



The sources of secessionist war: the interaction of local control and foreign forces in post-Soviet Georgia

David Siroky

To cite this article: David Siroky (2016) The sources of secessionist war: the interaction of local control and foreign forces in post-Soviet Georgia, *Caucasus Survey*, 4:1, 63-91, DOI: [10.1080/23761199.2015.1136516](https://doi.org/10.1080/23761199.2015.1136516)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23761199.2015.1136516>



Published online: 16 Feb 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 76



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 4 View citing articles [↗](#)

The sources of secessionist war: the interaction of local control and foreign forces in post-Soviet Georgia

David Siroky 

School of Politics and Global Studies, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, USA

ABSTRACT

Nationalism is one of the most powerful forces in the modern world – but why some ethno-national groups mobilize for conflict, while others remain quiescent, remains subject to significant disagreement. This paper argues that domestic politics create the incentives for secession, and international forces make conflict feasible against a sometimes stronger military adversary – the state. The proposed theory unpacks this interaction of domestic and international factors, and posits that when regional elites possess local control in an area that is contiguous with a potential sponsor, external support is more feasible and more apt to lead to mobilization and conflict. When regional elites lack local control, external sponsors will be wary of supporting a potentially lost cause and regional elites will exhibit more restraint, reducing the chances of conflict – external support therefore often flows from strong states to strong regions in weaker states. It is instrumental and variable, rather than affective and constant, and thus kin states will not always support their secessionist brethren in neighbouring states. Using a sub-national research design from post-Soviet Georgia, the results lend support to these conjectures.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 1 May 2015

Accepted 21 December 2015

KEYWORDS

Secessionist war; ethno-nationalism; external actors; local control; ethnofederalism; Georgia; Abkhazia; South Ossetia; Russia; Caucasus

One prominent scholar recently called nationalism the most powerful political force in the world – stronger than the spread of nuclear weapons, the advance of democracy or the resurgence of religion (Walt 2011). Nationalism is arguably the primary reason why the number of states in the world has quadrupled since the end of the Second World War, and has increased nearly 10-fold since the Congress of Vienna (Griffiths and Fazal 2008). Nationalism is also one of the main reasons why states are so interested in molding a unified national identity and in safeguarding it against subversion, subjugation and dilution from foreigners (Siroky and Mahmudlu 2015). These dual ambitions – both driven by nationalism, one focused on the minority and the other on the majority – point to a permanent tension in the borderlands of every multinational country.¹ In this article, I ask why some of these frontiers produce secessionist wars, whereas other regions remain relatively stable and tranquil.

According to one estimate, no more than 25 member states of the nearly 200-member United Nations were free of at least one secessionist movement in recent decades

(Zarkovic-Bookman 1992, 7). Secession is thus a global problem that plagues not only developing states (e.g. Georgia, Moldova, Nigeria, Russia, Ukraine and Indonesia), but also developed countries (e.g. Belgium, Canada, Spain, Switzerland and the UK). Since nations and states are rarely congruent in the modern world, most states are composed of several nations and the potential for ethno-nationalist separatism is thus latently always present, and is often violently explicit.

The security of a nation requires the preservation of its distinct identity, and such identities are a great deal better protected when they have their own states.² Nations with states where the nation is the majority group enjoy life in a less anarchic setting. But inside most states, nationalism is still the currency. The majority group is never fully safe from internal subversion and the minority group is never guaranteed that its autonomous powers, if it has any, may not be revoked. Culturally distinct groups are habitually subject to pressures from absorption, assimilation and expulsion (Bulutgil 2010; Mann 2005; Mylonas 2012; Naimark 2001). Indeed, guarantees of autonomy for non-core ethnic groups are always subject to credible commitment problems, and can be annulled when they become politically inconvenient (Gurr and Moore 1997; Siroky and Cuffe 2015). These threats are much smaller – in fact, they almost disappear – when the nation is in charge of its own state, which is one of the primary reasons behind the widespread demand for self-determination around the modern world. Nationalists have long argued that preserving their identities is best achieved through self-determination, which sometimes means statehood. Yet, if all nations demanded independent states, we would observe almost perpetual conflict between nations and states, and the near constant emergence of “new” nations. In fact, however, we observe highly variable patterns across time and space. Secession is a path that few groups pursue, and even fewer achieve.

These differences in group behaviour have attracted their fair share of theories and hypotheses, which for analytical clarity can be usefully divided into two main approaches. The first is more dominant in comparative politics, and focuses on domestic-level factors, especially group-level grievances (Buhaug, Cederman, and Gleditsch 2013; Hechter 1978; Horowitz 1985), relative deprivation (Gurr 1970), geographic concentration (Toft 2003; Weidmann 2009), relative mobilization capacity (McCarthy and Zald 2001; Tilly 1978), permissive electoral institutions (Birbir 2006), greed (Collier and Hoeffler 2004) and weak state capacity (Fearon and Laitin 2003). A second school of thought that is more prevalent in international relations scholarship highlights the interests of important external actors and the regional balance of power and threat (Brown 1996; Cetinyan 2002; Jenne 2007; Lake and Rothchild 1998; Regan 2002; Saideman 2002; Weiner 1979). This article contends that both internal and external factors should be taken seriously, and posits an integrated theory that stresses the interaction of local factors and foreign forces.

Internally, the theory highlights the role of local control, which I argue influences the demand for self-rule but also provides the mobilization capacity required for collective action. Local control can – but need not – be established by formal legal institutions that afford “legally entrenched power of territorially delimited entities within the internationally recognized boundaries of existing states to exercise public policy functions independently of other sources of authority in this state, [while being] subject to its overall legal order” (Stepan 1999; Wolff 2013, 5). For example, the government in Catalonia in Spain possesses high levels of formal autonomy through the constitution and high levels of control over the day-to-day affairs within the province. However, the definition used

here does not follow formal laws, but focuses on the degree of *de facto* rather than *de jure* autonomy (cf. Cornell 2002). For example, although Tibet is officially an autonomous region in China, the Chinese government exerts considerable control over the Tibetan government, appoints administrators from foreign regions and directly selects its own Dalai Lama in an attempt to control Tibetan religious organizations, a key consideration considering the role of monks in Tibetan society (Cunningham and Beaulieu 2010; Fuller et al. 2002; Karmel 1995; Sautman 2005; Teufel 2005, 71). Formal autonomy is mainly a fiction – formally autonomous Xinjiang and Tibet are arguably less autonomous than Shanghai or Guangdong, which are not formally autonomous. Local control is therefore conceptualized as distinct from autonomy, in that it is a *de facto* state of affairs, composed of access to power (Cederman, Gleditsch, and Weidmann 2011; Wimmer 2002); the degree of cross-cutting cleavages (Blau and Schwartz 1984; Selway 2011; Varshney 2002), elite cohesion (Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour 2012; Christia 2012; Pearlman 2011) and ethnically compact settlement patterns (Weidmann 2009), rather than *de jure* state of affairs defined by legal parameters. In sum, the fact that some regions have autonomous structures (in this case, Abkhazia and South Ossetia) helped them to shore up local control, but importantly the two are distinct because autonomy does not guarantee local control, and local control can exist independently of formal legal provisions.

Externally, the theory underscores the role of external actors – specifically, it explains why they sometimes choose to intervene, why they take sides when they do and how these external factors shape variation in the incidence of secessionist war. I argue that when regional elites possess significant local control in an area that is contiguous with the potential sponsor, external support is more feasible, more likely to be effective and more likely to be offered to the minority. In turn, ethno-nationalists that claim to represent the minority's interests are likely to demand a greater degree of self-determination if they possess external support. This more extreme demand increases the probability of war (Jenne 2007). When elites lack local control, external sponsors will be wary of extending support to a lost cause. The lack of external support will tame the demands of the would-be secessionists, and thereby reduce the likelihood of war. Thus, when either local control or external support is absent, and especially when both are missing, secessionist war is least likely; when a group possesses both local control and external support, secessionist war is most likely.

To investigate this idea, this paper employs a research design that Brubaker and Laitin have called “a case set” and Snyder refers to as the “subnational comparative method” (Brubaker and Laitin 1998; Snyder 2001). The study examines four culturally distinct and regionally concentrated ethnic groups in one state: post-Soviet Georgia. Although the number of cases is limited, they afford rich empirical variation on external support, local control and secessionist war, while allowing us to control for factors that vary across countries and are believed to influence the likelihood of secessionist mobilization and violence. The empirical analysis is based on archival material from the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Central Archives in Prague, the OSCE Archives in Tbilisi, Georgia, the Archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Georgia and local newspaper articles, along with the secondary literature.

The next section develops the proposed theory and the main hypotheses regarding how internal and external factors interact to influence the probability of secessionist war. The analysis demonstrates that the proposed two-level theory of secessionist war – which

combines local control and external support – offers a more convincing account of the facts examined than alternative explanations. The final section offers concluding remarks and discusses some possible implications of this study for future research on ethno-nationalism and secessionist war.

A theory of secessionist war

Like all civil wars, secessionist wars can have devastating effects on societies, long after the killing has ended (Ghobarah, Huth, and Russett 2002). Secessionist conflicts arguably differ from other civil wars, in that, in general, they are territorially confined to a border region occupied by a culturally distinct minority group. Rarely do such conflicts engulf entire countries like other civil wars sometimes do. It would seem to follow that explanations for violent secessionist conflict cast at the country-level are likely to obscure significant variation at the regional level.³ Although sub-national analyses and micro-level models do a better job of capturing this variation, they often overlook the transnational dimension of secessionist and other civil wars (Gleditsch 2007). External actors (states, diasporas, and international organizations) have often decisively influenced (and were influenced by) the dynamics of civil wars (Brubaker 1996; Jenne and Saideman 2009; Saideman 2011; Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood 2014). To more fully understand and explain secessionist wars, a theory of secessionist war should take account of both transnational and sub-national influences, and integrate them into a theory that shows how they interact to explain events and behaviour.

The theory advanced here posits that the emergence of secession is born in domestic (local) politics, but the *escalation* to secessionist war typically requires external forces, and results when these internal and external forces collide. The theory assumes that external actors are both rational and strategic. This implies that they should extend support only when the expected benefits exceed the anticipated costs. The expected cost is primarily a function of the relative power between two dyads: the secessionist group/the host state and the external actor/host state pairings. When the sponsoring state is stronger than the host state, and when the minority nation is relatively strong vis-à-vis the host state at the local level, then the expected cost is lower for the external sponsor. Similarly, the expected benefits for the external actor are significantly greater when local elites possess local control, since control over a border territory significantly reduces the extent to which the external actor must augment the group's capabilities to achieve its aims. When external support is extended to already moderately strong groups, it consolidates the partial control that local leaders already possess, serving as a force multiplier. These considerations suggest that external support is more likely to flow from stronger states to relatively strong minority groups in weaker states (Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham 2011; Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood 2014).⁴ In other words, external actors *select* secessionists that already possess some measure of local control, thereby consolidating the nascent nationalist movement. Typically, external support increases the group's demands against the host state, which raises the likelihood of state repression, and in turn boosts the probability of secessionist war (Brubaker 1995; Jenne 2007).⁵

Although states may find the delegation of fighting to ethno-nationalist movements attractive from one standpoint,⁶ the risk of conflict contagion is certainly unattractive (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008; Gleditsch, Salehyan and Schultz 2008; Salehyan and

Gleditsch 2006). It should therefore not surprise us that, even though some regional systems have certainly been more prone to active external support of secessionists against their formally recognized states, neighbouring states have often sought to “suppress” secessionist movements in their region, according to some scholars who have examined the historical record (Fabry 2010). States have done this by withholding resources from radicals, funding moderate elites, hardening borders and backing the central government of the host state. By raising the costs of insurgency, external actors have sought to decrease the likelihood that it emerges and crosses their borders. The suppression of secession is also rational, independent of the risk of contagion, when it is more costly to alienate the host state (e.g. in terms of lost economic trade and retaliation) than it is to irritate the would-be secessionists. The behaviour of external actors is thus shaped by these instrumental considerations, constrained by the feasibility of extending support, and conditioned by local secessionist control.

