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Published in:

International Journal of Sociology

Publication status and date:

Published: 09/09/2019

DOI (link to publisher):

[10.1080/00207659.2019.1661559](https://doi.org/10.1080/00207659.2019.1661559)

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Document License/Available under:

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Citation for the published version (APA):

Gugushvili, A., & Kabachnik, P. (2019). Stalin on Their Minds: A Comparative analysis of Public Perceptions of the Soviet Dictator in Russia and Georgia. *International Journal of Sociology*, 49(5-6), 317-341.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00207659.2019.1661559>

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Alexi Gugushvili & Peter Kabachnik

To cite this article: Alexi Gugushvili & Peter Kabachnik (2019): Stalin on Their Minds: A Comparative analysis of Public Perceptions of the Soviet Dictator in Russia and Georgia, International Journal of Sociology, DOI: [10.1080/00207659.2019.1661559](https://doi.org/10.1080/00207659.2019.1661559)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207659.2019.1661559>



Published online: 09 Sep 2019.



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Stalin on Their Minds: A Comparative analysis of Public Perceptions of the Soviet Dictator in Russia and Georgia

Alexi Gugushvili

Department of Social Policy and Intervention and Nuffield College, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

Peter Kabachnik

Department of Political Science and Global Affairs, College of Staten Island, and the Earth and Environmental Sciences Program, The Graduate Center, The City University of New York, New York, NY, USA

Recently there has been a renewed focus on analyzing post-communist memory, including the revitalization of debate on contemporary public perceptions of Josef Stalin. How do Russians and Georgians judge Stalin in the post-Soviet present? What individual characteristics are the best indicators of how someone evaluates Stalin? Scholars have offered various insights into the apparent resurgence of appreciation for the late Soviet leader, including nostalgia for the Soviet period, socio-spatial variables, and political attitudes, but no comparative research on attitudes and their explanations has been attempted. Using nationally representative survey data, this study compares the perceptions of Stalin in contemporary Russia and contrasts it with how people view the Soviet dictator in Georgia, his home country. We conclude that Stalin is alive in the minds of many, both in Georgia and Russia, although for different reasons. If in Georgia the admiration of Stalin is largely explained by socio-demographic and socio-spatial variables, in Russia it is more closely related to ideological and political context.

Keywords Stalin; Russia; Georgia; collective memory; public opinion

Dr. Alexi Gugushvili is a Lecturer in Quantitative and Comparative Methods at the Department of Social Policy and Intervention and a Research Fellow at Nuffield College, University of Oxford. He received his PhD in Political and Social Sciences (2014) from the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. His research interests include reputational politics, national identity, citizenship, comparative social welfare, health inequalities, and the trends, covariates and consequences of intergenerational social mobility.

Dr. Peter Kabachnik is a Professor of Geography in the Department of Political Science and Global Affairs at the College of Staten Island-The City University of New York (CUNY) and a member of the Earth and Environmental Sciences program graduate faculty at The Graduate Center-The City University of New York (CUNY). He received his PhD in Geography (2007) from the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA). He is currently working on a project examining how personality cults function, how they act as a disciplinary mechanism, and how they engender practices of compliance and resistance. His other research includes analyzing the role of cultural memory and memorialized landscapes in shaping national narratives, geopolitical contestations, and people's everyday practices.

Address correspondence to Alexi Gugushvili, Department of Social Policy and Intervention, University of Oxford, Barnett House, 32 Wellington Square, Oxford, OX1 2ER, UK. E-mail: alexigugushvili@spi.ox.ac.uk

INTRODUCTION

Positive perceptions of Stalin have increased in Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union (Gudkov 2013). While data is not available for Georgia over this same period of time, in 2012 people in Georgia, his homeland, held the highest levels of appreciation for Stalin (de Waal 2013b). Survey data suggest that 28 percent of people in Russia and 45 percent people in Georgia hold what we can unequivocally call very pro-Stalin attitudes. This segment of the public that judges Stalin positively tends to receive a disproportionate amount of media attention on this topic. It must also be acknowledged that people have more critical, ambivalent, and contested understandings of the Soviet dictator. Yet, it is important not to dismiss this pro-Stalin position as marginal and reactionary. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Stalin's reputation in Russia has improved significantly. The debates about Stalin and the Soviet past in Russian politics and as it relates to Russian nationalism is often reduced to claims about Russians wanting a return to authoritarianism and the failures of de-Stalinization. Again, one must be careful to impose sweeping generalizations, as scholars over the years have challenged the idea that the Russian populace is wishing for an end to democracy (Hale 2011). Despite Russian territorial expansion and interventions, it is important not to view Russians as "overcome with nationalism" (Gerber 2014, p. 131; c.f. Parland 2005). Vladimir Putin, who has effectively been in power since 2000, has equivocated on Stalin as a person and his record as leader, but has called him an effective manager and reinstated an altered version of the Soviet national anthem. One key point of emphasis is to reinstall Russian pride (Mendelson and Gerber 2008) and highlight past geopolitical greatness, upon which Stalin serves an important role. Support for Stalin can also be read as support for a strong leader to provide order, what has been referred to as the myth of a strong hand (Pettersson 2017), and is evidenced by Putin's high approval ratings.

In Georgia, on the other hand, the third president of the country, Mikheil Saakashvili and his United National Movement (UNM) party (2004–2012) made a concerted effort to reshape political discourse and the landscape to have an overt Western orientation, while simultaneously devaluing and othering the Soviet period (Kabachnik, Kirvalidze, and Gugushvili 2016; Ó Beacháin and Coene 2014). This translates to many people feeling devalued (Gotfredsen 2014). This phenomenon is exceptionally pertinent for older Georgians, who were most drastically affected by independence and the post-Soviet transition, and who have been shown to have the most positive appraisals of Stalin and the Soviet period (Gugushvili and Kabachnik 2015; Kabachnik, Kirvalidze, and Gugushvili 2016). Media discourses in particular highlight this as nostalgia for Stalin and the Soviet Union. Scholars have problematized the rendering of certain discourses about the past as "nostalgia" simply to render them unimportant (Boym 2001). Instead of dismissing this perception as reactionary, nostalgia can be understood as a "subtle political practice" (Gotfredsen 2014: 263).

Despite the need for more sensitive analysis, current understandings of Stalin are often reduced to two clearly delineated, opposing viewpoints: Stalin as tyrant vs. Stalin as great leader.¹ When trying to gain a better understanding of the politics of memory in relation to Stalin in post-Soviet space, it is important to avoid simplistic dichotomies and sensationalist rhetoric. There are not only pro- and anti-Stalin perspectives, and one needs to delve deeper into ambivalent attitudes rather than just stating that they exist. Instead, as Kabachnik (2018)

has argued, people's attitudes and memories exhibit hybridity. In fact, "hybridity is the most common feature of people's attitudes to Soviet symbols – be it Soviet symbols on a building, a street name, or the Stalin monument in Gori – in Georgia today" (Kabachnik 2018: 281).

Previous studies have focused on a variety of issues relating to contemporary attitudes towards Stalin, both in Russia and Georgia. However, comparative work has been missing from the analysis, and this article seeks to begin to fill this gap. One exception is *The Stalin Puzzle*, which conducted nationally representative surveys in Russia, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan in 2012. In fact, we draw from the Carnegie Endowment commissioned survey for the Russian data for our analysis. While the essays in *The Stalin Puzzle* focused on key themes related to current understandings of Stalin, they were not based on detailed quantitative analysis of data. This article undertakes a comparative analysis of Russian and Georgian attitudes toward Stalin, drawing off nationally representative survey data-sets.

