Towards a two-dimensional analytical framework for understanding Georgian foreign policy: How party competition informs foreign policy analysis

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The Version of Record of this manuscript has been published and is available in POST-SOVIET AFFAIRS, 37(2), on 04 Jan 2021, http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/1060586X.2020.1869455.

Studies explaining Georgian foreign policy present Tbilisi's options as a dichotomy consisting of the West and Russia, focusing either on power politics or personal characteristics of decision-makers. To paint a more nuanced and holistic picture, this article departs from these models and uses content analysis to explore what foreign policy visions political parties present to voters in their manifestos for parliamentary elections between 1992 and 2016. Grounding the conclusions in empirical data, the article elaborates a novel analytical framework with two dimensions: alignment and orientation. This framework advances the understanding of foreign policy in two major ways. First, the framework can reveal changes in foreign policy behavior that would normally be overlooked. Second, it shows that parties sometimes form pairs of circular foreign policy preferences (i.e., A > B > C > A). An added value of the findings is that the framework can be applied to other small states in the post-Soviet space and beyond.

Keywords: foreign policy analysis; party competition; party manifestos; small states; Georgia; two-dimensional analytical framework

Introduction

Provided a hegemonic regional power structure and relatively disinterested great powers external to the region, traditional scholarship of international relations does not expect small states to pursue an independent foreign policy due to a relative lack of capabilities. However, countries such as Georgia defy this logic. Torn between Russia—a regional hegemon—and the West – a not fully committed power pole— Georgia has not made any major concessions to Russia—the regional hegemon. This makes Georgia a thought-provoking case and has led scholars to search for domestic determinants of Georgian foreign policy. The search has, however, often been limited to considerations of political decision-makers and their individual preferences between Russia and the West, while other important political actors and a whole array of political preferences are ignored.

To fill this gap, the present article poses two major research questions: How have party positions on Georgia's foreign policy in pre-election settings developed since Georgia regained its independence in 1991? And what insights can party manifestos offer for the analysis of Georgian foreign policy? By analyzing how political parties have positioned themselves since 1992, the article elaborates a new, two-dimensional analytical framework, making it possible to connect foreign policy and party competition with each other, thus contributing to both fields.

The dimensions of the analytical framework, alignment and orientation, are derived from the empirical data of party positions as expressed in their manifestos. Alignment is a continuum of positions on whether Georgia should align itself with any international power pole or not. Orientation, on the other hand, describes how political parties position themselves regarding two of the most important power poles: the West and Russia. Consequently, the article departs from a simple dichotomous understanding of a pro-Western versus pro-Russian foreign policy orientation. This

adds extra nuance to understanding Georgian foreign policy and can be used as a framework to analyze foreign polices of other small states such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, and beyond.

Apart from the analytical framework, the article connects areas of party competition and foreign policy with each other and contributes to both fields. In the area of foreign policy, the article elaborates on how to conceptualize the nature of behavioral change. Instead of sliding along the pro-Western–pro-Russian continuum, it is possible to move along the alignment dimension without changing position on the dimension of orientation. Therefore, foreign policy behavior is presented as navigating a two-dimensional plane.

In the area of party competition, the framework reveals that political parties sometimes compete by forming pairs of foreign policy preferences that have a property of intransitivity (i.e., A > B and B > C but C > A). For example, if there is convergence among political parties on a pro-Western orientation, it means it is preferred to a pro-Russian orientation. However, a party can introduce an alternative pair of options and argue that non-alignment is preferable to a pro-Western orientation. If this direction wins out, then the argument for a pro-Russian orientation can be made as being preferable to non-alignment. This creates a loop of preferences. It is between such "loops" of preference that Georgian political parties competed in the domain of foreign policy between 1992 and 2016.

The next section provides a brief background on Georgian elections and parties, followed by an overview of the research on change and continuity of Georgian foreign policy. The methodology section then outlines how manifestos have been analyzed, with a description of results and analytical findings. Finally, the concluding section discusses the implications and agenda for further research.

Background: Elections and political parties in Georgia

Over the last 30 years, Georgia has had four leaders: Zviad Gamsakhurdia in the early 1990s, Eduard Shevardnadze from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, Mikheil Saakashvili from the 2003 Rose Revolution to 2012, and Bidzina Ivanishvili from 2012 until the present day. Although Ivanishvili served as a prime minister only for a year between 2012 and 2013, he is still widely considered to be an informal leader who can select and remove prime ministers (see, for example, Lebanidze and Kakachia 2017). Under these four administrations, Georgia went through a total of eight parliamentary elections, including the 2003 election that was annulled.

In 1992, during the first elections after independence, the political situation in Georgia was still chaotic. The political elite and society were fragmented and polarized. This was reflected by the fact that 24 parties were elected to Parliament. In a 150-member legislature two parties, the Peace Bloc and October 11, gained pluralities, winning 29 and 18 seats, respectively. However, neither of them survived to run in the next elections in 1995.

The elections of 1995 and 1999 were won by Eduard Shevardnadze's new party, the Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG). After putting an end to military conflicts, the second half of the 1990s was a period of stabilization and economic recovery for Georgia. Eleven parties won seats in the parliament in 1995, and only four—in 1999.

Under Shevardnadze, society's grievances remained largely unaddressed. Therefore, following the fraudulent 2003 elections, citizens took to the streets and ousted the President. The Rose Revolution, led by Mikheil Saakashvili and his United National Movement (UNM), won the subsequent snap elections, while the CUG dissolved. The UNM went on to win the 2008 elections as well, and was the dominant political force until early 2012, when a billionaire, Bidzina Ivanishvili, entered politics and established a new party, the Georgian Dream (GD).

Dissatisfied with elite corruption, abuse of power, a renewed military conflict, and other grievances, voters followed the GD, which won the 2012 elections. This was the first transfer of power through a democratic election. The GD also won a second term in 2016.

Overall, between 1992 and 2016, eight elections were held, and seven of them are analyzed in this article. The 2004 elections that followed the Rose Revolution are omitted because party competition occurred prior to the November 2003 elections and manifestos were produced only once. Consequently, seven elections enable us to analyze 46 manifestos.

Understanding change and continuity in Georgian foreign policy: Can party politics help?

The primary puzzle of Georgian foreign policy centers around why the country has been pursuing a pro-Western foreign policy instead of bandwagoning with Russia. Considering that the latter remains the primary security threat for Georgia, Tbilisi's foreign policy challenges the logic of theories focusing on power politics. Scholars focusing on balance of power (e.g., Mearsheimer 2001; Waltz 2001) would perhaps be perplexed by Tbilisi's policies. Even the modified approach of balance of threat (Walt 1988, 1990) has been argued to be insufficient to explain Georgian foreign policy (Oskanian 2016).

Consequently, scholars have looked to alternative theoretical approaches. Such studies can be grouped into two categories. The first body of literature is informed by a constructivist approach (on constructivism, see Wendt 1992; Hopf 1998; Katzenstein 1996; Kubalkova 2001), while the second group of studies is informed by neoclassical realism (on neoclassical realism, see Rathbun 2008; Lobell, Ripsman, and Taliaferro 2009; Kitchen 2010; Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell 2016).

There are two commonalities among studies on Georgian foreign policy. First, scholars tend to employ a dichotomous view of Georgia's options: a pro-Western versus a pro-Russian orientation. Other options of foreign policy are often overlooked or dismissed entirely, due to an assumption that there is a societal consensus about pro-Western foreign policy. This is a simplified view at best, and misleading at worst (see Kakhishvili 2016; Buzogany 2019). Second, scholars attempt to explain the change in Georgian foreign policy. This change usually coincides with one of the two main power transfers in Georgia: following the 2003 Rose Revolution or the 2012 parliamentary elections. Although both of these were indeed important developments in Georgian politics, there is a fundamental geopolitical choice—pro-Western orientation—that has remained intact since at least the late 1990s. Scholars tend to overlook this continuity.

From the perspective of constructivism, factors such as ideas (Gvalia, Lebanidze, and Iashvili 2011; Gvalia et al. 2013), values (Minesashvili 2016; Naskidashvili and Kakhishvili 2016), and perceptions (Kakachia, Minesashvili, and Kakhishvili 2018) of the political elite have been of particular interest in studying Georgian foreign policy. Equally insightful are studies on Georgia's elite identity (Nodia 1998; Kolstø and Rusetskii 2012; Ó Beacháin and Coene 2014; German 2015; Kakachia and Minesashvili 2015) or political culture in general (Jones 2003). One limitation of these studies is that all these non-structural factors are connected to individual decision-makers, which makes variations across governments explicable. However, what remains unclear is how it can be possible that a pro-Western foreign policy orientation has remained a constant across three very different types of leadership: from Shevardnadze through Saakashvili to Ivanishvili.

