**The Dual-Process Motivational Perspective on Anti-American Attitudes:**

**Evidence from Russia**

Kirill Zhirkov[1], Eduard Ponarin[2], Sharon Werning Rivera[3], and Shane Hsuan-Yu Lin[4]

[1] Department of Politics, University of Virginia

[2] Ronald F. Inglehart Laboratory for Comparative Social Research, HSE University

[3] Department of Government, Hamilton College

[4] Institute of Political Science, Academia Sinica

[Draft. Please don't cite or circulate]

**Abstract**

In this paper, we explore the psychological motivations of anti-American attitudes from the perspective of the dual-process model (DPM) that emphasizes two basic human motivational goals: preferences for security (driven by the perception of threat) and superiority (driven by the perception of competition). Among established measures in personality psychology, the former most closely corresponds to authoritarianism, whereas the latter is captured by social dominance orientation (SDO). We analyze the case of Russia where grievances against the United States featured prominently in Russia's justification of the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Using original survey data of the Russian mass public, we find that political and cultural grievances against the United States, as well as anti-American attitudes and readiness to engage in conflict, are predicted by authoritarianism—but not by SDO. Our results suggest that mass anti-American attitudes and support for an aggressive foreign policy are motivated by threat rather than competition.

*Keywords:* anti-Americanism, dual-process motivational model, Russia

Historically, one of the most studied attitudinal variables in international relations has been anti-Americanism, broadly defined as the dislike of the United States, U.S. foreign policy, and American society (Katzenstein & Keohane, 2007). Nowadays, scholars tend to see anti-Americanism as a phenomenon promoted by elites competing for power by using political communication (Blaydes & Linzer, 2012). Research on the content of messaging on social media also suggests that the most powerful framing of anti-Americanism, at least in the Arab world, revolves around intervention and threat (Jamal et al., 2015). At the same time, substantially less is known about what makes people around the world receptive to anti-American messaging.

In the paper, we develop an argument that emphasizes psychological predispositions as important variables explaining the endorsement of anti-American beliefs in the international public. Specifically, we follow a popular approach to attitude formation in social and personality psychology known as the dual-process model (DPM; Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). The DPM is based on assumptions that people, first, are motivated to achieve security and superiority, and second, tend to see attitudinal objects, such as social groups, through these lenses. Some individuals are more sensitive to perceived threat, whereas others pay more attention to competition—and these differences in personality orientations predict reactions to groups and actors seen (or portrayed) as threatening or competitive.

We expand the DPM framework to the analysis of foreign policy attitudes and anti-Americanism more specifically. We believe that it has the potential to move research in the field forward by moving beyond the essentialist "culture vs. politics" dichotomy in explaining anti-Americanism (for similar critique, see Chiozza, 2009). Instead, the DPM effectively treats anti-Americanism as elite messaging and shifts the question to who accepts this message. In our analysis, we investigate whether anti-American attitudes are better predicted by sensitivity to

threat or competition. This allows us to infer whether the United States is seen mostly as a security threat or, on the contrary, as a competitor for power in the international arena.

The data for our analysis come from Russia, which is a good case study for the DPM's application to anti-Americanism, since its leaders frequently broadcast messages oriented around both threat and competition. On the one hand, Russia is one of the few countries that openly presents itself as a global competitor of the United States—and has increasingly taken actions to maintain such a reputation over the past two decades. On the other hand, Russian government officials often use perceived security threats to justify those actions. For instance, in his speech to the Federal Assembly just before the one-year anniversary of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Putin claimed that Ukraine was used as a battering ram against Russia.[1]

Using original survey data, we demonstrate that authoritarianism (a personality orientation driven by the security motivation) is a better predictor of political and cultural grievances, anti-American attitudes, and support for international confrontation in the Russian public than social dominance orientation (SDO; driven by the superiority motivation). In other words, mass anti-American attitudes seem to be driven by threat rather than by competition. We discuss the implications of our findings for public diplomacy in the current Russo-Ukrainian War—as well as for the broader research on personality psychology in international relations.

**The Phenomenon of Anti-Americanism**

Among the various aspects of foreign policy attitudes held by mass publics around the world, scholars have dedicated particular attention to understanding the reasons behind anti-Americanism, or the dislike of the United States, U.S. foreign policy, and American society. Indeed, virtually everything related to the United States, from American music to U.S.

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[1]    http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70565

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involvement in foreign conflicts, has the potential to serve as a source or a catalyst for anti-American attitudes (O'Connor & Griffiths, 2007), although almost the same considerations can also motivate pro-American views (Duncan et al., 2015). Overall, the United States is far from enjoying universal popularity around the world, and public attitudes towards Americans vary over time and space (Katzenstein & Keohane, 2007).

In countries where anti-American sentiment is prevalent, this can have important political consequences. For instance, the fear of foreign interference can amplify backlash against the U.S.-sponsored programs aimed at democracy promotion around the world (Carothers, 2006). Some findings cast doubt on this assertion: for instance, a survey experiment in Jordan suggests that U.S. sponsorship does not undermine support for policies aimed at increasing women's representation in politics (Bush & Jamal, 2015). Other studies, however, show that backlash is specific to programs sponsored by the U.S. government as well as by Western governments more generally (Corstange, 2016). On a broader scale, anti-American attitudes in a country creates unwillingness to support the United States on the international stage (Goldsmith & Horiuchi, 2012), and might also negatively impact the opinions of regional powers considered to be U.S. allies (Ciftci & Tezcur, 2016). In other words, anti-Americanism carries the potential to undermine American soft power, one of the main assets of the U.S. government in global affairs (Nye, 2004).

