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# ABSTRACT

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Under what configuration of conditions do ethno-territorial conflicts escalate, and under what configurations of conditions is conflict avoided between a minority and the centre in multi-ethnic states? This dissertation employs qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) in order to capture the causal patterns of conflict escalation and peace preservation. By simultaneously analysing the causes of conflict and the conditions of peace, this dissertation bridges a significant gap in the existing literature that assumes causal linearity and unifinality.

The QCA analysis this dissertation conducts is grounded in empirical evidence from the South Caucasus where, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, three newly independent states emerged and grappled with the accommodation of ethnic-minorities and their evolving identities. The QCA analysis reveals that, contrary to the popular premise that regional autonomy is “an effective antidote” for ethno-territorial wars, autonomy in the South Caucasus was conducive to conflict and the lack of autonomy was conducive to peace. Nevertheless, this dissertation does not suggest that autonomy on its own can explain the complexity of inter-ethnic relations. Rather, it argues that there were multiple configurations of conditions that interacted to produce inter-ethnic peace or conflict.

## **Key Words:**

Ethno-territorial conflict, inter-ethnic relations, causal complexity, qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), South Caucasus