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**Ethnicity, Territoriality, and Conflict in the  
South Caucasus –  
A Qualitative Comparative Analysis**

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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

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# ABSTRAKT

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Za jakých podmínek etnicko-teritoriální konflikty eskalují, a za jakých podmínek lze předejít konfliktu mezi menšinou a centrem v multietnických státech? Tato disertační práce využívá kvalitativní srovnávací analýzu (QCA) s cílem zachytit kauzalitu eskalace konfliktu a zachování míru. Tato práce zaplňuje významnou mezeru v existující literatuře, která předpokládá kauzální linearitu a *unifinality*, tím, že současně analyzuje příčiny konfliktů a mírové podmínky.

QCA analýza prováděna v této práci, je založená na empirickém výzkumu z oblasti jižního Kavkazu, kde se po rozpadu Sovětského svazu objevily tři nové nezávislé státy a zápasily s integrací etnických menšin a jejich vyvíjející se identity. QCA analýza ukazuje, že na rozdíl od obecného předpokladu, že regionální autonomie je "účinný protilék" zabraňující etnicko-teritoriálním válkám, nezávislost na jižním Kavkaze přispěla ke konfliktu a nedostatek autonomie přispěl k míru. Nicméně, tato práce nenaznačuje, že samospráva sama o sobě může vysvětlit složitost vztahů mezi jednotlivými etniky. Spíše tvrdí, že k vytvoření míru či konfliktu mezi různými etniky je důležité sledovat množství podmínek, které se vzájemně ovlivňují.

### **Declaration of Authorship:**

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Prague, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012

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Signature

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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## GENERAL ABBREVIATIONS

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|      |  |
|------|--|
| AO   | Autonomous Oblast                                    |
| ASSR | Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic                 |
| COW  | Correlates of War Project                            |
| CSCE | Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe    |
| ELF  | Ethno-Linguistic Fractionalisation                   |
| ETC  | Ethno-Territorial Conflict                           |
| ETM  | Ethno-Territorial Minority                           |
| NKAO | Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast                   |
| OSCE | Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe |
| PITF | Political Instability Task Force                     |
| SOAO | South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast                     |
| SSR  | Soviet Socialist Republic                            |
| UCDP | Uppsala Conflict Data Program                        |

## ABBREVIATIONS PERTAINING TO METHODOLOGY

---

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| A     | Autonomous Status   |
| csQCA | Crisp Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis  |
| ED    | Ethnic Dominance  |
| EK    | Ethnic Kin outside the state where the ETM resides  |
| ENC   | Ethnic National Conception  |
| ENL   | Radical Ethnic Nationalist Leadership   |
| ES    | External Support  |
| fsQCA | Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis  |
| G     | Greed (Access to Lootable Resources or Profitable Trade Routes)   |
| GDP   | Gross Domestic Product  |
| INUS  | An acronym that stands for “Insufficient but Necessary part of a condition which is itself Unnecessary but Sufficient for the result” |
| LPE   | Lack of Political Power and Political Exclusion   |
| MPC   | Mythified Past Conflicts  |
| QCA   | Qualitative Comparative Analysis  |
| RI    | Regional Inequality (Poor Regions)  |
| RLD   | Religious and Linguistic Dominance  |
| RT    | Rough Terrain   |
| SE    | Shadow Economy  |
| SM    | Stateless Minorities  |



## INTRODUCTION

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*“There are places where it makes more sense to partition live populations than to maintain national unity around a mounting toll of corpses.”*

*– An anonymous European Diplomat 2010<sup>1</sup>*

The study of conflict onset is one of the most prominent aspects of Security Studies. In recent years, the study of one specific type<sup>2</sup> of conflict – ethnic conflict – has gained a lot of currency in academia because, arguably, it is the most pervasive form of contemporary conflict. Thousands of articles and books have been written on the subject leading to no unified understanding of the nature and causes of ethnic conflict. One particular debate – the greed versus grievance debate – has dominated the field over the last decade and has divided scholars along ontological, epistemological, and methodological lines. Zartman (2011: 298) argues that the greed versus grievance debate has wasted “great time and useful intellect in propriety claims on the causal field, where useful effort could be put into addressing the multicausal effect.” In order to overcome the arrested development in the field of conflict research, this dissertation aims to go beyond the greed versus grievance debate and to address the multicausal effects of ethno-territorial conflicts, a sub-type of ethnic conflict. This aim delineates the first research question that drives this dissertation – namely, under what configurations of conditions do ethno-territorial conflicts erupt.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Beary (2010).

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1 for Conflict Typology

A further aim of this dissertation is to analyse the multicausal effects associated with the lack of ethnic conflict. Fearon and Laitin (1996: 715) assert that “a good theory of ethnic conflict should be able to explain [the conditions of] peaceful and cooperative relations” between minorities and the centre. Yet, accounts of inter-ethnic peace are far less common than accounts of inter-ethnic violence. This dissertation aims to bridge this gap and to analyse the causes of inter-ethnic peace. Therefore, the second research question that drives this dissertation is under what configurations of conditions ethnic minorities maintain a non-violent relationship with the centre.

It is pertinent to note that this dissertation does not intend to offer a universal multicausal theory of ethno-territorial conflict (ETC) and inter-ethnic peace. Such a broad-sweeping theory would require an overdependence on a multitude of simplifications and would inevitably lack complexity and depth. This dissertation aims for far more modest generalisations based on the study of one security region – the South Caucasus. The South Caucasus is particularly well suited for the study of the multiple causes of ETC and the lack thereof because it balances the two often competing objectives of comparative scholarship. Firstly, it features a diversity of ethnic minorities whose relationships with the centre vary between the two outcomes under investigation<sup>3</sup>. Secondly, the fact that the ethnic minorities in the South Caucasus share many commonalities, which do not vary with the outcomes under investigation, enables the researcher to eliminate the causally irrelevant factors<sup>4</sup> and to limit the range of plausible causes of ETC and lack thereof to a manageable number.

To further limit the scope of the investigation, this dissertation examines the inter-ethnic relations in the South Caucasus between 1991 and 1993. The time scope of the investigation

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<sup>3</sup> The two outcomes under investigation are ETC and inter-ethnic peace.

<sup>4</sup> All factors that do not vary across the cases are deemed causally irrelevant.

is informed by Fearon's (2010: 11-12) proposition that newly independent states are most vulnerable to conflict in their first two years of existence. Moreover, the time period between 1991 and 1993 represents a critical juncture in the history of the region. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the newly independent states of the South Caucasus were left grappling with the accommodation of ethnic minorities and their evolving identities. At this critical juncture in time, three of the ethnic minorities – namely the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, the Abkhazians, and the South Ossetians – became embroiled in violent struggles for territory and independence. The other four ethnic minorities – the Lezgins and Talysh in Azerbaijan, and the Armenians and Azeri in Georgia – took a divergent path and retained more peaceful relationships with their respective centres<sup>5</sup>. The variety of outcomes that could be observed in this short span of time is particularly useful for the purposes of this investigation.

The intermediate number of cases under investigation and the aim to analyse the multitude of conditions that interact in order to produce ETC or inter-ethnic peace, shape the methodological choice of this dissertation. This dissertation cannot draw on purely qualitative methodology because the intermediate number of cases hinders rigorous qualitative comparisons. Moreover, this dissertation is interested in making modest generalisations and identifying patterns across the cases of conflict and non-conflict. Purely qualitative methodologies are extremely suitable for developing thick descriptions and identifying idiosyncrasies; however, they are not geared towards rigorous generalisations. This dissertation cannot draw on purely quantitative methodology either. The number of cases under investigation is too small for standard statistical procedures. Moreover, even if a larger sample of cases was available, the glaring lack of quantitative data from the region could hardly be neglected (Zuercher, Baev, and Koehler 2005: 259). Last but not least, standard

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<sup>5</sup> The three cases where ETC erupted and the four cases where ETC was avoided represent the seven cases this dissertation analyses.

quantitative approaches tend to measure the net-effect of a single variable; however, this dissertation is interested in the interaction of multiple causal conditions. Considering the intermediate number of cases, the aim to analyse the interactions between multiple causes, and the limitations posed by data reveals that this dissertation needs a methodological approach that bridges the qualitative-quantitative divide. This dissertation employs Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) because it is a case-oriented research method rooted in the principles of causal complexity, set theory, and Boolean algebra, and because it is geared towards intermediate-N analysis leading to modest generalisations.

The QCA analysis provides a systematic and explicit answer to the overarching research question – namely, under what configurations of conditions did ethno-territorial conflicts erupt, and under what configurations of conditions was inter-ethnic peace preserved between minorities and the centre in the South Caucasus between 1991 and 1993. The QCA analysis reveals that the occurrence of conflicts in the South Caucasus can be explained in terms of two conjunctural paths, while the lack of conflict in the region can be explained in terms of three conjunctural paths. Each of the conjunctural paths reveals how the causally relevant conditions interact to produce one of the two outcomes under investigation. Interestingly, some of the conjunctural paths feature similarities that are explained in terms of the evidence from the South Caucasus and in terms of their relation to security scholarship and policy.

This dissertation opens up with a chapter that conceptualises ethno-territorial conflict. Chapter 2 engages critically with the contemporary scholarship on the causes of conflict. Chapter 3 engages with empirical evidence from the South Caucasus. Chapter 4 enters a dialogue with methodology. It presents the key principles of and operations with QCA. Chapter 4 concludes with a discussion of the benefits of using QCA in conflict research. Chapter 5 synergises

theory, empirical evidence, and methodology in order to answer the overarching research question that drives this investigation. At the end of Chapter 5, the results of the causal analysis are summarised and theorised.

## CASE SELECTION

---

*“I see nobody on the road,” said Alice.*

*“I only wish I had such eyes,” the King remarked, in a fretful tone.*

*“To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance, too!”*

*– Lewis Carroll 1871*

For some time now, the South Caucasus region has been described as a savage mountainous territory submersed in its own blood-drenched histories; a region whose inhabitants have become obsessed with ancient ethnic hatreds, and, in Kaplanesque terms, have “ragged, spilled blood, [and] experienced visions and ecstasies” (Kaplan 1993: xxi). However, this depiction of the South Caucasus as a tinderbox of violent primordialism does not stand up to scrutiny when the often omitted empirical data on peaceful inter-ethnic relations is considered. Indeed, the evidence from the South Caucasus falsifies the widely accepted theory that the onset of conflicts in the newly independent states in the time period between 1991 and 1993 was “pervasive” (Gurr 2002: 55), because it shows that the majority of the ethnic minorities in the South Caucasus maintained peaceful relationships with their respective central governments<sup>6</sup>. In order to provide evidence for this argument and to avoid selection bias, this dissertation integrates the empirical data on both conflictual and non-conflictual inter-ethnic relations in the South Caucasus.

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<sup>6</sup> See Figure 1.

This dissertation analyses the outcomes of inter-ethnic relations in the South Caucasus at a time of a critical juncture in the history of the region. The definition of critical juncture this dissertation employs looks at the prominent definitions in literature<sup>7</sup> through the lens of configurational methods<sup>8</sup>. This dissertation conceptualises *critical junctures* as critical periods in history during which the presence or absence of distinct configurations of conditions could push the cases onto divergent paths.