On the other hand, proponents of neoclassical realism attempt to link systemic variables with internal factors. However, they have not been able to agree whether it is external factors that are of primary importance (Oskanian 2016) or internal factors that have the upper hand (Gvalia, Lebanidze, and Siroky 2019). According to Oskanian (2016), it was the perceived shift of power away from Russia that determined the change in Georgian foreign policy. However, Oskanian's (2016) strong emphasis on the "perceived" nature of the shift implies that this shift never happened. In the second half of the 1990s, Russia's capabilities did decrease relative to Western powers, but they never significantly changed vis-à-vis Georgia. Indeed, Russian capacity began to increase quickly again in the early 2000s. Even if Georgian politicians misperceived the reality of existing relative power capabilities, surely the 2008 August War would have been a wake-up call. Even if Saakashvili's perceptions of reality were inhibited by strong ideological considerations, then certainly under the

subsequent Georgian Dream (GD) leadership, the state of affairs would have radically changed. Yet, the last eight years have shown that the strategic geopolitical choice has never altered.

Like Oskanian (2016), Gvalia, Lebanidze, and Sirkoy (2019) also use a neoclassical realist framework. Unlike Oskanian (2016), however, Gvalia, Lebanidze, and Siroky (2019) focus on elite cohesion and state capacity to explain Georgia's foreign policy changes as resulting from the 2003 Rose Revolution. The changes are conceptualized as increased assertiveness of a pro-Western orientation. Indeed, following the Rose Revolution, elite cohesion increased, along with a state capacity to fulfill its functions, but this approach would fail to explain why assertiveness has decreased since the 2012 elections (for a discussion on how Georgian foreign policy has changed in terms of its assertiveness after the 2012 elections, see Kakachia, Minesashvili, and Kakhishvili 2018). Another change this approach fails to explain is the emergence of a pro-Western orientation under Shevardnadze's presidency in the late 1990s against the claim of Gvalia, Lebanidze, and Siroky (2019) that poor elite cohesion and low state capacity was characteristic of Shevardnadze's rule.

Overall, scholars have used four categories of factors to explain the puzzle of Georgian foreign policy: structural *versus* non-structural and internal *versus* external (see Table 1). In doing so, however, the literature has been informed by neoclassical realism or constructivism, while liberal theories focusing on the link between domestic social preferences and foreign policy behavior of a state have largely been overlooked. For example, Moravcsik's (1997) three variants of a liberal theory identifies three sets of causal factors influencing the state behavior: social values or identities; economic gains and losses for individuals or groups; and domestic make-up of interest representation. These causal links are derived from three core assumptions of the liberal theory of international relations: prime actors of international politics are societal; political institutions including states represent a subset of domestic interests and thus form state preferences; state preferences are interdependent and this configuration determines state behavior (Moravcsik 1997).

Table 1. Factors explaining Georgian foreign policy.

	Structural	Nonstructural
External	Nature of international (regional) system; capabilities; etc.	Values and ideologies of other actors; accepted norms; etc.
Internal	State capacity; elite cohesion; etc.	Identity; ideas; values; beliefs; perceptions; etc.

The analysis that follows below in this article is closely related to these considerations of liberal theories in the sense that political parties as societal actors represent domestic interests and appeal to societal values and identities. Constrained by a specific configuration of external conditions, this article assumes that political parties evaluate the feasibility of action in the area of foreign policy and produce visions in their manifestos. On the basis of these manifestos, however, it is possible to calculate foreign policy positions of individual parties, which aggregated together provide a holistic view of preferences present in the domestic politics.

Connecting party politics and foreign policy opens up new avenues of research, which have been largely overlooked by scholars of both international relations and party politics. The reasons for this is that foreign and security policy is normally believed to be beyond the party competition, as it concerns national interests of a given country on which there is a societal consensus. However, recent research demonstrates that this is not always the case and that parties form different preferences in the field of foreign policy (Joly and Dandoy 2018). Furthermore, the extant research has focused on how transnational party ideologies impact various issues such as military action (e.g., Palmer, London, and Regan 2004; Lewis 2017; Bertoli, Defoe, and Trager 2019; Haesebrouck and Mello 2020), provision of foreign aid (e.g., Brech and Potrafke 2014), foreign trade (e.g., Chang and Lee 2012) or international governance (e.g., Ecker-Ehrhrardt 2014).

More often than not, what is meant under the ideology is a well-established idea of the left–right dimension of ideologies, which, on the one hand, comes under strain even in Western

democracies when it comes to foreign policy preferences (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002; Cichi, Garzia, and Trechsel 2020). On the other hand, however, this dimension works differently in post-communist countries (Raunio and Wagner 2020). This is one reason why Raunio and Wagner (2020, 526) argue "there is a clear need for both comparative and in-depth case studies of non-Western cases." The authors additionally argue that even in Western democracies, party ideologies do not allow one to deduce the relevant party's foreign policy preferences (Raunio and Wagner 2020).

Therefore, this article not only represents an in-depth case study of a non-Western case, but also maps the foreign policy positions of 46 parliamentary parties between 1992 and 2016, demonstrates that the assumed consensus is missing, and explores how this diversity of positions can help understand Georgia's foreign policy.

Methodology: Converting manifesto data into foreign policy positions

The data for this analysis have been drawn from 46 manifestos produced across seven elections between 1992 and 2016 by the political parties that were elected to parliamentary seats during that period (see online Appendix 1).

Manifestos are often overlooked and deemed unimportant in the post-Soviet context because, first, voters rarely read them, and, second, political parties are unstable and the landscape changes frequently. However, manifestos impact voters indirectly through various stakeholders such as experts, journalists, individual politicians, etc. (Dolezal et al. 2012). Manifestos represent a compendium of valid party positions, a tool to streamline the positions of individual candidates and campaign materials (see Eder, Jenny, and Müller 2017). Therefore, the importance of manifestos does not exclusively depend on how many voters actually read them.

In Georgia of the 1990s, manifestos were published in major national newspapers, then parties started distributing them door-to-door; more recently they have been publicized through party websites and social media. Most importantly, manifestos make policy statements, which make it possible to calculate policy positions, and are a sound basis for drawing insightful conclusions.

As for the instability of political parties in post-Soviet settings, it is accurate to argue that the configuration of parties in the legislature often changes. It is common in Georgia for parties to disappear (e.g., Shevardnadze's CUG) or split into several different ones (e.g., UNM split into at least five different parties throughout its existence). However, there are at least three reasons why parties are still relevant for this analysis. First, parties are still the primary actors creating political discourse, no matter how unstable they may be. Second, even if there are old parties disappearing and new ones created, personalities remain largely consistent. For example, out of the current 149 MPs, 53 have served more than one legislative term, while 11 have served between four and six terms. This means many of the MPs have been members of different political parties. Finally, when Georgian parties split, it can be viewed as a mechanism for ensuring diversity of positions: instead of intra-party competition happening between various factions of a given party, an inter-party competition emerges in the party system. Considering that manifestos are formal articulations of positions of political parties, the data used in the article become highly relevant for the purposes of mapping the Georgian political landscape as a whole.

Grounding the identification of foreign policy preferences in the empirical data of manifestos is valuable on three counts. First, this method makes it possible to cover the entire period of independence from 1992 to 2016. Also, it permits an analysis beyond the limited circle of decision-makers, considering the spectrum of parties that contribute to domestic debates and formulating policy outcomes. Thus, the empirical data allow comparisons both across time and among different political parties.

When it comes to party positioning in any policy domain, the key question is whether positions converge or diverge. The issue of electoral decidability, defined as the extent to which political parties offer their voters distinct platforms for public policy, is thus pertinent (Bartolini 2001). Consequently, the analysis of party manifestos has two objectives: to evaluate whether parties

register clearly differentiable positions on issues related to foreign policy; and to explore how the aggregation of these issues can inform analysis of Georgian foreign policy.

For this purpose, content analysis has been employed with a single coder. A coding unit for content analysis is a sentence or a quasi-sentence, and the coding procedure followed the general guidelines of the Manifesto Research Group (see Budge 1987; Werner, Lacewell, and Volkens 2015). However, the actual coding framework used in this article employs all coding categories used in the coding framework of the MARPOR project, with some general categories broken down into ones that are more specific. Additionally, a few more categories have been added to the list, which makes the coding framework contextual for the case of Georgia (for a comparison how coding categories used in this article match or differ from those from the coding framework of the Manifesto Project, see online Appendix 3). At the end of the coding, some of the issues falling under the policy domain of external relations have been aggregated to construct two dimensions of competition (online Appendix 2).

