Chapter 4

Are Elites Influenced By Foreign Analogies?

Why should what has happened to the decision maker and his state be so much more relevant than the fates of others?
—Robert Jervis (1976, 281)

This chapter employs statistical analysis of individual-level data to begin to assess the seven hypotheses developed in chapter 3. The intention is to present an initial evaluation of my theory of imitation in foreign policy using pooled data from Ukrainian and Russian elites. I do find preliminary support for most of the hypotheses. In particular, the analysis here shows that subjective failure is strongly associated with attention to foreign success, and that lessons from vicariously observed experience are strongly related to foreign policy preferences. I also take a close look at a few of the individuals, analogies, and issues behind the data. First, evidence directly testing hypotheses H1–H7 is examined. Second, further investigation of the evidence relating to imitation is presented. And finally, I discuss possible alternative explanations for the results and summarize the findings.

The unit of analysis for this chapter is the individual decision maker, at any given time. The dependent variable is foreign policy preferences, measured along the ordinal scale discussed in chapter 3, ranging from −2 through +2. There are four independent variables measuring usage of different types of analogies, and three control variables, all discussed in detail below.

The Data

The target population here is the foreign policy elite of Ukraine and Russia. I have collected data on their foreign policy preferences and use of different types of analogies from three sources: articles authored by elites and published in the journals of their respective foreign ministries, published speeches or other policy statements, and in several cases interviews conducted with a consistent questionnaire designed for this study.1

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There are many possible ways to identify foreign policy elites (Lasswell, Lerner, and Rothwell 1952, 6–13; Zimmerman 1994, 105). I am interested in individuals at the highest possible decision level because I assume they perform agenda-setting functions and aggregate preferences of lower-level elites and the population within the state “organization.” I am also interested in a range of issues including military security, political issues, and foreign economic relations. Therefore, I capture a wide but exclusive sample of the elite: those holding high offices or wielding considerable influence, and involved in security, political, or economic issues of relations with other states.

I defined this group by formal and informal roles, including: presidents; prime ministers; deputy prime ministers; ministers of foreign relations, trade, defense, or economy; security council members; directors of intelligence agencies, ambassadors to the United States and Russia/Ukraine, central bank heads, parliamentary speakers/chairs, chairs of the parliamentary foreign relations committee, a foreign policy intellectual closely connected to the state, a top presidential adviser, and a national opposition leader.

For the period 1990–1997, all articles and speeches (and interviews) of these high-level foreign policy decision makers and advisers were used. There are a total of 148 observations (79 Ukrainian, 69 Russian) in the data set, representing 49 individuals (26 Ukrainian, 23 Russian). Twenty-seven individuals are represented more than once (the observations can be considered independent, however, with no significant effect of the lagged dependent variable, see the appendix). Nine individuals are counted five or more times. Among these are four Ukrainians (Foreign Minister Henadii Udovenko [14], President Leonid Kuchma [10], Foreign Minister Anatolii Zlenko [8], President Leonid Kravchuk [7]) and five Russians (Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev [19], Foreign Minister Evgenii Primakov [8], President Boris Yeltsin [5], Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin [5], Foreign Policy Adviser Sergei Karaganov [5]). Theoretically the overrepresentation (81 observations, or 55 percent of the data) of these individuals at the highest levels is justified because my sample is designed to reflect the foreign policy decision-making elite of both countries.

The publications chosen are assumed to play a sampling role in that when top decision makers and advisers write articles or publish statements in them, this indicates an active interest in influencing the state’s foreign policy. I do not claim that all relevant decision makers are included, but I believe most are, and that they represent the range and types of approaches to foreign policy of the top decision-making elite. For this reason, and because some individuals move regularly in and out of power, 24 instances of articles by high-level former officials are not excluded. But removing these observations gives very similar results to those presented in tables 4.1 and 4.2 (there are no changes in significance or sign for the analogy variables, and very few changes in significance for the control variables).

The five-point scale (−2 through 2) of foreign policy preferences in chapter 3 was used to code the data. The policies advocated are coded along