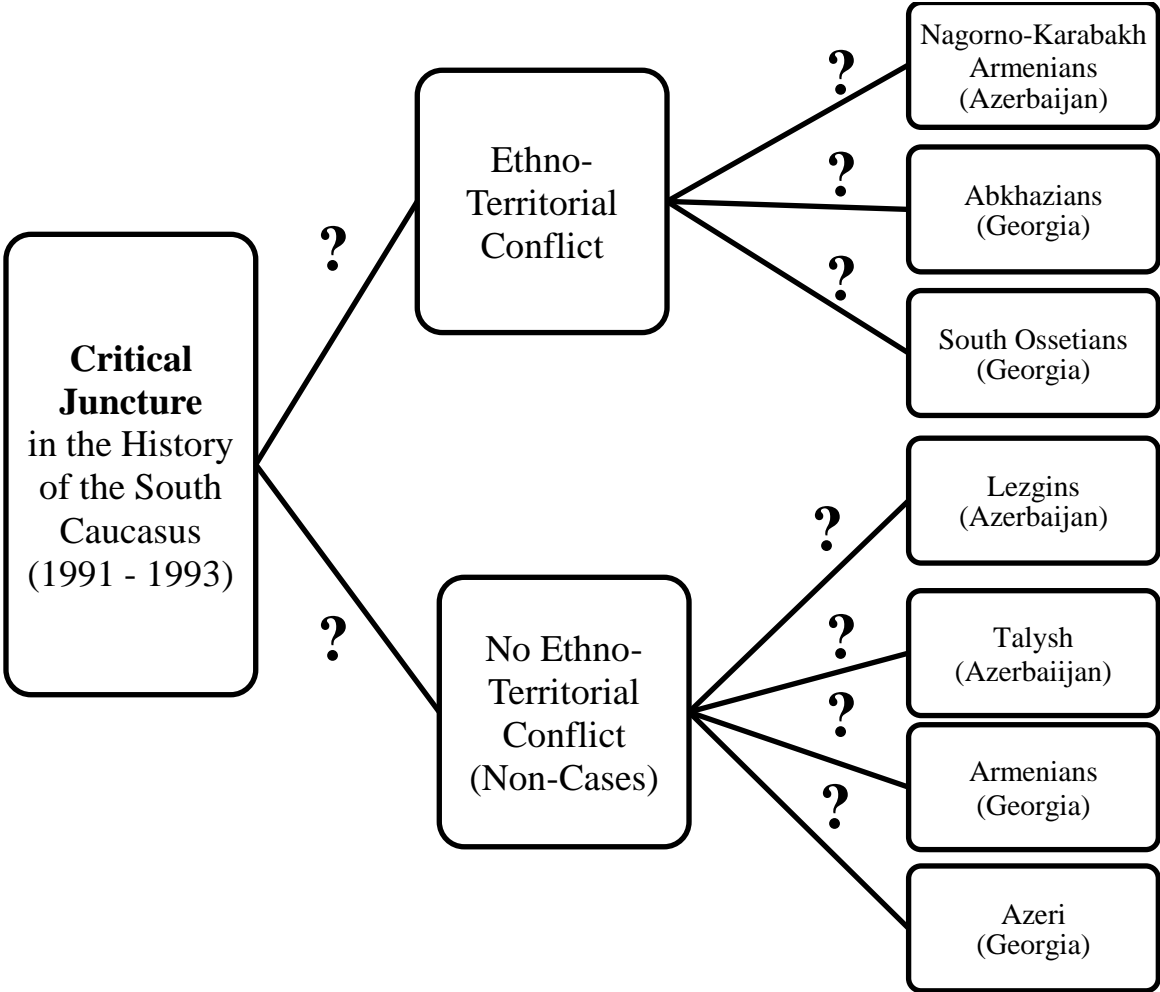
The collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the three newly independent states in the South Caucasus is a prominent example of a critical juncture. As a result of the different configurations of conditions that influenced the different ethnic dyads, some inter-ethnic relations escalated to ETCs, while others did not. The divergent paths of inter-ethnic conflict and peace are represented in Figure 1. The question marks represent causal paths that account for the occurrence of ETC or the lack of ETC.

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<sup>7</sup> Mahoney (2000), Katznelson (2003), Capoccia and Kelemen (2007), Emmenegger (2010)

<sup>8</sup> Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) belongs to the family of Configurational Methods (Rihoux and Ragin 2008).

FIGURE 1: CRITICAL JUNCTIONS IN THE HISTORY OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS – CASES AND NON-CASES OF ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT



At this point it is pertinent to introduce the seven cases under investigation. For the purposes of this dissertation, each case constitutes a dyadic relationship between a central government and an ethnic minority in the South Caucasus. This dissertation conceptualises ethnic minorities as minorities who believe that historically they have been a distinct ethnic group; who share tangible ethnic symbols such as religion and language; and whose existence as a unique ethnic group has been verified by “significant others” such as the elites at the centre of the state which the minority inhabits (Jaspal and Coyle 2009: 163; cf. Kaufman 2001: 24; Minorities at Risk 2011). In order to ensure the cases are suitable for comparative analysis,

this dissertation selects compactly settled ethnic minorities of comparable size<sup>9</sup> living in the peripheral regions of the state they inhabit.

At the brink of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the formation of the newly independent Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, there were seven ethnic minorities in the South Caucasus that fit the aforementioned criteria<sup>10</sup>. These cases include the Lezgins, Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, and Talysh in Azerbaijan; and the Abkhaz, Azeri, Armenians, and South Ossetians in Georgia<sup>11</sup>. There is a general agreement in the qualitative literature that, despite the sporadic episodes of inter-ethnic tension across the region, only three of these cases escalated to conflict – namely Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia (Cornell 2002; Zuercher 2007; De Waal 2010). However, the quantitative literature and conflict databases provide mixed information that is confusing at best and mutually exclusive at worst. The next analytical step is to clear out the definitional confusion and to conceptualise ethno-territorial conflict explicitly and systematically.

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<sup>9</sup>Considerably smaller ethnic minorities, such as the Kurds and the Avars in Azerbaijan for example, are excluded from this study.

<sup>10</sup> These seven cases comprise the universe of cases (Ragin 2008d: 3).

<sup>11</sup> The Azeri population in the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) of Nakhchivan is not included as a case because more than 90 per cent of the population of Nakhchivan were ethnic Azeri and, therefore, they were not a minority within Azerbaijan. Moreover, the Ajarian ASSR is not included as a case either because the Ajarians were not considered to be a distinct ethnic group within Georgia. They were recognised by the Georgian elites as a sub-ethnic group and many Ajarians identified themselves as Georgians civically and ethnically. Furthermore, the Azeri minority in Armenia is excluded from the universe of cases because it was forced to leave Armenia by 1990; therefore, it does not fit into the timeframe of this dissertation.



UNRAVELLING THE OUTCOME UNDER INVESTIGATION –  
CONCEPTUALISING ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT IN THE  
SOUTH CAUCASUS

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*“As we are ... prisoners of the words we pick, we had better pick them well.”*

– *Giovanni Sartori 1984*

*“Science depends on its concepts... They determine the questions one asks, and the answers one gets.”*

– *Sir George Thompson 1961*

The overarching aim of this dissertation is to identify the configurations of conditions under which ETC erupted and the configurations of conditions under which ETC was avoided between ethnic minorities and the central governments in the South Caucasus between 1991 and 1993. Before embarking on this intellectual journey, it is pertinent to define the subject of this enquiry systematically and explicitly because the way ETC is defined has implications for the etiological analysis. In the process of defining ETC, this dissertation fleshes out the examples of the conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia.

This chapter is split into two main sections. The first section examines the competing and often contradictory labels that have been attached to the conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. This dissertation argues that the label ethno-territorial conflict is the most suitable label for the three conflicts under investigation because it avoids the problematic assumptions of other labels regarding the special confines, the participants, and

the severity of the conflict. Moreover, the label ETC alludes to the diversity approach of concept formation and facilitates rigorous modest generalisations. Last but not least, the concept of ETC enables comparative inquiry into the three conflicts because it groups them under the same banner.

The second section of this chapter reveals a step by step approach to the conceptualisation of ETC. The aim of this section is to overcome the ubiquitous obscurity and lack of conceptual clarity in conflict research; therefore, this section is systematic and explicit in its conceptualisation of ETC. This section applies a configurational approach to concept formation rooted in set logic and aided by a truth table. This chapter argues that ETC is best understood as a subtype of the primary concept of conflict characterised by the occurrence of sustained combat within a state between the central government and an ethnic minority over the status of a territory, where all warring parties are able to mount military resistance and to sustain battle-related deaths.

## LABELLING CONFLICTS

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Over the last decade, the concept of ethno-territorial conflict has become increasingly popular, especially in the context of the South Caucasus. However, it is not the only label attached to the conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. Other popular labels include civil war, intra-state conflict, intra-state conflict with foreign involvement, inter-state conflict, international conflict, and ethnic conflict. How can a researcher navigate this minefield of labels loaded with layers of competing ontological and epistemological assumptions? The aim of this section is to examine the usefulness of the competing labels. Thus, this dissertation first looks into the three benchmark resources on conflict– the

Correlates of War (COW) Project, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), and the Political Instability Task Force (PITF) – and evaluates the utility of their labels. Then, this dissertation evaluates the utility of the labels ethnic conflict and ethno-territorial conflict – two types of conflict within the multidimensional typology of conflict. This section argues that the label ethno-territorial conflict is the most suitable label for the conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia.

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CIVIL WARS, INTRA-STATE CONFLICTS, INTRA-STATE CONFLICTS WITH  
FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT, INTER-STATE CONFLICTS, AND INTERNATIONAL  
CONFLICTS – COMPETING LABELS, COMPETING DATABASES

---

At present, there is no agreement on how to define and codify conflicts. The three benchmark resources – the Correlates of War (COW) Project, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), and the Political Instability Task Force (PITF) – employ different coding procedures leading to contradictory information about the onset, the participants, and the special confines of conflicts. As a result, the three conflicts in the South Caucasus – over Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia – have been coded differently across the three benchmark resources. The lack of consistency renders comparative inquiries into these three conflicts problematic, thus, hindering the analysis of regional security patterns.

Consider the conceptualisations of the conflict<sup>12</sup> in the South Caucasus between 1991 and 1993 in the three benchmark reference resources – the Correlates of War (COW) Project, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), and the Political Instability Task Force (PITF).

---

<sup>12</sup> The aim of this dissertation is to engage exclusively with the conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. The civil wars over the control of the government in Azerbaijan and in Georgia are not the subject of this investigation and, therefore, they are not included in Table 1.

TABLE 1: CONFLICTS IN SOUTH CAUCASUS - COW, UCDP AND PITF LABELS

| CONFLICT         | YEAR | DATABASE                    |   |   |
|------------------|------|-----------------------------|---|---|
|                  |      | COW                         | UCDP  | PITF  |
| NAGORNO-KARABAKH | 1993 | Inter-State War             | Intrastate War with Foreign Involvement over Territory            | International War (Warfare Category-Serious Political Violence) |
|                  | 1992 | Civil War over Local Issues | Intrastate War with Foreign Involvement over Territory            | International War (Warfare Category-Serious Political Violence) |
|                  | 1991 | Civil War over Local Issues | Intrastate Minor Conflict with Foreign Involvement over Territory | International War (Warfare Category-Serious Political Violence) |
| ABKHAZIA         | 1993 | Civil War Over Local Issues | Intrastate Minor Conflict over Territory                          | Ethnic War (Warfare Category-Limited Political Violence)        |
|                  | 1992 |                             | Intrastate War over Territory                                     | Ethnic War (Warfare Category-Limited Political Violence)        |
|                  | 1991 |                             |   | Ethnic War (Warfare Category-Limited Political Violence)        |
| SOUTH OSSETIA    | 1993 | No conflict                 |   | Ethnic War (Warfare Category-Limited Political Violence)        |
|                  | 1992 | No conflict                 | Intrastate Minor Conflict with Foreign Involvement over Territory | Ethnic War (Warfare Category-Limited Political Violence)        |
|                  | 1991 | No conflict                 |   | Ethnic War (Warfare Category-Limited Political Violence)        |

The key functions of these three databases are to collect empirical data and to define and classify conflicts. Yet the validity of the data is debatable, and the definitions and classifications are incongruous. The lack of consistency in the conflict labels is partly linked to a lack of consistency in the coding practices of all three reference resources. Indeed, all three resources rely on different coding procedures when defining the warring parties, the special confines, the intensity levels, and the time periods of conflicts. The most illustrative example comes from the way the intensity levels of conflicts are defined. Within the COW's (2011) conceptualisation of conflict, intra-state and inter-state wars must "meet the same definitional requirements" in terms of intensity level and must result in "a minimum of 1,000 battle related combatant fatalities within a twelve month period." Within the UCDP's (2011) conceptualisation of conflict, there could be two levels of intensity – minor conflict, which must result in "at least 25 but less than 1,000 battle related deaths in one calendar year," and war, which must result in "at least 1,000 battle related deaths in one calendar year." Within the PITF's (2010) conceptualisation of conflict, there are ten qualitative levels of intensity ranging from "Sporadic and Expressive Political Violence" to "Extermination and Annihilation."<sup>13</sup>

Another glaring problem of COW's, UCDP's, and PITF's conceptualisations of conflict is that the bounds of their definitions of intra-state conflict, intra-state conflict with foreign involvement, inter-state conflict, and international war are elusive and do not stand up to scrutiny when the empirical data from the South Caucasus is considered. Armenia's involvement in Nagorno-Karabakh and Russia's involvement in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is interpreted differently within and across the three databases. Yet, empirical evidence reveals a multitude of similarities which render these conflicts comparable.

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<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that the case of the ETC in South Ossetia is especially vulnerable to coding errors, because the number of battle-related deaths was comparatively low, which has led to extreme misconceptions in conflict research as illustrated in Table 1.

As a result of the differences in coding and labelling procedures, the labels of COW, UCDP, and PITF fail to provide “common points of reference for grouping phenomena”<sup>14</sup> within a single security region such as the South Caucasus. Thus, the aforementioned labels cannot “travel”<sup>15</sup> or pave the way for sound comparisons (Rose 1991: 447). This dissertation argues that the three conflicts in the South Caucasus that erupted between 1991 and 1993 share many commonalities and should be unified under the same banner – a banner which avoids the disparities and misconceptions in the existing coding and labelling practices.

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ETHNIC CONFLICT AND ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT – ELEMENTS OF A  
CONFLICT TYPOLOGY

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Typologies à la Collier, LaPorte, and Seawright (2012: 1) contribute “decisively to forming concepts [and] exploring dimensionality.” Yet, in the field of conflict research, a number of scholars reject the analytical value of all subtypes of conflict on ontological and epistemological grounds, arguing that politicised and tautological concepts such as ethnic conflict and ETC cannot be analysed with methodological rigour (Gilley 2004). This dissertation maintains that conflict typologies developed “according to high standards of rigour” are indispensable in conflict research because they facilitate rigorous limited generalisations and greater precision of analysis (Collier, LaPorte and Seawright 2012: 1). Sambanis’s (2001) empirical research comparing the determinants of a wide-sweeping sample of conflicts and a smaller sample of ethnic conflicts sustains this argument and shows that

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<sup>14</sup> In Rose’s (1991: 47) own words, the “concept of Prime Minister makes it possible to group together for comparison the British Prime Minister, the German *Bundeskanzler*, the Italian *Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri* and the Irish *Taoiseach*” (emphasis in the original).