A large segment of the literature on anti-American attitudes debates the relative weight of their political vs. cultural character. The classic formulation of the cultural hypothesis attributes anti-Americanism in non-Western societies to deep civilizational cleavages created by religious differences and the history of armed conflicts (Huntington, 1996). However, studies comparing the impact of political and cultural grievances on anti-Americanism and support for anti-

American violence, primarily in the Muslim world, tend to conclude that politics is more important than culture (Tessler & Robbins, 2007; Zhirkov et al., 2014). Examples of policies that provoke particularly strong anti-American responses in the Middle East include U.S. support for Israel and the 2003 invasion of Iraq (Furia & Lucas, 2008; Mostafa & Al-Hamdi, 2007; Sidanius et al., 2004). As the latest example, American support for Israel in its war with Hamas worsened attitudes toward the United States in the Arab world—and improved opinions of U.S. adversaries in the region (Robbins et al., 2023).

Studies conducted in other parts of the world tend to show similar results regarding the primacy of politics in anti-American attitudes. For instance, an analysis of survey data during the Cold War revealed a significant positive association between European citizens' satisfaction with U.S. foreign policy and their overall favorability toward the United States (Isernia, 2018). More recently, actions taken by the administration of George W. Bush, such as foreign interventions and the pursuit of military superiority, resulted in anti-American blowback (Johnson, 2004; Schatz & Levine, 2010). Other studies, however, suggest that the relative weights of the cultural and political drivers of anti-Americanism can be context-dependent (Berger, 2014; Glas & Spierings, 2021), and that American hegemony does not necessarily provoke defensive reactions in the Arab world (Nugent et al., 2016).

Independently of whether they are expressed in terms of culture or politics, anti-American grievances are largely rhetorical tools: they are first articulated by political elites and then spread to the mass public via the channels of political communication (Blaydes & Linzer, 2012; Sokolov et al., 2019). We know relatively little, however, about the psychological motivations that make someone receptive to these grievances. Recently, researchers investigating anti-American attitudes in the Arab world have formulated and tested a hypothesis regarding

their psychological underpinnings (Jamal et al., 2015). By analyzing Arabic Twitter discourses, they find that anti-American attitudes stem from the perceived threat of intervention into a country's internal affairs by a powerful foreign actor. However, this evidence comes from Arab countries that are not direct competitors with the United States on the international stage.

**The Case of Russia**

The fact that psychological antecedents of anti-Americanism have been almost exclusively studied in a single part of the world represents an important limitation because, depending on the country or region, anti-American attitudes can stem from different motivations. Russia is a country with the potential to fruitfully investigate this issue, since it is one of the few countries that sees itself as a major power—possessing a permanent veto on the UN Security Council, nuclear weapons, and the largest land mass in the world. As a result, anti-American attitudes in the Russian public could be motivated by perceived competition with the United States as well as by perceived threat. For instance, Russia has a nuclear arsenal approximately equal to (if not greater) than the United States.[2]

Moreover, anti-American attitudes have skyrocketed in Russia since its annexation of Crimea in 2014, and Russia's further invasion of Ukraine in 2022 accelerated this trend even more. Since anti-American views coalesced first in Russia's foreign policy elite (Sokolov et al., 2019), important research has been done specifically on that group. There is some evidence that attitudes to the United States in the Russian elite were structured across the old conflict lines between Slavophiles and Westernizers during the early Putin era (Zimmerman, 2005). Anti-American attitudes are also not uniform across different elite groups: for instance, those with background in education and media tend to be less anti-American (Zhirkov, 2019). Finally,

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[2]   https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat

research shows a temporal difference in the sources of anti-American attitudes in the Russian elite between the Yel'tsin period and the Putin period: anti-Americanism under Putin has become more uniform due to the cues emitted by the Kremlin over state-controlled media that are then followed by the elite (Rivera & Bryan, 2019).

Researchers have also investigated the sources of anti-Americanism in the Russian mass public. One explanation is the impact of the Russian government's anti-American propaganda, which has shaped the perception of the United States and its policies among Russians (Kizilova & Norris, 2023). A televised address by Vladimir Putin aired on February 24, 2022, aimed at justifying the invasion of Ukraine, provides some potential clues regarding anti-American grievances that are translated to the Russian public by the regime.[3] In the address, Putin touched on several important themes that employed anti-American rhetoric, focusing on the idea that the United States represented a threat to Russia's security and sovereignty. Putin's speech listed several political grievances against the United States, such as the eastward expansion of NATO despite Russia's objections. He also mentioned cultural grievances such as the destruction of the traditional values that "erodes" Russian society from within.

However, other studies contend that the influence of Russian state media on public opinion is constrained and contingent upon specific conditions (Stoycheff & Nisbet, 2017). Recent analysis of Russian public opinion regarding the war in Ukraine that tries to account for the possibility of preference falsification shows that most Russians support the war, but a non-trivial share of the population still opposes it despite the concentrated efforts of state-run media and resulting social pressures (Chapkovski & Schaub, 2022).

According to another important strand of thought, Russia has had a status conflict with

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[3] http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828

the West since the Cold War ended (Forsberg, 2014). As the country's status declined, perceived humiliation produced an emotional response among Russian masses and elites that ultimately resulted in widespread preferences for a more assertive, anti-Western foreign policy (Larson & Shevchenko, 2014). Another explanation of the shift in Russia's foreign policy emphasizes the change in self-perception among the country's elites who increasingly see themselves as defenders of Russian-speaking populations abroad (Strycharz, 2022).
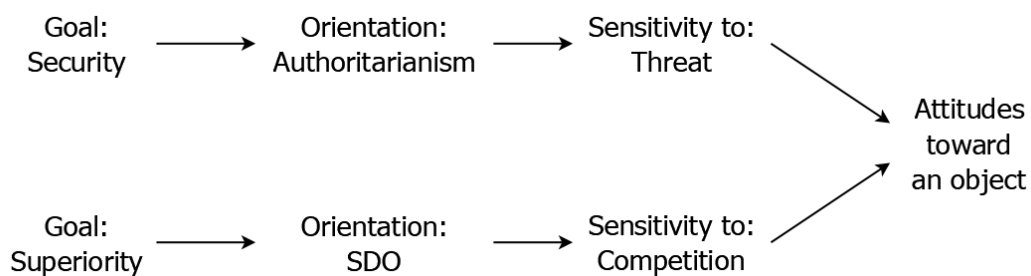
**The Dual-Process Model**

