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# "Forward to David the Builder!" Georgia's (re)turn to language-centered nationalism

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After the Rose Revolution, President Saakashvili tried to move away from the exclusionary nationalism of the past, which had poisoned relations between Georgians and their Armenian and Azerbaijani compatriots. His government instead sought to foster an inclusionary nationalism, wherein belonging was contingent upon speaking the state language and all Georgian speakers, irrespective of origin, were to be equals. This article examines this nation-building project from a top-down and bottom-up lens. I first argue that state officials took rigorous steps to signal that Georgian-speaking minorities were part of the national fabric, but failed to abolish religious and historical barriers to their inclusion. I next utilize a large-scale, matched-guise experiment ($n = 792$) to explore if adolescent Georgians ostracize Georgian-speaking minorities or embrace them as their peers. I find that the upcoming generation of Georgians harbor attitudes in line with Saakashvili's language-centered nationalism, and that current Georgian nationalism therefore is more inclusionary than previous research, or Georgia's tumultuous past, would lead us to believe.

**Keywords:** Georgia; nationalism; minorities; language; matched-guise experiment

## Introduction

"Forward to David the Builder!" is a motto utilized by Mikheil Saakashvili, the third president of Georgia, who came to power in the Rose Revolution of November 2003 (Maisuradze 2009). It evokes the deeds of a legendary medieval king, who united the divided Georgian lands – against considerable odds. Saakashvili sought to repeat this feat and considered David the Builder's tolerant policies as a suitable model. During his reign, the Georgian language had served as the binding element among an otherwise multi-ethnic and multi-denominational ruling elite (Amirejibi-Mullen 2011, 336). For Saakashvili, the (re) introduction of such an inclusionary nationalism was indispensable to overcome the exclusionary nationalism of Georgia's more recent past.

This article examines Saakashvili's nation-building program, and the challenges it encountered, through elite interviews and a matched-guise experiment fielded among high-school-aged respondents in Georgian public schools. I argue that Georgian nationalism has taken a linguistic turn, since the upcoming generation of ethnic Georgians treats the state language as a necessary and sufficient criterion for inclusion.

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The first generation of modern Georgian nationalists, led by Ilia Chavchavadze, had singled out the Georgian language as the main national adhesive in the hope of nurturing a language-centered nationalism of the European mold (Nodia 2009, 89). But, Georgia's incorporation into the Soviet Union offset this aspiration, and instead resulted in a "re-definition of Georgian-ness as an ethnic nation in the 20th century" (Amirejibi-Mullen 2011, 265). Georgians acquired an official homeland in the form of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) and benefited from affirmative action policies therein. However, minorities did not benefit from these "nativization" policies since they were seen as "settlers" in the Georgian SSR and were separated from Georgians through hereditary nationality markers in their passports (Martin 2001; Broers 2004).[1]

Intellectuals steeped in these primordial doctrines came to spearhead the independence movements that emerged in the South Caucasus in the late 1980s (Cheterian 2008, 40). In the Georgian SSR, the philologist Zviad Gamsakhurdia, poet Merab Kostava, and historian Giorgi Chanturia called for Georgian "ownership" of the republic. They were concerned about the demographic growth of non-Georgians, wanted to strengthen Georgian language and culture, and elevate the role of the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC). These plans roused the Georgian populace, who in 1991 elected Gamsakhurdia as the first president of the independent Republic of Georgia (Hewitt 2013). However, Gamsakhurdia rejected minorities as "guests," who had been "brought here by the Kremlin, by Russia, by the empire" (Shane 1991; Suny 1994, 325). He envisaged a historically enclosed Georgian nation, held together by their common ethnic origin and language, and which he believed had a special "Spiritual Mission." Gamsakhurdia's (1990) fervent ethno-religious nationalism excluded and therefore alienated minorities.

Georgia's minorities, who found themselves in an independent state ruled by and for ethnic Georgians, began pursuing their own self-determination (Kaufman 2001). Ossetians in the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast and Abkhaz in their Autonomous SSR, both located inside the Georgian SSR, established popular front organizations (*Adaemon Nykhas* and *Ajdgylara*) calling for independence. Aided by armed volunteers from the North Caucasus, as well as Russian forces, these ethno-regions broke away from the Georgian state through separatist wars in the early 1990s. Even though Georgia's Armenians and Azerbaijanis resided in two ethnic enclaves, Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli, bordering on their southern kin states, locals here never became overtly separatist. But, they did set up national fronts movements (*Javakhk* and *Geyrat*) calling for regional autonomy and created militias to protect their constituents.

In the midst of this process of state disintegration, Gamsakhurdia was toppled by a motley coalition of displaced Communists, democratic intellectuals, and mafia-esque politicians. The military junta invited Eduard Shevardnadze, the former First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party and Foreign Minister of the USSR, to serve as figurehead chairman of the government. But, Shevardnadze managed to balance the factions off against one another, restored a modicum of order, and was elected president in 1995. However, for fear of upsetting either Georgian ethno-nationalists or estranged minorities, Shevardnadze decided to "let sleeping dogs lie" (Nodia 2002, 6). Abkhazia and South Ossetia remained *de facto* independent, protected by Russian peacekeepers, but the Armenian and Azerbaijani enclaves fell under Shevardnadze's thumb since he managed to co-opt activists from Javakhk and Geyrat (Metreveli 2004).

Multiple strands of Georgian nationalism coexisted during Shevardnadze's second term in office (Sabanadze 2010, 104). On the one hand, he granted citizenship to all residents and struck a "civic" tone in his rhetoric. Under pressure from reformers inside the ruling party,[2] he also abolished the practice of differentiating among Georgian citizens by listing their

nationality on passports (Reisner 2010). On the other hand, "ethnicity remained a primary factor of self-identification among the wider population" (Nilsson and Popjanevski 2009, 10). Conservative "nativists" regarded the GOC and its traditions as a pillar of Georgianness, which by implication positioned minorities as outcasts (Nodia 2005). Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the ethno-regions studied with textbooks sent from their kin states, in their respective languages. They did not speak Georgian and were left severely isolated from Georgia (Wheatley 2004, 2005) (Table 1).

Among all post-Soviet states that embarked upon nation-building processes in the 1990s, Georgia's ethno-political implosion stands out as the perhaps the most cataclysmic. At the time of his presidential inauguration, Saakashvili therefore vowed – on the grave of David the Builder – to overcome the societal divisions caused by the exclusionary nationalism of Georgia's recent past (*Civil Georgia*, 25 January 2004). But since the Abkhazians and Ossetians remained outside the reach of the central government, I will proceed to ask: Did Georgia's third president succeed in fostering an inclusionary nationalism within which Armenians and Azerbaijanis were welcome?