<sup>15</sup> In the literature on concept formation, a concept can travel if it can be applied to new cases that are not the subject of the current enquiry.

there are “significant differences” between the results from the two samples, which point to the benefits of disaggregating conflict samples and analysing types of conflict.

Is the label ethnic conflict<sup>16</sup> the most suitable label for the conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia? Or is there another label that further disaggregates the concept of ethnic conflict and provides a more precise fit for the conflicts in the South Caucasus? The answer to these questions requires defining ethnic conflict and understanding its place within the multidimensional typology of conflict.

The concept of ethnic conflict is double-barrelled, and defining it entails defining ethnicity first. This dissertation suggests that ethnicity is not a primordial given, but a fluid social construction whose “very existence [depends] on *beliefs* about its existence” (Abizadeh 2001: 25; emphasis added); on its validation by “significant others” (Jaspal and Coyle 2009: 163); and on the existence of tangible ethnic symbols such as religion, language, and hierarchical structure (Kaufman 2001: 24). This conceptualisation of ethnicity illuminates social constructedness; however, it is not blinded by it. Even if they are socially constructed, ethnic boundaries have *real* implications to the extent that “they form an important part of people’s psychological *realities*,” because people who identify with an ethnic group often believe that their ethnic identity is inborn, natural, and fixed (Zagefka 2009: 231, emphasis added). This definition of ethnicity reveals the ontological and epistemological positions of this dissertation and underpins its definition of ethnic conflict.

This dissertation defines ethnic conflict as a type of conflict in which the warring parties are divided along ethnic lines and the incompatibility between them is expressed in ethnic terms.

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<sup>16</sup> See Appendix 1 for Conflict Typology.

Therefore, ethnicity is not “the ultimate, irreducible source of violent conflict” (Brubaker and Laitin 1998: 425); but a “social resource” that could be exploited by the entrepreneurs of violence as an ordering principle in fractionalising and mobilising multi-ethnic societies (Jenkins 2008: 93) if the symbols of ethnicity instrumentalised in the ethnic discourse are credible and popular (Kaufman 2001: 24).

The cases of the Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia conflicts fit comfortably under the banner of ethnic conflict. Nevertheless, the banner of ethnic conflict is too broad. The next step is to disaggregate the concept of ethnic conflict by introducing empirical examples and identifying differences among them. Consider the examples of the 1994 Rwandan War, arguably one of the most horrific ethnic wars in the last two decades, and the 2001 Macedonian War, arguably the only ethnic war halted from further escalation by preventive diplomacy. How do they differ from the wars in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia? The wars in Rwanda and Macedonia undoubtedly had an ethnic dimension, just like the wars in the South Caucasus. What differentiates the wars in Rwanda and Macedonia from the ETCs in the South Caucasus is that the Hutu and the Tutsi, and the Macedonians and Albanians fought for control over the government of the respective states, while the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, the South Ossetians and the Abkhaz have been fighting their respective governments for territorial control. Understanding the distinction between ethnic wars over territorial and governmental control leads to the realisation that the most fitting label for the conflict of the South Caucasus is ethno-territorial conflict.

The label ethno-territorial conflict alludes to the diversity approach to concept formation – a middle path between naturalist<sup>17</sup> and interpretivist<sup>18</sup> approaches, which accounts for the

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<sup>17</sup> Naturalist approaches to concept formation are “compelled to produce generalizations” (Sartori: 1970).



generality and complexity of social phenomena by identifying the “differences ... among types of cases” (Quaranta 2010: 8). This dissertation argues that the diversity approach to concept formation is conducive to the study of conflict because it helps disaggregate the overly aggregated literature on ethnic conflict. Moreover, it helps identify common patterns among groups of cases, and it leads to rigorous middle-range generalisations. Last but not least, it helps avoid overlooking important nuances and conditions, which become trivial or insignificant in an aggregates sample.

Almost two decades ago, Vasquez (1993: 73) postulated that scholarly research that does not differentiate between the subtypes of war is doomed to yield dubious findings. In order to avoid this hoary trap, this dissertation disaggregates the concept of ethnic conflict and analyses the conflicts in the South Caucasus as ethno-territorial conflicts.

## ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT – A SYSTEMATIC CONCEPTUALISATION

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The previous section established that ethno-territorial conflict is the most fitting label for the conflicts under investigation because of three key reasons – it avoids the disparities and misconceptions apparent in other competing labels, it enables rigorous comparative analysis, and it facilitates modest generalisations. With this in mind, the next analytical step is to conceptualise ETCs systematically and explicitly.

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<sup>18</sup> Interpretivist approaches to concept formation are “focused on producing concepts that are able to grasp the historical and contingent features of the phenomena under study. Therefore, [they aim] to go in deep and to understand the cases as complex instances and as products of historical processes and structures” (Ragin and Zaret: 1983). The drawback of such complex conceptualisations is that they rarely produce generalisations.

At present, a number of scholars fall into the category of “unconscious thinkers” (Sartori 1970: 1033), and uncritically employ the label ETC without defining it. A second group of scholars fall into the trap of “etiological fallacies” and present explanations of ETC that conflate the definitions and the causal analysis of the concepts (Schedler 1997: 8). As a result, there is a ubiquitous lack of conceptual clarity in the field of conflict analysis (Souleimanov 2013). This dissertation internalises Souleimanov’s critique and offers explicit and systematic conceptualisations of the three conflicts in the South Caucasus as ETCs.

This section suggests that the most effective methodological approach to concept formation is grounded in configurational logic and set logic. Notwithstanding the pioneering work of Quaranta (2010) in applying configurational set logic to concept formation, scholars have failed to capitalise on its potential. Yet, the “possibility of this new application gives the opportunity of looking at concepts as constructs made up of parts that are logically interconnected one with the other” (ibid.: 3). Moreover, it gives the opportunity of constructing concepts explicitly and systematically through the use of typologies and truth tables – powerful visual tools enabling comparisons across cases. Thus, the rest of this chapter draws on combinatorial logic, set logic<sup>19</sup>, and conflict typologies<sup>20</sup> in order to conceptualise ETCs.

The first analytical step in the process of concept formation is defining the primary concept in the conflict typology. This dissertation suggests that the definition of the primary concept of conflict hinges on three necessary attributes: (1) the occurrence of sustained combat; (2) the surpassing of a threshold of 25 battle-related deaths sustained by all warring parties in each

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<sup>19</sup> The chapter on methodology contains a more detailed explanation of the uses of truth tables and the nature of configurational logic and set logic. See pages 61.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix I for Conflict Typology.

year a conflict is active<sup>21</sup>; AND<sup>22</sup> (3) the ability of all warring parties to mount military resistance. In terms of sets, the attributes of conflict could be recorded in the following way:

$$C =_{def} \{x \mid x \text{ is the occurrence of sustained combat}\} \quad (1)$$

$$D =_{def} \{x \mid x \text{ is the surpassing of a threshold of 25 battle-related deaths sustained by all warring parties within a year}\} \quad (2)$$

$$R =_{def} \{x \mid x \text{ is the ability of all warring parties to mount military resistance}\} \quad (3)$$

Therefore, in order for a social event to belong to the set of conflict, it must exhibit all the aforementioned empirical criteria:

$$Conflict =_{def} \{x \mid x \in C \text{ and } x \in D \text{ and } x \in R\} \quad (4)$$

The configuration of sets necessary for the occurrence of conflict can be recorded in set notation in the following way:

$$Conflict = C \cap D \cap R \quad (5)$$

The *intersection*<sup>23</sup> of all three sets produces the necessary attributes structure of the primary concept of conflict (Quaranta 2010: 18). If a case does not exhibit all three attributes, it cannot be classified as an instance of conflict. It is important to establish the necessary attributes structure because it enables the distinction between conflicts and other violent social events such as episodes of one-sided violence or communal violence, which would otherwise fall into the “grey zone” (Goertz 2006: 29).

Constructing the necessary attributes structure of the primary concept of conflict is a prerequisite for putting conflict typologies to work. “Putting typologies to work” à la Collier

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<sup>21</sup> The threshold of 25 battle related deaths within a year of active conflict reflects UCDP’s coding principles. This relatively low threshold also reflects the bulk of the qualitative literature that identifies the events in South Ossetia in the time span under investigation as conflict. The case of South Ossetia is particularly vulnerable to changes in the battle-related deaths thresholds, because the number of battle-related deaths was comparatively low, which has led to extreme misconceptions in conflict research as illustrated in Table 1.

<sup>22</sup> Capitalised AND denotes the logical operator AND.

<sup>23</sup> The chapter on methodology contains a more detailed explanation of set theory and set intersection. See page 61.

and his collaborators (1997; 2012) requires refining the primary concept by adding further attributes with the aim of identifying configurational patterns among the different subtypes of conflict. This process leads to the formation of the structure of the concept of ETC.

The conceptualisation of ETC necessitates the addition of four more attributes associated with the conflict location, the conflict actors, and the nature of the incompatibility driving the conflict. This dissertation suggests that an ETC is a subtype of conflict (6) fought within a state, between (7) the central government and (8) an ethnic minority (9) over the status of a territory. Other parties may also partake in ETCs; however, their participation is accounted for in the causal analysis of ETCs. In order to avoid the trap of “etiological fallacies,” this dissertation does not incorporate external support into the definition of ETC (Schedler 1997: 8). Therefore, in terms of sets, the additional attributes of ETC could be recorded in the following way:

$$W =_{def} \{x \mid x \text{ conflict fought within a state}\} \quad (6)$$

$$G =_{def} \{x \mid x \text{ the central government of the state is a warring party}\} \quad (7)$$

$$M =_{def} \{x \mid x \text{ an ethnic minority is a warring party}\} \quad (8)$$

$$T =_{def} \{x \mid x \text{ conflict fought over the status of a territory}\} \quad (9)$$

It is pertinent to note that the sub-concept of ethnic minority, as defined for the purposes of this dissertation, is multi-dimensional and could be broken down further to delineate its two identifiers – namely, compactly settled minority groups (10) who believe they are ethnically distinct from the majority population, and (11) who share tangible ethnic symbols such as religion and language that differentiate them from the majority;

$$E =_{def} \{x \mid x \text{ compactly settled minority group who believe they are ethnically distinct from the majority population}\} \quad (10)$$

$$S =_{def} \{x \mid x \text{ compactly settled minority group who share tangible ethnic symbols}\} \quad (11)$$

Therefore, this dissertation conceptualises ETC as a subtype of conflict characterised by the occurrence of sustained combat within a state between the central government and an ethnic minority over the status of a territory, where all warring parties are able to mount military resistance and to sustain battle-related deaths. An ethnic minority is defined as a compactly settled group who believes it is ethically distinct from the majority population and whose members share tangible ethnic symbols such as religion and language that differentiate them from the majority.

This explicit conceptualisation of ETC reveals the complexity of its structure. In order to systematise the components of the concept of ETC, this dissertation firstly uses set notation and then constructs a truth table for a more effective visual representation (Quaranta 2010: 3). Applying the principles of set logic and the grammar of set notation to the concept of ETC leads to the following function:

$$ETC = C \cap D \cap R \cap W \cap G \cap M \cap T \cap E \cap S \quad (12)$$

This function suggests that nine logical conditions need to be fulfilled simultaneously in order for an inter-ethnic relationship to be conceptualised as an ethno-territorial conflict. If any of the conditions is missing, the inter-ethnic relationship cannot be described as ethno-territorial conflict.

How could these principles be summarised in a truth table and applied to the seven cases under investigation? Truth tables allow the systematic and explicit recording of whether a predicator is true or false across a population of cases. If a predicator is true, it assumes the value of 1. If a predicator is false, it assumes the value of 0. For example, in the case of

Abkhazia, the battle related deaths threshold was surpassed and the corresponding truth cell assumes the value of 1. In comparison, in the case of the Azeri minority in Georgia, no battle-related deaths were recorded in the period between 1991 and 1993, and the corresponding cell in the truth table assumes a value of 0. Values of 1 and 0 are assigned across all cases covering the predicators in the primary structure and the additional attributes.

The last column of the truth table contains the outcome under investigation – ETC. A value of 1 is assigned to each case that fulfils all nine conditions as outlined in point (12). A value of 0 is assigned to each case that fails to fulfil any of the nine conditions outlined in point (12). This principle is rooted in set logic and the use of the logical operator AND. As a result, between 1991 and 1993, three of the inter-ethnic relationships in the South Caucasus can be conceptualised as ethno-territorial conflicts, while the other four cannot.

This following truth table captures the three cases ETC in the South Caucasus and the four cases where ETC was avoided. The truth table draws on the conflict typology outlined in Appendix 1 and reveals the complexity of the structure of ETC in the South Caucasus.

