soviet states, this chapter operationalizes the dependent variable as well as the central predictors of each theory using relevant proxy variables. The resulting correlations and comparisons illustrate clear patterns against which each theory's predictions can be tested.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into six sections. The first provides a brief historical appraisal of the weaker post-Soviet states' foreign policy choices (the dependent variable), including the rationales for operationalizing them with the specific proxy variables used here. The next four sections take the four competing theories in turn, constructing relevant proxy variables for the causal factors highlighted by each theory and analyzing their predictive powers. The final section concludes by comparing the theories' relative performance on these tests, which offer substantial evidence that national mobilization theory represents an improvement over the conventional wisdom.

3.1 Post-Soviet Security Strategies: The Dependent Variable

To capture the variations across the weaker post-Soviet states' security strategies toward Russia, I construct a categorical proxy variable assessing the relative prevalence of balancing vs. bandwagoning in their foreign policies after the Soviet Union's collapse. I assign each state to one of four categories: *committed balancing* (Lithuania, Latvia,

Estonia), *balancing* (Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova), *ambivalent/neutral* (Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan), and *bandwagoning* (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Armenia). Countries were coded based on a combination of sources including their efforts to join and their participation within regional and international organizations such as the CIS and NATO, their United Nations General Assembly voting records, and their security strategies as developed and applied during the collapse of the Soviet Union and its aftermath.

Although membership in international organizations does not tell us everything, the efforts of these states to join major regional organizations offer a strong first-cut proxy for their post-independence security strategies. Russia sought to channel regional policies through the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) during the early 1990s, and it proceeded to create several other economic and security organizations that offered ready avenues for bandwagoning including the Commonwealth of Independent States Free Trade Area (CISFTA), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), and the Union State of Russia and Belarus. Meanwhile, NATO and the European Union (EU) remained the most prominent Western security and economic organizations, though their doors were not initially open for membership, and some CIS members created the sub-group GUAM to counter Russian influence within that organization. Table 3.1 shows the membership choices of the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states, assigning each state 2 points for joining each pro-Russian organization, -1 point for seeking to compromise Russian influence within the CIS by joining GUAM, and -2 points for pursuing membership in the major Western organizations.

Table 3.1 Post-Soviet States' Organization Membership Choices

Countries	CIS	CISFTA	CSTO	EEU	Union State	GUAM	EU	NATO	Total	Security Strategy
Estonia	0	0	0	0	0	0	-2	-2	-4	Committed Balancing
Latvia	0	0	0	0	0	0	-2	-2	-4	Committed Balancing
Lithuania	0	0	0	0	0	0	-2	-2	-4	Committed Balancing
Georgia	2	0	0	0	0	-1	-2	-2	-3	Balancing
Ukraine	2	2	0	0	0	-1	-2	-2	-1	Balancing
Moldova	2	2	0	0	0	-1	-2	-2	-1	Balancing
Azerbaijan	2	0	0	0	0	-1	0	0	1	Ambivalent/neutral
Turkmenistan	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	Ambivalent/neutral
Uzbekistan	2	2	0	0	0	-1	0	0	3	Ambivalent/neutral
Tajikistan	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	6	Bandwagoning
Armenia	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	8	Bandwagoning
Kazakhstan	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	8	Bandwagoning
Kyrgyzstan	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	8	Bandwagoning
Belarus	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	10	Bandwagoning

As Table 3.1 reflects, the *committed balancers* (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) consistently rejected membership in any of the Russia-led organizations that emerged after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Instead, they consistently pursued membership in the EU and NATO even before those organizations themselves openly contemplated expansion into the post-Soviet sphere, eventually securing membership in both organizations in 2004. The *balancers* (Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova) also sought membership in those Western organizations (so far unsuccessfully) but also demonstrated some engagement with Russia-led organizations. These three states each joined the CIS, though Georgia joined late and then withdrew, while Ukraine was a CIS associate rather than a full member. Ukraine and Moldova also joined the CISFTA. Within the CIS, however, they formed the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Development to chart a course beyond Russian influence.

The *ambivalent/neutral* states (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) exhibited the least interest in participating in regional organizations, whether pro-Russian or Western. Turkmenistan was only an associate member of the CIS. Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan joined the CIS (the latter joined the CISFTA as well) but both of those states also participated in GUAM (temporarily for Uzbekistan, during which time the organization changed its name to GUUAM to reflect its additional member). Finally, the *bandwagoners* (Tajikistan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Belarus) consistently bandwagoned with Russia, not only joining both the CIS and the CISFTA but also participating in one or more of Russia's desired avenues of deeper security and economic integration (the CSTO, the EEU, and the Union State with Belarus).

To check the robustness of these classifications by examining whether these states' broader foreign policy behavior mirrored their organizational membership choices, I also examined two other variables based on the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voting data of these states. The UNGA represents a unique forum where countries disclose their policy preferences on a wide range of issues over a long period of time, and as a result UNGA voting data has become a popular tool for research in international politics (Gartzke 1998, Bearce and Bondanella 2007, Kim and Russett 1996, Lai and Morey 2006). I use the voting similarity index (*agree3un*) found in the UNGA voting dyadic dataset. The index (0-1) is calculated for each dyad-year by dividing a total number of votes on which a given dyad agreed by total number of joint votes—in addition to “yes” and “no” votes, “abstentions” are counted as half-agreements (Voeten 2013). Most UNGA votes concern issues on which most states share uniform positions, making indicators based on the full voting record imply general harmony among states,

but nevertheless substantial variations can be observed. The column labeled *similarity* in Table 3.2 provides each state's average similarity scores to Russia on UNGA votes between 1991 and 2013. While the similarity index for each dyad fluctuates across years due to various internal and external changes, these average scores show each state's overall relative distance from Russia across foreign policy issues.

Table 3.2 Post-Soviet States' Security Strategies

Country	Similarity	Distance	Membership Choices	Security Strategy
Estonia	0.778737		-4	Committed balancing
Latvia	0.778092		-4	Committed balancing
Lithuania	0.782451		-4	Committed balancing
Georgia	0.789153	21.5	-3	Balancing
Ukraine	0.795068	20.63636	-1	Balancing
Moldova	0.787418	22.27273	-1	Balancing
Azerbaijan	0.853278	16.18182	1	Ambivalent/neutral
Turkmenistan	0.842823	20	2	Ambivalent/neutral
Uzbekistan	0.835683	18.875	3	Ambivalent/neutral
Tajikistan	0.877047	14	6	Bandwagoning
Kazakhstan	0.868489	14.18182	8	Bandwagoning
Armenia	0.862187	13.6	8	Bandwagoning
Kyrgyzstan	0.861317	15.22222	8	Bandwagoning
Belarus	0.884128	11.18182	10	Bandwagoning

The column labeled *Distance* in Table 3.2 provides another measure that captures the distance in foreign policy choices between Russia and the eleven post-Soviet states that were CIS members (excluding the Baltic states). This proxy is also based on UNGA voting data but constructed based on different criteria (Hansen 2015). Only the roll-call votes for entire resolutions that were passed between 1992 and 2013 were used, and if a state was absent for more than one-third of total votes in a single session that dyad-year was dropped from the analysis. Each state received a score for its foreign policy distance from Russia between 0 (minimum distance) and 100 (maximum distance), calculated by

assigning 0 points for agreement, ½ point for partial disagreement when voting against the absolute majority in a two-way split, and 1 point for full disagreement when voting against absolute majority in a three-way split. The combined total scores are presented as a share of the total number of votes in the section (Hansen 2015, 71-74). The country scores in the *Distance* column of Table 3.2 were constructed by averaging Hansen (2015, 75) yearly indicators for the eleven states.

It is notable that the *Similarity* and *Distance* columns produce comparable orderings of the post-Soviet states. The *similarity* measure shows a clean break between the committed balancers and balancers on one hand and the ambivalent/neutral states and bandwagoners on the other, as well as less significant but still appropriate distinctions between each of those pairs of groups. The *Distance* measure also sorts the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states into the same four groups, though their orderings within those groups would slightly change if using this as a primary measure. As a result, these measures reinforce the appropriateness of my four-part typology of post-Soviet state security strategies.

Finally, my classifications of the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states into these four categories accurately reflects their security strategies as developed and applied during the collapse of the Soviet Union and its aftermath. The three Baltic states were frontrunners of the secessionist movements within the Soviet Union during the late 1980s that sparked the cascade of declarations of sovereignty and then independence from the union (Walker 2003a, 64, 140). They outright rejected the New Union Treaty, a proposal for structural changes within the Soviet Union that would have decentralized the union in favor of its constituent republics, as this concession fell short of their goal of achieving

full-fledged political independence. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia refused to cooperate with Russia under the newly established CIS (Gleason 1992, 154-155). Instead, they explicitly oriented their foreign policies against Russia and toward the West, never wavering in their determination to join NATO and the European Union, which they eventually did more than ten years later (Kramer 2002, O'Connor 2003, 191-193).

Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine also displayed *balancing*, though these three states were not as cohesive in their foreign policy choices as the Baltic states were. Nevertheless, each of them resisted pressure to bandwagon with Russia and pursuing balancing strategies, even if those strategies took different forms and fluctuated across administrations. Georgia was the most fervent balancer among the three, boycotting the New Union Treaty during the twilight of the Soviet Union, rejected CIS membership in 1991 alongside the Baltic states, and openly orienting itself toward the West (Remnick 1990, Sakwa and Webber 1999, 393-394). Despite this balancing behavior, Georgia belongs in this second group because it reversed its early stance and joined the CIS in 1994, operating as a member of that organization until 2008 when it withdrew. Even within the CIS, however, Georgia continued seeking to counter Russia's influence by forming the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Development along with Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova (Cameron and Orenstein 2012, 33).

Moldova also boycotted the New Union Treaty, and Ukraine ultimately refused to ratify that treaty after initially involvement in the process of negotiating it. Both Ukraine and Moldova joined the CIS after the collapse of the Soviet Union, though Ukraine refused to ratify its charter and thus had only associate status before announcing its intent

to withdraw after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014. Despite all three of these states participating in the CIS, they worked to counter Russian influence within its ranks and displayed distinct foreign policy positions vis-à-vis Russia on many issues (Hansen 2015, 74, 77, Kuzio 2000, 81-82).

Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan adopted security strategies after the breakup of the Soviet Union that were *ambivalent/neutral* toward Russia. More so than any other post-Soviet states, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan have fluctuated between balancing and bandwagoning behavior. Neither of those states actively balanced during the twilight of the Soviet Union, as both participated in drafting and then signing the New Union Treaty. Both went on to join the CIS as independent states in 1991. UNGA voting data also reveals that these two states' similarity index with Russia fluctuated greatly, showing greater convergence with Russia over time after initial divergences. On the other hand, Azerbaijan has been a member of GUAM since its creation in 1997, and Uzbekistan joined that forum as well between 1999 and 2005 (Kubicek 2009, 245-248). Due to that participation some scholars have included Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan in a pro-Western category along with Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova (Kuzio 2000, 82-83), but considering their particularly ambivalent foreign policy preferences it makes more sense to separate them into a distinct category. Turkmenistan arguably represents a closer match due to its consistently neutral foreign policy approach regarding Russia, its steady record of neutrality charting a middle course amidst the wavering perspectives of Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan.

Finally, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Armenia demonstrated *bandwagoning* behavior toward Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Belarus

and Kazakhstan were the most consistent and enthusiastic bandwagoners, advocating the maintenance of the Soviet Union during its twilight and supporting the New Union Treaty (Hale 2009). Once the union disintegrated, Belarus and Kazakhstan also displayed the closest strategic cooperation with Russia in economic and security affairs, not only as active CIS members but also promoters of its various sub-organizations and initiatives including the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (Olcott 2010, 35, Nazarbayev 1996, 98).

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan also consistently bandwagoned with Russia starting in 1990, when they supported the New Union Treaty and held referendums that exhibited overwhelming popular support for the union. Since 1991, both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have been CIS members and have participated in other organizations under the CIS umbrella. Among this group of post-Soviet states, Armenia alone was actively pro-independence and anti-union in 1990, rejecting the New Union Treaty and holding a referendum on independence in 1991. Nevertheless, independent Armenia has consistently and reliably bandwagoned with Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union and has been an active member of the CIS and other Russia-led military and economic organizations.

3.2 Military Power: Realism's Independent Variable

As detailed in the preceding chapters, realist theories base their analysis of states' foreign policy choices primarily on the distribution of military power among them. From this perspective international behavior is largely understood as driven by states' rational calculations on how best to achieve security in the anarchic international system. In order

to explain the variations among post-Soviet states' security strategies towards Russia, therefore, realist logic looks to the distribution of military power among these states.

I use two proxies to gauge variations in military power among the post-Soviet states. The first, *Army*, which assesses the size of each state's armed forces in 1992 based the Correlates of War project's National Material Capabilities dataset (V5.0) (Singer 1988, Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972). Russia's army of 1,900,000 troops was more than three times the size of the next strongest state in the group (Ukraine), dramatically overshadowing all of the weaker post-Soviet states. Clearly none of those other post-Soviet states possessed "sufficient military assets to put up a serious fight in an all-out conventional war" against Russia, Mearsheimer's (2001, 5) threshold for competitiveness. Nevertheless, he and other realists recognize that even a far weaker conventional power may pose a sufficient threat to deter aggression by maintaining a survivable nuclear arsenal. After the break-up of the Soviet Union, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus inherited nuclear weapons alongside Russia, offering those three states a unique opportunity to balance against Russia despite their relative weakness in terms of conventional military capabilities (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Post-Soviet States' Military Capabilities

Countries	Army	Nuclear	Security Strategy
Ukraine	438,000	1	Balancing
Belarus	102,000	1	Bandwagoning
Azerbaijan	43,000	0	Ambivalent/neutral
Uzbekistan	40,000	0	Ambivalent/neutral
Kazakhstan	40,000	1	Bandwagoning
Turkmenistan	28,000	0	Ambivalent/neutral
Georgia	25,000	0	Balancing
Armenia	20,000	0	Bandwagoning
Kyrgyzstan	12,000	0	Bandwagoning
Lithuania	10,000	0	Committed balancing
Moldova	9,000	0	Balancing
Latvia	5,000	0	Committed balancing
Tajikistan	3,000	0	Bandwagoning
Estonia	3,000	0	Committed balancing
Russia	1,900,000	1	

Table 3.3 indicates that military power is a poor predictor of variations among the post-Soviet states foreign policy towards Russia. The asymmetry between Russia and each of the fourteen other post-Soviet states is stark: Russia's army of 1,900,000 is so much larger than its peers' that even if all fourteen weaker post-Soviet states hypothetically joined forces (ignoring their lack of shared desire or logistical/organizational capability to do so), their combined army would still number less than half of Russia's (778,000). Based on this proxy, realist logic clearly predicts that all of these weak states should have bandwagoned with Russia. If any significant qualitative differences emerged among their security strategies, Ukraine appears the most likely to have potentially stood out from the pack as the only weaker post-Soviet state even within striking distance of investing in a capable defensive force.

Beyond conventional military capabilities, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus each inherited nuclear arsenals when the Soviet Union collapsed. These offered a unique

opportunity to avoid the risks of conventional military vulnerability by investing in a survivable nuclear deterrent. Realist logic predicts that those states should have sought to retain their nuclear weapons rather than trust Russia to respect their sovereignty in the future regardless of any paper guarantees it might offer (Mearsheimer 1993). Not only did those three states fail to seize this unique opportunity, however, two of them (Kazakhstan and Belarus) prioritized bandwagoning with Russia rather than even attempt to provide security for themselves. Even Ukraine turned over its nuclear weapons to Russia despite orienting its foreign policy more towards balancing.

To be sure, there were other factors affecting those states' decisions to give up their nuclear weapons such as external pressure from both Russia and the West as well as economic and political incentives including international recognition and significant financial compensation for giving up nuclear weapons. While these factors loom larger for liberal and constructivist perspective, however, when looking through the realist prism they are all secondary to the credible guarantees of national survival they would have held by maintaining their nuclear weapons. Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea from the no-longer-nuclear Ukraine and its subsequent role in sponsoring separatist war in Ukraine's eastern regions illustrate this point vividly. As a result, the fact that all three states gave up their nuclear weapons violates realist predictions.

Realist logic expects all fourteen states to interpret Russia as a primary threat, to seek to balance against it if possible and resort to bandwagoning only if necessary. Yet their actual foreign policy behavior after the breakup of the Soviet Union violates this prediction as well. Not all of the other fourteen post-Soviet states interpreted Russia as a primary threat. Even states that were relatively well positioned to pursue their security

independently like Belarus and Kazakhstan were among the most enthusiastic bandwagoners, prioritizing unwavering cooperation with Russia. In contrast, many of the weakest post-Soviet states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia, and Moldova) prioritized balancing despite their extreme power asymmetry and the risk of Russian retaliation.

Besides a state's own military capabilities, realist logic also considers the possibility of external balancing. A state might be too weak to feasibly confront a threatening adversary alone but might still pursue balancing if it can find one or more powerful allies that are willing and able to provide credible security guarantees on its behalf. none of the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states had credible security guarantees from external powers as they were making fundamental decisions to balance or bandwagon with Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, however. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia did become members of NATO, but the door to NATO membership initially appeared closed, only inching open as the 1990s progressed and with their membership ultimately coming in 2004, more than a decade after the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

When the Baltic states decided to reject cooperation with Russia and participation in the Russia-led CIS during the early 1990s, they did so without any hint of security guarantees from the West capable of satisfying realist predictions. On the contrary, most Western governments feared regional destabilization and nuclear proliferation amidst the Soviet Union's collapse, and hence went out of their way not to encourage secessionist movements within the Soviet Union. Several Western leaders had also developed positive relationships with Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev and openly expressed their desire

to see him continue with the liberalization and democratization of the Soviet Union rather than oversee its dissolution (Walker 2003a, 65-66).

While Western leaders and publics alike were generally sympathetic to the principle of self-determination and hence to the Soviet republics' struggles for independence, the official message rejecting any potential security guarantees was nevertheless clear. For example, U.S. Ambassador to Moscow Jack Matlock warned representatives of Lithuania's popular front in 1989 that "under no circumstances" should they assume that "the United States or any other foreign country would be able to help them directly if their action brought on military and economic sanctions from Moscow" (Matlock 1995, 230-231). Some leaders in the Soviet Union's Eastern European republics may have dreamed of NATO membership, but no realist would equate the desire for allies with security, and all of these states knew that any potential admission to NATO was not immanent and definitely not immediate. Thus, their balancing behavior contradicts realist predictions that weak states lacking allies will bandwagon with powerful neighbors (Waltz 1979, 113, Walt 1987, 24, 31).

In sum, realist predictions based on states' relative military power are largely unsubstantiated and incapable of explaining variations among the weaker post-Soviet states' foreign policy choices toward Russia. We need to look to other approaches for help explaining why two of the relatively stronger post-Soviet states that possessed nuclear capabilities enthusiastically bandwagoned with Russia (Kazakhstan and Belarus) while several of the weakest that lacked external allies nevertheless chose to risk retaliation by balancing against Russia (Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Georgia and Moldova). That said, threat perceptions and strategic logics cannot be directly observed

nor directly inferred from state behavior, so Chapters 4 and 5 investigate further the role of strategic considerations in leaders' decision-making processes through case studies of Georgia and Kazakhstan.

3.3 Economic Incentives and Interdependence: Liberalism's Independent Variables

Liberal approaches emphasize the roles of economic incentives and interdependence driving international behavior. Liberal logic expects states to value absolute gains, which inclines them towards cooperation for mutual gain, and liberal scholars look to international institutions to facilitate that cooperation by providing channels of communication, reducing costs of transactions, and establishing shared system of norms for cooperation (Keohane and Martin 1995, 41-42, Keohane 1984). This chapter uses two proxies to test liberal predictions regarding the post-Soviet states' foreign policy choices (Table 3.4). One of them captures the level of states' economic interdependence by measuring the percentage of each Soviet republic's total trade in 1990 (imports and exports) that was conducted within the Soviet Union with Russia and the other thirteen states (*Intraunion Trade*). I constructed this variable using data from the World Bank's 1992 report on trade of the states of the former USSR (Michalopoulos and Tarr 1992, 37).

The second proxy assesses the extent to which each post-Soviet state's terms of trade would benefit or lose by leaving the ruble zone and switching to world prices (*Price of Exit*). I adopted this measure from Abdelal (2001, 70-72), who constructed it based on Tarr's (1994) analysis of the effect of switching to world prices on the post-Soviet states. Russia continued subsidizing the other newly independent states after the breakup of the

Soviet Union, enabling them to pay 60-70% below world prices for energy and other materials, but it was not willing to subsidize those that prioritized economic independence and chose to leave the ruble zone, facing those states with a direct and significant economic loss. Despite the removal of Russian subsidies, leaving the ruble zone and switching to world prices stood to benefit energy-rich states by generating much higher revenues for their exports (Tarr 1994). This proxy (*Price of Exit*) is based on cost-benefit analysis for each of the post-Soviet states, and thus represents a strong proxy showing each state's dependence on Russia/region and the related economic incentives behind their decisions to cooperate with Russia or not (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Post-Soviet States' Economic Incentives and Interdependence

Countries	Intraunion Trade	Price of Exit	Security Strategy
Ukraine	82.08	-18	Balancing
Kyrgyzstan	85.71	1	Bandwagoning
Georgia	85.88	-21	Balancing
Tajikistan	86.48	-7	Bandwagoning
Belarus	86.76	-20	Bandwagoning
Azerbaijan	87.67	-7	Neutral/ambivalent
Moldova	87.69	-38	Balancing
Latvia	88.56	-24	Committed balancing
Kazakhstan	88.68	19	Bandwagoning
Uzbekistan	89.45	-3	Neutral/ambivalent
Lithuania	89.71	-31	Committed balancing
Armenia	90.12	-24	Bandwagoning
Estonia	91.64	-32	Committed balancing
Turkmenistan	92.54	50	Neutral/ambivalent
Russia	60.61	79	

As Table 3.4 indicates, interdependence among the Soviet republics was extremely high (as expected within any domestic economic system). More than 80 percent of total trade for each of the fourteen smaller Soviet republics occurred within the

Soviet Union. Such a high level of interdependence, combined with extremely limited external trade connections, suggests that all of the newly independent post-Soviet states faced strong incentives to maintain their mutual economic ties and hence to cooperate with Russia. Yet such a uniform outcome did not come to pass as their prior interdependence (*Intraunion Trade*) fails to predict the post-Soviet states foreign policies towards Russia.

The second proxy (*Price of Exit*) indicates which states stood to benefit from economic independence from Russia and leaving the ruble zone. Since most post-Soviet states were heavily dependent on Russia, especially in the energy sector, only three energy-rich states could anticipate a net positive outcome from leaving the Russia-led economic zone (Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan). While Kyrgyzstan's net positive is marginal and fails to offer a clear economic incentive, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan faced significant incentives to pursue economic independence. As a result, liberal logic would predict that Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan should have been far more likely to chart their own foreign-policy course and prioritize balancing, a middle set consisting of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan faced no clear economic incentive, while the other post-Soviet states should have leaned strongly toward bandwagoning with Russia.

These predictions are strongly disconfirmed. None of the three states expected to balance by liberal logic actually did so: two proved to be reliable bandwagoners while Turkmenistan opted for a neutral foreign policy towards Russia. Moreover, the states that stood to lose the most by leaving the post-Soviet economic sphere were the ones that did exactly that. All six post-Soviet states that adopted security strategies of *balancing* or

committed balancing faced significant economic penalties by leaving the ruble zone. In sum, the liberal approach appears at best insufficient to explain post-Soviet states' security strategies toward Russia.

As with the realist approach, however, skeptics might argue that the prospect of forming new economic partnerships abroad might have factored into the decision-making of the states that chose to defect from the ruble zone. While the Baltic states eventually became members of the European Union as well as NATO, their EU memberships likewise materialized only in 2004, more than a decade after they rejected the Russia-led CIS. Moreover, the early 1990s saw major economic actors within each state advocating against a Westward orientation and instead lobbying for the maintenance of pre-existing economic ties or even reintegration with Russia and the other post-Soviet states.

Even the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank encouraged the post-Soviet states to continue regional cooperation with Russia and the other successor states in the early 1990s. IMF representatives advised the post-Soviet states against abruptly leaving the ruble zone and introducing their own currencies (Granville 2002, 61, 75-78), while World Bank economists recommended that they partake in a Russia-led multilateral free trade area or a customs union that would “incentivize trade, thereby reducing unemployment costs during the transition” (Michalopoulos 1993, 13, 12-14). Thus, those post-Soviet states that chose to prioritize balancing and economic independence did so against their own internally-recognized economic incentives, against the advice of the West and its major international monetary and economic organizations, and against the desire of Russia and some other post-Soviet states to maintain close economic ties in the region.

Retrospectively, the argument can be made that the decisions by Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia to pursue EU membership eventually paid off, though it is worth remembering that Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine have still not been granted membership thirty years later. Moreover, considering the pressures and incentives facing those states in early 1990s it is hard to argue that their decisions at that time were dictated by economic incentives. In fact, as Chapter 4 shows, those countries were willing to bear “the stomach’s sacrifices to the soul,” as one Georgian parliamentarian put it. Their leaders were well aware that choosing to balance against Russia would contradict their economic incentives, yet they were making that sacrifice for the sake of their national independence. As Estonian President Lennart Meri said of Estonia’s newly introduced currency, “The kroon is not a piece of paper; the kroon is the flag of Estonian economic and political independence,” and jubilant Estonians even bought new wallets for their new national currency (Abdelal 2001, 47-48). Chapters 4 and 5 offer more detailed analysis of the role played by economic incentives alongside other factors in the decision making processes in Georgia and Kazakhstan.