Scholars have been skeptical. Broers (2008, 299) stresses the persistent "expressions of intolerance salient in Georgian society." Nilsson (2009, 136) doubts the "prospects for Armenians to become accepted as part of the Georgian national 'large group tent.'" George (2008, 1151) argues that some of Saakashvili's reforms "disproportionately hurt ethnic and religious minority enclaves." Wheatley (2009, 119) is also doubtful, due to the "lack of a 'civic' model for the accommodation of minorities" and even implies that Georgia is backsliding, by subtitling his article "one step forward, two steps back." A lone optimist in this debate is Jones (2006, 249), who maintains that "nationalism in Georgia today, when put in context, is more 'modern' and 'normal' than most Western analysts – still reeling from the heated rhetoric of Georgia's militant nationalist pamphleteers of the early 1990s – suggest." This article lends credence to Jones' stance, and argues that President Saakashvili, despite concessions prompted by resistance from "nativists," helped foster a linguistic and tolerant nationalism, within which Armenian and Azerbaijani minorities were greeted as peers.

This thesis is supported in six steps. I *first* introduce Ernest Gellner's (2006) tale of Megalomania and Ruritania, which explains why language-centered nationalisms are inclusive. In the *second* and *third* sections, I adopt a top-down lens in order to examine

Table 1. Georgia's demographic composition, according to the 1989 and 2002 census.

| Year | 1989 | 2002 |
|---|---|---|
| Total | 5,400,841 | 4,371,535 |
| Georgians (%) | 3,787,393 (70.1) | 3,661,173 (83.8) |
| Armenians (%) | 437,211 (8.1) | 248,929 (5.7) |
| — in Javakheti (%) | 97,056 (1.8) | 90,373 (2.1) |
| Azerbaijanis (%) | 307,556 (5.7) | 284,761 (6.5) |
| — in Kvemo Kartli (%) | 178,833 (3.3) | 165,987 (3.8) |
| Ossetians (%) | 164,055 (3.0) | 38,028 (0.9) |
| Abkhaz (%) | 95,853 (1.8) | 3527 (0.1) |
| Others (%) | 610,295 (11.3) | 131,146 (3.0) |

Note: The 2002 census does not count inhabitants in separatist Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Here, and throughout this article, "Javakheti" refers to the districts of Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda, whereas "Kvemo Kartli" denotes the municipalities of Marneuli, Dmanisi, and Bolnisi. Data have been compiled from the National Statistics Office of Georgia (1989, 2002).

the official efforts undertaken to enable Armenians and Azerbaijanis to integrate without shedding their national characteristics – as well as shortcomings in this regard. In the *fourth* step, I present the matched-guise experiment I have conducted in order to learn if the next generations of Georgians accept Saakashvili's linguistic nationalism. On the basis of this bottom-up material, the *fifth* and *sixth* sections ask if Georgian students harbor attitudes that reward Armenians and Azerbaijanis for learning the state language and if they accept Georgian-speaking minorities as equals. This design enables us to investigate Georgian nationalism, and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, in unprecedented depth. And, the results shed new light on the prospects for inter-ethnic accord among Georgians and their Armenian and Azerbaijani compatriots.

## Constructing inclusive nations

Gellner's (2006, 57–84) tale about a borderland region, "Ruritania," inside the empire of "Megalomania," explains why inclusionary nationalisms are language centered. He describes how minorities from a poor borderland region, Ruritanians, migrate to a rich urban center, populated by Megalomanians, in search for greener pastures. But, well-heeled Megalomanians consider themselves to be of a higher standing and look down on the laggard Ruritanians, who stand out due to their mannerisms, accents, surnames, or appearance. Ruritanians might escape this stigmatization by losing their distinctive traits and adopt Megalomanian culture, or they might detest being discriminated against and return to their borderland intent on elevating Ruritanian culture by creating a separate state. Under what conditions will the communities integrate or disintegrate?

Gellner (2006, 62) portrays language as a necessary and sufficient condition for the emergence of an inclusive nation. Without being proficient in the common state language, Ruritanians would not be able to move into the Megalomanian heartland and climb the social ladder (Conversi 2007, 374–376). Inclusionary nation-builders must therefore spur their citizens to adopt and sustain a uniform linguistic infrastructure, which minimizes transaction costs and maximizes geographic and social mobility for everyone within the national domain (for France's experience see Weber 1976, 67–95). But before Ruritanians decide to learn the Megalomanian language, they need to feel confident that language is a sufficient criterion for inclusion. If Ruritanians who learn the state language cannot blend in, due to their physical features or because they retain surnames, religious beliefs, or cultural practices that are different from those of Megalomanians, then Gellner (2006, 64) expects "fissures" to arise. Megalomanians must therefore be tolerant, and abstain from discriminating against Megalomanian-speaking Ruritanians who retain "entropy-resistant" traits associated with their original in-group.

This Megalomanian–Ruritanian parable teaches us that Georgians must not "police 'boundary crossing' [if minorities] develop facility in 'their' language" (Laitin 1998, 126). Since out-group acceptance of Georgian-speaking minorities sends a crucial signal to Armenians and Azerbaijanis considering whether to integrate, I will examine the attitudes of Georgian elites and adolescents toward Georgian-speaking minorities. I first adopt a top-down perspective and ask: (A) what official efforts did Saakashvili's government undertake to ensure that Georgian-speaking minorities were met with acceptance? (B) and in what ways, if any, did they face residual barriers to inclusion? In order to address these questions, I investigate public rhetoric, legislation, policy initiatives, and draw upon interviews with Saakashvili's nation-building entrepreneurs. However, since minorities can also gauge levels of out-group acceptance from their everyday interactions with Georgians, I next adopt a bottom-up lens and ask: (C) do the next generation of

Georgians reward Armenians and Azerbaijanis for speaking Georgian? (D) and, if so, are they also tolerant toward Georgian-speaking minorities? In order to answer these questions, I conducted a socio-linguistic experiment for 792 adolescent Georgians, drawn from 52 schools in Tbilisi, Javakheti, and Kvemo Kartli.

## Signaling out-group acceptance

Let us first investigate if Saakashvili defended a "minimalistic" version of Georgian-ness, within which Georgian-speaking Armenians and Azerbaijanis were accepted. At first glance, Saakashvili reminded observers of Gamsakhurdia, since "both used the legitimating figure of the nation at the center of their political programs" (Manning 2007, 178). However, Saakashvili soon turned out to be a different kind of nationalist.

Saakashvili's (2010) references to David the Builder and Ilia Chavchavadze revived inclusionary imagery from Georgia's distant past, and thus helped anchor his linguistic nationalism and differentiate it from the ethnic nationalism of Georgia's recent past. His reforms also extended to Georgia's state symbols. The old flag, national hymn, and state emblem, which harked back to the 1918–21 Democratic Republic of Georgia, were scrapped. Its flag, which had been hoisted by Georgian troops during past ethnic conflicts and was associated with post-Soviet stagnation, was replaced by a red and white five-cross flag evocative of Georgia's medieval Golden Age (Derluguian 2004). The hymn *tavisupleba* (Freedom) replaced *dideba* (Praise). And although the state emblem still featured Georgia's patron saint, St. George, it also came to include Georgia's state motto, *dzala ertobashia* (Strength in Unity), along an attendant banner.

