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The Price of Coercion: Economic Considerations in Russia's Foreign Policy

Bidzina Lebanidze[1,2] **and Kornely Kakachia**[3]

Abstract

While much has been written recently about the geopolitical assertiveness of a resurgent Russia in its neighborhood, few studies so far have focused on the importance of economic rationales in Russia's decision-making. Economic variables can contribute to a more nuanced picture of the factors that determine the timing and extent of Russia's coercive policy in the neighborhood. This article seeks to explain the differential reaction of Russia to Georgia's and Ukraine's ratification of Association Agreements with the EU. It is argued that while Russia is generally hostile to the approximation of its neighboring states to the EU, it only applies coercive measures sparingly, depending on the availability of leverage against the target country and thorough cost-benefit calculations. As argued below, since 2009, Russia has stopped applying much of its coercive measures toward Georgia because of a lack of adequate leverage, high political costs, and fewer benefits. However, the Kremlin unleashed its coercive toolbox on Ukraine because Ukraine was more vulnerable and economically more important to Russia.

Keywords

Russia, EU, Ukraine, Georgia, foreign policy

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Introduction

Much has been written in recent years about Russia's assertive foreign policy and imperial ambitions in its geographic vicinity, as well as at the global level. However, while the array of factors has been widely discussed, economic rationales in Russia's decision-making have been rather neglected. The economic variables can add to a more holistic picture in order to explore the conditions, constraints, and factors that motivate Russia to resort to assertive measures against its neighbors. Aiming to fill this gap, this article will explore Russia's differentiated reaction to Georgia's and Ukraine's approximation to the European Union (EU) in the period of 2009–2014 that culminated with the ratification of the Association Agreements (AA) that included Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA). While Russia is generally hostile toward the close relations of the former Soviet states with the EU, it reacted very differently to Georgia's and Ukraine's association and free trade agreement with the EU. Georgia's drive toward the EU remained largely unnoticed. Kremlin continued the low-intensity hybrid warfare against Tbilisi in the form of enforced border demarcation in the conflict areas (Kakachia, 2018), isolated military and security incidents (GIP, 2017), anti-Western propaganda (Kintsurashvili, 2015), and political and diplomatic pressure. But, overall, Georgia's approximation to the EU did not result in heightened interest in the Kremlin. On the other hand, Ukraine experienced the whole wrath of the Kremlin—in the form economic, energy

[1]Institute of Slavic Languages and Caucasus Studies, University of Jena, Germany
[2]School of Arts and Sciences, Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia
[3]Department of Political Science, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia

Corresponding Author:
Bidzina Lebanidze, Institute of Slavic Languages and Caucasus Studies, University of Jena, Jenergasse 8, Jena 07743, Germany.

and ultimately military coercion culminating in a full-scale invasion in 2022.

Based on the extant literature, the Georgian case appears especially puzzling. While Russia's military strategy considers Georgia's membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a security threat Moscow didn't seem to care much about Georgia's association agreement with the EU. And all this happens while Moscow wants Tbilisi to reverse the course of its foreign policy priorities. Given these developments, this article broadly aims at unpacking the factors behind this differentiated approach in the Kremlin's long-term foreign policy, tracing the root reasons of this empirical puzzle.

While we agree with the existing explanations in the literature, which include the cultural and ideational importance of Ukraine over Georgia, as well as the Kremlin's different geopolitical considerations toward the two countries, we provide two additional arguments. These arguments are important to include in the analysis to fully understand Russia's logic of action in its close geographic proximity: the economic significance of third states and the degree of leverage toward third states. We argue that Russia's almost exclusive focus on Ukraine was conditioned, among other factors mentioned above, by Ukraine's key role as an economic powerhouse, as well as by the Kremlin's perception of Ukraine being more vulnerable to Russian pressure compared to Georgia.

In terms of research methods, we employ a paired comparison approach, which aligns with the most-similar systems design in comparative politics (Gisselquist, 2014; Tarrow, 2010). This method is particularly suited to our study as it allows for the systematic comparison of Georgia and Ukraine—two post-Soviet states that, while sharing significant historical and political similarities, have experienced divergent trajectories in their relations with Russia. By selecting cases that are comparable in many respects[1] but have different outcomes regarding the responses from Russia to their EU integration processes, we can isolate and analyze the impact of specific variables that may explain these differences. At the same time, we acknowledge the limits of monocausal explanations; therefore, the causal effects of the two independent variables (leverage and economic significance) should be studied in combination with other factors already identified in the literature and to be discussed in the next part of the article "Explanations of the Russian Approaches to its neighboring Countries."

For data collection, we consulted primary and secondary sources and conducted 18 semi-structured interviews and a short quantitative survey with renowned representatives of academia and policy community in Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, and the EU.[2] In the part of quantitative survey, we asked the 18 interviewees to grade importance of different factors for Russia's actions in Georgia and Ukraine. Selected respondents for interviews and survey come from different backgrounds and countries (see Appendix). Some of the respondents also were policy practitioners with a long experience in foreign policy making and belonged to the decision-making core of their respective countries. Others have long worked for think-tanks and have long monitored foreign policy making at practical level.

Since our focus is on the Association Agreement (AA), the timeframe of analysis will be the period between 2007 and 2014, from the launching of the negotiations over the AA and DCFTA by Ukraine until Russia's decision to go militarily against Ukraine, and the signature of the AA by Georgia and Ukraine. However, studying only this period will omit significant developments that occurred before 2009 and after 2014, which are closely connected to the subject of our study. Therefore, the article will also recap the developments before 2009, especially focusing on the period of time since the color revolutions, as well as the period after 2014, up to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: In the next part, we first briefly discuss the already existing explanations in the literature and introduce the theoretical and analytical conceptualizations used in this paper. In the third part, we briefly recap Russia's foreign policy toward Georgia and Ukraine before launching the Eastern Partnership. We do so to show how similar Russia's approach toward the two countries has been up to 2009. In the fourth and fifth parts we then discuss two hypotheses and analyze impact of leverage/linkage and the impact of economic significance in detail. The paper ends with conclusions where we summarize the results and discuss limitations of the study.