Usually, when party competition is analyzed, especially concerning a single policy domain, it is assumed that the competition is unidimensional. The most logical single dimension in the Georgian case would be pro-Western versus pro-Russian orientation. This dimension would describe two distinct foreign policy strategies: a pro-Russian orientation would imply bandwagoning and a pro-Western orientation would imply balancing. In the international relations literature, these two acts of bandwagoning and balancing are considered to be a spectrum. Consequently, it is possible to calculate party positions on this spectrum and deduce whether each party prefers a balancing act, i.e., pro-Western orientation, or a bandwagoning act, i.e., pro-Russian orientation.

This spectrum, however, comes with challenges: how should the position that is in or close to the center of the spectrum be interpreted? This is both an empirical and a conceptual challenge. The empirical challenge is that a numerical value close to zero when party positions are estimated in any policy domain does not necessarily mean that the position is exactly in the center. The center has to be contextualized for a given country and it remains unresolved how this conceptualization should occur. Conceptually, however, specifically in foreign policy analysis, the scholarly literature has introduced hedging as an alternative act to the two extremes of the spectrum (e.g., Roy 2005; Kuik 2008; Murphy 2010; Jackson 2014; Lim and Cooper 2015).

The act of hedging can be defined as maintaining "strategic ambiguity to reduce or avoid the risks and uncertainties of negative consequences produced by balancing or bandwagoning alone" (Koga 2018, 638). Consequently, hedging can be viewed as a middle option between bandwagoning and balancing. However, hedging can achieve ambiguity by either full engagement with all great powers or full disengagement with them. Therefore, empirically, it would remain unclear whether a party close to the center of the orientation dimension prefers engagement with both Russia and the West or disengagement from them. Therefore, the second dimension of competition is introduced: alignment versus non-alignment.

Alignment as an empirical measure combines all positive preferences for Russia and the West and unfavorable mentions of non-alignment (which explicitly includes references to military neutrality as well) in a given manifesto, while non-alignment combines all negative preferences for Russia and the West and favorable mentions of non-alignment. Although it seems that this dimension is derived from the dimension on orientation, alignment is considered to be a more fundamental spectrum of preferences. This is because this dimension describes the extent to which political parties would like to engage with great powers. If a party registers a position that leans towards engagement or alignment, only then it is possible to look into with which great power pole the given party would prefer to align or engage. Consequently, this dimension unpacks what can be termed as an act of hedging as a basis for then identifying whether parties prefer bandwagoning or balancing as their choice of foreign policy behavior for Georgia.

The two-dimensional framework has empirical benefits as well, as it assists in the understanding of foreign policy behavior in two major ways; first, by capturing changes in positioning that the unidimensional approach would miss; and second, by avoiding the same mistake

as a unidimensional approach, i.e., when actors change positioning, it does not necessarily mean that they are compromising their positions towards one power pole for the sake of the other.

A single axis of orientation presents foreign policy positioning as a zero-sum game. Actors can only move towards one of the endpoints of the continuum by moving away from the other end. Therefore, improving relations with one pole of power without compromising relations with the other is an inconceivable change of behavior in such a framework, and consequently such behaviour would be either misperceived or impossible to register.

Translating the text data into party policy positions can be carried out in three major ways: a saliency measure (Budge 1987); relative proportional difference estimate (Kim and Fording 2002); and log odds-ratios (Lowe et al. 2011). This article follows the latter because the logarithmic method diminishes the impact of the varied lengths of manifestos on the point estimates of party positions. Consequently, policy positions for each party in each election on each dimension of the competition are estimated with the following formula:

$$\theta = \log (R + 0.5) - \log (L + 0.5) \qquad (1)$$

where θ is the point estimate of a given political party's position for a given election on a given dimension of the competition, and R and L are the poles of the dimension. The numerical values of the calculated log odds-ratios in Georgia in any policy domain fall within the interval of [-1.2; +1.9]. Furthermore, a value of zero does not necessarily mean a median position of the policy dimension because the notion of the center, as Lowe et al. (2011) argue, would depend on the context of a specific country. Therefore, the positions close to the center are interpreted as unclear in this article. Consequently, the distance from the center speaks for a degree of clarity of positioning.

Overall, the analysis of seven parliamentary elections reveals the dynamics of the times positions of political parties in Georgia converged towards a common point, which would make foreign policy a valence issue, and those times parties offered differentiable policy options to their voters, which would make foreign policy a contested policy area.

Georgian party positions in the field of foreign policy

Figure 1 plots the positions of all parties from all elections on the same chart to show the variation of positions adopted by parties across time. This figure uncovers at least two aspects of the overall picture of Georgian party competition in the domain of external relations. First, each of the four sections of the plane of foreign policy positions is empirically present in the data. Second, considering the variation of positions, both dimensions of competition are relevant for analysis.

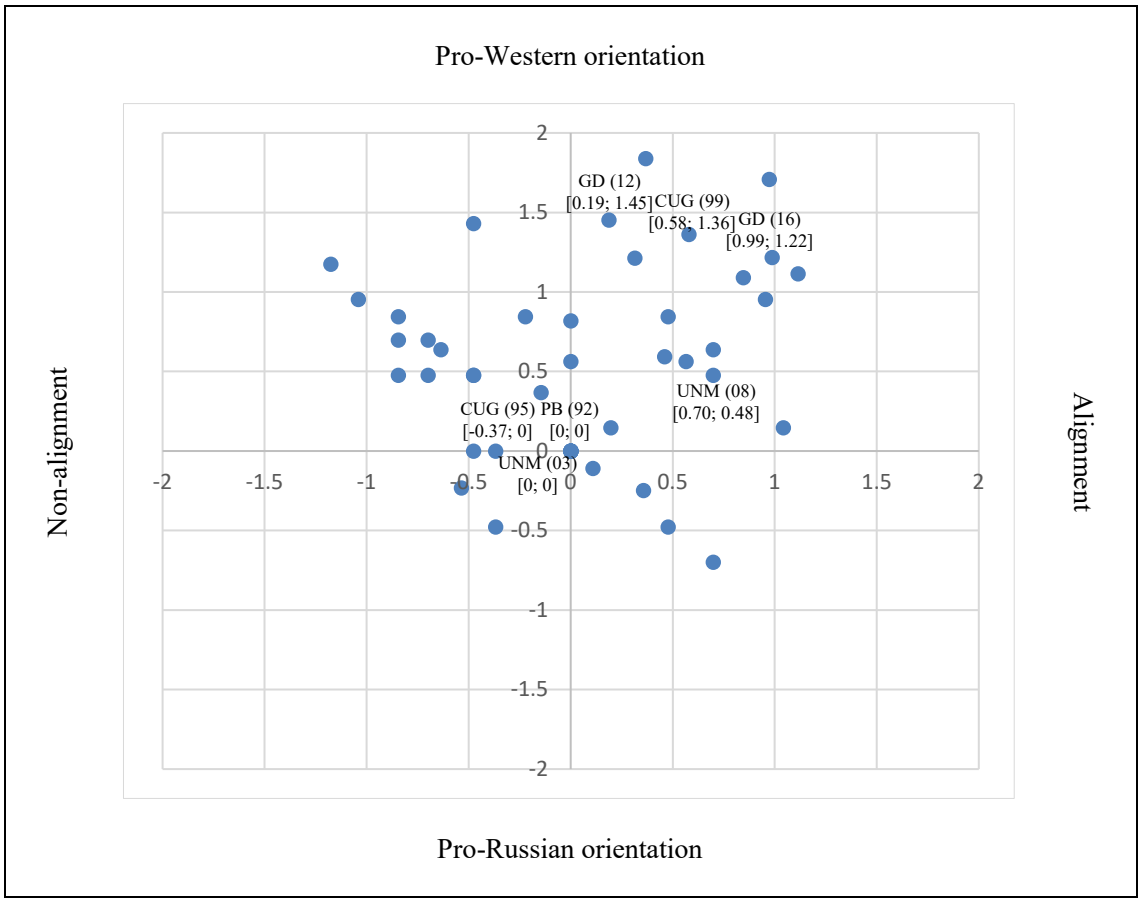

Figure 1. Dimensions of party competition in the domain of external relations and party positions during 1992–2016.

