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ARTICLE



Militant internationalism and dogmatism among foreign policy elites: evidence from Russia, 1995–2016

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ABSTRACT

Are foreign policy attitudes among Russian elites structured around broader beliefs about the nature of world politics? Are these attitudes consistently related to individual cognitive styles? I address these questions using survey data on the Russian foreign policy elite spanning most of the post-Soviet period. In my analysis, I focus on militant internationalism – a hawkish foreign policy orientation – and its relationship to the dogmatic cognitive style. The internal structure of militant internationalism among Russian elites reveals two constituent dimensions: perception of threat from the United States (anti-Americanism) and acceptance of using armed force abroad (militarism). I also demonstrate that militarism is positively related to dogmatism, whereas anti-Americanism appears to be more volatile. This analysis represents the first attempt to study elites' views on foreign policy within the motivated cognition framework using survey data from outside of the United States.

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Introduction

Are the attitudes and cognitive styles of those political elites responsible for formulating and implementing foreign policy decisions essential to an understanding of international relations? Within the neorealist approach to the field, which sees states as unitary actors acting in pursuit of power (Waltz 1979), individuals' opinions are of secondary importance. However, there are paradigms within international relations theory that put forward a different answer to this question. More than four decades ago, Holsti (1976) argued that the attitudes and cognitive styles of human actors should play a larger role in the study of foreign policy decision-making. This logic is central to the foreign policy decision-making research program formed at the intersection of international relations and political psychology (Ripley 1993). It sees political elites making foreign policy decisions as the primary actors in world politics, whose judgments are subject to the recognized limits of human cognition.

Therefore, scholars of international politics should care about *what* foreign policy elites across the world think and also *how* they think, since content and process of thinking are often interrelated. The content of thinking about foreign policy, at least in the US, is usually described with two core orientations: cooperative internationalism and militant internationalism (Wittkopf 1990). Cooperative internationalism is defined by willingness to cooperate with other actors in the international arena, whereas militant internationalism primarily emphasizes the readiness to use force. The process of thinking is related to the concept of cognitive style, i.e. the way a person engages with information. One prominent aspect of an individual's cognitive style is dogmatism

(Rokeach 1954), the general tendency to uncritically accept a certain set of beliefs and actively reject alternative ones. Its recent re-conceptualization, motivated need for cognitive closure (Webster and Kruglanski 1994), has been found to be predictive of conservative positions in various domestic policy domains (Jost et al. 2003). It remains unclear, however, whether the same relationship holds for foreign policy orientations. For instance, militant internationalism and isolationism seem to be almost equally prominent among conservative intellectuals in the US (Rathbun 2008).

In the present paper, I contribute to the literature on the psychology of international relations by investigating the relationship between militant internationalism and dogmatism. In my analysis of foreign policy orientations, I employ the motivated social cognition framework: people adopt beliefs about politics, including world politics, because they satisfy psychological needs (such as avoidance of uncertainty). An important advantage of my study concerns its data source. I analyze attitudes toward international relations and cognitive styles among Russian political elites, i.e. those actually making important foreign policy decisions in one of the world's great powers. Recent shifts in Russian foreign policy that include both greater assertiveness and greater reliance on the military make this analysis especially timely.

Using repeated cross-sectional surveys covering the period from 1995 to 2016, I investigate the internal structure of militant internationalist attitudes within the Russian foreign policy elite, their relationship to dogmatism, and how this relationship has changed over time. First, I show that the structure of militant internationalist attitudes within Russian foreign policy elites largely mirrors that previously found among their counterparts in the United States, thus suggesting that this orientation represents a consistent pattern of foreign policy attitudes, at least in the great powers. I also find that one dimension of militant internationalism – militarism, or readiness to use armed force overseas – is positively correlated with the dogmatic cognitive style. Another dimension – anti-Americanism, or perception of threat from the United States – is not significantly predicted by dogmatism, suggesting its more situational nature. These findings have important implications for the comparative psychological study of elites' views of world politics, as well as for an understanding of Russian foreign policy in recent years.

