Personality Traits and Foreign Policy Views of Russian Elites

Egor Lazarev
Columbia University

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“Social Change in Cross-National Perspective”
Puzzle

Why are some people “hawks” and some “doves”?

What explains difference in foreign policy views of elites?
Research Question

Do personality characteristics of people who hold high positions in power affect their foreign policy views?
Rational Choice Theory

Answer:

NO!

What matter are interests, expectations, strategies, coalitions...
Political Psychology
Approach

Emphasis on psychological traits of decision-makers

- Greenstein 1975;
- Holsti 1976;
- Etheredge 1978;
- Tetlock 1981
Challenge

Access to elites is extremely difficult to obtain.-----

Reliance on secondary indirect sources, or expert evaluations, or content analysis
Our Approach

- Original survey data of Russian Elites based on Sixth Wave of Russian Elites Survey Project headed by William Zimmerman
Place in the Literature

• Bridging classical studies of elites’ attitudes and beliefs with advanced research on psychological traits in social psychology

• Analysis of the elites’ orientation on foreign policy beyond the US
Theoretical Framework

- Psychological Traits (Big 5 approach):
  - Authoritarian Personality Theory (Adorno)
  - Interpersonal generalization theory (Christiansen)
  - Leader Trait Assessment theory (Hermann)
Hypothesis

Psychological traits that constitute personal authoritarianism should be associated with more aggressive foreign policy orientations.
Dependent Variables

• Definition of National Interests of Russia
• Orientation toward the use of military force
• Perception of the US as a threat to Russian national security
• Opposition to international operations in Libya and Syria
Independent Variables

- Conservative Parenting Values
- Ethnocentrism
- Mental Rigidness
- Need for Order
- Punitiveness
Conservative Parenting Values

Obedience + responsibility + religiosity – (self-expression + tolerance + imagination + independence)
Ethnocentrism

• Composite Index based on feeling thermometer

Attitudes towards Russians – (attitudes towards Muslims + Caucasians + Immigrants + homosexuals)
Mental Rigidness

“Of all the various philosophies in the world there exist apparently only one that is undoubtedly correct”
Need for Order

5-point scale

- “order established at any price, even if it involves violations of human rights” to “by no means establishing order infringe upon citizen’s rights”.
Punitiveness

“the interests of society must be protected even if innocent people sometimes are imprisoned”.

Controls

- Self-esteem
- Trust
- Group belonging (Military, Legislative, Executive, Business, Science and Media)
- Political affiliation (report of vote for Vladimir Putin)
- Membership in CPSU
- Age
- Gender
- Education
6th wave of the Russian Elite Survey September-October 2012

240 individuals from

1) Legislators
2) Government
3) Military
4) State-owned enterprises
5) Business-owners
6) Media
7) Science
Empirical Analysis

• Confirmatory factor analysis

• Dependent variables represent different factors

• Strong factor of ethnocentrism (without homosexuals)

• No coherent factor beyond parenting values
### Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Broad National Interests</th>
<th>Use of Military Force</th>
<th>US as a threat</th>
<th>Opposition to intervention in Libya</th>
<th>Opposition to intervention in Syria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Parenting</td>
<td>-0.070 (0.165)</td>
<td>-0.76** (0.19)</td>
<td>-0.750** (0.201)</td>
<td>-0.56** (0.21)</td>
<td>-0.764** (0.224)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnocentrism</td>
<td>0.05** (0.02)</td>
<td>-0.07** (0.01)</td>
<td>0.06** (0.01)</td>
<td>0.03** (0.01)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Rigidness</td>
<td>-0.05 (0.32)</td>
<td>0.03 (0.08)</td>
<td>0.02** (0.009)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.009 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for Order</td>
<td>0.35** (0.17)</td>
<td>0.28 (0.19)</td>
<td>0.16 (0.18)</td>
<td>0.52** (0.22)</td>
<td>0.53** (0.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitiveness</td>
<td>-0.09 (0.1)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
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<td>0.01 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>0.01 (0.034)</td>
<td>0.31 (0.384)</td>
<td>-0.095 (0.396)</td>
<td>-0.231 (0.386)</td>
<td>0.138 (0.397)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>-0.017 (0.014)</td>
<td>-0.09 (0.16)</td>
<td>0.019 (0.013)</td>
<td>-0.011 (0.013)</td>
<td>-0.013 (0.012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.07 (0.32)</td>
<td>0.05** (0.02)</td>
<td>0.014 (0.24)</td>
<td>-0.030 (0.026)</td>
<td>-0.016 (0.025)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.039 (0.436)</td>
<td>0.771 (0.572)</td>
<td>0.426 (0.450)</td>
<td>-0.032 (0.505)</td>
<td>(0.010) 0.497</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.173</td>
<td>(0.201)</td>
<td>-0.102 (0.651)</td>
<td>-0.045 (0.201)</td>
<td>-0.519** (0.232)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership in CPSU</td>
<td>-1.6**</td>
<td>(0.6)</td>
<td>-0.077 (0.599)</td>
<td>-0.156 (0.558)</td>
<td>-0.117 (0.630)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for Putin</td>
<td>0.234</td>
<td>(0.210)</td>
<td>-0.344 (0.247)</td>
<td>0.027 (0.217)</td>
<td>-0.061 (0.243)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>0.454</td>
<td>(0.616)</td>
<td>3.75** (0.862)</td>
<td>0.242 (0.681)</td>
<td>0.254 (0.814)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>0.512</td>
<td>(0.632)</td>
<td>0.588 (0.702)</td>
<td>0.855 (0.627)</td>
<td>-0.060 (0.862)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative</td>
<td>2.9**</td>
<td>(0.7)</td>
<td>0.131 (0.744)</td>
<td>-0.190 (0.885)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.862)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>0.301</td>
<td>(0.711)</td>
<td>0.585 (0.742)</td>
<td>0.325 (0.623)</td>
<td>0.693 (0.757)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>1.256**</td>
<td>(0.537)</td>
<td>0.390 (0.867)</td>
<td>0.646 (0.694)</td>
<td>0.032 (0.815)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1.4**</td>
<td>(0.634)</td>
<td>-0.459 (0.734)</td>
<td>0.350 (0.595)</td>
<td>0.958 (0.649)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Note: standard errors in parentheses.
Results

1) Personality traits are strong and significant predictors of foreign policy orientations

2) Conservative parenting values are associated with “Dovish” views. Also ethnocentrism is negatively related with positive attitudes towards military force. Isolationism

3) Need for order and mental rigidness more predictably were found to be positively associated with aggressive confrontationist foreign policy views
Interpretation

“Cheap talk”: attitudes and behavior

The role of emotions, intuition, beliefs in decision-making

“The essence of ultimate decision remains impenetrable to the observer - often, indeed, to the decider himself”. JFK

Association or causality?
Conclusions

Political leaders are also human beings