TABLE 2: TRUTH TABLE – THE CONCEPT OF ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT

|                               |                            | Primary Structure    |                         |                           | Additional Attributes |                  |                         |                                    |   | Outcome |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---------|
| Country in the South Caucasus | Ethnic Minority            | Sustained Combat (C) | Military Resistance (R) | Battle-Related Deaths (D) | Within a State (W)    | Central Gov. (G) | Ethnic Minority (M)     |                                    | Fought over the Status of a Territory (T) | ETC     |
|                               |                            |                      |                         |                           |                       |                  | Ethnically Distinct (E) | Shares Tangible Ethnic Symbols (S) |   |         |
| Azerbaijan                    | Lezgins                    | 0                    | 0                       | 0                         | 0                     | 0                | 1                       | 1                                  | 0   | 0       |
|                               | Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians | 1                    | 1                       | 1                         | 1                     | 1                | 1                       | 1                                  | 1   | 1       |
|                               | Talysh                     | 0                    | 0                       | 0                         | 0                     | 0                | 1                       | 1                                  | 0   | 0       |
| Georgia                       | Abkhaz                     | 1                    | 1                       | 1                         | 1                     | 1                | 1                       | 1                                  | 1   | 1       |
|                               | Armenians                  | 0                    | 0                       | 0                         | 0                     | 0                | 1                       | 1                                  | 0   | 0       |
|                               | Azeri                      | 0                    | 0                       | 0                         | 0                     | 0                | 1                       | 1                                  | 0   | 0       |
|                               | South Ossetians            | 1                    | 1                       | 1                         | 1                     | 1                | 1                       | 1                                  | 1   | 1       |

In conclusion, this chapter engaged in a dialogue between empirical data, theory and methodology and conceptualised ETCs in the South Caucasus explicitly and systematically. This chapter argued that ETC should be conceptualised as a subtype of conflict characterised by the occurrence of sustained combat within a state between the central government and an ethnic minority over the status of a territory, where all warring parties are able to mount

military resistance and to sustain battle-related deaths. This chapter defined the sub-concept of ethnic minority as a compactly settled group who believes it is ethnically distinct from the majority population and whose members share tangible ethnic symbols such as religion and language. Table 2 provided a visual representation of how each of the seven cases under investigation relates to the predictors of ETC defined in this chapter. Table 2 showed that the conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia can be defined as ethno-territorial conflict.

This conceptualisation of the ETCs in the South Caucasus has a number of advantages. Firstly, the conceptualisation of ETC as a subtype of conflict creates potential for achieving rigorous middle-range generalisations. Secondly, the disaggregation of the multiple dimensions of the concept of conflict accounts for the complexity of the social world. Thirdly, the introduction of the truth table delineates explicitly and systematically the cases under investigation; thus, augmenting the potential for comparative analysis, because rigorous comparative research is impossible without conceptual clarity.



# THE ROOTS OF ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICTS – A LITERATURE REVIEW

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*Even in the most severely divided society, ties of blood do not lead ineluctably to rivers of blood.*

– Donald Horowitz 1985

*If the Nobel Academy [sic] awarded a prize in political science, surely it would give high priority to anyone who provided a convincing answer to a simple question: under what conditions do ethnically identified populations make sustained, effective claims to control their own separate state?*

– Charles Tilly 1991

Having conceptualised ETCs in the South Caucasus in the previous chapter, the challenge remains to identify the configurations of conditions under which these conflicts occur. The “growth industry” of conflict analysis has boasted a hefty number of theories on conflict onset developed by scholars of diverse disciplinary and methodological persuasions (Gilley 2004: 1155). Yet, more than two decades after Tilly (1991: 569) posed his “simple question”, there is still no conclusive and comprehensive explanation of why and how conflicts escalate. The aim of this chapter is to engage critically with the competing and often contradicting theories of conflict onset, to systematise their key findings, and to develop an initial proposition of the salient explanatory factors of conflict onset that will be operationalised in the methodological framework of this dissertation. Instead of analysing individual theories and scholarly contributions, this chapter aims to install order to the bulk of the literature by delineating the various categories of conditions

under which ETCs occur. This chapter suggests that, like violent crime, violent conflict is “a function of [the] motives, means, and opportunities of its participants” (Cordell and Wolff 2011: 45). Therefore, it employs an analytical model that teases out the aforementioned three strands of analysis. The first part of this chapter looks at the motives of conflict identified in the literature; therefore, it delves into theories of ethnicity, ethnic grievances, and greed. The second part of this chapter focuses on the means through which conflicts are initiated; thus, it looks at the institutional design of ethnofederalism, the rise of radical ethnic leaders, and the availability of weapons. The final section considers the opportunities that lead to conflict – including support from diaspora and ethnic kin groups, atypically low costs for recruiting combatants, and atypically low governmental capabilities.

## THEORISING ETHNICITY

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The starting point to any study of ethnic conflict is the development of a theory of ethnicity. Scholars, who theorise ethnicity, typically subscribe to one of the three ideal type theories – primordialism, instrumentalism, or constructivism – based on their ontological and epistemological positions. Primordialism defines ethnicity as a fixed attribute of the identity of individuals and groups (Smith 1991, Kaplan 1993, Connor 1994). It asserts that ethnicity is ingrained in one’s genetic heritage (van den Berge 1981) or in one’s ancient histories and practices. It argues that ethnic divisions are natural and ethnic “violence is inevitable” (Huntington 1996: 94). The essence of primordialism is captured in the words of Anthony Smith (1993: 60-61):

“... wherever ethnic nationalism has taken hold of populations, there one may expect to find powerful assertions of national self-determination that, if long opposed, will embroil whole regions in bitter and protracted ethnic conflict.

Whether the peace and stability of such regions will be better served in the short term by measures of containment, federation, mediation or even partition, *in the long run, there can be little escape from the many conflagrations that the unsatisfied yearnings of ethnic nationalism are likely to kindle*” (emphasis added).

There are two significant problems with such narratives. Firstly, primordial narratives consider ethnicity the *sui generis* cause of conflict and fail to account for the complex dynamics of social, political, and economic causes of conflict. Secondly, primordialist narratives fail to account for the time and location of conflict onset because they typically lack analysis of conflict triggers.

Instrumentalists challenge the primordialist conceptualisation of ethnicity and argue that ethnic groups are merely alliances forged by rational individuals in order to compete for scarce resources (Bates 1983: 52). Thus, in the instrumentalist tradition, ethnicity is defined as “a practical *resource* that individuals ... [either] deploy opportunistically to promote their more fundamental security and economic interests ... [or] discard when alternative affiliations promise better return” (Esman 1994: 11; cf. Laitin 1998 and Jenkins 2008). This definition of ethnicity suggests that opportunistic individuals or entrepreneurs of violence are able to boundlessly manipulate historical narratives and ethnic myths in order to forge a sense of belonging to the ethnic in-group and a sense of distinctiveness from the ethnic *other*. The instrumentalist narrative suggests that, for the entrepreneurs of violence, “tearing their countries apart and causing thousands of people to be killed are small prices to pay for staying in or getting power” (Brown 2001: 20). Although such narratives are compelling, they fail to explain how ethnic masses overcome their aversion to violence and why they follow the entrepreneurs of violence down the path of conflict when the resources won through the course of conflict are rarely distributed amongst the ethnic support group. Another problem

with the instrumentalist conceptualisation of ethnicity is that it fails to account for the cases where the entrepreneurs of violence are unsuccessful in manipulating ethnic identities, lack mass support, and fail to incite violence.

In recent years, constructivism has gained credibility at the expense of the primordialism and instrumentalism; and, at present, it is regarded as the most effective discursive practice on ethnicity. Constructivism revises and synergises the primordialist and instrumentalist claims. It suggests that ethnicity is a flexible and malleable social construction shaped by social, political, and economic changes and cleavages (Lake and Rothchild 1996: 7). A strand of constructivism, ethno-symbolism, argues that ethnicity draws its power from a combination of tangible ethnic symbols and instrumental narratives (Cordell and Wolff 2011: 15). Ethnic symbols – such as the name, language, religion, and hierarchical structure of an ethnic group – can be instrumentalised through the narratives of opportunistic leaders with the aim to equate the status and security of the ethnic symbols to the status and security of the individuals in the ethnic group. This conceptualisation of ethnicity explains why the ethnic masses follow the entrepreneurs of violence down the path of conflict. It also explains why ethnicity is so powerful and ubiquitous. In Kaufman's (2001: 25) words:

“If cleverly cast, an ethnic [narrative] ... can claim that the ethnic warrior is fighting simultaneously for self-respect (identity), self-interest (material goods), clan survival, clan territory, the propagation of the faith and country; and if the fight is successful the warrior would have achieved immortality (through martyrdom and even the defence of progeny) even in death.”

Understanding the link between the tangible ethnic symbols and the instrumental narratives is key to understanding the role of ethnicity in ethnic conflicts. The corollary of the ethno-symbolist conceptualisation of ethnicity is that instrumental ethnic narratives only achieve

their purpose to mobilise the ethnic kin against the ethnic other if their ethnic claims *appear* convincing and truthful, and if they generate mass support among the targeted population.

## THE MOTIVES OF ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT

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### ETHNIC GRIEVANCES

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Understanding ethnicity and ethnic grievances is a sine qua non of the study of ethnic conflict. However, the question of how to operationalise and measure ethnic grievances remains. In the last decade, the theory of ethnic grievances has dominated the debate about the salience of ethnicity in explaining conflict onset. Out of this debate, a discourse of the banality of ethnic conflict has emerged (Mueller 2000; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Collier and Hoeffler's 2004). Why do scholars conclude that ethnic grievances have little explanatory power? This section argues that previous studies fail to account for the salience of ethnic grievances because of the way they operationalise and measure them. This section engages critically with the existing theories and measures of ethnic grievances and suggests that in order to improve their utility and validity scholars should pursue a disaggregated approach with cross-level<sup>24</sup> validity.

One of the most prominent proxies of ethnic differences, ergo ethnic grievances, is the index of ethno-linguistic fractionalisation (ELF). ELF<sup>25</sup> measures the likelihood that two randomly selected individuals would belong to different ethno-linguistic groups. Scholars that use the ELF index typically argue that the estimated effect of the ethnic structure of society is “substantively and statistically insignificant” (Fearon and Laitin 2003: 78; cf. Collier and

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<sup>24</sup> This is a reference to the Level-of-Analysis problem in conflict research.

<sup>25</sup> The original measure of ELF relied on data from *Atlas Narodov Mira* (1964).

Hoeffler 2004: 570). Therefore, they discard ethnic diversity as an important explanatory factor in conflict analysis. This chapter argues that there are three pending questions that need to be answered before any sound conclusions can be made regarding the salience of ELF – firstly, how to identify and distinguish ethno-linguistic groups methodologically; secondly, which ELF database to use considering that the different ELF databases indicate different values of fractionalisations; and thirdly, whether the proxy ELF truly captures the phenomenon of ethnic grievances. In terms of the first question, ELF stands on shaky methodological foundations because it relies on borderline-arbitrary decisions in identifying and delineating ethnic groups<sup>26</sup> (Lind 2005:3). Thus, it can be accused of applying coding principles that manipulate the data and reinforce preconceived theoretical notions. In terms of the second question, it is pertinent to note that there are a number of competing ELF indices and no consensus on which one is most accurate or appropriate (Easterly and Levine 1997; Roeder 2001; Fearon 2003; Alesina et al 2003). Since there are clear differences in the values of ELF that the different indices provide, researchers can select the ELF index that best supports their hypotheses. This type of manipulation of the sources leads to selection bias and distorted results. In terms of the third question, the ELF indices are vulnerable to criticism because they misinterpret the “contingent, fuzzy, and situational nature of ethnicity” by trying to confine it to absolute categories of belonging on non-belonging (Brown and Langer 2010: 9). Moreover, ELF indices fail to account for the complexity and the dynamics of inter-group fractionalisation. Consider the following example, outlined by Posner (2004: 851): “Take two hypothetical countries, the first with two groups of equal size and the second with three groups containing two-third, one-sixth and one-sixth of the population, respectively. In both countries, the fractionalization index [...] would be 0.5. Yet, the dynamics of the inter-group competition in each country would [...] certainly be different.” This example shows that ELF

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<sup>26</sup> Such “borderline-arbitrary decisions” could have significant implications for cases such as the Ajar ethnic minority in Georgia or for more general cases where individuals were born in mixed-marriage families and they identify with more than one ethnic, linguistic, or religious groups.

indices overlook important nuances of the nature of ethnic fractionalisation; therefore, any theory that trusts ELF measures is inherently flawed. Another shortcoming of ELF indices is that they represent ethnic-fractionalisation as a phenomenon constant through time. Such representations of ELF are inconsistent with data on battle related deaths, human displacement, migration, and population growth. Moreover, the static nature of ELF contradicts the dominant understanding of ethnic identity as a dynamic social phenomenon that reflects the social, political, and economic environment. Therefore, this chapter argues that ELF – the most popular proxy of ethnic grievances – does not capture the complexity of the phenomenon it tries to measure. Therefore, any conclusions about the explanatory power of ethnic differences and ethnic grievances based on ELF measures are vulnerable to criticism and rebuttal.