Alongside these historical analogies and symbolic reforms, Saakashvili used public speeches to stress that all ethnic groups were part and parcel of the national fabric. In his inaugural speech, he proclaimed:

> Georgia is home not only for all Georgians, but also for all ethnic minorities, residing in Georgia. Every citizen, who considers Georgia as its homeland, be they Russian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, Azerbaijani, Armenian, Jewish, Greek, Ukrainian, Kurd – is our greatest wealth and treasure. (*Civil Georgia*, 25 January 2004)

Over the next years, Saakashvili (2005b) underlined that "Georgia [ … ] has rejected the politics of ethnicity, division and mistrust." He argued that "it is our responsibility to maintain the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Georgia, which has been left to us by our ancestors," but maintained that "the nation and the nationality are only one – Georgian, and it consists of Georgians, Azeri-Georgians, Abkhaz-Georgians, Ossetian-Georgians, Armenian-Georgians and so on" (*Civil Georgia*, 26 May 2007). Saakashvili (2005a) deemed it vital to turn Georgia into a "motherland of all its citizens," since "we need to know our history. And our history teaches us that tolerance is the basis for sovereignty in our region. It is not only a moral duty – it is an issue of national security" (*Civil Georgia*, 26 September 2013).

Unlike the Soviet-era intelligentsia that had bred the ethno-centric ideas from which "nativist" nationalism sprung, Saakashvili's circle belonged to a younger generation of intellectuals, who were Western-educated, Anglophone, and liberal (Shatirishvili 2003).[3] Many of Saakashvili's lieutenants were themselves atypical Georgians, such as his State Minister for Reintegration and Minister for Internal Affairs, who adhered to Judaism and Catholicism, respectively, rather than the GOC. The inclusion of such figures in the government led some opponents to deride Saakashvili's rule as "non-national" or "anti-national" (see Gavashelishvili 2012, 123) but it also meant that officials were committed to relax the definition of Georgian-ness.

Thus, although Georgia had joined several international treaties before the revolution,[4] Saakashvili ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 2005 (UNAG 2008, 44). This afforded additional protection to Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the borderlands, since Saakashvili became obliged to translate the principles of the convention into national policies (Wheatley 2006). To this end, a series of domestic institutions were established. He first appointed a State Minister for National Accord Issues, but a State Minister for Civil Integration replaced him in December 2004.[5] In 2005, a Council of National Minorities and Council of Religions surfaced at the Ombudsman's Tolerance Center, and in 2006 Saakashvili appointed a Presidential Advisor on Civil Integration (Sordia 2009; PDO 2010). Yet a serious "lack of coordination among state bodies dealing with minority issues" beset these structures throughout Saakashvili's first term (Nilsson and Popjanevski 2009, 25).

At the beginning of his second term, Saakashvili therefore replaced the State Minister for Civil Integration with a State Minister for Reintegration (Temur Yakobashvili), authorized to deal with Abkhazia and South Ossetia – as well as the Armenian and Azerbaijani ethno-regions. In tandem, Saakashvili's Advisor on Civil Integration (Tamar Kintsurashvili) was made chair of a Civil Integration and Tolerance Council, liable for devising a nation-building master plan. In May 2009, Saakashvili adopted its proposed "National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civic Integration" (UNAG 2010, 14–21). It identified six domains – rule of law; education and state language; media and access to information; political integration and civil participation; social and regional integration; and culture and preservation of identity – within which government agencies were to implement programs with funding from the state budget. Every month, these agencies reported to an Inter-Agency Commission under the State Ministry for Reintegration, where the deputy minister (Elene Tevdoradze) coordinated implementation. And every year, the deputy minister reported to the Civil Integration and Tolerance Council, where Saakashvili's Advisor on Civil Integration monitored the nation-building program. In addition, representatives at the Ombudsman's Council of National Minorities conducted external monitoring and took on a consultative role.[6]

These nation-building entrepreneurs singled out a shared language and tolerance among Georgia's citizens as crucial ingredients to ensure equal opportunities for all (CITC 2008).[7] Without speaking the state language, and a tolerant environment facing Georgian-speaking minorities, neither Javakheti-Armenians nor Kvemo Kartli-Azerbaijanis would have opportunities for geographic and social mobility in Georgia. Thus, while a range of programs within the Action Plan were designed to inspire minorities – and in particular adolescent minorities – to learn the state language, other programs were designed to protect Georgian-speaking minorities from discrimination. Georgia's Public Defender, himself praised for his promotion of tolerance, described Saakashvili's nation-builders as "committed" to both these targets (Wikileaks 2009c).[8]

Yet to the chagrin of some minorities, Saakashvili regarded them as "equal and alike," not as "equal and separate," and thus refused to allot rights on a sectarian basis.[9] He did not adopt a separate law on national minorities, or sign the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (Nilsson and Popjanevski 2009, 27; GoG 2012, 17). Minorities were, however, protected *qua* citizens.[10] Georgia's constitution, adopted in 1995, declared all citizens equal "regardless of race, color, language, sex, religion, political and other opinions, national, ethnic and social belonging, origin, property and title, place of residence" (Art. 14; Art. 38). These principles were then translated into the 1997 Law on the Public Unions of Citizens, 1997 Law on Culture, 1997 Law on Education, and the 1999 Criminal Code to name but a few examples (Jones 2006, 260). However, since these provisions were seen

as insufficient, Saakashvili toughened pre-existing bans against discrimination in the Criminal Code and in the provision of healthcare. He also added a clause on "neutrality and non-discrimination" to the 2005 Law on General Education (Art. 13) and similar phrases to the 2004 Law on Higher Education (Art. 3), as well as to the 2006 Labor Code (Art. 2). Additional reforms were initiated to enable minorities to regain historical surnames. Lastly, to help minorities to seek redress in case of discrimination, the Ombudsman established offices in both Akhalkalaki and Marneuli in 2009 (GoG 2007, 2009, 2012).

So as to inform minorities about ongoing reforms, Saakashvili reached out to them in their native languages. The National Concept for Tolerance and Civic Integration and related laws were translated and distributed in the ethno-regions – as were voters' lists and ballots during elections. As part of the Action Plan, the state funded newspapers, such as the Armenian-language *Vrastan* and Azerbaijani-language *Gurjistan*, and ordered public radio to air daily 10 minute news programs in Armenian, Azerbaijani, Abkhaz, Ossetian, and Russian. Daily TV-news was disseminated in the same set of languages through a program called *Moambe* on the Public Broadcaster's channel; until 2010, when the Russian newsreel was abolished and a separate Russian channel, called *Perviy Kavkaz*, was set up. Local TV-stations in Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli also began translating and rebroadcasting Georgian news, though some lacked licenses and struggled with funding and signal coverage (SMR 2014, 83–96).[11] Meanwhile, Georgian public radio and TV aired programs such as *Our Georgia* and *Our Yard*, and produced a series named *Multiethnic Georgia*, which showcased minorities' traditions. While the Public Broadcaster was obliged to reflect Georgia's multi-ethnic fabric, private broadcasters were prohibited from fomenting intolerance (UNAG 2010, 61–70).