Note: Party tags include the largest party in the parliament in a given election: Peace Bloc (PB) 1992; Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG) 1995 and 1999; United National Movement (UNM) 2003 (although officially UNM was not the largest party in the parliament as a result of the 2003 elections; after the Rose Revolution following the elections UNM gained control of the parliament) and 2008; Georgian Dream (GD) 2012 and 2016. The coordinates represent the point estimates of respective party positions on the two-dimensional plane.

To evaluate temporality, Figure 2 plots party positions on the dimension of alignment across the seven elections. The size of each circle is proportionate to the share of seats a party received in the parliament. The chart shows three main patterns. First, the most intense competition in terms of alignment can be found in the first three elections after independence, between 1992 and 1999, while in the following three elections, from 2003 to 2012, no single party advocated for non-alignment, so it appears that by the beginning of the 2000s, the positions of the Georgian political spectrum converged. Second, non-alignment began reemerging in 2016 when one political party started questioning the existing consensus. A third pattern suggests that party size does not seem relevant, as both big and small parties, including the largest ones, have registered all sorts of possible positions.

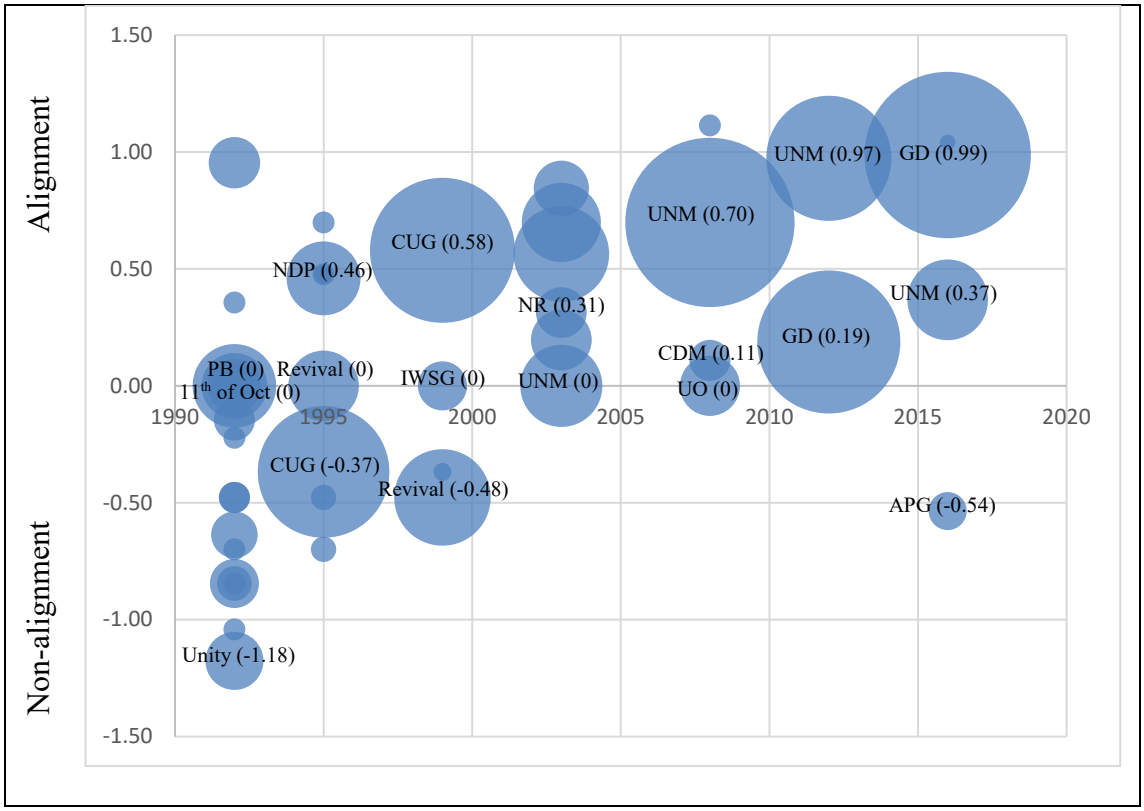

Figure 2. Alignment and party size during 1992–2016.

Note: Party tags include the three largest parties in the respective parliament and the number in brackets indicates the point estimate of the respective party's position on the dimension. List of parties: in 1992—Peace Bloc (PB), 11th of October, Unity; in 1995—Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG), National Democratic Party (NDP), Revival; in 1999—CUG, Revival, Industry Will Save Georgia (IWSG); in 2003*—United National Movement (UNM), New Rights (NR); in 2008—UNM, United Opposition (UO), Christian Democratic Movement (CDM); in 2012—Georgian Dream (GD), UNM; in 2016—GD, UNM, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia (APG).

*In 2003 only two parties are tagged because only these two managed to get into the parliament in 2004 when the elections were repeated following the Rose Revolution.

Figure 3 plots party positions over time on the dimension of orientation, with circles indicating party size. Three main patterns emerge. First, there has never been more than one political party leaning towards a pro-Russian orientation in any given election. Second, smaller parties tend to be pro-Russian more than larger ones. Only in 2003 was there a sizeable pro-Russian party—the third largest—with about 17% of seats in parliament. Third, there was only one election (in 2012) when all parties registered the same foreign policy orientation, which is perhaps due to the absence of smaller parties. These patterns clearly demonstrate that pro-Russian orientation has never gained momentum in the domestic debates on foreign policy in Georgia. Consequently, to expect any Georgian government to bandwagon with Russia seems unreasonable from this perspective even if theoretical assumptions deem such an expectation logical.

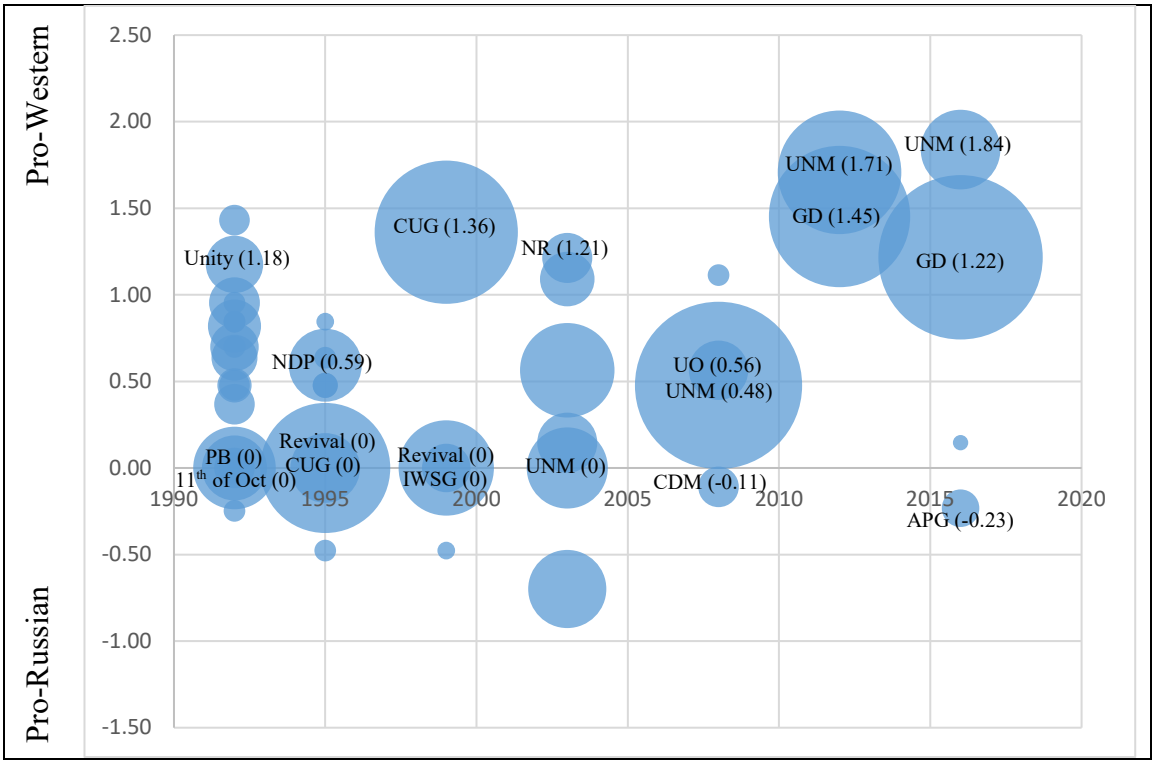

Figure 3. Foreign policy orientation and the party size during 1992–2016.