Explanations of the Russian Approaches to its Neighboring Countries

The academic literature on Russian approaches to its neighborhood identifies several factors that may have impact on timing and extent of Russian actions. Ambrosio (2009), Tolstrup (2009, 2015) and others argue that Russia reacts negatively to the involvement of Western actors in its immediate neighborhood, which Russia, in the best tradition of balance of power politics, regards as a sphere of its privileged interests. Therefore, any new initiative by EU, NATO, or the United States may be followed by new counter measures by the Kremlin. Conversely, as Russia prioritizes its sphere of influence, it maintains close political, military, and economic ties with other "friendly" post-Soviet states, including the Central Asian states, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Belarus. Russia shares particularly close ties with Belarus, with which it has established the Union State. Since most of these states do not aspire to join Euro-Atlantic institutions, and therefore do not challenge the Kremlin's geopolitical agenda, Moscow does not perceive them as threats. The Kremlin has actively supported friendly regimes in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus, shielding them from

Western pressure. The more authoritarian these regimes are, the greater the support they receive from the Kremlin. Furthermore, the Kremlin has also sought to bolster the stability and legitimacy of pro-Russian regimes in more geopolitically contested countries like Ukraine and Moldova, exemplified by its backing of leaders such as Viktor Yanukovych in Ukraine and Vladimir Voronin in Moldova.

Some scholars also identify a link between high oil prices and Russia's military adventurism. According to this view, higher oil prices open up a possibility for the Russian petrostate to act more aggressively against its disobedient neighbors as it increases the leadership's autonomy and risk-acceptance and decreases its political accountability to domestic constituencies (Snegovaya, 2019). Some authors also refer to "diversionary tactics" or "diversionary tensions" when attempting to explain Russian aggressive behavior in its neighborhood (Åslund & Kuchins, 2009; Blank, 2008; Filippov, 2009; Shevtsova, 2009). According to this view, the 2008 Russia-Georgia War, the 2014 Russia-Ukraine conflict and the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine could be all viewed as diversionary conflicts waged by Russia to divert attention from domestic politics and/or to consolidate domestic power by searching for external enemies (Filippov, 2009; Gerstel, 2017; Gomza, 2022).

Interviews conducted for this study also provided three other alternative explanations that are well-supported by academic literature and worth discussing. First several respondents argued that Russia already achieved its objectives during the 2008 war in Georgia and the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as it made Georgia less attractive for the West and Georgia's membership to NATO and EU less likely. Similarly, as the argument goes, Russian assertive actions in Ukraine were aimed at preventing Kyiv closely aligning with the EU and the NATO (Götz & Staun, 2022; Kaunert & de Deus Pereira, 2023). Therefore, for the Kremlin it was essential to create similar stumbling blocks in a form of territorial conflicts in Ukraine to make country unfit for EU and NATO membership (Götz & Staun, 2022). As a Russian political scientist argued in the interview with the authors,

> "In 2013/4 Russia viewed the prospects of Ukraine entering the EU as more realistic and threatening than those of Georgia and Moldova. (…) Most importantly, both Georgia and Moldova had unresolved territorial disputes at the time of signing the EU Association agreements, de facto Russia-controlled proxies, which are obstacles to any serious discussions of the EU accession. Ukraine at the time did not have territorial disputes, and hence the Kremlin's intervention was required so that Ukraine also received a territorial dispute on its territory."[3]

Whereas this argument certainly carries some validity it does not fully explain Russia's aims regarding regional competition with the EU. For the Kremlin, an objective of sabotaging the Western integration schemes has been accompanied by aims of advancing its own integration projects. The Kremlin did not just persuade Armenia to abandon the AA with the EU but also forced it to join the EAEU and would have done the same with Georgia had it had enough persuasive power and leverage toward Tbilisi.

Second, many respondents underlined the importance of domestic political processes in Georgia and Ukraine. In Ukraine, Yanukovych's removal from power created legitimacy crisis which was used by the Kremlin as a pretext to inspire military conflict in the country. In other words, Yanukovych's demise provided the Kremlin with "the 'right' moment when to start" [retaliation against Ukraine for its continuous pro-Western policy].[4] Besides, according to a Russian scholar, the post-Euromaidan political leadership in Kyiv "was viewed by Moscow as being hostile to its interests and hence Ukraine was viewed as slipping away from the Kremlin's control."[5] In Georgia no such pretext for justification of military incursion existed. Besides, the 2012 power change brought to power the Georgian Dream (GD) party—a more moderate political force which stopped Russia-critical rhetoric and attempted to improve relations with Russia.[6] For Russian government, it would therefore be more difficult to mobilize its population against the new Georgian government due to latter's accommodating rhetoric toward Russia. This is in line with the literature, which sees Georgia's partial U-Turn from a Russia-skeptic to a Russia-accommodating policy since 2012 (Kakachia & Kakabadze, 2022; Lebanidze & Kakachia, 2023).

Third, many respondents underlined cultural and identity-related factors as another variable to understand difference between Georgia and Ukraine in Russia's foreign policy discourse. According to one German scholar, unlike Georgia, Ukraine has been considered by Russian political regimes since president Boris Yeltsin as the Slavic brotherly nation to Russia and therefore a "not entirely sovereign" state.[7] Similarly, other interviewed scholars argued that Georgia and Moldova "both have different national roots, so Russians are more likely to perceive them as foreign imperial holdings, while Ukraine (and Belarus) is understood to be part of Russia"[8] or "extension of Russia."[9] We acknowledge the validity of this argument as is done by a large body of academic literature (Kuzio, 2022; Teper, 2016; Tsygankov, 2019). But we assume that cultural factors cannot monocausally explain the timing of Russian military interferences in Ukraine in 2014 and before that in 2008 in Georgia. Ukraine was obviously always considered as culturally very close to Russia. But Russia did not invade Ukraine in 2004 when pro-Western government under Victor Yushchenko started driving toward the EU and the NATO. The Kremlin only did so in 2014, when Ukraine tilted toward signing the AA with the EU and Moscow's failure to bring its Western neighbor into the EAEU became apparent.

While each of these views has its merit and can explain broad patterns of Russia's regional policy, we add two more

factors that should be taken into consideration if we want to have more nuanced view about Russia's differentiated strategy in its neighborhood: economic significance of the target country and degree of political and economic leverage toward the target country. Based on the two additions we propose two hypotheses that can add more explanatory power to Russia's divergent behavior toward Georgia and Ukraine:

H1: Russia's differentiated approach toward Georgia and Ukraine can be explained by Russia's higher political and economic leverage toward Ukraine and a lower political and economic leverage toward Georgia.

H2: Russia's differentiated approach toward Ukraine and Georgia can be explained by Ukraine's paramount importance and Georgia's relative insignificance as economic player for Russia's geopolitical and geo-economic regional integration projects.

To test the hypotheses, we consult the broad literature on external governance and regionalism. Relying on leverage/linkage-based democracy promotion model developed by Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way (Levitsky & Way, 2002, 2010), we conceptualize and assess Russia's leverage along political and economic dimensions, or to what extent were two countries vulnerable toward Russia's pressure in economic and political areas. We also consult literature on regionalism to understand why Ukraine was more important for Russia than Georgia.