In this article, we illustrate that the reasons behind positive evaluations of Stalin can vary significantly. While there are hybrid dimensions of memory within countries, our focus is to tease out the salient divergences between Russia and Georgia in terms of support for Stalin. We show that in Russia Stalin represents a strong leader and societal and political order, as reflected in ideological and political variables from the survey data. While in Georgia, Stalin also is a source of national pride, and socio-demographic and socio-spatial indicators are the primary factors that influence support for Stalin.

NATIONALISM, POLITICS, AND IDENTITY

Scholars have explored a variety of key figures, national heroes and villains, including Stalin, throughout post-Soviet space (Gugushvili, Kabachnik, and Gilbreath 2016; Kabachnik, Gugushvili, and Kirvalidze 2018; Katchanovski 2010; Marples 2006, 2010). These studies have highlighted spatial variation and strong regional patterns of differences in political attitudes and support for figures. For Stalin in particular, he is seen as both a hero and villain in Georgia and people in rural areas show the most support for him.

Nationalism, politics, and ideology is a key lens through which to approach this research. We use these premises as a starting point for our analysis. In Georgia, Stalin fulfills the role of national icon, or hero (for more on heroes and villains in the Georgian collective imagination, see Gugushvili, Kabachnik, and Kirvalidze 2017), rather than a political/ideological model (see Bakradze 2013; de Waal 2013a).

In Russia, on the contrary, Stalin represents political order and geopolitical prestige. According to Lipman (22), "In Putin's Russia, Stalin remains the embodiment of the state at its most powerful." Gudkov adds that "Vladimir Putin's Russia of 2012 needs symbols of authority and national strength, however controversial they may be, to validate the newly authoritarian political order" (29).² Both Stalin and the more general cult of WWII are invoked by Putin to add to his legitimacy, foster a particular version of Russian identity that generates pride, and highlight the need for a powerful ruler (Edele 2017; Wood 2011). This is not a simple appropriation of Stalinism and Soviet political practices, nor is it a return to the Soviet state. As Kalinin surmises,

We are dealing rather with the politics of positively encoding nostalgia about the Soviet past to a new Russian patriotism ... becoming part of a common cultural heritage ... In such a de- and re-semanticised context, the Soviet past stops being a focal point for ideological choices which lead to political disagreements – it becomes the basis for a social consensus which breaks down all difference and overcomes any disputes ... This model of inscribing the Soviet into Russian modernity genuinely legitimises the Soviet past, but not as a political or ideological resource (as is often held) but as part of the “cultural and historical heritage” which comprises the common and inalienable “baggage of modern Russian culture” and national historical traditions (Kalinin 2011).

Thus, the Soviet past, Stalin included, becomes part of a more general Russian national heritage.

Oushakine also argues for a similar process, pointing out the way that various Russian ‘pasts’ have been equated (Oushakine 2013). This aids Putin’s emphasis on the state and socio-political order by producing continuity across various regimes and empires. Russian nationalism is best understood as Russian nationalisms (as is the case with all nationalisms). Variants identified include militaristic patriotism (Sperling 2003), neo-paganism (Laruelle 2008), imperial outlooks, ethnic nationalist, Pan-Slavic (Laruelle 2019), and ethno-cultural (Teper and Course 2014), and Gerber (2014) states that there is “not a unified or coherent ideology” (129).³ As the above cited research demonstrates, in Putin’s statist national model Russian ethnic nationalism does not play such a significant role, which stands in contrast with the case of Georgia.

Georgian nationalism was prominent during the Soviet period and there is evidence that ethnic Georgians received preferential treatment (Conquest 1967), and virulent ethnic nationalism pervaded the early 1990s in newly independent Georgia (Suny 2006), and this phenomenon has not been eliminated. Stalin plays a role in Georgian nationalist discourse, both historically and today. Research has highlighted the role of Stalin, and the symbolic politics of Stalin, in Georgian nationalism. Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization helped provide the impetus, in part, for Georgian nationalist impulses during the 1956 protests (Blauvelt 2009; Blauvelt and Smith 2015; Kozlov 2002). This was an especially significant development as Georgians reacted quite differently than other Soviet republics to the process of dismantling his personality cult (see also Kabachnik, Gugushvili, and Jishkariani 2015). Indeed we see evidence of the local hero effect in Georgia, as support for Stalin is highest in and around Gori, but “there are high levels of sympathy and admiration for Stalin throughout the country — not only in Gori” (Kabachnik and Gugushvili 2015:114). Stalin, is seen as Georgian, and more importantly, is recognized as one of the most well-known historical figures around the world. It is even more remarkable, for many in Georgia, that he was able to come from humble beginnings and rule a global power. Thus, Bakradze declares that Stalin “has turned into an object of local patriotism and popular devotion” (Bakradze 2013).

Another central aspect of Georgian nationalism that is important to mention is the role religion plays. Exploring this link will be another avenue to investigate in our multivariate analysis. Scholars have identified Orthodox Christianity as being a key aspect of Georgian national identity (Jones 1994, 2014; Suny 1994). Furthermore, as reported elsewhere, whether Stalin was seen as religious impacts how people judge him (Kabachnik, Kirvalidze, and Gugushvili 2016). How people respond to whether Stalin was religious or not is informative on a number of levels, including how one thinks about the formally anti-religious

Soviet Union and how one is able to explain religious morality with events like the repressions.

PUBLIC OPINION OF POLITICAL FIGURES IN POST-SOVIET SPACE

In this section we turn to the public opinion survey data. Scarcity of survey data in Georgia about Stalin stands in stark contrast to Russia, where polls focusing on Stalin's remembrance have been quite common, allowing for the ability to track Russian attitudes on this topic over time. In terms of how attitudes toward Stalin have changed in Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union, the pattern is quite clear. In 1990, positive appraisals of Stalin in Russia were at 8 percent (Calvert Journal, 2017), with that percentage tripling in less than two decades. In addition, in a Levada poll "49 percent said Stalin played a positive role, while 32 percent said it was negative – roughly the opposite of a 1994 Survey" (Gutterman 2013). In 2009, "VTsIOM ... found that 54 percent of Russians have a high opinion of his leadership skills, 50 percent viewed his personal attributes as average or above average and this was up 45 percent from the 2000 survey results (Shuster 2009).

The Russian polling results overall suggest that "while in the West, Stalin is seen simply as a monstrous dictator, the view in Russia remains divided, as a survey by the Public Opinion Foundation showed. Thirty-six percent of those polled said Stalin did more good than bad for the country, 29 percent said the opposite and the rest were unsure ..." (Anon 2003). That same year the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center, found that 20 percent of those surveyed had a "very positive" view, and 30 percent a "somewhat positive" view of Stalin. Only 12 percent had a "very negative view" of Russia's late leader (Conger 2008). In surveys conducted in St. Petersburg, Kazan and Ulianovsk in 2007 and 2008 35 percent of people judged Stalin's role in history to be positive (Koposov 2011). Mendelson and Gerber (2006) identify a "thorough ambivalence about Stalin among Russia's youth", based on three surveys conducted by the Levada Center: "4700 Russian 16 and older taken in January 2003 and July 2004 and a survey of 2000 Russians 16 to 29 years old conducted in June 2005" (4; see also Mendelson and Gerber (2005, 2006)). Their "survey data suggest that young people's attitudes toward Stalin are, if anything, becoming more positive: in 2005, nearly 19 percent of respondents said they would definitely or probably vote for him, up from 13 percent in 2003 and 2004" (5). More recently, 58 percent of Russians surveyed by the Pew Research Center (in 2015–2016) said Stalin played a very/mostly positive role in history (Masci 2017). A Levada Center poll found an upward trend with 47 percent of respondents choosing positive associations of Stalin (Hofman 2017). A March 2018 Levada Center survey had 57 percent of people agree that Stalin was "a wise leader who led the Soviet Union to might and prosperity" (RFE/RL 2018).