Another popular measure of ethnic grievances and inter-ethnic tension is polarisation (Horowitz 1985; Esteban and Ray 1994; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005). Polarisation indices are usually based on rent-seeking models of conflict and pertain to measure the fear of ethnic-dominance, political exclusion or repression. While Collier and Hoeffler (2004) reject the link between polarisation and ethnic conflict, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol (2005: 293) assert that polarisation is an “adequate indicator.” This chapter argues that polarisation is a more suitable proxy of ethnic grievances than fractionalisation, because it accounts for the degree of group cohesion and for the power of ethnic leaders to draw on ethnic fears of oppression and exclusion in order to mould group identities. Nevertheless, ethnic polarisation measures are subject of the same measurement and validity critique as ELF measures (Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2007: 6).

A third popular measure of ethnic grievances in the existing literature is ethnic domination proxied by the size of the ethnic minority as a percentage of the overall population of the state. When analysing the link between ethnic dominance and conflict, Fearon and Laitin (2003: 84) “consider only countries with at least a 5% ethnic minority,” and conclude that ethnic diversity measures yield “weak and inconsistent results.” This chapter challenges Fearon and Laitin’s (ibid.) conclusion on methodological and theoretical grounds. By setting the threshold at five per cent, Fearon and Laitin assume that smaller minorities are unlikely to wage wars against the centre. Yet, empirical evidence falsifies this assumption. For example, in the South Caucasus, the Abkhazian<sup>27</sup> and the South Ossetian<sup>28</sup> minorities made up less than five per cent of the population; yet they waged ethno-territorial conflicts against Georgia. Therefore, setting the threshold at five per cent appears to be an arbitrary decision, which has a significant impact on the results because it excludes a number of important cases of ethnic conflict from the sample. Another methodological shortcoming of the variable “size of ethnic minority” is that it does not account for the territorial cohesion of ethnic minorities. This dissertation argues that compactly settled ethnic minorities are more likely to fight for territorial autonomy than dispersed ethnic minorities, because they see their territorial claims as more viable and legitimate. Therefore, variables that do not account for territorial cohesion lead to analysis that is fragmentary at best and erroneous at worst.

Apart from the popular statistical measures of ethnic grievances, a host of qualitative explanations of ethnic conflict exist. Such explanations can be grouped under the banner of inter-ethnic security dilemmas<sup>29</sup> (Van Evera 1994: 18; cf. Jervis 2011). One of the most

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<sup>27</sup> In 1989, Abkhazians accounted for less than 2% of Georgia’s population (Working Archive Goskostata Rossii, 2012: Georgia).

<sup>28</sup> In 1989, South Ossetians accounted for 3% of Georgia’s population (Working Archive Goskostata Rossii, 2012: Georgia).

<sup>29</sup> Van Evera (1994: 18) defines inter-ethnic security dilemmas as the dilemma “posed where one group cannot achieve physical security without diminishing the physical security of other groups. It is analogous to the



prominent inter-ethnic security dilemmas is related to ethnic dominance and political power. Cederman, Wimmer, and Min (2010: 9-10) argue that the fear of ethnic dominance and the fear of losing political power increase the probability of ethno-territorial conflict. This dissertation concedes that the fear of dominance and power loss are highly relevant explanatory factors; yet, they are highly difficult to measure and cannot be analysed systematically across a multitude of cases.

Nevertheless, other factors, such as the occurrence of prior conflicts between the ethnic groups in question, are easier to observe and provide important insights into the inter-ethnic dynamics (Kalyvas 2007: 426). Past conflicts have manifold effects on inter-ethnic relations. They enable the entrepreneurs of violence to draw on the shared memories of ethnic groups, to glorify their military victories, to blame the callous and brutish ethnic other for their military losses, and to perpetuate the culture of violence. Therefore, previous conflicts increase the risk of ethno-territorial conflict.

Another factor that augments ethnic grievances and increases the risk of ETC is the strengthening of exclusive ethnic nationalist conceptions simultaneously held by minority groups and their respective majorities. The further ethnic groups are from the civic-territorial conception of the nation and the closer they approximate the ethnic-genealogic conception of the nation, the greater the risk of ethnic conflict (Cornell 2002: 34). Cornell's idea has great explanatory potential; however, it is difficult to measure precisely because it depends on fuzzy social phenomena such as perceptions and experiences of belonging and exclusion.

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interstate security dilemma of international relations, except that the clashing units are ethnic ... groups, not states.”

While the motives of ethno-territorial conflict pertaining to ethnicity and ethnic grievances rarely find support in the quantitative literature, the motives pertaining to greed are championed as the strongest determinants of conflict. Over the last decade, the claim that underdevelopment, poverty and economic decline, breed conflict has become a truism. There are multiple rationales that support this claim. One such rationale suggests that, in poor societies, state capacities are weak, including the police capacity to secure peripheral regions inhabited by minority groups (Fearon and Laitin 2003: 80). Another rationale suggests that, in poor societies, economic decline leads to large-scale unemployment, which in turn leads to low recruitment cost for the entrepreneurs of violence and low opportunity cost for the recruited members into ethnic paramilitary groups (Collier and Hoeffler 2004: 564; Hirshleifer 2001: 10-11)<sup>30</sup>. These conditions are typically identified as conducive to rising secessionist moods and ethno-territorial conflicts. However, much like ELF, the measures of poverty and economic decline are vulnerable to validity threats because they measure social phenomena on the wrong level of analysis. Economic motives of conflict are typically measured by proxies operating on the state level. Proxies, such as GDP, are highly aggregated and lack information about the disparities between the different ethnic groups within a state. This dissertation suggests that inter-ethnic inequalities, rather than ubiquitous poverty or economic decline, create an economic environment conducive to conflict.

A number of scholars have pointed out the explanatory value of inter-ethnic inequalities, also known as horizontal inequalities (Sambanis and Mianovic 2009; Stewart 2010). Deiwiks, Cederman, and Gleditsch (2012: 289) argue that horizontal inequalities augment the risk of

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<sup>30</sup> Hirshleifer (2010: 10-11) suggests that in such situations “Machiavelli’s Theorem” is in force and no opportunistic ethnic leader would miss on the lucrative chance to exploit someone else.

ethno-territorial conflicts in federations. Moreover, they explain that in “unequal federations, both relatively developed and underdeveloped regions are ... more likely to be involved in secessionist conflict than regions close to the country average” (ibid.: 289). Although this analysis is an improvement of the previous literature on the economic motives driving conflict, it is still vulnerable to criticism due to the fact that it implicitly assumes ethno-territorial conflicts are fought with the objective to improve the economic standing of the secessionist region. A careful scrutiny of the empirical data reveals that ethno-territorial conflicts have been fought over regions whose economic standing would be diminished after the secession, especially in the cases where the perceived advantages of self-determination would overbalance the anticipated economic losses (cf. Horowitz 1985).

Another economic factor pertaining to greed is the lure of the control over the shadow economy. The shadow economy provides lucrative opportunities of legal and illegal trans-border trade, tax collection, and trafficking of weapons, drugs, and luxury goods (Duffield 2001: 14; Newman 2004: 177; Kaldor 2006: 6). Therefore, the risk of conflict is greater in countries with a large shadow economy because the financial incentive for the entrepreneurs of violence and their supporters is greater. The problem is, however, that the size of the shadow economy cannot be measured precisely because by definition the shadow economy is informal, irregular, and illegal.

Last but not least, the literature that theorises the motives of conflict suggests that resource rich countries are more susceptible to conflict because the perceived potential for economic gain from conflict in such countries is greater (Bannon and Collier 2003). This dissertation suggests that the relationship between the availability of resources and the occurrence of conflict is not so straight forward. Certain types of easily accessible resources called diffuse

resources, such as precious minerals and metals, are more lootable, while other types of resources called point resources, such as oil and gas, are less lootable and easier for the government to control because their extraction requires technology and infrastructure (Le Billion 2005: 35). Moreover, in countries where the extraction of point resources supplements the employment in regions densely populated by the minority, the minority might be discouraged from pursuing conflict because it would have to forgo a higher opportunity cost. Therefore, the effect of the existence of natural resources on conflict motives and on the occurrence of conflict is not straightforward; yet, it is significant.

## THE MEANS OF ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT

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As suggested in the introduction of this chapter, conflicts are a function of motives, means, and opportunities. Having discussed the motives for conflict, the next logical step is to discuss the means of conflict.

## INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN AND ETHNO-FEDERALISM

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One of the explanatory conditions that impacts the likelihood of conflict is the nature of regional institutions and ethno-federal structures. Bunce (2004: 179-180) argues that institutional design and ethnofederalism can have “powerful effects on interethnic relations” and, under specific circumstances, ethno-federal structures can institutionalise the differences and undermine the commonalities between the ethnic centre and the ethnic periphery, thus augmenting the risk of conflict. Ethno-federal institutions and structures provide a platform for exerting power and disseminating instrumental ethnic narratives; thus, they can strengthen in-group identity, polarise public opinion about the ethnic other, and foster mobilisation along

ethnic lines. Furthermore, ethno-federal structures provide the means of conflict because they feature officially recognised borders, institutionalised ethnic identities, effective chains of command, state-like institutions, and mass media control – features which become instrumental in manipulating the ethnic perception of the symbols of identity<sup>31</sup> and in rallying mass support for the outbreak of ethno-territorial conflicts (Cornell 2002: 253).

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#### AVAILABILITY OF ARMS

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Other means of conflict, without which rebellion would be impossible, are weapons. Although this point seems trivial, its importance can hardly be neglected – after all, without the availability of weapons fighting could not begin or be sustained<sup>32</sup>. Marsh (2007) provides valuable insights into the relationship between the availability of weapons and the occurrence of different types of conflict. He (ibid.: 54) explains that the modes of arms acquisition have implications – “[c]ountries in which weapons are freely available to all are associated with fractured heterogeneous insurgencies, while those where only a well-organized party can obtain sufficient weapons are associated with a single and disciplined armed opposition group.” The availability of weapons, the modes of acquiring weapons, and the participants in an insurgency are important components of conflict analysis.

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#### ROUGH TERRAIN

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Another enabling factor for conflict, commonly cited in the literature, is rough terrain (Fearon and Laitin 2003: 80). Rough terrain is considered to be a proxy for conflict potential

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<sup>31</sup> Ethno-federal state borders and institutions can become key symbols of ethnic identity. For example, the borders of the autonomous federal structure drawn on a map, a post stamp, a coin, or a textbook cover – everyday items that reinforce the ethnic perception – can become “powerful emblems” of the distinct identity of the ethnic group (Anderson 1991: 175).

<sup>32</sup> The lack of weapons or the access to weapons can be seen as a discouraging factor for the entrepreneurs of violence planning conflict.

because it provides a remote setting for rebel training, and during the course of the conflict it facilitates the military resistance of the insurgents. Yet, the presence of rough terrain could not explain why conflicts erupt at a specific point in time because geographic terrain does not change over time to reflect the patterns of peace and violence. Moreover, rough terrain measures typically overlook the degree of roughness of the terrain. Empirical evidence reveals that if the mountains in a region are too high and freeze during the winter, they could cut off the vital lines of military, financial, and food support to the rebels, thus, decreasing the chance of conflict onset or freezing the fighting during the winter.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT

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The previous two sections of this chapter outlined the means and motives that drive conflict onset. Yet, means and motives alone cannot fully explain the occurrence of conflict. This chapter is based on the premise that conflicts break out when motives, means, and opportunities align. Therefore, this section analyses the role of opportunities for the onset of ETC

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## EXTERNAL SUPPORT

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Opportunities for conflict typically emerge when there is political, military, or financial support from external actors propping up the entrepreneurs of violence. Cederman, Girardin, and Gleditsch (2009: 403) argue that, “given the highly asymmetric nature of [ethnic] conflicts, which by definition feature non-state groups challenging ... governments,” external support by ethnic kin groups or other favourable groups is a key factor augmenting the rebel group’s perception of having a winning chance in a conflict. By association, external support augments the opportunities for conflict onset. Why has

this compelling argument not been proliferated and corroborated in quantitative conflict research? Quantitative studies typically overlook this factor due to a misplaced level of analysis. If the assumed level of analysis is the state level, the relations between key actors on the sub-state, regional, and international levels can be overlooked, and the role of external support can be belittled.

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#### ATYPICALLY LOW COSTS FOR REBELLION

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Another factor that generates greater opportunities for rebellion is the incidence of atypically low costs. This factor is highly correlated with poverty, economic decline, and unemployment. In particular, high levels of unemployment among young men are highly conducive to conflict because they provide incentives for young men to join rebel groups and to pursue looting and plunder in the context of violence. Moreover, from the perspective of the entrepreneurs of violence and the rebel leaders, the cost of recruiting rebels plummets when the opportunity costs are atypically low (Collier, Hoeffler, and Sambanis 2005: 7). Arguably, the atypically low costs for rebellion are a decisive factor for the occurrence of conflict. Nevertheless, it is extremely difficult to measure whether poverty and unemployment create a context of atypically low cost and breed conflict, or whether poverty and unemployment are the consequences of conflict that perpetuate it in a vicious cycle.