3.4 Cultural Similarity: A Third Independent Variable

Beyond realism and liberalism, a third prominent approach argues that states’ ethno-linguistic or religious similarities shape their interactions. According to this perspective, states are more likely to cooperate when they share cultural characteristics but tend to “balance against countries with which they lack cultural commonality” (Huntington 1996, 155). This section uses two proxies to capture the fourteen post-Soviet states’ cultural similarities with Russia. One of them, *Civilization*, is based on Huntington’s (1996) classification of states into broad civilizational categories based

largely though not exclusively on religious differences. That classification divides the post-Soviet states among three categories: *Orthodox*, including Russia as well as Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia; *Western*, including Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia; and *Islamic*, including Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Azerbaijan (Table 3.5). Theories that expect greater cooperation between states that share these identities and greater conflict between dyads that cross civilizational lines predict a higher likelihood of bandwagoning among the Orthodox states and a higher likelihood of balancing among the Western and Islamic states.

The second proxy is a demographic measure derived from Flynn (2004, 14) data: the percentage of ethnic Russians residing in each of the fourteen weaker post-Soviet republics in 1989 (*Ethnic*). The various republics' demographic compositions fluctuated greatly throughout the tenure of the Soviet Union and across different administrations due to various intentional and unintended processes (Flynn 2004). During the twilight of the Soviet Union, as the various republics started becoming increasingly autonomous from Moscow, the extent of shared ethnic heritage with Russia may have influenced their policies toward it.

Table 3.5 Post-Soviet States' Cultural Similarity to Russia

Countries	Civilization	Ethnic	Security Strategy
Kazakhstan	Islamic	37.8	Bandwagoning
Kyrgyzstan	Islamic	21.5	Bandwagoning
Tajikistan	Islamic	7.6	Bandwagoning
Azerbaijan	Islamic	5.6	Ambivalent/neutral
Turkmenistan	Islamic	9.5	Ambivalent/neutral
Uzbekistan	Islamic	8.3	Ambivalent/neutral
Estonia	Western	30.3	Committed balancing
Latvia	Western	34	Committed balancing
Lithuania	Western	9.4	Committed balancing
Armenia	Orthodox	1.6	Bandwagoning
Belarus	Orthodox	13.2	Bandwagoning
Georgia	Orthodox	6.3	Balancing
Moldova	Orthodox	13	Balancing
Ukraine	Orthodox	22.1	Balancing
Russia	Orthodox		

Table 3.5 indicates that neither cultural similarity (*Civilization*), nor the share of ethnic Russians in the state (*Ethnic*) can account for the post-Soviet states' security strategies toward Russia. The three states representing Western civilization balanced against Russia, but only two of the five states labeled as sharing Orthodox civilization actually bandwagoned with Russia (Belarus and Armenia), while the other three directly violated the prediction by balancing (Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia). Despite being predicted to balance against Russia due to their contrasting cultures, none of the Islamic states did so, and three of them did the very opposite by bandwagoning. Culture, religion, and other related factors may not be irrelevant, but they are evidently neither necessary nor sufficient to explain these states' balancing and bandwagoning choices.

The second proxy (*Ethnic*) tests a different argument: that the share of ethnic Russians in the post-Soviet states affected their foreign policy choices toward Russia.

Although some scholars have argued that a high percentage of ethnic Russians can incline states toward stronger cooperation, such claims are often based on single-country studies without accounting for divergent behavior by other states despite similar demographic compositions (Zardykhan 2004, Olcott 1995b). Three of the fourteen Soviet republics contained populations composed of at least 30% ethnic Russians in 1989, yet while Kazakhstan bandwagoned with Russia, Estonia and Latvia were committed balancers. Extending the cutoff to include states with over 20% ethnic Russians fails to help this perspective because one of the two additions balanced (Ukraine) while the other bandwagoned (Kyrgyzstan).

To make a more fine-grained comparison, ethnic composition cannot explain the divergent policies of Kazakhstan and Latvia despite similar portions of their populations composed of ethnic Russians. Moreover, whereas Kazakhstan exhibited a clear pattern of ethnic Russian emigration since the 1970s, such outflow began in the Baltic states only after 1989. Therefore, Kazakh leaders made their foreign policy decisions in the early 1990s well aware that their country's demography was changing in favor of its titular ethnic group, and hence should have been less sensitive to Russian interests, while any future demographic trends in Latvia were more uncertain. Finally, all of the post-Soviet states experienced waves of emigration by ethnic minorities after achieving their independence, but we do not see any corresponding wave of balancing against Russia associated with the declining share of ethnic Russians among their populations.

This outcome does not mean that demography does not matter. Ethnic Russians in the other post-Soviet states held political views that differed from those of their titular ethnic groups on average, and they did tend to be more pro-unionist and supportive of

cooperation with Russia. However, this effect was not uniformly present. In Estonia and Latvia, for example, majorities of voters chose independence in March 1991 including significant portions of ethnic Russians, especially those in big cities (Bungs 1991, Kionka 1991). In Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, however, Kyrgyz and Kazakhs along with ethnic Russians overwhelmingly voted to preserve the Soviet Union (Walker 2003a, 118). Neither religion nor ethnicity has much predictive power for these states' security strategies, and their effects on public opinion differed significantly by context.

Another cultural similarity variable that is often described as important in the post-Soviet context is Slavic culture. Only two weaker post-Soviet states, Ukraine and Belarus, represent the Eastern Slavic ethno-linguistic family alongside Russia, and various scholars and politicians have predicted that these three Slavic Republics would prioritize partnership and cooperation with each other. As late as February 1989, with the Soviet Union deep in crisis, Gorbachev argued that Ukraine and Belarus were qualitatively different from the non-Slavic republics and unlikely to seek separation from the Soviet Union. Describing them as "closely bound up with Russia," their people occupying "authoritative positions in society, in production, in administrative and party organs, and in the cultural sphere" of the Soviet Union, he mused that "given their historically rooted similarity with Russians and the closeness of their languages" it was often "difficult to determine who is Russian, Ukrainian, or Belarussian" (Beissinger 2002, 95).

Such expectations were only partially met: Belarus emerged as one of the most enthusiastic unionist states and actively prioritized cooperation with Russia to the point of entertaining reunification after the breakup of the Soviet Union. In contrast, Ukraine

actively sought independence from and prioritized balancing against Russia, with the antagonism between the two states eventually breaking out into military conflict in 2014. Pan-Slavic ideas and even dual identities are prevalent in Belarus and present in eastern Ukraine as well, but they have not translated into a unified pan-national identity.

The context and social priming of similarities and differences offers a better understanding of state behavior than such descriptive cultural attributes. First tsarist and then Soviet Russia tried to fully assimilate Ukrainians and Belarusians into a Greater Russia, purposefully and systematically exaggerating ethnic similarities while downplaying distinctions between the three peoples. To this end, Moscow implemented aggressive Russification efforts in these two republics, including banning Belarusian and Ukrainian schools, limiting publications in their native languages and replacing them with Russian books and newspapers, and systematically attempting to eliminate those languages as means of communication (Marples 2012, 50-51, Suny 1993, 26). Moreover, Soviet historiography restricted the collective memory and identity of Belarusians and Ukrainians, and in 1947 and 1954 official Soviet policies reinforced this long-employed “all-Russian” narrative by no longer defining Ukrainians and Belarusians as separate peoples, but instead as regional Russians (Kuzio 2002, 245-246).

Despite Russia’s efforts, Ukraine was able to resist its pressure and sustain its own nationalist narratives, especially in its western regions that became part of the Soviet Union much later (in 1940) and were less affected by Soviet-Russian propaganda, and the 1980s ignited Ukrainian national mobilization and secessionist mass demonstrations against Soviet rule. Even Belarus had nationalist writers and activists trying to reclaim their past by highlighting their cultural uniqueness, distinctiveness from Russia, and

historic ties to Europe in the early twentieth century and again in the 1980s, despite being one of the least nationally mobilized republics in the Soviet Union and arguably the one where Russia's denationalization efforts were most successful (Marples 2012, 47-49, 51-53). When considering the role of cultural similarities as determinants of state behavior, what matters most is not those similarities writ large but rather their historical and socio-political context as well as how existing cultural similarities are primed, exaggerated, or diluted to serve specific socio-political goals. National mobilization theory provides such a constructive view, capable of explaining why some states with high levels of cultural similarity forge antagonistic relations while others become trusted allies despite deep cultural distinctions.

Chapters 4 and 5 carry this analysis further by investigating how leaders in Georgia and Kazakhstan wielded their cultural identities. Sharing Orthodox Christianity did not prevent Georgia from framing Russia as its primary security threat and working to balance against it, while Islamic Kazakhstan had no problem framing Christian Russia as a kindred nation and treating it as its main strategic partner. Although individual politicians and activists in both Georgia and Kazakhstan have made arguments in line with cultural similarity approaches, they have routinely failed to gain as much traction as this perspective predicts.

3.5 National Mobilization: A New Independent Variable

National mobilization theory suggests that when particular historical experiences prime the people of the nation to see themselves as unique socio-political units worthy of independence and the critical mass of the nation is politically mobilized to defend

national interests, we should see a strong us vs. them mentality, prioritization of political independence, and the perception of a formal ruler as a security threat, inclining leaders of such nations to adopt balancing policies. In other words, national mobilization theory predicts that the post-Soviet states that displayed high national mobilization by 1990 should be more likely to prioritize their independence, perceive Russia as an essential security threat, and balance against it. Alternatively, those post-Soviet states that exhibited low national mobilization by 1990 should be less likely to prioritize the independence they gained, more likely to downplay Russia as a security threat, and hence more likely to pursue cooperation with it.

To test these predictions through a correlational analysis across all fourteen post-Soviet states in this section, I construct a categorical variable (*National Mobilization*) that captures their relative levels of national mobilization by 1990. The result is three categories: *high national mobilization* (including Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Georgia), *medium/contested national mobilization* (including Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan), and *low national mobilization* (including Belarus, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan). I justify these categorizations by providing brief historical appraisals of these states' differing processes of national mobilization.

Nation-building can vary as a process in terms of its content and intensity both across nations and across time within a given nation. It can occur gradually over a long period of time or in more accelerated bursts due to internal or external shocks, such as interstate conflict or rapid modernization. The theoretically important questions here are: Where did each of the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states stand in terms of its national

mobilization in 1990? How strong was its self-awareness as a unique socio-political entity worthy of independence? What were its main nationalist narratives and how coherent were they? In addressing these questions, I highlight these states' varying experiences of nation-building during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well as the ways in which the mass national agitations of the late 1980s manifested in each. The second half of the 1980s saw accelerated processes of national mobilization in several of the post-Soviet states, including spillover effects as events in some amplified parallel processes in others. Still, not all nations displayed similar levels of mobilization: some were early instigators of the national awakenings and mass agitations of the late 1980s, others were primed to catch the fire of nationalism as it spread, while still others experienced little meaningful mobilization and instead resisted the secessionist elements within and outside their borders. While Chapters 4 and 5 provide more in-depth analysis of these processes and their effects on post-independence foreign policymaking in the cases of Georgia and Kazakhstan, this section offers a condensed appraisal of all fourteen states in this regard.

First, the *high national mobilization* category includes Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Georgia. These four states exhibit many differences in terms of their cultural characteristics and historical trajectories, but they also share some important similarities in the ways that internal and external processes during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries drove them to belong in this category. All four had long histories of battles, repressions, imperial occupations, and multicultural influences before forming as modern nation-states. Georgia had the most coherent experience of nationhood in its initial contact with the Russian Empire: the Georgian Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti sought tsarist

Russia's support against Ottoman and Persian invaders in 1783, becoming a Russian protectorate through a bilateral treaty (Kandelaki 1953, 173-179). Despite internal conflicts among Georgian principalities and frequent external intrusions, Georgia by that time had not only clear cultural characteristics such as a unique language, a long literary tradition, and a dominant religion in Christianity that distinguished it from many non-Christian neighbors, it was also a political unit (responsible for its internal and external politics) built on a centuries-old royal dynasty. Thus, when Russia violated its treaty responsibilities in 1801 by overthrowing Georgia's royal dynasty and annexing its historic territories, those actions were widely perceived as a betrayal and prompted decades of conspiracies and rebellions against the Russian occupation (King 2008, 27-30, 148, Lang 1962, 37-41).

The Baltic nations' initial contacts with Russia were different. Latvians, Estonians, and Lithuanians were dominated and influenced by German and Polish rulers and cultures during the centuries preceding Russian rule (O'Connor 2003, 35). Under tsarist Russia, the Baltic German nobility continued to largely run local governments in the provinces containing Latvian and Estonian populations, while Poles comprised the upper class in Lithuanian territories (O'Connor 2003, 17-19, 36-38, Kasekamp 2010, 55-60, 61-67). The people of these three nations thus largely comprised subject peasant populations during that period. Moscow began instituting a Russification process in the second half of the nineteenth century, but it remained merely one of several cultural pressures these nations resisted. Thus, as their national awakening began to gather momentum the three Baltic nations' self-awareness and nation-building formed us-vs.-them perspectives not only against Russian but also German and Polish cultures.

The early nineteenth century saw several uprisings against tsarist Russia in Georgia involving both peasants and nobles, and Lithuanians rebelled a couple of times as well (alongside Poles), but the provinces dominated by the German Baltic nobility remained loyal to Russia, which was willing to accommodate the traditional privileges of Baltic Germans over Latvians and Estonians in the region (Kasekamp 2010, 68-72, Suny 1994, 70-72). As that century progressed, however, all four nations experienced processes of national awakening. In Georgia, the early nineteenth century was dominated by patriotic romanticism as prominent Georgian poets and writers, mostly from the higher social strata, glorified Georgian culture and the lost kingdoms, even if many of these aristocrats tolerated Russian rule as the lesser evil compared to potential Persian or Ottoman rule (Jones 2005, 6, 33, Suny 1994, 124-127). From the mid-1850s a new generation of Georgian nationalist intellectuals, often educated abroad, began modern nation-building rooted in improving general literacy and disseminating national narratives among the masses through books and newspapers that were written in Georgian and hence escaped tsarist censorship (Jones 2005, 34, Lang 1962, 109). Interestingly, Baltic German intellectuals in the early nineteenth century supported the Estonian and Latvian languages not to promote nationalism but as a basis for assimilating German culture (Kasekamp 2010, 76, O'Connor 2003, 45-46). Latvian and Estonian literacy societies were established in 1824 and 1838 respectively, and a Lithuanian literacy society followed in 1879 in East Prussia and in Vilnius (under Russian rule) only in 1907 (Kasekamp 2010, 76).

The dramatic socio-political changes of the nineteenth century were key preconditions of national movements as modernization, urbanization, and the rapid

development of communication systems facilitated interpersonal connections and enabled nationalists to shape broader ethnic and national identities beyond people's localized lived experiences (Kasekamp 2010, 77). The abolishment of serfdom, improved education, literacy, printed press, and upward mobility of the late nineteenth century facilitated these processes, which were particularly important for ethnic Latvians and Estonians seeking to break into higher social strata dominated by Baltic Germans (O'Connor 2003, 46-53). Nationalist intellectuals began actively reviving significant cultural experiences from history (Georgians glorifying their medieval kings, for example, and Lithuanians their grand dukes) as well as constructing new national narratives and mythology (for example, Estonian and Latvian writers produced national epics such as *Kalevipoeg* in 1857 and *Lacplesis* in 1888) (Kasekamp 2010, 77-78). Of the four states in this *high mobilization* category, Lithuanian national awakening lagged the others by several decades during the nineteenth century due to the division of historic Lithuanian territories between Germany and Russia, the centuries-long assimilation of Polish culture, and more aggressive Russification efforts toward Lithuanian culture than the others. Lithuania's national awakening began gaining ground only toward the end of the nineteenth century, driven largely by Lithuanians who left their homeland (especially during the famine of 1867-1868) but continued publishing and smuggling books and newspapers in Russian Lithuania (O'Connor 2003, 58-60).

By the early twentieth century the Baltic areas and Georgia were highly industrialized and modernized, and the titular ethnic groups gradually reclaimed cities that used to be dominated by Germans, Russians, and Poles as well as Jews, Armenians, and others who had made up much of the urban working class (O'Connor 2003, 67-68).

Political parties became more active, often voicing demands for greater autonomy within the Russian Empire and sometimes even full independence. Russian military defeats by Japan in 1905 and Germany in World War I sparked internal upheavals that provided a window of opportunity for these nations to assert themselves, and between 1917 and 1918 all four declared independence. Georgia's Social Democratic Party successfully mobilized its population and involved the masses in nation and state-building during those years. The Baltic states were initially hindered by wars of independence against German, Russian, and Polish occupations, but the victorious Allied powers persuaded a weakened Germany and Russia to tolerate their independent existence as buffer states after 1920, enabling a sustained period of nation-building during the two decades that followed. In contrast, Georgia was relatively removed from the major battlegrounds of World War I and enjoyed a relatively peaceful period between 1917-1921, during which its leaders promoted an intense period of nation-building and created a well-functioning democratic republic before Bolshevik Russia forcibly annexed it in 1921.

Thus, all four of these nations experienced national mobilization prior to their annexations by the Soviet Union. Georgia had a short-lived but intense experience of modern statehood between 1917-1921, during which it held free and fair elections, formed a multiparty government, organized an effective legislative body, drafted a constitution, and garnered international recognition (Lee 2017, 48). The three Baltic states had more chaotic experiences during those years but enjoyed two decades of independence and nation-building between 1920 and 1940 (O'Connor 2003, 85-110). Soviet totalitarian rule could suppress but not erase nationalism in these four states. As a result, they were the most active republics during the late 1980s in organizing mass

political demonstrations, electing nationalist parliaments while still under the Soviet rule, and demanding national liberation (Beissinger 2002, 166-186).

Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan exhibited *medium/contested national mobilization*. While each of these states also displayed national mobilization by 1990, their experiences were not as strong or consolidated as in Georgia and the Baltic states. Ukraine had a distinct culture, language, and history tracing its origins to the medieval Kievan Rus (Suny 1993, 43-44, Shevelov 1980), but its development into a modern nation-state during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was uneven and contested for several reasons. The territory of modern Ukraine was occupied by Austria, Poland, and Russia for centuries and not unified in its current scope until 1939. Its national awakening began in the early nineteenth century under tsarist Russian rule as in other parts of Eastern Europe, but its upper and middle classes were dominated by Russians, Poles, and Jews, making it difficult for Ukrainian intellectuals to spread national narratives among their rural, peasant population (Guthier 1979, 31-32). Moreover, the Russian Empire considered Ukraine as sharing a broader Russian identity due to their Slavic ethno-linguistic roots, and tsarist authorities actively guarded against formation of distinct Ukrainian identity and nationalism on its territory (D'Anieri 1997, 7-8, Guthier 1979, 31). Western Ukraine, on the other hand, was never part of the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union until 1939, and under the relatively liberal rule of the Habsburg Empire it became a cradle of nation-building during the late nineteenth century as Ukrainian nationalists in Habsburg territories sustained cross-border contacts with their brethren under Russian rule (Magocsi 2002, 55-64).

Ukraine seized the opportunity to declare independence in 1917 alongside Georgia and the Baltic states, but instead of one unified Ukrainian state there were several smaller ones that were each denied any significant opportunity for modern state-building as they were quickly absorbed by either the Soviet Union (central and eastern Ukraine) or Poland (western Ukraine) (Abdelal 2001, 107). When western Ukraine was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, its nationalism was strong enough to resist Soviet Russification efforts and sustain Ukrainian nationalist narratives including perceptions of Russia as a threatening “other,” but these sentiments were not widely shared in Ukraine’s eastern areas. Ukrainian nationalists became active during the *perestroika* period of the late 1980s as well through the Popular Movement of Ukraine for Reconstruction, but its demands were largely limited to cultural and economic autonomy rather than independence from the Soviet Union (Magocsi 2002, 63). National mobilization in Ukraine remained uneven and contested, reflecting the divergent historical experience of Ukraine’s regions: western Ukraine was highly mobilized and saw Russia as the primary threat to its cultural autonomy and later to its independence, but the new state’s eastern and southern parts were less mobilized—even as they generally supported Ukraine’s autonomy and independence a majority in these regions did not share the strong anti-Russian perspective so prevalent in the west (Beissinger 2002, 191-195).

Moldova represents another peculiar case of highly contested national identity. Ruled by the Ottoman Empire from the fifteenth century until its annexation by the Russian Empire in 1812, Moldova’s strongest historic, cultural, and linguistic ties lay with Romania—to the point that debate endures over the arbitrariness of the division between the two (Baar and Jakubek 2017, 61). Prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union

its experience with independence was exceedingly brief, having declared independence (as Bessarabia) in 1917 only to willingly unify with Romania after less than four months (Baar and Jakubek 2017, 63-64). The Soviet government refused to recognize Romanian authority there, designating the region on the left bank of the Dnestr the Moldavian ASSR in 1924. After the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Bessarabia was occupied by the Soviet Union and united with the Moldavian ASSR to form the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (Crowther 1991, 184).

Unlike their policies elsewhere, Soviet leaders worked to foster Moldovan identity in order to reinforce their rule by undermining the region's strong cultural and political ties to Romania. The Moldovan alphabet was changed from Romanian to Cyrillic, and historic ties to Romania were downplayed while ties to Slavic peoples were exaggerated (Kuzio 2002, 256). Soviet promotion of Moldova's distinctiveness from Romania did not translate into better social or economic status for ethnic Moldovans, though, who were often dominated by Russians and Ukrainians in social, economic and political spheres. This was partially because many Moldovan intellectuals had left for Romania during the post-World War II period, and Soviet authorities remained distrustful of ethnic Moldovans' loyalty especially in the political sphere (Crowther 1991, 85-86). In addition, Moldova's relatively low levels of urbanization, educational attainment, and economic productivity further hindered its nation-building under Soviet rule (Crowther 1991, 184-185). Although Moldova saw mass demonstrations demanding autonomy from the Soviet Union in 1989 and onward, its national mobilization remained regionally uneven and its national identity contested between pro-Romanian and pro-Russian narratives.

Much like Georgia, Armenia had a distinct and coherent national identity based on a long historical memory of its ethno-cultural roots. For several centuries preceding its Russian occupation, however, Armenia was divided among different empires with its diaspora scattered across various cities and countries. Like Moldova its experience with political independence before the breakup of the Soviet Union was brief: Armenia only reluctantly declared independence in 1917 as a last resort after the breakup of the Transcaucasia Federative Republic, left it to face an impending Ottoman attack alone (Hovannisian 1971, 35-37). While its experience of independence during 1918-1920 remains meaningful for the nation, that period was so turbulent for Armenia that it stifled much potential state-building. As Hovannisian (Hovannisian 1971, 38) describes, “In mid-1918 the remnants of the Armenian people were left a mangled bit of land that, for lack of a better term, they called a republic... The Armenians were soon to find that they faced far greater tribulations in making independence something more than a declaration. The new government turned to the barren and isolated land, abounding with rocks and mountains, orphans and refugees, heartache and misery.”

In 1920 Armenia lost its independence to Soviet Russia, but despite its history of tsarist and then Soviet occupation Armenians perceived not Russia but the Ottoman Empire (later Turkey) as their main enemy, which had taken Armenia’s historic territories, executed a genocide of ethnic Armenians, and contributed to refugee flows and famine in the short-lived Armenian republic. By contrast, its years under Soviet rule were relatively peaceful for Armenia. Even as its national mobilization grew during the late 1980s, Armenia’s threat perception focused primarily on its conflict with Azerbaijan over the contested territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. As a result, while several other Soviet

republics were reasserting their national identities by defining themselves against Soviet Russia, Armenia faced a different immediate enemy in neighboring Azerbaijan that shaped its conception of security as it pursued independence (Beissinger 2002, 188-189).

For its part, Azerbaijan had fewer historic antecedents for national mobilization than the other states in this category, but it experienced sufficient national mobilization during the late 1980s to distinguish it from the third category and warrant its place here. Azerbaijan offers a good example of how even people with a relatively loose, incoherent national identity can forge one relatively quickly under the right circumstances. Its current territory was populated by a kaleidoscope of ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups over the centuries including Zoroastrians, Christians, Muslims, Albanians, Turks, and Persians. Prior to its incorporation into Russian after the Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813, it had been ruled by Iran for several centuries (with brief intrusions by the Russian and Ottoman Empires) (Dowling 2015, 728-729). The Azerbaijani nation as distinct from both Russia and Iran was essentially created by this separation, but until the early twentieth century its people did not possess a distinct national identity and instead saw themselves as part of the larger Muslim world. Even as Baku started to industrialize and modernize as an oil-rich city, the Azerbaijani population remained largely rural and the city was dominated by ethnic Russians and Armenians, and these inequalities led to bloody clashes between them as early as 1905 (Suny 1993, 38-40). Azerbaijani intelligentsia produced several political parties in the early twentieth century promoting ideas such as socialism, Pan-Turkism, and Pan-Islamism, but none garnered much popular support (Suny 1993, 41). The Armenian threat proved Azerbaijan's main source

of ethnic mobilization, strengthening its connection with Turkey against their shared enemy and affecting the national mobilization of both states to this day.

Azerbaijan declared independence from Russia in 1918 with Ottoman support, and although its nationalists were not able to garner as much popular support as those in other countries, this brief period of independence offered an early incubation period for nationalist ideas to begin crystalizing apart from direct attachments to Iran, Turkey, or Pan-Islamism. The late 1980s saw mass demonstrations in the streets of Baku, but while some Soviet republics were mobilizing around ideas of autonomy and independence from the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan's ethno-national mobilization was shaped by the conflict with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh. Thus, Armenia and Azerbaijan reinforced each other's national mobilization. While Azerbaijani attitudes were not as anti-Russian as those in some other Soviet republics, however, they were conditional on Russia's position toward the conflict with Armenia, which Russian leaders tended to support.

Belarus, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan fall into the third category, *low national mobilization*. Although each of these states has seen nationalist movements advance narratives and gain varying levels of support in different time periods, they all had very low levels of national mobilization by 1990. As a result, nationalists were unable to garner much popular support as the Soviet Union disintegrated and sporadic secessionist demands and demonstrations did not translate into sustained mass movements. Due to the socially-constructed nature of national identities and mobilization processes, some of these countries may have belonged in different categories during different time periods and could reach higher levels in the future, but the theoretically important question here is where these states stood by 1990.