In turn, the public opinion data on Stalin and the Soviet past in Georgia has been limited to three sources: a 2007 International Republican Institute' Georgian National Voter Study (IRI 2007), the aforementioned 2012 Carnegie survey (de Waal 2013b),⁴ and the survey commissioned to the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) in 2015 which we are using for this article (Kabachnik, Kirvalidze, and Gugushvili 2016). In all of these surveys perceptions of Stalin are overall very positive starting with IRI's poll in which only 15 percent of

respondents agreed that “Stalin was a bad leader and mass murderer,” while 69 percent stated that “Stalin was a good leader and he modernized and promoted the USSR.” The 2012 Carnegie survey also showed that only 20 percent of respondents selected the words antipathy, irritation, fear and disgust when asked to choose words which best describe their attitudes to Stalin.

PREDICTORS OF RETROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENTS OF THE COMMUNIST PAST

The above-described survey data are very helpful to recognize the prevalence of favorable attitudes towards Stalin, however these data-sets were rarely used to shed light on what characteristics are important predictors of Stalin’s support, especially in cross-national comparative perspective. As discussed above, the dimensions of nationalism, identity, and ideology might be central for understanding attitudes towards communism and Stalin, but studies have also identified that economic nostalgia and certain socio-demographic, spatial, and socio-economic explanations are significant predictors of these attitudes.

Individuals’ gender could be an important explanation of retrospective assessments of the communist past for a number of reasons. Post-communist transition brought new socio-economic and political challenges for women such as decline in political representation and increase in women’s unemployment (LaFont 2001). Yet, the existing evidence suggests that men were more likely to suffer by various measures of health and wellbeing from these major transformations (Azarova et al. 2017). Further, social psychology literature indicates that there is gender gap in a broad array of attitudes related to authoritarianism, the use of force and violence (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Togeby 1994). Some empirical evidence shows that males are more in favor of the Soviet system and consequently Stalin and Stalinism. For instance, it is known that females in the Soviet Union on average tended to oppose higher spending on defense (Carnaghan and Bahry 1990), while more recently females in Russia were less likely than males to express a desire to see the return of the communist system (Munro 2006).

Socialization processes are another crucial framework for understanding support for communist past. Individuals acquire values and beliefs from the distinctive development of their birth cohorts through social interactions, the content of formal education, and unique historical experiences such as war or major economic crisis (Ryder 1965). Political attitudes are predominantly shaped when individuals are entering adulthood (Jennings and Markus 1984) and differences between cohorts are persistent even after major social, political, and economic changes (Alwin and Krosnick 1991). Studies in former Soviet Union countries suggest that the youngest cohorts are more supportive of popular participation in decision-making, while the older cohorts reveal admiration for a “strong leader” (Hahn and Logvinenko 2008). When asked about the most appealing political system for Russia, nearly half of individuals born before the 1930s preferred an unreformed Soviet political regime, whereas among those born after the 1960s that proportion was only 10% (Colton and Mcfaul 2002). The youngest cohorts in Russia and Georgia should be least affected by social indoctrination which glorified communism because they grew up during the less authoritative periods in the 1970s and 1980s as well as in post-communist environment in the 1990s and 2000s (Szafraniec 2017).

Spatial explanations of attitudes toward communist symbols can be measured by examining the type of settlement where individuals reside. The increased complexity of social structure that accompanies urban residence could be more difficult to accommodate within the framework of an authoritarian state system. On the other hand, a high proportion of rural population in a country can lead to a society which is more introverted and exclusive, and tends to be oriented to tradition and to values rooted in the past (Ramet 1996). Existing evidence suggests that in the 1990s rural residents in Russia were generally less supportive of political reforms (Wegren 1994) and were more collectivist and egalitarian than urban residents (Reisinger, Miller, and Hesli 1995). Further, in big cities and national capitals of post-socialist countries people have been more critical of the quality of the existing democracy than in small and medium-sized towns and rural communities (Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2014). Lastly, in Georgia, residents from rural areas were shown to have more positive perceptions of Stalin when compared to those living in Tbilisi and other urban settlements (Gugushvili, Kabachnik, and Gilbreath 2016).

Existing literature also suggests that other socio-structural conditions and individuals' characteristics are associated with attitudes toward the communist past (Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2014). One of the most important measures of socio-economic position is educational attainment. Well educated individuals are expected to have more critical views toward authoritative leaders because education equips people with the skills to understand political processes and to communicate preferences to those who make political decisions. We should expect that less educated individuals are more likely to support Stalin because they are less aware of the mass executions and other atrocities committed by the Soviet regime under Stalin's leadership. A highly educated public, on the other hand, is less likely to tolerate the old Stalinist system's heavy-handed terror and controls (Bahry 1993). A study analyzing attitudes in Russia in the beginning of the 1990s concludes that educational attainment had the most important effect on political attitudes (Hahn 1991). In Georgia, a recent study suggests that individuals with tertiary education were significantly more likely to support the idea that a monument of Stalin should be placed on the grounds of his museum in his hometown of Gori, rather than where it previously stood, in the main square (Kabachnik, Gugushvili, and Kirvalidze 2018).

In addition to education, other aspects of respondents' socioeconomic position might also shape attitudes toward Stalin and the communist past in Russia and Georgia. If we assume that Stalin is perceived as a symbol of an individual's attitudes toward various aspects of the Soviet political and economic system (Cohen 1982), many of those who are dissatisfied with their current position in the post-socialist socioeconomic hierarchy might express positive attitudes toward Josef Stalin. For instance, it was shown that an individual's income is strongly and negatively related to support for an authoritarian political order in a large number of post-communist countries (Andersen 2012). Studies on nostalgia for post-communism also reveal that the poor are more likely to have positive feelings about the Soviet past (Sullivan 2013). Further, the family economic situation during the communist period has a strong effect on Russians' attitudes toward the former system (Munro 2006), while in Georgia the majority of respondents believe that the political and economic situation was better during the Soviet period in 1970s and 1980s and these attitudes are positively linked with their retrospective assessments of the communist past (Gugushvili et al. 2015).

After describing the unique narratives of Stalin in different country contexts, presenting trends in public opinion, and outlining possible individual-level explanations of positive

perceptions of the late Soviet dictator, the aim of this study is to comprehensibly and comparatively explore, for the first time, the nature of contemporary perceptions of Stalin both in Russia and Georgia.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Data-sets

Data for the current analysis derives from two sources. First, for the Russian data-set, we use the Levada Center poll conducted in Russia and commissioned by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in October 2012 (for more details see Levada Center, 2012). This was a Russia-wide poll of the over 18 year old urban and rural population based on a representative sample of respondents from 130 settlements in 45 regions of the country. The statistical error in the data of the study did not exceed 3.4 percent. The sample was distributed among eight federal districts, while inside each district it was split in five strata of settlements proportionally to number of adult population living in them. All cities with a population of over one million were inserted in the sample as self-representative units. In the rest of the strata with probability, proportional to the size of a settlement, there were selected from one to eight urban settlements, so that 7–13 interviews are conducted in each of them. The number of interviews, falling onto one strata, is divided equally among selected settlements. In total, there were 130 primary sampling units (PSUs) selected for the study.