This logic builds on a growing literature that points to the role of diverse external forces in intra-state conflicts: diasporas (Shain 2007), external homelands and kin groups (Brubaker 1995; Jenne 2007; Saideman and Ayres 2009; Salehyan 2009), neighbourhood contagion (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008; Hegre and Sambanis 2006), refugees (Lischer 2005; Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006), interstate relations (Mylonas 2011), external recognition (Coggins 2011; Mirilovic and Siroky 2015) and the international system (Kalyvas and Balcells 2010).⁷ Many scholars now accept that external forces play a fundamental role in explaining internal conflicts, and some estimates indicate that about one half of all insurgent groups in recent history have received external support.

External support can be seen as an investment – and, like other investors, external actors expect a return proportional to the risks. Risks are lower when success is more likely, and success is more plausible when local actors possess some degree of control. External actors are also most effective in buttressing secessionist movements when they can join forces with local actors that already possess at least partial control.⁸ In this view, external involvement is an instrument of statecraft designed to weaken neighbouring states rather than a display of ideological or ethno-religious affinity for the secessionists. On this account, affective concerns for cross-border ethnic and religious kin, and ideological affinities for like-minded groups, should be much less influential in explaining behaviour, since support can be a bargaining tool that the external actor can exchange in a *quid pro quo* with the host state over more important foreign policy objectives. If this strategic view of external support is true, then ethnic kin states should support *and* suppress their co-ethnic separatists in neighbouring states, depending on their instrumental interests and not according to their affective or ideological ties to the relevant actors. If support is instead driven by ideological or primordial motives, then kin states should almost never suppress their own kin, and states should rarely extend support to non-kin.⁹ If this instrumental account is more accurate, then states with strong *instrumental* ties to the host state will tend to support the central government rather than the secessionists, even if the external state shares ethnic ties with the secessionists. Likewise, states with strong rivalries against the host state, even though they lack strong ethnic ties to the secessionists, will tend to support the secessionists.

Turning to local control, minority groups possess a highly variable degree of control across countries, within them, and over time. All else equal, minorities possess much greater control over local affairs in ethnofederal systems. Proponents of autonomous

institutional arrangements have argued that political decentralization is the primary means by which a large multi-ethnic state can relieve ethno-regional tensions and preserve a unified polity (Anderson 2014; Diamond 1999; Stepan 1999).¹⁰ Most recently, decentralization of power to ethnic regions has been touted as a potential solution to tensions with ethnic minority groups in Iraq and Afghanistan (O'Hanlon and Joseph 2007), and has been discussed in many other hot spot regions around the world, including the Balkans (Guss and Siroky 2012), Ethiopia (Ghai 2000) and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa (Forrest 2004; Horowitz 1985).¹¹ Many studies have shown that autonomy bears a strong relationship to peace in the developed world (e.g. Spain, Germany, USA, Switzerland, and Australia) and in the developing world (e.g. Nigeria, India, Mexico, Ethiopia). Autonomy, wrote one scholar, "has done more to relieve or contain secessionist pressures than to stimulate them" (Diamond 1999, 156). Stepan reinforces this point when he observes that "every single longstanding democracy in a multilingual and multinational polity is a federal state" (1999, 19). The most recent study to advance an argument in favour of ethnofederalism suggests that, within the universe of post-1945 states with ethnofederal arrangements, both failures and successes, ethnofederalism has succeeded more often than it has failed and has performed better than institutional alternatives. Furthermore, where ethnofederal systems have failed, studies seem to show that no institutional alternatives could reasonably have succeeded (Anderson 2014). In short, local control does not inexorably lead to secession in the absence of other permissive factors.

Critics argue that centrifugal concessions to ethnic groups create a "slippery slope" of increasing demands for self-determination (Brass 1996; Gurr 2000; Kaufman 1996; Lijphart 1977; McGarry and O'Leary 2003; Tsebelis 1990). Autonomy is unlikely to satisfy a group's demands for self-rule, in this view, and is much more likely to reinforce ethnic particularism and prejudices by providing group leaders with the symbolic and material resources needed to mobilize local co-ethnics against the state (Ghai 2000). Some studies have shown that autonomy can actually exacerbate relations between the state and ethnic groups, for it cultivates the capacity for self-rule without significantly reducing desire for more of it (Brancati 2009; Coppieters 2001; Roeder 1991; Siroky and Cuffe 2015). On the account, autonomy serves as the basis for secessionism by sharpening borders, "constructing" nations and fostering centrifugal incentives among regional elites (Bunce 1999; Coppieters 2001; Cornell 2002; Roeder 1991; Slezkine 1994; Suny 1993; Zürcher 2007). I argue that this is only true when it is matched with external support, however, and most autonomous groups and regional elites do not seek secession.

Autonomy almost invariably increases local control and decreases central control. This fact alone makes offering external support to potential secessionists more attractive (Gurr 2000; Gurr and Moore 1997; Sambanis and Zinn 2006; Siroky and Cuffe 2015). Although local control is often insufficient to create secession without external support, local control makes support from external actors more likely to be offered, which jointly makes secessionist war more likely.¹²

In sum, the proposed theory of secessionist war suggests an important pathway through which external and internal forces interact to jointly produce secessionist wars. Rather than taking external support as exogenous, the theory uses an instrumentalist logic to explain how the behaviour of external forces is shaped by domestic politics, and how the behaviour of domestic actors is shaped by external forces. In this view, neither

domestic nor international politics can be safely bracketed, since the emergence of a secessionist movement is born in domestic politics, but the escalation to secessionist war is explained better once we account for external actors. The root causes of secessionist wars stem from this two-level interaction.

I next turn to evaluating these claims empirically by exploring sub-national variation in secession from post-Soviet Georgia, where there were several sub-national regions that had the *potential* to secede – two did (Abkhazia and South Ossetia), and two did not (Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli). Georgia offers an excellent empirical case set to study the problem of secession. It contains multiple separatist movements, various types of external involvement and external actors, and variation across ethnic groups in their degree of local control. This provides some advantages that are not available to large-N studies – many of the macro-level features of civil war studies remain constant within the case and time period examined here, and are thus eliminated by design as causes of the observed outcomes. Drawing on evidence from state and international archives,¹³ interviews conducted with decision-makers in Georgia,¹⁴ as well as some publicly available evidence from regional newspapers,¹⁵ the empirical analysis below seeks to determine whether the proposed theory explains the empirical record better than the plausible alternatives.

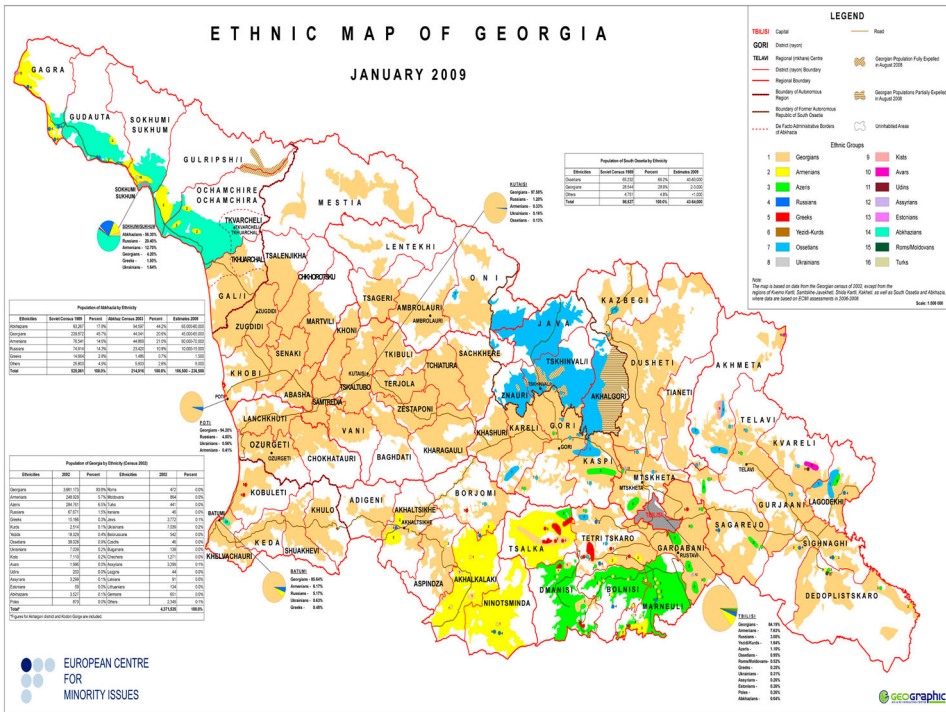
Evaluating the empirical record

Why did some regions of Georgia produce secessionist wars, whereas others never came to a boil or remained entirely quiescent? If, as the theory implies, external forces played a key role, then why did some external actors actively encourage secession, while others did nothing or even tried to prevent it? How did external forces interact with local politics? The following analysis examines these questions in light of the proposed theory and alternative explanations in four distinct regions from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s: Abkhazia, Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli and South Ossetia.¹⁶ These regions and their respective ethnic distributions are depicted in [Figure 1](#).

Javakheti: the ticking bomb

The conditions that many theories associate with heightened likelihood of conflict escalation are present in Javakheti, but conflict is absent. Javakheti is a remote region, bordering Armenia and Turkey, comprised almost entirely of ethnic Armenians with a bordering kin state (Melikishvili 1999, 21). Javakheti is a poorly integrated “country within a country” where visitors from Tbilisi are thought of as foreigners (*dghes* 1999; *dilis gazeti* 2002). A local research team (Melikishvili 1999) reported an encounter with a young Armenian woman in the *Georgian* village of Zhdanovo who insisted on inviting the team to her home and then explained why:

I was born in Georgia, in Batumi, and grew up there. Then I married in Armenia. When I saw you, I immediately placed you as Georgians and my heart gave a leap. I felt I must invite you to my home’. Asked in which district of Armenia she was married, she replied – Here, in Zhdanovakan [in Georgia].¹⁷



Legend for Figure 1

Group	Color	Region
Abkhaz	Turquoise	Abkhazia
Armenians	Yellow	Javakheti
Azeris	Green	Kvemo Kartli
Ossetians	Blue	South Ossetia

Figure 1. Ethnic map of Georgia.

Source: European Centre for Minority Issues, Tbilisi Office, courtesy of the director.

The village is de jure in Georgia, but at the time was, for all intents and purposes, in Armenia. The conflation was apparently widespread among residents of Javakheti, most of whom regarded living in Armenia as a fact. Maps in circulation in the region also include Javakheti as Armenian territory. The Georgian lari was hardly used during the 1990s and into the 2000s, whereas Russian rubles and Armenian drams were widely accepted (*Qazet 2002*).¹⁸ Sometimes dubbed “Georgia’s Siberia”, Javakheti would often not receive a single ton of fuel for over a year, since gas supplies were cut and roads are blocked during the winter months with snow (*Georgian Radio 1994*). The road from Akhalkalaki to Yerevan was much more travelled and better maintained than the round-about road leading to Tbilisi, which only 4 × 4 vehicles could travel, and only part of the year (*Cornell 2001, 199*).