The territories of the Central Asian post-Soviet states were ruled by tsarist Russia before being incorporated into the Soviet Union. Although they have rich and distinct cultural attributes (including language, religion, and various cultural traditions), before their conquests by the Russian Empire most Central Asian peoples did not resemble nations in the modern sense, with loosely defined borders and primary loyalties held by tribes and clans. The evolution of nationalism in these states was undermined by Pan-Islamic ideas, Russification policies emanating from Moscow, and the region's relatively low levels of literacy, urbanization, and socio-economic modernization. Among the Central Asian states, Kazakhstan alone had experienced national independence prior to the Soviet Union's dissolution, having maintained autonomy under the Alash movement between 1917 and 1920. Although this experience was central to future nationalist narratives in that country, however, it failed to produce mass national mobilization before giving way to Soviet occupation in 1920. The Soviet period saw relatively low national mobilization and a lack of dissident movements in Central Asia, and broadly successful Russification and Sovietization efforts translated into weak national mobilization by the late 1980s when waves of mobilization and mass demonstration were commonplace in other parts of the Soviet Union (Abdelal 2001, 77-78, Suny 1993, 41).

Belarus stands alongside the five Central Asian states in displaying low national mobilization. The current territory of Belarus was ruled by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth before being incorporated into the Russian Empire during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During the nineteenth century most Belarusians were peasants with low levels of literacy, the area's cities were dominated by Russians, Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews, and only a small educated

Belarusian gentry had started to articulate nationalist narratives by the end of that century, without much traction (Suny 1993, 31). Belarus' experience of independent statehood in 1918-1919 was accompanied by minimal nation-building—scholars describe the Belarusian Democratic Republic of that period as an “unsolicited gift” of the Russian Revolution and Austro-German goodwill rather than a product of internal movements, noting that “the self-appointed administration lacked the elements necessary for international recognition” (Vakar 1956, 105).

That period was followed by Belarus' incorporation into the Soviet Union, though some of its western areas were parts of Poland until 1939, and nation-building remained minimal on both sides of the border. Furthermore, as noted above, Russian leaders applied particularly aggressive Russification policies to populations sharing Slavic ethno-linguistic roots, including those in Belarus as well as Ukraine. In accordance with these policies, Moscow made concerted efforts throughout its centuries controlling those territories to prevent distinct cultural expressions among them, banning non-Russian languages and downplaying historic ties with Western states as opposed to Russia, (Kuzio 2002, 244-246).

In the 1980s, Belarus and the Central Asian states remained mostly passive spectators of the nationalist movements sweeping other Soviet republics. This is not to say that there were no nationalists in these states, but they were unable to broadly galvanize the unenthusiastic masses to embrace national autonomy. Each of these republics had undergone modernization and urbanization processes producing diverse cultural intelligentsia by the 1980s, and some nationalist parties did emerge such as the *Birlık* (Unity) Movement of Uzbek writers and scientists, which initially focused on

ecological and economic issues before moving to issues of sovereignty and autonomy by late 1989 (Beissinger 2002). Belarus also saw nationalist demonstrations focused on cultural issues with the foundation of the Belarusian Popular Front in 1988, and the discovery of mass graves near Minsk left by the Stalinist purges radicalized many Belarusians against Moscow (Zaprudnik 1989). While both of these movements paid attention to the nationalist mobilization already underway in the Baltic states and elsewhere, however, neither of them managed to garner similar levels of sustained mass support (Zaprudnik 1993, 130, Beissinger 2002, 258). In highly mobilized nations like Georgia and the Baltic states, even Communist leaders either proved sympathetic to their respective nationalist causes or quickly fell from power and were forced to adapt their platforms to reflect the new nationalist visions. In contrast, the nationalist movements in Belarus and Uzbekistan were largely rejected by elites and masses alike and harshly suppressed by the Communist leaderships of these republics (Garnett and Legvold 1999, 3-5, Fierman 1997).

Table 3.6 National Mobilization in the Post-Soviet States

Countries	National Mobilization	Years of Pre-1990 Independence	Security Strategy
Georgia	High	3	Balancing
Estonia	High	20	Committed balancing
Latvia	High	20	Committed balancing
Lithuania	High	20	Committed balancing
Ukraine	Medium/contested	1	Balancing
Moldova	Medium/contested	1	Balancing
Armenia	Medium/contested	2	Bandwagoning
Azerbaijan	Medium/contested	2	Neutral/ambivalent
Uzbekistan	Low	0	Neutral/ambivalent
Turkmenistan	Low	0	Neutral/ambivalent
Kazakhstan	Low	2	Bandwagoning
Kyrgyzstan	Low	0	Bandwagoning
Tajikistan	Low	0	Bandwagoning
Belarus	Low	1	Bandwagoning

Table 3.6 displays the strong correlation between levels of national mobilization across the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states and their security strategies towards Russia. As national mobilization theory predicts, all four states with high national mobilization chose to balance against Russia, while four of the six states with low national mobilization chose to bandwagon. All three committed balancers ranked among those with high national mobilization (the Baltic states), while those that adopted neutral or ambivalent policies displayed contested or low national mobilization.

The timing of events surrounding the breakup of the Soviet Union also aligns with the expectations of national mobilization theory, as highly mobilized Soviet republics were the first ones to declare independence while the least mobilized were the latest and most reluctant to leave the union (Walker 2003a, 64, 140). Six of the mobilized states outright rejected participation in Gorbachev's New Union Treaty negotiations (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova), and while Ukraine was initially involved in those negotiations it too ultimately backed out (Beissinger 2002, 417-432). Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Georgia all held referendums on independence in early 1991, as did Armenia and Ukraine a few months later. In contrast, the states with low national mobilization held referendums on the preservation of the Soviet Union, with turnout and support for the preservation of the union ending up higher in each of these republics than even in Russia itself (Walker 2003a, 118, 140).

Azerbaijan's and Uzbekistan's ambivalent foreign policy toward Russia marks only a slight divergence from the predicted outcomes, and ultimately unsurprising ones. Azerbaijan was the least mobilized among the middle group, showing some national mobilization by the end of 1980s but without other strong predictors and mostly reactive

to its escalating territorial conflict with Armenia. In a similar fashion, Uzbekistan had the highest mobilization level in the late 1980s among Soviet republics in the low mobilization category, most notably represented through its *Birlik* movement. As another borderline case, its choice to pursue a relatively ambivalent foreign policy toward Russia instead of outright bandwagoning as the other Central Asian states did is understandable within national mobilization theory. The nationalist movement in Uzbekistan was harshly repressed by the Communist establishment during the late 1980s and early 1990s, but independent Uzbekistan's leaders continue to reflect contested national narratives and anti-Russian sentiments remain among sections of its population.

The only significant divergence from national mobilization theory's predictions is Armenia's bandwagoning behavior. Despite its limited experience of independent statehood prior to Soviet rule, Armenia displayed relatively strong national mobilization by 1990. As expected, Armenia joined other mobilized Soviet republics in rejecting the New Union Treaty and actively striving for independence, but it proceeded to bandwagon with Russia instead of balancing against it. Although the intensity of its national mobilization alone cannot account for this behavior, the content of Armenian nationalism does offer a likely explanation. Whereas the other nationally mobilized post-Soviet states clearly understood Russia as their primary threat, Armenia's formative nation and state-building during the twentieth century took place in the context of other existential threats emanating from the Ottoman Empire (1915-1920) and Azerbaijan (1918-20 and again in the late 1980s over Nagorno-Karabakh). Thus, while Armenian national mobilization produced clear incentives for independence from the Soviet Union, it drove Armenian

leaders not to reject economic and political partnership with Russia but rather to view it as a crucial partner against immanent threats from its east and west.

To summarize this chapter's main findings I constructed a truth table assessing the coincidence between the post-Soviet states' decisions to adopt balancing security strategies and the central causal conditions of each of the alternative theories discussed earlier. To facilitate this, I recoded each variable into a dichotomous format: Nuclear Weapons – the presence of nuclear capabilities at the breakup of the Soviet Union (see Table 3.3), Economic Incentive – the presence of economic incentives for independence from Russia (see Table 3.4), Civilizational Difference – the presence of a civilizational difference with Russia as conceptualized in the cultural similarity section (see Table 3.5), National Mobilization – the presence of either high or medium/contested national mobilization as opposed to low national mobilization (see Table 3.6), and finally Balancing – the adoption of a balancing security strategy (committed or not) as opposed to neutral/ambivalent or bandwagoning strategies (see Table 3.2). The resulting truth table (Table 3.7) sacrifices some of the nuances and variations among the variables discussed in the preceding sections, but it provides a concise means to compare the relative fit between this chapter's findings and the predictions of the alternative theories.

Table 3.7 Truth Table on Post-Soviet Balancing Toward Russia

W	E	C	N	B	Cases
1	0	0	1	1	Ukraine
0	0	1	1	1	Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania
0	0	0	1	1	Georgia, Moldova
1	1	1	0	0	Kazakhstan
0	1	1	0	0	Turkmenistan
0	0	1	1	0	Azerbaijan
0	0	0	1	0	Armenia
1	0	0	0	0	Belarus
0	0	1	0	0	Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan
1	1	1	1	-	
1	1	0	1	-	
1	0	1	1	-	
1	1	0	0	-	
1	0	1	0	-	
0	1	1	1	-	
0	1	0	1	-	
0	1	0	0	-	
0	0	0	0	-	

Note: W = Nuclear Weapons, E = Economic Incentive, C = Civilizational Difference, N = National Mobilization, B = Balancing

Table 3.7 clearly shows that all six post-Soviet states that chose to balance against Russia also had moderate to high national mobilization. The other potential causal conditions hypothesized by the alternative theories failed to generate such empirical support. Only one state out of the six balancers (Ukraine) possessed nuclear weapons during the early 1990s, and the other five lacked any comparable military capability that might have deterred powerful Russia from retaliation and hence might have explained their balancing behavior. Only three states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) out of the six balancers had cultural differences with Russia in line with cultural similarity arguments, while the other three (Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova) prioritized balancing despite sharing

Orthodox civilization with Russia. Finally, none of these six states had economic incentives to balance against Russia.

Two states, Azerbaijan and Armenia, had moderate or high national mobilization but did not balance against Russia. Although these outcomes do not perfectly reflect the predictions of national mobilization theory, its logic is capable of explaining them by taking into account the directionality of national mobilization, as emphasized earlier in this chapter. During the nation-building process, states define their emerging identities in contrast to threats by intertwining their own positive self-image with the enemy image of another state. During the transformative periods of national mobilization for Armenia both in early twentieth century and as well as in late 1980s, Turkey and Azerbaijan represented existential security threats while Russia was seen as a lesser evil or even more as a friend, warranting neutral to positive attitudes. Similarly, although the national mobilization of Azerbaijan lagged that of its peers, its development as a modern nation-state was largely intertwined in its conflict with Armenia, in the context of which Russia represented only a secondary threat. These observations suggest that a promising avenue for the future of national mobilization theory lies in further developing and operationalizing the directionality of national mobilization.

Finally, Table 3.7 also offers a useful tool for identifying least-likely cases for deeper analysis. Out of the states that prioritized balancing, Georgia and Moldova represent least-likely cases that defied the expectations of conventional approaches that these states with weak military capabilities, economically dependent on Russia, and sharing Orthodox civilization should bandwagon. National mobilization offers a plausible alternative driver of these states' foreign policy strategies, and Chapter 4 examines

Georgian leaders' decision-making to clarify its causal role relative to the factors emphasized by conventional theories as they were formulating Georgia's balancing strategy toward Russia.

Similarly, Kazakhstan represents a least-likely case for national mobilization theory given that it was the only country among the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states to exhibit the presence of the main causal factors identified by all three alternative theories. Given its possession of nuclear weapons, economic incentives for independence, and its cultural distinctiveness from Russia, the three conventional theories predict that Kazakhstan should have been the post-Soviet state most predisposed toward balancing against Russia. Yet contrary to these conventional expectations and in line with national mobilization theory, it prioritized cooperation with Russia. In order to clarify the causal logic behind its security strategy, Chapter 5 examines the motivations of Kazakh leaders in charting their foreign policy course amidst the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Overall, national mobilization demonstrates very strong predictive power for the post-Soviet states foreign policy choices toward Russia. This is particularly important considering the failure of the three alternative theories to account for variations in their security strategies. This is not to say that military capabilities, economic incentives and interdependence, and cultural similarity do not help shape international relations, but it does indicate that the content of national identity and levels of national mobilization affect states' interests, perceptions, and actions. It does not mean that states do not act rationally, but it does strongly suggest that their past experiences and current domestic ideological environments affect leaders' calculations. In short, national mobilization has a significant effect on state behavior, and traditional approaches to international relations

would benefit from more directly taking into account the role of historically and socially constructed national identities.

CHAPTER 4. “THE STOMACH’S SACRIFICES TO THE SOUL”: NATIONAL MOBILIZATION AND GEORGIA’S POST-COLD WAR FOREIGN POLICY

When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, Russia inherited vastly superior economic and military power compared to the other 14 post-Soviet states, and it actively started reclaiming its leadership position in the region and developing new avenues for political, economic and security cooperation among the newly independent states (Brzezinski and Sullivan 1997, 3-9, Willerton and Cockerham 2003, 185-186). However, not all post-Soviet states were enthusiastic about reintegration and cooperation with Russia (Kubicek 2009, 237, Kuzio 2000, 81-82, Sakwa and Webber 1999, 379-380). Georgia, militarily and economically one of the weakest post-Soviet states, was one of the first to declare independence from the Soviet Union (Slider 1991, 63). With its economy heavily dependent on Soviet integration, Georgia had much to lose by antagonizing Russia. Given the steep military power asymmetry between the two countries and the lack of willing external allies for Georgia, its leaders had every reason to consider balancing a futile endeavor. Yet despite its weakness Georgia’s leaders interpreted Russia as their main security threat and maintained an anti-Russian foreign policy position (with some variations across different leaders), an approach that defied the expectations of conventional international relations theories.

In this chapter I seek to answer the following question: why did Georgia prioritize balancing against Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union? My central argument is that Georgia’s relatively high national mobilization by the year 1990 was the primary factor driving its post-Soviet foreign policy choices towards Russia. This chapter conducts in-depth case studies of the historical development of Georgian nationalism and

Georgia's post-Soviet foreign policy decision making in order to determine whether Georgia's high national mobilization was in fact what led its leaders to prioritize balancing strategies against Russia, or whether theories rooted in power, economic interdependence, or static cultural factors provide better explanations for this outcome.

National mobilization theory predicts that Georgia, having undergone a relatively intense process of national mobilization, should have developed a correspondingly intense national identity framed in "us-vs.-them" terms against Russia. Its people and leaders should have placed an especially high value on their national political autonomy. Perceiving Russia as the greatest threat to that autonomy, they should have rejected bandwagoning as entailing an unacceptable sacrifice of autonomy and instead prioritized balancing against their powerful former ruler. High national mobilization makes it more likely for nationalist leaders who see the powerful former ruler as a primary security threat and not as a strategic partner to assume key decision-making roles. At the same time, the citizens of nationally mobilized states should share such views and push their leaders to adopt foreign policies in line with them regardless of their leaders' own personal convictions. In Georgia, if a critical mass of the population perceived Russia as their enemy, the leaders of independent Georgia should have had incentives to reflect those sentiments in their foreign policy decision-making.

Alternatively, realist logic predicts that a newly emergent weak state like Georgia, lacking external alliances to balance against its powerful neighbor, should bandwagon with Russia for fear of its vastly superior capabilities. Liberal logic also predicts that Georgian leaders should have sought cooperation with Russia due to preexisting economic interdependence among the former Soviet states and the urgent economic

incentives facing a weak state like Georgia. On its surface Georgia's balancing strategies toward Russia defy both realist and liberal predictions, but thoroughly testing these theories requires establishing whether Georgian leaders' decision-making was fueled by the types of concerns these theories highlight. Were they informed by power distribution calculations and expectations of security guarantees from external powers, seeing balancing against Russia as a rational choice in line with realist logic? Did they expect to develop better economic partners elsewhere, hence seeing balancing against Russia as a rational choice in line with their country's economic interests?

Last, approaches emphasizing cultural similarity expect that Georgian leaders should have seen states sharing their Orthodox Christianity as less threatening, and hence should have been predisposed towards cooperation with Russia. To test this prediction, the case study will examine whether Georgian leaders' decision-making towards Russia was informed by the cultural similarities between the two countries and the extent to which those similarities factored into their foreign policy choices.

In testing national mobilization theory against these alternative theories, this chapter examines several important historical junctures in Georgia's national development along with its leaders' decision-making processes during the post-Soviet period. Its first section focuses on establishing the presence of the independent variables highlighted by national mobilization theory by exploring Georgia's transformation into a modern nation-state with a strong and distinct national identity, examining its cultural and political independence and pre-Soviet nation building in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Georgia, before it was absorbed by the Soviet Union. The second section of this chapter demonstrates the revival of nationalism in Georgia during the late

1980s and its struggle for political independence from the Soviet Union, which directly informed the role of national mobilization in post-independence Georgia.

The third section investigates Georgian leaders' motivations for adopting balancing strategies towards Russia during the twilight and aftermath of the Soviet Union. To this end, I examine several important episodes during which Georgian leaders were faced with decisions that would shape their country's foreign policy towards Russia. In each of these cases Georgian leaders chose to balance against Russia instead of bandwagoning: rejecting the New Union Treaty (1990) and its successor, the CIS (1991); rejecting participation in the union-wide referendum and staging an alternate referendum on Georgia's independence (1991); pursuing Western partnerships via membership in NATO and the European Union (1990-1991); and continuing to treat Russia as its primary threat across successive administrations moving forward. In each of these case studies, I examine Georgian leaders' decision-making processes to establish the relative importance of national mobilization, power, economic interdependence, and cultural similarity in informing their decisions.

4.1 The Mobilization of Georgian Nationalism

Eighteenth-century Georgian kings sought support from the Russian Tsars against Ottoman and Persian invaders, leading to a bilateral treaty in 1783 that made the Georgian Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti a protectorate of the Russian Empire (Kandelaki 1953, 173-179). Russia did not respect its treaty responsibilities guaranteeing the protection of Georgia's territorial integrity and the reign of its royal dynasty, however, annexing its historic territories in 1801 and overthrowing its Bagrationi dynasty (King

2008, 27-30, Lang 1962, 37-41). This action struck many Georgians as a betrayal, prompting conspiracies and rebellions against the Russian occupation in 1802, 1804, 1812-1813, 1819-1820, 1832, and 1841 (King 2008, 148, Suny 1994, 70-72).

Anti-tsarist bitterness persisted both among Georgia's peasants and its aristocrats, but rebellions were too sporadic and localized to challenge the new status quo of Russian rule and they failed to galvanize large segments of Georgian society due to its hierarchical structure. Nevertheless, these uprisings represented *national experiences*—even if limited in scale—that expressed a longing for the restoration of the Georgian Kingdom and contributed to an us-vs.-them mentality especially among certain segments of Georgian nobles. As historian Ronald Suny puts it, “out of such unreconciled aristocrats the first generation of the Georgian oppositional intelligentsia was formed in the 1820s,” and the resentment towards tsarist rule had “a specific ethnic and cultural dimension” (Suny 1994, 70).

In December 1832, a group of well-connected, highly educated Georgian nobles and intellectuals planned a conspiracy with the goal of reasserting Georgia's independence and restoring the Bagrationi royal dynasty to the throne, and some of the conspirators even advocated for a liberated Georgia to become a constitutional monarchy or a republic (Suny 1994, 71-72). Although the conspiracy was unsuccessful, it demonstrated that even in the early 1830s there were Georgian intellectuals who wanted not merely to restore their own status by reviving the Georgian Kingdom; they were concerned with questions of national self-determination, imported the insights of political thought and experience from the Europe of that time, and debated the major concepts of constitution and republicanism (Jones 2005, 32-33). Even as many of the conspirators

were still clinging to the hierarchical monarchy and their own superior social status, there were intellectuals like Solomon Dodashvili and others who were envisioning and advancing alternative governmental formations for a nation-state, with an emphasis on individual freedoms, limited sovereign powers, and promoting a national language and mass education as a foundation for the nation's progress (Jones 1987, 58, 71-72).

By the time Georgia was annexed by the Russian Empire in 1800, it had already developed clear *national characteristics* including a unique language and literary tradition, a dominant religion that distinguished it from non-Christian neighbors, and a long line of royal dynasties including kings that had been able to unite historic Georgia at different times. Despite centuries of prolonged occupations by various empires and internal conflicts among various Georgian kings and princes, Georgians had a shared sense of historic continuity and imagined nationhood. That said, the hierarchical character of Georgian society proved an obstacle to horizontal national mobilization, making it easier for the tsarist administration to co-opt a significant section of the Georgian nobility by granting their traditional status and benefits—even if now Georgian kings were replaced by Russian tsars (Suny 1994, 71-72). Thus, between the 1830s and the 1840s there were two parallel processes in Georgia: on one hand, many Georgian nobles developed a symbiotic relationship with the Russian nobility, advancing in the academic and military ranks of the empire and becoming part of the same urban elite communities in Tbilisi and Moscow; on the other hand, literary genres also emerged during this period highlighting patriotic romanticism, depicting nostalgia and pride in the glorious past of the Georgian kingdom, questioning and criticizing the union with Russia,

and providing a cohesive image of the Georgian nation and its history (Suny 1994, 124-125, Jones 2005, 33).

The process of Georgian national mobilization began to gather momentum in the 1850s and 1860s while still under tsarist rule. This awakening coincided with the emergence of a new generation of Georgian nationalist intellectuals as well as processes of modernization, urbanization, and the advancement of general education and printed press, which are essential components in the process of modern nation-building and the creation of “imagined communities” (Anderson 1991). The core of the new generation of intellectuals was a group called *tergdaleulni*,¹ members of which began galvanizing Georgian society with ideas of equality and individual rights combined with national self-identification and self-government. These intellectuals supported a changing landscape of hierarchical society despite largely being aristocrats themselves, advocating for peasant land ownership and criticizing the older generation of Georgian elites for its embrace of Russian culture at the expense of Georgian culture.

The *tergdaleulni* were clear and purposeful in their efforts to build a modern nation and generate unity based on the strong foundation of Georgian cultural heritage. As Stephen Jones (Jones 2005, 34-35) writes, “The *tergdaleulni*, in their search for a new Georgian identity, overturned the old world of aristocratic patriotism with explosive concepts of nationalism, equal rights, realism, and scientific progress.” One of the essential transformations pushed by the group’s leader, Ilia Chavchavadze, and the other *tergdaleulni* was replacing the archaic literal Georgian language with a vernacular one

¹ *Tergdalaulni* literally means “those who drank from Terek.” Terek is the river that separates the Caucasus from Russia, and here it was used to describe Georgian intellectuals who travelled to Russia to receive their education.

that made culture and literature accessible to the wider public instead of only a small intellectual elite. Chavchavadze along with Dimitri Kipiani and other like-minded men and women went on to establish the Society of the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians in 1878, which developed into an extremely powerful network of thousands of educators, schools, libraries, newspapers, and journals throughout Georgia (Lang 1962, 109). Georgian nationalists succeeded in spreading national narratives through poems, novels, and newspaper articles that escaped imperial censorship, especially when written in Georgian and/or conveyed through hidden patriotic messages (Jones 2005, 35).

Georgian nationalist intellectuals fostered and capitalized on the socio-economic and technological transformations that were taking place at the time, recognizing how industrialization and urbanization enabled greater mobility and connectivity among large numbers of people and facilitated their active participation in nation-building, which previously primarily revolved around elites. They hoped that developments such as new roads and railways would overcome regionalism and work towards national harmony—as the prominent *tergdaleuli* Sergo Meskhi put it, “destroy the isolation and misunderstandings between compatriots and establish greater communication and unity between brotherly people” (Jones 2005, 15).

These revolutions in social mobility, horizontal connectivity, and the exchange of information were facilitated by various developments that started to erode regional and social barriers within Georgia’s population. General education experienced a significant boost beginning in the late 1840s as regional and parochial schools significantly increased in number, and hundreds of students received annual stipends sponsoring higher education outside of Georgia. Public libraries, theaters, numerous professional

societies, hundreds of factories and merchandise shops, and a growing number of journals and newspapers in both Russian and Georgian provided additional channels of connectivity and information exchange from the 1850s onward (Lang 1962, 85-86, 89-90). Tbilisi grew into an energetic industrial center, attracting large numbers of people from rural areas as well as from other cities, and its population more than doubled between 1886 and 1914 (Jaoshvili 1996). Banks started offering loans that boosted business from the 1870s, while railroads facilitated social and economic networks connecting the Caspian coast with Black Sea (Lang 1962, 130, Jones 2005, 28).

To summarize, the late nineteenth century can be aptly described as an era of modern nation-building in Georgia. The *tergdaleulni* emphasized Georgia's *national characteristics* (expressed in Chavchavadze's widely popular slogan "language, homeland, religion"), highlighted *national experiences* including its historical struggles against foreign invaders and enduring colonial Russian rule, and widely disseminated *national information*. The combined effect of these developments was to replace old allegiances to kings and *tavads* (Georgian nobles governing regions) with a broader concept of national identity encompassing an "imagined community" of Georgians, even if still under Russian rule. The resulting awakening remained mostly confined to cultural independence until the Russian Revolution of 1917, when the right combination of internal and external circumstances enabled Georgia to translate it into political independence and to build a modern self-governing nation-state.

4.1.1 Experiencing National Independence

Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, Georgia's Social Democratic Party refused to recognize the Bolshevik central government and disarmed Russian defense

forces in Tbilisi, establishing a temporary Transcaucasian Republic with Armenia and Azerbaijan before declaring independence on May 26, 1918 (Lee 2017, 36-40). Georgia's demonstrated readiness to establish an independent nation-state was a logical continuation of its accelerating nation-building process. Chavchavadze and the *tergdaleulni* had laid a strong foundation for national awakening and unity during the late nineteenth century, and in the early twentieth century the Social Democrats led by Noe Zhordania mobilized Georgia's population with political visions and grassroots activism. The Social Democrats initially hoped to see a democratic transformation within tsarist Russia, but after the Bolshevik takeover they quickly moved to secure Georgia's full independence. In doing so, they chose to follow the European path of social democracy, designating Bolshevik Russia as a threatening "other" (Matsaberidze 2014, 141).