Leverage and Economic Significance as Explanatory Factors

To analyze significance of political and economic leverage in Russia's foreign policy we borrow a theoretical and conceptual framework from the democratization literature. Literature on external influencing on international arena in areas of democratization and regime dynamics argues that success of democracy promoters depends on two factors: linkage and leverage (Levitsky & Way, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2010; Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2011; Tolstrup, 2009; Vanderhill, 2013). We argue that we could apply these same concepts to measure the variance in degree of Russia's potential impacts in Georgia and Ukraine. In line with Levitsky and Way (2010) we conceptualize leverage as the degree of dependency on, and vulnerability to, an external actor. Linkage refers to "the density of the ties" to an external actor (Levitsky & Way, 2010, p. 43). It has many dimensions (economic, intergovernmental, technocratic, social, information, and civil society) and acts as a "transmitter of international influences" (Levitsky & Way, 2010, p. 43).

In this paper, we focus on few important indicators of leverage and linkage that account for degree of vulnerability of Ukraine and Georgia toward Russia in political and economic areas and analyze them under the umbrella term of leverage since the latter is the main analytical category in this article. Economic leverage would include amount of trade and economic relations and energy dependency. Political leverage includes presence of pro-Russian political parties/forces, presence of pro-Russian attitudes in the population or the parts of population, as well as existence of territorial districts/enclaves with overwhelmingly pro-Russian population. Political leverage would also include important political junctures that could be used by Russia as a pretext to justify its assertive moves. They may include legitimacy crisis due to sudden regime change or eruption of military conflict within a country.

Second, to explore how difference in economic characteristics between Georgia and Ukraine tilted the interest of Russia toward the latter, we consult the literature on evolving competitive regionalism between Russia and the EU/West. Much has been written recently about Russia's approach to regionalism that includes cultural (Makarychev & Yatsyk, 2018), political (Libman & Obydenkova, 2018; Libman & Vinokurov, 2012), and military (Allison, 2018; Kropatcheva, 2016) dimensions of region building. Whereas all these dimensions are equally important, Russia made the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) to the main driver of its regional ambitions (Tarr, 2016; Vinokurov, 2017). Above all, the EAEU represents economic project with a customs union at its core. Therefore, a membership value of each potential member should be determined by economic indicators in the first place (Balassa, 2013). Therefore, we will be looking at the role of economic factors in Russian decision-making toward Ukraine and Georgia and to what extent the Kremlin has been following economistic logic in its region-building approach.

Finally, both leverage and economic factors should be considered in relative terms and situated in the rational cost-benefit calculations of the Kremlin—or to what extent do they fit the win-sets (Moravcsik, 1997; Putnam, 1988) of the Russian government. For instance, it is to be expected that a low leverage (hence, higher action costs) and a low economic significance of a target country may dissuade the Kremlin from coercive actions against it whereas a high leverage and a high economic significance of a target country may have an opposite effect: increase the degree of risk-acceptance in its foreign policy action.

Before the Eastern Partnership: Georgia and Ukraine Between Russia and the West

From Russian perspective, Georgia and Ukraine as political units of international politics have always been similar in many regards. Both countries were part of Soviet Union and after its dissolution became immediate neighbors of Russia. Hence, both are considered to be part of Russia's Near

Abroad—or belong to the special zone of Kremlin's interest. At the same time, as seen from Moscow, both countries belong to a rather problematic grouping of post-Soviet states which since 1990s time and again have objected the Kremlin's objective to reintegrate the post-Soviet space around Russia. For instance, Georgia was the only country that decided not to join the Russia-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) when it was created in 1992, later though Russia coerced the disobedient Black Sea neighbor to become the CIS-member (Gvalia et al., 2019). Ukraine too experienced a few tensions with Russia over the status of Crimea and the Russian fleet there as well as energy disputes. Overall, throughout the 1990s, both Georgia and Ukraine navigated their foreign policies between dominant Russia and the West who was weakly present in the region. The situation dramatically changed however in the beginning of 2000s when both Georgia and Ukraine experienced the peaceful electoral revolutions and new governments under Victor Yushchenko and Mikhail Saakashvili started to pursue a more assertive pro-Western foreign policy. As the new governments of two countries possessed the revolutionary legacy and pursued same strategic goals of EU and NATO membership, they also became close strategic partners. What is more, other regional and global actors also started to consider Georgia and Ukraine in a tandem. Russia saw the two countries as trojan horses of the West and the major impediment for its attempts to regain the great power status by re-establishing the political influence in its Near Abroad. For instance, Russian top policy makers reiterated many times that a NATO membership of Georgia and Ukraine would represent a threat to Russia's security and the Kremlin would do anything to stop their advancement toward NATO (Asmus, 2010; Embury-Dennis, 2008; Osborn, 2020). The NATO push by the Georgian-Ukrainian duo for NATO membership was halted during the 2008 NATO Bucharest summit when Germany and France blocked the US attempt to grant two countries the Membership Action Plan—a forestage to NATO membership (Erlanger & Lee Myers, 2008). The Bucharest Summit was soon followed by the Russian invasion of Georgia and the 5-day war over the breakaway region of South Ossetia in August 2008 during which Georgia received strong political and diplomatic backing from Ukraine (Kendall, 2008).

After the NATO's unsuccessful attempt to extend MAP to Georgia and Ukraine, the two countries continued the pro-Western foreign policy and a year later became part of the Eastern Partnership Initiative (EaP) launched by the EU which entailed a possibility of association agreement (AA) including the deep and comprehensive free trade area (DCFTA). Launching of the EaP marks the point when Russia started to differentiate more between the two countries—both politically and economically. While Russia concentrated more on Ukraine, its policy attention toward Georgia has somewhat lessened. The change was also reflected in Russia's public policy discourse. While until 2009, Russian officials frequently mentioned Georgia and Ukraine in the same context, after 2009, Russia became mostly preoccupied with Ukraine and the Kremlin officials started to more differentiate between two countries in their speeches and statements. Ultimately, Russia's increased policy attention toward Ukraine was followed by an open military confrontation in 2014, annexation of the Crimea, an internationalized civil war in the Eastern part of Ukraine where Russia acted as a party and finally, the full-scale invasion of the country in 2022. Russia-Georgia relations, on the other hand, initially did not significantly change between 2008 and 2013 when Georgia signed the AA with EU. The ratification of the AA relations between two countries even improved in areas of trade, tourism, and investments (Kakachia & Lebanidze, 2019). Hence, the question arises, why Russia pursued similar approach toward Georgia and Ukraine before launching the EaP and why the Kremlin shifted its focus toward Ukraine and largely neglected Georgia afterward?