Note: Party tags include the three largest parties in the respective parliament and the number in brackets indicates the point estimate of the respective party's position on the dimension. List of parties: in 1992—Peace Bloc (PB), 11th of October, Unity; in 1995—Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG), National Democratic Party (NDP), Revival; in 1999—CUG, Revival, Industry Will Save Georgia (IWSG); in 2003*—United National Movement (UNM), New Rights (NR); in 2008—UNM, United Opposition (UO), Christian Democratic Movement (CDM); in 2012—Georgian Dream (GD), UNM; in 2016—GD, UNM, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia (APG).

* In 2003 only two parties are tagged because only these two managed to get into the parliament in 2004 when the elections were repeated following the Rose Revolution.

Finally, it is important to look at the continuity of individual party positions and how they have changed from election to election. As Nodia and Scholtbach (2006) argue, Georgian parties suffer from a "high death rate," explaining why only 8 of 32 parties analyzed in this article have received parliamentary seats in more than one election. Considering that three of these parties were the largest ones in the parliament twice each, it is more relevant to observe how their positions have changed. The most obvious change is when the Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG) diametrically changed its position from advocating non-alignment and offering no clearly identifiable position on orientation in 1995, to advocating alignment and a pro-Western orientation in 1999. The second notable change was when the United National Movement (UNM) started advocating for alignment and a pro-Western orientation in 2008, while completely ignoring both dimensions in 2003. Finally, the subtlest change happened between 2012 and 2016 with the Georgian Dream (GD). The GD did not change positions diametrically on any dimension, but the subtlety is that while its pro-Western orientation became slightly less assertive in 2016, alignment became significantly more assertive. A change from the calculated position of 0.19 to 0.99 on a dimension which offers a range of positions between -1.18 and 1.11 is significant.

Overall, the data from party manifestos suggest that most competition between political parties in the domain of foreign policy happens on the dimension of alignment. Furthermore, there seem to be changes in how the largest parties have positioned themselves from election to election. Consequently, two questions arise from these data: (1) How can the diverging positions on alignment in the 1990s be interpreted, and how is the re-emergence of contestation of alignment related to the earlier trend? (2) How can the position changes by the largest parties be interpreted, and how are these changes related to the actual foreign policy behavior of Georgia?

To answer these questions and understand how and why all these patterns emerge, it is important to examine qualitative data of manifestos regarding what non-alignment means for political parties in different periods of Georgia's development. Additionally, contrasting the meaning of non-alignment and gradual solidification of pro-Western orientation with what has been happening on the international stage, in Georgia's immediate neighborhood, and especially in Georgian–Russian relations provides further insights for interpreting the identified patterns. As the empirical analysis shows, the readiness of the West to serve as a new patron of Georgia in its struggle to escape Russian influence is the key to understanding the dynamics of party political discourse on foreign policy.

Non-alignment and its changing meanings

Non-alignment as an anti-Russian stance

The last few years of the Soviet Union and first few years of independence were by far the most turbulent in Georgian politics. Georgia and its people suffered tremendously as a result of a range of violent events, from the Soviet army crushing the protest rally in the center of Tbilisi on 9 April 1989, through a brief civil war in the capital, to two wars in breakaway Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The inexperience of governing an independent country resulted in chaos and uncertainty about Georgia as an international actor. According to Jones (2013), even though Zviad Gamsakhurdia saw the West as a new patron for Georgia, during his leadership "the slogan was 'Down with Bush! Down with Communism!'" This vision was based on the fact that the West was not ready to accept the new reality of 15 independent states instead of one Soviet Union. This was clearly demonstrated in President Bush's 1991 so-called "Chicken Kiev" speech, in which he stated, "Americans will not support those who seek independence in order to replace a far-off tyranny with a local despotism. They will not aid those who promote a suicidal nationalism based upon ethnic hatred" (Dahlburg 1991). Gamsakhurdia's presidency was short-lived—in January 1992, following the civil war, he had to flee Georgia and his political party, Round Table Free Georgia, dissolved after his demise.

Following Gamsakhurdia's ouster in 1992, there was a brief transitional period, after which Eduard Shevardnadze returned to Georgia and assumed power. In 1992, he was directly elected as the Chairman of parliament and the new parliament made him head of state. The 1992 election was the first in independent Georgia. The elected parliament was the most multi-party parliament Georgia has ever had to date. At that time the country was still in chaos both in terms of external and internal affairs; thus the newly emerged political parties were not a product of long-lasting social cleavages (see Lipset 1960; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Party–voter linkages had not been formed, and parties faced challenges to find their niche in the political landscape.

As a result, that year Georgian parties had to take positions on foreign policy against a background of internal chaos and a high degree of international uncertainty. In this context, it would have been far-fetched for Georgians to receive any significant support from the ideal Western patrons. Therefore, it was inconceivable for Georgia to become a member of Western political and security structures such as the NATO or the EU.

Meanwhile, Russia was trying to reintegrate the former Soviet republics and consequently, Georgia came under pressure from the Kremlin to join new political and security structures in the region: the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Tbilisi eventually submitted to this pressure in 1993.

In the 1992 and 1995 elections, a pro-Russian orientation was registered by only two parties. Having regained independence from Russia, it was logical that the Georgian political class would advocate against imperialism, symbolized by the new reintegration efforts under the Russian leadership. On the other hand, however, 18 parties in the two elections registered clearly identifiable pro-Western positions, while six more parties either ignored foreign policy in their manifestos or offered unclear positions (i.e., equal references to both positions). What is more important, however, is that these political parties, especially in 1992, clearly understood that neither external nor internal circumstances would permit a feasible pro-Western foreign policy. This is evident from the fact that all but one party that year, which advocated a pro-Western foreign policy, also advocated non-alignment.

Non-alignment in the early 1990s, therefore, should not be understood as a drive for neutrality or strategic hedging. Rather, the combination of non-alignment and a pro-Western orientation should be interpreted as anti-imperialism or safeguarding the newly acquired sovereignty. This is also supported by the qualitative evidence from the manifestos.

In the period of 1992–2003, favorable references to "non-alignment" can be found in 11 manifestos. All these manifestos registered a position leaning towards non-alignment in the overall dimension. These 11 parties focused on two messages when advocating for non-alignment: the problem of foreign military bases and personnel on Georgian soil, and a need for caution and balance in foreign policy.

For example, in 1992 the Union of Traditionalists wrote, "The goal of Georgia's foreign policy should be freeing the country from foreign military forces and turning its territory into a neutral zone." Similarly, the Merab Kostava Society maintained that "liberation from foreign military forces" should be the cornerstone of Georgia's actively neutral foreign policy. Other parties, e.g., the Social Justice Union, argued that Georgia should not enter into any military alliance and should maintain a neutral status. This line of reasoning continued in 1999 in the manifestos of the Labor Party of Georgia, which stated, "The solution is neutrality. The territory of our country should not host military bases of any foreign country or bloc. Georgia should not be a member of any military-political union. This is the key to restoring Georgia's territorial integrity." The Labor Party reinforced the same ideas in their 2003 manifesto, but the difference was that their overall position then leaned towards alignment.

Another message related to non-alignment was related to a balancing act, which requires a cautious and elaborate foreign policy. This is the underlying motivation for the Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG) to favor non-alignment over alignment. Their manifesto reads:

> Georgia is the only country among the former Soviet republics that has a border with Russia—the main military power of the Collective Security Treaty on one hand, and on the other hand, with Turkey—one of the most important countries in the North Atlantic bloc. This is what determines their military-strategic interest towards Georgia from both sides [the West and Russia], and which should be the basis for our well-reasoned and balanced foreign policy.

Considering such language regarding the meaning of non-alignment—freedom from foreign military bases and need for cautious foreign policy due to geopolitical intricacies of Georgia's location—as well as the fact that all but one of the parties advocating for non-alignment registered a pro-Western position, it becomes apparent that Georgian parties viewed non-alignment as a way of escaping Russian influence. When Georgian parties believed Russia was the major regional power with little visible or tangible effort from the West to counter Moscow's influence, non-alignment was in essence an anti-Russian, anti-imperialist stance. Furthermore, the disappearance of non-alignment from the political spectrum after 2003 interestingly coincides with Russia's withdrawal of its military bases from Tbilisi-administered territory.

The first elections are a manifestation of how Georgian parties form pairs of preferences in foreign policy options. Viewing foreign policy options dichotomously—pro-Western versus pro-

Russian—was not beneficial, because the former was not feasible at that time, while the latter was not desired. Therefore, parties managed to find a middle ground—non-alignment—which was more feasible than a pro-Western orientation and less undesirable than a pro-Russian one. As soon as the pro-Western orientation became feasible, as a result of changing international and domestic contexts, parties stopped advocating for non-alignment until 2016.