This desperate situation prompted some local leaders, especially those associated with the movement called United Javakh, to push for a border readjustment, using violence as

necessary (Darchiashvili 2000; *dghes* 1999). Moreover, the Georgian–Armenian conflict in 1918 could have provided the basis for mobilizing grievances, yet it did not.¹⁹ Although many of the domestic preconditions for escalation are present, the region’s natural sponsor state, Armenia, has acted cautiously, frequently taking the side of the central government *against* its own ethnic kin. Armenian President Robert Kocharyan also emphasized Armenia’s interest in “a stable and developed Georgia” (*Prime* 1998; *Snark* 1999). Armenia even detained a Javakhk leader on its territory and turned him over to Georgia, and President Ter-Petrosyan closed an Armenian newspaper promoting separatism in Javakheti (Cornell 2001, 205; *Prime* 1998; *Snark* 1999). President Ter-Petrosyan said that ethnic Armenians residing in Georgia who attempt to encroach upon Georgia’s territorial integrity were “enemies of the Armenian people at large” (Matsaberidze and Meskhia 1997).

The absence of external support for separatism has worked to defuse a potential time bomb in Javakheti, where the degree of local control is high and the central government’s reach was, until very recently, limited. External support from mainstream actors in Armenia has been circumscribed largely for strategic reasons: Armenia needs Georgia more than it needs Armenians in Javakheti. Indeed, Georgia and Iran are Armenia’s only friendly contiguous neighbours. As Tatul Hakobyan noted:

The Georgian-Russian crisis once again highlighted Armenia’s economic and transit dependence on Georgia. Just a few days and weeks of internal instability in Georgia was enough to create a shortage of essential goods in our country. Armenia is directly dependent on Georgia for communication with the outside world, as goods are mainly transported through the territory of this country (*Armenian Reporter*, August 30, 2008).

Whether and for how long these interests will continue to trump Armenia’s affinity with its kin in Javakheti depends not only on Georgia’s policies towards Javakheti, though these are important, but also on the final settlement of Armenia’s conflict with Azerbaijan and its rapprochement with Ankara, which may free Armenia’s hand to adopt a more aggressive foreign policy towards Georgia. This dynamic has little to do with the pacific qualities of Armenians, who have shown that they can fight in Karabakh, and everything to do with its international relations and strategic ties to the host state. Armenia’s material and military overextension in Karabakh has required Armenia to keep peace with Georgia and subordinate any ethnic affections to strategic concerns vis-à-vis the Javakheti Armenians.

Relying solely on domestic-level factors would lead us to expect secessionist conflict in Javakheti. Ethnic ties are present, grievances are plenty, mountainous terrain defines the region, which was formed on the remnants of a volcano, and the Armenians are spatially concentrated here more compactly than any other minority group in Georgia. Although Javakheti does not possess formal legal autonomy, it nevertheless has many of the characteristics that autonomy is supposed to provide: clear borders, local leadership, group identity and mass media control. It also has a history of conflict with the host state (war in 1918 between Georgians and Armenians), porous borders, economic inequality, limited upward mobility and a weak state that was neither willing nor able to do much about these concerns during the 1990s.²⁰ What Javakheti lacks are not the domestic conditions for conflict escalation, but the international ones, namely external support. Several Armenian administrations have actively and consistently suppressed separatism in Javakheti (whereas they repeatedly

encouraged it in Karabakh), suggesting that the decision to support or suppress is primarily about weakening or reinforcing neighbouring states, and only secondarily about affective or primordialist ties. The evidence strongly suggests that Javakheti's relative tranquility in the face of abundant motivations and domestic opportunities is explained largely by Armenia's strategic and instrumental concerns rather than its affective concerns for its kin or by their characteristics and conditions within their host states.

Of course, it is unlikely that Armenia would have any serious interest in Javakheti if there were no Armenians there, but it is equally clear that ethnic ties are insufficient to explain variation in support. Indeed, from the evidence below on Russia's involvement in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, ethnic ties also appear unnecessary to explain support. Although ethnic ties are neither necessary nor sufficient, I am *not* arguing that ethnic ties are irrelevant – they were certainly crucial to the risks taken by Armenia in its war with Azerbaijan. They are simply secondary to strategic calculations. Ethnic ties, globally and in the cases examined here, have resulted in both support and suppression of secession, and non-ethnically linked states have also both supported and suppressed secessionist groups on their borders. Affective ties clearly provide a much less satisfactory explanation than instrumental ties.

Turning to Kvemo Kartli, where Azeris are a majority but continue to be subject to extensive discrimination and exclusion, further reinforces this point.

Kvemo Kartli: the sleeping giant

The second region is the Azeri-dominated Kvemo Kartli, located on the border with Azerbaijan, and composed of over 90% Azeris who live compactly in Rustavi, Marneuli, Bolnisi, Gardabani, Tsalka and Dmanisi areas. Like Javakheti, they live so homogeneously in Kvemo Kartli that:

many local people don't even realize which state they live in ... As the local officials say, many Azerbaijanis looked for the name of Heydar Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, in the ballot papers ... the ballot papers were printed in Georgian, and most of the local population doesn't speak the state language. (*Zerkalo* 2003)

Also like Armenians in Javakheti, Azeris in Kvemo Kartli are better connected to their ethnic kin across the border than to Tbilisi. Unlike Javakheti, where Armenians hold many of the power positions, Georgians hold all of the important political positions in Kvemo Kartli, and Azeris thus lack any significant amount of local control.

Although ethnic tensions have threatened to escalate on several occasions, these were always defused, largely thanks to Azerbaijan's pro-Tbilisi position (Kokoev and Svanidze 2000; *mze TV* 2004). In the mid-1990s, there were reports of armed border disputes based on "a territorial claim by certain forces in Azerbaijan to the [Georgian] Kvemo Kartli region" (*iveria* 1996). In 1998, over 1500 ethnic Azeris living in Kvemo Kartli gathered to call for the resignation of the governor, Levan Mamaladze, who was accused of selling forged property certificates and arbitrary governance. "The longer Levan Mamaladze is governor here", said one Azeri, "the more serious the ethnic conflict becomes. Events in Abkhazia and South Ossetia may also be repeated in Marneuli ..." (*Azadlyg* 1998). In 2004, violent clashes erupted in Vakhtangisi between interior ministry troops

and the financial police after the latter seized 3 million lari (1.8 million USD) worth of hidden goods from six Azeri houses suspected of smuggling. Azeri civilians attributed ethnic motives to the military-style operation and responded with force, attacking Georgian cars (*mze TV 2004; Zerkalo 2004*).

Baku intervened, but to support Tbilisi, not its ethnic kin (Cornell 2001, 211). This is consistent with Baku's position that "the region will never present any kind of danger ... it is peaceful ... [we support] the authorities in Georgia no matter who is in control" (*Zerkalo 2003*). According to Alibala Askerov, "the Azerbaijanis have never had and will not have any separatist views". Suleyman Suleymanov, editor-in-chief of the Azerbaijani-language and Tbilisi-published newspaper *Gürcüstan* and president of the Union of Azerbaijanis of Georgia, echoed this sentiment:

I do not believe that there will be any riots or disorders in the Kvemo Kartli region. The Azerbaijanis have always been loyal to authority ... Azerbaijanis have never been separatists. This is simply not in the nature of the Azerbaijanis who live in Georgia. There are three basic qualities which make up our character – sincerity, industry and obedience to the law.

Both Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli depend upon connections to their kin states; voices from Yerevan and Baku carry a lot of weight. Both Baku and Yerevan desire good relations with Tbilisi for economic and political reasons. Azerbaijan and Georgia share energy interests in transporting Caspian reserves and preventing Russia's energy monopoly, which has been wielded for foreign policy objectives.

In the late 1990s, President Heydar Aliyev even personally visited the region to persuade the local population to vote for Eduard Shevardnadze and the ruling Citizens' Union of Georgia party (*iprinda 1999; Shiriyev and Kakachia 2013*). When Aliyev takes the trouble to speak directly to Georgia's Azeri population about political and economic affairs, local Azeris listen. Trade between Georgia and Azerbaijan tripled after Saakashvili took office and joint energy projects, including a natural gas pipeline, promise to boost bilateral trade higher. Georgia is essential to Azerbaijan's efforts to isolate Armenia. Georgia even granted Azerbaijan assurances that it would not re-export Azerbaijani oil or natural gas to Armenia. Aliyev desperately needs allies in the region, given the war with Armenia and Russia's generally pro-Armenian policies in Nagorny Karabakh, and Georgia is a more important ally than ethnic Azeris in Kvemo Kartli.

It is important to note that Armenia and Azerbaijan have not suppressed secessionist movements among their kin in Georgia out of any natural distaste for separatism. Armenia encourages separatism in Nagorny Karabakh, and Azerbaijan does the same in the Azeri regions of Iran, or "Southern Azerbaijan" (Human Rights Watch 1997; Nissman 1995). Azerbaijan's behaviour towards its ethnic kin in Kvemo Kartli cannot be explained by reference to affective linkages. Domestic-level factors also provide misleading predictions. Azeris possess tangible grievances. Religious and cultural differences between Muslim Azeris and Orthodox Georgians are arguably more salient than between any other dyad in Georgia. Azeris are concentrated spatially in large sections of Kvemo Kartli, particularly in Marneuli, but also Bolnisi and Dmanisi. Although the degree of local control is lower than in Javakheti, Azeris possess a strong group identity and mass media such as Azeri-language newspapers, mechanisms through which autonomy can influence secession. What distinguishes the Azeri region (and the Armenian region) from the conflict regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is its low degree of local

control and the moderating role of external actors (something it shares with Javakheti) that have helped to curb secessionist activities.

Examining these two cases serves to highlight the conditions that have served to prevent tensions from escalating into secessionist conflicts. Local control was significant in Javakheti, and almost entirely absent in Kvemo Kartli, but both were relatively quiet because of the role that external actors (kin states, in this case) played in dampening the demand for more self-rule. By comparison, Abkhazia and South Ossetia tell a very different story.

Abkhazia: between abandonment and entrapment

A common argument for the secessionist war in Abkhazia (one that is for obvious reasons more popular among Georgians than Abkhazians and Russians) is that it was largely manufactured by external forces (i.e. Russia), which stoked the fires of discontent and brought tensions to the point of war by arming the Abkhaz with offensive weapons and assuring them external support. By contrast, the Abkhaz and the Russians, though they have different perspectives and the Abkhaz highlight the 1930s–1940s period as a crucial turning point, both point to Georgia's drive to "Georgianize" the region in the last years of the Soviet Union and during the early period of independence under President Zviad Gamsakhurdia as crucial causes of the conflict. Both arguments are half true. In Abkhazia (and in South Ossetia), Georgia proposed policies that were interpreted as intended to eliminate the cultural specificity and group autonomy of the Abkhazians.²¹ The Abkhaz are numerically smaller than the other groups and have an existential fear stemming from the 1930s and 1940s that distinguishes their level of grievance from the other groups in this study.

It is also important not to ignore or to underemphasize the role that the central administration of Georgia played in the escalation of the conflict, especially during President Gamsakhurdia's administration. Gamsakhurdia's nationalist rhetoric was indeed nationalist in orientation, but during his period in power, the Georgians and the Abkhaz reached a power-sharing agreement that both parties recognized, and Gamsakhurdia made special provisions to protect the Abkhaz language and culture (Coppieters and Legvold 2005). It was after he fled the country, and a Military Council assumed power, that the "war of laws" arose between Tbilisi and Sukhumi. Moreover, Gamsakhurdia's nationalist rhetoric was to a large extent targeted at Kvemo Kartli, which did not escalate, because the interaction with external forces was absent. Russia did not provide aid to paramilitary groups, as it did in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, because it had no strategic interest in Kvemo Kartli.