Russian Leverage toward Ukraine and Georgia: From Color Revolutions to the 2022 Invasion of Ukraine

We argue in this article that Russia's differentiated attention toward Georgia and Ukraine before and after signing the AA is, among other factors, both matter of different capabilities and preferences. We start with the capabilities. We argue that whereas Russia possessed many instruments to coerce Ukraine in various ways, in case with Georgia the Kremlin's coercive toolbox was limited to two options: a full-scale military invasion or continuous occupation of the country using hybrid warfare tactics.

If we apply the two concepts of linkage and leverage to Russia's relations with Georgia and Ukraine, we can clearly observe a significant difference across two cases. Both in Georgia and Ukraine Russia had a rich toolbox of coercion and influencing of governmental decision-making that included political, military, economic, financial, cultural, and security-related levers. Yet the sequencing of their use toward the two countries was different. To punish the pro-Western hyperbolic drive by the new Georgian government and also due to deteriorating situation in the conflict areas around Abkhazia and South Ossetia Russia decided to make use of the majority of its coercive instruments already between 2005 and 2008 (Asmus, 2010). The Kremlin started with manipulating energy prices and other economic coercion tools. Between 2005 and 2007 it quadrupled the price for gas for Georgia and gas deliveries were cut in the winter of 2006 allegedly as a result of multiple blasts in the North Caucasus (Shaban, 2015). In 2006, Russia banned Georgian mineral waters and wines from its market and later it introduced a full-scale economic and transport embargo on its southern neighbor (Morrison, 2019). All transport and postal links were cut, issuance of visas for Georgian citizens

were stopped, and several thousands of Georgian migrants were deported from Russia (BBC, 2006; Morrison, 2019).

Finally, spiraling of bilateral tensions resulted in a full-scale military confrontation in August of 2008. After the brief war, Russia formally recognized the independence of Georgia's two breakaway regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In response, Georgia abandoned the CIS, the only post-Soviet regional organization it was member of and cut diplomatic ties with Russia. Overall, between 2005 and 2008 by applying various coercive measures, Russia achieved some of its major objectives in Georgia. Georgia's NATO membership was postponed indefinitely, credibility of Georgia's leadership suffered in many Western partner countries, and the country was hit by further economic and political instability.

On the other hand, however, major negative side effect of Russia's coercive actions was a sharp decrease in Russian leverage toward Georgia. First, political, economic, and cultural ties between Georgia and Russia decreased to a minimum (Lebanidze, 2020). Second, with decreasing ties, Russian leverage decreased too. Georgia managed to diversify its economy and replace Russian energy sources by importing higher volumes from neighboring Azerbaijan (Corso, 2013; Shaban, 2015). By recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, Russia lost the major bargaining chip to manipulate Georgian political elites. Hence, after the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, Georgian government did not have political incentives to negotiate with Russia on major political and security issues.

Another reason why Georgia became less of a priority for Russia after 2009 was that the Kremlin's 2008 intervention created structural obstacles—fully occupying and unilaterally recognizing Georgia's breakaway territories—that hindered Tbilisi's aspirations to join the EU or NATO. By entrenching these geopolitical barriers, Russia effectively ensured that Georgia's Western integration would remain stalled, thus achieving a key objective without requiring additional and costly interventions. Russian soft power in Georgia too experienced irreparable blow in 2008. Russian stance on Abkhazia and South Ossetia did not only alienate Georgian government but it also undermined any remaining pro-Russian political forces in Tbilisi. Russia's popularity had also declined in Georgian population (CRRC, 2020). Overall, despite close religious ties and Russia's hyperactive anti-Western propaganda attempts (Kintsurashvili, 2015) after 2008, the Kremlin failed to consolidate its position in Georgia's political class or in Georgian population.

Situation was very different with Ukraine. Russia did use the similar instruments against Kyiv after the 2004 Orange Revolution but it did so in a more modest way and retained its leverage toward its Western neighbor. For instance, Russia exploited Ukraine's dependency on Russian gas and increased gas price for Ukraine five-fold between 2005 and 2010 and fought few energy wars with Ukraine when Kyiv declined Russia's new energy policy approach (Feifer, 2010; Lebanidze, 2020). Gas cuts and increases in gas price accelerated economic slowdown in Ukraine and negatively affected the popularity of Victor Yushchenko's government (CFR, 2019). Similarly, Russian government invested many political and diplomatic resources to prevent Ukraine's membership of NATO.

However, unlike in case with Georgia, the Kremlin did not use the military coercive instruments against Ukraine, such as open military confrontation. By not doing so, the Kremlin preserved extensive linkages and leverage with Ukraine as well as popularity among many Ukrainians. According to one public opinion poll conducted by Gallup in 2009, 43% of Ukrainians still viewed the NATO as a "threat" and only 15% associated the North Atlantic Alliance with "protection" (Gallup, 2010). Hence, starting from 2009, unlike Georgia, in Ukraine, Russia still had many options, other than the full-scale military intervention, that could be utilized by the Kremlin to achieve desired outcomes. They included, among others, economic and energy dependency on Russia, the Russia-friendly population of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, as well as majority population which was against NATO and had neutral attitude toward Russia and Russia-friendly political parties and political figures in Ukraine.

An example of the latter was Victor Yanukovych's election as a new president in 2010 which significantly changed dynamics of Russia-Ukrainian relations. Yanukovych, who was widely seen as a pro-Russian politician, switched from staunchly pro-Western to a more balanced foreign policy: he renounced Ukraine's aspiration to seek NATO membership (Popescu, 2014), extended lease for the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol to 2042 (Konoplyov & Delanoë, 2014), and revoked some of the most controversial domestic legislation that angered Kremlin. For instance, in 2012, his party "Regions of Ukraine" initiated the legislation that granted Russian language status of "regional language" in Ukraine (Ogarkova, 2018).

However, despite some significant improvements in relations with Russia, Yanukovych's government refused to establish institutional partnership with Russia by avoiding membership of the Russia-led alliances and pursued further closer institutional ties with the EU. Together with Georgia and Moldova, Yanukovych's government negotiated the AA and the DCFTA but backed off from the deal in the very last moment partly due to disagreements with the EU over poor democratic record and partly due to Russia's successful stick and carrot policy. In the end, Yanukovych was forced out of power as a result of the "Revolution of dignity" (Kakachia et al., 2019) resulting in Russia-Ukraine military confrontation and Ukraine signing the AA with the EU.