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#### ATYPICALLY LOW GOVERNMENT CAPABILITIES

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Over the last two decades, a new strand in the literature and a new discourse has emerged in the field of security proposing that weak states and failed states create favourable conditions and opportunities for conflict outbreak (Traub 2011). The rationale of this

discourse is that weakly governed states are unable to project control on the periphery<sup>33</sup> of the state. Thus, the entrepreneurs of violence can take advantage of the state weakness and use the opportunity to assert their control through violent means. Two of the often cited reasons for state weakness are the disintegration of federal structures and the change of political regimes (Hegre, Ellingsen, Gates, and Gleditsch 2001). Hegre et al. (ibid.: 36) argue that factors such as the creation of new states and the change of regime create opportune moments and increase the risk of conflict. While this argument generally holds of for bi-ethnic states it does not hold for multi-ethnic states where some of the minorities wage wars for territorial control against the centre, while others do not.

## SUMMARY

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Exhausting all the conditions leading to conflict is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, this was not the aim of this chapter either. This chapter aimed to engage critically with the existing literature on conflict onset and to explain the causes of conflict as a function of motives, means and opportunities. Three key findings can be teased out.

The first one relates to the level-of-analysis problem in conflict research. Conflict research, in particular quantitative conflict research, typically studies the phenomenon of conflict at the state level of analysis, thus overlooking a number of important causes of conflict that transcend the state level. Therefore, this section suggests that unless ethno-territorial conflict is studied as a “disaggregated, relational phenomenon that includes links across state borders” on the sub-state, nation-state, regional and international levels, the causal explanations of conflict will be fragmented and incomplete (Cederman, Girardin, and Gleditsch 2009: 404; Cordell and Wolff 2011: 6-10). Arguable causes of conflict suffering

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<sup>33</sup> Ethnic minorities typically live in the periphery of the state.



from level-of-analysis problems – such as ELF, ethnic polarisation, poverty measured by GDP, national rates of unemployment, weak state capabilities, regime change, and external support – are either over-aggregated or under-aggregated and lead to dubious results.

The second finding that could be teased out relates to the validity of proxies such as ELF as a proxy for ethnic grievances or GDP as a proxy for poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment. This dissertation suggests that the overreliance on proxies poses a threat to the validity of theoretical models because, for a model to be valid, it must rely not only on the valid interpretations of the behaviour of the causal variables, but also on the validity of the proxies that substitute for direct data across the variables. Therefore, models explaining the causes of conflict that “rely heavily on proxies are ... more vulnerable than models with fewer proxies and more direct data” (Naper 2011: 3). This can be summarised in a table in the following way:

TABLE 3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEORIES AND PROXIES

|        |           | Proxy   |  |
|--------|-----------|---|--|
|        |           | Accurate  | Inaccurate   |
| Theory | Precise   | The proxy captures the phenomenon, and the theory rightfully concludes from the proxy trusting its validity | The proxy does not capture the phenomenon, but the theory falsely concludes from the proxy trusting its validity |
|        | Imprecise | The proxy captures the phenomenon, but the theory misinterprets the proxy                                   | The proxy does not capture the phenomenon, and the theory misinterprets what the proxy measures                  |

As a result of the understanding about the dependency between accurate proxies and precise theories, this chapter suggests that more direct measures should be used when analysing the salience of greed and grievance as causes of conflict.

The third finding that could be teased out from the discussion in this chapter relates to the capacity of individual factors to influence conflict. This chapter argues that no factor can cause conflict independently and consistently. Factors pertaining to motives, means, and opportunities have to operate simultaneously to produce conflict.

## THE FOUR LEVELS OF ANALYSIS – A DIALOGUE WITH EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

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The previous chapter engaged critically with a plethora of theories of conflict onset. It suggested that no individual factor can comprehensively explain the occurrence of ethno-territorial conflict or the lack thereof. It also suggested that ethno-territorial conflicts are highly complex social phenomena that are best understood in terms of four different levels of analysis – the sub-state level, the state level, the regional level, and the global level (Cordell and Wolff 2011: 6-10). The aim of this chapter is to engage with empirical evidence from the South Caucasus and to analyse the seven cases under investigation in terms of the aforementioned four levels of analysis. This is necessary because the question about the configurations of conditions conducive to conflict or peace hinges on empirical evidence.

It is important to note that the empirical sources on inter-ethnic relations in the South Caucasus are either very limited or laden with contradictions and bias. Some of the minorities that avoided ETCs, such as the Azeri in Georgia, have been virtually overlooked by scholars and journalists. Other minorities, such as the Lezgin and the Talysh in Azerbaijan, became the subject of false reporting in brief media frenzies surrounding the events around the proclamation of independence of the Lezgin Republic (1991) and the Talysh-Mugan Republic (1993), but since then have been forgotten (Minahan 2002c: 1841). In contrast, the minorities that experienced the hot phase of ETC in the early 1990's and are now living in a perpetual state of frozen conflict continue to be the subject of numerous reports and academic studies; however, the validity and objectivity of many of these works is dubious. A large amount of the literature written by authors from the region is loaded with ideological bias and disseminates deliberate disinformation. Likewise, some of the literature produced in the West

is prejudiced or unable to escape the colonialist modalities of thinking about security. Thus, it creates a discourse about geo-strategy and pipelines of oil and blood spouting from the South Caucasus.

This chapter aims to escape the biased narratives of the South Caucasus as the “polygon of Satan” (Isaenko 2010) or as the playground for the “new great game” of “pipeline poker” (Kleveman 2003). Instead, it aims to present a more balanced overview of the dynamics of conflict on the four level of analysis following Cordell and Wolff’s (2011: 8-9) model<sup>34</sup>. For clarity and convenience, this chapter engages systematically with each one of the four levels of analysis with respect to the seven cases under investigation.

## THE GLOBAL LEVEL

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The global level is the realm of powerful states, international organisations, and diasporas. Yet, at the time when the ethno-territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus were emerging, the international community “largely neglected” the security situation in the South Caucasus because it presumed the region was under “Russian dominance” (Sabanadze 2002: 9). The lack of interest in the region and the lack of effort to prevent the escalation of violence gave local and national radical ethnic leadership free reign to pursue their objectives by any means uninhibited by international restrictions<sup>35</sup>. Since 1992, international organisations, such as the

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<sup>34</sup> Cordell and Wolff (2011: 6-8) challenge the tried and tired two-level neo-realist approach to conflict analysis and argue that the system and the unit level need to be disaggregated further in order to account for the actors and the structures shaping the conditions conducive to conflict on the international level, the regional level, the state level, and the sub-state level. This chapter prefers the innovative four-level analytical approach to the tried and tired two-level neo-realist approach because it facilitates more detailed and nuanced analysis.

<sup>35</sup> This is not to suggest that the international community is capable of averting any security crisis. This dissertation is aware that the international community has a poor track record of preventing and managing ethno-territorial conflicts. Nevertheless, the experience of Macedonia for example suggests that timely and well-measured international involvement can halt large scale violence and can reduce the human cost of conflict.

OSCE (formally CSCE) and the UN, have been involved in the South Caucasus and have assumed the roles of mediators or observers of the three conflicts. While this is particularly important for the way the ETCs in the South Caucasus developed, it is not relevant for this dissertation because this dissertation focuses on conflict onset, rather than conflict nature and duration.

Nevertheless, one factor that was particularly important for the onset of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh was the powerful Armenian diaspora and lobby in the US. The Armenian diaspora played a significant role in the onset of the conflict because it sent remittances to Armenia and to Nagorno-Karabakh, and in some cases it provided recruits to join the rebellion. Moreover, the “strongest evidence of the Armenian lobbying success” was passing Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act which “specifically prohibits Azerbaijan from receiving US aid as long as Azeri hostilities towards Armenians continue and the Azeri blockade against Armenia persists” (Gregg 2002: 22). In effect, this made Armenia one of the countries receiving the highest amount of US aid per capita, while Azerbaijan was denied any aid. Considering how important aid and support from the diaspora and friendly governments are for financing rebellion, this is a significant factor (Kaldor (2006: 102-106).

## THE REGIONAL LEVEL

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### RUSSIA

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By the end of 1991, the Soviet Union had disintegrated, and the three Soviet Socialist Republics (SSR) in the South Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia – had become independent states. Although Russia's de facto role changed from a national actor to a regional actor, its influence and involvement in the South Caucasus remained decisive. A comprehensive analysis of Russia's role in the development of inter-ethnic relations is beyond the scope of this investigation. However, a few important points need to be made. On the brink of its collapse, the Soviet Union revised its legislation and added a new law enabling ASSRs and AOs to decide in a referendum whether to secede together with their respective SSRs or to remain within the Soviet Union (Zuercher 35). Although this law never had strong legal standing, it fuelled and propelled the territorial disputes in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia.

Moreover, the collapse of the Soviet Union brought the collapse of ethnofederalism and the opportunity to shake down the established practices of social, political, and economic dominance and subordination. It also brought the collapse of the Soviet ideology and opened up room for the newly found ideologies of ethno-national emancipation driven by opportunistic intellectuals and political elites. The fall of the Soviet Union resulted in ubiquitous economic decline, the shrinking of the formal economy, and the boom of the black market economy. Another consequence of the dissolution of the Soviet Union was the disruption of the official chain of command of the Soviet leadership, which meant that Russia's policy towards the South Caucasus could oscillate between tacit neglect and blatant

meddling. These oscillations, however, were not chaotic or irrational. They were well calculated moves driven by geo-strategic interests.

The ultimate result was that the Russian Federation continued to exert its dominance in the South Caucasus and provided considerable military and financial assistance to all three ethnic minorities fighting their respective central governments. In the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia arguably provided more than mere assistance – it became a warring party.

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## IRAN

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Iran – a prominent regional actor in the South Caucasus – was alarmed by the newly acquired independence of Azerbaijan in 1991. Since approximately a quarter of Iranian citizens were ethnic Azeri, Iran feared the escalation of separatist tensions within its borders. This fear shaped Iran's foreign and security policy towards the South Caucasus, which can be crudely summarised in three core objectives – to maintain an image of neutrality in order to avoid domestic tensions; to clandestinely weaken and isolate Azerbaijan by providing covert support to the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenian and rumoured support to the Talysh independence movement; and to limit the influence of Turkey and Russia in the oil-rich Caspian region in order to pursue its financial objectives (Cornell 2002: 103; Souleimanov and Ditych 2007: 107). Thus, Iran's involvement in the South Caucasus was not driven by religious motives<sup>36</sup>, but rather by rational economic and political self-interest<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> By supporting Armenia's side in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Shi'a Iran supported Christian Armenia rather than Shi'a Azerbaijan.

<sup>37</sup> Iran's political and economic interests involved strengthening its relationship with Russia and increasing its involvement into the resource rich Caspian region. Therefore, Iran avoided taking steps that would jeopardize its strategic interests.

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## TURKEY

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In contrast to Iran, Turkey was reassured by Azerbaijan's acquisition of independence because it anticipated an opportunity to exert control over the Turkic people of Azerbaijan and to gain access to the Caspian riches. Thus, although Turkey made a half-hearted attempt to stabilise its relationship with Armenia<sup>38</sup>, it soon abandoned this foreign policy direction and swapped it for open support for their Muslim brethren. This move was beneficial for Turkey for two reasons: it was supported by public opinion and it was conducive to Turkey's broader aim of extending its influence in the Turkic world.

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## THE NATIONAL AND SUB-NATIONAL LEVELS

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### GEORGIA

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Georgia became the first SSR in the South Caucasus to be granted independence. Soon after its independence, it placed presidential power in the hands of Zviad Gamsakhurdia – an opportunistic nationalist leader, who portrayed himself as a national hero destined to win the fight for Georgian freedom and territorial integrity (Nodia 1996: 77). Gamsakhurdia also coined the slogan “Georgia for Georgians” and insisted ethnic minorities were “mere guests on Georgian soil” (Souleimanov forthcoming in 2012: 159). Throughout Gamsakhurdia's presidency, ethno-nationalist political discourse prevailed and ethnic discrimination became

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<sup>38</sup> Turkey made an attempt to stabilize its relationship with Armenia because Turkey feared Russia – an open supporter of the Armenian side in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.



the order of the day. However, in December 1991, Gamsakhurdia was overthrown by the same militias he once used to his advantage, and he left Georgia. Out of the political vacuum, a new-old leader emerged – the former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze assumed power and in a rhetorical move proclaimed himself “the protector of national minority groups” (Popjanevski 2006: 27). Nevertheless, in the first two years of statehood, none of the ethnic minorities in Georgia were fully integrated and suffered widespread discrimination fuelled by the limited employment opportunities for non-Georgian speakers and the virtual lack of political representation.