Militant internationalism and dogmatism in mass and elite opinion

In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the disciplines of American public opinion and international relations experienced a surge of interest in both mass and elite attitudes toward foreign policy (Holsti 1992). These developments in the late 1970s and early 1980s were paralleled by methodological developments that allowed for taking a new look at the structure of people's political beliefs, including those concerning world politics (Hurwitz and Peffley 1987). A number of studies conducted in that period specifically addressed the structure of foreign policy attitudes in the United States. Analysis of survey data on both the mass public and elites suggested that foreign policy attitudes among Americans were structured around two relatively broad orientations: militant internationalism and cooperative internationalism (Maggiotto and Wittkopf 1981; Holsti and Rosenau 1990). In the US in the 1980s, militant internationalism incorporated two interrelated dimensions: perception of threat from the USSR and readiness to use armed force overseas. Militant internationalism also showed some cross-cultural validity as a foreign policy orientation: it was found – with some adjustments to the national context – to be applicable to the Swedish public (Bjereld and Ekengren 1999).

Are people who express militant internationalist orientations with respect to foreign policy characterized by identifiable personality traits and/or cognitive styles? During the early stages of personality research in political psychology, it was hypothesized that a preference for hawkish foreign policy was related to the rigidity and dogmatism common to the authoritarian personality type (Levinson 1957). Currently, the most influential psychological theory linking dogmatism and intolerance of ambiguity to political preferences is the motivated social cognition approach (Jost et al. 2003). It argues that individuals adopt political positions in order to satisfy psychological

needs, such as management of uncertainty and threat. Individual differences in the importance of these needs are strongly correlated with ideological orientations – specifically, those high in dogmatism tend to be politically conservative.

There are reasons to believe that militant internationalism can be linked to dogmatism in a similar way as conservative orientations in domestic policy have been. A recent study suggests that militant internationalism is based on the same moral foundations as political conservatism: loyalty, authority, and purity (Kertzer et al. 2014). At the same time, earlier evidence linked dogmatism and intolerance of ambiguity to isolationist foreign policy preferences (Tetlock 1981). It is interesting, though, that militarism and isolationism among the American public both appeared to be associated with a number of essential psychological variables, such as ethnocentrism (Hurwitz and Peffley 1987). In other words, existing research offers ambiguous expectations regarding the relationship between a dogmatic cognitive style and militant internationalism.

Russia provides an interesting case for studying the structure of militant internationalism and its relationship to dogmatism for several reasons. First, in the 1990s, the Russian party system was fractured and weak. Only in the 2000s did it gradually evolve into an effectively non-competitive system with a dominant party (Gel'man 2008; Golosov 2011). Given that the conflict between two well-defined partisan coalitions represents a major organizing framework for broader ideological orientations in the US, one might expect the structure of militant internationalism to be weaker among Russian elites than their American counterparts. Second, personality variables exhibit different – sometimes even opposite – correlations with the common political orientations in post-communist countries (McFarland, Ageyev, and Abalakina-Paap 1992). Thus, this source of ideological constraint may not be working within the Russian elite – or may be working in ways different from in the US and other Western countries.

The concepts of cooperative internationalism and militant internationalism have already been applied in a study of foreign policy opinions among Russian elites by Zimmerman (2002). In the analysis, he used an additive index based on the standard definition of militant internationalism as a combination of perceived threat from another great power and readiness to use the armed forces abroad. Zimmerman found some important correlates of militant internationalism, such as a preference for high military spending and a general view of the world as more threatening. He also revealed a division between elites and the mass public, as the latter was substantially more isolationist. At the same time, Zimmerman never assessed the dimensionality of militant internationalism and did not estimate its relationship to psychological variables, such as dogmatism. Also, his analysis was limited to the 1990s, thus leaving out important developments in Russian politics in the 2000s and 2010s.

In this paper, I use survey data on Russian elites to answer several questions derived from the research on foreign policy attitudes and their relationship to cognitive styles reviewed above. First, does militant internationalism, as conceptualized in American public opinion research, exist as an internally coherent orientation within foreign policy attitudes among Russian elites? Second, what are the trends in militant internationalist attitudes among Russian foreign policy elites? Third, is support for militant internationalism – or its constituent dimensions – related to dogmatism? Fourth, are these relationships stable or volatile over time? Answering these questions will shed some light on the universality and internal consistency of core foreign policy attitudes, as well as on the nature and dynamics of specific perceptions of world politics among Russian elites.