Social and personality psychology may provide some answers regarding the motivations that explain the endorsement of anti-American attitudes in the Russian public. The idea that social and political attitudes are primarily driven by two factors, perception of threat and perception of competition, has been formalized as the DPM (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). The DPM starts from the premise that attitudes are informed by two sets of motivational goals: security, order, and cohesion, on the one hand, and power, dominance, and superiority, on the other. Some objects, such as social groups, are seen as threatening, and negative attitudes toward them are explained by the desire for security, whereas negative opinions about groups perceived as competitors are predicted by an emphasis on the goal of superiority. In terms of specific and measurable personality variables, attitudes toward threatening targets are most strongly associated with authoritarianism (an orientation emphasizing the desire for security; Stenner 2005), and prejudice toward competing groups is primarily driven by SDO (emphasizing the desire for superiority; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). In other words, authoritarians are sensitive to the perception of threat whereas high-SDO individuals are sensitive to the perception of competition.

Importantly, authoritarianism and SDO are neither highly interrelated nor mutually

exclusive. The observed correlation between two traits is positive but relatively low (Duckitt, 2006; Duckitt et al., 2002). Therefore, they can serve as compatible pathways toward development of negative outgroup attitudes, in which threat and competition independently drive prejudice. Figure 1 presents the structure of the DPM—how the two motivations are conceptualized, operationalized, and related to attitudes.

**Figure 1**
*The DPM: Security and Superiority as Motivations of Social and Political Attitudes*



Originally, the DPM was tested on attitudes toward social groups residing within a country's own borders, and the results confirmed its core predictions: authoritarianism and SDO positively predict attitudes like outgroup prejudice and nationalism (Duckitt et al., 2002). At the same time, those high in authoritarianism and SDO exhibit different levels of prejudice depending on whether the target groups are perceived as threatening or competitive (Duckitt, 2006; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007). The general logic behind the DPM can be extended into the field of international relations: a respondent's own country can be seen as an analogue of the social ingroup, whereas other countries are external attitudinal objects similar to social outgroups (Satherley & Sibley, 2016; Sidanius et al., 2004). Developing this logic, we further contend that foreign countries—like social outgroups in the standard DPM model—can be seen as either threatening or competitive, and motivations postulated by the DPM (security and superiority) can translate to foreign policy goals.

Existing research demonstrates that authoritarianism and perceptions of threat indeed predict foreign policy attitudes (Gadarian, 2010; Hetherington & Suhay, 2011; Huddy et al., 2005). The same is true for SDO: those high on SDO prefer international trade deals that result in relative rather than absolute advantage (i.e., outperforming competitors is more important for high-SDO people than increasing their own well-being; Mutz & Kim, 2017). Furthermore, there is evidence that, at least in the Arab world, SDO is associated with anti-American attitudes; specifically, those high in SDO tend to be pro-American (Alexander et al., 2005; Levin et al., 2003). This negative effect is interpreted through the lens of Arab countries' relative position in the international hierarchy vis-a-vis the United States: among citizens of less powerful countries, the desire for more equality in global affairs (an attitude that corresponds to low SDO scores) is associated with negative attitudes toward the superpower, and vice versa. Therefore, this effect can be different in countries that occupy higher positions in the international hierarchy, such as Russia. Tests that directly contrast the effects of authoritarianism and SDO on attitudes toward countries—including the United States—have been relatively rare, but they demonstrate that these effects are indeed non-trivial and often opposite in direction (Henry et al., 2005; Levin et al., 2012; Satherley & Sibley, 2016).
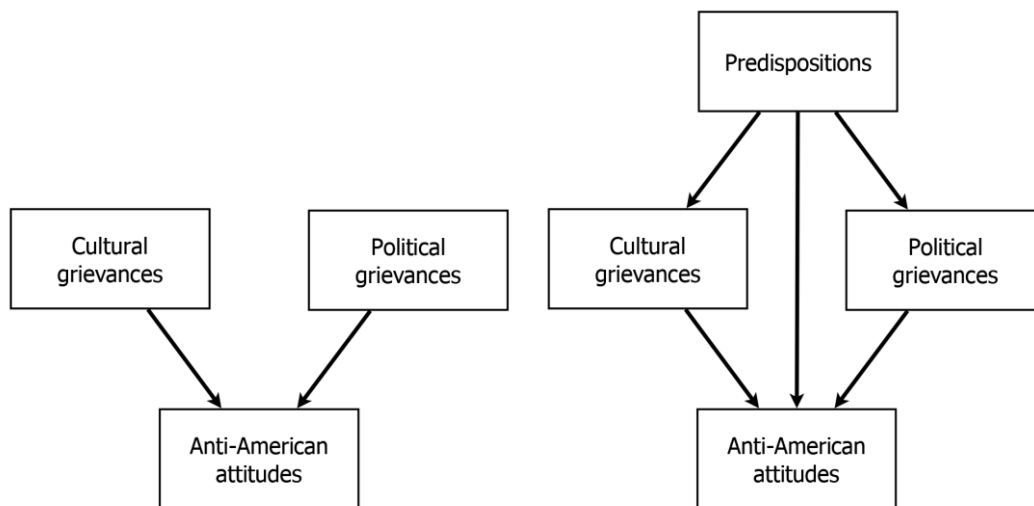
The DPM allows us to improve upon previous studies that simply contrast the effects of cultural and political grievances on anti-Americanism as illustrated on the left side of Figure 2. Instead of assuming that grievances represent the true drivers of anti-Americanism, we treat them as epiphenomenal with respect to psychological orientations that predict both the endorsement of grievances and, ultimately, anti-American attitudes (the right side of Figure 2).