Yanukovych's removal from power through "Revolution of dignity" was decisive moment also for another reason: it acted as a tipping point for Russian aggression as it gave Russia a pretext for its campaigns in the Crimea and the Eastern

Figure 1. In your opinion, Which factors played the most significant role in Russia's reluctant reaction/non-reaction toward Georgia's Association Agreement with the EU? (Standardized on 0–100 where 0 means least significant and 100 means most significant).

Ukraine. With Yanukovych still being seen as a legitimate president Russian government and media portrayed the revolution as a coup d'etat with participation by extremist Neonazi groups and supported by external actors (Marples, 2016).

Overall, we can assume a certain path-dependency when discussing Russia's divergent strategies from 2009 on toward Georgia and Ukraine from the perspective of available resources. Russia's rather moderate approach toward Georgia since 2009 was driven by the fact that the Kremlin had thrown all of its coercive toolbox at Georgia in 2004–2008. This limited Kremlin's strategic choices starting from 2008: Russia either had to accomplish military intervention and a regime change by force or let it go. Russia continued its hybrid warfare in the conflict areas and tried to instigate political instability and weaken central governance capacity of Georgia by forceful and lengthy process of border demarcation strategy, but it was not enough to destabilize the country. Georgia did not have any other vulnerable regions where Russia could instigate another conflict or ethnic tensions. Neither did it experience any governance crises, similar to Euromaidan events, which could be instrumentalized by Russia as a pretext for invasion or instigation of a new conflict.

Hence, somewhat paradoxically, the 2005–2012 economic embargo and the 2008 August war strengthened Georgia's resilience and made it more immune against further coercive measures from Russia. Hence, after 2008, a situation emerged when the Kremlin's options were limited to full-scale military intervention and regime change—a step which would be perhaps too cost-intensive and with fewer benefits compared to the similar strategy toward Ukraine. On the other hand, Russia had an extensive toolbox of coercive measures against Ukraine which the Kremlin diligently started to use since launching the EaP in 2009.

The majority of interview respondents also confirmed the hypotheses about Russia's low leverage in Georgia compared to Ukraine. In quantitative assessment part about Georgia, "Russia having less means to influence Georgia after the August War of 2008" received by far the most votes (Figure 1) leaving behind all other factors by a wide margin.

In qualitative part of the interviews, the 2008 Russia-Georgia War was identified by many respondents as a tipping point after which Russia lost its political and economic leverage on Tbilisi. According to an interviewed French political scientist,

> "in the 2000s, Russia had already used its whole array of punitive measures against Georgia, ranging from the introduction of visa requirements in late 2000 to military intervention in August 2008. In the mid-2010s Russia had much more limited leverage at its disposal vis-à-vis Georgia than vis-à-vis Moldova and Ukraine, especially as all ties had been severed after the 2008 conflict."[10]

The Eastern European scholars shared this view. According to political science scholar from Ukraine,

> "Georgia was probably already considered lost to some extent and hostile to Russia as well, no matter what. (…) After the Russian aggression of the year 2008 it was highly unlikely that even a tiny fraction of Georgians would support this idea [of joining the EAEU]."[11]

Similar perspective was provided by Georgian respondents. According to a professor from Ilia State University, the Russia-Georgia war already drew political boundaries in Georgia in 2008: "Russia occupied two regions and the EU (through EUMM) got access to the rest of the country."[12] Therefore, signing the AA by Georgia was "merely a formalization of reality."[13] Accordingly, "reaction to Georgia was moderate, since Georgia was regarded as an already 'lost cause', and Ukraine was still a process."[14]

The Heavyweight and the Dwarf: Economic Differences Between Ukraine and Georgia

Difference in degree of leverage only partly explains Russia's differential behavior toward Georgia and Ukraine since 2009.

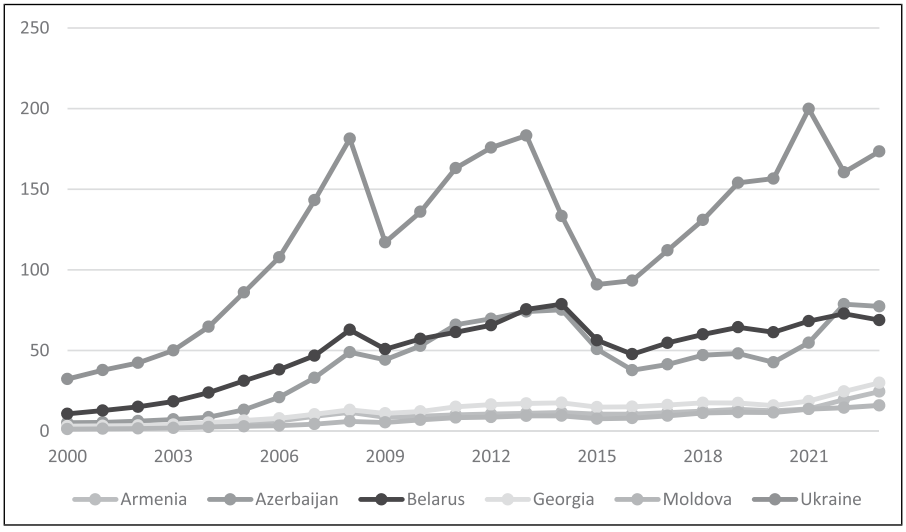

Figure 2. GDP of selected countries (current prices, billions of U.S. dollars). Source: IMF Datasets

Overall, it seems that Ukraine was a much more important country for Russia also due to another reason: Ukraine's sheer size, its strategic location, and its economic and industrial significance. In comparison, Georgia seems to mostly matter to the Kremlin in areas of security and geopolitical considerations, hence Russia's negative reaction to Georgia's NATO membership. On the other hand, Georgia seems to be less significant when it comes to economic considerations. Georgia is neither considered a role model for domestic processes in Russia and therefore it is considered less as a source of democratic contagion in the region.

As Figure 2 indicates, Ukraine has always outperformed Georgia in terms of relative economic size, but also industrial output, and exports and imports by a wide margin. Georgia does not possess any significant industrial sector that could be of a high importance for Russia but specializes mostly in agriculture, services, and tourism. In economic terms, the added value of Georgia's EAEU membership would be moderate at best. From perspective of economic power, Ukraine is opposite of Georgia: it has the second biggest GDP among the former Soviet republics after Russia; is the second most populous country with large labor force; has second most exports and imports; commands various industries, especially in the Eastern parts of the country; and has a strategic geo-economic position between EU and Russia with the sales market of more than 40 million consumers.[15] For instance, even in 2022, the year of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, Ukraine's exports ($44 billion) and imports ($55 billion) exceeded several times Georgia's exports ($5.5 billion) and imports ($13.5 billion) (TrendEconomy, 2023), and Ukraine's GDP still remained eight times higher than that of Georgia (Figure 2). Therefore, it is no surprise that Ukraine, and not Georgia or Moldova, became the main target of the Kremlin to bring in the EAEU.