Non-alignment as an anti-Western stance

In 2016, a small, newly established conservative party, the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia (APG), revived debates about alignment by advocating for non-alignment. APG grounded their promise in the critique of the pro-Western orientation, particularly that of its feasibility or lack thereof. In fact, this closely reflects the evolution of party positioning in the 1990s when non-alignment was a position against pro-Russian orientation. This time, however, non-alignment seems designed as a position against a pro-Western orientation. APG is one of only two parliamentary parties since 1992 that supported non-alignment while adopting a pro-Russian orientation. It seems that the shift from a pro-Western to pro-Russian foreign policy orientation was facilitated by the shift in the dimension of alignment. The difference from the 1992–1995 reasoning about alignment is that during the first years of independence it was external factors, both structural and non-structural, that did not permit a clearly defined alignment policy. In 2016, however, it was the internal, non-structural factors, such as public opinion, that did not permit a clearly defined pro-Russian orientation. Public opinion, however, is never a consensus of each individual member of society, and there still is room for alternatives (Kakhishvili 2016; Buzogany 2019).

This limited space is the niche that the APG is trying to fill, and the party has found a way to advance its agenda. The APG is creating a loop of relative preferences between pairs of foreign policy options and assigns them the property of intransitivity. The logic is that pro-Western foreign policy is superior to pro-Russian, so in direct juxtaposition the pro-Western option prevails. However, if a political party can argue that non-alignment is more feasible than a pro-Western orientation and that a pro-Russian orientation is superior to non-alignment, then the shift in orientation can happen through the dimension of alignment.

The APG's narrative is simple and straightforward but based on several hidden assumptions that are not immediately apparent for voters. The narrative has two parts and unfolds as follows: the first part of the narrative is that it is in Georgia's national interest to restore territorial integrity. Therefore, Georgia needs to find the means to achieve this goal. Membership in NATO and the EU is desirable but cannot be the means to achieve the restoration of territorial integrity. The reason for this is that membership in the NATO/EU is impossible with unresolved territorial issues. Therefore, membership in these organizations implies that Georgia abandon its breakaway regions. Consequently, if Georgia must forget the restoration of its territorial integrity, the country should not join NATO/EU. This means that for Georgia's ultimate national interests, a pro-Western foreign policy orientation is not useful, and therefore non-alignment is essentially better. This way, Georgia will not be forced to give up its goal to restore territorial integrity.

This is the first part of the narrative. Obviously, this logic is based on an assumption that misses the distinction between membership in NATO and the EU and a pro-Western foreign policy orientation. The latter is much broader and additionally involves, for example, bilateral relations with the United States or individual European countries, as well as the tangible benefits of relations with NATO and the EU.

The second part of their reasoning is that a pro-Russian orientation may be better than non-alignment. Again, if the ultimate goal is restoring territorial integrity, which is non-negotiable, Georgia must do all it can to guarantee that Tbilisi's control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia is restored. Considering that a war is neither desirable nor feasible, Georgia should turn to the power that has effective control over these breakaway regions, which is Russia. Therefore, through

negotiating with Russia and partnering with Russia, Georgia may achieve its goal of restoring territorial integrity. Consequently, a pro-Russian orientation is better than non-alignment.

This logic too, is based on an assumption with another missing distinction—but this time a distinction between territorial integrity and sovereignty. These two do not equal each other, and APG's narrative is heavily focused on the former without talking much about the latter.

This discussion is supported by evidence from the APG manifesto. APG takes the caution of the CUG from 1995 to a new level. Its manifesto advocates for "patience" and balancing between big powers such as the United States, Europe, Russia, and Turkey. "We have to understand; we have to internalize that there are times for fighting and times for patience. Now is the time for patience, for calm; now is the time when we should at all costs avoid getting involved in wars that are not ours." If this passage seems cryptic, it probably was meant to be so. What is striking is that it does not mention any country, but advocates for non-alignment. However, for the purposes of deconstructing this message, primary attention should be paid to "patience" and "calm," on the one hand, and "the wars that are not ours," on the other. The former pair most likely refers to a vocal foreign policy orientation pursued by the UNM during 2004–2012. Even when they were not in power, the UNM politicians kept pushing for a more assertive foreign policy from the GD and for safeguarding Georgia's foreign policy orientation in legislation and even in the constitution. Therefore, "patience" and "calm" can be interpreted as toning down foreign policy and rhetoric about foreign policy.

On the other hand, avoiding getting involved in "wars that are not ours" most likely refers to the fact that Georgia has sent troops to Iraq and Afghanistan as well as Kosovo and Central African Republic—all under Western military or police operations. As of 26 March 2019, NATO indicated on its website that in Afghanistan, Georgia was one of the largest non-NATO troop contributors in the framework of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and one of the top overall contributors in the framework of the Resolute Support mission. These are indeed "wars that are not ours."

As a result of this reasoning, the APG manifesto argues that non-alignment is inevitable and trying to escape from this inevitability "is deadly." This "deadliness" is further reinforced with the idea that, according to the manifesto, Georgia is not going to be accepted into NATO, and "we should not be lying to ourselves or to society." However, what Georgia's aspirations towards NATO could lead to might be "complete partition of the country," implying giving up the hope to restore territorial integrity. Furthermore, APG argues, even if Georgia is accepted as a member of NATO, there is a chance that it will result in a "devastating war with Russia."

This shows how APG does not juxtapose pro-Western and pro-Russian orientations with each other. Instead, the party maintains that non-alignment is better than a pro-Western orientation. However, if this idea becomes established, one could expect, judging from APG's positioning as pro-Russian, that the party will eventually juxtapose non-alignment and a pro-Russian orientation, then argue for the latter.

Overall, the two-dimensional analytical framework shows that positions of domestic political actors tend to converge in terms of the orientation of Georgian foreign policy. However, diverging positions over alignment demonstrates that there is more to Georgian foreign policy than a dichotomous understanding of orientation. Political parties navigate this two-dimensional plane with considerations in mind regarding the feasibility of their foreign policy visions. If external and/or internal factors, either structural or non-structural, do not permit a certain foreign policy option, political parties will reposition over the axis of alignment instead of modifying their positions of orientation.

Capturing change in foreign policy behavior using the two-dimensional framework

The CUG between 1995 and 1999: Emergence of pro-Western foreign policy

In the 1995 parliamentary elections, the Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG), Eduard Shevardnadze's party, emerged victorious, gaining 108 seats out of 220. This started the process of Shevardnadze's consolidation of power. In 1995, the CUG opted for non-alignment, a point calculation of -0.37, while the position on orientation was unclear, a point calculation of 0.00. In 1999, however, they advocated for alignment, a point calculation of 0.58, and a strongly defined pro-Western orientation, a point calculation of 1.36. This shift seems drastic because the range of positions in all elections is between -1.18 and 1.11 on the alignment dimension and -0.70 and 1.84 on the orientation dimension.

This change reflects the shifting foreign policy behavior of Georgia between the two elections. By the 1995 election, Georgia was no longer engaged in active military conflicts and the economy was starting to recover from a deep recession. In foreign affairs, Georgia was trying to engage with international organizations. Although Moscow had already coerced Georgia to enter the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and sign the Collective Security Treaty (CST) (Jones 2013), in 1996 Tbilisi signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU. In 1997, Georgia cooperated with Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova to establish a new organization, GUAM, which was intended to counter Russian influence in the region. Although GUAM's potential was not fully utilized (Shelest 2013), it was still an act of rebellion.

In 1998–1999 several important events defined the orientation of Georgian foreign policy. In October 1998 Georgia signed the Ankara Declaration that started the so-called Millennium Project—the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline. Together with the earlier Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA), BTC had the potential to become a source of economic growth and decreasing dependence on Russia (Jones and Kakhishvili 2013). That same year, Georgia and Russia reached a bilateral agreement, following which Russia withdrew its border troops from Georgia in 1999 (Sokov 2005). To continue the trend, in 1999 Tbilisi did not agree to renew the Collective Security Treaty and was no longer part of the Russia-led collective security umbrella. This decision preceded the official membership of Georgia in the Council of Europe in February of the same year, when Zurab Zhvania, then-speaker of parliament, famously stated "I am Georgian, therefore, I am European" (Jones 2013, 251).