We implement a test based on the DPM by using authoritarianism and SDO to predict political and cultural grievances, anti-American attitudes, and support for confrontation with the

United States in the Russian public. This will allow us to understand whether anti-American attitudes among Russians are predominantly driven by the security motivation and viewing the United States as a threat (if authoritarianism is a better predictor) or by the superiority motivation and perceiving the United States as a competitor (if SDO is a better predictor).

**Figure 2**
*Classic Model of Anti-Americanism (Left) and the Model Informed by the DPM (Right)*



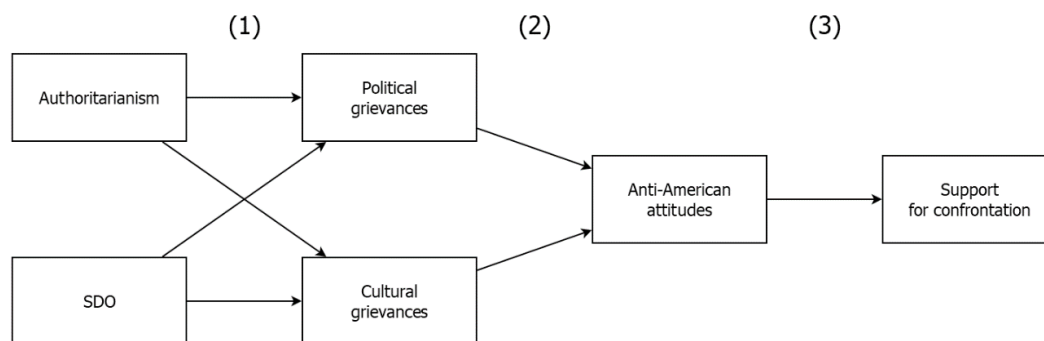**Expectations and Hypotheses**

The discussion above allows us to formulate several hypotheses to be tested in the empirical section of the paper. Specifically, we expect authoritarianism and SDO to positively predict the expression of political grievances (H1 and H2), cultural grievances (H3 and H4), and anti-American attitudes (H5 and H6). Since we are interested in the potential political consequences of both grievances and anti-American attitudes, we also use support for confrontation with the United States as an additional dependent variable. Since previous research on the DPM does not provide enough of a theoretical basis to expect effects of authoritarianism and SDO on support for confrontation, we treat that analysis as exploratory.

In addition to regressions that predict the four outcomes of interest independently, we

also fit an integrated model that replicates the theoretical pathways from predispositions to policy preferences as postulated by the DPM. Specifically, we expect that authoritarianism and SDO will boost the acceptance of the grievance language (step one), perceptions of grievances will lead to anti-American attitudes (step two), and then those with high anti-American attitudes will support confrontational policies (step three). Figure 3 presents the corresponding pathways.[4]

**Figure 3**
*Hypothesized Pathways from Authoritarianism and SDO to Anti-American Attitudes*



## Data and Variables

On March 23 and 24 of 2020, we carried out an online survey on a sample of 806 Russian adults.[5] Respondents were recruited using an opt-in proprietary panel maintained by a local survey firm. The firm distributed an anonymous survey link to the panel members, and those willing to participate accepted the study invitation and completed the survey. The sample characteristics are as follows. The mean age is 39.6 years (40.5 years nationally) and the gender ratio is 38.2% male to 61.8% female (46.5% to 53.5% nationally).[6] Higher education is reported by 74.4% of respondents (56.7% nationally) and approximately 71% of the sample live in a city

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[4]  In the interests of simplicity, Figure 3 omits some potential direct effects (e.g., the possible direct effect of authoritarianism on anti-American attitudes that is not mediated by grievances), but such effects are estimated in the integrated model.

[5]  The survey was fielded in Russian, but in the paper, we provide English translations of the materials.

[6]  National demographic data are from the Russian Federal State Statistics Service (rosstat.gov.ru).

(74.8% nationally). Finally, 88.2% of respondents are ethnic Russians (80.9% nationally).

Overall, our sample is somewhat skewed toward female and highly-educated respondents but

still exhibits a reasonable degree of demographic variation.

As a measure of authoritarianism, we used the 4-item child-rearing battery (Feldman &

Stenner, 1997), which was recently validated in the Russian context (Zhirkov et al., 2023). SDO

was measured using a shortened version of $SDO_7$, the most recent variant of the full version of

the scale (Ho et al. 2015). The order of the authoritarianism and SDO scales was randomized.

See Supplementary Material for the questions and response options.

We asked about political and cultural grievances separately given the prominence of this

distinction in the literature (Sidanius et al., 2004; Tessler & Robbins, 2007; Zhirkov et al., 2014).

Here is a sample question on political grievances: "Russia's economic problems in the 1990s

were caused by the West's deliberate efforts, not missteps of the Russian leadership." And this is

a sample question on cultural grievances: "Propaganda of homosexuality in the modern West is a

real problem that threatens Russian society." Responses were coded on a 4-point Likert-type

scale from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 4 = *Strongly agree*. See Supplementary Material for full

question batteries and details on their administration in the survey.[7]

Respondents were asked two questions about their attitudes to the United States and

Americans on a scale from 1 = *Very unfavorable* to 4 = *Very favorable*.[8] Answers to these two

questions (with reversed responses) were averaged to obtain overall anti-American attitudes. The

next question asked respondents about their readiness to engage in an open conflict with the

United States (see Supplementary Material for the exact formulation) with scores ranging from 0

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[7]    The grievance questions mostly feature "the West" rather than the United States directly. These formulations
       have been chosen for external validity reasons—this is the way the grievances are discussed in Russia. Putin's
       speeches cited above are good illustrations.