The 1917-1921 period represents arguably the most important period of modern Georgian nation- and state-building despite its brevity. After more than a century of imperial rule, Georgian leaders forged a culturally united and horizontally mobilized independent political unit responsible for its own internal and external affairs. As the eldest member of the newly elected Constituent Assembly, Silibistro Jibladze, declared in his opening remarks on March 12, 1919, "The people, who were not frightened by the freezing winter of the North, who showed their capacity for political and citizenry growth and development under a thick and cold layer of the ice of occupation, are not going to be destroyed nor destroy the independence they have gained" (Iakobashvili, Khositashvili, and Jgerenaia 2019, 20).

In sharp contrast to the Bolshevik dictatorial takeover in Russia and other authoritarian developments of that time, the new Georgian state was represented by a

freely elected multi-party government under democratic principles delineated in the Act of Independence (May 26, 1918). Its Constituent Assembly proved effective, adopting over 100 laws culminating in a constitution of the Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1921 (Matsaberidze 2014, 41-57). As Jones (2005, 48-49) describes, this group of Georgian intellectuals produced a unique model of “socialist-led national liberation” inspired by the nineteenth-century writings of the *tergdaleulni*, their own shared colonial experience, and imported ideas of European socialism.

Georgia’s newly established state met all the essential criteria of statehood under international law such as permanent population, a defined territory, a government, and the ability to enter relationships with other states (Dixon 2007, 115). More importantly, several qualities of Georgia’s short-lived statehood made it possible for this period to become a particularly meaningful *national experience* with lasting effects for the nation. Particularly important were mass political engagement and popular support of the newly established government, which gave it important legitimacy and a broad mandate for internal affairs, as well as the international recognition of Georgia’s independence by several significant world powers, which enhanced its ability to pursue an effective foreign policy.

Social Democrats had popular support in Georgia long before taking the lead in its independent government. The November 1917 Constituent Assembly elections held across the entire imperial territory demonstrated that while Bolsheviks were gaining foothold in many areas that was not the case in Georgia, where Social Democrats enjoyed overwhelming popular support (Lee 2017, 37-38). The Social Democrats remained the primary political authority during the years of independence and earned 109 out of 130

seats in independent Georgia's Constituent Assembly. Suffrage was universal (age 20 and up), the electoral system was proportional in one nation-wide constituency, and the election results led to the formation of a multi-party government (Nohlen, Grotz, and Hartmann 2001a, 372-375). The elections were held on February 14, 1919, with 60% turnout despite bad weather (Lee 2017, 44-45). Popular support and political engagement among the people were not limited to elections. Public enthusiasm and engagement was displayed in organized celebratory parades that attracted hundreds of thousands to the streets of Tbilisi, most notably on the first- and second-year anniversaries of the declaration of independence (NationalArchivesofGeorgia n.d.).

International recognition of Georgia was a paramount concern for its leadership, and they worked tirelessly towards that end through bilateral and multilateral engagements including sending a delegation with that primary objective to the Paris Peace Conference in January 1919 (Lee 2017, 76-80, Lang 1962, 219-222, Kobakhidze, Silakadze, and Vacharadze N.D., 51, 54, 59, 61). Between 1918 and 1921 Georgia gained *de facto* and later *de jure* recognition from several important international powers including Turkey, Germany, England, and France. True to form, the Georgian government turned these into another tangible and memorable *national experience* for its people by organizing a mass public celebration in the streets of Tbilisi on February 6, 1921, where invited foreign diplomats joined the celebration of Georgian independence (Kobakhidze, Silakadze, and Vacharadze N.D., 96-97).

Most notably, Georgia managed to gain *de jure* recognition of its independence even from Soviet Russia. Formalized in the Treaty of Moscow in May 7, 1920, this included declarations that "Russia unreservedly recognizes the independence and

sovereignty of the Georgian state” and that “Russia undertakes to refrain from any kind of interference in the internal affairs of Georgia” (Beichman 1991, 64-65).² This treaty did not stop Russia from annexing Georgia several months later, but its legal recognition of Georgian independence marked another meaningful *national experience* at the time, and it continues to be a reference point for Georgian leaders highlighting the country’s past independence and Russia’s failure to uphold its commitments towards Georgia.

Unlike the old days when political affairs concerned elites while serfs and peasants remained uninvolved and uninformed, these crucial *national experiences* of independence and state-building were shared not only by a small group of leaders but by a large population which was better informed and mobilized thanks to the various *information dissemination* channels in place as well as purposeful reforms implemented by Georgia’s new government to keep the population informed and involved in state-building. As Lee (2017, 48) describes it, despite Georgia’s internal and external weaknesses, “they now had a state of their own for the first time in more than a century and it was the democratic republic they promised, one with a multi-party system, free and fair elections, freedom of speech and assembly, an independent judiciary, and local government.” Suny (1993, 63-66) argues that post-revolutionary Georgia was “the most viable and stable states in Transcaucasia,” where “class and ethnic identities overlapped and reinforced each other” in the process of national mobilization and state-building.

² The treaty was not perceived uniformly positively—while some saw it as a diplomatic success of Georgia, others denounced it over the concessions made to Moscow. According to the treaty, in exchange for recognition of Georgia’s independence and sovereignty by Soviet Russia and its commitment to refrain from any kind of interference in Georgian affairs, Georgia committed to not allowing troops of powers hostile to Russia on its territory and also to allowing a local branch of the Communist party to function freely in Georgia.

Historians and political scientists studying this period agree that independent Georgia “had excellent chances for success” if the Soviet Empire consolidating next door would “permit them to demonstrate potential” (Suny 1993, 64). As it happened, however, Bolshevik Russia forcibly annexed independent Georgia in February 1921.

4.1.2 Georgian Nationalism under the Soviet Union

The exhausted European states had no interest in fighting to keep the Soviet Union out of Georgia after World War I, despite many of them having recognized Georgia’s independence and some like Germany and Britain having moderate geopolitical interests in South Caucasus (Tsereteli 2014, 80, Gachechiladze 2014, 21, 24). Whatever peaceful image the new Soviet regime tried to create (at least in its initial stage), its annexation of Georgia was violent and bloody. The Georgian army fought for several weeks before being defeated by a Soviet invader that had significant numerical and technological advantages (Andersen and Partskhaladze 2009, 68-69). Duly-elected members of the Georgian government were driven into exile in France by March 1921, while those who stayed behind were arrested and executed *en masse* along with their sympathizers (King 2008, 173-174, Andersen and Partskhaladze 2009, 73). This initial contact between independent Georgia and the Soviet Union was a markedly negative *national experience*, uniting many Georgians in a shared grievance and engraving the Soviet Union (like the Russian Empire a century earlier) as the main enemy of Georgian nation and statehood.

The seventy years of Soviet rule that followed were not uniform, as Moscow’s policies toward the Soviet republics varied substantially under different leaders from Lenin to Gorbachev. While at times some level of cultural expression was tolerated or

even encouraged, political dissent and nationalist ambitions in the republics were guarded against. Despite harsh reprisals, Georgian society actively resisted the newly established Soviet rule. The first three years of occupation saw sporadic revolts against the Bolshevik regime across Georgia, culminating in a large-scale uprising in August 1924 (Benidze 1991). The August uprising was coordinated by the Committee for the Independence of Georgia, which was comprised of members of five political parties, unifying all different strides of society with their nationalist and anti-Soviet sentiments (Grdzeldze 1992).

Georgia's leaders-in-exile played a significant role in planning and coordinating the uprising—their “last desperate effort to regain their freedom”—but despite some initial success in western Georgia the August uprising was ultimately suppressed by the Red Army, resulting in thousands of executions and tens of thousands of arrests and deportations (Lang 1962, 243-244). These events demonstrated both the determination of Georgia's nationalists and the brutality of the Bolshevik rule they opposed. In the following years, the government-in-exile led by Noe Zhordania continued denouncing the horrors of Bolshevik rule through publications from abroad, and although these efforts failed to alter the repressive and totalitarian character of Soviet rule, it offered a counter-narrative that continued to criticize the legitimacy of Soviet authority in Georgia and to provide a strong reference point for undercover pro-independence movements (King 2008, 73-75, Zhordania 1925).

The most severe tactics of Sovietization and squelching nationalist sentiments among Soviet republics were employed under Stalin's leadership. His political repressions resulted in hundreds of thousands of executions without trial, forced labor camps, and general terror across the union. The Great Purge of “enemies of the people”

(in the 1930s) wiped out many critics of the Soviet Union and prominent members of the intelligentsia, instilling widespread fear (Thurston 1998, Stalin's lists on Georgia 2013). Subsequent Soviet leaders were relatively less harsh, but until the 1980s political dissent and nationalist mobilization remained sporadic and easily restrained. Nevertheless, large scale demonstrations that took place in Tbilisi in 1978 demonstrated the enduring potential of Georgian nationalism. The constitution asserted Georgian as the sole official language in the republic, and the demonstrations arose in response to Soviet authorities' attempt to change this by giving a similar status to Russian and other languages. Thousands of demonstrators, mostly students, were able to pressure the local government to maintain the primacy of the Georgian language within the republic (Sakwa 1998, 241). In Suny's (1994, 291) words, "Without gaining the full attributes of political sovereignty, Georgians nevertheless remained a cohesive and conscious nationality in possession of its own territory and prepared, should the opportunity arise, to improve its social, material, and cultural life."

As Gorbachev's *Perestroika* took shape in the late 1980s, so did the awakening of nationalism in different parts of the Soviet Union.³ However, the republics did not respond similarly to these relative freedoms; only a handful of them seized the opportunity for national mobilization, while others rejected the notion of independence and clung to the Soviet Union even as signs of its disintegration became apparent (Abdelal 2001, Brzezinski and Sullivan 1997). In the final years of the Soviet Union, as

³ *Perestroika* literally means restructuring, referring to political and economic reforms that took place in the Soviet Union under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980s, associated with the relative liberalization and decentralization of the Soviet system.

the central leadership was challenged and shaken, Georgia was one of the few Soviet republics where leaders of the national liberation movement galvanized society and widespread anti-Soviet movements and demonstrations emerged.

The culmination of the Georgian national movement came on April 9, 1989, when a large-scale anti-Soviet demonstration was raided by Soviet troops using sharp shovels and toxic gas, killing and injuring peaceful demonstrators. This tragedy further fanned the flames of anti-Soviet sentiments (in Georgia and beyond), making it easier for nationalist leaders to frame the Soviet Union and its main successor-state, Russia, as Georgia's essential enemy (Beissinger 2002, 80). I argue that Georgia's strong national mobilization—first developed during the nineteenth century, strengthened through political independence and state-building in 1917-1921—made Georgian society resilient enough even after seventy years of Soviet rule to sustain its unique self-image, animosity towards its occupying power, and longing for independence. In the following sections I demonstrate how these national sentiments affected Georgia's foreign policy during the early 1990s.

4.2 Georgia's Post-Soviet Foreign Policy

I begin this case study of Georgia's foreign policy decision-making in 1990, when Georgia, still formally under the Soviet rule, began acting as an independent state and effectively formulating its own domestic and foreign policies. Georgia's leader during this time was Zviad Gamsakhurdia, a former dissident and leader of the national liberation movement in Georgia, who was elevated to national leadership following the first multiparty elections in Soviet Georgia on 28 October 1990. Gamsakhurdia's tenure

as a national leader was short-lived, first as chairman of the Supreme Council of Georgia and then as president (1990-1992). Nevertheless, during his brief rule Gamsakhurdia powerfully shaped the course of Georgia's post-independence foreign policy towards Russia.

To what extent did Gamsakhurdia's own nationalist views and high national mobilization throughout the country influence Georgia's foreign policy toward Russia during his tenure as leader of the country? The sections that follow examine the decision-making process of Georgia's leaders confronting important foreign policy choices in the early 1990s, paying particular attention to their perception of Russia and their future relationship with it. The analysis is based on primary documents including official statements, interviews, correspondence, and most importantly transcripts of sessions of the Supreme Council of Georgia, which contain invaluable information regarding Georgian leaders' decision-making processes as they were debating and shaping Georgia's foreign policy. While the primary focus in the following sections is on the 1990-1992 period and the leadership of Gamsakhurdia, I also extend my analysis to incorporate Georgia's subsequent foreign policy under presidents Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili in order to demonstrate that the role of Georgia's strong national mobilization endured across such disparate leaders.

4.2.1 The New Union Treaty

As the forces that eventually pulled the Soviet Union apart grew increasingly severe in the late 1980s, and leaders in Moscow were desperately searching for a formula that would keep the simmering union together. Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev proposed the New Union Treaty, intending to accommodate the various republics'

growing needs for autonomy while preventing the dissolution of the union. Several visions for a renewed union circulated involving varying degrees of decentralization, but as late as 1990 Gorbachev remained hopeful that it was still possible to salvage the union by accommodating the republics' growing demands (Cherni̇aev 2000, 51-53).

Although these events occurred under the formal mantle of Soviet rule, they represented the formative foreign policy issue for the Soviet republics—indeed, the choice whether to chart their own unique foreign policies. Some approached this decision willingly and others confronted it only by necessity, but during this period each decided how to approach its future relationship with Russia and how much autonomy to demand or sacrifice. The various republics met Gorbachev's initiative with radically different responses: some enthusiastically supported his efforts to preserve the union while others outright rejected the proposal as an insult to their goal of full independence (Remnick 1990). Georgia fell in the latter category, and archival transcripts detailing Georgian leaders' decision-making process as they were grappling with how to respond to Gorbachev's invitation reveal that nationalism was the central factor informing their decisions.

Nationalism can affect states' foreign policy in two ways. First, a leader's own internalized nationalist views may directly influence his/her decision making. Second, widespread nationalist views in society may generate popular pressure incentivizing even non-nationalist leaders to reflect nationalism in their policies. In the case of Georgia, both conditions were met by 1990: a nationalist leader governed an electorate mobilized around nationalist sentiments. Before he became the formal leader of Georgia, Gamsakhurdia had been involved in anti-Soviet political activism for several decades and

had been arrested several times because of it. By the mid-1980s he became the charismatic leader of Georgia's national liberation movement, galvanizing followers with nationalist speeches highlighting the millennial history of the nation, denouncing Soviet occupation, and uniting people around the shared goal of independence. Gamsakhurdia's leadership can be described with reference to populism, religiosity, and conservatism, but all of these were wrapped in nationalist rhetoric and images of a semi-mythological historic Georgia, which he compared to "Lazarus rising from the dead" (Jones 2013, 52, Fuller 1993, 342-343). Gamsakhurdia revived old traditions and national symbols in numerous aspects of social and political life, restoring the flag, anthem, and emblem of the first republic of Georgia. He also promoted Georgian Orthodox Christianity, equating it with Georgianness and delivering lectures on the country's spiritual mission (Gamsakhurdia 1990, 1991f).

It was no accident that Georgia had an overtly nationalist leader as it broke away from the Soviet Union. As the preceding sections described, Georgia had a long history of national mobilization by the late 1980s. Its mobilized electorate eagerly participated in the Supreme Council elections of October 28, 1990, producing a council composed primarily of nationalist anti-communist parties. In those first multiparty parliamentary elections allowed under Soviet rule, the nationalist Round Table-Free Georgia bloc headed by Gamsakhurdia received overwhelming support. Upon becoming the new chairman of the Supreme Council on November 19, Gamsakhurdia effectively formed a non-communist government of Georgia (Nelson and Amonashvili 1992, 687-688). The local communist government lost control over the radical nationalists and in some ways was nationalized itself, even adopting stances in line with Georgia's political liberation.

This shift was likely not fueled by any earnest change of heart among communist politicians; instead, it represents a strong example of how the acceleration of anti-Soviet and pro-independence sentiments in public opinion drove non-nationalist leaders to adopt nationalist positions (Matsaberidze 2019, 178-180).

Transcripts of the sessions of the Supreme Council of Georgia reveal that Gamsakhurdia and other parliamentarians actively denounced and rejected the New Union Treaty from the very moment it was proposed by Soviet leadership in November 1990. At the November 22 session, council members expressed a widespread consensus that Chairman Gamsakhurdia should reject Moscow's invitation to attend the November 23 meeting of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union, where Gorbachev was expected to make a special report regarding the future of the union (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-a, 199-200). Far from framing this decision as internal business-as-usual between the center and a republic of the Soviet Union, the Georgian parliamentarians consciously confronted it as a matter of foreign policy, demonstrating the mindset of an independent Georgia even as their council remained formally within framework of the Soviet Union. As one of the MPs stated, "Since this [was] about a union treaty, and in general about [Georgia's] relationship with Russia,... it represent[ed] foreign affairs" (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-a, 202).

It is also telling that Georgian parliamentarians rejected the New Union Treaty without knowing what it really entailed or what kind of renewed union Gorbachev was actually proposing. Only one of the MPs, Georgian diplomat Levan Aleksidze, suggested that instead of outright rejection it would make sense to "let this proposal come to Georgia... [then] consider it and write a justified rejection"—to first "see what they are

offering” since they could “always say no” (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-a, 2003). Yet the loudest voices in the council argued for rejecting any type of new union treaty coming from Russia—an enemy that should not be trusted—and they framed the rejection of the New Union Treaty as their duty to the Georgian nation. As one prominent MP, Nodar Natadze, put it, “The responsibility of the Supreme Council of Georgia [was] to declare unequivocally and clearly that Georgia is not going to join any union treaty,” that all new parties representing a majority of the council had been elected on a platform championing Georgian independence, and that Georgian independence was “incompatible with joining a new union treaty” with Russia (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-a, 203-204).

This discussion preceded any formal invitation for the Georgian republic to join the New Union Treaty; indeed, it preceded any council members actually seeing the treaty’s contents. Soviet leaders started a promotion campaign highlighting that the New Union Treaty would guarantee the sovereignty of all member republics in this renewed union, but the Georgian parliamentarians rejected the notion outright, treating any proposal emanating from Moscow as a threat to be avoided at any cost. Not only did they refuse to consider the New Union Treaty, members of the Georgian parliament advocated adopting a formal document that would demonstrate “that Georgia’s Supreme Council rejects any proposal of a union treaty” (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-a, 202).

National duty and responsibility were recalled at every step of this discussion, with parliamentarians judging it as their “responsibility to the nation” to formally and categorically reject any form of union treaty with Russia and justifying that position as “Georgia’s historic interest” (N. Natadze File N1165 No 8 N2892 pp 206-207, 203-204).

In contrast to such nationalist invocations, strategic calculations concerning the military and economic costs and benefits of refusing to entertain a future union in any form were entirely missing from the discussion. Gamsakhurdia summarized the debate by reminding everyone that they had not yet received the formal invitation to join the treaty “because they do not dare to,” echoing another MP’s sentiment that “maybe they will not even dare to ask a parliament with attitudes like ours to join the new union treaty” (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-a, 206-207, 205). His comments highlighting the strength of the nationalist commitments embodied by Georgia’s newly elected parliament were met by applause.

Shortly after this discussion, the Supreme Council of Georgia received an official proposal for the New Union Treaty from Moscow. It responded by drafting and adopting an official document declaring Georgia’s rejection of the New Union Treaty and outlining the reasoning behind this position. Addressed to Gorbachev, the two-page document began by highlighting that the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia had adopted a law declaring its transitional period on November 22, 1990, noting the history of Soviet occupation of Georgia since 1921, and emphasizing that although it was formally a member of the Soviet Union Georgia was actively pursuing institutional reforms towards the full restoration of its independence. The document made inescapably clear that Georgia rejected participation in any union treaty that implied even a minimal amount of vertical subordination, concluding that it would “reject participation in a detailed consideration of the ‘New Union Treaty proposal’ because in any form it is unacceptable to the Republic of Georgia, which is only in the early stages of restoring its full state independence”(Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-b, 105-106).

To summarize, the Supreme Council of Georgia's deliberations surrounding the New Union Treaty proposal showed Georgian leaders' ironclad resolve to reject it sight unseen because any union with Russia contradicted their ultimate goal of full independence. In line with national mobilization theory, their discussions were filled with nationalist sentiments as the chairman and MPs alike were effusive in their dedication to Georgia's independence, using their duty to the country, their historic responsibility, and similar concepts to justify their rejection of the union treaty.

The MPs did not debate the economic or political consequences of their decision during these parliamentary discussions. Liberal logic would expect that economically weak Georgia, still largely dependent on trade with the Soviet center and the union at large, would be concerned about the potential economic consequences of rejecting a new union treaty, which was fundamentally concerned with maintaining existing economic ties among the Soviet republics. Similarly, realist logic would predict that Georgian leaders should have been concerned with the strategic consequences of rejecting a renewed union and antagonizing the Soviet leadership, which only one-and-a-half years earlier had demonstrated that it was willing to deploy military force to crush Georgia's aspirations for independence. Contrary to assumptions that rational Georgian politicians should have heavily weighed the material consequences of their decision, it is telling that such concerns went unvoiced during their decision-making process, which was instead dominated by nationalists and nationalist sentiments.

Similarly, no one voiced sentiments regarding the fact that Georgia and Russia shared the Orthodox Christian religion in the Georgian Supreme Council of the early 1990s. Although there had been collaborationists who advanced the idea of cultural

similarity throughout the long history of Russo-Georgian relations, any collaborationists were sidelined along with the Georgian Communists, a group that itself had little credibility on religious matters. As a result, Georgia's experience with the New Union Treaty offers considerable support for national mobilization theory while disconfirming the alternative theories, which were defied by Georgian leaders' rejection of the treaty as well as the highly nationalist character of their deliberations and the absence of the material and cultural considerations that those alternative approaches would expect.

4.2.2 The Union-Wide Referendum

Confronted with Georgia's refusal to even participate in the drafting of the New Union Treaty (along with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova and Armenia) and increasing secessionist activity across the Soviet Union, Gorbachev proposed a union-wide referendum to be held on March 17, 1991. The goal of this referendum was to maintain the integrity of the Soviet government by salvaging popular support for the New Union Treaty (Austin 1996, 3). This was a significant moment as it was the first (and last) time that the Soviet Union asked its population to participate in such a referendum. The question proposed for the ballot was: "Do you consider it necessary to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics, in which the rights and freedoms of a person of any nationality will be fully guaranteed?" (Hill and White 2014, 19). Such an unprecedented direct appeal to the people of the Soviet Union could have been interpreted as a positive effect of Gorbachev's *Perestroika*, but not all republics saw it in such an attractive light. On the contrary, Georgian leaders perceived the idea of a referendum as unequivocally negative—yet another attempt by Moscow to stifle their progress toward full independence and to threaten their nation's

sovereignty (Gamsakhurdia, Saqartvelos Respublika, February 5, 1991, 1). Not only did they reject the union-wide referendum, Georgian leaders responded by holding an alternate referendum asking the people of Georgia to express their opinion on Georgia's full independence from the Soviet Union. The discussions regarding the union-wide referendum held during the February 1991 sessions of the Supreme Council of Georgia demonstrate the reasoning behind these decisions.

Gamsakhurdia opened the debate on the proposed Soviet and Georgian referendums by observing, "We discussed and thought, that of course we should not participate in any referendum regarding the Soviet Union, but I think we can still hold a referendum in some form, so that our nation's will regarding the independence of Georgia, regarding the restoration of state independence can be expressed" (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-c, 113). The discussion that followed was filled with nationalist fireworks and references to Russia as an existential current and future threat to the sovereignty of Georgia. As parliamentarian Nodar Natadze stated, Georgia was "essentially under two life-or-death threats" from Moscow, one of them the physical risk of "expulsion" and "slaughter" and the other "legal, if we willingly agree to stay in the Soviet Union." Therefore, he declared that Gorbachev's referendum "should be totally boycotted" (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-c, 114-115).

Gamsakhurdia's own passionate arguments for rejecting the Soviet referendum met unanimous approval from the council members. He argued that Georgia did not "recognize the Soviet Union and neither its belonging to it," insisting that there could not be a referendum on maintaining the Soviet Union when there had never been a "referendum in Georgia regarding joining the Soviet Union" at the time of its conquest in

1921 (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-c, 115-116, Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-d, 108). He considered Georgia's 1918 "declaration of independence still legally valid," but given the reality of its infringement for 70 years he thought that holding an alternate referendum on Georgia's independence was important "to demonstrate to the world society that the Georgian nation want[ed] independence" (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-c, 115-116, Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-d, 108).

Although there was broad consensus across the Supreme Council on boycotting Gorbachev's union-wide referendum and holding a referendum on Georgia's independence, several members voiced concerns regarding the timing and potential turnout rate of their alternate referendum. Some emphasized the importance of producing a high turnout and a high percentage of positive responses; the goal was to get "not just 50% plus one" votes, but "as high a percent as possible, so that the percent itself is a clear and impressive" communication of the will of the Georgian nation (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-d, 113-114). Some feared that if they failed to achieve "much more than two-thirds of the votes" including votes from "non-Georgian citizens, then the results of the referendum will have lesser effects both for the international organizations and our talks with the center of the empire [Moscow]." Securing a dramatic success, therefore, represented a "huge responsibility for [Georgia's] history" (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-d, 114, 133).

Some parliamentarians noted the harsh economic conditions expected to befall Georgia during the upcoming months and worried how this would affect the referendum results. Their concern was that many "perceive Georgia's independence, among all the

other things, as the stomach's sacrifices to the soul" and thus there was much work to be done to show Georgia's citizens that it was "poor not because it is fighting for independence, but quite contrary, it is poor because it does not have independence" (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-d, 113-114). One of the parliamentarians, Roman Gotsiridze, advised against holding the referendum on independence anytime soon, believing that the "economic pocket situation" would determine voters' "political choice" (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-d, 127-129). In contrast to the expectations of liberal theory, however, this pessimism was not accompanied by calls to prioritize economic recovery by revisiting integration with Russia. Instead, Gotsiridze's skepticism was met with a harsh response from his colleagues who consciously prioritized nationalist soul over materialist stomach. They condemned his doubts as a "disrespect to the whole Georgian nation," arguing that any projected referendum results must take into account "the national self-awareness and the instinct in Georgian people to save their nation, their consciousness, and their future," and the fact that the "Georgian nation [was] ready for this choice" of full state independence (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-d, 129-130).