Several scholars have pointed to Abkhazia's autonomy (and the threats to it) as the key factor in explaining why the conflict escalated. The empirical details are inconsistent with the theory, however. It is true that Abkhazia has a complicated history with regard to its status – since it was "degraded" in controversial circumstances in 1931, the Abkhaz felt that they had a special claim to sovereignty in their territory (Blauvelt 2014; Broers 2014; Welt 2014). It is also true that the Abkhaz received preferential treatment in government, assuming 65% of the ministries even though they were only 20% of the population (Zürcher 2007), yet they did not possess as much local control as these numbers might suggest. About half of the members in the local parliament were Georgians; most notably, the Prime Minister of Abkhazia, the Minister for Internal Affairs and the Head

of Security were all ethnic Georgians. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that the Abkhaz possessed an unusually high degree of de facto local control (and de jure autonomy) compared to the other regions. The legal status of the Supreme Soviets in Abkhazia made possible the “war of laws”, which was a key factor in the escalation of the conflict; although Ajara in the south-west of Georgia was also an autonomous republic, it did not escalate in the same way.²²

While the importance of de facto local control and de jure autonomy should not be underestimated, what significantly distinguished the case of Abkhazia from Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli was the interaction of local control with external forces. Russia’s support for Abkhazia was overwhelming; it supplied Abkhaz secessionists with air support and heavy armaments, including T-72 and T-80 tanks along with Grad rocket launchers that “appeared seemingly from nowhere”, and mercenaries, largely Chechens and Circassians, from the Confederation of Caucasian Mountain Peoples (Billingsley 1997; Cornell 2001, 167; Dejevsky 1998; *Izvestiya* 1992; OSCE Archive 1992a). Even though the Abkhaz possessed no air force whatsoever, “Abkhaz jets” bombed Georgian positions inside Georgia with unmarked Sukhoi fighter planes (Chervonnaya 1994; Chirikba 1998, 76; Cornell 2001, 171; Dale 1996, 126; *Izvestiya* 1992; OSCE Archive 1992b). Shevardnadze called Russia out.²³ While external support therefore does *not* explain the origin of secessionist sentiment in Abkhazia, it was absolutely crucial to understand the escalation and explain the eventual success of the secessionist movement in Abkhazia (and South Ossetia).²⁴

Russia’s support led some Abkhaz leaders to believe that they could win against Tbilisi. In July 1992, Abkhazia’s “President” Vladislav Ardzinba claimed that Abkhazia was “strong enough to fight Georgia”, and hinted at guarantees of external support (BBC 1992). On 14 August, he declared: “The world knows in what kind of situation Abkhazia has been placed ... but we’re assured of moral and material assistance ... and convinced that we have the appropriate support” (Chervonnaya 1994, 118). Russian troops even joined the Abkhaz attack; in March 1993, Russian pilots bombed Sukhumi. Georgia shot down a Su-27 with Russian markings on March 18. The recovered pilot was a Russian Major from the air force unit stationed in Abkhazia (Diplomatic Bulletin 1993, as cited in Kozhokin 1996; Goltz 1993). Two Su-25s then raided Sukhumi, which Russian sources claimed was a reaction to Georgia’s attack on Russia’s seismic research centre in Eshera, Abkhazia. Despite this explicit support for the Abkhaz, Russia insisted on its role as mediator and blocked UN efforts to mediate (Hill and Jewett 1994, 53). Russia would use this playbook later to similar effect (e.g. in Crimea and Donbas, Ukraine).

In October, a heat-seeking missile shot down a Georgian helicopter. Abkhaz also had naval vessels, “large battle tanks and other modern armour that the Abkhazians could have acquired only from the Russian arsenal” (*International Herald Tribune* 1992; *The Times* 1991a 8 January; *The Times* 1991b 12 January; *rezonansi* 1993). The timing of Abkhaz offensives was linked to the delivery of Russian arms, producing violence within days after shipments were received (Clark 1992). The conflict resulted in defeat for the nascent Georgian state. Abkhaz, once a numerical minority, became perhaps the largest single ethnic group in the region (around 50% as of 2011), except in Gali. Satisfied with the new status quo, Moscow brokered a ceasefire and entered as “peacekeepers” (*Declaration* 1994; Lieven 1993a; 1993b; *Memorandum* 1996).

Archil Gegeshidze, former Foreign Policy Advisor, explained in an interview why securing access to Abkhazia served Russia's instrumental interests:

Russia has almost completely lost its access to the strategic Black Sea. During Soviet times, the navy could use the west, north or east side of the sea. But one by one, these vanished. First Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union, then Ukraine took control of Crimea, now Georgia. Abkhazia has a deep water coastline, which the Russian Black Sea Fleet won't relinquish without a fight. (Interview, A. Gegeshidze, 2008)

Neither a purely domestic story nor an external one explains the logic of escalation in Abkhazia. Russian and Abkhaz interests initially pointed in the same direction: both viewed Georgian independence as a security threat. For the Abkhaz, Georgian independence meant "Georgianization". For Russians, it translated into a loss of influence in Abkhazia, a critical location on Russia's southern border for defense, deep warm ports for the Black Sea Fleet and holidays in the "Georgian Riviera". According to Cornell, "Russia made it clear that Georgia's problems would continue until it entered the CIS and accepted Russian troops on its territory"; Shevardnadze was forced to accept Russia's ultimatum and its offer of "neutral" military assistance (Cornell 2001, 173).

But Abkhazia never became independent, and Russia never pushed for it.²⁵ It remained in limbo, and when Georgia became more useful than the Abkhaz during the war in Chechnya, Russia's support switched sides. The war in Chechnya also dampened Russia's enthusiasm for secession and for ethnic Abkhaz, some of whom volunteered to fight on the Chechen side against Russians.²⁶ At the same time, Georgia became more useful to Russia because it was able to block the border gorges through which Chechen fighters would seek refuge and regroup for attacks against Russian forces.

The chronology and timing of conflict illustrate how clearly Russian involvement influenced events in Abkhazia, and how the conflict waxed and waned over time as a function of Russian policy. Although Russia never fully turned off the taps to the separatists, their support varied over time in intensity. First and foremost, Russian policy in the early 1990s aimed to weaken Georgia by bolstering Abkhaz forces (Shenfield 1995, 43; Zverev 1998, 53; cited in Cornell 2001, 349). The magnitude of Russia's intervention must be deduced from bits and pieces of evidence, but beyond contention is how much Russia took from Georgia on land, air and sea. Russian troops were spread around and within Georgia's borders, the Black Sea Fleet was (and still is) stationed off the coast of Abkhazia and there are new Russian military bases on what is the *de jure* territory of Georgia.

Yet, since the marriage between Abkhazia and Moscow was always one of convenience – bolstering Abkhaz power in exchange for military installations on its territory (Cohen 2009a, 2009b) – divorce and separation were therefore never far from the discussion. In the long run, Abkhazia wants real independence. Russia is content with dependence and control. Although Medvedev later officially recognized Abkhazia's independence, nothing has changed inside Abkhazia: recognition is "not something that substantially alters the existing situation on the ground" (Corso 2008). Some Abkhaz are of course happy to take quasi-independence and Russian pensions over Georgian governance, but others see the exchange of one ruler for another (Garb and Kaufmann 2007; Lunev 1995; Starr 1996). In either case, it is clear that Russia's support was (and still is) instrumental (in both senses of the word), and it is hard to conceive of an explanation for Abkhazia's secessionist war that does not involve a large role for external support.

Although grievances in Abkhazia were present already for years, not until Russia delivered military support did these grievances and the secessionists who voiced them gain the upper hand. The movement for more self-rule itself preceded Russian intervention – the origins lie in domestic politics, namely in Georgian offensives – but Russia's aid to the Abkhaz is what made events escalate to the level of war. Russian support also explains the variable intensity of the conflict over time. Russian support for the Abkhaz diminished somewhat in the mid-1990s, because its foreign policy focus shifted (especially to the war in Chechnya, which dampened its enthusiasm for secession), and so too did the Abkhaz movement. But when Russian support returned in the late 1990s, Abkhazia's secessionist movement was reinvigorated with new resources. The ebb and flow of the conflict's intensity point to a recurrent pattern in secessionist dynamics, and the essential role of external actors in explaining the escalation and diminution of conflict.

It is clear that Abkhazia possesses a number of characteristics that made secessionist conflict likely, especially a very high degree of local control and a different trajectory of grievances during Soviet times. Yet, what distinguished Abkhazia was also the overwhelming amount of external support it received from Russia in the form of fighters, funds, weapons, tanks and planes. Abkhazia stands as the centrepiece of Russian policy towards Georgia, and scholarly attention has therefore rightly focused on this conflict, but it was actually in South Ossetia rather than Abkhazia where secession escalated, both in the early 1990s and most recently in the August 2008 war. The next section explores why and how the conflict unfolded in this otherwise desolate farm land at the foothills of the Caucasus mountains in light of theories of secession.

South Ossetia's secessionist war

South Ossetia lived for many years at peace with the rest of Georgia, though it must be acknowledged that the tensions from the 1918 to 1921 period in South Ossetia, sustained a sense of grievance that was available for activation in the late 1980s. What pushed South Ossetia from an aggrieved but still peaceful region to a fully secessionist one was not domestic politics, however. These historical grievances and Gamsakhurdia's attack on South Ossetia's autonomy (like on Abkhazia's autonomy) were certainly relevant to the conflict's *origins*, but Russia's overt intervention is what empowered the nationalists who were previously marginal and weakened the moderates (cf. Saparov 2010).²⁷ In 1989, South Ossetia requested an elevation of the region's status from autonomous region (*oblast'*) to an autonomous republic.²⁸ Rather than granting the request, Tbilisi increased its control over Tskhinvali by adopting Georgian as the official language throughout the region, which disadvantaged many minorities that only spoke Russian and/or their native tongue, and then barred regional parties from competing in national elections (Cornell 2001, 209). Ossetian and Georgian nationalism fed off each other (Siroky and Aprasidze 2011). Although South Ossetians did not take these developments lying down, and proclaimed allegiance to the Soviet Union, there was little that they could do about it, until Russia took their side.²⁹

South Ossetia was not significantly different than other regions in terms of historical grievances, and arguably possessed fewer gripes than some others. Mountainous terrain cannot account for the secessionist conflict, for the South Ossetian conflict mostly occurred on the open plains and terrain played little if any role. Economic viability was

also not a factor because South Ossetia has no economic viability, besides smuggling. Religious differences and linguistic differences are virtually non-existent. Local control was important, but not sufficient. South Ossetia's autonomy (as an autonomous region) was legally less than Abkhazia's autonomy (which was an autonomous republic).