The Georgian data-set used in this study comes from survey which was commissioned to the CRRC about two and half years after the Russian survey, in the Spring of 2015 (for more details see Gugushvili et al. 2015; Kabachnik, Kirvalidze, and Gugushvili 2016; Gugushvili, Kabachnik, and Kirvalidze 2017). To our knowledge this is the first time a detailed nationally representative study on this topic has been undertaken in Stalin’s home country (for the other, see de Waal 2013). Selected respondents were interviewed face-to-face, participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous, and the results are representative for the adult population of Georgia. The sample design was based on stratification and clustering which ensured that each respondent was nested within a specific primary sampling unit. Random route sampling and Kish table were used for the selection of households and respondents respectively within the selected locations. Survey average margin of error is 1.9 percent. After list-wise deletion of the missing data for both data-sets, we maintain 1,147 and 1,347 respondents respectively in Russia and Georgia for our multivariate analysis.

Dependent variables

In both the Russian and Georgian surveys, respondents were asked to what extent they would completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, or completely disagree with the following four statements: (1) “Stalin was a wise leader who brought power and prosperity to the Soviet Union”; (2) “For all Stalin’s mistakes and misdeeds, the most important thing is that under his leadership the Soviet people won the Great Patriotic War”; (3) “Stalin was a cruel, inhuman tyrant, responsible for the deaths of millions of innocent people”; (4) “Our people

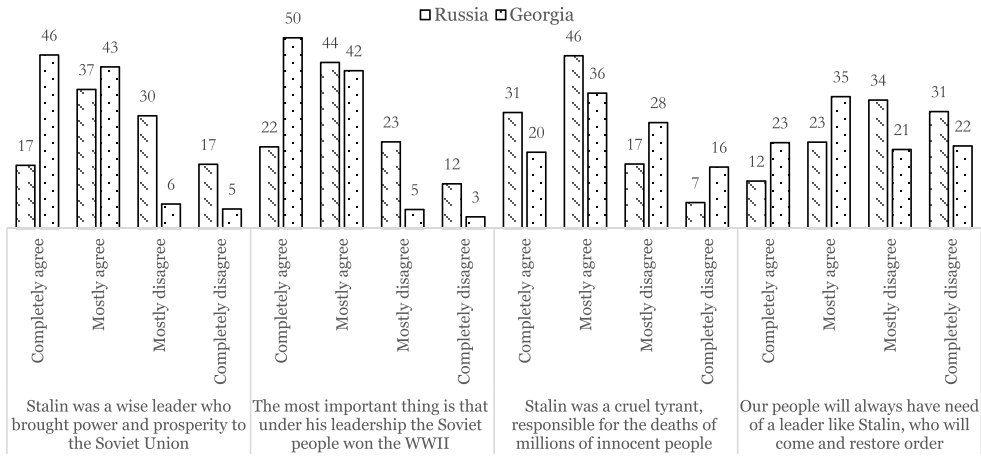


Figure 1. Respondents' perceptions of Stalin in Russia and Georgia, %.

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from Levada Center (2012) and Gugushvili et al. (2015).

will always have need of a leader like Stalin, who will come and restore order". Based on the distributions of answers on the survey questions shown in Figure 1, we can see that respondents in Russia overall are much less positive about Stalin than respondents in Georgia.

If in Georgia about 88 percent of respondents agree that Stalin was a wise leader who brought power and prosperity to the Soviet Union, in Russia only 53 percent of respondents think this way. Similarly, if in Russia only 65 percent agree that for all Stalin's mistakes and misdeeds, the most important thing is that under his leadership the Soviet people won the Great Patriotic War, in Georgia this share of respondents is up to 92 percent. It is noticeable that for the first two described questions in both countries respondents exhibit overall positive attitudes toward Stalin, while they are more critical toward the late Soviet dictator in the last two questions – 77 percent in Russia and 56 percent in Georgia think that Stalin was a tyrant responsible for the deaths of millions of innocent people, while 65 percent and 43 percent of respondents, respectively, in Russia and Georgia disagree that their country will always have need of a leader like Stalin, who will come and restore order. The high shares of "don't know" and "refuse to answer" (15.1 percent in Russia and 6.9 percent in Georgia for question 1, 12.1 percent and 5.4 percent in question 2, 15.9 percent and 17.4 percent in question 3, and 18.0 percent and 13.7 percent in question 4) also suggest ambivalent and contested perceptions of Stalin in these two countries and particularly in Russia.

Independent variables

Based on the previous scholarship on public opinion towards Stalin in Russia and Georgia (Gugushvili, Kabachnik, and Gilbreath 2016, 2017; Kabachnik 2018; Kabachnik and Gugushvili 2015; Kabachnik, Kirvalidze, and Gugushvili 2016; Mendelson and Gerber 2005, 2006, 2008; Reisinger et al. 1994), we start our analysis with an array of comparable

explanatory variables to account for the variation in support of Stalin among survey respondents.

In the Russian sample males account for about half of the sample, while in Georgia their share is much lower. For individuals' birth year we created 10-year cohorts for both countries: starting with those born in 1925–1934 and ending with those born in 1985–1994. For the type of settlement, we differentiate between those living in the capital cities of Moscow and Tbilisi, other urban areas, and rural settlements. In both countries we classify respondents' education attainment with primary, secondary, and tertiary education. For the respondent's household socio-economic conditions, we create approximate tertiles of income in each country. For Labor market position we use a dummy variable for those who were employed at the time of survey. Nostalgia for the Soviet Union is operationalized by using individuals' answers to the question about whether the economic situation during Soviet period in the 1970s–1980s was better than at the time of interview. Descriptive statistics for these comparable variables is shown in [Table 1](#).

In addition, the described survey data allowed us to analyze the effect of country-specific variables on Stalin support. For Russia in our data-set we have information for whom respondents voted for in the March 2012 presidential elections: did not vote – 29.2 percent, for Putin – 43.4 percent, for Zyuganov – 10.1 percent, for Zhirinovskiy – 4.3 percent, for Mironov or Prokhorov – 6.7 percent, and for other – 6.3 percent. In Georgia in turn, the survey respondents were asked what their attitude towards the Russian President Vladimir Putin was: 72.6 percent – negative, 18.5 percent – neutral, and 8.8 percent – positive.

For the Russian sample we also use survey questions which asked about the role of democracy in Russia and how strongly the state should be involved in the economy. As for the topic of democracy, 17.1 percent agreed that democracy is definitely good for the country, 58.8 percent said it is probably good, 19.2 percent said it is probably bad, and 4.9 percent said it is definitely bad. As for the state's involvement in the economy, the following was the distribution of answers: very large involvement – 20.4 percent, large involvement – 41.0 percent, moderate involvement – 33.8 percent, little involvement – 3.6 percent, and no involvement – 1.1 percent.

For Georgia, based on an earlier study into the role of national identity and religion in remembering Stalin, we also use the following additional variables: national identity and Stalin's religiosity (Gugushvili 2016; Gugushvili, Kabachnik, and Kirvalidze 2017). We derive the Georgian national identity variable from the following question: "Some people say that the following things are important for being truly Georgian. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?": (1) "to be born in Georgia," (2) "to have Georgian Citizenship," (3) "to have spent greatest part of life in Georgia," (4) "to speak fluent Georgian," (5) "to be Orthodox Christian," (6) "to have Georgian ancestors," (7) "to recognize political institutions and laws of Georgia," (8) "to feel Georgian," and (9) "to respect Georgian traditions." Response options vary from "very important" to "not important at all." The conducted factor analysis with orthogonal varimax rotation suggests that the first identified factor consists of the importance of traditions, feeling Georgian, having Georgian ancestry, and being Orthodox Christian. Since this variable is standardized in takes mean value of 0 (standard deviation: 0.88, min–max: –4.81:1.87). Having Georgian ancestry and being Orthodox Christian are undoubtedly closer to an ethnic understanding of national identity (see Jones and Smith 2001). In the Georgian sample we

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics of Identical Independent Variables Used in Analysis Across Russia and Georgia, %