The Supreme Council's referendum debate sidestepped not only economic concerns but strategic concerns as well. Its speeches neglected the potential effects of their decisions on Moscow's military posture towards Georgia—whether rejecting the Soviet referendum and holding their own would actually smooth Georgia's route to independence or instead make it a target for an aggressive crackdown. During this parliamentary discussion session only one member warned his colleagues that Georgia should prepare for a harsh response, anticipating "economic blockades" or "direct

interventions” and suggesting “some kind of union, alliance with the republics that are expected to be punished similarly” (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-d, 125). These isolated comments reflect the sort of logic realist theory would expect from leaders in Georgia’s situation, but they were not echoed by others in the Supreme Council and sparked no follow-up debate.

Ultimately, the Supreme Council of Georgia adopted a resolution boycotting the Soviet referendum (planned for March 17) and instead planned its own referendum for March 31, in which people would be asked: “Do you support the restoration of the independence of Georgia on the basis of the Act of Declaration of Independence of Georgia on May 26, 1918?” (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-d, 108). During the month leading up to Georgia’s referendum, the Supreme Council committed to educating the public about it through rallies, academic sessions, lectures, and televised programs (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-d, 113-114). The Chairman closed the session by expressing his confidence that everyone would come to the referendum on Georgia’s independence “because this is an extremely important matter, for Georgians this has a vital importance, and for non-Georgians too, because non-Georgians expect citizenship, land, and normal life conditions” (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-d, 133-134).

The Georgian referendum was held on March 31 as planned, and the results were impressive with over 90% turnout out of which around 99% voted in favor of independence and less than 1% voted against (Matsaberidze 2019, 181). On April 9 (the two-year anniversary of the Soviet army’s crackdown on Georgia’s peaceful anti-Soviet protests), the Supreme Council of Georgia passed the Act of the Restoration of Independence of Georgia (Matsaberidze 2019, 183-185).

Independence from the Soviet Union was explicitly framed as a restoration of the sovereignty that had been lost in 1921. As Gamsakhurdia declared in his 1991 New Year Address, “Georgia declared its independence in 1918 and it is still legitimate. Therefore, we do not need to announce our independence again” (Gamsakhurdia 1991). In an hour-long speech before the Georgian Supreme Council preceding the official reading of the Act of the Restoration of Independence, Gamsakhurdia explicitly linked post-Soviet independence to the pre-Soviet experience of independence, describing the First Georgian Democratic Republic (1918-1921) as an indispensable experience of modern Georgian statehood and observing its accomplishments in the domestic and international arenas as well as its forcible annexation by the Soviet Union. His speech was filled with nationalist sentiments emphasizing the experience of statehood, highlighting the repressions experienced under Soviet rule and at times invoking religious symbolism and cultural uniqueness, contrary to the expectations of theories emphasizing Georgia’s and Russia’s shared Orthodox Christianity (Gamsakhurdia 1991d). On May 26, 1991, Gamsakhurdia became the first popularly elected president of independent Georgia (earning 86.5% of the vote). The date was symbolic: the seventy-fourth anniversary of Georgia’s declaration of independence in the beginning of the century.

In sum, the same Georgia that rejected the New Union Treaty also rejected the union-wide referendum that Gorbachev intended to muster desperately needed legitimacy for the treaty. The discussions among Georgia’s MPs surrounding their decision to reject the referendum were saturated with nationalist sentiments. Their alternative referendum on independence, its successful implementation with a high level of turnout and extensive support for independence, their declaration of independence and the lion’s share of the

surrounding official statements and speeches align with the predictions of national mobilization theory. During the Supreme Council's debates regarding the referendum, a few isolated MPs voiced economic and strategic concerns regarding their colleagues' political choices, but their voices were drowned in a sea of nationalist rhetoric about the importance of full political independence and a full-hearted rejection of anything coming from Georgia's perceived enemy.

4.2.3 Pro-Western Foreign Policy

Georgia's foreign policy from 1990 onward was not only anti-Russian but also firmly pro-Western. Throughout its history Georgia had been influenced by various Western and Eastern powers due to its strategic location, but the modern Georgian state has been distinctly pro-Western. The first republic of modern Georgia (1918-1921) defined its independence and identity in contrast to Bolshevik Russia and consciously emulated democratic Europe. As the Chairman of the Government of Georgia Noe Zhordania (1920) declared, "Our present and our future path is strongly, directly intertwined with the West, and no power can terminate this connection." After 70 years of Soviet rule, Gamsakhurdia and his nationalist parliament reinvigorated that framing of Georgia's independence as constituted in opposition to Soviet Russia and in harmony with the European family. Whereas Georgia's Social Democratic leadership in the early twentieth century primarily highlighted their shared democratic ideology with Europe in contrast to totalitarian Russia, Georgia's nationalist leadership during the 1990s additionally emphasized their shared Christian civilization with Europe. In so doing, they minimized the fact that Russia also represented Christian civilization (even if the role of religion in Russian society had been suppressed under Soviet rule). In his animated

speeches, Gamsakhurdia routinely stressed Georgia's "destiny," "historic mission," and "belonging to Europe and Christian civilization" (Gamsakhurdia 1991c).

Throughout his short tenure as leader of Georgia, Gamsakhurdia routinely appealed to the international community and particularly to the Western powers for their support. During its first official session, the Supreme Council of Georgia made clear not only its dedication to full independence and sovereignty but also its pro-Western and pro-European political course. On November 14, 1990, the council drafted and adopted an official appeal to the Paris Summit of the heads of the member states of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which was scheduled to convene on November 19, reminding its participants about Georgia's seventy years of occupation by the Soviet Union and its recent strides towards full independence through "democratic and multiparty elections." It offered those elections as evidence that "Georgia has chosen the way, that will bring him back to the family of European people" and ultimately promote the "process of European integration" (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-e, 91-93). The letter further reminded European leaders about the "very spirit of the Helsinki process"—aimed to secure the peaceful coexistence of European people—and it concluded by expressing Georgia's hope that the states participating in this Paris Summit would "realistically evaluate the processes that are taking place in the European part of the Soviet Union—the justified aspirations of the people of the formerly independent states to rebuild their statehoods, and not stifle this process of global Euro-integration and ultimate stability" (Press Release of the Supreme Council N11, 84-85).

After declaring Georgia's independence on April 9, 1991, the Georgian parliament adopted several further official appeals requesting recognition of its

independence and support from the Western powers and the United Nations (Press Release of the Supreme Council N4, 90, 93-94). Already during these first moments of Georgia's independence, President Gamsakhurdia openly contemplated the idea of joining NATO despite no official signs that its membership would be considered (Coene 2016, 31). In yet another official appeal to the United Nations in May 1991, Georgia declared its readiness to join and ratify important conventions, declarations, and pacts of international law, and it expressed the hope that the United Nations would invite Georgian representatives to participate in its various activities (Press Release of the Supreme Council N6, 88). During its next session, the Supreme Council of Georgia adopted a law providing guidelines for joining and ratifying international treaties and conventions (Press Release of the Supreme Council N7, 81-87).

On August 26, 1991, President Gamsakhurdia warned the Western states and particularly the United States about instability within the Soviet Union following the August coup in Moscow and the real danger of military aggression faced by the democratically-elected governments of the newly independent states in the region. He urged the Western states to extend their prompt recognition of those states' independence and to establish diplomatic relationships with them as a way to "safeguard the achievements of truly democratic reforms in these countries" (Press Release of the Supreme Council N8, 186). The following month, he sent an appeal to UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar in which he once again reiterated Georgia's commitment to international law and asked for the acceptance of Georgia into the United Nations, concluding that "Georgia's entry to the United Nations will greatly enhance peace in the Caucasus region" (Press Release of the Supreme Council N9, 29-30).

In sum, Georgia's leaders chose a clear foreign policy orientation of balancing against Russia while seeking support from the West from the very formative period of their independence in the early 1990s, and they did so despite recognizing the tangible threat of economic and military retaliation from Russia. This foreign policy course defies realist logic, which expects a small state like Georgia to bandwagon with a threatening great power next door (Walt 1987, 24-25, Waltz 1979, 195). Skeptics might argue that realist logic would explain Georgia's foreign policy if its leaders realistically expected the West to provide security guarantees against Russia, but this argument falls apart when evaluated against the available evidence. Not only were the United States and the Western European states reluctant to provide timely recognition or security guarantees of any sort to Georgia (thirty years later they still refuse to admit Georgia to either NATO or the EU), but Georgian leaders were well aware of the likely futility of their efforts. Yet despite enduring disappointment after disappointment from the West and numerous retaliations from Russia, they still refused to bandwagon.

Transcripts of discussions during the parliamentary sessions of the newly-elected Supreme Council of Georgia show that already in November 1990 Georgian leaders were well aware that the Western powers held a favorable view of Gorbachev and his reforms, making any meaningful support for Georgia inimical to the more important goal of maintaining positive relations with Moscow (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-a, 88-94). Parliamentarians expressed frustration that the West did not really see the Soviet Union as an empire, and with Gorbachev proposing to maintain the union by transforming it into renewed confederation, Georgia had a tough task ahead to convince the West to view the Soviet Union as they did—a “barbarian anachronism” stifling the

self-determination of its member republics—and to take the side of “the nations needing their own states” like Georgia instead of prioritizing stable relations with reformers in Moscow (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-a, 89-90).

Georgia continued trying to balance against Russia the following year without any meaningful security guarantees from the West and with clear understanding of the gravity of this lack of support. In May 1991, Gamsakhurdia in his presidential election program was once again clear in his assessment that because the West had supported Gorbachev’s reforms during the late 1980s, Western leaders were uncertain whether to continue supporting “the ‘reformist’ center” or to shift their support to “the ‘radical nationalists’ in rebellious republics,” and he hoped that this dilemma would be solved in favor of the republics “sooner or later” (Gamsakhurdia 1991c).

Yet realist logic demands more to justify balancing by such a vulnerable state than a vain hope that desired allies would “sooner or later” defy their own strategic incentives to cooperate with Moscow and instead support weak Georgia. In 1991, Georgia needed immediate external guarantees against Russia, which had tremendous economic and military advantages over its southern neighbor, had demonstrated its readiness to use both economic blockades and military retaliations, and maintained troops on Georgian territory even after its declaration of independence in April 1991 (Gamsakhurdia 1991b, a).

Georgia’s high national mobilization drove its foreign policy more than economic or strategic calculations or any shared cultural elements with Russia. Both its parliamentary discussions during the revolutionary period of 1990-1991 as well as Gamsakhurdia’s numerous speeches and interviews during that time show that economics

and the balance of power were dwarfed by nationalist sentiments in determining Georgia's foreign policy. Georgian leaders framed their identity in anti-Russian terms even on matters of religion and culture, portrayed Georgia's independence in opposition to Russia and as part of the West, represented Russia as an untrustworthy and fundamental enemy, and understood any cooperation with Russia as an unacceptable sacrifice of Georgia's long-awaited autonomy.

4.3 Georgia's Foreign Policy After 1992

The formulation of Georgia's initial foreign policy perspective during the twilight and immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union laid the foundations for its policies after gaining independence. During those formative years, leaders judged where their state stood in relation to Russia, how to orient themselves within the changing world and regional politics, and what risks they were ready to take along their chosen route. This does not mean that foreign policy is a static phenomenon—it can be influenced by numerous factors and can fluctuate over time. That said, some factors can have a strong and lasting impact, producing patterns that are crucial for explaining and predicting future behavior. In this section, I examine Georgia's post-1991 foreign policy across different leaderships to demonstrate that national mobilization remained an enduring and important factor. Despite some clear differences across the successive administrations, Georgia's central foreign policy goal remained balancing against Russia and seeking cooperation with the West.

4.3.1 Shevardnadze: Communist turned Nationalist

Gamsakhurdia was ousted on January 6, 1992, by a military coup staged by growing opposition allegedly supported by Moscow. He was succeeded by Eduard Shevardnadze, who was a peculiar choice for the openly anti-Russian Georgia given his heavy Communist past. Shevardnadze was the First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party in 1972-1985 and was later promoted to Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union (1985-1991). In the West, Shevardnadze was considered a liberal politician and praised for his role in *Perestroika* and the peaceful end of the Cold War, but within his native Georgia he needed to convince people that despite his Communist background he was there to advance Georgia's full independence from Russia as well as its popular pro-Western vision (Baker 2014). Jones (2013, 249) evaluates Shevardnadze as a sophisticated political player under circumstances when "the West was desirable but not attainable, and Russia was undesirable but not alienable."

As discussed earlier, there are two mechanisms through which national mobilization affects states' foreign policy choices: directly via a nationalist leader and indirectly when a nationally mobilized population expects its leaders to adopt policies in line with its widely shared national identity and purpose. If Gamsakhurdia emerged directly from the national-liberation movement and in many ways represented the very embodiment of Georgian nationalist sentiments, Shevardnadze had to adopt a similar nationalist identity to appeal to his popular constituency in Georgia. Though perhaps not to the extent of other Georgian leaders and with less emotional overtones, Shevardnadze too used nationalism and national symbols to garner popular support. In 1992, upon returning to his native Georgia, the lifelong Communist Shevardnadze decided to be

baptized as an Orthodox Christian, taking as godparents Georgian Patriarch Ilia II and the beloved Georgian poet Ana Kalandadze (Jgerenaia 2017, 35). This decision fulfilled the political purpose of strengthening his legitimacy and public support by paying tribute to Christianity, which had been suppressed under the Soviet Union but was now enjoying revitalization as a defining national characteristic in Georgia.

Shevardnadze continued his predecessor's practice of honoring the first republic of Georgia as an important foundation for modern Georgian statehood, writing about Russia's 1921 conquest of Georgia in his memoir that "the national struggle against the occupiers was so heroic that we should transmit every detail of these events to our descendants" and that to do so was "the duty of the present independent state" (Jones 2014, 319). Among the post-Soviet Georgian leaders, Shevardnadze was relatively more rational and less populist, trying to steer his country away from militant and destructive ethno-nationalism and instead to emphasize citizenship and minority rights (Shevardnadze 1992b, a). Yet like the others he oriented Georgia's foreign policy towards the West, albeit more cautiously than other leaders did.

In October 1993 Georgia was on the verge of failing as a state due to fierce ethnic conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as infighting with ex-President Gamsakhurdia's supporters. Hoping to avoid a total military and economic catastrophe, Shevardnadze announced that Georgia would become a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Joining the CIS and accepting its peacekeeping forces on Georgian territory were controversial moves viewed by many as compromising the country's sovereignty and violating its anti-Russian stance, even if undertaken as a last resort to avoid the country's potential disintegration. Shevardnadze initially accused

Russia of intruding on Georgia's sovereignty by exacerbating ethnic conflicts on its territory, insisting that Georgia did not intend to join the CIS in the near future (Brzezinski and Sullivan 1997, 34-36). Yet soon after he declared that due to "Russia's betrayal, I think Georgia will not join the CIS," Shevardnadze reversed his position and decided to join the CIS after all. Admitting that "the situation in Georgia compelled [him] to take this step," he distinguished between two factions within Russia with the hope that the democratic side represented by President Boris Yeltsin would prevail (Brzezinski and Sullivan 1997, 237) He explained his reversal as follows: "I saw in this decision the last chance to rescue my people and my country while preventing its disintegration, preventing civil war, and enabling justice to emerge again in Abkhazia" (Brzezinski and Sullivan 1997, 238).

Joining the CIS may be viewed as confirming the realist prediction that under extreme security pressures a weak state should bandwagon with its threatening neighbor, but this confirmation is partial at best. Georgia was a member of the CIS from March 1994 until its withdrawal in 2008, yet even within the Russia-led organization it never abandoned its pro-Western and anti-Russian foreign policy. On the contrary, under Shevardnadze's leadership Georgia vigorously reinforced and advanced its efforts for Euro-Atlantic integration on economic and security matters both in bilateral relations with the United States and European states and with intergovernmental organizations such as the EU and NATO. During this period it joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, the Council of Europe, the IMF, and the World Bank, as well as signing numerous other international conventions and treaties.

Moreover, in 1997 Georgia along with three other CIS members established the organization GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova), a pro-Western subgroup consolidated with the intention of integrating with European and transatlantic structures and countering Russia's influence within their respective states (Kuzio 2000, 83). Quantitative studies also confirm that Georgia's temporary membership in the CIS (which some describe as a "necessary evil") did not produce a convergence of Georgian and Russian foreign policy preferences. Instead, Georgia consistently displayed one of the largest divergences from other CIS states in UN General Assembly voting (along with Moldova and Ukraine), especially on security and self-determination issues (Hansen 2015, 69-73).

Georgia's defiant continuation and even acceleration of its pro-Western moves cuts against realist logic, since Russia consistently viewed Georgia's westward orientation as negative and stood poised to retaliate at will. Primary documents including political briefings, analyses, and reports within the Georgian government show that its leaders were well aware of Russia's disapproval, especially regarding its pro-Western overtures in the security arena (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-f, 19-27, Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-h, 1-2, 20-23). Nevertheless, they proved willing to continue down that path despite lacking any tangible security guarantees from the West. In September 1995, Georgia's embassy to the United States sent a report/brief back to the Minister of the Foreign Affairs of Georgia based on meetings in the US State and Defense Departments, notifying readers about the general plans for the NATO's future enlargement (with no specific countries or timelines yet set), the strict guidelines for future states to qualify for NATO membership, as well as Russia's overwhelming

disapproval of NATO's eastward enlargement and NATO's preference to accommodate and not isolate Russia (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-f, 74-80).

Despite being uncertain at best regarding Georgia's prospects of becoming a NATO member and absolutely certain of Russia's disapproval of such a development, at no point did this report suggest that Georgia curb its efforts to forge a closer relationship with NATO. On the contrary, it outlined specific steps to reinforce those efforts (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-f, 76-78). Another report—prepared by the political department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia in August 1995—makes clear that Georgian leaders were aware that Russia opposed the Euro-integration of central and eastern European states, observing that it was particularly concerned with the NATO's eastward enlargement and emphasizing that it “will not tolerate” such moves involving the post-Soviet republics (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-g, 27-36). Still, this report concluded with guidelines for Georgia to “deepen the cooperation with European structures and states,” and—though NATO membership was not yet attainable— suggestions how to “reinforce the cooperation with the Partnership for Peace program” (Supreme Council of Georgia Transcripts-g, 34-36).

4.3.2 Saakashvili: Nationalism in the Face of War

Shevardnadze was initially perceived as a stabilizing force who would bring security and democratic progress to the chaotic post-Gamsakhurdia country, but he lost his popularity and eventually his presidency due to rampant corruption that flourished under his watch (Antidze 2014). Mikheil Saakashvili came to power through a peaceful revolution in 2003, ousting Shevardnadze who to his credit stepped down in response to popular demand and avoided bloodshed rather than attempting to maintain power.

Saakashvili revived the use of emotionally charged nationalist rhetoric similar to Gamsakhurdia's, but like Shevardnadze his vision of the nation was more inclusive and not limited to one ethno-religious category. His populist promotion of Georgian exceptionalism and the importance of Christianity was not always easily combined with his parallel emphasis on multicultural civic unity, in which "every citizen who considers Georgia as its homeland... is our greatest wealth and treasure" (Saakashvili 2004).

Especially early in his presidency, Saakashvili took pragmatic steps toward modernization and democratization, but the most notable feature of his domestic consolidation was nationalism, and his foreign policy was once again defined by its anti-Russian stance. He tapped into nationalist sentiments by recalling Georgia's glorious medieval kings, its ancient Christian roots, and its destiny among European nations: "Georgia is a country of unique culture. We are not only old Europeans, we are the very first Europeans, and therefore Georgia holds a special place in European civilization" (Saakashvili 2004). Saakashvili maintained bold anti-Russian rhetoric throughout his two-term presidency, in the face of Russian intolerance of Georgia's pro-Western orientation and supported by the Georgian public's enduring conviction to resist the influence of its powerful neighbor.

Saakashvili started his presidency by emphasizing the importance of Georgia's nationhood and its independence lost to the Russian Army in February 1921, as well as the sacrifice of the Georgians who died while peacefully demanding national liberation from the Soviet Union on April 9, 1989 (Saakashvili 2004). Some might have hoped that Russia would not revive an imperial geopolitical perspective after the Soviet Union's dissolution, but Russian politicians and media pundits frankly opined that the

“dismemberment of Georgia is a political necessity” and argued that Russia’s main task in Caucasus should be de-sovereignization and the annihilation of Georgia’s “centuries-old statehood” (Rondeli 2014, 39). If there were any doubts about Russia’s intentions towards Georgia, the war of August 2008 clarified them, demonstrating its readiness to punish detractors in its “near abroad” with military invasion and territorial annexation. Moreover, the war demonstrated as clearly as possible that Georgia lacked the Western support it needed to have any hope of realistically surviving Russian aggression. Despite ideologically and economically supporting Georgian democracy (just like in 1921), the flaccid Western response to Russia’s invasion showed that it would not provide security guarantees for Georgia that might entail fighting to defend it or even sanctioning Russia over its actions.

The Russo-Georgian War offers a natural experiment to once again test this study’s theoretical predictions regarding the foreign policy behavior of weak states—not only under the threat of military retaliation but in the face of realized threats. The war is commonly depicted as Russian punishment for Georgia’s pro-Western orientation and NATO aspirations, following intensified Georgian efforts to become a NATO member after it signed an Individual Partnership Action Plan in 2004 and was nearly granted a Membership Action Plan in April 2008 (Rondeli 2014, 37, Gvalia et al. 2013, 119, Marcus 2008). Russia imposed economic sanctions on Georgian products such as wine and mineral waters in 2006 and also raised gas prices, causing significant damage to Georgia’s economy, but those punishments failed to deter Georgia’s pro-EU and pro-NATO aspirations (Newnham 2015, 61). The 2008 war was the ultimate test of Georgia’s balancing strategy towards Russia, its military overwhelmed as NATO watched from the

sidelines offering little more than rhetorical condemnation. In contrast to realist logic, however, even this resounding military defeat, the resulting loss of its territorial integrity, and the reality check of Western unwillingness to fight for Georgia did not alter its foreign policy orientation.

In line with the expectations of national mobilization theory, even under physical threats Georgia maintained its pro-Western and anti-Russian foreign policy and even worked to accelerate its efforts toward membership in the EU and NATO. Saakashvili's speech at the UN General Assembly in 2013 demonstrates Georgia's persistent Western self-identification, emphasizing its unique culture and heritage of statehood and depicting Russia as a brutal imperial power that the West should balance against. He declared that Georgia is and "should remain a nation united in our historical identity to join the European family of democratic nations, the family we should never have been separated from in first place" (Saakashvili 2013). Saakashvili noted that Georgia was under attack because Russia could not tolerate a democratizing sovereign state next to it, and that it perceived Georgia's successful transformation as a virus in the region. He even framed the 2008 defeat as a success in which Georgia's "statehood and independence survived" despite Russia's full-blown invasion and Georgia's substantial territorial losses. Throughout the speech, Saakashvili reiterated Georgia's dedication to joining the EU and NATO and asked the international community "to help to put an end to the Russian annexation" (Saakashvili 2013).

Despite deepening its economic and political connections with the West across thirty years of independence, Georgia remains without any security guarantees from the West or any timeline if/when Georgia might join the EU or NATO. In 2019, NATO

Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was asked by the head of Slovenian delegation when Georgia, a “great NATO partner and contributor to [its] missions,” would become a “full member of NATO,” to which he responded as they “stated, and restated again and again at different NATO Summits... Georgia will become a member of NATO, but we have not put a timeline to that process yet” (Stoltenberg 2019). According to realist logic, such vagaries amount to little more than cheap talk and should certainly not guide rational national-security decision making. While the West continues to offer general promises without concrete security guarantees and Moscow continues to object its pro-Western foreign policy, the durability of Georgian nationalism continues to be tested.

Even Christianity, which some assume to function as the core of a shared civilization with Russia, has continued to be employed by Georgian leaders to highlight Georgia’s place in Western civilization as opposed to Russia. In his speech during the French president’s visit to Georgia, Saakashvili remarked that “Christianity as well as the alliance with the Byzantine Empire and social democracy against Bolshevism were European choices... [reflecting Georgia’s European] identity and values.” He made a point of declaring “with more confidence and energy – we choose Europe and European Democracy” (Torija 2014, 312).

Not only did Saakashvili and his administration remain pro-Western during the war’s aftermath, the Georgian public also maintained its pre-war foreign policy views and support for Georgia’s pro-Western orientation, as demonstrated in popular polls (Müller 2011, 80-81). A survey of Georgia’s political elites (including security and foreign policy experts) demonstrated that they too remained largely united in favor of a pro-Western foreign policy and in perceiving Russia as Georgia’s primary threat (Gvalia

et al. 2013, 123-124). This popular consensus fundamentally fueled the sustainability of Georgia's anti-Russian and pro-Western positions by maintaining its leaders' incentives to follow through with foreign policies that reflect these nationally-held views.

Since 2012, Georgia's government has been controlled by the Georgian Dream coalition led by Bidzina Ivanishvili, whose previous business experience in Russia fueled some suspicions along similar lines to those of Shevardnadze's skeptics. Yet public vigilance to reject any suspected anti-Western or pro-Russian political moves by Ivanishvili's coalition has remained high during the years since. For example, the invitation of a Russian parliamentarian to deliver a speech in Tbilisi about Christian brotherhood between the two countries was widely perceived by the public as an insult to Georgia, prompting opposition parties to mobilize widespread demonstrations in front of the parliament building (Mackinnon 2019).