[8]    The same question format is used in global opinion surveys by the Pew Research Center.

= *Avoid direct confrontation* to 10 = *Openly challenge the United States*. The distinction between anti-American attitudes and readiness for confrontation was motivated by the expectation that even among those with highly unfavorable opinions of the United States, many would still prefer to avoid direct conflict.

## Results

We start by estimating OLS regression models, in which we use authoritarianism, SDO, and demographic controls (age, gender, education, urbanization, and ethnicity) to predict political and cultural grievances, anti-American attitudes, and support for confrontation with the United States. In the analyses, all variables are standardized, so the coefficients can range from $-1$ (perfect negative relationship) to 1 (perfect positive relationship). Regression coefficients are presented graphically in Figure 4. They show that authoritarianism significantly and positively predicts all four outcomes: authoritarians report higher levels of political grievances *(b* = 0.15, *p* < .001; H1 supported), higher levels of cultural grievances (*b* = 0.26, *p* < .001; H3 supported), stronger anti-American attitudes (*b* = 0.17, *p* = .001; H5 supported), and greater support for confrontation (*b* = 0.10, *p* = .005). SDO, by contrast, is negatively related to political grievances (*b* = −0.10, *p* = .006), while not being significantly associated with the other three outcomes (H2, H4, and H6 not supported).[9]
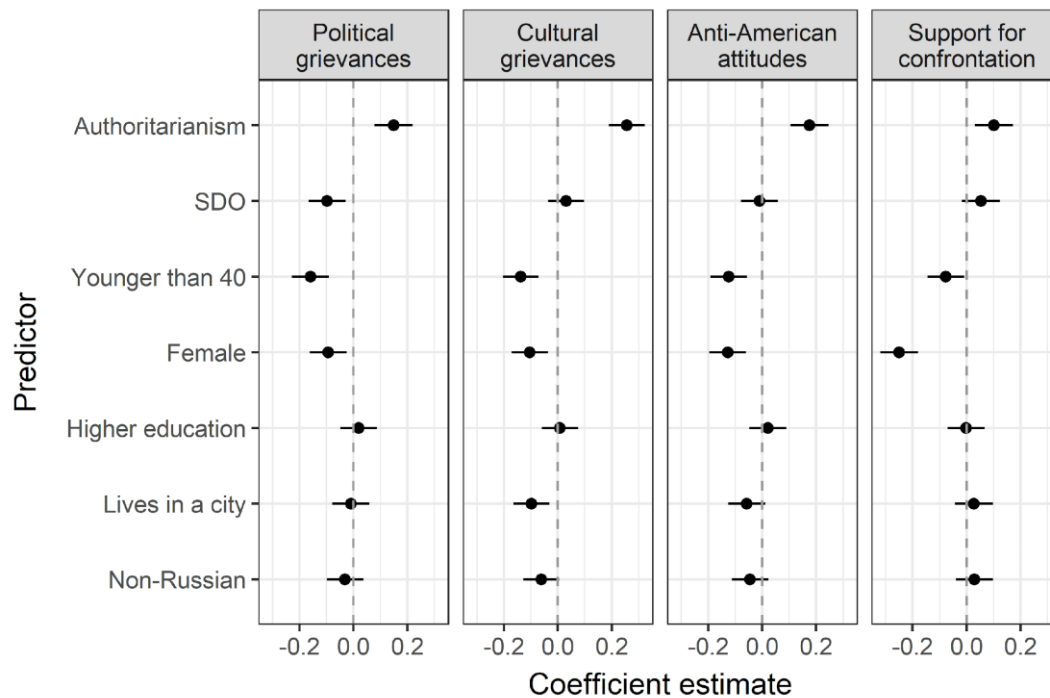
Even though demographic variables are not the focus of our study, it is worth noting that age and gender emerge as significant predictors of all four outcomes of interest. Specifically, as Figure 4 shows, females and younger respondents express lower levels of political and cultural grievances, weaker anti-American attitudes, and less support for confrontational policies. We do

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[9]  It is important that the null effects are not produced by low variation in either the explanatory variable or the dependent variables. See Table S1 in Supplementary Material for descriptive statistics, including sample standard deviations.

not find similar differences for college-educated respondents, urban dwellers, or those who

identify with minority ethnic groups. The only exception is that those residing in large cities

score somewhat lower on the index of cultural grievances.