## ABKHAZIA

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The Abkhaz ethnic minority is located in the north-east of Georgia along the Black Sea in what used to be a lush tropical resort popular among the Soviet elites. The Abkhaz speak a Northern Caucasian language. Approximately two-thirds of the Abkhaz are Christian Orthodox, and the rest are Sunni Muslim. In 1989, the Abkhaz constituted only 17 per cent of the population of the Abkhazian ASSR; however, as the titular nation, they benefited from all the privileges instituted by ethno-federalism. There is a history of ethnic disturbances occurring in Abkhazia in 1957, 1967, and 1979 but none of these episodes were as violent as the ETC that erupted in Abkhazia with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The seeds of the ETC were sown when a group of sixty Abkhaz intellectuals, with a radical-nationalist agenda, sent a letter to Moscow reeling off the grievances of the Abkhaz population and calling for the reinstatement of Abkhazia as a union republic – a return to the status of 1921. These demands were met with strong opposition in Georgia leading to ethnic violence in Sukhumi resulting in dozens of deaths and several hundred wounded (Cornell 2002: 109-110). Interestingly, a

period of calm followed these clashes and Abkhazia maintained peaceful relations with the centre during Gamsakhurdia's leadership.

However, after Gamsakhurdia fell from power, tensions began deteriorating between Tbilisi and Sukhumi. In the summer of 1992 Abkhazia reinstated its 1925 constitution. The Georgian government in Tbilisi considered this move a secessionist act, prompting poorly controlled Georgian paramilitary forces to attack Abkhazia. The fighting resulted in Georgian forces occupying the capital and the Abkhaz forces being pushed into the north-western corner of the region. A sudden counterattack from the Abkhaz forces in October surprised the Georgian troops, especially because the Abkhaz forces were equipped with heavy armament. In addition to this, the Abkhaz forces were helped by North Caucasian volunteers and air support from Russian forces stationed in the Caucasus, who were obviously also the providers of the Abkhaz's heavy weaponry. The fortunes of the Georgian forces suffered more and more during 1993, and Abkhaz forces eventually recaptured Sukhumi in September. During and following the fighting, virtually all Georgians living on the ASSR's territory were evicted in a campaign of ethnic cleansing.

## JAVAKHETI ARMENIANS

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This ethno-territorial Armenian minority lives in the south-western border province of Javakhetia in the Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda rayons<sup>39</sup>. Javakheti Armenians are Christians belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church. Typically, they speak their mother tongue, Armenian, and rarely speak Georgian. As a result they suffer from discrimination and isolation. The Javakheti Armenians did not have an autonomous status during the Soviet era

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<sup>39</sup> Some ethnic Armenians live in the capital Tbilisi and in Abkhazia.

and their social, political, and economic rights were largely neglected. After Georgia gained its independence, Zviad Gamsakhurdia's radical nationalism sparked tension in Javakhetia. The Javakheti Armenians responded to this radical nationalism by creating the political organisation Javakhk, who campaigned for greater Armenian autonomy within Georgia. However, the organization suffered from many problems including a lack of a clear structure and chain of command; being riven by internal conflicts; and failing to mobilise active popular support. For its part, the Georgian government was very careful not to provoke the Javakheti Armenians. The Armenian government, aware of its isolation and the subsequent importance of its relations with Georgia, has been prepared to defuse potential problems in the region, including an intervention to convince Javakhk not to hold a referendum on autonomy or secession.

#### KVEMO KARTLI AZERIS

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Azeris generally inhabit compact areas of the southern and south-eastern regions of Georgia, especially in the Kvemo Kartli province. Three-quarters of the Azeri in Georgia are Sunni Muslim, and one-quarter are Shi'a Muslim<sup>40</sup>. Little unrest has been noted among Azeris in Georgia, and for this they have been labelled the "silent mass" (Cornell 2002: 209). However, they have seen some ethnic tensions, especially in the late 1980s. This included an episode where extreme nationalists in Georgia applied a lot of pressure on Azeris, especially in the Bolnisi region, to leave Georgia. This resulted in the emigration of nearly two thousand Azeri families from Georgia, yet it did not cause the creation of self-defence organizations among local Azeris, nor did it cause them to unite politically or to demand greater rights from the Georgian government. The Azeri government also played a role in diffusing inter-ethnic

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<sup>40</sup> This proportion is reversed in Azerbaijan.

tensions because it was highly aware of the strategic location of Georgia as a link between Azerbaijan and Turkey.

## SOUTH OSSETIANS

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The South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast was the ethno-federal territorial division given to the Ossetian minority living in Georgia. The Ossetians are a predominantly Christian people speaking an Iranian language. They live on both sides of the border between Georgia and the Russian Federation and share a strong sense of kinship and ethnic cohesion. In Georgia, in 1989, two thirds of the region's population was composed of Ossetians, with the remaining third mostly made up of ethnic Georgians. The increase in radical nationalism among Georgia's ruling elite elicited a reaction in the South Ossetian AO, including the creation of a popular movement, the Ademon Nykhas. The Georgian government's attempts to make Georgian the sole official language of the republic in August 1989, propelled Ademon Nykhas to petition the USSR central government for unification with North Ossetia. Inter-ethnic riots occurred in South Ossetia near the end of 1989. Following the banning of regional parties from participating in Georgian election in late 1990, the South Ossetian AO Supreme Soviet raised South Ossetia from an Autonomous Oblast to an 'Independent Soviet Democratic Republic'. In response, the Georgian parliament abolished the autonomy of South Ossetia, and, from December 1990, the region has been referred to as 'Shida Kartli' or the 'Tskhinvali and Java' regions in official Georgian discourse. Although Soviet Ministry of Interior forces stopped violent clashes, by mid-1991, the situation had worsened to the point where South Ossetia's capital, Tskhinvali, was under artillery fire. By the time the Soviet Union was beginning to dissolve, volunteers from the North Caucasus were gathering in North Ossetia and were vowing to support the Ossetian independence movement. Due to

strong lobbying on the part of North Ossetian authorities, the Russian Supreme Soviet's speaker threatened military actions against Georgia. In December, Gamsakhurdia was defeated in street clashes in Tbilisi, bringing a moment of respite to the situation. However, the situation again turned volatile in early 1992. Finally, with the help of Russian President Yeltsin's auspices in June 1992, a cease-fire agreement was signed and trilateral peace-keeping troops were introduced. As a result of this agreement, Georgia, in practice, lost jurisdiction over South Ossetia, and the conflict remains unresolved.

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## ARMENIA

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Armenia was the second republic in the South Caucasus to gain its independence. However, unlike Georgia, Armenia's territory did not incorporate any ethno-federal divisions. In fact, the population of Armenia was homogenous with the exception of the Zangezur Azeri minority<sup>41</sup>. The independence and the new national conception of Armenia were closely linked to a shrewdly orchestrated ethno-nationalist discursive and political movement. However, while the radical-nationalist ideology reified the importance of Nagorno-Karabakh; it brushed over Javakhetia and extinguished the dwindling flame of the movement for autonomy.

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## AZERBAIJAN:

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Azerbaijan was the last republic in the South Caucasus to gain its independence from the Soviet Union. In contrast to the ethnic identities of the titular nations of the other two South Caucasian states, the ethnic identity of the Azeri was not clearly bounded. Over the last

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<sup>41</sup> The Zangezur Azeri were a compactly settled minority. There were pockets of ethnic Azeri living in Armenia north of the Sevan Lake and in some parts of the Ararat District and the north-west of Armenia.

century, the Azeri – a predominantly Shi’a Muslim people speaking a Turkic language – have identified with different ethnonyms including Transcaucasian Tartars, Turks, and Muslims. Contemporary Azeri also identify with the label Azerbaijani; however, Azerbaijani is a civic and a territorial identity which means first and foremost a citizen of the Republic of Azerbaijan<sup>42</sup> (Souleimanov 2004: 203). It is important to note that in the first two years after its independence, Azerbaijan employed a political and legal discourse promoting the construction of a civic rather than ethnic national identity; however, it simultaneously and unequivocally blocked attempts for self-determination voiced by the ethnic minorities.

#### LEZGINS:

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The Lezgin ethnic minority in Azerbaijan lives in the north-eastern part of the country by the border with Dagestan. Unlike the Azeri majority, who are Shi’a Muslim and speak a Turkic language, the Lezgins are a Sunni Muslim people speaking a North Caucasian language akin to the Dagestani group of languages (Lewis 2009b). Apart from a brief moment of independence between May and October 1917, the Lezgins never formed their own nation state and never developed a strong ethnic conception of statehood. However, they share a sense of a Lezgin homeland located along the Samur River. During Soviet times, the Samur River, dividing the Lezgin populations in Azerbaijan and Dagestan, was a “relatively meaningless administrative border” (Cornell 2002: 105). However, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it became a tightly-controlled border between two nationalising states. This changing of the status of the border disrupted the traditional lifestyle of the Lezgins, who had strong family and trade ties in both Azerbaijan and Dagestan. It also intensified the fear of cultural and political discrimination, repression, and assimilation. It promptly led to the rise of

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<sup>42</sup> As a malleable social construction, the Azerbaijani identity is changing and it is becoming more bounded. In recent years, the Azerbaijani identity has been enriched by moulding an ethnic layer into it.

two ethnic organisations – Sadval<sup>43</sup> and Samur. Sadval’s political goals were nationalist and radical leading to the declaration of independence of the Lezgin Republic in 1991. Samur’s goals were more moderate – they opposed the claim for territorial autonomy from Azerbaijan and advocated the protection of minority rights within Azerbaijan (Minahan 2002b:1088; cf. BBC Summary of World Broadcasts 1993d). Ultimately, Samur was the more popular movement. Even though processes, such as the forced conscription of Lezgins into the Azerbaijani army fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh, and events, such as the seventy thousand strong Lezgin rally in Kusarskiy rayon and the ensuing “Lezgin massacre”,<sup>44</sup> created tension between the Lezgin minority and the Azeri government, large-scale conflict was avoided. After all, Lezgins and Azeri had no history of violent conflict, they shared a number of cultural traits, they intermarried, and, although the Lezgins have their distinct mother tongue, many of them are bilingual and speak Azeri (Popjanevski 2006: 65).

#### NAGORNO-KARABAKH ARMENIANS:

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The Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians in Azerbaijan are Monophysite Christians who speak an Indo-European language. The first of the three ethno-territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of the demands for the transfer of the AO from the jurisdiction of the Azerbaijani SSR to the Armenian SSR (Cornell 2002: 104). By the time the ETC erupted during the fall of the Soviet Union, the Soviet ideology was

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<sup>43</sup> In the language of the Lezgins, Sadval means unity.

<sup>44</sup> Allegedly, six Lezgins were killed by the Azerbaijani forces during the “Lezgin massacre” (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts 1993b; 1993c).

declining and was quickly and shrewdly replaced by powerful ethno-nationalist doctrines. These doctrines instrumentalised the past episodes of violence<sup>45</sup> between Armenians and Azeri in the historical territory of Karabakh<sup>46</sup>, and redefined each battle as a “national epic” and each victory as “a restoration of justice” (Souleimanov 2004: 2005). Thus, the struggle for Nagorno-Karabakh became the symbol of the struggle for statehood for both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Ethnic sentiment and rivalry was being mobilized on a large scale in, with large demonstrations being held in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. The Supreme Soviet of the Nagorno-Karabakh AO requested central authorities to transfer the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. When this petition was rejected the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast voted for independence. The increasing ethnic tensions and mobilization resulted in violence and ethnic cleansing developing quickly in both SSR’s, pushing the Azeri population from Nagorno-Karabakh and forcing Armenians to flee from areas of Azerbaijan other than Nagorno-Karabakh.

Following months of violence, the Armenian Supreme Soviet decided to unilaterally annex the Nagorno-Karabakh AO to Armenia. In response to this move, the autonomy of the Nagorno-Karabakh Oblast was abolished by the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet. Azerbaijan gradually lost control of the area of the NKAO as violence among paramilitary groups emerged and intensified. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992, full-scale war erupted with documented examples of Armenia’s direct involvement. Therefore the multi-dimensional role of Armenia as a warring party and as an international party involved in the Nagorno-Karabakh ETC blurs the distinction between inter-state and intra-state conflict.

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<sup>45</sup> The Armenians and Azeri fought over the territory of Karabakh in 1905-1906 and in 1918-1920.

<sup>46</sup> The territory of Nagorno-Karabakh encompasses approximately half of the historical territory of Karabakh. The administrative and territorial division of Nagorno-Karabakh was a product of ethnofederalism, and it appeared on the map of the South Caucasus for the first time during the Soviet era.



## TALYSH:

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The Talysh ethnic minority in Azerbaijan lives in the south-eastern part of the country. A predominantly Shi'a Muslim population, its mother tongue is a Northern Iranian language; however, most Talysh are bilingual and speak Azeri well (Lewis 2009c). The Talysh ethnic homeland, also known as the Talysh Khanate, stretched along the south-west of the Caspian Sea between the borders of Azerbaijan and Iran. However, during Soviet times the Talysh did not enjoy autonomous status and they were forced to assimilate either into Azerbaijani or Russian-dominated Soviet culture (Minahan 2002c: 1841). The newly acquired independence of Azerbaijan, the on-going ethno-territorial conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, the June 1993 coup d'état in Baku, and the growing support in Iran for their Shi'a brethren across the border, incited Alikram Humbatov, an army renegade and an opportunistic entrepreneur of violence, to proclaim the independence of the Talysh-Mugan Republic (Cornell 2002: 106). The events surrounding the proclamation of independence of the Talysh-Mugan Republic were highly disputed, even at the time of their occurrence. Contradicting reports flooded the BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1993e; 1993f; 1993g). Some reports claimed separatist protests were held in Lenkoran. Other reports claimed the protesters were demonstrating against Humbatov's ethno-separatist claims. Humbatov himself reportedly played an antipodean role and did not maintain the separatist line at all times. Nevertheless, a rebellion in Lenkoran was averted, the rebel forces were dispersed, and the Talysh minority returned to peaceful coexistence within Azerbaijan. There are no historical accounts of the Talysh fighting large scale battles against the Azeri and events in the early 1990's did not change that.