Although the escalation of secessionist conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia shares similar causes – significant external support – South Ossetia has none of Abkhazia's economic value. It is not located on the sea, and therefore provides no naval port. Nothing is produced and no significant natural resources appear to be present in South Ossetia. South Ossetia has one strategic advantage for Russia: it contains a mountain tunnel (built in 1985) that creates a unique corridor linking Russia's North Caucasus to the South Caucasus. This seemingly innocuous tunnel is important because it provides a key land-based link through which the Russian military can access the entire South Caucasus, and thus serves Moscow geopolitically as an important weapon in Moscow's repertoire (Bliev 1999; Menteshashvili 1990, cited in Cornell 2001, 187). It also provides Russia with a critical buffer between its tumultuous North Caucasus region and Georgia, which has been accused of aiding Chechen fighters by providing sanctuary for them to retreat and regroup before attacking again, above and beyond the Chechens ability to pass back and forth between the Pankisi Gorge. If Russia did not provide material and other support, the Georgian army would likely have overrun the territory, causing most South Ossetians to flee to North Ossetia (into Russia). This matters because it would give Ossetians a demographic boost, and thereby exacerbate the already delicate ethnic balance between North Ossetian and Ingushetians.³⁰

The Kremlin armed the secessionists with heavy armaments (including heat-seeking missiles), tanks and attack helicopters (*Courier-Mail* 1991; *The Advertiser* 1991; *The Times* 1991a). Shevardnadze claimed that "helicopters with Russian markings attacked towns and Georgian national guard positions in the region of South Ossetia" (*International Herald Tribune* 1992; *Washington Post* 1992). Intense fighting lasted almost three weeks, and produced a divided provincial capital (Cvetkovski 1998). Russian Parliamentary Chairman, Ruslan Khasbulatov, and Vice-president Aleksander Rutskoi, claimed South Ossetia as "Russian territory." "Russia", he warned, "might find itself forced to annex South Ossetia" (*The Guardian* 1991; *Herald Sun* 1991).

South Ossetia, with a population of less than 100,000 and no economic or military means, could not have created a credible secessionist threat without support from Moscow (Cornell 2001, 344; Hill and Jewett 1994; OSCE Archive 1992b; Shenfield 1995). Moscow's support was instrumental, however, and thus variable. Partly as a result of its involvement in a separatist war in Chechnya, Moscow began to call, however insincerely, for Georgia's territorial integrity and make statements *against* separatism. But that stance shifted too, and a more interventionist policy was re-instituted after the Rose Revolution. Although Russia never fully abandoned the territories, its embrace of South Ossetia and Abkhazia widened (Filipov 2009).³¹ In addition to control over the mountain tunnel, Moscow sent strong signals to other actors in the region, especially Ukraine and Moldova, that dissent will not be tolerated (Chelova and Siroky 2008).

Although Russia has recognized South Ossetia's independence, only Nicaragua, Venezuela, Nauru and Hamas have followed. Tuvalu and Vanuatu initially extended recognition, but then withdrew their recognition. Russia's position here as elsewhere is instrumental rather affective. This implies that it can be reversed, which would allow

Georgia to resume control, but only in a *quid pro quo* exchange for something Georgia has of equal value. South Ossetia has been abandoned before. Its leaders know that they rule at Russia's pleasure. Thus, even though South Ossetia had less local control than Abkhazia, the extent of external support from Russia was overwhelming and propelled the situation into a full scale war on two occasions.

Discussion and rival explanations

Table 1 summarizes these results for each of the four regions in view of the theoretical expectations, and shows that there is a respectable fit between the theoretical expectations and the empirical record.

The results indicate that external support facilitated the escalation of the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, even more in Abkhazia, where the locals had a high degree of local control, than in South Ossetia, where the locals depended more on Russia's support for its military capacity and materials. The reverse happened in Kvemo Kartli and Javakheti, where Azerbaijan and Armenia actively sought to curb secession in their ethnic kin regions by withholding resources, marginalizing co-ethnic separatists, and supporting the host state's central government. Javakheti possessed a high degree of local control, but lacked external support. Kvemo Kartli lacked both and, consistent with the theory, was the most stable region.

However, I also need to show why alternative accounts cannot explain the same variation in secessionist conflict escalation. Ascriptive differences in a primordial sense are sometimes cited as essential reasons for conflict (Connor 1994; Rabushka and Shepsle 1972; Smith 2000), although it is rare to find an unreconstructed primordialist in the social sciences today. As Fearon and Laitin (2000, 849) write, "primordialism" is itself something of a construct of constructivists. Nonetheless, without caricaturing primordial arguments, it is clear that the empirics do not tell their (imagined) story and a more instrumentalist story is called for. Both ethnic Abkhaz and ethnic Georgians are Caucasians, and are both predominantly Orthodox by denomination,³² yet conflict between them was the most intense. Armenians and Georgians are also both indigenous Caucasians, and both are also Orthodox,³³ yet this dyad has been much more peaceful.³⁴ The starkest cultural differences in Georgia exist between Orthodox Georgians and Muslim Azeris, yet this dyad has in fact been the most pacific. The highest level of conflict is – surprisingly from this point of view – in the *most similar* dyads: Georgian–Abkhaz and Georgian–Ossetian.³⁵

Mountainous terrain has also been promoted as facilitating civil war, and particularly "sons of the soil" wars that are in many ways similar in topography to secessionist wars (Buhaug and Gates 2002; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Galula 2006; Hendrix 2011; Karny 2000; Siroky and Dzutsati 2015). Javakheti, South Ossetia and Abkhazia have large

Table 1. Theoretical expectations and empirical cases.

External support	Local control	
	High	Low
Yes	Secessionist war most likely (Abkhazia)	Secessionist war less likely (South Ossetia)
No	Secessionist war less likely (Javakheti)	Secessionist war least likely (Kvemo Kartli)

mountainous areas, whereas Kvemo Kartli is flat. The Abkhaz case is sometimes cited as supportive of this conjecture, but a closer look reveals that the empirics are problematic – the conflict did *not* occur in the mountains, and was not dominated by defensive tactics. Much of the fighting occurred in coastal areas. Similarly, the Ossetian conflict, which is also sometimes cited as support for the terrain thesis, occurred openly on the plains in and around Tskhinvali, the principal city in the region (cf. Zürcher 2007). Discussions of mountainous terrain rightly draw attention to force multipliers, but the factor that multiplied the power of weaker secessionist forces in Georgia was not terrain, but external actors. Similarly, what prevented some secessionist movements from escalating was not geography, but the suppression of separatist agitators as well as the denial of weapons and refuge by external actors (indeed, ethnic kin states!).

Economic viability offers a similarly weak explanation for sub-national variation in Georgia (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Hechter 1992; Zarkovic-Bookman 1992). Kvemo Kartli is one of the most economically viable regions, yet it did not secede, whereas South Ossetia is the least economically viable region, survives largely on a black economy based on smuggling, yet it was the first to declare independence.³⁶ Spatial concentration, which is widely thought to facilitate collective action, also fairs poorly when we compare the regions in revolt with those that remained stable. Georgia offers at least two important examples of this observation: the Azeris in Kvemo Kartli and the Armenians in Javakheti.³⁷ The Abkhaz and Ossetians are far more dispersed, but they nevertheless seceded. Two-thirds of Ossetians in Georgia lived outside of South Ossetia at the time of the conflict, and Abkhaz comprised less than half of Abkhazia (Soviet Union 1989). In Georgia, the two most spatially concentrated groups were dormant, and the most dispersed were the most violent.

These prominent alternative explanations cannot account for variation in the behaviour of these regions. It is not their geographic and economic endowments but rather the external provision and suppression of conflict resources to some ethnic groups, and not others, and to a lesser extent their degree of local control, that account for the observed variation in outcomes.

Implications

Why does secessionist sentiment escalate into armed conflict among some regionally based ethnic groups but not others? This is an important and still open question. Contrary to claims that secession arises largely from domestic-level conditions and interactions, I show that external actors played a decisive role, both in supporting and in suppressing conflict escalation. Furthermore, I argue that such behaviour is motivated primarily by the strategic and instrumental interests of leaders in external states, and only secondarily by their ethnic and ideological affinities. Two observable implications follow: first, if external involvement is primarily instrumental rather than affective, then we should observe variation over time in an external actor's support and suppression of a secessionist movement as its foreign policy priorities shift. Theories grounded in affective loyalties provide no reason to expect significant change over time. Yet, few scholars who study external support for secessionist movements would contend that it is constant over time. Second, if external involvement is primarily instrumental rather than affective, we should observe external kin states *not* supporting co-ethnics across the border, and possibly suppressing them, when the host state offers a more advantageous relationship.

The essay explores the implications of this general argument in the Caucasus using a sub-national research design of paired comparisons (Tarrow 2010). I would not wish to claim that I have controlled for all relevant variables through a “natural experiment”, but I echo Laitin (1995) and Varshney (2002) and others in defending such an analysis as worthwhile for focusing on the limiting conditions of general theories and for building alternative theories through controlled comparisons. The external actor dynamics illustrated here represent such an analysis, and further our understanding of how and why external involvement of the kind examined here occurs. The part of the world examined in this study – Russia’s “near abroad” – may stand out as a country that is overly willing to intervene in its neighbourhood, but medium-N and large-N studies of external support suggest that the phenomenon of external support for insurgent groups is actually quite widespread in the world (Salehyan 2009).

It might still be the case the scope conditions are narrow because the quality of “being Russia” explains all of the variation: Russia intervened in both, while Armenia and Azerbaijan did not. Both are smaller countries with arguably more to lose in a conflict with Georgia, and of course both also have each other to worry about strategically. But this overlooks several important facts to the contrary, including that Armenia intervened in Azerbaijan over Nagorny Karabakh, Russia’s support is not a constant, but has waxed and waned over time, and that Russia has *not* intervened in almost all of the places in the near abroad where it has nearly 25 million ethnic kin.³⁸ The recent and ongoing intervention in Ukraine, and anticipation of such an intervention in the Baltics, is a sign that the Georgia case may not be so unique after all, and affords new opportunities for research through systematic comparisons and to examine the drivers of external support. It is true that not all interventions are alike, and Russia’s involvement in South Ossetia and Abkhazia was at a very high level in scope and depth, but other cases – for example, India’s involvement in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and American involvement in Kosovo – were comparable if not larger in magnitude.

Even though it limits my ability to make more empirically general claims about these dynamics, one clear benefit of the small-N empirical strategy adopted here is that it provides a higher degree of internal validity, while granting that there is a trade-off with external generalizability. It highlights this important dimension of external involvement, and shows how and why it operates in a specific context while holding constant several (certainly not all) causal factors in civil war that vary considerably across countries and regions. The trade-off made in this article is more internal validity and clarity for less ability to make specific statements about its generality.

Notes

1. In developing the theory below, I focus on regional groups that are spatially concentrated on the borders with other countries because these are the groups most relevant to the question of secessionist war. Dispersed groups and groups located in “islands” within the country (e.g. Tatarstan) have never to my knowledge attempted to secede from the host state. For an analysis of conflicts and borderlands, see Snyder (2010) and Bartov and Weitz (2013). For a discussion from an international relations perspective, see Atzili (2012).
2. This is a fundamental premise of partition theory. On partition theory, see Kaufman (1996), Sambanis (2000), Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl (2009) and Fearon (2004). On applications of the theory, see Mearsheimer and Van Evera (1999), Mearsheimer (1993) and Gelb (2003).