Unlike Georgia, Ukraine stood out in terms of significance of impact on Russia's many economic sectors if it turned away from the Russian and CIS markets toward the EU, specifically in areas of productive industries, energy, and military.

Ukraine boasted a significantly larger and more diverse industrial sector compared to Georgia. It had substantial industries in metallurgy, machinery, and chemicals, which played a critical role in Russia's own industrial supply chain. For example, Ukraine's metallurgical industry has been one of the world's largest, and Russia has been one of the major buyers of Ukrainian steel products. Before 2014, Ukraine was a critical supplier for Russia's defense and aerospace industries. For example, Ukrainian companies like Motor Sich provided engines for Russian helicopters and aircraft, which left a gap in Russia's supply chain when ties were severed after 2014 (The Kyiv Independent, 2022). Before 2014, Ukraine also supplied high-performance marine gas turbines, such as those produced by Zorya-Mashproekt, to the Russian navy, showcasing its exceptional expertise in manufacturing these complex systems (Cook et al., 2022). Ukraine's decision to end military-industry ties after the annexation of the Crimea left Russian planners scrambling to find alternatives, as such high-tech components were not easily replaced (Cook et al., 2022). Ukrainian factories like Yuzhmash also played a critical role in supplying components for Russian space and missile programs. Specifically, Yuzhmash produced the Zenit launch vehicles used by Russia's Sea Launch project (Bodner, 2022). In area of nuclear energy, Ukraine's Turboatom provided the low-speed turbine generators to Russia's power plants (World Nuclear Association, 2024). Ukraine's role as a primary transit country for Russian natural gas exports to Europe further underscores its strategic importance. Although projects like Nord Stream were developed to bypass

Ukraine, they came at significant financial and political costs for Russia.

Conversely, Georgia's industrial sector has been relatively small, focusing primarily on agriculture, services, and tourism, with limited relevance to Russia's industrial requirements.

Significant qualitative and quantitative economic differences between two countries, together with other variables discussed above, explain Russia's higher attention toward Ukraine. Since 2012, Russia adopted an active stick-and-carrots policy toward Ukraine to force it into the EAEU. In February 2012, in a "cheese war," Moscow banned cheese from three major Ukrainian producers (RFE/RL, 2012) and in August 2013 declared a full-scale embargo on Kyiv by blocking "virtually all imports from Ukraine" (Popescu, 2013, p. 1) which was revoked after few days but the ban was reintroduced later for some products (Cenusa et al., 2014). Economic pressure was part of Russia's stick and carrot approach toward Kyiv to lure the Yanukovych Administration into entering the EAEU instead of signing the EU deal. Economic pressure was accompanied by political and diplomatic intimidations coming from the Russian government. For instance, Sergey Glazev, Putin's special adviser on the EAEU, threatened Ukrainian government that the country's economy would face consequences if Kyiv made the "suicidal step of signing the EU association agreement" (Nielsen, 2013).

At the end of the day, a combination of continued democratization pressure coming from the EU and lucrative offer by Russia of $15 billion in loans and the $130 discount on gas price (RFE/RL, 2013) persuaded Yanukovych to abandon the EU deal and seek membership in the EAEU instead. Yanukovych's U-turn was quickly followed by the mass demonstrations and, after bloody crackdown on demonstrators, Yanukovych's departure from Ukraine. Russia viewed the regime change in Kyiv as a coup d'état inspired from the West and moved quickly to annex Crimea and instigate internationalized civil conflict in the Eastern part of Ukraine. The economic and trade sanctions too continued throughout 2014 and beyond (Cenusa et al., 2014). The Kremlin failed to achieve its ultimate goal of bringing Ukraine into the EAEU, but it severely punished its Western neighbor for political disobedience. Russia scholar Mark Galeotti explains logic behind Kremlin's desperate attempt to recruit Ukraine into the EAEU:

> "I would be surprised if Putin was willing to accept Ukraine not being part of the Eurasian Economic Customs Union, for the simple reason that, without Ukraine, that union looks increasingly threadbare. […] Ukraine in this respect is crucial, and this explains quite why the Russians have been so bloody minded in their dealings with this" (Brooke, 2014).

Russia's differential approach toward two countries is visible in statements and interviews by Russian officials. Whereas Georgia's economic significance was barely ever mentioned, Russian officials have always underlined importance of Ukraine as a part of Russia's own integration projects as well as importance of economic linkages between Ukraine and Russia. For Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, economies of Ukraine and Russia were "knotted together by thousands of economic ties" (Kremlin.ru, 2010) which needed to be integrated to remain competitive. For Vladimir Putin, Ukraine always used to be "an inseparable part" of the CIS economic space or as he described it "the largest economic complex in the world, which took ages, rather than years or decades, to create" (Kremlin.ru, 2014).

Therefore, Russian government viewed Ukraine's tilting toward signing free trade agreement (FTA) with the EU as a zero-sum game between EU and Russia. According to the Russian president, Ukraine's FTA with the EU would result in competitive disadvantage for Russia's economic and social systems and political loss for Russia's integration projects (Kremlin.ru, 2014). Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov described the DCFTA between EU and Ukraine as an attempt by the EU to create a "sphere of influence" in Ukraine (Reuters, 2014). In a same vein, Sergey Lavrov, saw the Eurasian Economic Union as a product of natural integration processes in post-Soviet states. On the other hand, the DCFTA between EU and Ukraine was seen as a major aberration to the rule contradicting

> the creation of a new international architecture, where regional integration unions are building blocks. From this point of view, we see that it is absurd to attempt protecting "own" integration at the same time confronting neighbours' integration processes (Lavrov, 2013).

On the other hand, Russian officials have rarely complained about Georgia's AA with the EU. However, Georgia continued to be on Russia's radar regarding its relations with NATO. Russian Officials have been regularly issuing warnings toward the West against Georgia's and Ukraine's NATO membership (Atlantic Council, 2018; Reuters, 2018). Discrepancy in Russian reaction between Georgia's AA agreement with EU and its approximation to NATO shows that Russia prioritizes security and geopolitical interests vis-à-vis Georgia and is less concerned about Tbilisi's economic approximation to the EU.

Hence, to conclude, Russia's fixation on Ukraine and its relative ignorance of Georgia amid the AAs with the EU, and later the EU accession prospects, was also partly dictated by economic considerations. Ukraine was considered by the Kremlin as an indispensable member for the proper functioning of the EAEU due to its economic size and industrial output. Georgia, on the other hand, has been an economically insignificant actor and perhaps was only viewed as an added value to the EAEU in geopolitical but not necessarily in economic terms.