	<i>Russia</i>	<i>Georgia</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Males	47.4	39.3
Female	52.6	60.7
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>Birth cohorts</i>		
1925–1934	2.3	3.7
1935–1944	7.9	14.5
1945–1954	14.6	16.8
1955–1964	20.5	20.4
1965–1974	18.4	14.9
1975–1984	17.4	16.3
1985–1994	18.7	13.3
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>Type of settlement</i>		
Moscow/Tbilisi	9.2	30.0
Other urban	64.6	33.1
Rural	26.2	36.9
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>Education</i>		
Primary	38.2	38.5
Secondary	30.3	26.9
Tertiary	31.5	34.6
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>Income tertile</i>		
Bottom	41.6	41.9
Middle	27.4	26.0
Top	31.0	32.1
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>Employment status</i>		
Employed	58.8	26.9
Other Labor market status	41.2	73.1
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>Nostalgia</i>		
Soviet period was better	46.6	68.3
Soviet period was not better	53.4	31.7
Total	100.0	100.0
Number of observations	1,147	1,347

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from Levada Center (2012) and Gugushvili et al. (2015).

also use a variable which asks respondents their opinion on whether or not Stalin believed in god: 25.8 percent thought that Stalin did not believe in god, 27.8 percent replied that they did not know, while 46.4 percent thought that Stalin believed in god.

Statistical analyses

In addition to analyzing all dependent variables in separate regression models using ordinary least squares regressions, we also derive the cumulative index of perception of the Soviet

dictator by the survey respondents and analyze it separately to have a more comprehensive picture of the covariates of Stalin support (see our other research that uses this same “Stalin index” technique: Gugushvili and Kabachnik 2015). This is done by combining answers on the dependent variables from completely disagree to completely agree into a single index of attitudes toward Stalin. We reversed answer options for question 3 because higher scores indicated negative attitudes toward Stalin in contrast to the other dependent variables. In both countries, the factor loading of these variables, all above 0.44 with an eigenvalue of Factor 1 = 1.58, and their scale reliability coefficient, more than 0.73, suggest that the derived index is a relevant aggregate measure of attitudes toward Stalin in Russia and Georgia. To make the results easier to interpret, we rescaled answer options to completely disagree = 0 to completely agree = 3. Therefore, 0 points (4×0) in the cumulative index means that for all four questions the respondent holds extremely negative ideas about Stalin (4.6 percent of the sample in Russia and 0.9 percent in Georgia), while those who score 12 points (4×3) have extremely positive attitudes toward the Soviet dictator (2.0 percent of the sample in Russia and 8.1 percent in Georgia). This form of the dependent variable allows us to see clearly how each independent variable is associated with attitudes towards the Soviet dictator.

RESULTS

Multivariate comparative analysis

Tables 2 and 3 show regression coefficients from our OLS models in, respectively, Russia and Georgia. Belonging to specific birth cohorts is an important explanation as to why some people have positive or negative attitudes toward Stalin in Russia and Georgia. It is obvious that when compared to those born in 1955–1964, individuals born before or during the Second World War between 1925 and 1944 are much more likely to have favorable attitudes toward Stalin. For instance, for Russia in Model 5 (the cumulative Stalin support index varies from 0 to 12), individuals in cohort 1925–1934 score 2.35 points higher than individuals in the reference category. Similar associations are observed for Georgia; however, the scale of this effect is lower. For instance, in Model 5 the size of the comparable regression coefficient is 1.56. Differences between Russia and Georgia are even more vivid when it comes to the youngest cohorts in our samples. For Russia we find that since the cohort born in 1955–1964 support of Stalin has not declined. In fact, if anything youngsters born in 1985–1994 are more likely to believe that Stalin brought power and prosperity to the Soviet Union than individuals in the reference group. This contrasts with the earlier assessment which claims that there is a growing indifference to Stalin among younger Russians. Using only simple descriptive analysis leads Lipman (2013) to the erroneous conclusion that “to the young, Stalin is increasingly losing his symbolic significance and becoming just a figure from a remote past” (p.23). The trend in Georgia is markedly different from Russia. Individuals born after 1975 in Georgia have significantly lower positive perceptions of Stalin. This association takes place for all separate questions as well as for the cumulative Stalin support index.

Our findings also reveal that respondents in both capital cities, Moscow and Tbilisi, have significantly lower support of Stalin than in rural areas of the respected countries. This effect

TABLE 2
Covariates of Positive Perceptions of Stalin in Russia, Point Estimates from OLS Models

	<i>(M1) Stalin brought power and prosperity to the Soviet Union</i>	<i>(M2) Under Stalin's leadership the Soviet people won WWII</i>	<i>(M3) Stalin was responsible for the deaths of millions of innocent people</i>	<i>(M4) Our people will always have need of a leader like Stalin</i>	<i>(M5) Cumulative index</i>
Intercept	1.21 (0.14)***	1.46 (0.14)***	1.09 (0.13)***	1.06 (0.15)***	4.82 (0.38)***
Gender (male = 1)	0.05 (0.05)	0.07 (0.05)	0.05 (0.05)	0.09 (0.06)	0.27 (0.15)*
Birth cohorts					
1925–1934	0.72 (0.15)***	0.59 (0.16)***	0.59 (0.17)***	0.45 (0.18)**	2.35 (0.50)***
1935–1944	0.50 (0.12)***	0.44 (0.12)***	0.34 (0.12)***	0.28 (0.14)**	1.57 (0.36)***
1945–1954	0.21 (0.10)**	0.08 (0.10)	–0.07 (0.09)	0.05 (0.10)	0.27 (0.29)
1955–1964	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
1965–1974	0.09 (0.09)	–0.00 (0.08)	0.01 (0.08)	–0.04 (0.09)	0.06 (0.24)
1975–1984	0.10 (0.09)	–0.09 (0.09)	–0.08 (0.09)	–0.12 (0.10)	–0.19 (0.26)
1985–1994	0.18 (0.09)**	0.14 (0.09)	–0.04 (0.08)	–0.06 (0.09)	0.23 (0.25)
Settlement					
Moscow	–0.44 (0.12)***	–0.58 (0.12)***	–0.43 (0.11)***	–0.52 (0.11)***	–1.97 (0.35)***
Other urban	0.06 (0.07)	0.04 (0.07)	–0.16 (0.06)**	–0.03 (0.07)	–0.10 (0.19)
Rural	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Education					
Primary	0.01 (0.07)	0.07 (0.06)	0.00 (0.06)	–0.02 (0.07)	0.06 (0.19)
Secondary	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Tertiary	–0.05 (0.07)	0.03 (0.07)	0.05 (0.07)	–0.01 (0.07)	0.02 (0.20)
Income tertile					
Bottom	0.07 (0.07)	0.12 (0.07)	0.06 (0.07)	–0.03 (0.08)	0.22 (0.22)
Middle	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Top	–0.24 (0.08)***	–0.15 (0.08)*	–0.05 (0.08)	–0.21 (0.09)**	–0.64 (0.24)***
Employment (employed = 1)	0.03 (0.07)	0.09 (0.06)	–0.05 (0.06)	0.02 (0.07)	0.09 (0.18)
Nostalgia (Soviet better = 1)	0.27 (0.06)***	0.16 (0.06)**	0.17 (0.06)***	0.30 (0.07)***	0.90 (0.18)***
Presidential elections					
Putin	0.12 (0.07)*	0.14 (0.07)**	–0.11 (0.06)*	0.09 (0.07)	0.24 (0.19)
Zyuganov	0.18 (0.10)*	0.20 (0.10)*	0.07 (0.10)	0.24 (0.11)**	0.69 (0.31)**
Zhirinovskiy	0.08 (0.14)	0.09 (0.13)	0.12 (0.15)	0.29 (0.18)	0.58 (0.45)
Mironov/Prokhorov	–0.08 (0.12)	–0.01 (0.12)	–0.15 (0.10)	0.02 (0.12)	–0.22 (0.33)
Other	0.29 (0.12)**	0.17 (0.11)	0.05 (0.11)	0.22 (0.12)*	0.73 (0.32)**
Did not vote	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Statistics					
BIC	3170.93	3086.41	2982.23	3305.86	5552.93
Adjusted R ²	0.11	0.11	0.07	0.09	0.16
Number of observations	1,147	1,147	1,147	1,147	1,147

Notes: ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 0.01, 0.05, and 0.10 levels, respectively. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Source: Authors' calculations based on data from Levada Center (2012).