**Figure 4**
*Authoritarianism, SDO, and Demographics as Predictors of Political and Cultural Grievances,*
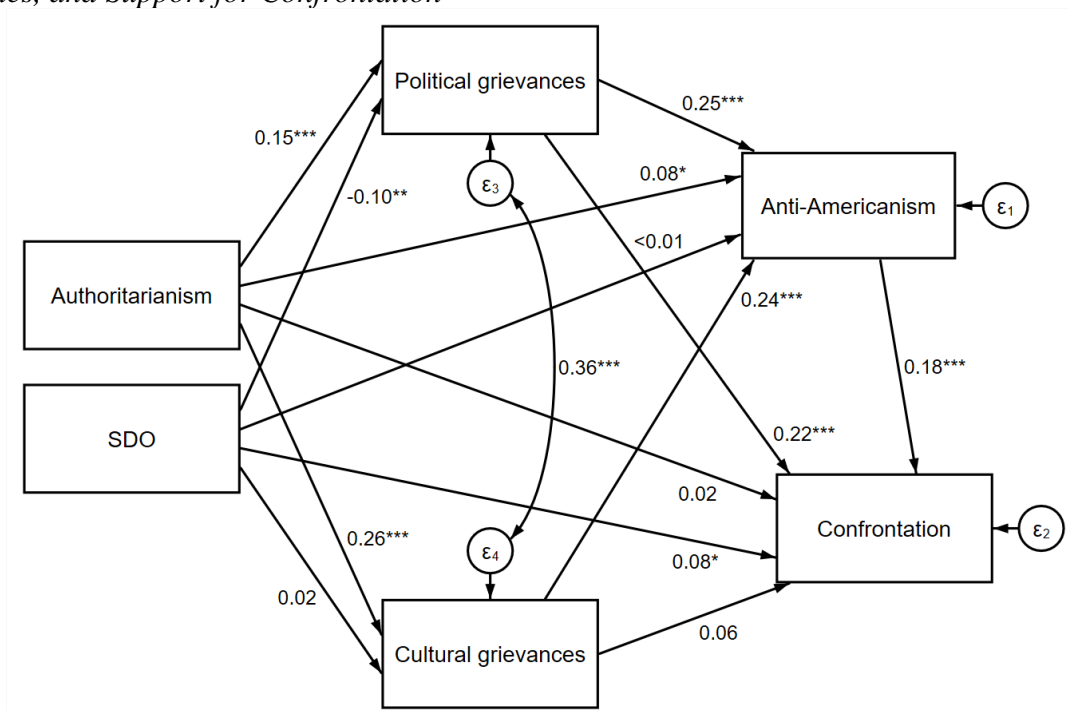*Anti-American Attitudes, and Support for Confrontation*



*Note.* All variables standardized. 95% confidence intervals presented. For numerical results, see
Table S2 in Supplementary Material.

As the second step in our analysis, we estimate a path model that corresponds to the

theoretical expectations. Path analysis is used to estimate directed relationships among variables;

in other words, it makes assumptions about the causal ordering of the variables. In our model,

authoritarianism and SDO, first, predict political and cultural grievances that, in turn, lead to

anti-Americanism and, ultimately, to support for confrontation. The results are presented in

Figure 5. They show that political grievances positively and significantly predict both anti-

Americanism and support for confrontation while cultural grievances are associated only with

the former. Therefore, anti-Americanism in Russia seems to have both political and cultural roots. Also, the magnitude of the correlation between the error terms of cultural and political grievances indicates that these variables are positively related but measure distinct phenomena. Comparing these results to the theoretical model of anti-American attitudes presented in Figure 3, we find strong and consistent evidence for the existence of the authoritarianism pathway and little to no evidence for the existence of the SDO pathway.

**Figure 5**
*The Paths from Authoritarianism and SDO to Political and Cultural Grievances, Anti-American Attitudes, and Support for Confrontation*



*Note.* $N = 764$. Control variables (not presented due to space considerations) include age, gender, education, urbanization, and ethnicity. See Table S3 in Supplementary Material for full results.

Importantly, a direct effect estimated in the path modeling framework may only partially capture the true relationship between two variables. For instance, according to the model presented in Figure 5, authoritarianism affects anti-Americanism both directly and indirectly via political and cultural grievances. Therefore, to properly summarize the effects of

authoritarianism and SDO on anti-American attitudes and support for confrontation, we also present indirect and total effects.[10] The estimates presented in Table 1 show that authoritarianism has positive and significant total effects on both anti-American attitudes and support for confrontation whereas SDO does not. Overall, authoritarianism is significantly and positively related to all outcomes of interest—political and cultural grievances, anti-American attitudes, and support for confrontation—whereas SDO is not. From these results, we can infer that anti-American attitudes in the Russian public are motivated by a perception of threat from the United States rather than by perceived competition.

**Table 1**
*Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects of Authoritarianism and SDO on Anti-American Attitudes and Support for Confrontation*

|  | Anti-American attitudes | Support for confrontation |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Authoritarianism |  |  |
| Direct | 0.06* | 0.02 |
|  | (0.03) | (0.03) |
| Indirect | 0.07*** | 0.07*** |
|  | (0.01) | (0.01) |
| Total | 0.13*** | 0.09* |
|  | (0.03) | (0.03) |
| SDO |  |  |
| Direct | 0.01 | 0.10* |
|  | (0.04) | (0.04) |
| Indirect | -0.02 | -0.03 |
|  | (0.02) | (0.02) |
| Total | -0.01 | 0.07 |
|  | (0.04) | (0.05) |

*Note.* Results are based on the same model as presented in Figure 5. Standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

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[10]  In the path modeling framework, an indirect effect is the pathway from the explanatory variable to the outcome through a mediator. The direct effect, in turn, is the pathway from the explanatory variable to the outcome while controlling for mediators. The total effect is the sum of the direct effect and any indirect effects.

**Discussion**

What do our findings imply for the Russian case? Looking at the development of anti-American sentiment among the Russian elite since 1993, one can see an up-and-down trend with each new peak higher than ever (Sokolov et al. 2019; Zhirkov 2019). These peaks correspond to major developments in the relationship between the United States and Russia. For instance, the peak in 1999 coincided with the first round of NATO enlargement in Eastern Europe that was immediately followed by NATO's bombing campaign against Yugoslavia. The 2008 peak was marked by the decision of the NATO summit in Bucharest (a "fudge" that called for Ukraine and Georgia's membership in the alliance but did not offer either a Membership Action Plan; Roxburgh 2021, pp. 224–231) and was followed by the Russo-Georgian War later that year.

Each of these events may be interpreted in the same dual fashion that we investigate in this paper. Did NATO enlargement make the Russian public more receptive to anti-American rhetoric because they felt they were losing a rivalry? Or did it create fear, however remote or close the actual threat might be? This paper cannot resolve this dilemma with certainty, but it does elucidate the issue. Although we only have a convenience sample from the Russian population at a single point in time, we show that anti-American sentiment—at least in the mass public—is associated with authoritarianism (and perceived threat) but not with SDO (and desire to outperform rivals).