Data and methods

As the source of data for my analysis, I use the Survey of Russian Elites that has been conducted since 1993 (Zimmerman, Rivera, and Kalinin 2019). The project now has seven waves, with data collection carried out approximately every four years. The survey focuses explicitly on foreign policy elites, i.e. those who possess formal positions in or informal influence over Russian foreign policy. Respondents are recruited using the method of quota sampling, whereby the population is

first divided into mutually exclusive groups and a predetermined number of respondents from each group is then interviewed. This is a non-probability sampling technique, which limits the generalizability of the findings. That being said, the quota method may be the only feasible option, given that the sampling frame – the Russian foreign policy elite – is extremely difficult to construct. Even if it could in theory be done, such an effort would be associated with effectively prohibitive time and material costs due to the closed nature of the Russian political system (Rivera, Kozyreva, and Sarovskii 2002). Survey respondents are classified by the group within the Russian political and social elite to which they belong: media, science/education, business, government/politics, and military/security. When working with the Survey of Russian Elites data, I selected only questions that were asked in all waves after 1993. Unless otherwise specified, the results presented use all available data from 1995 to 2016.

In defining the constituent dimensions within militant internationalism, I followed the literature on American public opinion. It suggests that militant internationalism in the US is defined by (a) viewing the use of military force to reach foreign policy goals as effective and/or desirable and (b) perceiving a necessity to deter the opposite great power, e.g. the USSR in the 1980s (Wittkopf 1990). Mirroring this approach, the “opposite great power” in the case of Russia is the United States. To measure attitudes toward using military force, I employed a question about the general importance of military force in international relations, as well as questions about respondents’ readiness to use military force and the perceived legality of deploying Russian troops abroad. The perceived threat from the US was assessed using questions on whether Russian security is jeopardized by US policies, perceived US hostility to Russia, and the degree of danger posed by US military power. Three of these nine questions were used in the militant internationalism index by Zimmerman (2002). The wordings of questions and answers for the corresponding survey items are presented in Table A1 in the online appendix. For the analysis, all responses were recoded so that greater values represented more positive attitudes toward the use of military force and a greater perceived threat from the US.

I measured dogmatic cognitive style with two survey questions asking about the presence of one correct philosophy in the world and the need to prohibit the expression of dangerous ideas, respectively. These questions very closely correspond to two items from the popular dogmatism scale proposed by Troidahl and Powell (1965). The battery is based on the original conceptualization of dogmatism by Rokeach (1960), and was used in a survey study of US foreign policy elites (Kemmelmeyer 2007). These items reflect two important aspects of dogmatism as a psychological variable: (a) belief that a single correct point of view exists; and (b) desire to limit others’ access to opinions considered incorrect and therefore dangerous. Statement wordings are presented in Table A2 in the online appendix. Those in the right-hand column were asked in the Survey of Russian Elites and used in my analyses. Answers were given on a four-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 = *Completely agree* to 4 = *Completely disagree*. The respondent-level dogmatism scale generated from these two items ranged from 0 to 1, where the score 0 corresponded to completely disagreeing with both statements and 1 corresponded to completely agreeing with them.

In my analyses, I also used a set of socio-demographic variables: elite group, gender, age, history of membership in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), and ethnicity (Russian vs. non-Russian).

The data analysis proceeds as follows. First, I estimate the confirmatory factor-analytic (CFA) model for the constituent elements of militant internationalism. Second, I describe the dynamics of militant internationalism among Russian foreign policy elites in 1995–2016. Third, I estimate the relationship between militant internationalism and dogmatism. Fourth, I trace changes in this relationship over time. Fifth, I perform some robustness checks. Data cleaning and most analyses reported in the paper were done in Stata (StataCorp 2015). CFA for militant internationalism was performed in Mplus (Muthen and Muthen 2012). Figures presenting regression results were created using “ggplot2” (Wickham 2016), a package written for R software (R Core Team 2018).

Results

I started by estimating a CFA model for the indicators of militant internationalism. CFA is a form of inferential measurement modeling that tests whether the hypothesized structure of a theoretical construct is consistent with the observed data (Harrington 2009). In my analysis, I borrowed the theoretical structure of militant internationalism as defined in the American public opinion literature and replicated it using data from the Survey of Russian Elites. Since the chosen indicators were categorical rather than continuous, I estimated the model using the generalized least squares method (Muthen 1984).