As part of the Action Plan, the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection also supported dozens of museums, theaters, libraries, music schools, and other legal entities of public law (LEPLs) promoting minorities' cultures (SMR 2014, 136–154).[12] These efforts enabled a string of publications, productions, exhibitions, and performances over the years – held in Tbilisi, in the regions, and abroad. Also, the president's administration and the ombudsman partook in the promotion of minorities' cultures by arranging festivals, issuing periodicals, and awarding individuals fostering tolerance (GoG 2007, 27; PDO 2010, 10–19; GoG 2012, 132–136). Nonetheless, as we will discover in the next section, these symbolic, institutional, and practical efforts to signal out-group acceptance were deficient on several accounts.

## Remnants of discrimination

Armenians and Azerbaijanis were unsure if learning the state language was sufficient to be welcomed into the Georgian nation, since Saakashvili had to appeal to – or at least not alienate – circles favoring a more "maximalist" conception of Georgian-ness. Concerns lingered over the promotion of the state language, as well as due to residual barriers stemming from the politicization of religion and historical narratives in public.

Saakashvili's nation-building entrepreneurs construed the promotion of the state language, Georgian,[13] as an instrument to help Armenians and Azerbaijanis overcome social, professional, and political barriers and access equal opportunities in Georgia.[14] However, since the Georgian language is often seen as constitutive of Georgian-ness, minorities feared that linguistic adaptation might end in assimilation (Nijaradze 2008). This anxiety was fed by Saakashvili's push to implement language laws (ignored under Shevardnadze) requiring that administrative proceedings take place in Georgian. The sudden application of these laws left non-Georgian officials in the ethno-regions, who had used Russian,

Armenian, or Azerbaijani during proceedings, with no time to complete the arduous process of learning a foreign language as adults. Realizing the need to first create avenues for minorities to learn Georgian, Saakashvili then scaled back the implementation of these laws during his second term and instead tried to win over the next generation of Armenians and Azerbaijanis through educational reforms.[15]

Even so, minorities faced discrimination due to the privileges awarded to the GOC, whose clergy treated religion and tradition as essential elements of Georgian-ness (Nodia 2005, 76; Amirejibi-Mullen 2011, 313–322; De Waal 2011, 28). These "nativists" rose to prominence under Shevardnadze's second term, when Orthodox extremists were organizing attacks against "non-traditional" denominations. In 2002, a concordat was signed between the state and the GOC, and its protests forced Shevardnadze to withdraw from a treaty with the Vatican (Sepashvili 2003). From 2003 to 2008, the approval rating of the GOC soared from 39% to 87%, and groups like the Union of Orthodox Parents threatened religious freedom (Nijaradze 2008, 3; Wikileaks 2009b). Saakashvili's policies put him on a collision course with these actors, who opposed "diluting" the national idea. Though state officials were careful not to criticize the influential GOC, frustrations simmered under the surface and harmed efforts to instill out-group tolerance (Wikileaks 2009a).[16]

Saakashvili thus paid heed to the GOC through his symbolic politics. The flag did not just evoke memories of Georgia's medieval Golden Age; its five crosses were a Christian symbol (Crego 2007, 17). Orthodox imagery was also echoed in the national anthem, which began with the lines: "My icon is my motherland, and the whole world is its icon-stand." Saakashvili likewise took spiritual oaths at ceremonies involving the Patriarch in connection to his presidential inaugurations (*Civil Georgia*, 21 January 2008). These religious tributes, which minorities in the ethno-regions did not fail to notice,[17] led some citizens to believe that the GOC even functioned as a state religion.[18]

Officials also fell short of implementing *laïcité*, that is, separating church and state affairs, in the legal sphere. The constitution (Art. 9) declared "complete freedom of belief and religion," but recognized "the special role" of the GOC through a reference to the 2002 concordat. Thus, at a time when other religions could not even register as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the GOC had the status of a LEPL as well as a range of further privileges (Tsintsadze 2007). The concordat also lent legal force to GOC marriage services, and gave its priests special access to jails and military units. The church likewise enjoyed tax privileges and, unlike other denominations or institutions promoting minorities' cultures, it received lavish transfers from the state budget (*TI Georgia*, An Overview of Public Financing Provided to the Georgian Patriarchate, 4 July 2013). Another source of bias concerned the restitution of religious properties nationalized under the Soviet Union. Though the state assisted the return of churches to the GOC, the latter also obtained, or laid claim to, sites that once had belonged to other religious denominations (International Religious Freedom Report 2004, 2011). This fed frustration among Armenians, in particular, who were deprived of churches in Javakheti and in the capital, where some of the disputed properties fell into disrepair.[19]

But Saakashvili did take a stance against the nativists on some occasions. He curbed attacks against "non-traditional" believers by having police – quite literally – haul one of the culprits, a defrocked priest, out of his church in the Tbilisi suburb of Gldani (*Civil Georgia*, 13, March 2004). In 2005, Saakashvili enabled spiritual associations to register as non-profit organizations, but since religious minorities were loath to register as NGOs, he later pushed through reforms permitting other denominations to register as LEPLs (GoG 2007, 31; *Civil Georgia*, 7 July 2011). In the wake of this initiative, the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Muslim Governance of All Georgia registered as LEPLs,

which gave them limited tax privileges. However, due to the belated legal recognition of these denominations, and the GOCs' enduring sway over property restitution processes, no more than 10 Armenian churches and 12 mosques had been registered by 2012 (GoG 2012, 51, 75f).

Government officials also tried, with mixed success, to reduce Orthodox influence in the domain of education. Despite clauses in the 2002 concordat that had envisaged giving the GOC a consultative role in educational affairs, Saakashvili never adopted any laws to this effect. A memorandum between the GOC and Ministry of Education and Science was signed in 2005, but afterward Saakashvili instead adopted the Law on General Education, which outlawed proselytizing in schools (Art. 13). Implementation of this statue nonetheless lagged behind during the ensuing years. Teachers sometimes reinforced Orthodoxy or censured non-believers, although they risked dismissal for doing so (Tsintsadze 2007, 770; International Religious Freedom Report 2011; GoG 2012, 43). However, observations from my own visits to dozens of public schools in 2011 indicate that such transgressions were more common in Georgian-language sectors than in Armenian, Azerbaijani, or Russian-language sectors.

Apart from facing religious discrimination, minorities had difficulties reconciling their memories of the past with Saakashvili's, often instrumental, historical discourse.[20] In his narrative, the adversarial Russian "Other" represented the backward past, which Georgia had to escape in order to return to – and thus fulfill – its true European "Self" (Kolstø and Rusetskii 2012; Bolkvadze and Naylor 2015). Saakashvili thus dissociated Georgia from its Soviet/Russian past,[21] and attributed historic and present ills to its malignant influence in order to "excuse [Georgia's] limited current glory" and disown "responsibility and blame for its suffering" (Amirejibi-Mullen 2011, 321). This narrative discounted the xenophobia rampant among Georgians in the 1990s, and led officials to dismiss ethnic conflicts as "artificially provoked" by "imperial ideologists" (Kutelia 2007; *Civil Georgia*, 15 March 2007). Yet this self-serving account did not resonate with minorities, who had experienced Gamsakhurdia's chauvinism first hand.