Figure 3. In your opinion, which factors played the most significant role in Russia's negative reaction toward Ukraine's Association Agreement with the EU? (Standardized on 0–100 where 0 means least significant and 100 means most significant)

The economic hypothesis was also largely confirmed by the interviews with experts and scholars. In part of quantitative assessment, *"a higher importance of Ukraine's membership to the EAEU"* received third most votes after two other factors: *"Increase in geopolitical influence of the United States and NATO in Russia's perceived sphere of influence"* and *"Increase in geopolitical influence of the EU in Russia's perceived sphere of influence"* (Figure 3). However, the latter two are rather generic factors which have been constantly present in Russia's foreign policy thinking since 1990s and therefore can only explain variations in Russia's foreign policy if combined with other variables. Overall, it should be said, that surveyed experts found it hard to highlight a single most important driving factor behind Russia's actions toward Georgia and Ukraine. As Figures 1 and 3 show the answers were rather distributed evenly among different explanatory factors highlighting a complex and multidimensional nature of the subject.

Economic significance of Ukraine over Georgia was also underlined by majority of surveyed respondents in qualitative part of the interviews. One respondent from a German think-tank argued that Ukraine was not only "an important transport hub for Russian oil and gas deliveries to the EU" but also "the largest economy in the Eastern neighborhood, which is why Russia has always been keen to integrate the country in its Eurasian integration projects."[16] Similarly, according to an Ukrainian political scientist, "without Ukraine, the Russian-led EAEU project would not be able to become a significant international union."[17] Therefore, "the difference [in Russian approaches toward Georgia and Ukraine] can be explained by the different level of the economic losses that Russia faced—Ukrainian economy and market—and therefore Russian economic revenues were much bigger."[18] One Ukrainian respondent from a Kyiv-based think-tank explained Ukraine's economic importance in detail:

> "Ukraine is a large market with 45 million consumers, which is several times more than Georgia and Armenia combined. Until 2013, the export of Russian goods to Ukraine was at a very high level and accounted for about 30% of all Ukrainian imports. And it was not only oil and gas, but also very large supplies of cars, household appliances, household chemicals, clothing, cosmetics, etc. Moscow understood that with the entry into force of the AA and FTA, Russian goods would have to compete on a par with European ones, and many of them would not even be able to pass certification according to European requirements to be implemented in Ukraine."[19]

Other respondents shared the similar view. One Russian scholar argued that "the major threat for Moscow [emanating from the EU-Ukraine AA] boiled down to the fear of being gradually kicked out of Ukrainian economy and then Ukrainian politics."[20] The Western scholars too shared the view about importance of economic variable arguing that Ukraine was considered as an integral part of Russia's economic integration projects while Georgia has been economically insignificant state for Russia.[21]

It is interesting to also look at the dynamics after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia and its impact on Russia-Georgia relations. It should be noted that due to intensified relations in trade and tourism in the last years, Georgia's vulnerability has increased again in the last couple of years (TI Georgia, 2022). Interestingly, however, the Kremlin has so far been reluctant to use this vulnerability against Georgia, even if the South Caucasus country has reluctantly continued its quest for European integration and even applied for the EU membership in 2023. Hence, the Russia-Ukraine war that started in 2022 has not had any impact on Russia's approach toward Georgia. Quite the contrary, Georgia has become one of the major destinations for Russian businesses and citizens fleeing the country after

Table 1. Main argument of the study

	Georgia	Ukraine
Degree of leverage	Decreased after the 2008 Russia-Georgia war and because of Georgia's successful diversification of economy and energy consumption away from Russia as well as Russia's unpopularity in the population and political class	Remained high due to Ukraine's political, economic, and societal linkages with Russia; its energy dependency on Russia; and the Russia-majority enclaves (Crimea)
Degree of economic significance	Low except country's strategic geopolitical location	High as Ukraine remained economic and industrial powerhouse in the region
Degree of Russia's coercive policy	Limited toolbox of coercive power except full-scale invasion and hybrid tactics (e.g., borderization policy)	Larger toolbox of coercive power as Ukraine remained vulnerable toward Russia in areas of energy, trade, investments, and societal linkages

Source: Compiled by the authors.

the Russian invasion of Ukraine (TI Georgia, 2022). But this fact has also been ignored by the Kremlin.

Conclusions

This article attempted to explain Russia's differentiated approach toward Georgia and Ukraine after launching the EaP in 2009 up to the decision to start its military campaign in Ukraine in 2014. While Russia made Ukraine to the central point of its coercive strategy, Georgia was either ignored or at best a target of low-intensity hybrid warfare. While we acknowledge the validity of the factors identified by the literature on Russia foreign policy, in this article, we discussed two additional factors that may play a significant role in variation of Russia's assertive approach toward other states: variance in leverage and a perception of positive cost-benefit balance [in our case, relative economic significance of targeted countries]. When combined together, the two factors add explanatory power to understanding why Russia's foreign policy attention revolved around Ukraine and, to a lesser extent, in the case of Georgia.

Table 1 sums up the two hypotheses and the main argument of the article: After 2009, Russia focused more on Ukraine because (1) Ukraine's membership in the EAEU was more significant due to Ukraine's strategic location, economic size and industrial output, and (2) Ukraine was more vulnerable against Russian pressure. On the other hand, Georgia was ignored by Russia, because (1) the Kremlin had much fewer economic and political levers to exploit against Tbilisi other than a full-scale invasion which could generate high political costs considering the possible gains, and (2) Georgia was not an economically significant actor for proper functioning and economic competitiveness of the EAEU.

The 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine confirms the key findings of this article. While the aspects of false expectations about duration of the war and hence major strategic miscalculations on the side of Russian government should be factored in, still Russia was ready to pay heavy political and economic price for Ukraine. While Ukraine's economic significance perhaps was not the single most important factor behind Russia's decision to launch a full-scale war it always figured in the speeches of Russian president and other high-ranking officials. In 2021, in his famous article, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians" Putin spoke of "a single economic system over decades and centuries" between Russia and Ukraine which were "natural complementary economic partners" (Putin, 2021).