Results are presented in Figure 1, with variable labels corresponding to those in Table A1. The figure uses the standard CFA graphical notation. Rectangles represent observed variables, i.e. the ones directly measured using respondents' answers to questions from the Survey of Russian Elites. Next to each observed variable, I also list its distribution (Bernoulli or ordinal) and the link function (probit) used in the model parameters' estimation. Ellipses represent latent variables, i.e. those measured indirectly by inferring their probable values from observed variables via the factor-analytic model. The core assumption behind the model is that answers to specific survey questions (e.g. perception of threat from the US) are informed by respondents' broader considerations with respect to foreign policy (e.g. general anti-Americanism). Straight unidirectional arrows denote factor loadings that indicate how strongly answers to each question are affected by the underlying

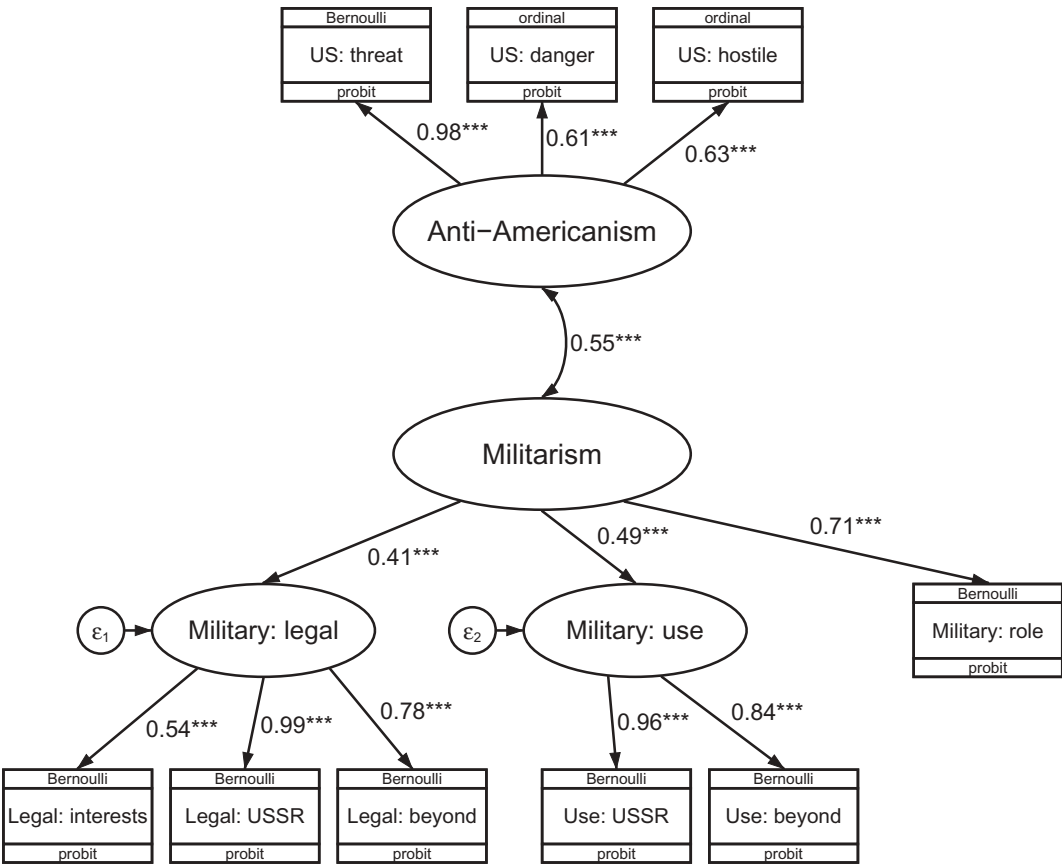


Figure 1. Confirmatory factor-analytic model for militant internationalism. $N = 1,464$; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.951. Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.070. For categorical indicators, distribution families (Bernoulli or ordinal) and link functions (probit) are shown. Variable labels correspond to Appendix Table A2. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

latent variable. A curvy bidirectional arrow denotes a correlation between two latent variables that are dimensions of militant internationalism among Russian elites: anti-Americanism and militarism. The numbers adjacent to the arrows represent the corresponding point estimates, with the levels of statistical significance indicated by asterisks.