TABLE 3
Covariates of Positive Perceptions of Stalin in Georgia, Point Estimates from OLS Models.

	(M1) Stalin brought power and prosperity to the Soviet Union	(M2) Under Stalin's leadership the Soviet people won WWII	(M3) Stalin was responsible for the deaths of millions of innocent people	(M4) Our people will always have need of a leader like Stalin	(M5) Cumulative index
Intercept	2.25 (0.08)***	2.34 (0.07)***	1.28 (0.10)***	1.67 (0.10)***	7.54 (0.25)***
Gender (male = 1)	0.08 (0.04)*	0.02 (0.04)	0.09 (0.05)*	-0.01 (0.06)	0.18 (0.14)
Birth cohorts					
1925–1934	0.33 (0.10)***	0.23 (0.09)**	0.44 (0.16)***	0.55 (0.15)***	1.56 (0.39)***
1935–1944	0.15 (0.06)**	0.10 (0.06)*	0.34 (0.09)***	0.42 (0.09)***	1.01 (0.23)***
1945–1954	0.09 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.06)	0.04 (0.08)	0.18 (0.09)**	0.27 (0.21)
1955–1964	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
1965–1974	-0.13 (0.07)*	-0.13 (0.07)*	0.03 (0.09)	-0.11 (0.10)	-0.33 (0.24)
1975–1984	-0.27 (0.08)***	-0.17 (0.07)**	-0.21 (0.08)**	-0.16 (0.09)*	-0.82 (0.23)***
1985–1994	-0.21 (0.09)**	-0.20 (0.08)***	-0.23 (0.09)**	-0.29 (0.10)***	-0.93 (0.24)***
Settlement					
Tbilisi	-0.11 (0.06)**	-0.10 (0.05)**	-0.12 (0.07)*	-0.35 (0.07)***	-0.70 (0.18)***
Other urban	-0.14 (0.05)***	-0.15 (0.05)***	0.10 (0.06)*	-0.19 (0.06)***	-0.39 (0.16)**
Rural	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Education					
Primary	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.08 (0.07)	-0.19 (0.17)
Secondary	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Tertiary	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.22 (0.07)***	-0.26 (0.07)***	-0.60 (0.18)***
Income tertile					
Bottom	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	0.01 (0.07)	0.01 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.18)
Middle	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Top	-0.14 (0.06)**	-0.11 (0.05)*	0.01 (0.07)	-0.23 (0.08)***	-0.47 (0.19)**
Employment (employed = 1)	0.04 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	-0.08 (0.06)	0.04 (0.07)	0.03 (0.18)
Nostalgia (Soviet better = 1)	0.28 (0.05)***	0.32 (0.05)***	0.11 (0.06)**	0.19 (0.06)***	0.90 (0.16)***
Putin's perception					
Negative	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Neutral	0.06 (0.05)	0.10 (0.05)**	0.21 (0.07)***	0.29 (0.07)***	0.66 (0.16)***
Positive	0.17 (0.07)**	0.11 (0.07)*	0.56 (0.10)***	0.59 (0.09)***	1.43 (0.23)***
Statistics					
BIC	3220.17	2930.78	3761.98	3864.00	6337.60
Adjusted R ²	0.09	0.09	0.10	0.17	0.19
Number of observations	1,347	1,347	1,347	1,347	1,347

Notes: ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 0.01, 0.05, and 0.10 levels, respectively. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Source: Authors' calculations based on data from Gugushvili et al. (2015).

is particularly strong in Russia where Moscow respondents score about 2 points lower in the cumulative Stalin support index. In Russia we do not see any systemic differences between rural areas and other non-Moscow urban areas in terms of preferences toward Stalin, while in Georgia respondents living in non-Tbilisi urban areas have significantly lower support for Stalin than respondents in rural areas. This stands in contrast to claims made based on the

same Russian data that higher levels of positive and lower negative opinions are found in villages, followed by towns, and then Moscow (Gudkov 2013). This highlights the need to be cautious when only conducting bivariate analysis of survey data.

We also do not observe any systemic differences between the level of education and support of Stalin in Russia. Both people with primary and tertiary education have similar preferences when compared to individuals with secondary education. On the other hand, in Georgia we find that education is negatively associated with the perception that Stalin was not responsible for the deaths of millions of innocent people and that Georgians will always have need of a leader like Stalin. In the cumulative Stalin support index people with tertiary education express lower support for Stalin by 0.6 points. When it comes to household income, in both countries we see the identical associations: those who are in the top income tertile express lower support for Stalin in all regressions except in Model 3 regarding the question about Stalin's responsibility for the deaths of millions of innocent people.

Positive perceptions of the Soviet Union in the 1970s and the 1980s expectedly has a significant and positive association with our dependent variables in both countries, and the scale of this effect, 0.9, is similar in the Russian and Georgian samples. Lastly, when it comes to the links between perceptions of Vladimir Putin and Stalin, we also observe some similarities between Russia and Georgia. In Russia, those who voted for Putin in the 2012 presidential election, when compared to those who did not vote, are more likely to agree that Stalin brought power and prosperity to the Soviet Union and that under Stalin's leadership the Soviet people won the Second World War. However, the same individuals are also slightly more likely to agree that Stalin was responsible for the deaths of millions of innocent people. Stalin is more strongly supported by those who voted for Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation since 1993. In Georgia, on the other hand, those who have neutral and especially positive perceptions of Putin are much more likely to view Stalin favorably when compared to those who perceive Putin negatively. The scale of the effect is 1.42 points in the cumulative Stalin support index in Model 5.

Trends for cohorts and country-specific factors of Stalin support

As we have seen in the previous section, an individuals' birth cohort appears to be an important explanation of favorably viewing Stalin in both countries, but the tendency of declining support for Stalin in Georgia among younger cohorts is not matched in the Russian sample. To illustrate this more vividly, we further split our birth cohorts in 5-year periods and derive predicted margins of Stalin support, after accounting for all other explanations shown in Tables 2 and 3. Figure 2 suggests that among the oldest cohort in Russia, those born before 1934, the Stalin support index is about 7.5, which declined to about 5.0 for those born in 1955–1959. After this period, support did not decline and stabilized between 5.0 to 5.5 points in the latest cohorts. On other hand, support for Stalin has been the highest among the three oldest cohort in Georgia, with up to 9.0 in the cumulative Stalin support index, and this has been declining for consecutive cohorts with the youngest cohorts having around 6.5 point of Stalin support. In fact, the difference between Russian and Georgian cohorts shrank from the oldest to the youngest cohort from 2.0 to 1.0 point. If this trend continues, it is expected that in years to come Russian and Georgian youth will have equal support for Stalin.