Though pre-existing primers supplied pupils with ethno-centric accounts of the past, officials tried – with some success – to develop more inclusive historical textbooks. One old school book argued that "some genuine Georgian territories," which had been lost to Turkey, were "soaked by the blood of Georgian people" and another primer cast Georgia's multi-ethnic composition as a product of the "indigenous tolerance that Georgians have toward other nationalities" (Gundare 2007, 38; Pääbo 2011, 192). Despite protests from elder historians, who had penned these existing textbooks, Saakashvili's government proceeded to adopt new educational guidelines and new primers, which combined the teaching of Georgian history with the teaching of world history, and aimed to help pupils see past events from different angles (Reisner 2009). In 2009, regulatory bodies initiated a process of screening textbooks for prejudiced contents ahead of approval (SMR 2014, 49). Although minorities still felt that their national histories received too little attention in public schools,[22] these reforms generated textbooks that were more reflective and detached, and more inclusive of minorities in their take on Georgia's past (Gigineishvili 2007; Chikovani 2013, 84–91).

## Introducing the matched-guise experiment

As outlined in the preceding sections, Saakashvili took concerted efforts to signal that Georgian-speaking Armenians and Azerbaijanis were part of the nation, although the privileges allotted to the GOC and divisive historiographies presented residual hurdles. Coupled with

the shortage of "sociological survey work providing 'hard' evidence of [ethnic] stereotyping" in Georgia (Broers 2008, 288), this left minorities wondering: will Georgians henceforth welcome me as a peer if I learn their language? In order to reach a more decisive answer to this question, I here turn from the policies of the Georgian elite to the attitudes of adolescent Georgians. And to ascertain if the next generation of Georgians embraces Saakashvili's language-centered nationalism, or – like the nativists – discriminates between mere Georgian-speakers and "real" Georgians, I have fielded a matched-guise experiment for 792 adolescent respondents.

The matched-guise experiment is a well-known socio-linguistic research technique (Romaine 1995, 289) introduced into mainstream political science by Laitin (1998). It enables researchers to measure attitudes toward ethno-linguistic groups under controlled circumstances, without running into the problem of social desirability bias. Respondents tend to be reluctant to reveal their true opinion and give censored replies when asked direct questions about sensitive topics, such as stereotypes and tolerance. However, the matched-guise experiment enables us to tease out respondents' attitudes without them even realizing it. In its traditional design, speakers are recorded reading a text in several languages, dialects, or accents. The recordings are then played for respondents, who are asked to judge if the speakers are educated, reliable, etc. Respondents are led to believe that the voices they are rating belong to different individuals, but they are in fact hearing the same individuals reading the same text in different languages, dialects, or accents. Unbeknownst to the respondents, they rate the same speaker in different "guises." By "matching" reactions to the same speaker in different guises, the design controls for extraneous variables and reveals if respondents consider one guise as more educated, reliable, etc. than the other (Lambert et al. 1960).

Yet, the traditional matched-guise design suffers from several drawbacks (Blauvelt, Berglund, and Driscoll forthcoming). To start with, there is the problem of sending identity cues. In the traditional design this is done by having the same speaker read the same text in different languages, first in her native tongue (without accent) and then in a second language (with an accent telling of her origins). But when the same text has to be read in many languages it becomes difficult to find individuals capable of doing so. Moreover, even if we could find such polyglots, it is doubtful whether our respondents would be able to infer the identity of the speaker (say, by distinguishing the accent of an Armenian from the accent of an Azerbaijani speaking Georgian). Worse yet, the traditional design only enables us to study if the same individual is encouraged to learn a foreign language; and does not permit us to investigate if that individual is accepted as an equal on par with native speakers of that language. Using the traditional design, the latter inference could only be made by comparing – not the voice pairs of one speaker – but entirely different speakers, when no experimental control is involved.[23] Due to these problems, I chose to revise the experimental design.

I instead used recordings of a standard Georgian-, Armenian-, and Azerbaijani-speaker – all young adult females – with very similar voice types reading the text only in their native tongue. I also created ID tags characteristic for Georgians (Tamar Maisuradze), Armenians (Arpine Sarkisian), and Azerbaijanis (Afa Mamedova).[24] The native speaker recordings were then played for the respondents multiple times, yet presented with ID tags characteristic of the different nationalities. More specifically, respondents listened to the Georgian recording three times, first "tagged" as a Georgian, then as an Armenian, and as an Azerbaijani, who both spoke Georgian fluently. Respondents listened to the Armenian and Azerbaijani recordings twice, once presented as a member of their

actual minority group and once "tagged" as a Georgian. And after listening to each recording, respondents jotted down their reactions on a questionnaire.

This revision resolves the flaws of the traditional design. There is no need to find polyglots since only recordings of native speakers are used. And instead of using foreign accents as "cues" to the identity of the speaker, accents that are difficult to discern in multilingual settings,[25] respondents are confronted with clear-cut "cues" in the form of ID tags. Moreover, since respondents are evaluating the same recordings that have been assigned shifting ID tags, fully valid comparisons across these identities become possible (horizontal comparisons in Figure 1). At the same time, since the recurring ID tags cause the respondents to believe that they are assessing the same person speaking in different languages, valid comparisons across recordings become possible too (vertical comparisons in Figure 1).[26] The revised design therefore empowers us to investigate attitudes toward a broader range of ethno-linguistic groups.

By (vertically) comparing reactions to our Armenian and Azerbaijani "personas," once as they speak their native language and once as they speak Georgian, we discover if respondents reward "Ruritanians" for learning the "Megalomanian" state language. By (horizontally) comparing reactions to our native Georgian-speaking recording, once as it is presented with a Georgian ID tag and once as it is presented with an Armenian or Azerbaijani ID tag, we learn if respondents discriminate between "real" Georgians and mere Georgian-speakers. Taken together, these comparisons enable us to ascertain whether or not our respondents adhere to Saakashvili's language-centered nationalism.

Because state officials emphasized the importance of "winning over" the upcoming generation to their language-centered national project,[27] I chose to organize the revised matched-guise experiment where I could find a representative sample of young Georgians from all walks of life: in high schools. I visited 11 public schools and two private schools in Tbilisi (covering all districts of the capital); 19 public schools in Javakheti and 20 public schools in Kvemo Kartli (covering all districts of these borderlands). At these sites, I could find a stratum of young Georgians, whom Armenians and Azerbaijanis were likely to meet in their future everyday interactions.

Accompanied by assistants with a suitable linguistic repertoire, I obtained consent from the school principals and asked for a full period with students from classes 10 through 12. Just like Laitin (1998, 220–234), I explained that we were "interested in how people form impressions about others by hearing their voices" and told the students that they were about to listen to a series of speakers reading the same passage about Euclidean geometry.[28] These recordings included a set of dummy voices, as well as our native language speakers presented multiple times with their distinct ID tags. After having listened to each recording, respondents wrote down their evaluations on a questionnaire, which included closed-

| | Georgian ID tag | Armenian ID tag | Azerbaijani ID tag |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Native Georgian speaker recording** | 'Tamar Maisuradze' speaking Georgian | 'Arpine Sarkisian' speaking Georgian | 'Afa Mamedova' speaking Georgian |
| **Native Armenian speaker recording** | 'Tamar Maisuradze' speaking Armenian | 'Arpine Sarkisian' speaking Armenian | |
| **Native Azerbaijani speaker recording** | 'Tamar Maisuradze' speaking Azerbaijani | | 'Afa Mamedova' speaking Azerbaijani |

Figure 1. The comparative logic of the revised matched-guise design.

ended questions about 17 personality attributes. As the students are asked to evaluate similarly sounding speakers reading the same pre-assigned text, they know next to nothing about the persons behind the recordings, except their name and the language in which they speak. Our presumption is therefore that the ID tag and language of the speaker serve as a: "convenient cognitive shorthand for rapidly inferring a wide range of information about [the] person" (Hale 2008, 243).