To facilitate interpretation of the CFA results, I present standardized parameters in [Figure 1](#). As a result, all factor loadings can hypothetically range from 0 (no impact of the latent variable on survey item response; item is irrelevant as an indicator for the respective latent variable) to 1 (latent variable perfectly predicts survey item response; item is an error-free indicator for the latent variable). Overall, the structure of militant internationalism as a foreign policy attitude was essentially replicated in the Russian elite sample. As demonstrated previously in the American public opinion literature, it broke down into two constituent dimensions: perception of threat from the opposite great power (the US in the Russian case) and positive views of the use of military force. The first of these two dimensions, anti-Americanism, manifested itself in characterizing the US as threatening, dangerous, and hostile when answering the survey questions. The corresponding factor loadings ranged from extremely to moderately high: 0.98 for the perception of threat from US policies, 0.61 for the assessment of US military power as dangerous to national security, and 0.63 for the view of the US as hostile toward Russia. The second dimension, militarism, was displayed in respondents' opinions about the legality of using troops abroad, readiness to do so, and view of military force as the ultimate argument in international relations. The respective factor loadings were moderate to high: 0.41 for legality of military actions, 0.49 for readiness to use it, and 0.71 for general reliance on armed force. It is necessary to note that the perceived legality of using troops and readiness to use them were themselves latent variables measured with the appropriate survey items. The factor loadings were relatively high, with four out of five being greater than 0.7 and only one being lower. Finally, the correlation of 0.55 between anti-Americanism and militarism suggested that these two dimensions were relatively close but still distinct dimensions of militant internationalism. The goodness-of-fit indices, such as a comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.95, suggested that the overall model corresponded to the data reasonably well.

Based on these results, I computed the composite indices of anti-Americanism and militarism for each individual respondent to use in consequent regression analyses. To do this, I took several steps. I normalized the two non-dichotomous indicators of anti-Americanism, assessment of US military power as dangerous to national security and view of US as hostile toward Russia, to range from 0 to 1. In each case, 0 corresponded to the least anti-American of the available answers ("The absence of danger" and "Very friendly," respectively) and 1 corresponded to the most anti-American ones ("The utmost danger" and "Very hostile"). I then took the arithmetic mean of the two resulting scores as well as the dichotomous variable with regard to perception of threat from U.S. policies – i.e. three items total – to calculate each respondent's anti-Americanism score, ranging from 0 (lowest possible level of anti-Americanism) to 1 (highest possible level of anti-Americanism). I also averaged the three dichotomous indicators of perceived legality of using troops abroad and two dichotomous indicators of readiness to use them to compute the corresponding indices for each respondent, ranging from 0 (lowest possible perceived legality/readiness) to 1 (highest possible perceived legality/readiness). By averaging these scores and the dichotomous variable view of military force as the ultimate argument in international relations, I calculated individual respondents' militarism scores, ranging from 0 (lowest possible militarism) to 1 (highest possible militarism). Whenever some of the indicators were missing, I calculated the overall scores using all available data. For example, anti-Americanism had three indicators and, in some observations, one of them was missing. In those observations, the overall anti-Americanism scores were calculated as the arithmetic mean of the two indicators that were available.

Using these scores, I traced changes in anti-Americanism and militarism among Russian foreign policy elites over the period from 1995 to 2016. The top part of [Figure 2](#) presents means of the corresponding attitudes across the six waves from the Survey of Russian Elites analyzed in this article. Here, as well as in all relevant figures, estimates (points) are presented with 95% confidence