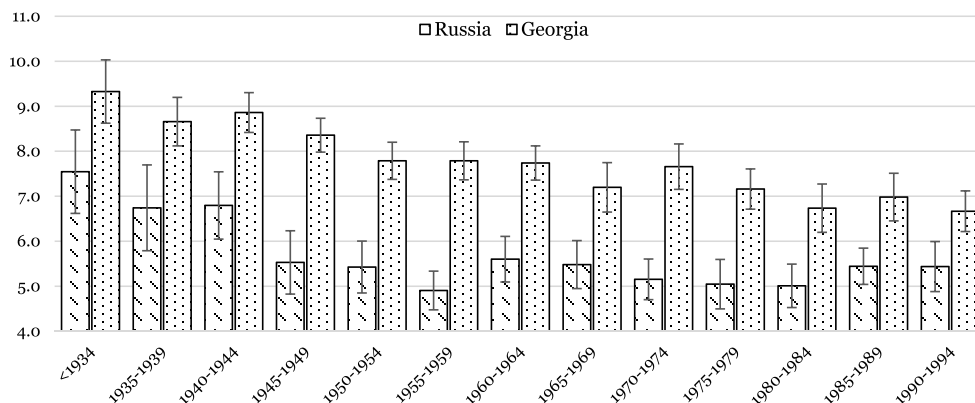


Figure 2. Predicted margins of Stalin support index by 5-year birth cohorts in Russia and Georgia. Note: Bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Source: Authors' calculations based on data from Levada Center (2012) and Gugushvili et al. (2015).

Since in this study we use two separate data-sets which are not fully identical, both of these surveys include country-specific questions. Based on previous scholarship, we expect that in Russia Stalin's support is related to ideological views about the state's role in the economy and the nature of politics (Nelson 2015). This is why we employ two variables about the free market economy and the role of democracy in Russia. On the other hand, in Georgia, Stalin can be understood through the prism of nationalism, national identity, and religiosity (Gugushvili, Kabachnik, and Kirvalidze 2017). Therefore, we employ two additional questions on the links between an ethnic understanding of national identity in Georgia and respondents' views on the religiosity of Stalin.

In Figure 3a, we see that in Russia individuals' perceptions of state involvement in the economy is an important predictor of Stalin support (full regression models for both Russia and Georgia are presented in Appendix, Table A1). Those who think that the state's role should be small in the economy score around 4.7 in the outcome variables, while those who believe that this involvement should be very strong score about 6.3 points in Stalin's support index. The detected association is even stronger for individuals' views about democracy in Russia. Those who think democracy is good for Russia have around 5.2 score in the index, while those who believe that democracy is definitely bad for Russia score more than 2.0 points higher in the index.

In the Georgian data-set we do not have the same variables as described above for Russia, but we still observe an interesting association between national identity factors, religious beliefs, and Stalin support. Those with the lowest score of national identity in Georgia have the lowest preferences for Stalin with around a 5.5 score. This is comparable to those in Russia who support democracy and are against strong state involvement in the economy. However, as the score of national identity factors increases to 25th, 50th, 75th, and 100th percentile, so does support for Stalin in Georgia. Those with the highest sense of national identity have around an 8.5 score which is comparable with the results for individuals born in 1935–1944.

Lastly, in the Georgian context we find evidence that respondents' beliefs about Stalin's religiosity is a strong explanation of why people support Stalin. Those who think that Stalin

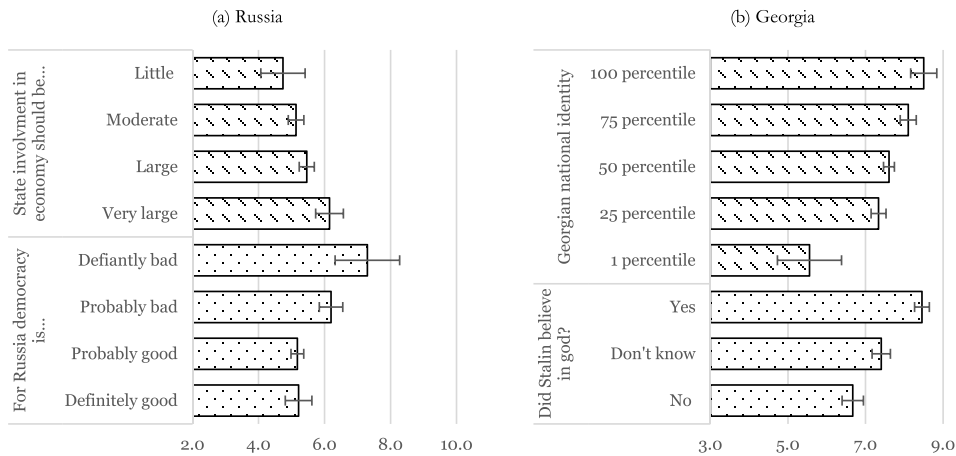


Figure 3. Predicted margins of additional explanations of Stalin support in Russia and Georgia.

Note: Bars represent 95% confidence intervals. *Source:* Authors' calculations based on data from Levada Center (2012) and Gugushvili et al. (2015).

did not believe in god have a 6.5 Stalin support score, while for individuals who think that Stalin believed in god this support increases by 2 points to about 8.5. Those who do not know whether or not Stalin believed in god have a Stalin support score which lies in between these two values. In unreported analysis, we have also tested the links between those who consider religion to be an important marker of Georgian identity, those who think Stalin was religious, and the attitude of both towards Stalin. We find that the correlation between perceiving that religion is very important part of being Georgian and believing that Stalin was religious is not statistically significant, but both of these variables maintain strong and independent association with support for Stalin.

CONCLUSION

To our knowledge, this study was the first to undertake a comparative analysis of public opinion regarding contemporary attitudes to Stalin in both Russia and Georgia using multivariate analysis of quantitative survey data. If in Georgia the admiration of Stalin is largely explained by socio-demographic and socio-spatial variables, in Russia it is more closely related to ideological and political thinking. Our comparative analysis of the survey data highlights several elements that provide explanatory power regarding people's attitudes toward Stalin. Age has a major impact, as the oldest generations have the highest levels of support for Stalin. In terms of the youngest generations, Georgia and Russia are experiencing differing trends, as youth in Russia have seen their appraisal of Stalin increase over the past decade,⁵ while Stalin is being seen less admirably by Georgian youth. This may not be indicative of rigorous de-Stalinization and efforts to engage with the legacy of the Soviet past in Georgia, but rather more likely to be a passive effect of time, while the increase in

appreciation for Stalin in Russia is likely supported by the Putin administration's discourse on Stalin and the Soviet past.

Spatial factors are shown to have an impact, as demonstrated elsewhere (Gugushvili, Kabachnik, and Gilbreath 2016; Kabachnik, Gugushvili, and Kirvalidze 2018). Residents of both Tbilisi and Moscow, with the latter having a particularly strong impact, are more critical of Stalin, and those in rural areas are more likely to approve of Stalin.

In Russia, two important indicators were what people felt about the state's role in the economy and their views on democracy. One would be more anti-Stalin if they felt that democracy was a good system and that the state should not have much of a role in the economy. However, Stalin supporters were not that supportive of democracy and thought that the state involvement in the economy should be high.

Overall, Georgians have a very negative perception of Putin, although some do qualify this stance as they explain that despite their disdain for him he may be good for Russia and Russians. However, Georgians that have neutral and positive assessments of Putin are likelier to be pro-Stalin. Finally, certain understandings of Georgia nationalism prove influential. What Georgians felt about Stalin's religiosity also has an effect. Those who felt he did not believe in god were more critical of him, while people judged Stalin more positively if they felt he was a believer. People in Georgia that hold ideas akin to ethnic nationalism are more likely to admire Stalin.