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined why Georgia prioritized balancing against Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, an important question for international relations because Georgia's pro-Western and anti-Russian foreign policy defies the expectations of conventional theories rooted in realism, liberalism, and cultural similarity. According to those theories, a militarily weak and economically dependent Georgia that shared Orthodox Christianity with Russia should have been inclined to bandwagon with its powerful neighbor, especially in the absence of credible security and economic guarantees from external powers.

Georgia's deep national mobilization offers a more persuasive explanation for its post-Soviet security strategy than either material factors or cultural similarities. As the earlier sections of this chapter demonstrate, Georgia underwent a relatively intense process of national mobilization. A country with centuries-old traditions and a long historic memory, Georgia consistently offered its leaders strong foundations for modern nation-building. Facilitated by accelerating modernization and urbanization as well as improved literacy and connectivity among its people, that process was particularly pronounced during the second half of the nineteenth century despite Georgia being subjected to domination by the Russian Empire at the time.

The national awakening that occurred during the late nineteenth century was effectively translated into political independence in the early twentieth century when political upheavals (World War I and the Russian Revolution) provided a window of opportunity for Georgia to forge its own nation-state. Georgia's intellectual elites mobilized an intense national identity that was framed explicitly in us-vs.-them terms against Russia. Inheriting this identity in the early 1990s, Georgia's people and leaders alike placed an especially high value on their national political autonomy. Its first president, Gamsakhurdia, and his successors rejected bandwagoning with Russia as entailing an unacceptable sacrifice of autonomy and instead prioritized balancing against it. This process played out through two mechanisms: an internal process of nationalist leaders dictating foreign policy and an external process of nationally mobilized populations constraining leaders to pursue foreign policies in line with widely-held nationalist views.

In testing national mobilization theory against its alternatives, I analyzed several important foreign policy decisions that took place during the 1990-1991 years, the period when the post-Soviet states laid the foundations for their subsequent foreign policy strategies. Georgian leaders rejected the New Union Treaty, Gorbachev's proposal to save the union by transforming it into federation or confederation, as well as the union-wide referendum, which offered citizens across the Soviet Union a chance to directly express whether or not they wished to preserve the union. National mobilization theory offers a compelling explanation for these decisions, which manifested Georgian leaders' commitment to prioritize their national autonomy and their perception of Russia as the primary threat to that autonomy. Records of their decision-making processes surrounding those two foreign initiatives show that their discussions were overwhelmingly informed by nationalism and notably lacking in the sorts of strategic and economic calculations expected by conventional theories (not to mention feelings of shared civilization).

Georgia's decisions to appeal Western states and organizations during its formative period offer further support for national mobilization theory. The debates surrounding those decisions and the language of Georgia's official statements confirm its leaders' strong self-identification with Western culture, which contributed to their construction of a foreign policy position that was strongly anti-Russian and pro-Western. Having been primed to see Russia as a threatening "other" for centuries under the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, this perspective on the Western European states as desired allies was neither new nor simply a reaction to material incentives. Instead, Georgia's pro-Western and anti-Russian views echoed its period of independence between 1917 and 1921, when adopted sharply anti-Bolshevik and pro-Western positions.

That brief but important period was consistently used by Georgia's more recent leaders as a reference point to define and shape their post-Soviet foreign policies. Georgia did not waver from these stances despite having no credible Western security guarantees and despite enduring economic and military reprisals from Russia for its pro-Western orientation.

National mobilization theory does not exclude the potential influence of other factors or the possibility of changes over time, but it does speak to strong general patterns and policy trajectories. Following the short-lived tenure of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Georgia's foreign policy under the leadership of Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili remained robustly anti-Russian and pro-Western despite the enduring threat of Russian retaliation and the absence of any Western security guarantees, both of which were starkly illustrated during the 2008 war. Public opinion too remained generally consistent in supporting this orientation for thirty years after gaining independence, and public approval for Georgia's aspirations to join the EU and NATO remains around 75% (NDI Georgia 2019). Even when nationalist policies fly in the face of structural and material factors, the robustness of Georgia's national mobilization has proven an enduring force in its foreign policy.

CHAPTER 5. UNION OVER AUTONOMY: LOW NATIONAL MOBILIZATION AND KAZAKHSTAN'S POST-SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, post-Soviet states displayed radically different security strategies towards Russia (Willerton and Cockerham 2003, 25, 36). Kazakhstan did not seek independence despite being culturally distinct from Russia, economically one of the strongest post-Soviet states with strong potential due to its rich oil and gas reserves, and inheriting nuclear weapons from the Soviet Union. Instead, it was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of maintaining the union and worked hard to preserve strong ties with Russia. Kazakhstan was the very last of the Soviet republics to declare independence from the Soviet Union, taking that fateful step only after it had become clear that the union was already dissolved, on December 16, 1991 (Olcott 2010, 25, 36). Its leaders interpreted Russia not as their primary threat but rather as their friend. They approached it as an economic and security partner, handing over their nuclear capabilities instead of leveraging them to balance against Russia and maintaining a consistent pro-Russian foreign policy for decades after independence.

In this chapter I seek to answer the following question: why did Kazakhstan prioritize bandwagoning with Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union? My central argument is that Kazakhstan's relatively low level of national mobilization enabled its leaders to drive its post-Soviet foreign policy towards Russia rather than away from it. My primary task in this chapter is to establish whether national mobilization theory or an alternative theory best explains why its leaders chose to prioritize bandwagoning strategies towards Russia.

In brief, national mobilization theory predicts that Kazakhstan, having undergone a relatively mild process of national mobilization compared to several other post-Soviet states, should exhibit a correspondingly lesser us-vs.-them mentality toward Russia. Placing a relatively low value on their national political autonomy, Kazakhstan's people and leaders should have perceived bandwagoning policies as less undesirable than their counterparts in Georgia did, making them more inclined to adopt those policies rather than balancing against their powerful former ruler. Low national mobilization can affect states' foreign policy in two ways. First, it increases the likelihood of seeing the emergence of leaders who do not have strong nationalist beliefs, who should be more inclined to see the next-door powerful state as a potential partner rather than a security threat. Second, if the people are not mobilized by a strong nationalist ideology, they should expect and influence their leaders to adopt foreign policy strategies in line with public views about the powerful former ruler. In the case of Kazakhstan, if a critical mass of the population in the 1990s interpreted Russia as their friend, the leaders of the newly independent Kazakhstan should have faced an incentive to reflect those sentiments in their foreign policy decision-making.

The alternative theories considered here each make different predictions. Realist logic predicts that Kazakhstan should interpret Russia as its primary threat and try to balance against it. Although Kazakhstan's conventional military capabilities at the time of its independence were insufficient to directly counter the much stronger Russia, it had a unique opportunity to take advantage of the nuclear weapons it inherited from the Soviet Union for this purpose. On its surface, then, Kazakhstan's bandwagoning strategy towards Russia seems to contradict realist predictions, but closer examination is

necessary to test whether Kazakhstan leaders' decision-making was primarily informed by their own perceptions of power and threat, which may have driven them to see bandwagoning as a rational choice in line with realist logic.

Liberal logic predicts that Kazakhstan's leaders should have sought cooperation with Russia due to the preexisting economic interdependence among the former Soviet states and the urgent economic incentives they faced during and after the breakup of the Soviet Union. At first glance, Kazakhstan's bandwagoning strategy toward Russia appears to fit liberal predictions, but thoroughly testing this theory requires establishing whether Kazakhstan's foreign policy choices were made according to a rational decision-making process in line with its economic interests or whether other considerations proved more significant.

Last, approaches emphasizing cultural similarity expect that Kazakhstan's leaders should have seen Russia as threatening due to the contrast between Russia's Orthodox Christian civilization and their own Islamic civilization. This sharp cultural divide should have made them skeptical of Russia's intentions and more likely to view their border with Russia as a geopolitical fault line, prompting them to balance against Russia. While Kazakhstan's foreign policy defies these predictions, further testing is needed to examine what role cultural differences may have played in its leaders' decision-making.

This chapter tests national mobilization theory against these alternative theories by examining Kazakhstan's leaders' decision-making processes at several important historical junctures. As in the previous chapter, the first section here aims to establish the values of the independent variables highlighted by national mobilization theory, surveying Kazakhstan's process of national formation and its lack of formation as a

modern nation-state by the time it was absorbed by the Soviet Union (due to external and internal factors), leading to a much weaker degree of national mobilization during the twilight of the Soviet Union than was observed in the Georgia case. In doing so, it examines the relative levels of cultural and political independence and pre-Soviet nation building in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Kazakhstan, as well as the lack of national mobilization during the struggle for political independence in the late 1980s.

The second section investigates why Kazakhstan's leaders adopted bandwagoning strategies toward Russia during the twilight and aftermath of the Soviet Union. To this end, I examine several important historical episodes when Kazakhstan specifically chose cooperation rather than balancing against Russia: the New Union Treaty (1990); participation in the union-wide referendum and support of the maintenance of the union (1991); the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Kazakhstan's economic and security alliances (1990-1994); and the decision to surrender its nuclear weapons (1991-1994). Although some of these events occurred under the formal mantle of Soviet rule, they represented the formative foreign policy issues for the various Soviet republics on their way to independence—the key moments as they decided how to approach their future relationship with Russia. In each of these case studies, I examine Kazakhstan's leaders' decision-making processes to establish the relative persuasiveness of each alternative theory as an explanation for their choices.

5.1 The Historical Absence of Kazakh National Mobilization

If we look at modern day Russia and Kazakhstan the distinctions between the two nations might seem strong. In fact, some scholars have argued that Kazakhstan had

“extraordinarily strong cause to separate itself from Russia-dominated union,” citing cultural differences and grievances between Kazakhs and Russians, a native Turkic language unlike Russia’s Slavic one, Islam as a dominant religion as opposed to Orthodox Christianity, and the past experience of a nomadic lifestyle that was countered by sedentarization campaigns (Hale 2009, 3-8). Considering these distinctive cultural features combined with the numerous grievances Kazakhstan should have had due to its history of repression under first the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union, it is unsurprising that some would think that Kazakhstan should have forged strong anti-Russian sentiments by the 1990s. The opposite was the case.

National mobilization theory is premised on the notion that descriptive national characteristics cannot tell us much about the relationships between the two states by themselves, despite being important building blocks of a national self-image. The post-Soviet relationships between Russia and its neighbors offer a testament to this claim, offering examples of culturally distinct states that forged strong alliances (e.g., Russia with several Central Asian states) and culturally similar states that became adversaries (e.g., Russia and Ukraine). National mobilization theory looks at not only the *national characteristics* of states but more importantly the dynamic processes of national experiences and the dissemination of national information. These represent the engine that forms national consciousness, telling us how widespread and cohesive national narratives were and to what degree national self-awareness translated into an “us vs. them” mentality towards others and a strong demand for political autonomy. Kazakhstan did not produce a level of national mobilization by the 1990s sufficient to drive its

leaders to see Russia as a pressing security threat, despite its unique cultural characteristics.

5.1.1 Under the Russian Empire

When Kazakhstan was annexed by the Russian Empire it was not a unified national or political unit. The Kazakh Khanate which emerged in the fifteenth century was later divided into three political units—hordes—each of which claimed distinct geography and culture (Uyama 2000, 73-76, Sabol 2003, 15-16). Russia incorporated these hordes into its empire in phases between seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. The first phase was the relatively peaceful and gradual acquisition of the Small and Middle hordes, while the second phase (early nineteenth century) was the full-fledged military conquest of the Great Horde and the establishment of colonial rule (Olcott 1995a, 28). Thus, while the Kazakhs were distinct from their occupier by their ethnic and cultural characteristics, members of different hordes did not possess unified national awareness. Instead, Kazakhs in the early nineteenth century still identified primarily with their narrow clans (Uyama 2000, 73-74).

Other internal and external barriers also stifled the process of Kazakh nation-building. One of the central characteristics of Kazakh culture was the nomadic lifestyle, which carried a much more fluid idea of habitation and “home.” Even the etymology of the word Kazakh is related to nomadism and means “to wander,” “roam,” or “homeless” (Ferret 2016, 177). This nomadic lifestyle contrasts with the modern concept of nation-building and a nation-state, which is strongly intertwined with a relatively fixed concept of territory that a group claims as its homeland (Smith 2001, 12-13). Although this past

nomadic culture is currently used to strengthen narratives of Kazakhstan's uniqueness, in the early nineteenth century nomadism stifled modern nation-building (Norris 2012).

Another barrier to nation-building was the lack of urbanization and low literacy level which made it impossible for Kazakhs scattered across a vast territory to communicate effectively enough to share experiences and construct a unified national narrative (Sabol 2003, 61-65). The general disconnectedness among the Kazakh population combined with many Kazakhs' willingness to align with Russia to facilitate its Russification efforts and subjugation of the Kazakh hordes (Stevens 2020, 13). Moreover, the tsarist governments' Resettlement Act of 1889 dramatically altered the demography of Kazakhstan and caused economic decline by disturbing existing nomadic economy (Pianciola 2004, Kesici 2017, 1137).

While under the tsarist rule in the mid and late nineteenth century, Kazakh nationalist intellectuals started to emerge. This process followed a path similar to what we see in Georgia around the same time period: well-educated members of the elite challenged tsarist rule and the predominant Russian narratives, cultivating national sentiments, and highlighting the uniqueness of their respective cultures. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, this national revival in Georgia was effective in horizontally galvanizing large segments of Georgian society. In Kazakhstan we do not see the same effect, however.

The intellectual class in Kazakhstan was relatively small, with limited resources for effective communication, and they lacked the resources and infrastructure to disseminate their budding national narratives across the large rural Kazakh territory and population (Sabol 2003, 65-72). In relatively small Georgia, the emergence of nationalist

intellectuals coincided with a period of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and the development of printed press and railroads, but Kazakhstan experienced no such boom. As a result, we do not see any widespread activation of national narratives or mass mobilization of national identity in Kazakhstan that might have strengthened its people's self-identification and juxtaposed it to Russia as an oppressive occupier.

In the early twentieth century Kazakh national revival strengthened through an increased volume of published nationalist narratives in books and newspapers. Kazakh intellectuals of different backgrounds participated in this process of forming a unified national vision, but this national awakening lacked a mass character and even more so political organization and action (Sabol 2003, 70-72). Even among the more progressive intellectuals who were promoting national revival, many remained pro-Russian and only advocated for some reforms within the empire, not for the political independence of Kazakhstan.

5.1.2 A Missed Opportunity for National Independence

The early twentieth century brought a period of turbulence in the Russian Empire that saw waves of dramatic socio-political changes galvanize the whole empire. The first consequential event of this period was the Russian Revolution of 1905 (also referred to as the First Russian Revolution). While it failed to overthrow the tsarist regime, this revolution significantly damaged it by establishing a multiparty system and an elected legislature capable of voicing the interests of the many (Ascher 1994, 1-3). The grievances fueling the mass movement in 1905 were multifaceted, representing social strata such as “liberals among the middle class and gentry, industrial workers, peasants, and some of the national minorities” (Ascher 1994, 3). Understandably, these processes

gave an important push to national awakening that was already on the way in various parts of the empire, including in Kazakhstan, though national mobilization remained less pronounced in Kazakhstan than in some other parts of the empire such as Lithuania, Latvia, or Estonia (Kasekamp 2010, 81-84).

One notable development in Kazakh society during the 1905-1916 period was the emergence of the Alash movement, which was led by Kazakh intellectuals who aimed to use a myth of common descent as the basis for modern Kazakh nationhood. The name of the movement, Alash, represents “a mythical figure believed to have been the father of all three Kazakh zhuz” or hordes (Kesici 2017, 1135). In a society that traditionally revolved around a nomadic lifestyle and oral traditions, the Alash movement attempted to turn a fluid and sometimes inconsistent oral myth of its people’s origins into a more fixed, written, and unifying version that could be used for more coherent modern nation-building (Kesici 2017, 1140-1143). Although it failed to attract mass support, the Alash movement nevertheless emerged as the most viable national voice that could potentially seek Kazakh independence in the early twentieth century (Saktaganova et al. 2020, 210-211).

The twilight of the Russian Empire sent a series of socio-political shocks across its territories. His authority weakened by World War I, the Tsar was overthrown by the domestic opposition in early 1917 and replaced by the liberal provisional government. A few months later, that government was defeated in another revolution led by the Bolsheviks, who took power through a Civil War that lasted until 1923. Some parts of the sinking empire used this turbulent period as a window of opportunity to break away and establish their own independent states, but the longing for full political independence and

the capacity to establish new sovereign nation-states were not uniform across the empire, resulting in varied fallouts across its different parts. Kazakh intellectuals had to respond to the leadership vacuum following the overthrow of the tsarist regime, and some advocated for independence, but in July 1917 the all-Kazakh congress supported more limited cultural and political autonomy within Russia. Nevertheless, that December a political movement led by Alikhan Bukeikhanov established a provisional independent government called the Alash autonomy (Saktaganova et al. 2020, 214).

The Alash autonomy, or Alash Orda, represented a historical moment for Kazakhstan as its first formally independent government. However, the Alash autonomy had very limited power, and the government spent most of its short-lived existence fighting or negotiating with internal and external opposition until its termination in March 1920 (Saktaganova et al. 2020, 214-216). Constant external pressure from the Bolsheviks, internal political dissent, and a deteriorating economic situation prevented the period of Alash autonomy from translating into a meaningful experience that would be nationally shared and celebrated at the time (Sabol 2003, 141-150). This contrasted with the ability of several other nations, including Georgia, to lay a strong foundation of nationhood as they established independent nation states with attributes such as international recognition, elections, multiparty governments, written constitutions, and responsibility for their internal and external affairs (before their eventual annexation by the Soviet Union) (Suny 1994, 185-208).

Between 1920 and 1945, most of the territories that were occupied by the Russian Empire were reoccupied by the Soviet Union. However, some states were forced into the Soviet Union after experiencing full-fledged national mobilization and meaningful

periods of political independence as modern nation-states, while others' experiences of independence were far more qualified (Suny 1993). Kazakhstan fell into the latter category despite the efforts of its intellectuals to conceptualize Kazakh nationhood within the Russian Empire and to achieve political autonomy under Alash Orda. Although there was a political plurality including anti-Soviet Movement and parties by the time Kazakhstan was absorbed by the Soviet Union in 1920, there was neither a strong unified national narrative nor a clear "us vs. them" dichotomy towards Russia. Numerous legitimate grievances towards tsarist rule did not translate into animosity towards Russia. Even the most nationalist Kazakh parties pursued not full independence but autonomy under Russian federal rule, and even some members of Alash Orda defected to the side of the Bolsheviks by 1920 despite their initial bitterness and their anti-Soviet Struggle (Olcott 1995a, 129).

5.1.3 Under the Soviet Union

After the Bolshevik government consolidated its power in 1920, it went on to formally disband the Alash autonomy. The group was quickly and effectively dissolved, its leaders and members either went into exile or cooperated and joined the Bolsheviks. The Soviet authorities replaced the Alash autonomy with the Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, in 1925 renaming it the Kazakh ASSR, and in 1936 granting it union republic status and the new title of the Kazakh SSR (Peimani 2009, 124, Cameron 2018). The Soviet rule that lasted 70 years saw varying leadership and policies ranging from the appreciation of ethnic diversity in the union (indigenization) to active and at times forceful Russification and Sovietization.

Having the status of a republic, even if under the Soviet Union, provided Kazakhstan with the possibility to continue its yet-unfulfilled process of self-awareness and nation-building. Kazakhstan had clear borders within the union as well as local administrative bodies responsible for the territory and population, even if in direct subordination to the center. Moreover, the previously rural and scattered population of Kazakhstan underwent rapid modernization, industrialization, and urbanization under Soviet rule, especially from the 1930s onward (Lewis, Rowland, and Clem 1975, 291-292). These socio-economic transformations are associated with people's high-level mobility and communication and hence represent necessary preconditions for nationalism—the emergence of “imagined communities” when local allegiances are replaced by national ones (Anderson 1991).

However, there were other factors and policies in the Soviet Union that undercut or influenced these processes of nation-formation and mobilization. In the late 1920s and 1930s the Soviet policies of collectivization and sedentarization disturbed Kazakhstan's lifestyle and economy, leading to a famine that decimated over 40 percent of its population (Suny 1993, 113, Conquest 1986, 189-196). In addition, decades of mass resettlements, deportations, and Soviet labor camps dramatically altered the demographic composition of Kazakhstan until by the 1960s ethnic Russians accounted for more than 40% of its population and ethnic Kazakhs became a minority within their republic (Flynn 2004, 15). Furthermore, Moscow's policies of Russification and Sovietization affected the process of identity formation by providing alternative or complementary identities, a good example of which is Soviet propaganda produced for Kazakh soldiers during World War II that aimed at creating a Soviet-Kazakh identity (Carmack 2014, 95). Russification

had a mixed record of success in different parts of the Soviet Union, and while there was some variation what methods were used in different states, no less important was the capacity and willingness of nations to resist these processes (Karklins 1986). The low-level national mobilization present by the time it became part of the Soviet Union was one of the important factors making Russification successful in Kazakhstan, especially in linguistic terms.

After Stalinist repressions and the relative relaxation of censorship in the Soviet Union, Kazakh nationalist writers emerged, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. They started actively creating and recreating a national mythology in novels with the attempt to provide versions of historical continuity by revitalizing and reimagining pre-colonial, pre-Russian Kazakh nationhood, while also amplifying more recent historical figures who fought against the Russian Empire like Khan Kenesary Kasymov (Kudaibergenova 2013, 844). If nineteenth-century Kazakh nationalist revival was limited to the elite, the twentieth century revival of nationalist literature reached a much wider audience thanks to Kazakhstan's rapid modernization by the mid-twentieth century, which was associated with urbanization, a printed press, and improved literacy levels (Kudaibergenova 2013, 842-843). Nevertheless, this nation-building of Kazakhstan took place within the Soviet Union framework, and it was constantly competing with the alternative Soviet narratives spreading through various channels of mass media.

Although this twentieth-century Kazakh nationalist revival provided a clear cultural framework of "us" for the nation, it did not translate into mass national mobilization for liberation as seen in other parts of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, where mass protests demanded political independence and populations saw Russia as a

threatening “other.” To be sure, the large-scale Alma-Ata student demonstration in December 1986 showed the capacity of Kazakhs to mobilize en masse for political action, but the nature of the protests (reactive, lacking organization or durability) and content of the grievances (limited to local change, democracy, environmental justice and economy) show that it was not national mobilization towards autonomy or independence (Beissinger 2002, 75-76).

I argue that this can be explained by the lack of experience of modern statehood in Kazakhstan. The Alash autonomy established in 1917 was too weak and short-lived to produce a strong reference point for twentieth-century Kazakh nationalists as the period of independence they were robbed of by the Soviet Union and longed to restore. This is not to say that twenty-first-century nationalists will not revitalize and recreate the meaning of the Alash autonomy for the nation, but rather that in the late 1980s and early 1990s Kazakh national mobilization was still lacking the intensity and content to produce strong pro-independence and anti-Soviet unity. As a result, we see Kazakhstan emerge as the most ardent supporter of maintaining the Soviet Union and after this was unattainable, supporting a new confederacy and maintaining a strong strategic partnership with Russia. The rest of this chapter examines Kazakhstan’s foreign policy decisions at the twilight and immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union, testing whether these foreign policy decisions stemmed from low national mobilization as expected by national mobilization theory.

5.2 Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy

I begin this case study of Kazakhstan's foreign policy decision-making in 1990, when it became clear that the Soviet Union in its original form was in crisis and the member republics started formulating separate domestic and foreign policies even as they remained still formally under the Soviet rule. The leader of Kazakhstan at that time was Nursultan Nazarbayev, who had been ascending through the Communist party leadership since early 1980s until he eventually became the party leader, then Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Kazakhstan, and finally its first president—named by the Supreme Soviet in April 1990 and later popularly elected in December 1991. The sections that follow examine the decision-making process of Kazakhstan's leaders, but primarily focus on Nazarbayev because he was single-handedly responsible for most of Kazakhstan's domestic and foreign policy decisions (Kasenov 1995, 268).

To what extent did Nazarbayev's views and the lack of national mobilization in Kazakhstan influence Kazakhstan's foreign policy toward Russia during his long-lived tenure as leader of the country? In this analysis I pay particular attention to Nazarbayev's perception of Russia and the future of Kazakhstan's relationship with it, based on primary documents including his official statements and interviews, correspondence, and laws adopted during the time period under investigation.

5.2.1 The New Union Treaty

In the late 1980s the Soviet Union was in the midst of a crisis pulling it apart and the leadership in Moscow had a hard time keeping up with the rapid and immense changes. Soviet leaders were trying to contain the wave of nationalism roaming through the union by alternating between punishment and appeasement strategies (Sobchak 1993,

Beissinger 2002, 360-365, 378-381). Meanwhile, Kazakhstan's dedication to preserving the Soviet Union was unmatched among the republics, and even after the dissolution of the union Nazarbayev consistently framed its disintegration in negative terms. He bluntly criticized Mikhail Gorbachev, the final president of the Soviet Union, saying, "If you are the president, then do not let the country collapse! Or else leave, if you think you are unable to do so" (Nazarbayev 1996, 58, 52-60). Nazarbayev's sentiment about the breakup of the "country" reflects the fundamental difference between Kazakhstan and leaders in some of the other successor states, who did not see the Soviet Union as their "country" but as their imperial occupier that needed to be destroyed.

The New Union Treaty was one of Gorbachev's major initiatives aimed at accommodating the republics' growing demands for more autonomy while still salvaging the Soviet Union, which was confronted with mounting losses of power and legitimacy as well as threats of economic disintegration and territorial fragmentation (Saxer 1991, 644-648). In 1990, Gorbachev invited all of the union republics to participate in drafting a treaty to refresh their union, and even the proposed name of the new confederation reflected this need to accommodate republics' increasing demands for more autonomy: proposing to replace the original (1922) treaty of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) with a Union of Sovereign States (USS). By 1990, the secessionist movement was very strong in the Baltic republics, Ukraine, and Georgia, whereas several other republics supported the preservation of the union. Even among those that favored a new union treaty, though, many advocated for sovereignty as a basis for negotiating the new form of union (Walker 2003a, 78-80). In Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev was profoundly disappointed by the cascade of declarations of sovereignty among the other Soviet

republics. He viewed Russia's declaration of sovereignty in June 1990 as an especially important turning point leading to the breakup of the Soviet Union, asking, "But from who, from what is Russia sovereign? It is the core of the country" (Nazarbayev 1996, 43).