All these developments led CUG to change its foreign policy positioning diametrically by the October 1999 elections. The change soon became irreversible as the government continued its pro-Western policies after victory in the elections. Immediately afterwards, in November 1999, Georgia had a major diplomatic victory at the OSCE Istanbul summit. With the firm support of the West, Russia submitted to Georgia's request to withdraw its troops from the territory of Georgia by 2001 (Jamestown Foundation 1999). Although Russia did not fulfill this commitment, it was a significant achievement for Georgian diplomacy, following the withdrawal of border guards.

In 2000, Georgia institutionalized its foreign policy orientation when the government adopted the first conceptual document on a strategic vision for the future. The document clearly prioritized relations with the West as opposed to relations with Russia (Government of Georgia 2000). This document was published during the increasing tensions between Tbilisi and Moscow, known as the Pankisi crisis. This was the first important confrontation between Moscow and Tbilisi, as relations between the two neighbors started to deteriorate over the issue of Chechen fighters seeking shelter in the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia. Russia accused Georgia of supporting terrorists, and violated the latter's airspace several times, while referring to Pankisi as a "mini-Afghanistan on Russia's doorstep" (Tyler 2002).

Georgia hesitated to take action, although it was repeatedly requested to by Moscow. Eventually, however, after receiving the US Georgia Train and Equip Program that prepared Georgian military forces for conducting counter-terrorist operations, Georgia finally conducted counter-terrorist operations to restore government control over Pankisi. All these events led up to

2002, when Shevardnadze officially requested an invitation for Georgia to become a member of NATO (Peuch 2002).

Consequently, the CUG's change in positioning on the two-dimensional plane is indicative of actual changes in Georgian foreign policy behavior between 1995 and 1999. After the 1999 elections, positions expressed in the manifesto translated into actual policy outcomes, most importantly by institutionalizing a pro-Western orientation and officially applying for NATO membership.

The UNM in 2004: a thaw in Georgian–Russian relations

In the 2003 elections, the UNM completely ignored alignment and orientation in foreign policy. This meant that the party did not register any position on either of the two dimensions. However, in 2008 clearly identifiable positions emerge—a combination of alignment and pro-Western orientation, with 0.70 and 0.48 calculated point estimates, respectively. The UNM manifesto of 2003 is an unusually short document, the second shortest in fact of all, with only 31 meaningful coded segments, while an average manifesto has 199 meaningful coded segments. Therefore, the interpretation of the absence of foreign policy positions should be interpreted with caution. However, it still warrants looking into what happened immediately after UNM's ascent to power. This change of positioning between 2003 and 2008 coincides in fact with an important change in Georgian foreign policy behavior that is often overlooked by observers.

Following the Rose Revolution, in January 2004 Mikheil Saakashvili became the President of Georgia, and the United National Movement (UNM) received a majority in parliament. The first few months of 2004 were highly significant for Georgian foreign policy. Two weeks after his inauguration, Saakashvili went to Moscow on his first official visit abroad. He vowed to improve Georgian–Russian relations, saying he was ready "to do everything to put an end to the shameful relations" Georgia had had for years with its northern neighbor, and "to press for the signing of a much-delayed bilateral friendship treaty" (Peuch 2004b). Reactions after the visit were overwhelmingly positive—so much so that some claimed, "Russia had found a reliable partner in the newly elected South Caucasus leader" (Peuch 2004a). Saakashvili reportedly agreed to cooperate with Russia to secure the border section between the two countries that ran along Chechnya, which was "what Moscow had long wanted to hear from his predecessor" (Peuch 2004a).

The promising start was short lived, however. Seemingly, Saakashvili's government was ready to find a common language with Moscow, but negotiations over the bilateral friendship treaty failed because of Putin's request to add two points to the treaty: "the mention of Russia's special rights in Georgia's conflict zones" and "a note that both countries take responsibility to disallow the deployment of third party military infrastructure on its territory" (Edilashvili 2012). The alternative suggested by Georgia to ban a foreign country's military was refused by Russia because "These terms offered by Russia were the same in the pre-Saakashvili period and after that" (Edilashvili 2012).

In May 2004 a new confrontation started to develop in the triangular relationships between Tbilisi, Tskhinvali, and Moscow. Georgia started to reinforce a major anti-smuggling police operation in and around South Ossetia that started in December 2003. This led to mutual accusations between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali about covert intentions of the other side and turned violent. Shooting and confrontation lasted until late August and the death toll due to recurring crossfire in July–August reached 17 on the Georgian side and five on the Ossetian side (International Crisis Group 2004). Following the summer of 2004, Georgian–Russian relations deteriorated even further, resulting in an energy blockade, a Russian embargo on Georgian goods, the deportation of Georgian migrants from Russia and, ultimately, the 2008 August War—after which diplomatic relations ceased between the two countries.

The absence of positions in the 2003 UNM manifesto and subsequent changes in the 2008 elections raises questions about whether there were changes in Georgia's foreign policy behavior

between the two elections. This is an important added value of the manifesto data for foreign policy analysis, because it can serve as a proxy for detecting change in foreign policy behavior.

The GD between 2012 and 2016: discursive change in Georgian–Russian relations

The change in GD's positioning is perhaps the most interesting one to showcase the benefit of a two-dimensional analytical framework. In the 2012 election, GD's positions on alignment and orientation, respectively, were 0.19 and 1.45. In 2016, however, the positions were modified: alignment became significantly more assertive at 0.99 and orientation became slightly less assertive at 1.22.

If foreign policy is viewed in dichotomous terms, GD's modification of positioning would imply that the largest party of the 2012 and 2016 elections became less pro-Western between the two elections, which would automatically imply tilting towards pro-Russian positioning. However, this conclusion would be misleading. There is no empirical evidence that GD in 2016 was less pro-Western than in 2012.

In 2012, GD promised to normalize Georgian–Russian relations. This was one of its important foreign policy promises, and indeed the GD government delivered on the promise following the elections. The newly elected government decoupled economic and social issues from security and created a new position, the Prime Minister's Special Representative for Relations with Russia. With this step, the GD government established a formal channel of communication with the Kremlin to discuss matters related to trade, economic relations, and people-to-people contacts. This format achieved the reopening of the Russian market to Georgian exports and the restoration of flights between the two countries. Georgia even cooperated with Russian Special Services during the Sochi Winter Olympics in 2014.

Furthermore, these steps were accompanied by a significant change in the rhetoric of high-ranking Georgian officials towards Russia. For example, Bidzina Ivanishvili, then Prime Minister, while greeting new recruits on the five-year anniversary of the war on 8 August 2013, said that the government was ready to admit mistakes and take "its own share of the blame" for letting the war happen in August 2008 (Government of Georgia 2013). Furthermore, as Civil Georgia reported on 5 September 2013, Ivanishvili stated that his government would consider joining the Russian-initiated Eurasian Economic Union should it be in the national interests of Georgia. Later, on 12 September, Civil Georgia quoted President Mikheil Saakashvili referring to Ivanishvili's statement as an act of "breaking of the main taboo" of Georgian politics. For years prior to GD's coming to power, the UNM had been trying to frame Georgian–Russian relations in a way that would exclude the possibility of cooperation of any sort between Georgia and Russia. Therefore, the Georgian PM's comment was a hard blow to this discourse and a clear sign of shifting discourse on Georgia's foreign policy (for details, see Kakachia, Minesashvili, and Kakhishvili 2018).

However, these developments do not justify the claim that Georgia had become less pro-Western. During the same period, Georgia signed the Association Agreement with the EU and maintained its status as frontrunner of the Eastern Partnership. Consequently, this means that Georgian foreign policy should not be interpreted on a single continuum of pro-Western and pro-Russian positions. In fact, soon after the 2016 elections, Georgia's pro-Western orientation was codified in the constitution: in 2018, Article 78 was added to the Constitution, stating, "The constitutional bodies shall take all measures within the scope of their competences to ensure the full integration of Georgia into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization" (Parliament of the Republic of Georgia 2018).

Overall, the two-dimensional analytical framework is useful for a nuanced understanding of Georgian foreign policy. It captures changes in foreign policy behavior that are often overlooked and demonstrates that Georgian foreign policy is not a zero-sum game in which every positive move towards one pole of power automatically implies tilting away from the other pole.

Conclusion

By linking party competition and foreign policy, this article explores how Georgian political party positions changed from 1992 to 2016 and how party manifestos can inform the analysis of Georgian foreign policy. Focusing on parliamentary political parties and their manifestos permits a better understanding of the domestic political elite than most literature focusing on government decision-makers. The novel two-dimensional analytical framework for foreign policy analysis offers a dimension of orientation, paired with the dimension of alignment, which creates a plane on which to observe the positions of political actors.