3. This realization led to a large wave of sub-national studies of violence and a shift from cross-national civil war studies. This shift seems to have occurred sometime in the mid-2000s, when in the same year – 2006 – Stathis Kalyvas’s seminal micro-level study of violence *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*, and Havard Hegre’s and Nicholas Sambanis’ impressive cross-national study of civil war were published (Hegre and Sambanis 2006).
4. Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham find that external support is more likely for moderately strong groups, which are both more likely to be offered external support and are more likely to accept it.
5. Brubaker emphasizes an external homeland, but the external actor need not be ethnically tied to the secessionists, as other analysis of external support indicates (cf. Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham 2011).
6. Delegation of fighting to rebel agents is a common strategy that states pursue. For a principal agent model of this relationship between rebels and external sponsors, and how it influences the chances of civilian abuse, see Salehyan, Siroky and Wood (2014).
7. Partial delegation significantly reduces the cost of involvement by outsourcing part of the job to local fighters who not only possess greater local knowledge of terrain but also vested interests in the nationalist movement that makes them more willing to sacrifice their lives. See Salehyan (2009) and Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood (2014).
8. On the trade-offs in using indigenous forces for third-party nation and state building, see Darden and Mylonas (2012), cf. Gortzak and Siroky (2012).
9. The theory also yields another prediction concerning the duration of support. If external support is largely instrumental, then it should also be ephemeral. If the source of support is driven instead by ethnic, ideological or religious affinity, then external support should be more enduring. Similarly, switching sides would be highly unusual from an ethnic ties perspective, whereas it would not be unusual using an instrumental logic. On allegiances in civil war alliances, see Christia (2012).
10. If external support is motivated more by instrumental than affective concerns, external support should actually be *more* likely from non-ethnic kin states than kin states – probabilistically because most states are non-kin states. Suppression should be *more* likely to emerge from ethnic kin states, counter-intuitively from the ethnic ties perspective, because kin states (if they act more instrumentally than on the basis of kinship) will be reluctant to become bogged down in secessionist wars from which it will be difficult to disengage precisely because of those kinship ties that very often bridge borders in cases of secessions.
11. For the former Soviet Union, see Bunce (1999), Hale (2000) and Treisman (1997); for North America, see Kymlicka (2008). For an empirical evaluation of the debate, see Miodownik and Cartrite (2010).
12. Chechnya, where the role of external forces was minimal, is an exception in this region.
13. Archival evidence is drawn from the OSCE Central Archives in Prague, the OSCE Archives in Tbilisi and the Archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Georgia. Fond, box and document numbers are provided whenever available.
14. Interviews were conducted with academics, policy-makers and analysts. Individuals are cited by name or position when permission was granted, and anonymously when it was requested.
15. The regional newspapers used were *Azadlyg*, *dghes*, *dilis gazeti*, *iveria*, *iprinda*, *Izvestiya*, *mze*, *Qazet*, *Prime*, *rezonansi*, *sakartvelos respublika*, *sakinform*, *Snark*, *Zerkalo*.
16. Here, it is important to acknowledge the evolution and change in the host state’s circumstances, and hence the incentives and constraints on secessionist mobilization/external action, in order to avoid the impression that the early 1990s, which was a highly eventful time, can be compared with later periods, which are sometimes mentioned here (especially in the cases of Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli) but are not intended to be evaluated in the same basket.
17. The Armenian woman in Zhdanovo (a Russian sounding name) uses “Zhdanovakan” to name her town, turning it into an Armenian-sounding place.
18. Zurab Zhvania, Chairman of the Georgian Parliament, put it lightly when he remarked of the 1990s that the problem is “the region’s link with the center” (Prime 1997).

19. I thank an anonymous reviewer for this point.
20. Saakashvili made considerable efforts to reintegrate Javakheti and connect it better to Tbilisi. One concrete example of this effort was the new highway from the capital to the region.
21. Although known for his nationalism, Gamsakhurdia actually secured a peaceful arrangement with the Abkhaz that granted them disproportional representation (Coppeters and Legvold 2005, 383ff.). Under Shevardnadze, matters spiraled out of control. In 1992, Georgia's Military Council declared that it would restore the 1921 Constitution. Many Abkhaz interpreted this to mean that its autonomous status would be revoked. Even though the 1921 constitution contained a clause for Abkhaz autonomy (1921 Constitution, XI, A.107–108), the damage had been done and, only a few months later, the Abkhaz declared independence (Cornell 2001, 345ff.).
22. Cornell explains this anomaly by referring to Abashidze's non-radical leadership. In any case, Adjara is unusual in many respects, most importantly for this study in that it was one of the few autonomous regions in the former Soviet Union outside of Russia proper not to have a titular nationality. As such, Derluguian characterized it as a "land without a people ... there was an Ajaria, but not Ajars' (Derluguian 1998, 277). For a similar argument about Ajaria, see Toft (2003, 113), where it is suggested that cultural differences between the region of Ajara and the rest of Georgia were not sufficiently large to generate conflict. This argument presumes that large differences would generate conflict, but the cases of Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli, not to mention South Ossetia, where the rate of intermarriage was very high, cast doubt on this line of reasoning.
23. OSCE Archive, N.408. CSCE Georgia Files accuses "Russian forces of supporting the Abkhaz by preventing Georgia from using the air force, helicopters and navy and carrying out air strikes on military targets'.
24. This should not be taken to mean that other factors were unimportant. As Zürcher (2007) rightly notes, the collapse of state authority in Tbilisi and the ineffectiveness of Georgian para-military armies were also crucial.
25. Until 2008, of course, but even then it did not manage to convince even its closest allies to recognize it.
26. In a document adopted by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on 19 January 1996, Abkhazia was resolutely condemned for separatist aspirations. The CIS signed an agreement to impose explicit trade, finance and transportation sanctions on Abkhazia, and reiterated Georgia's territorial integrity (CIS 1996). Sanctions enforcement was spotty, but the Abkhaz side complained; Russia formally lifted the resolution 12 years later, <http://www.rb.ru/topstory/politics/2008/03/06/205356.html> (in Russian).
27. South Ossetia first gained its autonomy in the early 1920s and maintained it throughout the Soviet period; see Saparov (2010).
28. "... autonomous republics look considerably more like states than the lower-ranked autonomous oblasts and autonomous okrugs, insofar as they had their own legislatures, executives, and judiciaries ... in addition, compared with lower-ranked territories, ASSRs were allowed greater, albeit symbolic, representation in the federal government..." (Giuliano 2006, 277).
29. In one of the last attempts to preserve the Soviet Union, on 3 April 1990, Moscow passed a law on secession of the USSR's constituent republics. Autonomous entities in each constituent republic had the right to stay in the union, even if the host republic voted to secede in a referendum, "O porjadke reshenija voprosov, svjazannyh s vyhodom sojuznoj respublikiz SSSR", Article 3 (in Russian), www.businesspravo.ru/Docum/DocumShow_DocumID_37784.html
30. Of course, most South Ossetians are living in Russia now, due to the various conflicts, so this policy has not worked as it was apparently intended. I thank a reviewer for pointing this out.
31. See Cheterian (2010) on how the 2008 border war was quite different from the secessionist wars of the 1990s.
32. Abkhaz are split between Orthodoxy and Islam, but the exile of many Abkhaz Muslims resulted in a largely Orthodox population within Abkhazia proper.

33. Though both are Orthodox, the Armenian Church broke from Constantinople in 554 after rejecting the Council of Chalcedon in 491, and became autocephalous.
34. Historical tensions between the merchant Armenians in Tbilisi and agrarian Georgians from the countryside are not insignificant, but the Armenians in Javakheti were largely quiescent in the 1990s, while tensions in other regions escalated.
35. The claim here is not that Georgians are the same as either Abkhaz or Ossetians, but rather that they are the most similar on the examined dimensions.
36. According to the *Statistical Yearbook of Georgia* (2010, 142), Kvemo Kartli has 497,200 inhabitants. Kvemo Kartli is a transport corridor (railroad and main roads) going to Azerbaijan and Armenia. Rustavi and Gardabani, both in Kvemo Kartli, are major industrial cities. Kvemo Kartli generated 10.2% of the total production output in Georgia (in 2009) compared to 1.1% in Samtskhe-Javakheti (including Samtskhe) and 2% in South Ossetia. Independent Russian researchers (Pakhomenko 2009) put South Ossetia's population at 32,000 in 2009.
37. Although many Armenians live in Abkhazia and Tbilisi, they are spatially concentrated in Javakheti (or Javakhk, as Armenians call it). The same for Azeris: many live in Tbilisi, but they are spatially concentrated in certain parts of Kvemo Kartli. Tbilisi itself is 85% Georgian, 7.5% Azeri and 7.5% Armenian. <http://www.regions.ge/>
38. Russians are disenfranchized in some places (e.g. Estonia and Latvia), and possess other grievances related to discriminatory treatment and legislation elsewhere.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for extensive feedback and comments from the reviewers and the editors, Laurence Broers and Mairbek Vatchagaev. For numerous helpful suggestions, insightful questions and valuable discussions on previous versions, I am very grateful to Laia Balcells, Giovanni Capoccia, Julia Choucair-Vizoso, Keith Darden, Alexander Downes, Valery Dzutsati, Francesca Grandi, Ryan Grist, Elise Guiliano, Giorgi Gvalia, Henry Hale, Donald Horowitz, Leslie Hough, Susan Hyde, Anne Le Huérou, Temur Iakobashvili, Evan Lieberman, Jason Lyall, Stathis Kalyvas, Bruce Jentleson, Kimberly Marten, Ghia Nodia, Leonid Peisakhin, Daniel Posner, Alexander Rondeli, Lawrence Sáez, Stephen Saideman, Nicholas Sambanis, Tom Trier, Barbara Walter, Carolyn Warner, Erik Wibbels, Archil Abashidze, Davit Aprasidze, Lenka Bustikova, Lela Chakaia, Alex Debs, Erin Jenne, Nuno Monteiro, Lika Sanikidze, Taniel Sikharulidze, Tariq Thachil and Steven Wilkinson. Previous versions of this paper were presented at the Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, at Arizona State University, Duke University and Yale University.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

ORCID

David Siroky  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6110-3183>

References

- Anderson, L. 2004. "Ethnofederalism: The Worst Form of Institutional Arrangement...?" *International Security* 39 (1): 165–204.
- Atzili, B. 2012. *Good Fences, Bad Neighbors: Border Fixity and International Conflict*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Azadlyg. 1998. "Azeris of Georgia Protest Against Lawlessness and Neo-Bolshevism." Baku, January 14. Supplied by *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, January 30.
- Bakke, K., K. Cunningham, and L. Seymour. 2012. "A Plague of Initials: Fragmentation, Cohesion, and Infighting in Civil Wars." *Perspectives of Politics* 10 (2): 265–283.
- Bartov, O., and E. D. Weitz, eds. 2013. *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- BBC. 1992. "Abkhazia: Strong Enough to Fight Georgia." July 30.
- Billingsley, D. 1997. "Caucasian Confederates." *Jane's Intelligence Review*.
- Birniir, J. 2006. *Ethnicity and Electoral Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blau, P., and J. Schwartz. 1984. *Crosscutting Social Circles: Testing a Macrosocial Theory of Intergroup Relations*. New York: Academic Press.
- Blauvelt, T. 2014. "From Words to Action! Nationality Policy in Soviet Abkhazia from 1921–1938." In *The Making of Modern Georgia: The First Georgian Republic and Its Successors*, edited by Stephen F. Jones, 232–262. London: Routledge.
- Blied, M. 1999. *Osetiya, Kavkaz: Istoriya i sovremennost*. Vladikavkaz: SOGU (North Ossetian State University); cited in Svante Cornell, *Small States and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*. Richmond: Curzon, 2001, 187.
- Brancati, D. 2009. *Peace by Design*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Brass, P. 1996. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- "Breakdown of Order in South Ossetia." 1991a. *The Times*, January 8.
- Broers, L. 2014. "Unpacking the Meta-conflict: Claims to Sovereignty, Self-determination and Territorial Integrity in the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict." In *The Making of Modern Georgia: The First Georgian Republic and Its Successors*, edited by Stephen F. Jones, 263–283. London: Routledge.
- Brown, M. 1996. *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Brubaker, R. 1995. "National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External National Homelands in the New Europe." *Daedalus* 124 (2): 107–132.
- Brubaker, R. 1996. *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brubaker, R., and D. Laitin. 1998. "Ethnic and Nationalist Violence." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 423–452.
- Buhaug, H., L.-E. Cederman, and K. Gleditsch. 2013. *Inequality, Grievance and Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Buhaug, H., and S. Gates. 2002. "The Geography of Civil War." *Journal of Peace Research* 39 (4): 417–433.
- Buhaug, H., and K. Gleditsch. 2008. "Contagion or Confusion?" *International Studies Quarterly* 52 (2): 215–233.
- Bulutgil, H. Z. 2010. "War, Collaboration and Endogeneous Ethnic Polarization: The Path to Ethnic Cleansing." In *Rethinking Violence: State and Non-state Actors*, edited by Erica Cernoweth and Adria Lawrence, 7–82. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Bunce, V. 1999. *Subversive Institutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cederman, L.-E., K. Gleditsch, and N. Weidmann. 2011. "Horizontal Inequality and Ethnonationalist War." *American Political Science Review* 105 (3): 478–495.
- Cetinyan, R. 2002. "Ethnic Bargaining in the Shadow of Third-party Intervention." *International Organization* 56 (3): 645–677.
- Chelova, M., and D. Siroky. 2008. "Only NATO Expansion Will Deter Russian aims." *Kyiv Post*, August 20. <https://www.kyivpost.com/opinion/op-ed/only-nato-expansion-will-deter-russian-aims-29441.html?flavour=mobile>
- Chervonnaya, S. 1994. *Conflict in the Caucasus: Georgia, Abkhaz and the Russian Shadow*. Glastonbury: Gothic Image Publications.
- Cheterian, Vicken. 2010. "The August 2008 War in Georgia: From Ethnic Conflict to Border Wars." In *War and Revolution in the Caucasus: Georgia Ablaze*, edited by Stephen E. Jones, 63–78. Abingdon: Routledge.