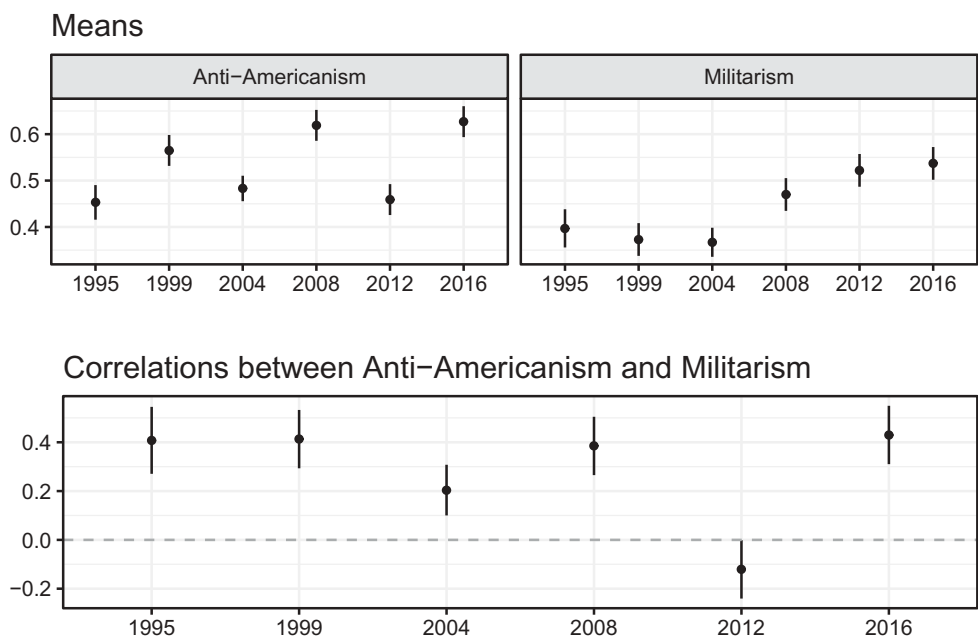


Figure 2. Anti-Americanism and militarism over time: means and correlations; point estimates with 95% confidence intervals.

intervals (whiskers). Confidence intervals effectively represent the uncertainty of the respective parameter estimates. The data suggest that, from 1995 to 2016, anti-Americanism among Russian elites was relatively volatile, apparently fluctuating in response to political events. It is easy to see spikes in anti-American attitudes due to the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, the Russo-Georgian War in 2008, and the current crisis in Ukraine. Militarism showed much more stability, even though it increased significantly between 2004 and 2012. This steady increase is difficult to connect to any one specific event in Russia-US relations.

The bottom part of Figure 2 presents correlations between anti-Americanism and militarism from 1995 to 2016 estimated as standardized bivariate regression coefficients. A correlation coefficient can range from -1 , indicating perfect inverse (negative) dependence between the two variables, to $+1$, indicating a perfect direct (positive) relationship. A correlation coefficient of 0 indicates the absence of a relationship. It can be seen that the estimated correlation coefficients between anti-Americanism and militarism among members of the Russian foreign policy elite were positive, moderately high, statistically significant, and relatively stable (around 0.4 for most years). The only exception was 2012, when the correlation was negative (estimate of -0.12).

I then ran regression models in order to understand how the two constituent dimensions of militant internationalism were related to dogmatism. The two dependent variables, anti-Americanism and militarism, and the key predictor, dogmatism, were all on the $0-1$ scale (these calculations were described above). Most of the control variables in the model were dichotomous. Age, the only continuous control variable, was recoded to range from 0 (lowest age observed in the data) to 1 (highest age observed in the data). Since all variables included in the model were on the same scale, coefficient estimates had an intuitive interpretation as the estimated difference in anti-Americanism and militarism between those with the lowest and highest scores, respectively, on the corresponding predictor (e.g. least dogmatic vs. most dogmatic), *ceteris paribus*.

Reported standard errors were cluster-adjusted in order to account for the probable dependency of observations within survey waves. Clustering specifies that the standard errors allow for the possibility that observations within the same groups can have similarities not accounted for by

the variables included in the model. That is, the observations are independent across groups (survey waves in the present case) but not necessarily within groups.

Results of the regression analyses are presented in Figure 3. If the confidence interval includes zero (the whisker crosses the corresponding dashed line), the parameter is considered to be not statistically significant at the given level of confidence (i.e. not significantly different from zero). Coefficient estimates suggest that dogmatism affected militarism among Russian elites (corresponding estimate was 0.20), but not anti-Americanism. Anti-Americanism, in turn, also demonstrated significant relationships to some sociodemographic variables. Specifically, anti-Americanism was higher among former members of the CPSU (coefficient of 0.09) and lower among ethnic minority respondents (non-Russians, -0.06). In addition, media and science/education elites were less anti-American than those from the legislative/executive branches, the largest elite group in the data (estimated differences of -0.09 and -0.10 , respectively). Militarism was not significantly affected by any variable other than dogmatism, since all corresponding coefficient estimates were not statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence.