The various republics differed substantially in what they meant by "sovereignty," ranging from limited increases in their subnational governmental authority to formulate local policies to full-fledged formal independence and the freedom of action that accompanied international statehood (Walker 2003a, 7-10). On October 25, 1990, Kazakhstan eventually declared sovereignty like the others, seeking to increase the authority of its local government. At the same time, however, Kazakhstan's declaration also made explicit its support for a renewed union, emphasizing that the declaration served as a step towards (not away from) the completion of the New Union Treaty: "The Kazakh SSR is a sovereign state which voluntarily associates with other republics in a Union of Sovereign Republics and builds relations with them on a treaty basis" (Furtado and Chandler 2019, 486, 485-488).

Kazakhstan's enthusiasm for the preservation of the Soviet Union contrasted sharply with the strong determination of some other republics to gain full political independence, several of which totally rejected the New Union Treaty (Walker 2003a, 101-102). As the center of power started to tilt away from Moscow and toward the republics, Nazarbayev, no less than Gorbachev himself, "became preoccupied with the search for a formula to keep the union together, which became even more important to him than defending Kazakhstan's interests against Moscow" (Olcott 2010, 35). He cooperated actively both with Boris Yeltsin (chairman of the Russian Federation) and Gorbachev (president of the Soviet Union) with the goal of maintaining the union and

promoting an integrated economic and security sphere within it—as he put it, “I was doing everything possible to find common approaches acceptable to all the leaders pulling the cart in different directions” (Nazarbayev 1996, 98, 91-101).

Nazarbayev’s support for the Soviet Union was on full display throughout the period of drafting and negotiating a new union treaty. In February 1990, he appealed to Kazakhstan’s electorate to support the treaty, clarifying his reasoning for favoring bandwagoning instead of balancing in the process:

Without doubt, in our mutual history there are serious reasons for mutual resentments, disillusionments and doubts. These have been given birth by decades of rule by a command-administrative system, usurping power in our common home, appropriating for itself the right to speak and act in the name of peoples. To do away with the totalitarian past is only possible together, only uniting efforts. The Kazakh people, and all the people of the republic do not conceive of themselves outside our united Fatherland, the preservation of which answers both the political and economic interests of multinational Kazakhstan. The collapse of the Union would inevitably bring with it the complete collapse of the economy of the republic, the sharp exacerbation of the standards of living of millions of people, would throw us all back whole decades, and would do irreparable harm to cooperation with countries of the world community. We do not have another path available, other than that towards the renewal of the Union on the basis of the conclusion of a Union Treaty between sovereign, equal republics. (Hale 2009, 14)

Nazarbayev’s reasoning on display here touches upon several factors relevant to our competing theories. First, he directly mentions the “political and economic interests” of multiethnic Kazakhstan when arguing for cooperation, which scholars have put forward as important determinants of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy (Olcott 2010, Hale 2009, İpek 2007). Nazarbayev particularly emphasized economic interests, arguing that without union the republic’s economy will “collapse.” While this might seem to confirm liberal logic that predicts cooperation for economic benefits, however, it is not quite the

case for Kazakhstan. Due to its rich energy resources, unlike most other post-Soviet states Kazakhstan stood to significantly benefit by achieving economic independence from Russia: leaving the ruble zone and switching to world prices would generate much higher revenues for Kazakhstan's exports in the energy sector (Tarr 1994). Thus, Kazakhstan's willingness to stay in the economic union with Russia goes against liberal expectation of the primacy of economic incentives.

Economists assessed the post-Soviet states' incentives to cooperate with Russia as follows: "If there is any prediction to be made from the analysis of the short-term costs and benefits of leaving the ruble zone, it is that [the Baltic states] would try to remain in the ruble zone, while [Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan] would opt for a new currency" (Goldberg, Ickes, and Ryterman 1994, 319-320, 310). Yet the opposite of this prediction played out in reality, driving those economists to conclude that the post-Soviet states were driven by more than just economic incentives (Goldberg, Ickes, and Ryterman 1994, 320).

Besides cost-benefit calculations related to raw energy resources and the benefits of shifting to world market prices, high institutional and economic interdependence could have driven Kazakhstan to prioritize cooperation with Russia. But high interdependence was not unique to Kazakhstan—all fourteen weaker post-Soviet states were highly interdependent with over 80 percent of each state's trade being conducted with Russia and the other Soviet republics (Michalopoulos and Tarr 1992, 37). Thus, even if we evaluate Kazakhstan's cooperation with Russia as partially confirming liberal predictions of interdependent states' cooperation, that support is rather slim when considering the context: republics with fewer natural resources that were more heavily dependent on

Russia prioritized balancing, while energy-rich Kazakhstan prioritized staying in the ruble zone and bandwagoning with Russia while sacrificing the tangible benefits that would come with economic independence. Economic benefits are therefore at best insufficient to explain Kazakhstan's prioritization of staying in the union.

Nazarbayev also mentioned Kazakhstan's multiethnic character, and scholars have noted the large percentage of ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan as an internal security concern that may have affected its prioritization of unionism and cooperation with Russia (Olcott 1995b). But this factor too was not unique to Kazakhstan. Latvia and Estonia had similarly high percentages of ethnic Russians living within their borders by 1989 (34% and 30.4% respectively), yet both forged radically different foreign policies as initiators of the secessionist movement in the Soviet Union, rejecting the New Union Treaty and sustaining consistent balancing policies towards Russia (Flynn 2004, 15, Kasekamp 2010).

National mobilization theory identifies a new necessary factor that can help explain Kazakhstan's strong support for remaining in the union. Several phrases in Nazarbayev's appeal illustrate Kazakhstan's low national mobilization, which enabled its leader to prioritize cooperation. Even as he recognized that there were historical reasons for "mutual resentments" and "doubt," Nazarbayev placed the blame on the "totalitarian" system/administration that Kazakhstan had endured for decades without blaming Russia itself. Moreover, he called the Soviet Union their "common home," going even further to say that "the Kazakh people, and all the people of the republic do not conceive of themselves outside our united Fatherland." Doing so erased any nascent "us vs. them" contours between the Soviet Union and Kazakhstan, demonstrating the latter's lack of

national mobilization by representing it as part of a shared “fatherland” rather than one distinct from its neighbors. Given this conceptualization of shared national identity, it was natural to view solutions to the USSR’s problems as “only possible together, only uniting efforts.” Nazarbayev underscored the importance of joining the New Union Treaty by noting, “We do not have another path available”(Hale 2009, 14).

All of the above is the very opposite of what we would expect from nationally mobilized leaders who saw Russia as an enemy occupier and were ready to risk economic or other hardships in their pursuit of independence. Skeptics may argue that Nazarbayev’s pro-unionist position may not necessarily have reflected the views of the Kazakh population more broadly, but the fact remains that within the Soviet republics that had been nationally mobilized by that time, leaders were not able to make pro-Russian statements so freely and openly without being called out as traitors for suggesting cooperation with the enemy. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, political leaders in Georgia around that time were harshly criticized by colleagues and the public if they dared to suggest cooperation with Russia.

It is not surprising that Nazarbayev, a Communist leader with a political career intertwined with the Soviet Union, genuinely thought that maintaining a strong union was not only possible but the right path for Kazakhstan. Not every leader has to be nationalist. What is theoretically important here, however, is that Nazarbayev freely voiced his unionist positions without getting substantial push back from the Kazakh public. Nationalist sentiments were not strong enough or widespread enough within Kazakhstan at the time to make it costly for Nazarbayev to openly advocate for maintenance the Soviet Union, even calling it—not Kazakhstan—his “fatherland.” National mobilization

theory expects that in highly mobilized states leaders have a strong interest in reflecting their nations' dominant views even where their personal convictions diverge. In line with this expectation, numerous Communist leaders in different Soviet republics adopted nationalist positions during the late 1980s and early 1990s, with local Communist parties transforming into new parties and/or adopting new nationalist platforms, and politicians who retained pro-unionist positions became marginalized (Beissinger 2002, 98-101).

In contrast, Nazarbayev never wavered in his support of the union. Even as late as 2017 he admitted how in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, when nationalist and secessionist movements and demonstrations across the Soviet Union were gaining strength, he was trying to counteract those forces by promoting a new union treaty: "If adopted, the USSR would be transformed into the Union of Sovereign States (USS), republics would obtain economic independence and significantly widen their political authority, while the all-union center would be responsible for a common foreign policy and common security" (Nazarbayev 2017, 30, 17-31). Nazarbayev's eagerness to continue seeing Kazakhstan's foreign and security policies set in Moscow underscores the low priority he placed on national autonomy both during and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, in stark contrast to the behavior of Soviet republics like Ukraine, Georgia, and the Baltics, which craved autonomy from Moscow.

5.2.2 The Union-Wide Referendum

The union-wide referendum proposed by Gorbachev and ultimately held in March 1991 is another important event at the dusk of the Soviet Union that provides a window to see where the Soviet republics stood in terms of their attitudes towards the union and how they envisioned their independence and future relationships with Russia. As

secessionist rhetoric and activities were increasing across the various republics, the proposed union-wide referendum was yet another attempt by the center to salvage the Soviet Union by appealing directly to the population to boost the popularity of the new union treaty (Brady and Kaplan 1994, Alexandrov 1999, 35, Austin 1996, 3). This was a significant moment as it was the first (and last) time in the history of the Soviet Union that its population was asked to participate in such a referendum.

The question proposed for the ballot was: “Do you consider necessary the preservation of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics, in which the rights of each nation would be fully guaranteed?” (Nohlen, Grotz, and Hartmann 2001b, 492, White and Hill 1996, 153, 157). Not all republics interpreted this unprecedented direct appeal to the people of the Soviet Union as a sign of good will from the center or a signal of the democratization of the union. Georgia’s leaders denounced this referendum as yet another attempt by the center to stifle their progress toward independence, six of the republics (Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova) officially boycotted the referendum, and several republics held their own alternate referendums asking for public opinion on the potential restoration of full independence from the USSR (Walker 2003b, 49-73, CSCE Report, 1991).

Kazakhstan was one of the nine states which administered the union-wide referendum, and the overwhelming majority of its population supported the preservation of the USSR. That said, there were some reservations even in Kazakhstan. Some Kazakh authorities initially did not want to hold the referendum, not because they rejected the USSR like some of the other republics, but because they thought there was no need for

such referendum in Kazakhstan where the public was not split on the issue of preserving the union. Kazakh leaders also expressed their criticism of the central Soviet authorities for the lack of consultation with the republics in the decision-making process surrounding the referendum (Sheehy 1991). Furthermore, Kazakhstan changed the wording of the referendum question simplifying it by taking the “renewed union” part out and replacing “republics” with “states” in the text, which presumably expressed the presumption of a higher level of sovereignty for Kazakhstan within the union: “Do you consider it necessary to maintain the USSR as a Union of sovereign states of equal rights?” (CSCE Report 1991, 26, 2, Walker 2003b, 63-65).

Despite these reservations regarding the process and disagreements on the wording of the referendum question, however, a predominant consensus among Kazakhstan’s leadership and public favored preserving the Soviet Union. In early March 1991, preceding the union-wide referendum, Kazakhstan’s leadership held a televised meeting of representatives of various political parties and other groups to discuss referendum-related questions, issuing an official joint statement of the parties in attendance urging the public to vote “yes” on the referendum. At a time when other republics were criticizing the Soviet Union as a rudimentary colonial creation, Kazakhstan’s leaders labeled it their “common home” and emphasized the importance of maintaining it. Their statement described the referendum as a vital measure for “the preservation of our common home” and “important step on the road to signing a Union Treaty” (CSCE Report 1991, 27).

The union-wide referendum of March 1991 was a particularly informative event. The lead-up to the referendum offered a major platform for each republic’s leaders to

demonstrate their positions regarding the Soviet Union, and the vote itself enabled their publics to directly express their own views on the matter. In Kazakhstan, both the turnout for the referendum and public support for the preservation of the Soviet Union were among the highest across all republics; at roughly 88% and 95% respectively, both results were higher even than Russia's (Alexandrov 1999, 37).

Scholars often point to Kazakhstan's demographics to help explain this outcome. Specifically, during the late 1980s it was home to a large ethnic Russian population (37%), which many cite as an important driver of both its domestic and foreign affairs (Olcott 1995b, 26). However, Kazakhstan's ethnic composition in 1991 cannot explain the results of the referendum and its unionist position. First, the high turnout in the referendum and the even higher positive result show that Kazakhstan's citizens overwhelmingly shared the unionist position regardless of their individual ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, even if ethnic Russians might on average display pro-unionist positions, when we look at the larger regional context we can see significant variation even across Soviet republics containing large ethnic Russian minorities. Latvia and Estonia also had large ethnic Russian populations, for example, but their turnout and referendum results show that a large portion of even the ethnic Russians in those republics held anti-unionist and pro-independence positions (Tuminez 2003, 128-130). State-level national mobilization offers a stronger predictor of public support for independence and antipathy towards the Soviet Union than cultural or ethnic similarities—those similarities did not prevent broad majorities from viewing Russia as a security threat in states with high national mobilization such as the Baltics, while in less nationally mobilized Kazakhstan the ethnically diverse population was largely in

agreement in its assessment of the Soviet Union as its home and Russia as its strategic partner.

On a behavioral level, Kazakhstan's position on remaining in the Soviet Union and its cooperation with Russia may appear to be a strategic move: cooperation with a militarily and economically stronger neighbor provided security and economic benefits for Kazakhstan. But when looking at it more closely, Kazakhstan's motivations and framing of its decisions towards Russia come in tension with realist logic. That logic expects small states to see a powerful former ruler as a threat, but it also expects a small state to bandwagon with a strong neighbor if it lacks the capability to effectively balance against it. Thus, even if Kazakhstan's cooperation with Russia might seem like the strategic move of a smaller state, its enthusiasm for this cooperation contradicts realist logic.

Kazakhstan did not bandwagon with its greatest threat out of desperation, its leaders saw the Soviet Union and Russia not as their enemy but as a strategic partner. Kazakhstan possessed marked advantages compared to most of the other Soviet republics, being economically stronger and holding nuclear weapons, yet it still prioritized cooperation over balancing. Nazarbayev's various public speeches and statements offer ample evidence of his interpretation of Russia as a partner instead of an enemy. For example, on September 30, 1992, during his address to the Kazakh nation, he acknowledged the historic upheavals that Kazakhstan had gone through before becoming an independent state and even called the Soviet Union the totalitarian regime, but nevertheless he emphasized that the Soviet times were beneficial for Kazakhstan in terms of literacy, industrialization, and other areas. "During the very years of Soviet rule we got

the opportunity to develop the republic on our ... territory, which in the previous century was under threat to be disintegrated into three regions, to rebuild its unity, to officially clarify and strengthen its borders, and this way to lay a legitimate foundation for creating our current independent state” (Qasymbekov 2010, 106).

While other newly independent states blamed the Soviet Union for their stagnation, Kazakhstan directly linked the success of its statehood to Soviet rule, for which, its leader argued, the nation should be grateful. On December 16, 1996, during his official speech celebrating the 5-year anniversary of Kazakhstan’s independence, Nazarbayev again emphasized his perception of Russia as a strategic partner: “The current Russia, the tsarist autocracy, and the Soviet Union are principally different states. Kazakhstan has signed agreements of friendship and cooperation with all its neighbors, including Russia, which it is going to follow resolutely.... It would be unwise to transfer the relationships of those past years to the present democratizing Russia, with whom Kazakhstan is building a relationship of friendship and cooperation” (Qasymbekov 2010, 123).

“Despite the ups and downs of history,” he continued, “Kazakhs formed a relationship of brotherhood and trust” with the Russian nation. “Preserving these relationships and strengthening them with consideration of current realities represents the chief interest of both nations” (Qasymbekov 2010, 123). Nazarbayev’s language here went beyond normal strategic cooperation between two states on economic and military areas, emphasizing the kinship and trust between the two nations. Leaders of other newly independent states that had much higher levels of national mobilization would have received strong pushback for such language from publics that saw their former ruler as an

overwhelming security threat. In contrast, Kazakhstan's leader and the lion's share of its population agreed that Russia was not an enemy, and that cooperation between the two states was essential.

5.2.3 The Commonwealth of Independent States

Despite the efforts of Gorbachev and some unionist leaders to maintain the Soviet Union in a renewed confederate form, the union's dissolution became immanent by the winter of 1991. On December 10, in his acceptance speech as newly elected president of Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev expressed his disappointment with the disintegration process. "I want to tell you honestly: the prospect of signing the new union treaty and forming an economic community is now as problematic as ever before. It's not our fault that it happened this way. To my deep regret, the leadership of a number of republics started equating sovereignty with autarky" (Qasymbekov 2010, 99).

During this speech, Nazarbayev also expressed his surprise and disappointment regarding the fact that only two days earlier leaders of three republics (Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus) had signed the Belavezha Accords (Qasymbekov 2010, 100). Declaring that "the Union of SSR as a subject of international law and geopolitical reality ends its existence," the three signatory republics announced that in its place they would "form the Commonwealth of Independent States" (Shushkevich 2013, 329). At a time when some of the former Soviet republics were celebrating the achievement of the independence they had long desired and fought for, Nazarbayev assured his people that Kazakhstan had sufficient economic and human resources to thrive as this unsolicited independence was thrust upon them (Qasymbekov 2010, 99-100). Consistent with this attitude, Kazakhstan was the most reluctant of all the Soviet republics to proclaim its sovereignty and later to

declare independence, doing so only after all the others, including Russia, had already completed those steps.

As the initial goal of preserving the Soviet Union became unattainable and the unrealized new union treaty was replaced by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Kazakhstan quickly became an ardent supporter of the CIS, even hosting its founding ceremony in Alma-Ata on December 21, 1991 (Voitovich 1993, 404-405). Four of the post-Soviet states boycotted the new organization (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Georgia) while the other eleven joined it on that day. Out of these eleven states, Kazakhstan emerged as the most passionate promoter of political and economic reintegration under the umbrella of the CIS. In Martha Olcott's (2010, 36) words, "The urge to integrate was almost instinctive for Kazakhstan's leaders and citizens alike, regardless of their ethnic origin... Some in Kazakhstan would even have given up independence if a stable union with Russia would have resulted."

Kazakhstan's enthusiasm for the CIS is reflected in the percentage of CIS documents it approved. By 1993, Kazakhstan had signed 98% of documents advanced by the CIS, a rate of approval almost as high as Russia's (99%) and far higher than many other member states (for example, Ukraine's approval rate stood at 72% and Azerbaijan's at only 22%) (Hale 2009, 17). Nazarbayev was openly dissatisfied that the level of integration within the CIS did not meet his exceptionally high standards. He wanted stronger reintegration among the post-Soviet states and to this end Kazakhstan came up with and actively advanced various institutional initiatives, the most important one being Nazarbayev's proposal for creating the Eurasian Union as an enhanced version of the CIS (Nysanbaev and Dunaev 2010, 22-33). As he attested, "Kazakhstan was guided by the

need to maintain economic, political, and simply human ties established in the post-Soviet sphere.” He argued that “the very idea of the CIS was saved mostly thanks to the constructive position of Kazakhstan” and that his proposal of a Eurasian Union was “what in part awakened the ‘sleeping’ commonwealth” (Qasymbekov 2010, 130).

Nazarbayev’s idea of the Eurasian Union, proposed in 1994, entailed a common market, common security, common borders, a common foreign policy, and even integrated cultural and educational spheres among the member states (Nysanbaev and Dunaev 2010, 13-21). In the proposal he bluntly declared that the creation of the Eurasian Union and reintegration was “the objective logic of the development of the post-Soviet sphere” and “the responsibility” of the post-Soviet nations (Nysanbaev and Dunaev 2010, 21). Unfortunately for Nazarbayev, the level of unionism he championed was impossible to sell to most of the newly independent states, which joined the CIS with various levels of reservation and fears that powerful Russia would dominate the organization. Still, despite other states’ reservations, Kazakhstan remained consistent in its efforts to enhance the reintegration of the post-Soviet states and to sustain strong cooperation with Russia.

Scholars have attributed Kazakhstan’s unwavering support for the preservation of the Soviet Union, its unmatched enthusiasm for reintegration under the CIS, and its sustained strong cooperation with Russia to concerns for its economy and security (both in terms of domestic stability and external threats) (İpek 2007, Karpat 2015, Olcott 2010, Hyman 1994, Hale 2009). Nazarbayev’s speeches and proposals on integration certainly highlighted these strategic concerns, as he regularly promoted collective economy and security. While lobbying other post-Soviet states to support enhanced integration,

Nazarbayev routinely argued that “economic interests determine the basis for the rapprochement of the independent states” (Nysanbaev and Dunaev 2010, 17). Such statements offer some evidence for the logic of liberal theory, which sees economic incentives and preexisting institutional interdependence as the main determinants of cooperation.

However, proponents of economic explanations miss an important caveat that undercuts the ability of liberal logic to explain Kazakhstan’s post-Soviet foreign policy: these economic concerns were not unique to Kazakhstan. The other 13 post-Soviet states had just as much to lose economically by leaving the union and antagonizing Russia. If anything, Kazakhstan was better positioned to profit from autonomy thanks to its rich natural resources than other post-Soviet states with fledgling economies which nevertheless opted for balancing against Russia or else advocated much lighter versions of economic cooperation and interdependence within the CIS. Thus, Kazakhstan’s exceptional enthusiasm for integration and cooperation with Russia despite its natural resources remain a puzzle when viewed in the context of economic distributions across all the post-Soviet states.

National mobilization theory provides a more compelling theoretical mechanism that explains Kazakhstan’s post-Soviet foreign policy. Kazakhstan’s relatively low national mobilization by 1990 made it possible for its leaders to prioritize economic interests and cooperation over full independence from the union and Russia. As discussed earlier in this chapter, neither Kazakhstan’s leaders nor its population perceived Russia as an enemy. Its leaders did not even have to hide from the public that they were compromising the country’s sovereignty for the sake of economic benefits. In defense of

economic union within the CIS and his decision to stay in the ruble zone (which enabled Russia to dictate Kazakhstan's economic policy), Nazarbayev told Kazakhstan's parliament in 1993 that leaving the ruble zone immediately was "impossible" and "in order to become a truly sovereign state... we must now waive part of our sovereignty," or else face "financial collapse" (Hale 2009, 19).

Nazarbayev prioritized the economic benefits of deeper integration with Russia but pursued them by knowingly compromising Kazakhstan's sovereignty. This is a crucial point of the national mobilization theory: all post-Soviet states were concerned about their dire economic situations, but they differed significantly in terms of how much of their sovereignty they were willing to compromise, potentially endangering their newly-gained independence. The post-Soviet states with relatively high national mobilization prioritized their state sovereignty over economic benefits associated with post-Soviet integration and cooperation with Russia. In these states either leaders themselves did not want to cooperate with Russia, or they were constrained by publics which would not tolerate positions that traded sovereignty for economic benefits. Moreover, if Kazakhstan's cooperation with Russia was determined by fear of short-term economic calamity once left adrift in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse, we would expect to see its relationship with Russia weaken over time as its leaders developed diversified connections with other states. Yet as time went by, Russia remained Kazakhstan's main strategic partner and strong post-Soviet reintegration remained Kazakhstan's enduring goal.

5.2.4 The Question of Nuclear Weapons

Kazakhstan found itself in quite peculiar situation for a newly independent state after the collapse of the Soviet Union, inheriting some of the Soviet Union's nuclear weapons. It actually became the possessor of the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal at the time (Norris 1992), with over 1,410 strategic warheads, SS-18 ICBMs, and cruise missiles carried by Bear-H bombers (Cirincione, Wolfsthal, and Rajkumar 2005, 366). By 1995, however, Kazakhstan transferred all its strategic nuclear weapons to Russia. That said, Kazakhstan's official stance regarding its nuclear status and its intentions of denuclearization was not always clear or consistent during the intervening years, imposing anxiety on international actors such as Russia and the United States (which wanted to see its full denuclearization), along with Ukraine and Belarus (which similarly inherited portions of the Soviet nuclear arsenal). Kazakhstan's decisions regarding its nuclear arsenal were affected by both external and internal factors. More than its ultimate decision to relinquish its nuclear weapons or even its official stances on the issue throughout the early 1990s, historical research into Kazakh leaders' motivations during this process can help shed light on their approach to post-Soviet security.

In 1990, the Soviet republics drafted their declarations of independence, some enthusiastically and others like Kazakhstan more reluctantly. Ukraine, which also inherited Soviet nuclear weapons, clearly expressed its intention to become a "permanently neutral state" and to adhere to "nuclear free principles" in its 1990 Declaration of Sovereignty. In contrast, Kazakhstan never mentioned similar intentions regarding its nuclear capacities (KSSR Resolution No. 1700, October 25, 1990).

At first glance it might seem that Kazakhstan, even more than Ukraine, was concerned with its security in 1990 and intended to keep the nuclear weapons located on its territory as a guarantee of its autonomy. However, closer examination shows that the opposite is true. In 1990, both states were still under Soviet rule and thus did not see nuclear weapons controlled by officials in Moscow as their own property. Already in 1990, Ukraine's leaders envisioned their country's independence from the Soviet Union, and they perceived the nuclear arsenal not as an asset but rather as a burden keeping Ukraine connected to Moscow and stifling its full political, territorial, and strategic independence (Budjeryn 2016b, 10).