During the administration of this experiment in November–December 2011, I gathered 792 responses from adolescent Georgians; identified as such since they reported their nationality as "Georgian" at the end of their questionnaire; 504 of these came from Tbilisi, 115 from Javakheti, and 173 from Kvemo Kartli. But since students did not differ in their responses across these regions, I will present only the aggregated results.

## Rewards for speaking Georgian

Let us examine whether our 792 adolescent Georgians reward Georgian-speaking minorities over native-speaking minorities. To this end, Table 2 compares the respondents' reactions when listening to recordings introduced with the same Armenian ID tag. The left column lists the average scores given to "Arpine Sarkisian" as she speaks Armenian (representing an Armenian) and the right column lists the average scores for the same "Arpine Sarkisian" as she speaks Georgian (representing an integrated Armenian). In the rows, we can see how our respondents assessed these recordings in terms of questions A through Q: "is she [relevant attribute]?" The last row presents the average evaluation across all these features. Higher ratings designate more positive characteristics, since the scale for these items runs from 1 (very little) to 6 (very much).

In order to ease our interpretation of Table 2, I have color-coded the columns. Gray boxes contain lower scores, whereas white boxes contain higher approval ratings. Following this interpretive grid, we see that assessments for integrated Armenians are consistently more positive than ratings for regular Armenians. When Georgian adolescents hear "Arpine

Table 2. Rewards for Georgian-speaking Armenians.

| | Attribute | Armenians | Integrated Armenians | *p*-values (two-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Educated | 4.12 | 4.81 | 0.000 |
| B | Cultured | 3.99 | 4.62 | 0.000 |
| C | Reliable | 3.44 | 3.84 | 0.000 |
| D | Witty | 3.88 | 4.36 | 0.000 |
| E | Open | 3.84 | 4.27 | 0.000 |
| F | Self-confident | 4.04 | 4.37 | 0.000 |
| G | Magnanimous | 3.57 | 3.88 | 0.000 |
| H | Pleasant | 3.35 | 4.10 | 0.000 |
| I | Attractive | 3.30 | 3.92 | 0.000 |
| J | Spiritual | 3.63 | 3.97 | 0.000 |
| K | Intellectual | 3.66 | 4.01 | 0.000 |
| L | Proud | 3.70 | 3.90 | 0.001 |
| M | Leader | 3.64 | 3.96 | 0.000 |
| N | Hard-working | 3.94 | 4.35 | 0.000 |
| O | Amusing | 3.29 | 3.82 | 0.000 |
| P | Wealthy | 3.43 | 3.62 | 0.000 |
| Q | Patriotic | 3.54 | 3.83 | 0.000 |
| | **Average** | **3.67** | **4.09** | 0.000 |

Table 3. Rewards for Georgian-speaking Azerbaijanis.

| | Attribute | Azerbaijanis | Integrated Azerbaijanis | *p*-values (two-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Educated | 4.09 | 4.59 | 0.000 |
| B | Cultured | 4.09 | 4.51 | 0.000 |
| C | Reliable | 3.29 | 4.08 | 0.000 |
| D | Witty | 3.72 | 4.26 | 0.000 |
| E | Open | 3.70 | 4.24 | 0.000 |
| F | Self-confident | 3.88 | 4.15 | 0.000 |
| G | Magnanimous | 3.38 | 3.90 | 0.000 |
| H | Pleasant | 3.03 | 4.00 | 0.000 |
| I | Attractive | 3.04 | 3.94 | 0.000 |
| J | Spiritual | 3.56 | 4.00 | 0.000 |
| K | Intellectual | 3.42 | 4.06 | 0.000 |
| L | Proud | 3.36 | 3.80 | 0.000 |
| M | Leader | 3.30 | 3.91 | 0.000 |
| N | Hard-working | 3.87 | 4.22 | 0.000 |
| O | Amusing | 2.96 | 3.79 | 0.000 |
| P | Wealthy | 3.32 | 3.73 | 0.000 |
| Q | Patriotic | 3.45 | 3.98 | 0.000 |
| | **Average** | **3.45** | **4.06** | 0.000 |

Sarkisian" speaking Georgian, she is considered more likeable across all features, as compared to the same "Arpine Sarkisian" speaking Armenian. Furthermore, a two-tailed *t*-test delivers very low *p*-values, signaling that the differential ratings are highly unlikely to be the result of random chance. The results thus signal that Georgian adolescents reward Armenians for speaking Georgian.

Let us next investigate if our 792 adolescent Georgians also reward Azerbaijanis for speaking Georgian. In Table 3, which follows the same template as earlier, we can first see the average scores for "Afa Mamedova" speaking Azerbaijani (representing an Azerbaijani) and then the average rating for "Afa Mamedova" speaking Georgian (representing an integrated Azerbaijani). In the rows, we trace how the respondents rated these recordings when asked: "is she [A through Q]?" The last row details the average rating across all traits on a scale spanning from 1 (very little) to 6 (very much).

From the color-coding, which follows the same pattern as earlier, we can rapidly see that "Afa Mamedova" is considered more sympathetic across every single feature when she speaks Georgian instead of Azerbaijani. Again, the two-tailed *t*-tests deliver *p*-values that are so low that we can be well-nigh certain that adolescent Georgians are more positively disposed toward Azerbaijanis who speak Georgian than those who do not, even if they retain a distinct Azerbaijani name and surname. The stark differential between the "guises" being "matched" in Table 2 and Table 3 indicates that the next generation of Georgians rewards Georgian-speaking minorities over native-speaking minorities. Much like Gellner's Megalomanians, the Georgians seem to regard acquisition of the state language as *necessary* for the inclusion of Ruritanians into the nation – as Ruritanians who fail to speak Megalomanian confront social stigmatization.