Following these results, I investigated the stability of the relationships between dogmatism and the two components of militant internationalism across time. To do so, I estimated the corresponding regression coefficients separately for each of the six analyzed waves within the Survey of Russian Elites, instead of pooling the data. The results of these calculations are presented in Figure A1 in the online appendix. Coefficients estimated by year suggest that, in agreement with analysis of pooled data, the effect of dogmatism on anti-Americanism is less stable than the effect of dogmatism on militarism. Specifically, the estimated effects of dogmatism ranged from 0.34 in 1999 to -0.03 in 2012 for anti-Americanism and from 0.31 in 2016 to 0.08 in 2012 for militarism. It is interesting that the lowest estimates for the two dimensions of militant internationalism were reported in 2012 before increases in 2016, although for militarism this surge was more pronounced

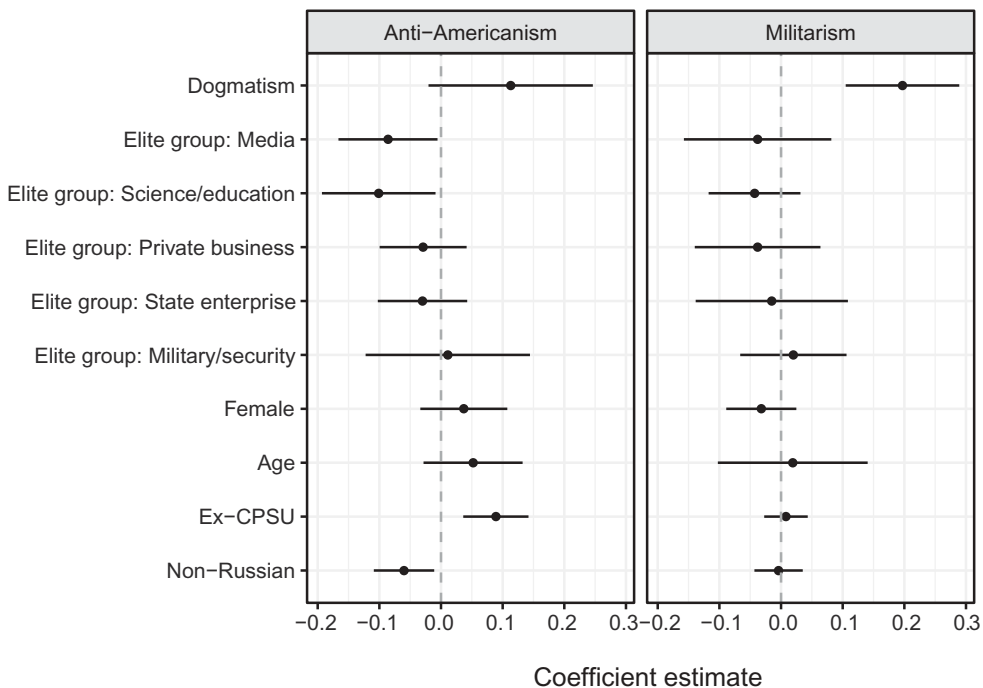


Figure 3. Regression results for Anti-Americanism and militarism; point estimates with 95% confidence intervals. Reference elite group is legislative/executive (combined into a single category); 1,343 and 1,341 observations respectively. Standard errors are adjusted for six clusters (survey waves). Wave fixed effects are included but not presented due to space considerations.

(changes were +0.15 and +0.23 respectively). When interpreting statistical significances for these analyses, it is necessary to remember that the sample sizes by year were approximately six times lower than the pooled data – correspondingly curtailing their statistical power.