- Chirikba, V. A. 1998. "The Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict: In Search for Ways Out. Georgians and Abkhazians." In *The Search for a Peace Settlement*, edited by Bruno Coppieters, Ghia Nodia and Yuri Anchabadze, 45–55. Köln: Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien.
- Christia, F. 2012. *The Closest of Allies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- CIS. 1996. "Reshenie Soveta glav gosudarstv Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv ot 19 yanvarya 1996g. O merakh po uregulirovaniyu konflikta v Abkhazii, Gruziiya." <http://systema-by.com/docs/bitfm/dk-hv1nid.html> [in Russian]. Also: <http://www.rb.ru/topstory/politics/2008/03/06/205356.html> [in Russian].
- Clark, B. 1992. "Russian Army Blamed for Inflaming Georgian War." *The Times*, October 6.
- Coggins, B. 2011. "Friends in High Places: International Politics and the Emergence of States from Secessionism." *International Organization* 65 (3): 433–467.
- Cohen, A. 2009a. "Russia Plans Base in Georgian Breakaway Region." *RFE/RL*, March 19.
- Cohen, A. 2009b. "Russia Plans Three Military Bases in Abkhazia." *Eurasia Insight*, February 6.
- Collier, P., and A. Hoeffler. 2004. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers* 56 (4): 563–595.
- Connor, W. 1994. *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Coppieters, B. 2001. *Federalism and Conflict in the Caucasus*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- Coppieters, B., and R. Legvold. 2005. *Statehood and Security: Georgia After the Rose Revolution*, 384. American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Cornell, S. 2001. *Small States and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*. Richmond: Curzon.
- Cornell, S. 2002. "Autonomy as a Source of Conflict." *World Politics* 54 (2): 245–276.
- Corso, M. 2008. "Russia Formally Recognizes Separatist Regions." *Eurasia Insight*, August 26.
- Cunningham, K., and E. Beaulieu. 2010. "Dissent, Repression and Inconsistency." In *Rethinking Violence: States and Non-state Actors in Conflict*, edited by E. Cernoweth and A. Lawrence, 173–196. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Cvetkovski, N. 1998. "The Georgian-South Ossetian Conflict." Ph.D. diss., Aalborg University.
- Dale, C. 1996. "The Case of Abkhazia." In *Peacekeeping and the Role of Russia in Eurasia*, edited by L. Johnson and C. Archer, 121–137. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Darchiashvili, D. 2000. "Ethnic Relations as Security Factor in Southern Georgia." *Central Asia and Caucasus: Journal of Social and Political Studies* (1). <http://www.ca-c.org/journal/eng-01-2000/07.darchiash.shtml>.
- Darden, K., and H. Mylonas. 2012. "The Promethean Dilemma." *Ethnopolitics* 11 (1): 85–93.
- Declaration on Measures for a Political Settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict. 1994. <http://peacemaker.un.org/georgia-measurespoliticalsettlement94>.
- Dejevsky, M. 1998. "Caucasus Muslims Join Battle." *The Times*, August 20.
- Derluguian, Georgi M. 1998. "A Tale of Two Resorts: Abkhazia and Ajaria Before and Since the Soviet Collapse." In *The Myth of Ethnic Conflict*, edited by Beverly Crawford and Ronnie D. Lipschutz, 261–292. International and Area Studies Research Series, No. 98. Berkeley: University of California.
- dghes. 1999. "Paper Accuses Armenian Nationalists of Stirring up Ethnic Trouble in Georgia," July 2. Supplied by *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, July 15.
- Diamond, L. 1999. *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- "Ethnic Battle Splits Georgia." 1991. *Guardian*, February 13.
- Fabry, M. 2010. *Recognizing States: International Society and the Establishment of New States Since 1776*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fearon, J. 2004. "Separatist Wars, Partition, and World Order." *Security Studies* 13 (4): 394–415.
- Fearon, J., and D. Laitin. 2000. "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity." *International Organization* 54 (4): 845–877.

- Fearon, J., and D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97 (1): 75–90.
- "Fierce Nationalist Feelings Unite Small Town Rebels." 1991b. *The Times*, January 11.
- Filipov, M. 2009. "Diversionary Role of the Georgia–Russia Conflict." *Europe–Asia Studies* 61 (10): 1825–1847.
- Forrest, J. 2004. *Subnationalism in Africa: Ethnicity, Alliances, and Politics*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Fuller, E. 1983. "How Serious are Inter-nationality Tensions in Georgia?" *Radio Liberty Research Bulletin* RL 444/8, November 25.
- Fuller, G., R. Morrison, A. Murphy, and M. Ridley. 2002. "Potential for Ethnic Conflict in China." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 43: 583–611.
- Galula, D. 2006 (1964). *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International.
- Garb, P., and W. Kaufmann. 2007. "Georgian NATO Accession and Potential Impacts on the Georgian-Abkhaz Peace Process." Proceedings of the 14th conference, Istanbul, June 14–15. <http://www.peacebuilding.uci.edu/files/progs/pdfs/NATOconference.pdf>.
- Gelb, L. 2003. "The Three-state Solution." *New York Times*, November 25.
- Georgian Radio. 1994. "South of Country Virtually Cut Off from Outside World," Tbilisi, in Georgian. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, March 4.
- Ghai, Y. 2000. *Autonomy and Ethnicity: Negotiating Competing Claims in Multi-ethnic States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ghobarah, H. A., P. Huth, and B. Russett. 2002. "Civil Wars Kill and Maim People – Long After the Shooting Stops." *American Political Science Review* 97 (2): 189–202.
- Giuliano, E. 2006. "Secessionism from the Bottom Up: Democratization, Nationalism and Local Russia's Accountability in the Russian Transition." *World Politics* 58 (2): 276–310.
- Gleditsch, K. S. 2007. "Transnational Dimensions of Civil War." *Journal of Peace Research* 44 (3): 293–309.
- Gleditsch, K., I. Salehyan, and K. Schultz. 2008. "Fighting at Home, Fighting Abroad: How Civil Wars Lead to International Disputes." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52 (4): 479–506.
- Goltz, T. 1993. "Eurasian Letter: The Hidden Russian Hand." *Foreign Policy*, 92 (Autumn): 92–116.
- Gortzak, Y., and D. Siroky. 2012. "Prometheus Bound?" *Ethnopolitics* 11 (1): 101–104.
- Griffiths, R., and T. Fazal. 2008. "A State of One's Own." *Brown Journal of International Affairs* 15 (1): 199–209.
- Gurr, T. 1970. *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gurr, T. 2000. *Peoples Versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.
- Gurr, T., and W. Moore. 1997. "Ethnopolitical Rebellion: A Cross-sectional Analysis of the 1980s with Risk Assessments for the 1990s." *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (4): 1079–1103.
- Guss, J., and D. S. Siroky. 2012. "Living with Heterogeneity: Bridging the Ethnic Divide in Bosnia and Beyond." *Comparative Sociology* 11: 304–324.
- Hakobyan, T. 2008. "Turkey Faces a Critical Decision." *Armenian Reporter*, August 30.
- Hale, H. 2000. "The Parade of Sovereignties: Testing Theories of Secession in the Soviet Setting." *British Journal of Political Science* 30 (1): 31–56.
- Hechter, M. 1978. "Group Formation and the Cultural Division of Labor." *American Journal of Sociology* 84 (2): 293–317.
- Hechter, M. 1992. "The Dynamics of Secession." *Acta Sociologica* 35 (4): 267–283.
- Hegre, H., and N. Sambanis. 2006. "Sensitivity Analysis of Empirical Results on Civil War Onset." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50 (4): 508–535.
- Hendrix, C. 2011. "Head for the Hills? Rough Terrain, State Capacity, and Civil War Onset." *Civil Wars* 13 (4): 345–370.
- Hill, F., and P. Jewett. 1994. *Back in the USSR: Russia's Intervention in the Internal Affairs of the Former Soviet Republics and the Implications for United States Policy Toward Russia*. Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project. Harvard: JFK School.
- Horowitz, D. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Human Rights Watch. 1997. "Iran: Religious and Ethnic Minorities." September. <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1997/iran/>.
- Interview, A. Gegeshidze. 2008. "Former Senior Foreign Policy Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Georgia."
- Iprinda. 1999. "Georgian Labour Party Censures Azerbaijan for Promoting Georgia's Ruling Party." Iprinda News Agency, Tbilisi, in Georgian, October 31. Supplied by *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, October 31.
- iveria. 1996. "Georgian Security Council Discusses Georgian-Azeri Border Situation." In Georgian, October 18. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, October 23.
- Izvestiya. 1992. "Mountain People Join the War on Abkhazia's Side." August 26.
- Jenne, E. 2007. *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Jenne, E. K., and S. M. Saideman. 2009. "The International Relations of Ethnic Conflict." In *Handbook of War Studies III: The Intrastate Dimension*, edited by Manus Midlarsky, 260–279. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Kalyvas, S., and L. Balcells. 2010. "International System and Technologies of Rebellion." *American Political Science Review* 104 (3): 415–429.
- Karmel, S. M. 1995. "Ethnic Tension and the Struggle for Order: China's Policies in Tibet." *Pacific Affairs* 68: 485–508.
- Karny, Y. 2000. *Highlanders: A Journey to the Caucasus in Quest of Memory*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Kaufman, C. 1996. "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars." *International Security* 20 (1): 136–175.
- Kokoev, K., and G. Svanidze. 2000. "Problems of Ethnic Minorities in Georgia." *Central Asia and the Caucasus*. http://www.ca-c.org/journal/2000/journal_eng/eng01_2000/06.kokoev.shtml.
- Kozhokin, E. 1996. "Georgia-Abkhazia." In *US and Russian Policymaking with Respect to the Use of Force*, edited by Jeremy Azrael and Emil Pain. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. http://www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF129/CF-129-chapter5.html
- Kymlicka, W. 2008. *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations in Canada*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Laitin, D. 1995. "National Revivals and Violence." *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 36 (1): 3–43.
- Lake, D., and D. Rothchild, eds. 1998. *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Lieven, A. 1993a. "Georgian Forces Routed by Rebels." *The Times*, October 1.
- Lieven, A. 1993b. "Victorious Abkhazian Army Settles Old Scores in an Orgy of Looting." *The Times*, October 4.
- Lijphart, A. 1977. *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Lischer, S. 2005. *Dangerous Sanctuaries*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Lunev, S. 1995. "Russia's Ominous New Military Doctrine." *Jamestown Prism*, December 1.
- Mann, M. 2005. *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Matsaberidze, G., and V. Meskhia. 1997. "Djavakheti in Between Real and Imaginary Problems." *sakartvelos respublika* 13, January 18; cited in Lia Melikishvili, *Latent Conflict in Polyethnic Society*. Tbilisi: CIPDD, 1999. <http://www.cipdd.org/copdd/MELIKSHVILI/contents.htm>. ISBN 99928-31-17-0.
- McCarthy, J., and M. Zald. 2001. "The Enduring Vitality of the Resource Mobilization Theory of Social Movements." In *Handbook of Sociological Theory*, edited by Jonathan H. Turner, 533–565. New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- McGarry, J., and B. O'Leary. 2003. "Introduction: The Macro-political Regulation of Ethnic Conflict." In *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation: Case Studies of Protracted Ethnic Conflicts*, edited by John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, 1–40. London: Routledge.
- Mearsheimer, J. 1993. "Shrink Bosnia to Save It." *New York Times*, March 21.