Our results also have important implications for public diplomacy during the current war in Ukraine. They show how autocratic regimes like Russia can take advantage of real or imagined U.S. intervention threats to mobilize domestic support in favor of an aggressive foreign policy. In the Russian case, our results indicate that those in the mass public who score highest on authoritarianism will most likely be receptive to anti-American messaging, while Russians

with anti-authoritarian predispositions are likely to remain positive—or at least neutral—toward the United States. At the same time, U.S. efforts to minimize the perception of a threat emanating from across the Atlantic may win over those Russians who are in the middle of the authoritarianism scale.

## Conclusion

Our goal in this paper has been to understand the psychological motivations of anti-American mass attitudes in Russia. We have followed the dual-process model (DPM) postulating that anti-American attitudes, as with other forms of prejudice, can be motivated by the desire for security and perception of threat (measured by authoritarianism) or by superiority and the perception of competition (measured by social dominance orientation, or SDO). Using an original survey, we have demonstrated that political and cultural grievances, anti-American attitudes, and support for confrontation with the United States in the Russian mass public are all predicted by authoritarianism—but not by SDO. Therefore, anti-American attitudes among Russians are motivated more by sensitivity to threat rather than to competition.

From a broad perspective, our analysis continues the line of research on the importance of authoritarianism and perceived threats in foreign policy attitudes (Gadarian, 2010; Hetherington & Suhay, 2011; Huddy et al., 2005). More specifically, our results support research that emphasizes the role of threat and fear of intervention—either real or imagined—in driving anti-Americanism among the international public (Jamal et al., 2015). Given Russia's readiness to engage in an open conflict with the United States, it represents a particularly difficult test for the threat/security component of the DPM. Results of our analysis also fit existing research on Chinese political elites demonstrating that perceived vulnerability to threats from the United States is the dominant psychological motivation behind China's increasingly aggressive foreign

policy (Nathan & Scobell, 2012).

Nevertheless, our analysis linking authoritarianism and anti-American attitudes is limited to a single country, and future research may attempt to replicate it in other contexts such as China, Iran, or Turkey. Similarly, it may be worth investigating whether the DPM works equally well in the Russian elite sector, where researchers have demonstrated a linkage between both professional backgrounds and political messaging and anti-American attitudes. Status concerns are increasingly being discussed as explanations of Putin's actions in Ukraine, and they can be investigated within the framework of the DPM.

Overall, our paper once again highlights the importance of studying the psychological antecedents of foreign policy opinions, including in nondemocratic countries. And the authoritarian predisposition, which drives sensitivity to real or imagined threats in addition to submission to authority, may prove particularly promising in this regard.

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# Supplementary Material

**Contents**

Survey materials

Table S1. Descriptive statistics

Table S2. Regression results

Table S3. Full results of the path model

**Survey materials**

[The survey was fielded in Russian. Below is an English translation.]

*Political grievances*
"Below are several statements concerning the relationships between Russia and the West after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with each."
 (1) Spread of the West's influence on East European countries followed desire to hurt Russian interests, not wishes of those countries' populations
 (2) Spread of the West's influence on East European countries followed wishes of those countries' populations, not desire to hurt Russian interests (reversed)
 (3) NATO's military operation against Serbia in 1999 was launched to spread West's political influence, not stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo
 (4) NATO's military operation against Serbia in 1999 was launched to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, not spread West's political influence (reversed)
 (5) Russia's economic problems in the 1990s were caused by West's deliberate efforts, not missteps of the Russian leadership
 (6) Russia's economic problems in the 1990s were caused by missteps of the Russian leadership, not West's deliberate efforts (reversed)
 (7) Current hostility between Russia and Ukraine are caused by West's intrigues, not Russian leadership mistakes
 (8) Current hostility between Russia and Ukraine are caused by Russian leadership mistakes, not West's intrigues (reversed)
Question order randomized.
Respondents are randomly presented with four statements, one from each following pair: (1) and (2), (3) and (4), (5) and (6), (7) and (8).
Answers coded from 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 4 = "Strongly agree."

*Cultural grievances*
"Below are several statements concerning the modern Western culture. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with each."
 (1) Emphasis on individualism in modern Western culture leads to social degradation
 (2) Emphasis on individualism in modern Western culture leads to social progress (reversed)
 (3) Propaganda of homosexuality in the modern West is a real problem that threatens Russian society
 (4) The problem of homosexuality propaganda in the modern West is fabricated by the Russian government for political reasons (reversed)
 (5) Western feminism has gone too far and is unacceptable in Russian society
 (6) Russian society can learn a lot from Western feminism in terms of gender equality (reversed)
 (7) Modern West abandoned its own cultural heritage
 (8) Russia and the West have a lot of common cultural heritage (reversed)
Question order randomized.
Respondents are randomly presented with four statements, one from each following pair: (1) and (2), (3) and (4), (5) and (6), (7) and (8).
Answers coded from 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 4 = "Strongly agree."

*Social dominance orientation*
"Below are several statements concerning the relationships between Russia and the West after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with each."
 (1) An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom
 (2) Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups
 (3) No one group should dominate in society (reversed)
 (4) Groups at the bottom are just as deserving as groups at the top (reversed)
 (5) Group equality should not be our primary goal
 (6) It is unjust to try to make groups equal
 (7) We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups (reversed)
 (8) We should work to give all groups an equal chance to succeed (reversed)

Question order randomized.
Respondents are randomly presented with four statements, one from each following pair: (1) and (2), (3) and (4), (5) and (6), (7) and (8).
Answers coded from 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 4 = "Strongly agree."