Finally, I carried out some robustness checks in order to understand whether militant internationalism among Russian elites is related to additional psychological variables that are conducive to dogmatism. To do this, I re-estimated the regression models reported in [Figure 3](#) using two personality traits associated with intolerance of ambiguity. The first of these was authoritarianism, a generalized belief in obedience to a higher authority, measured using the child-rearing values battery commonly used in political psychology (Feldman and Stenner 1997; Stenner 2005). Questions about important child qualities were included in the 2012 wave of the Survey of Russian Elites. Since the items did not exactly correspond to the ones used by Feldman and Stenner, I chose the following to construct the authoritarianism index: independence (reversed), imagination (reversed), and obedience. The second trait was openness to experience, a dimension of human personality defined within the Big Five model that is responsible for positivity toward new ideas and feelings. It is widely considered politically consequential, with open individuals having liberal views on a variety of issues (Mondak and Halperin 2008; Gerber et al. 2010). In the Survey of Russian Elites, it was measured for the 2016 wave using the 10-item short version of the Big Five inventory (Rammstedt and John 2007). In my analysis, its scores were reversed so that higher values represented lower openness to experience. Both measures were normalized to range from 0 (least authoritarian and most open) to 1 (most authoritarian and least open).

The results are presented in Table A3 in the online appendix. The only significant relationship was found for authoritarianism and militarism: those who valued obedience rather than independence and imagination in children were more positive about the use of military force in international relations. This result indicates that authoritarianism plays a role in support for militant responses to foreign threats, real or perceived. Openness, in turn, was almost completely unrelated to both components of militant internationalism, with coefficient estimates being statistically insignificant and close to zero. A sizable effect of authoritarianism with no corresponding effect of openness suggests that the relationship between dogmatism and militarism might be produced by broader deference to authority rather than by the cognitive style per se. Unfortunately, the unavailability of authoritarianism and openness measures for other survey waves does not allow testing this conjecture further.

Conclusion

In the present paper, I investigated the internal structure of militant internationalism among Russian elites, its dynamic from 1995 to 2016, and its relationship to dogmatic cognitive style. First, I found that militant internationalism represented an internally consistent attitude within Russian foreign policy elites. Its structure largely mirrored the one reported previously in the US, with two major constituent dimensions: anti-Americanism and militarism. Second, I demonstrated that, of these two dimensions, anti-Americanism was more volatile, as members of the Russian elite apparently responded to high-profile events concerning the relationship between the two countries. Militarism was a relatively more stable attitude, although it experienced a significant increase from 2004 to 2012. This development did not have an obvious single cause, but it could have been related to the growing potential of the Russian armed forces due to significant increases in military spending. It is also necessary to note that increased lenience among Russian elites toward the use of troops overseas preceded recent military involvement in Crimea and Syria – that is, changes in foreign policy attitudes were ultimately reflected in actual decision-making. Third, I showed the presence of a significant relationship between militarism and dogmatic cognitive style. This relationship appeared to be relatively stable over time and was replicated using a measure of authoritarian predisposition based on child-rearing values.

Summarizing the findings, it is possible to say that the nature of militant internationalism among Russian elites is surprisingly similar to the one reported previously in the US. This conclusion is true for both of its constituent components: a perceived necessity to deter the opposite great power and a positive view of using military force abroad. Similar to American public assessments of the image of the USSR (Shapiro and Page 1988; Peffley and Hurwitz 1992), evaluations of the United States by Russian elites seem responsive to actual developments in world politics, as well as in the bilateral relationship between the two countries. These situational factors seem no less important than the more fundamental ones associated with dissatisfaction with and resentment toward the US and the West in general (Breslauer 2009; Sokolov et al. 2018). The observed strong and positive relationship between the view of the US as dangerous and hostile, on the one hand, and readiness to use military force overseas, on the other, also suggests that, as argued by political psychologists, support for a hawkish foreign policy is a reaction to a perceived threat (Huddy et al. 2005; Gadarian 2010). Even though my analysis does not directly test this interpretation, it is in line with the seemingly paradoxical combination of assertiveness and insecurity in Russian foreign policy previously noted by Lapidus (2007). Taken together, these conclusions echo the criticism of essentialist perspectives on Russia's foreign policy as a product of authoritarian political culture (Tsygankov 2012). Psychological factors indeed play an important role in Russian elites' attitudes, but the same has repeatedly been shown to be true for the United States – Russian foreign policy does not appear to be unique in this regard (Shleifer and Treisman 2011).

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