- Mearsheimer, J., and S. Van Evera. 1999. "Redraw the Map, Stop the Killing." *New York Times*, April 19.
- Melikishvili, L. 1999. *Latent Conflict in Polyethnic Society*. Tbilisi: CIPDD.
- Memorandum on Measures to Provide Security and Strengthen Mutual Trust Between Sides in the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict*. 1996, April 17.
- Menteshashvili, A. 1990. *Iz Istorii Vzaimootnoshcheniy Gruzinskogo, Abkhazskogo i Osetinskogo Narodov (1918–1920)*. Tbilisi: Об-во "Знание" Грузии.
- Miodownik, D., and B. Cartrite. 2010. "Does Political Decentralization Exacerbate or Ameliorate Ethnopolitical Mobilization? A Test of Contesting Propositions." *Political Research Quarterly* 63 (3): 731–746.
- Mirilovic, N., and D. S. Siroky. 2015. "Two States in the Holy Land?: International Recognition and the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict." *Politics and Religion* 8 (2): 263–285.
- Mylonas, H. 2011. "Assimilation and Its Alternatives." In *Rethinking Violence*, edited by Erica Chernoweth and Adria Lawrence, 83–116. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Mylonas, H. 2012. *The Politics of Nation-building: Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- mze. 2004. "Ethnic Azeris in Border Village Attack Georgian Cars After Police Raid." In Georgian, December 8. Supplied by *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*.
- Naimark, N. M. 2001. *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth Century Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Nissman, D. 1995. "The Two Azerbaijans." *Caspian Crossroads* 2: 23–24.
- O'Hanlon, M., and E. Joseph. 2007. "A Bosnia Option for Iraq." *United States Department of Least Bad Iraq Options* 2 (3). <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2007/01/01/a-bosnia-option-for-iraq/>.
- OSCE Archive. 1992a. N.408. CSCE Georgia Files, Com. No. 408, Prague.
- OSCE Archive. 1992b. N.178. CSCE Georgia Files, Com. 178, Prague.
- Pakhomenko, Varvara. 2009. "Obitaemy Ostrov (Inhabited Island)" [in Russian], September 22. <http://www.polit.ru/article/2009/09/22/demo/>.
- Pearlman, W. 2011. *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Prime. 1997. "Parliament Speaker Satisfied with Visit to Southern Georgia." Tbilisi, in Russian, 10:09 GMT, September 15.
- Prime. 1998. "Georgian, Armenian Presidents Eager To Mediate in Regional Conflicts," November 20.
- Qazet. 2002. "Azeri Daily Says Georgia Helpless in Face of Armenian Separatism." February 8. Supplied by *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*.
- Rabushka, A., and K. Shepsle. 1972. *Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability*. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company.
- "Rebels Call for Kremlin Help." 1991. *Courier Mail*, February 7.
- "Rebels Seek Help from Gorbachev." 1991. *The Advertiser*, February 7.
- Regan, P. 2002. "Third Party Interventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflicts." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46 (1): 55–73.
- Roeder, P. 1991. "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization." *World Politics* 43 (2): 196–232.
- "Russian Troops on the March." 1992. *Washington Post*, June 25.
- "Russians Gave the Abkhaz Weapons." 1993. *rezonansi*, December 3.
- Saideman, S. 2002. "Discrimination in International Relations: Examining Why Some Ethnic Groups Receive More External Support Than Others." *Journal of Peace Research* 39 (1): 27–50.
- Saideman, S. 2011. "The International Relations of Secession." In *Research Companion on Secession*, edited by P. Radan and A. Pavkovic, 267–283. Basingstoke: Ashgate.
- Saideman, S., and W. Ayres. 2009. *For Kin or Country*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Salehyan, I. 2009. *Rebels Without Borders*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Salehyan, I., and K. S. Gleditsch. 2006. "Refugees and the Spread of Civil War." *International Organization* 60 (2): 335–366.

- Salehyan, I., K. Gleditsch, and D. Cunningham. 2011. "Explaining External Support for Insurgent Groups." *International Organization* 65 (4): 709–744.
- Salehyan, I., D. Siroky, and R. Wood. 2014. "External Rebel Sponsorship and Civilian Abuse: A Principal Agent Analysis of Wartime Atrocities." *International Organization* 68 (3): 633–661.
- Sambanis, N. 2000. "Partition as a Solution to Ethnic War: An Empirical Critique of the Theoretical Literature." *World Politics* 52 (4): 437–483.
- Sambanis, N., and J. S. Schullholfer-Wohl. 2009. "What's in a Line: Is Partition a Solution to Civil War." *International Security* 34 (2): 82–118.
- Sambanis, N., and A. Zinn. 2006. "From Protest to Violence: An Analysis of Conflict Escalation with an Application to Self-determination Movements." Unpublished Manuscript, Yale University.
- Saparov, A. 2010. "From Conflict to Autonomy: The Making of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region 1918–1922." *Europe-Asia Studies* 62 (1): 99–123.
- Sautman, B. 2005. "China's Strategic Vulnerability to Minority Separatism in Tibet." *Asian Affairs* 32: 87–118.
- Selway, J. 2011. "The Measurement of Cross-cutting Cleavages and Other Multidimensional Cleavage Structures." *Political Analysis* 19 (1): 48–65.
- "Separatist Movement in South a Threat." 2002. *dilis gazeti*, April 27.
- Shain, Y. 2007. *Kinship and Diasporas*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Shenfield, S. 1995. "Armed Conflict in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union." In *The United Nations and Civil Wars*, edited by Thomas G. Weiss, 31–48. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- "Shevardnadze Says Russia Aids Rebels." 1992. *International Herald Tribune*, June 16.
- Shiriyev, Z., and K. Kakachia. 2013. "Azerbaijani-Georgian Relations." SAM Review, v. 7–8, July, Baku. https://www.academia.edu/4344816/Azerbaijan-Georgian_relations_The_Foundations_and_Challenges_of_the_Strategic_Alliance.
- Siroky, D., and D. Aprasidze. 2011. "Guns, Roses and Democratization." *Democratization* 18 (3): 1227–1245.
- Siroky, D., and J. Cuffe. 2015. "Lost Autonomy, Nationalism and Separatism." *Comparative Political Studies* 48 (1): 3–34.
- Siroky, D., and V. Dzutsati. 2015. "The Empire Strikes Back: Ethnicity, Terrain, and Indiscriminate Violence in Counterinsurgencies." *Social Science Quarterly* 96 (3): 807–829.
- Siroky, D., and C. Mahmudlu. 2015. "E Pluribus Unum? Ethnicity, Islam and the Construction of Identity in Azerbaijan." *Problems of Post-Communism* 63 (2). doi:10.1080/10758216.2015.1082124
- Slezkine, Y. 1994. "USSR as a Communal Apartment." *Slavic Review* 53 (2): 414–453.
- Smith, A. 2000. *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism (The Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures)*. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press.
- Snark. 1999. *Ajarian Leader To Help Georgia's Ethnic Armenians Join Ajaria*. Armenian Report, News Agency, Yerevan, in Russian, March 4. Supplied by *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, March 8.
- Snyder, Richard. 2001. "Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36 (1): 93–110.
- Snyder, Timothy. 2010. *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*. New York: Basic Books.
- "Soviet Quiet War." 1991. *Herald Sun*, March 1.
- Soviet Union. 1989. *1989 USSR Census in Georgia*. <http://irakly.org/istoriya-i-politika/perepis-naseleniya-gruzii-1989-goda>.
- Starr, R. 1996. "Moscow's Plans to Restore Its Power." *Orbis* 40 (3): 375–389.
- Statistical Yearbook of Georgia*. 2010. Tbilisi: National Statistics Office of Georgia. http://geostat.ge/cms/site_images/files/yearbook/Statistical%20Yearbook_2010.pdf.
- Stepan, A. 1999. "Federalism and Democracy: Beyond the US Model." *Journal of Democracy* 10 (1): 19–34.
- Suny, R. 1993. *Revenge of the Past*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Tarrow, S. 2010. "The Strategy of Paired Comparisons." *Comparative Political Studies* 43 (2): 230–259.
- Teufel, J. D. 2005. "China's Vulnerability to Minority Separatism." *Asian Affairs* 32: 69–86.

- Tilly, C. 1978. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Toft, Monica. 2003. *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Treisman, D. 1997. "Russia's 'Ethnic Revival': The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Post-communist Order." *World Politics* 49 (2): 212–249.
- Tsebelis, G. 1990. "Elite Interaction and Constitution Building in Consociational Societies." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 2 (1): 5–29.
- Varshney, A. 2002. *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Life*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Walt, S. 2011. "Nationalism Rules." *Foreign Policy*, July 15.
- Weidmann, N. B. 2009. "Geography as Motivation and Opportunity: Group Concentration and Ethnic Conflict." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53 (4): 526–543.
- Weiner, M. 1979. "Bad Neighbors, Bad Neighborhoods." *International Security* 21 (2): 5–42.
- Welt, C. 2014. "A Fateful Moment: Ethnic Autonomy and Revolutionary Violence in the Democratic Republic of Georgia, 1918–1921." In *The Making of Modern Georgia: The First Georgian Republic and Its Successors*, edited by Stephen F. Jones, 205–231. London: Routledge.
- Wimmer, A. 2002. *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wolff, S. 2013. "Approaches to Conflict Resolution in Divided Societies: The Many Uses of Territorial Self-governance." *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 20 (1): 27–50.
- Zarkovic-Bookman, M. 1992. *The Economics of Secession*. London: MacMillan.
- Zerkalo. 2003. "Paper Warns Against Use of Georgia's Azeri for Inter-political Feuding," December 23. Supplied by *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, December 30.
- Zerkalo. 2004. "Daily Alarmed by Plight of Azeris in Georgia," April 22. Supplied by *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, April 23.
- Zürcher, C. 2007. *The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict, and Nationhood in the Caucasus*. New York: NYU Press.
- Zverev, Alexei. 1998. "Ethnic Conflicts in the Caucasus 1988–1994." In *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, edited by Bruno Coppieters. Brussels: VUB Press. <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/ch0101.htm>.