*Authoritarianism*
"Although there are a number of qualities that people feel children should have, every person thinks that some qualities are more important than others. Below are pairs of desirable qualities. For each pair please indicate which quality you think is more important for a child to have."
- Independence or respect for elders
- Be considerate or well-behaved
- Have obedience or self-reliance
- Have curiosity or good manners

Question order randomized.
Answers coded 1 when a pro-authoritarian trait is chosen (respect for elders, well-behaved, obedience, good manners) and 0 otherwise.

*Anti-American attitudes*
- What is your opinion of the United States?
- What is your opinion of Americans?

Question order randomized.
Answers coded from 1 = "Very unfavorable" to 4 = "Very favorable."
Scores reversed to obtain anti-American attitudes.

*Support for confrontation*
"The degree of confrontation between Russia and the United States is currently on the rise. There are different views on how Russia should act in this situation. What is your position?

For your response, please use the scale from 0 to 10. If you think that Russia should avoid direct confrontation with the United States, choose answers close to 0. If you think that Russia should openly challenge the United States, choose answers close to 10. If your position is somewhere in between, choose answers close to 5."

**Table S1**

*Descriptive Statistics*

|  | Min | Max | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Authoritarianism | 0 | 1 | 0.45 | 0.27 |
| SDO | 1 | 4 | 1.96 | 0.55 |
| Political grievances | 1 | 4 | 2.69 | 0.59 |
| Cultural grievances | 1 | 4 | 2.73 | 0.58 |
| Anti-American attitudes | 1 | 4 | 2.34 | 0.59 |
| Support for confrontation | 0 | 10 | 4.01 | 2.41 |

*Note*. SD = standard deviation

**Table S2**

*Regression Results*

| | Political grievances | Cultural grievances | Anti-American attitudes | Support for confrontation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Authoritarianism | 0.15*** | 0.26*** | 0.17*** | 0.10** |
| | (0.04) | (0.03) | (0.04) | (0.04) |
| SDO | -0.10** | 0.03 | -0.01 | 0.05 |
| | (0.04) | (0.03) | (0.04) | (0.04) |
| Age (younger than 40) | -0.16*** | -0.14*** | -0.12*** | -0.08* |
| | (0.04) | (0.03) | (0.04) | (0.04) |
| Gender (female) | -0.09** | -0.10** | -0.13*** | -0.25*** |
| | (0.04) | (0.03) | (0.04) | (0.04) |
| Education (higher) | 0.02 | 0.01 | 0.02 | -0.00 |
| | (0.04) | (0.03) | (0.04) | (0.04) |
| Residence (city) | -0.01 | -0.10** | -0.06 | 0.03 |
| | (0.04) | (0.03) | (0.04) | (0.04) |
| Ethnicity (non-Russian) | -0.03 | -0.06 | -0.04 | 0.03 |
| | (0.03) | (0.03) | (0.03) | (0.03) |
| *N* | 778 | 778 | 778 | 766 |

*Note*. Standard errors in parentheses.

$* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001$

**Table S3**

*Full Results of the Path Model*

| | Estimate |
|---|---|
| **Political grievances ←** | |
| Authoritarianism | 0.11*** |
| | (0.03) |
| SDO | -0.11** |
| | (0.04) |
| Age | 0.20*** |
| | (0.04) |
| Gender (female) | -0.04* |
| | (0.01) |
| Education (higher) | 0.01 |
| | (0.02) |
| Urbanization (city) | -0.01 |
| | (0.02) |
| Ethnicity (Russian) | 0.01 |
| | (0.02) |
| Intercept | 0.49*** |
| | (0.03) |
| **Cultural grievances ←** | |
| Authoritarianism | 0.19*** |
| | (0.02) |
| SDO | 0.02 |
| | (0.04) |
| Age | 0.18*** |
| | (0.04) |
| Gender (female) | -0.04** |
| | (0.01) |
| Education (higher) | -0.00 |
| | (0.02) |
| Urbanization (city) | -0.05** |
| | (0.01) |
| Ethnicity (Russian) | 0.03 |
| | (0.02) |
| Intercept | 0.46*** |
| | (0.03) |
| **Anti-American attitudes ←** | |
| Political grievances | 0.25*** |
| | (0.04) |
| Cultural grievances | 0.25*** |
| | (0.04) |
| Authoritarianism | 0.06* |
| | (0.03) |
| SDO | 0.01 |
| | (0.04) |
| Age | 0.10* |
| | (0.04) |
| Gender (female) | -0.03* |
| | (0.01) |
| Education (higher) | 0.01 |
| | (0.01) |
| Urbanization (city) | -0.01 |
| | (0.01) |
| Ethnicity (Russian) | 0.01 |
| | (0.02) |

| | |
|---|---:|
| Intercept | 0.12** |
| | (0.04) |
| **Support for confrontation ←** | |
| Political grievances | 0.27*** |
| | (0.05) |
| Cultural grievances | 0.07 |
| | (0.05) |
| Anti-American attitudes | 0.22*** |
| | (0.04) |
| Authoritarianism | 0.02 |
| | (0.03) |
| SDO | 0.10* |
| | (0.04) |
| Age | 0.02 |
| | (0.05) |
| Gender (female) | -0.10*** |
| | (0.02) |
| Education (higher) | -0.01 |
| | (0.02) |
| Urbanization (city) | 0.02 |
| | (0.02) |
| Ethnicity (Russian) | -0.04 |
| | (0.02) |
| Intercept | 0.14** |
| | (0.05) |
| **Error variances** | |
| Political grievances | 0.04*** |
| | (0.00) |
| Cultural grievances | 0.03*** |
| | (0.00) |
| Anti-American attitudes | 0.03*** |
| | (0.00) |
| Support for confrontation | 0.05*** |
| | (0.00) |
| **Error covariances** | |
| Political grievances, Cultural grievances | 0.01*** |
| | (0.00) |

*Note.* $N = 764$. Standard errors in parentheses.
\* $p < .05$, \*\* $p < .01$, \*\*\* $p < .001$