Kazakhstan, the most ardent supporter of Soviet reintegration and notably lacking aspirations for independence, mentioned no intention to get rid of the nuclear weapons on its territory in its 1990 declaration not because it wanted to keep them as a security guarantee but because it did not even see itself as a separate political unit with its own military capabilities by that time. In fact, unlike Ukraine's, Kazakhstan's Declaration of Sovereignty did not even lay out an intention to create an independent national army, instead continuing to adhere to the idea of a strong union and joint security. Considering Nazarbyev's dedication to the union and public support for the new union treaty, we can conclude that Kazakhstan did not even see the need to have any elaborated strategic position regarding the nuclear weapons on its territory, which it saw as in the custody of the Soviet Union. The only related mention in Kazakhstan's declaration of sovereignty concerned a demand for the suspension of nuclear tests on its territory (KSSR Resolution No. 1700, October 25, 1990).

The situation changed dramatically after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, as the independence of the former Soviet republics rendered several of them nuclear powers in their own right. From this point on, Kazakhstan's leaders were forced to make important decisions regarding the future of their nuclear arsenal. Between 1991 and 1994, they engaged in numerous bilateral and multilateral negotiations, playing a part in various international agreements regarding nuclear weapons (Skootsky 1995). Although Kazakhstan eventually handed over its nuclear arsenal to Russia, its leaders and most notably Nazarbayev made many contradictory claims regarding their intentions for that arsenal, adding significant ambiguity to their position (Ayazbekov 2014).

Realist logic makes the unambiguous prediction in this instance that Kazakhstan should keep its nuclear weapons as the ultimate guarantee of its future survival. As John Mearsheimer writes, those weapons represented “the only reliable deterrent to Russian aggression,” and no other country would provide a “meaningful security guarantee” (Mearsheimer 1993, 50-51).⁴ Cultural similarity logic would also expect that Kazakhstan, a nation with very distinct ethnic and cultural attributes from Russia, should want to keep its nuclear weapons to deter the powerful other next door. On the other hand, liberal logic predicts that Kazakhstan should prioritize cooperation, including turning over nuclear weapons to Russia, for the sake of economic benefits. Finally, due to its low national mobilization, national mobilization theory would expect Kazakhstan to see Russia not as a threat, but as a reliable economic and security partner, and hence to be more open to turning over its nuclear weapons. Kazakhstan's eventual handover of its

⁴ Mearsheimer (1993) made the case for Ukraine's nuclear deterrence against Russia, and though he did not overtly generalize to the other post-Soviet states, his logic is applicable to Kazakhstan as well.

nuclear weapons contradicts realist and cultural similarity theory but is in line with liberal and national mobilization theory.

Further analysis is needed to demonstrate Kazakh leaders' motivations behind their decision-making process and to uncover the relative importance of the factors each theory emphasizes in informing their motivations. For the purpose of testing the theoretical predictions the most important questions are: did Kazakhstan see Russia as a threat? Did it seriously consider keeping nuclear weapons as a deterrent against Russia? Or was the ambiguity surrounding Nazarbayev's positions regarding the country's nuclear arsenal a bargaining tool to gain economic or other benefits through its eventual disarmament?

The previous section of this chapter demonstrated that Kazakhstan had a strong unionist position and saw the Soviet Union and later Russia not as a threat but instead as a trusted ally. Why then did its leaders flip-flop regarding their intentions for their nuclear arsenal? One of the important initial talks regarding Kazakhstan's nuclear status took place on December 17, 1991, when US Secretary of State James Baker visited Kazakhstan with a clear message that the United States did not want to see proliferation of nuclear weapons to the successor states of the Soviet Union, did not support a nuclear Kazakhstan, and was determined to work towards this goal. This meeting between Baker and Nazarbayev produced an uncertain outcome (Hoffman 1991). On one hand, Nazarbayev voiced commitment to denuclearize in exchange for US security guarantees and support for its accession to international organizations. Then again, in the press conference following the meeting with Baker, Nazarbayev stated that Kazakhstan's

denuclearization was conditional on Russia's denuclearization (Hoffman 1991, Nazarbayev 1996).

Such ambiguity in Kazakhstan's position was commonplace. Nazarbayev regularly reiterated his ultimate goal of denuclearization while also showing a reluctance to do so, including demanding a status of "nuclear power" or "temporary nuclear state" and the associated seat at the multilateral negotiations. This ambivalent nuclear strategy lasted until May 23, 1992, when Kazakhstan joined the Lisbon Protocol to the START I (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) and officially agreed to become a non-nuclear state. "The Republic of Byelarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, and Ukraine shall adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of July 1, 1968 as non-nuclear weapon states Parties in the shortest possible time, and shall begin immediately to take all necessary action to this end in accordance with their constitutional practices" (Lisbon Protocol to the START I, May 23, 1992).

International pressure to denuclearize was strong, but it is important to explore how Nazarbayev navigated this pressure and how domestic factors informed his thinking on security policy (Potter 1995, 35-40). What is most relevant here is that Kazakhstan did not see Russia as a threat—its defiant position regarding denuclearization was a negotiating tactic intended to get more attention from the various international actors involved and to harvest the resulting benefits of international prestige and economic gains. Although there were some hardliners in Kazakhstan who supported the idea of keeping its nuclear weapons, and even some reports about neighboring Islamic states expressing interest in them, these were relatively insignificant voices that represented

neither the will of the Kazakh public nor of its political decision-making body (Nazarbayev 1996, 64, Budjeryn 2016a, 266-268).

Nazarbayev made headlines during 1991-1992 for his defiant stands, telling press and international leaders that Kazakhstan should have nuclear state status, that denuclearization would take ten or fifteen years, and even arguing that other nuclear states needed to reciprocate and denuclearize as a condition for Kazakhstan to do so. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan was advocating strong interconnectedness and even a shared security system within the CIS and promoting active economic and military cooperation with Russia and other CIS member states (Nysanbaev and Dunaev 2010). In other words, Kazakhstan's leaders did not see much need for security deterrence from Russia, unlike other successor states that were balancing against it, since they were consistently working to give up significant parts of their sovereignty to Russia and the CIS in the areas of joint economy and security.

In his 1996 memoir, Nazarbayev admitted that from the beginning he understood that "there cannot be alternatives to the nonnuclear status of the country." At the same time, he bragged about how defiant and tough he was in the negotiations with the various international actors, most notably Secretary of State Baker, in order to get the best deal for Kazakhstan that would provide economic assistance and security guarantees (Nazarbayev 1996, 69, 62-75). In the same account, he made clear that Russia was Kazakhstan's primary ally and not a security threat he worried about in any significant way: "I informed B. Yeltsin, that in Washington the talks will be about Kazakhstan agreeing to taking out rockets from its territory. What conditions Kazakhstan puts

forward—this is my question. But before working in this direction, Kazakhstan would like to know the opinion of its strategic partner—Russia” (Nazarbayev 1996, 68).

Nazarbayev never hid his disappointment about the dissolution of the Soviet Union or his preference for more parity in the CIS. Kazakhstan’s unionist position was so ingrained that the only alternative to nuclear disarmament that Nazarbayev considered was within the context of the CIS, where there could be “unified control” over the weapons and “joint strategic forces” composed of its various member states (Brzezinski and Sullivan 1997, 47-48). Consistent with national mobilization theory, Kazakhstan never seriously considered any security strategy that would jeopardize its relationship with Russia and its aspirations for the more intertwined union.

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I argue that Kazakhstan’s full-hearted unionist positions and consistent bandwagoning with Russia cannot be explained by conventional theoretical arguments and require additional perspective. Kazakhstan’s cooperation with Russia was not motivated by the rational strategic calculations of a weak state provoked into bandwagoning out of fear or desperation. Nor was its sole desire to achieve economic benefits from this cooperation. Instead, Kazakhstan’s relatively low national mobilization by 1990s was a necessary factor that can help us explain why both its leaders and the vast majority of its population saw Russia as a partner and not as an essential security threat, and why they pursued unwavering bandwagoning and economic and military cooperation with it.

Kazakhstan's unionism and cooperation with Russia defies cultural similarity expectations. Its national attributes (language, religion, nomadic culture) were more distinct from Russia's than those of many other post-Soviet states, and its past conflicts and repressions (tsarist Russia or later the Soviet Union) would predict that Kazakhstan should interpret the Soviet successor Russia as its most important "other" and its primary threat. Yet we see that the opposite is true: despite some hardliner nationalists in the country, the widely shared national perception of Russia was of a kindred partner. It is important to recall that this attitude was largely shared by all ethnic groups in Kazakhstan, not just the ethnic Russians who represented a significant portion of the population in the early 1990s (White and Hill 1996).

The expectations of realist logic are also largely unsupported. First, since that logic mostly ignores the internal characteristics of states, it would expect that newly independent Kazakhstan would perceive powerful Russia next door as its primary security threat. Yet we see the opposite, as its leaders and public alike interpreted Russia as a friend and not a security concern. Realist logic also predicts that autonomy is the paramount interest of states, but Kazakhstan willingly gave up its autonomy by submitting itself to various bilateral or multilateral joint economic and security areas. A state that sees balancing as unattainable might bandwagon with a powerful state next door, and on the surface one might think that that was the case for Kazakhstan. But here too, Kazakhstan's bandwagoning does not seem to be rooted in desperation but rather in a self-driven willingness to do so. When the unique possibility emerged to balance as it inherited its nuclear arsenal, Kazakhstan instead opted to hand that arsenal over to Russia, not even seriously entertaining the idea of keeping nuclear weapons as deterrence

against Russia. Even any possible retention of its nuclear weapons was envisioned within the context of a joint collective security with—not against—Russia.

Liberal logic's expectations that preexisting interdependence and Kazakhstan's economic interests would make its leaders cooperate with Russia are only partially supported. There was a high level of institutional and economic interdependence within the Soviet Union, and almost 90% of Kazakhstan's trade in 1990 was conducted with other union republics (Michalopoulos and Tarr 1992, 37). That said, among the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states only Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan had a clear incentive to pursue economic independence from Russia and move to world prices because it would significantly increase their revenue from energy exports (Goldberg, Ickes, and Ryterman 1994, 310, Tarr 1994, 12-13). Even if Kazakhstan's leaders failed to appreciate the potential benefits of economic independence and genuinely believed cooperation with Russia was the more advantageous choice, the context here is important to consider: twelve other states were highly dependent on Russia and had much to lose economically by leaving the union and antagonizing Russia. Overemphasizing the primacy of economic motives in Kazakhstan's foreign policy thus fails to account for its context and cannot convincingly explain why it maintained a strong unionist position while more economically vulnerable states risked dire consequences to pursue full independence.

In contrast, the analysis in this chapter supports national mobilization theory, which predicts that due to its low national mobilization by the time the Soviet Union collapsed, Kazakhstan should have been more likely than many other post-Soviet states to see Russia as a strategic partner and to seek cooperation on economic and security matters. Kazakhstan first clung to the failing Soviet Union, being the latest republic to

reluctantly declare independence, and from that point it actively engaged in rebuilding a new union with extensive interdependence, criticizing the CIS because it was not as strong a union as Kazakhstan wished it to be. Kazakhstan consistently interpreted Russia as a friend and strategic partner and, unlike states with much higher national mobilization, was willing to sacrifice some level of its sovereignty in this process of cooperation.

It is important that Kazakhstan's foreign policy and relationship with Russia cannot be reduced to the positions of its leaders. While Kazakhstan's president Nazarbayev, a former communist leader with strong ties to Moscow and Gorbachev, unsurprisingly held unionist and pro-Russian positions, Kazakhstan's population was also largely in agreement with the country's foreign policy. Kazakhstan's population widely supported staying in the union and later maintaining kindred relationship with Russia. Nazarbayev does not get much push back from the population and seems to be in agreement with the national will as it forges foreign policy towards Russia (cite – memorandum, other public polls). Nationalist hardliners represented an insignificant minority in Kazakhstan, and even among them many argued for a higher level of cultural autonomy and not political independence from the Soviet Union in 1990s. Thus, Kazakhstan's relative lack of concern for giving up some of its sovereignty to the CIS and ultimately to its powerful member Russia, can be better explained by national mobilization theory.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

The breakup of the Soviet Union was one of the most momentous international political events of the twentieth century, with far-reaching effects at the individual, societal, state, and systemic levels. The various post-Soviet successor states had dramatically different reactions to the dissolution of the union, and the weaker fourteen went on to adopt drastically different security strategies toward Russia.

The behavior of Georgia and Kazakhstan illustrates the range of variation well. Kazakhstan's president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, saw the breakup of the Soviet Union as a great tragedy, a sentiment that was widely shared among his new co-nationals who voted overwhelmingly in favor of preserving the union in the March 1991 referendum (over 94%). In the years that followed Kazakhstan consistently prioritized cooperation and re-integration with Russia. In contrast, Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia declared Georgia's independence on April 1991 (almost nine months before the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union). He greeted independence with a celebratory mood that reflected his nation's overwhelming support for it in the March 1991 referendum (over 99%), and Georgia went on to pursue foreign policies aimed at balancing its powerful neighbor.

Despite copious scholarship on both the causes and consequences of the Soviet Union's dissolution, however, conventional international relations theories fail to explain the wide variation in security strategies toward Russia across the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states. I argue that this failure is largely due to ignoring historic processes of national mobilization as an important factor in international relations. This concluding chapter begins by summarizing my argument and findings before turning to this study's broader implications and avenues for future research.

6.1 The Argument

This study begins with the premise that nationalism is a significant factor in international relations and sometimes assumes a central role in driving foreign policy choices. Despite much important research on the causes and consequences of nationalism, the most prominent theories of international conflict and cooperation have treated it primarily as a constitutive element of the state or a force multiplier and in doing so have lagged significantly in incorporating nationalism in their explanations. Approaches that base their worldview on states' military capabilities and material incentives while sidelining ideational factors remain common, and while constructivism has filled some gaps left by realist and liberal approaches (highlighting the socially constructed nature of states preferences and incentives), constructivist research in international relations has tended to focus primarily on international norms and culture and less so on the domestic and societal factors that shape states' behavior.

Building on the foundations laid by constructivism as well as the ample scholarship on nationalism, I argue that national mobilization rooted in states' experiences of nation-building affects the foreign policy choices of weak states towards their powerful former ruler. More specifically, I argue that the content of national identities and the level of national mobilization that had been established in each of the post-Soviet states by 1990 largely determined their foreign policy choices toward Russia in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's dissolution. In states where national sentiments were widely shared and politically activated, leaders and publics alike assigned immense normative value to their political autonomy, developed a robust us-vs.-them mentality toward their historic significant "other," perceived Russia as an existential security threat,

and prioritized balancing against it. On the other hand, states with low national mobilization saw national narratives not widely shared or activated among their populations, and as a result they did not assign such great value to the political independence they had so recently obtained, did not perceive Russia as an essential security threat, and preferred to bandwagon with it.

6.2 Findings

This study evaluates the ability of national mobilization theory to explain variations in the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states' security strategies toward Russia (from committed balancing to bandwagoning) in comparison to several prominent alternative theories of international security. While approaches based on realism, liberalism, and cultural similarity are inadequate or at best insufficient to explain those variations, substantial evidence supports the predictions of national mobilization theory.

Realist perspectives that are primarily concerned with the distribution of international military power cannot explain why very weak states like Georgia and the Baltic states prioritized balancing even in the absence of any reliable prospect of security guarantees from external powers, risking Russian military retaliation in the process. It also struggles to comprehend why the Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Ukraine failed to seize the unique opportunity to guarantee their security through nuclear deterrence and instead turned over to Russia the nuclear warheads they inherited from the Soviet Union. Moreover, two of those states (Kazakhstan and Belarus) emerged as the most enthusiastic supporters of bandwagoning and re-unification with Russia.

Liberal approaches highlighting the importance of institutional interdependence and economic incentives cannot explain why the wide-ranging interdependence that existed among the Soviet republics failed to drive them to prioritize cooperation after the union dissolved. It also struggles to account for the decisions to sever economic ties with Russia by several states that had very clear economic incentives to cooperate, given Russia's ongoing subsidies in the energy and other areas. Lastly, perspectives that highlight cultural similarity cannot explain why Orthodox Christian states like Georgia and Ukraine chose to balance against Russia while Islamic states preferred to bandwagon with it, or why some states containing relatively high percentages of ethnic Russians prioritized cooperation but others with similar demographic configurations chose balancing.

In contrast, the empirical analysis offers substantial support for national mobilization theory. Those states that had developed strong national identities and that exhibited significant national mobilization by the late 1980s were the same ones that prioritized balancing against Russia, while states with contested national identities and low national mobilization prioritized bandwagoning even at the expense of some elements of the sovereignty they had so recently gained.

Chapter 3 appraised the national mobilization of each of the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states based on their historic development as modern nations, highlighting factors such as emergence of nationalist intelligentsia, the dissemination of nationalist narratives among their population, and historical processes of defining the nation against a central security threat during its formative years as a modern nation-state. It also surveyed the longitude and depth of each state's experience of independence prior to being absorbing

by the Soviet Union, which offered the opportunity to solidify a national identity that would later inspire its mobilization in the late 1980s. This analysis identified four highly mobilized states (Georgia and the Baltic states), four that displayed medium/contested mobilization (Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan), and six with low mobilization (Belarus and the five Central Asian states). Comparing these results for national mobilization to the post-Soviet states' security strategies reveals a far greater correlation than achieved by proxies for any of the three major paradigmatic approaches, as all four highly mobilized states rank among the balancers while the six low-mobilization states all pursued bandwagoning or ambivalent/neutral foreign policies toward Russia.

Chapters 4 and 5 moved beyond this correlational analysis by examining causal process evidence via in-depth case studies on Georgia and Kazakhstan. Both of these states represent least likely cases for the conventional theories. Georgia was one of the weakest post-Soviet states militarily and economically and shared Orthodox Christianity with Russia, yet it defied conventional expectations by emerging as a fervent balancer and maintained its anti-Russian foreign policy stance even after enduring severe economic and military punishments (including losing territory in the 2008 war). Kazakhstan was one of the richest post-Soviet states, one of the few that inherited nuclear weapons, and embodied Islam in contrast to Russia's Christianity, yet against conventional expectations it consistently bandwagoned and prioritized reintegration with Russia. The main difference between the two states was not military power, economic incentives, or civilizational culture, but that Georgia demonstrated deep national mobilization in the late 1980s while Kazakhstan did not.

The case studies test whether the causal logic proposed by national mobilization theory was in fact at work in affecting those states' foreign policy choices during and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Using primary sources such as transcripts of early 1990s parliamentary sessions as well as leaders' speeches and interviews, I assess the relative roles of national, military, economic, and cultural factors in driving leaders' decision-making. Georgian leaders routinely emphasized their country's long history of nationhood and its deep though short-lived experience of independent statehood in the early twentieth century. They framed Russia as their nation's primary threat in both past and present, an imperial power that had repeatedly threatened Georgia's independence, and they rejected cooperation with Russia almost unanimously, embracing balancing as a historic duty that was well worth economic and even physical sacrifices. On the other hand, Kazakh elites led by Nazarbayev described Russia as a kindred nation without much pushback from their population. They emphasized the common history and destiny of the two nations instead of focusing on past repressions by Russia, and they openly suggested giving up their nation's sovereignty altogether in favor of reunification with Russia, framing it as returning to a common home for the sake of mutual economic, military, and cultural gains.

6.3 Contributions

These findings concerning the effects of national mobilization on the security strategies of the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states offer important insights for better understanding the turbulent post-Soviet region. That region remains an arena of intra- and interstate conflict and tension as well as cooperation, and the diverse alignments of the post-Soviet states have had both regional and global significance over the decades since

the Soviet Union's collapse. As a result, added clarity in understanding that behavior should interest scholars of international relations and foreign policy experts alike.

The theoretical contributions of this research go beyond its regional and policy-relevant implications in providing a clear case for the benefits of incorporating nationalism and historical processes more fully into the study of international relations. While the term "nationalism" has become ubiquitous among scholars and politicians alike, scholarship on nationalism began to proliferate during the final decades of the twentieth century. Scholars like Ernest Gellner (1983), Benedict Anderson (1991), and Miroslav Hroch (1985) produced seminal studies on the origins of nationalism, contributing to a growing scholarly consensus on its modern and socially constructed nature.

Research on the effects of nationalism followed but was more fragmented especially in the field of international relations, which has traditionally been dominated by realist approaches and the privileging of material factors as compared to ideational ones. That said, there are some insightful works employing nationalism and national identities as central factors driving various political effects. For example, studies by Ronald Suny (1993) and Mark Beissinger (2002) explore the role of nationalism and political mobilization as factors leading to the breakup of the Soviet Union, Rawi Abdelal (2001) has explored the role of national identity in the political economy of the post-Soviet states, and other works such as those by Paul D'Anieri (1997) and Christopher Stevens (2020) have examined nationalism's effects on state behavior based on studies of individual countries or country dyads. National mobilization theory contributes directly to this growing body of scholarship.

Although this study demonstrates that national identities rooted in historical mobilization processes can assume a central role in determining foreign policy choices, I do not argue that conventional factors such as distributions of military power, economic or institutional interdependence, or cultural similarities are irrelevant. Under certain circumstances, however, those factors can fade into the status of secondary considerations as nationalism becomes the dominant predictor of behavior. In line with constructivist and nationalism scholarship, this study confirms that states preferences are not uniform or fixed, and states' varied experiences of nation- and state-building can produce varied preferences—even regarding the value of something as central to international relations as national autonomy—leading to different interpretations and actions by states facing similar material constraints.

Scholars who treat nationalism as a marginal factor in international relations might assume that its effects are applicable only in outlier cases, interpreting behavior that is inspired by nationalism as irrational in the face of contrasting material incentives. This is a problematic view. Although nationalism like any factor is not the only or always the main factor driving international behavior, the instinct by so-called rationalist scholars to label it irrational demonstrates a paradigmatic blind spot. Behavior that runs contrary to realist or liberal expectations may be perfectly rational if it serves the state's goals, even if those goals are not limited to the ones prioritized by those paradigms. One of the main insights of this research is that states' preferences are not fixed, they are socially constructed and can vary across states and across time. If we take into account that states' preferences are socially constructed and vary across countries and within a country over time, then evaluating the rationality of state behavior should be done in

relation to the assessment of the preferences a state holds and its rankings of those preferences.

For example, if during its formation as a modern nation-state Georgia perceived Russia as an existential threat—a significant “other”—then its high mobilization should lead it not only to acutely prioritize its political independence but specifically to revere its independence from Russia, turning that targeted foreign policy priority into an objective capable of overriding other more conventional concerns. Georgian leaders’ refusal to consider economic and military cooperation with Russia or to participate in Russia-led regional organizations might seem irrational from a perspective rooted purely in security or economics, but such behavior is readily explainable given due appreciation for the nationalism of Georgia’s public and political elite alike. Its national mobilization proved strong enough even to risk Georgia’s physical survival by rejecting cooperation with Russia, behavior that is unintelligible to perspectives that assume state survival should be leaders’ top priority but that makes more sense to leaders who see subordination to the enemy as equivalent to national annihilation.

The Kazakhstan case study reveals that not only high national mobilization but low mobilization as well provides important insights into why leaders’ foreign policy choices may diverge from conventional expectations. For example, without taking into consideration Kazakhstan’s development into a nation-state and its low national mobilization by 1990, it is difficult to comprehend why Kazakh leaders did not perceive Russia as a threat and did not seriously consider using the nuclear weapons they inherited to balance against it. It also defied conventional wisdom by prioritizing economic cooperation with Russia instead of cutting ties and moving to world market prices, which

would have benefitted Kazakhstan due to its rich oil resources (unlike most other post-Soviet states). As these examples show, there is great value in more prominently featuring national mobilization and ideational factors more broadly in international relations scholarship.

6.4 Future Research

This study also points to several promising avenues of future research. Although it sought to explain the variations in security strategies among the fourteen weaker post-Soviet states, the resulting national mobilization theory is not specific to the Soviet Union. Thus, one potential area for further research would test that theory across comparable cases in different regions and time periods. It would be interesting to see how well its logic travels to other cases of disintegrating international unions, confederations, or empires, and how national mobilization interacts with different institutional frameworks and security environments. Such research would help establish the generalizability of national mobilization theory while also contributing important insights to areas studies within the chosen regions.

Another related research question concerns the role of an institutional breakup in triggering the logic of national mobilization theory. While it is understandable that the recent experience of foreign rule should heighten the salience of autonomy from their former ruler for newly independent states with histories of nationalism, it is also possible that other events or experiences may also prime states for high national mobilization to play a predominant role in their foreign policy decision making. For example, do

variations in national mobilization among Latin American states affect their security strategies vis-à-vis the United States?

Skeptics may argue that the breakup of the Soviet Union may have been a particularly relevant time for the newly independent states' national mobilization to become the most salient factor for their policymaking because it was a period when they were faced with an uncertain future and an open window to assert their independence. Thus another potential avenue for research would explore the circumstances under which nationalism emerges as a particularly relevant factor in foreign policy decision-making. Shocks such as interstate conflicts in the region or significant systemic changes in great power dynamics may be likely candidates for exploration, but it would be interesting to see how the effects of such crises compare to long-term rivalries, simmering territorial disputes, and other potential catalysts.

There are many questions to ask and to answer, but one thing is clear: the growing scholarship on nationalism demonstrating its pervasive nature and its effects on international politics is a key element of modern political science. National mobilization theory and the empirical findings of this study can seek no greater success than to contribute to that end.

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VITA

Eteri Tsintsadze-Maass will earn her Ph.D. in political science from the University of Kentucky in 2020. She has also earned an M.A. in political science from the University of Kentucky, an M.A. in international peace studies from the University of Notre Dame, and a B.A. with honors in psychology from Tbilisi State University. Her article “Groupthink and Terrorist Radicalization” was published in *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2014). She earned an REEEC Research Fellowship at the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2019, won the Emerging Global Scholar Award from the University of Kentucky in 2018, and received a Graduate Fellowship from the Office for Policy Studies on Violence Against Women in 2016. She has taught courses at the University of Kentucky, the University of Evansville, the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs, and Tbilisi State University, and she will begin teaching at Old Dominion University in 2021.