**Emerging Georgian openness**

This section explores whether our 792 adolescent Georgians discriminate between "real" Georgians and Georgian-speaking Armenians or Georgian-speaking Azerbaijanis. Is it sufficient for Ruritanians to learn the state language in order to be welcomed as peers? Table 4

Table 4. Openness toward Georgian-speaking Armenians.

|   | Attribute | Georgians | Integrated Armenians | *p*-values (two-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Educated | 4.48 | 4.81 | 0.000 |
| B | Cultured | 4.51 | 4.62 | 0.055 |
| C | Reliable | 3.86 | 3.84 | 0.983 |
| D | Witty | 4.08 | 4.36 | 0.000 |
| E | Open | 3.93 | 4.27 | 0.000 |
| F | Self-confident | 3.89 | 4.37 | 0.000 |
| G | Magnanimous | 3.71 | 3.88 | 0.003 |
| H | Pleasant | 3.64 | 4.10 | 0.000 |
| I | Attractive | 3.69 | 3.92 | 0.000 |
| J | Spiritual | 4.01 | 3.97 | 0.813 |
| K | Intellectual | 3.82 | 4.01 | 0.001 |
| L | Proud | 3.77 | 3.90 | 0.032 |
| M | Leader | 3.62 | 3.96 | 0.000 |
| N | Hard-working | 4.12 | 4.35 | 0.000 |
| O | Amusing | 3.59 | 3.82 | 0.001 |
| P | Wealthy | 3.44 | 3.62 | 0.004 |
| Q | Patriotic | 4.00 | 3.83 | 0.006 |
| | **Average** | **3.88** | **4.09** | 0.000 |

addresses this question by comparing the reactions of our respondents after listening to the exact same native Georgian-speaker recording: once presented as "Tamar Maisuradze" (a regular Georgian) and once introduced as "Arpine Sarkisian" (an integrated Armenian). The rows detail how the respondents rated these recordings in terms of attributes A through Q and, lastly, in terms of the average across all these 17 features. The scale for these enquiries extends from 1 (very little) to 6 (very much).

The columns are color-coded to facilitate analysis. Gray boxes contain lower scores and white boxes enclose higher approval ratings. In addition, when both columns are colored in a light gray tone, this means that the variance is too small to be statistically significant, according to the result of a two-tailed *t*-test. With the help of this template, we discover that adolescent Georgians are not inclined to favor their own ethnic kin (in the left column) over a Georgian-speaking Armenian (in the right column). When our respondents listen to the same recording, albeit presented with dissimilar ID tags, they deem "Arpine Sarkisian" as more likeable than "Tamar Maisuradze" in connection to 14 traits – and these differentials are significant in all cases but one (B). Our respondents rate their ethnic kin higher than the integrated Armenian in terms of attributes C, J, and Q, but significance tests among these traits reveal that we can only be confident that Georgians are seen as more "patriotic" than integrated Armenians. Apart from this lone sign of intolerance, the treatment effect projected in Table 4 signals that the next generation of Georgians is open to Georgian-speaking Armenians.

Table 5 studies whether adolescent Georgians also are open to Georgian-speaking Azerbaijanis. In the left-hand column, we see the reactions of our 792 respondents when listening to the native Georgian-speaker recording presented as "Tamar Maisuradze" (a regular Georgian). In the right-hand column, we see the students' appraisal of the exact same recording when introduced as "Afa Mamedova" (an integrated Azerbaijani). Evaluations were made according to a scale running from 1 (very little) to 6 (very much) and the rows describe the findings for attributes A to Q.

Aided by the same color-coding as earlier, we find no signs that adolescent Georgians treat Georgian-speaking Azerbaijanis worse than their own co-ethnics, although the latter

Table 5. Openness toward Georgian-speaking Azerbaijanis.

| | Attribute | Georgians | Integrated Azerbaijanis | p-values (two-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Educated | 4.48 | 4.59 | 0.070 |
| B | Cultured | 4.51 | 4.51 | 0.839 |
| C | Reliable | 3.86 | 4.08 | 0.001 |
| D | Witty | 4.08 | 4.26 | 0.005 |
| E | Open | 3.93 | 4.24 | 0.000 |
| F | Self-confident | 3.89 | 4.15 | 0.000 |
| G | Magnanimous | 3.71 | 3.90 | 0.001 |
| H | Pleasant | 3.64 | 4.00 | 0.000 |
| I | Attractive | 3.69 | 3.94 | 0.000 |
| J | Spiritual | 4.01 | 4.00 | 0.939 |
| K | Intellectual | 3.82 | 4.06 | 0.000 |
| L | Proud | 3.77 | 3.80 | 0.626 |
| M | Leader | 3.62 | 3.91 | 0.000 |
| N | Hard-working | 4.12 | 4.22 | 0.142 |
| O | Amusing | 3.59 | 3.79 | 0.003 |
| P | Wealthy | 3.44 | 3.73 | 0.000 |
| Q | Patriotic | 4.00 | 3.98 | 0.689 |
| | **Average** | **3.88** | **4.06** | 0.000 |

has the familiar Georgian surname suffix (-dze). The modal tendency is rather the opposite, seeing that the right-hand column is lighter than the left one. When our respondents listened to the same Georgian-speaking recording, presented first as "Tamar Maisuradze" and then as "Afa Mamedova," they ranked the latter significantly more positively across 11 attributes. For another three features (A, L, and N) the integrated Azerbaijani is favored over the Georgian, yet the difference is too slight to be statistically significant. In connection to one attribute (B), the Georgian-speaking Azerbaijani and Georgian-speaking Georgian received the same rating. In two instances (J and Q), "Tamar Maisuradze" is seen as more likable than "Afa Mamedova," but a two-tailed *t*-test reveals that neither differential is significant. Since our respondents do not privilege their co-ethnics over Georgian-speaking minorities, Tables 4 and 5 reveal an emerging openness among adolescent Georgians. And, if the next generation of Megalomanians treats the state language as a *sufficient* criterion for inclusion, Gellner expects Ruritanians to be attracted to the prospect of integration.

## Conclusion: Georgia's linguistic nationalism

Perhaps no other post-Soviet state has gone through such a turbulent nation-building process as Georgia. Without a doubt, the ethno-religious nationalism buoyed by Georgians in the early 1990s helped tear apart, and in some cases rupture, the fabric of this emerging nation. But this taxing legacy has also served as a catalyst for change. It motivated Saakashvili's program to forge an inclusive nationalism, wherein belonging – along Gellner's (2006) formula – was contingent upon speaking the state language and all Georgian-speakers, irrespective of ethnic origin, were to be welcome. This article has investigated if Georgian-speaking Armenians and Azerbaijanis were embraced as equals from the side of Georgian state officials and Georgian adolescents.

I argue that officials took rigorous steps to signal *out-group acceptance*. Saakashvili revived inclusive historical analogies, introduced new state symbols and emphasized Georgia's multi-ethnic fabric in his speeches. To put these gestures into effect, and fulfill

obligations stemming from Georgia's accession to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, a series of domestic institutions were set up. These institutions, albeit after a period of organizational flux, began executing a "National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civic Integration." Officials involved in this endeavor, many of whom themselves had a multicultural background, implemented programs devised to help minorities learn Georgian and to protect them from discrimination. To this end, officials reinforced anti-discrimination laws, reached out to minorities via media in their native languages, and backed minorities' cultures. But minorities faced *residual barriers*. They perceived attempts to promote the state language as unfair and were discriminated against on religious and historical grounds. The GOC, due to its societal stature, attained symbolic and legal privileges that were denied Apostolic Armenians and Muslim Azerbaijanis. Moreover, state officials and school textbooks reproduced a tendentious historical narrative. Despite various official efforts to promote religious and historical tolerance, minorities were left asking themselves: will Georgians treat me as a peer if I learn their language?