This framework makes two major contributions to understanding Georgian foreign policy. First, it allows detection of changes in foreign policy behavior that normally escape the attention of observers of Georgian foreign policy, i.e., the emerging pro-Western orientation between 1995 and 1999 and the short-lived thaw in Georgian–Russian relations in 2004. Additionally, the framework reveals the discursive shift following the 2012 transfer of power from the United National Movement to the Georgian Dream. This approach is particularly important for departing from a zero-sum understanding of foreign policy behavior, in which every attempt to incite normalization of relations between Georgia and Russia cannot be understood without tilting away from a pro-Western orientation. This flawed interpretation of Georgian foreign policy can easily be discarded by introducing an alignment dimension, allowing extra room for maneuver.

The second key contribution of the framework relates to the pairs of relative preferences of foreign policy options. This concerns the meaning of non-alignment in two different contexts: the events of the 1990s and the 2016 election. Political actors consider what factors permit and inhibit a particular policy option by evaluating both external and internal, as well as structural and non-structural factors. Based on these considerations, actors strategically advocate what is possible and not necessarily what their first choice of action is. In the 1990s external factors did not permit a pro-Western orientation, and thus parties advocated non-alignment. In 2016, however, it was internal discursive limitations that excluded advocating a pro-Russian orientation. That is why the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia settled for non-alignment.

Although the case study in this article was Georgia, the analytical framework and findings have clear implications for other small states, especially those pushed and pulled between two great powers. However, its application would be limited if countries do not have at least a minimum level of democratic governance, with functioning political parties and a system of democratic transfer of power through elections. The quality of party manifestos is important; they must offer clear policy positions, otherwise their intentions are impossible to calculate. Considering these conditions, the framework can be applied to other post-Soviet states, especially Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

Finally, the study suggests possibilities for further research on several questions. First, it is important to understand how political parties formulate their foreign policy visions and what factors they consider when evaluating the feasibility of an option. Are these considerations more about structural issues such as power capabilities, or about non-structural issues such as values and identities? At the same time, it is equally important to explore how these visions relate to public opinion on foreign policy and whether political parties reflect a diversity of views on foreign policy extant in the society. Additionally, it could be determined whether government positions can be systematically mapped on the two-dimensional plane and what sort of data would allow it. Another issue to be studied is whether positions of the largest party in an election can be a significant proxy measure for a government position at a given time. The answers to these questions can further advance the understanding of the foreign policy of small states.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Research Council of Norway under grant 287815.

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Appendix 1. List of political parties whose manifestos have been included in the analysis.

#	Party	Election year	% of seats obtained	Total number of coded segments in the manifesto	Share of codes related to external relations in the manifesto	Share of codes related to alignment dimension in the manifesto	Share of codes related to orientation dimension in the manifesto
1	11 Of October	1992	12	85	13%	0%	0%
2	Charter 91		6	77	18%	9%	9%
3	Democratic Party		7	53	11%	6%	4%
4	Farmers' Union		1	57	14%	5%	5%
5	Greens		7	78	21%	5%	5%
6	Ilia Chavchavadze Society		5	68	0%	0%	0%
7	Merab Kostava Society		3	86	3%	3%	1%
8	National Independent Party		3	69	28%	19%	19%
9	National Democratic Party (NDP)		8	266	14%	7%	7%
10	Peace Bloc		19	73	12%	0%	0%
11	People's Friendship and Justice		1	51	16%	6%	6%
12	Social-Democratic Party (SDP)		1	59	36%	29%	29%
13	Social Justice Union		1	71	11%	7%	6%
14	Socialist Workers' Party		3	86	6%	1%	1%
15	Union of God's Children		1	57	9%	4%	4%
16	Union of National Agreement and Revival		3	28	32%	0%	0%
17	Union of Traditionalists		5	88	15%	6%	5%
18	Unity		9	165	7%	4%	4%
19	Citizens' Union of	1995	50	124	20%	3%	2%

	Georgia (CUG)						
20	National Democratic Party (NDP)		15	422	16%	8%	7%
21	Progress		2	88	18%	2%	1%
22	Reformers' Union		1	257	12%	2%	1%
23	Revival		14	41	29%	5%	5%
24	Socialist Party of Georgia (SPG)		2	102	3%	1%	1%
25	Tanadgoma		1	34	50%	15%	15%
26	The Union of Georgian Traditionalists		1	70	43%	11%	10%
27	Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG)	1999	58	179	15%	6%	6%
28	Georgia's Revival		26	201	13%	0%	0%
29	Industry Will Save Georgia (IWSG)		7	128	9%	0%	0%
30	Labour Party of Georgia (LPG)		1	58	12%	7%	2%
31	Burjanadze Democrats	2003	8	93	38%	20%	20%
32	For a new Georgia (CUG)		25	77	22%	8%	8%
33	Labour Party of Georgia (LPG)		10	202	7%	4%	2%
34	National Movement (UNM)		19	31	13%	0%	0%
35	New Rights		7	524	15%	5%	5%
36	Union of Democratic Revival		17	96	11%	2%	2%
37	Christian Democratic Movement (CDM)	2008	5	54	19%	13%	13%
38	Republican Party of Georgia (RPG)		1	179	8%	3%	3%
39	United Opposition		10	63	24%	10%	10%
40	United National		79	69	13%	3%	1%

	Movement (UNM)						
41	Georgian Dream (GD)	2012	57	1360	12%	3%	3%
42	United National Movement (UNM)		43	155	26%	16%	16%
43	Alliance of Patriots of Georgia	2016	4	983	24%	11%	9%
44	Georgian Dream (GD)		77	1518	20%	11%	11%
45	Industry Will Save Georgia (IWSG)		1	161	16%	3%	3%
46	United National Movement (UNM)		18	366	23%	9%	9%

Appendix 2. Content of dimensions.

Dimension 1: Alignment versus non-alignment

Alignment		**Non-alignment**
Favorable mentions		Favorable mentions
EU		Non-alignment
NATO		Unfavorable mentions
USA and other western countries		EU
Russia		NATO
USSR, FSU		USA and other western countries
Eurasian Economic Union		Russia
Russia's role in the territorial conflicts		USSR, FSU
Mobilization of western support for conflict resolution		Mobilization of western support for conflict resolution
Unfavorable mentions		Eurasian Economic Union
Non-alignment		Russia's role in the territorial conflicts
		Imperialism

Dimension 2: Pro-western versus pro-Russian orientation

Pro-western		**Pro-Russian**
Favorable mentions		Favorable mentions
EU		Russia
NATO		USSR, FSU
USA and other western countries (excluding Turkey)		Eurasian Economic Union
Mobilization of western support for conflict resolution		Russia's role in the territorial conflicts
Unfavorable mentions		Unfavorable mentions
Russia		EU
USSR, FSU		NATO
Eurasian Economic Union		USA and other western countries
Russia's role in the territorial conflicts		Mobilization of western support for conflict resolution
Imperialism		

Appendix 3. Comparison of coding categories used in Manifesto Project and in this article.

Coding categories of the Manifesto Project codebook (Version 2020a) – Policy domain: External Relations	Coding categories used in this article – Policy domain: External Relations
per101 Foreign Special Relationships: Positive	Foreign Special Relations: Positive • Russia • Armenia • Turkey • Azerbaijan • USA and West • Other
per102 Foreign Special Relationships: Negative	Foreign Special Relations: Negative • Russia • Armenia • Turkey • Azerbaijan • USA and West • Other
per103 Anti-Imperialism	Anti-Imperialism
per104 Military: Positive	Military: Positive
per105 Military: Negative	Military: Negative
per106 Peace	International peace
	International terrorism: Negative
per107 Internationalism: Positive	Internationalism: Positive
per108 European Community/Union: Positive	Integration in EU: Positive
	Integration in NATO: Positive
per109 Internationalism: Negative	Internationalism: Negative
per110 European Community/Union: Negative	Integration in EU: Negative
	Integration in NATO: Negative
Other coding categories absent in the Manifesto Project codebook	National interests and security: general
	Sovereignty
	Balancing / Neutrality / Non-alignment
	USSR: Positive
	USSR: Negative
	Integration in EAEU / FSU: Positive
	Integration in EAEU / FSU: Negative
	Diaspora: Positive
	Territorial integrity: • Territorial integrity: general • Russia's role: Positive • Russia's role: Negative • Mobilizing Western support • Peaceful conflict resolution: Positive • Peaceful conflict resolution: negative