Our findings help us in exploring questions of how historical figures, like Stalin, and contemporary figures, like Putin, are valued and understood by the public, and can be illustrative of the politics of/as memory, expectations and attitudes toward the state, nationalist impulses, and/or levels of dis/satisfaction with the current situation (Griffin 2004; Kosicki and Jasińska-Kania 2007). Our results highlight that neither country has undergone effective de-Stalinization processes, and elements of re-Stalinization continue, be it how history textbooks represent the Stalin period (Sherlock 2011) to the installation of new Stalin monuments in the landscape. These contested practices are not hegemonic, even though they are likely to catch the media's attention. It will be important to monitor the youngest generation of Russians in terms of their admiration for Stalin (e.g. Kasmara and Sorokina 2015), and what this signifies, as well as whether the downturn in appreciation for the youngest generations in Georgia is a marker of critical attitudes or lack of exposure and understanding.

With all the geopolitical animus between Russia and Georgia, it should not be surprising these states provide very different contexts for the evaluation of Stalin, despite convergence of high levels of support in both places. Despite the post-Saakashvili Georgian Dream attempts at rapprochement with Russia, the greater pull remains with the EU as well as the lingering trauma of the 2008 war with Russia. Stalin provides a reminder of particularly national pride and points to a time when a Georgian ruled Russia and the entire Soviet empire. Russia, maneuvering to be a central global player, has entirely different goals than tiny Georgia. Under Putin's two decades of rule, Russian pride and the blaming of the West have both been nurtured. Critical reappraisals of Stalin, while not entirely absent, have not been conducted in any sustained fashion by the state. Thus Stalin is held up not as a Georgian, nor as a dictator, but as an "effective manager" (Nelson 2015:41) who effectively ran a large state, brought Russia to greatness, and won WWII. These different narratives continue to circulate and flourish in both states.

Based on our analysis, we conclude that Stalin is alive in the minds of many, both in Georgia and Russia, although for different reasons. For certain individuals Stalin can be a hero, some see him as a villain, and for others still he may conjure up indifference, ambivalence, and contradictory meanings. Even among those who admire Stalin, as we have demonstrated, tend to support him for different reasons in Russia and Georgia. Stalin today epitomizes the hybridity of meaning (Kabachnik 2018). We must remain cautious about concluding that increasing rates of Stalin support equates to, for example, broad support for authoritarianism. Thus, a positive appraisal of Stalin does not necessarily equate to a call to return to High Stalinism, or a restoration of the USSR. It more often than not speaks to constraints and struggles in people's everyday lives in the present, rather than a myopic focus on the past. The prevalence of multiple meanings does not mean these public opinion polls should be ignored or discounted. Instead, it highlights the need for nuanced interpretations of these data. We close with a call for more critical research on public opinion using advanced multivariate statistics, as well as mixed methods approaches that augment statistical analyses with qualitative data that enables people's narratives to properly situate their answers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank CRRC Georgia and its president, Koba Turmanidze.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Authors declare that they have no financial interest or any other conflict of interest from the direct application of this research.

NOTES

1. Although some do acknowledge that many people view Stalin through both lenses simultaneously (Lipman 2013: 21).
2. This is not the only element of the Soviet past that is being appropriated. For the role of the Great Patriotic War/WWII, see Kirschenbaum (2011).
3. For the impact of trauma and despair on Russian nationalism, see Ries (1997) and Oushakine (2009).
4. This survey covered both Georgia and Russia (as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan). The Pew Research Center conducted an 18 country survey, also including both Georgia and Russia, although they had just one question related to Stalin, asking whether he played a very/mostly positive role in history (Pew Research Center, 2017).
5. This trend had been identified in surveys conducted with Russian youth in 2005 (Mendelson and Gerber 2006).

FUNDING

This work was supported by an Academic Swiss Caucasus Net (ASCN) grant and a PSC-CUNY Award, jointly funded by The Professional Staff Congress and The City University of New York.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A1
Covariates of Cumulative Stalin Support Index, Point Estimates from OLS Models

	Russia		Georgia	
	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Intercept			7.49 (0.25)***	7.30 (0.26)***
Gender (male = 1)	0.21 (0.15)	0.27 (0.15)*	0.19 (0.14)	0.07 (0.13)
Birth cohorts				
1925–1934	2.26 (0.52)***	2.27 (0.48)***	1.85 (0.41)***	1.60 (0.37)***
1935–1944	1.54 (0.35)***	1.52 (0.35)***	1.02 (0.23)***	1.01 (0.22)***
1945–1954	0.21 (0.29)	0.24 (0.29)	0.33 (0.21)	0.29 (0.20)
1955–1964	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
1965–1974	0.06 (0.24)	0.10 (0.24)	–0.29 (0.24)	–0.21 (0.23)
1975–1984	–0.22 (0.25)	–0.13 (0.25)	–0.73 (0.24)***	–0.55 (0.23)**
1985–1994	0.21 (0.25)	0.29 (0.25)	–0.83 (0.25)***	–0.62 (0.23)***
Settlement				
Moscow/Tbilisi	–1.95 (0.35)***	–1.91 (0.35)***	–0.89 (0.18)***	–0.86 (0.17)***
Other urban	–0.07 (0.19)	–0.02 (0.19)	–0.43 (0.16)***	–0.57 (0.16)***
Rural	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Education				
Primary	0.09 (0.19)	0.08 (0.19)	–0.25 (0.17)	–0.15 (0.16)
Secondary	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Tertiary	–0.01 (0.20)	0.05 (0.20)	–0.55 (0.18)***	–0.60 (0.17)***
Income tertile				
Bottom	0.14 (0.22)	0.22 (0.22)	0.04 (0.18)	–0.05 (0.16)
Middle	Reference	Reference	Reference	Reference
Top	–0.67 (0.23)***	–0.59 (0.23)**	–0.29 (0.19)	–0.38 (0.18)**
Employment (employed = 1)	0.13 (0.18)	0.07 (0.18)	–0.00 (0.18)	0.07 (0.17)
Nostalgia (Soviet better = 1)	0.77 (0.18)***	0.92 (0.18)***	0.79 (0.16)***	0.84 (0.15)***
Presidential elections				
Putin	0.29 (0.19)	0.29 (0.19)	–	–
Zyuganov	0.53 (0.30)*	0.60 (0.30)**	–	–
Zhirinovskiy	0.54 (0.43)	0.70 (0.46)	–	–
Mironov/Prokhorov	–0.19 (0.32)	–0.10 (0.32)	–	–
Other	0.71 (0.32)**	0.75 (0.31)**	–	–
Did not vote	Reference	Reference	–	–
Putin's perception				
Negative	–	–	–0.86 (0.17)***	–0.64 (0.16)***
Neutral	–	–	Reference	Reference
Positive	–	–	0.81 (0.25)***	0.72 (0.25)***
State involvement in economy				
Little	–0.73 (0.24)***	–	–	–
Moderate	–1.01 (0.25)***	–	–	–
Large	–1.22 (0.41)***	–	–	–
Very large	Reference	–	–	–
For Russian democracy is..				
Definitely good	–	Reference	–	–
Probably good	–	–0.10 (0.22)	–	–
Probably bad	–	0.78 (0.27)***	–	–
Definitely bad	–	1.86 (0.54)***	–	–

(Continued)

TABLE A1
(Continued)

	Russia		Georgia	
	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
National identity factor scores	-----	-----	0.47 (0.08)***	-----
Stalin's religiosity				
Stalin believed in god	-----	-----	-----	1.04 (0.15)***
Don't know	-----	-----	-----	Reference
Stalin didn't believe in god	-----	-----	-----	-0.68 (0.18)***
Statistics				
BIC	5539.43	5556.55	5932.14	6224.27
Adjusted R ²	0.21	0.20	0.23	0.27
Number of observations	1,147	1,147	1,347	1,347

Notes: ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 0.01, 0.05, and 0.10 levels, respectively. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *Source:* Authors' calculations based on data from Levada Center (2012) and Gugushvili et al. (2015).