At the same time, the findings of the article should be dealt with caution and show some empirical and conceptual limitations. Critics would argue that the two other smaller economies, Armenia and Moldova, were also insignificant for the overall economic output of the EAEU, yet Russia pressured both of them hard to change their course and join the EAEU instead of signing the AA with the EU, and ultimately succeeded with Armenia. However, our findings hold if we use both arguments in combination (leverage and significance). Among the three smaller EaP states, Armenia was most vulnerable against Russia's pressure and that is why Kremlin found it so easy to influence the decision-making of Armenian authorities. Moldova was somewhat vulnerable, and Kremlin tried and mostly failed: Chisinau signed the AA with the EU in 2014 and applied for the EU membership in 2022. Yet the country remains fragmented over its foreign policy priorities (Gritsenko & Zotova, 2023) and continues to rely on Russian gas and electricity (Pieńkowski & Zaniewicz, 2021) which increases its vulnerability toward Moscow. Russia has been attempting to destabilize the country and support the return of anti-EU and pro-Russian forces to government (Całus, 2022; Solik & Graf, 2023). Georgia on the other hand was the least vulnerable and this might be a reason why Russia decided not to spend additional resources on the Black Sea country and to focus on the other countries instead. Instead, the Kremlin has been trying to regain its lost leverage vis-à-vis Tbilisi by reviving trade, economic, and people-to-people links since 2012 (Lebanidze & Kakachia, 2023).

Qualitative interviews with policy experts to significant extent support the two hypotheses of this study but also provide alternative/supplementing explanations: First, some respondents underlined the fact that since Georgia was already hindered by presence of conflict areas Russia was more concerned with Ukraine's chances of EU and NATO membership (geopolitical explanation). Second, respondents argued that Victor Yanukovych's removal from power triggered Russia's coercive reaction (domestic political explanations). Third, Ukraine is considered more important due to its cultural closeness to Russia (cultural/identity-related explanation). While the three factors provide different causal angles, they do not necessarily invalidate our hypotheses but rather supplement them. A complex phenomenon such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict requires synthetic explanations which include several explanatory variables and cannot fully be explained by monocausal approaches.

The results of our study provide significant policy-relevant insights for better understanding of Russia's foreign policy. First, as Georgian case indicates, it seems that despite being a regional hegemon, Russia's toolbox for influencing its neighboring states is limited, and the Kremlin's coercive policies often result in a further loss of influence in its immediate neighborhood. Second, as Kremlin's Ukraine policy indicates, while the NATO remains a threat for the Russian government, it also views competition with the EU over economic regional integration in shared neighborhood as equally dangerous for Russia's security and strategic interests. Third, Russia remains a self-constructed rational actor in its neighborhood and elsewhere. While its goal remains the reintegration of the former Soviet space around the Kremlin's orbit, it only resorts to coercive policy toward post-Soviet states if it can exploit vulnerabilities of the target countries and if the political and economic benefits seem to outweigh the costs. Yet, it is self-constructed rational actor because what Russia's ruling political elite considers as a rational behavior could be counter-productive in terms of achieving declared interests. However, how states conceive and construct rational behavior and how the process is influenced by other factors such as bounded rationality (March, 1978) is a subject of a broader academic debate. For the sake of our argument, however, if we take factor of internal consistency of choice (Sen, 1993) as a starting point to define rational behavior, we can see a certain continuity in Russia's foreign policy behavior consistent with its declared objectives and available resources.

Finally, the insights from this article also contribute to a broad academic discussion about the foreign policy analysis of illiberal regional hegemonic states. By integrating economic factors into the analysis, this study offers a fresh perspective that goes beyond the conventional geopolitical and cultural explanations typically found in the existing literature. It highlights the importance of economic factors in shaping a state's foreign policy, particularly in the context of regional competition over overlapping integration projects. Moreover, the inclusion of economistic factors into the analysis requires adopting a rational lens to analyze the actorness of states. For this, the article attempts to adopt the linkage and leverage model to examine how Russia exploits the vulnerability of neighboring states and weighs the costs and benefits of its actions. This is an important insight also in light of the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which precipitated many authors to question Russia's rational actorness.

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Notes

1. From Russia's perspective, Georgia and Ukraine have long been viewed as part of its Near Abroad, sharing a Soviet past and similar post-Soviet challenges, including resisting Kremlin's efforts to reintegrate the region under its influence. Their push for EU and NATO membership in the 2000s, marked by peaceful revolutions and pro-Western policies, positioned them as strategic partners but also as obstacles to Russia's geopolitical ambitions.
2. Initially, we planned to interview only policy practitioners, but since we were unable to recruit Russian policymakers for interviews, we decided to interview experts and scholars instead. For more consistency, we chose to interview the same group of respondents in all countries.
3. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by authors. July 20, 2020. Moscow.
4. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by authors. July 21, 2020. Moscow.
5. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by authors. July 20, 2020. Moscow.
6. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by authors. August 20, 2020. Moscow.
7. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by authors. August 19, 2020. Bonn.
8. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by authors. August 20, 2020. New York.
9. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by authors. August 2, 2020. Tartu.
10. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by the authors. August 20, 2020. Paris, France.

11. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by the authors. August 20, 2020. Odessa, Ukraine.
12. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by the authors. August 20, 2020. Tbilisi, Georgia.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. These Figures have somewhat declined after Russian invasion of Ukraine.
16. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by the authors. August 18, 2020. Berlin.
17. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by the authors. August 18, 2020. Kyiv.
18. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by the authors. August 20, 2020. Kyiv.
19. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by the authors. August 18, 2020. Kyiv.
20. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by the authors. August 2, 2020. Tartu.
21. Interview with political scientist. Interviewed by the authors. August 19, 2020. Bonn.

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Appendix

List of Interviews

Title/position	Place	Date
Political scientist, professor at university	Moscow, Russia	20 July 2020
Political scientist, professor at university	Moscow, Russia	20 July 2020
Political scientist, professor at university	Moscow, Russia	21 July 2020
Political scientist, professor at university	Moscow, Russia	21 July 2020
Political scientist, professor at university	Tartu, Estonia	2 August, 2020
Political scientist, expert at think-tank	Berlin, Germany	18 August 2020
Political scientist, expert at think-tank	Kyiv, Ukraine	18 August 2020
Political scientist, expert at think-tank	Bonn, Germany	19 August 2020
Political scientist, professor at university	Paris, France	20 August, 2020
Political scientist, professor at university	Odessa, Ukraine	20 August 2020
Political scientist, professor at university	Tbilisi, Georgia	20 August 2020
Political scientist, expert at think-tank	Kyiv, Ukraine	20 August 2020
Political scientist, professor at university	Washington DC, USA	22 August 2020
Political scientist, professor at university	Tbilisi, Georgia	22 August 2020
Political scientist, professor at university	Tbilisi, Georgia	22 August 2020
Political scientist, professor at university	Frankfurt (Oder), Germany	23 August 2020
Political scientist, professor at university	Tbilisi, Georgia	25 August 2020
Political scientist, expert at think-tank	Kyiv, Ukraine	26 August 2020