In order to reach a more decisive answer, I then studied if Saakashvili's language-centered national project has struck roots among the next generation of Georgians. I administrated a revised matched-guise experiment for 792 Georgian adolescents from Tbilisi, Javakheti, and Kvemo Kartli. The experiment does not pose direct questions, and thus evades the problem of social desirability bias, and is designed so as to enable us to elicit information on micro-foundational mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. The results signal that *Georgian adolescents reward minorities for speaking Georgian*. After having listened to the same persona, "Arpine Sarkisian" or "Afa Mamedova," once as she spoke her native language and once as she spoke Georgian, the latter guise was always deemed more likable. But *Georgian adolescents also accept Georgian-speaking minorities as peers*. After respondents had listened to the same Georgian-language recording, once presented as "Tamar Maisuradze" and once as "Arpine Sarkisian" or "Afa Mamedova," the latter guises were almost never ostracized. This indicates that Georgian adolescents regard acquisition of the state language as necessary, but also as sufficient, in order to see Armenians and Azerbaijanis as equals.

To be sure, Georgian adolescents are not representative of Georgians writ-large, and Saakashvili's linguistic nationalism has been criticized by circles favoring an ethno-religious national project. Concessions made to these "nativists," coupled with their rising influence following the 2012 parliamentary elections, have caused pessimism as to the prospects for overcoming the exclusionary nationalism of Georgia's recent past. Nonetheless, the fact that respondents participating in the matched-guise experiment did not favor "real" Georgians and discriminate against mere Georgian-speakers suggests that at least the next generation of Georgians has embraced a more inclusive nationalism. Adolescent Georgians reward Armenians and Azerbaijanis for speaking the state language – provided that Georgian is spoken without a strained foreign accent (see Driscoll, Berglund, and Blauvelt 2016). And, remarkably, respondents did not prohibit minorities from blending in on the basis of their ethnic origin (reflected in ID tags). In view of this budding out-group acceptance for "nouveaux titulars," we may be witnessing a (re)turn to the language-centered nationalism of Georgia's distant past.

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## Notes

1. Children inherited their parents' nationality, and if these differed, the child had to choose one at age 16.
2. One of these reformers, named Mikheil Saakashvili, was soon to become Shevardnadze's successor.
3. In fact, they were nicknamed the Mississippdaleulni: "those who have drunk the waters of Mississippi."
4. Such as the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; and the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.
5. The State Minister for National Accord Issues, Guram Absandze, was charged with healing the wounds of the civil war by cajoling "Zviadist" rebels, who had been hiding in Mingrelia, to disarm. The State Minister for Civil Integration, Zinaida Bestaeva, instead worked with the conflict in South Ossetia.
6. Interview with the Manager of the Advancing National Integration Project at the United Nations Association of Georgia and Member of the Civil Integration and Tolerance Council, Tbilisi, 15 June 2010; and the Coordinator of the Ombudsman's Council of National Minorities, Tbilisi, 4 August 2010.
7. Interview with the State Minister for Reintegration, Tbilisi, 29 July 2009; President's Advisor on Civil Integration, Tbilisi, 4 August 2010; Deputy State Minister for Reintegration, Tbilisi, 5 August 2010.
8. Interview with the Public Defender, Tbilisi, 16 August 2011.
9. Interview with the Chairman of the Public Movement Multinational Georgia, Tbilisi, 6 July 2010; and the Director of the Center for the Promotion of Reforms and Democracy, Akhalkalaki, 12 August 2010.
10. Saakashvili's stance drew criticism from the Council of Europe (2009, 16). But his unwillingness to differentiate citizens by their ethnicity is similar to the French reluctance against making "distinctions between citizens on grounds of origin or religion" (*Civil Georgia*, 22 December 2008; Thio 2005, 241).
11. Interviews with the Directors of Pervana TV and ATV-12, Javakheti, 17–18 August 2010.
12. Including the Akhundov Azerbaijani Cultural Center, the Aliyev Azerbaijani Theater and the Adamiani Armenian Theater in Tbilisi, and 52 libraries in the Southern borderlands (UNAG 2010, 58f).
13. Georgia's constitution (Art. 8) does recognize Abkhaz, alongside Georgian, as a state language in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, but this clause is of theoretical import due to Abkhazia's secession.
14. Interview with the State Minister for Reintegration, Tbilisi, 29 July 2009.
15. Interview with expert at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, Tbilisi, 29 June 2010; and with a Member of the Civil Integration and Tolerance Council, Tbilisi, 6 August 2010.
16. Interview with official at the Ombudsman's Council of Religions, Tbilisi, 30 July 2010.

17. When doing fieldwork in Kvemo Kartli in 2011, I found that the first line from the anthem, "My icon is my motherland," had been inscribed in vast letters across a mountainside overlooking Dmanisi. And in Bolnisi, I spotted several sizable crosses that had been placed on hilltops next to Azerbaijani villages.
18. Interview with the principal investigators for a research project on "The Role of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the Formation of Georgian National Identity," Tbilisi, 19 July 2011.
19. Interview with minority activist at the Armenian Community of Georgia, Tbilisi, 24 August 2010.
20. Interview with minority rights expert, Tbilisi, 3 August 2010; and with a historian specializing in the South Caucasus, Tbilisi, 14 July 2010.
21. Officials restricted the display of Soviet symbols, opened a Museum of Soviet Occupation in the capital and declared 25 February, when Georgia fell to the Red Army, as the Day of Soviet Occupation.
22. Interview with former Minister of Education, Tbilisi, 7 July 2010; teacher, Akhalkalaki, 6 July 2010.
23. Laitin (1998, 238) makes such a comparison when studying the persistence of a "colonial mentality" in former Soviet republics, that is, whether titulars attribute higher scores to Russians speaking Russian rather than to members of their own ethnic group speaking in their own native language. However, this is a comparison between two different speakers and therefore goes beyond the precepts of the experiment.
24. "Tamar" and "Maisuradze" are among the most common names in Georgia, and the latter carries the distinct Georgian –dze suffix (*Feradi*, 12 February 2013). "Sarkisian" has the typical Armenian –ian suffix, and is also one of the most common names in Armenia (National Statistical Service of Armenia 2013). Since Azerbaijani surnames were often Russified during Soviet times, I decided to use the most widespread surname, "Mamedova," which has a suggestive Turkish root (*1News.az*, 1 December 2012).
25. Even when the traditional design works, and respondents can infer the origin of a speaker based on her accent, it tends to produce biased findings, since respondents may react more negatively to a person because her strained accent in a foreign language is annoying – and not because she is a foreigner *per se*.
26. In order to prevent respondents from "seeing through" the experiment (to realize that they were rating the same recording under different tags and vice versa), I recorded speakers with similar voice types. I also inserted distracting dummy voices between recordings that were relevant for the experiment, kept the pertinent "guises" far apart from each other, and gradually shortened the playtime of the recordings.
27. Interview with the President's Advisor on Civil Integration, Tbilisi, 4 August 2010.
28. Students were told that the persons in the recordings were reading "the same passage about mathematics. They did not write this passage. They are only reading it. After having listened to each recording, you will be asked what their personality is like [ … ]. Some of you might not understand this passage, but it does not matter. We want you to think about what kind of person is reading those words."

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