## SUMMARY

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This chapter engaged with empirical evidence from the South Caucasus, and in doing so it applied a four levels-of-analysis approach that teased out the dynamics of conflict onset across the international, regional, state and sub-state levels. This chapter concludes that conflict analysis that does not account for the dynamics on all four levels risks omitting important causal explanations. Nevertheless, this chapter leads to the realisation that the qualitative analysis of all seven cases across the four levels is unsystematic and it can hardly lead to rigorous generalisations. Therefore, this chapter suggests that a different methodological strategy is needed to organise the myriad of information into a format that can be unpacked effectively. This dissertation endorses QCA as the most effective methodological strategy for dealing with an intermediate number of cases and an intermediate number of causal explanations.

ENTERING A DIALOGUE WITH METHODOLOGY –  
QUALITATIVE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND CAUSAL  
COMPLEXITY

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*“‘Social phenomena are complex.’ As social scientists we often make this claim...Consequently, our explanations are often inadequate... Yet this depiction of social life does not fit well with experience. We sense that there is a great deal of order to social phenomena – that there is method to the madness. In fact, it is our strong sense that social phenomena are highly ordered that keeps us going. What is frustrating is the gulf that exists between this sense that the complexities of social phenomena can be unravelled and the frequent failures of our attempts to do so.”*

*– Charles Ragin, 1989*

For some time now, scholars have pointed to the shortcoming of both qualitative and quantitative conflict research and to the “serious methodological challenges” to identifying the conditions under which contemporary conflicts occur (Newman 2009: 259). Yet, innovative research methods have remained unpopular in conflict studies. This dissertation aims to analyse the causes of conflict and the conditions of peace in the South Caucasus and it argues that Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) provides an efficacious alternative to traditional research methods because of five key reasons – it facilitates the analysis of an intermediate number of cases<sup>47</sup>; it is geared towards unravelling causal complexity; it is highly conducive to the analysis of necessary and sufficient causes; it produces rigorous modest generalisations; and it is capable of identifying theoretically interesting and innovative

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<sup>47</sup> The number of cases within a security region are rarely suitable for small-N or large-N research.

explanations that might be rendered insignificant in highly aggregated methodological approaches. The following chapter introduces the key principles and operations of QCA, and it concludes with an assessment of the benefits of using this innovative methodology.

## KEY PRINCIPLES OF QCA

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### THE COMPARATIVE METHOD – AN INTERMEDIATE-N APPROACH

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The aim of this dissertation is to analyse the configurations of conditions under which ethno-territorial conflicts erupted in between minorities and central governments, and the configurations of conditions under which peace was preserved in the South Caucasus between 1991 and 1993. Therefore, this dissertation aims to analyse an intermediate number of cases and an intermediate number of conditions, and in doing so, to draw modest generalisations.

What methodological approach fits the aims of this dissertation? This chapter suggests that small-N<sup>48</sup> and large-N<sup>49</sup> methodological approaches are not fitting for the purposes of this dissertation. By definition, small-N approaches – such as single case studies, paired comparisons, and other standard qualitative approaches – are geared towards the analysis of a small number of cases and a large number of causal explanations. They provide thick analysis, and their conclusions have little cross-unit relevance. Since small-N approaches are not geared towards the systematic comparison of an intermediate number of cases, and since

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<sup>48</sup> N refers to the number of cases that are investigated. Small-N methodologies typically analyse one, two, or few cases.

<sup>49</sup> Large-N methodologies are geared towards analysing no less than thirty cases and preferably considerably more.

they do not facilitate modest generalisations, they are not suitable for the purposes of this inquiry.

Unlike small-N approaches, large-N approaches – such as regression analysis and other standard statistical methods – tend to analyse a large number of cases and a limited number of independent variables. The results of large-N analysis typically reveal broad generalisations that lack nuance and complexity<sup>50</sup>. Therefore, large-N approaches are not suitable for the aims of this inquiry either.

QCA – a configurational comparative method geared towards the analysis of an intermediate number of cases and an intermediate number of conditions – synergises the strengths and tackles the shortcomings of small-N and large-N approaches. Moreover, the rigorous application of QCA leads to modest generalisations that truncate irrelevant complexity while maintaining significant nuances. Therefore, this dissertation employs a QCA approach to the analysis of the causes of ethno-territorial conflict and the conditions of inter-ethnic peace in the South Caucasus between 1991 and 1993.

The following table delineates a typology of the methodological approaches in the social sciences.

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<sup>50</sup> A detailed discussion of the strengths and shortcomings of small-N and large-N is beyond the scope of this investigation. More importantly, it is not the main purpose of this investigation, because the universe of cases under investigation for this dissertation is seven (i.e. the seven compactly settled ethnic minorities in the South Caucasus). For extensive discussions about small-N and large-N methods see Brady and Collier 2004.

TABLE 4 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: A TYPOLOGY<sup>51</sup>

|                     | Number of cases |                   |                   |   |         |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|---|---------|
|                     |                 | 1                 | 2                 | Intermediate-N                            | Large-N |
| Number of Variables | Large           | Single Case Study | Paired Comparison | Configurational Comparative Methods (QCA) |         |
|                     | Small           |                   |                   |   |         |

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#### CAUSAL COMPLEXITY

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Another reason for employing a configurational comparative approach is that QCA is rooted in the notion of causal complexity. Understanding causal complexity requires differentiating it from causal simplicity. Causal simplicity is the underlying assumption of the standard quantitative approaches that dominate contemporary comparative scholarship. The assumption of causal simplicity reveals an epistemological position according to which a cause<sup>52</sup> influences the researched outcome<sup>53</sup> in a linear, unifinal, and additive way.

This dissertation recognises the power of quantitative methods such as regression analysis to specify the linear effects of individual independent variables on the dependent variable; however, it argues that this strength inevitably becomes a weakness considering the fact that

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<sup>51</sup> Table adapted from: Berg-Schlosser, D., De Meur, G., Rihoux, B. And Ragin, C. C., 2009. Qualitative Comparison Analysis (QCA) as an Approach. In: Ragin, C. C. and Rihoux, B., eds. 2009. *Configurational comparative methods: Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and related techniques*. California, CA: Sage, p. 5

<sup>52</sup> Causes are termed independent variables in quantitative research.

<sup>53</sup> The outcome is termed the dependent variable in quantitative research.

social phenomena, such as ethno-territorial conflicts, are complex, and their intricacies cannot be explained through a methodology that champions causal simplicity and single explanatory factors (Shalev 2007; Ragin 2008). Therefore, in order to avoid the “twin evils of theoretical poverty and methodological rigidity” (Braumoeller 1999: 3), this dissertation employs an epistemology and a methodology that rely on causal complexity.

The concept of *causal complexity* is associated with three interrelated concepts – namely, *conjunctural causation*, *equifinality*, and *causal asymmetry*. *Conjunctural causation* is present when a single condition can exert its influence on the final outcome only when conjoined with one or more different conditions. *Equifinality* complements conjunctural causation and grants that different conjunctures<sup>54</sup> can lead to the same final outcome. *Causal asymmetry* warrants that even if a conjuncture leads to a certain outcome, the lack of this conjuncture does not necessarily lead to the lack of the outcome (Schneider 2011: 57).

How do the principles of causal complexity relate to the key research question and the hypotheses of this dissertation? The research question explicitly specifies an interest in the *configurations of conditions* associated with the patterns of peace and conflict in the South Caucasus between 1991 and 1993. Therefore, the research question necessitates the analysis of *conjunctural causation*, *equifinality*, and *causal asymmetry* in order to explain the *causal complexity* of inter-ethnic peace or conflict. The hypotheses of this dissertation are also expressed in terms of causal complexity. This dissertation hypothesises (1) that the outcome of inter-ethnic relations in the South Caucasus cannot be explained through isolated conditions but through combinations of social, political, and economic conditions<sup>55</sup>; (2) that the peaceful or conflictual outcome of inter-ethnic relations in the seven cases can be the

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<sup>54</sup> Conjuncture is the term for a combination of conditions that lead to an outcome.

<sup>55</sup> This hypothesis draws on conjunctural causation.

result of different conjunctures of conditions<sup>56</sup>; and (3) that the absence of the conjunctures that lead to conflict does not explain peace ipso facto<sup>57</sup>.

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## NECESSARY AND SUFFICIENT CONDITIONS

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The concepts of necessity and sufficiency are commonplace in academic discourse. However, their deceiving simplicity has led to ubiquitous misemployment<sup>58</sup>. Moreover, necessity and sufficiency are interpreted differently in different methodological approaches (Goertz and Star 2003: 12). In order to avoid conceptual and methodological confusion this chapter aims to conceptualise necessity and sufficiency explicitly and precisely.

Qualitative Comparative scholarship<sup>59</sup> interprets necessity and sufficiency through the lenses of conjunctural causation, equifinality, and causal asymmetry. Ragin (1987: 99) asserts that “a cause is defined as necessary if it must be present for a certain outcome to occur. A cause is defined as sufficient if by itself it can produce a certain outcome.” Therefore, *necessity* – seen through the lens of qualitative comparative scholarship – defines a situation where, if the outcome is present, then the necessary cause is also present. However, a necessary cause could be either present or absent when the outcome is not present. This is not a logical contradiction; it is a reinforcement of the understanding of causal asymmetry<sup>60</sup>. In comparison, *sufficiency* defines a situation where, if a sufficient cause is present, then the

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<sup>56</sup> This hypothesis draws on equifinality.

<sup>57</sup> This hypothesis draws on causal asymmetry.

<sup>58</sup> See Schweller (1992: 248 – 249), Holsti (1996: 180), and Wendt (2003: 79) for examples of misemploying the concepts of necessity and sufficiency.

<sup>59</sup> Qualitative Comparative scholarship is scholarship that employs Qualitative Comparative Analysis. The term Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) refers to a family of methodological approaches including crisp set QCA, multi value QCA and fuzzy set QCA.

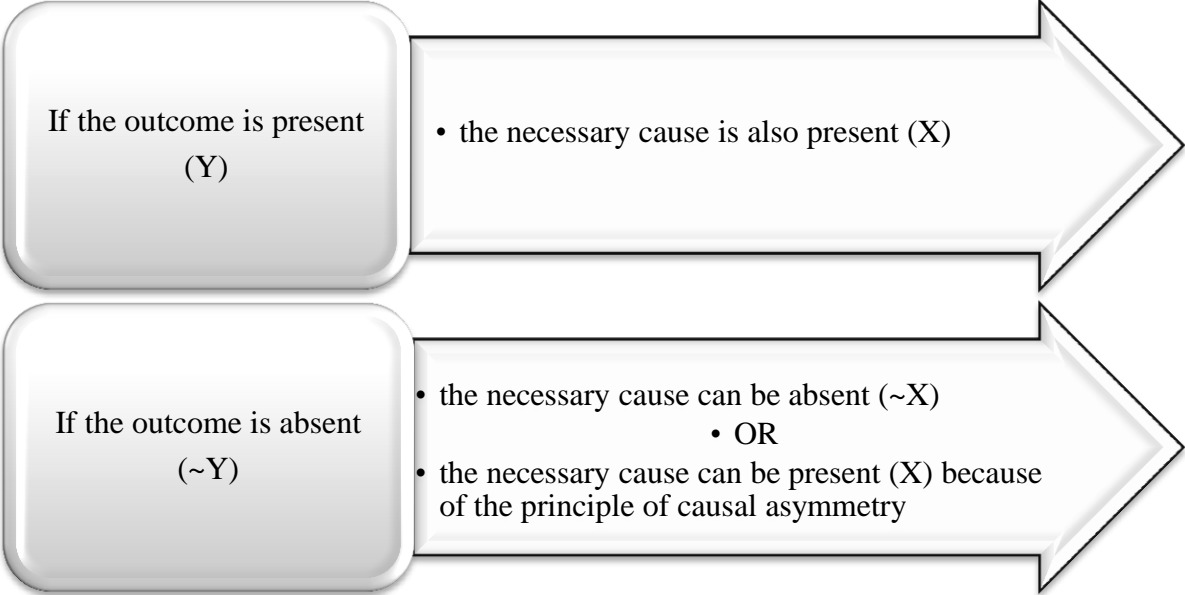
<sup>60</sup> Consider the example of the rise of radical ethnic leaders as a necessary cause of ethno-territorial conflict. This means that every time the outcome ETC is present, the presence of radical ethnic leaders can also be observed. Moreover, it means that radical ethnic leaders can be present in social environments in which no conflict has been observed.



outcome is present. Conversely, when a sufficient cause is absent, the outcome could be either absent or present. This is not a logical contradiction either – it is a premise of equifinality, which implies that there are other sufficient conditions that could be identified. The principle of equifinality allows for such conditions to be analysed.

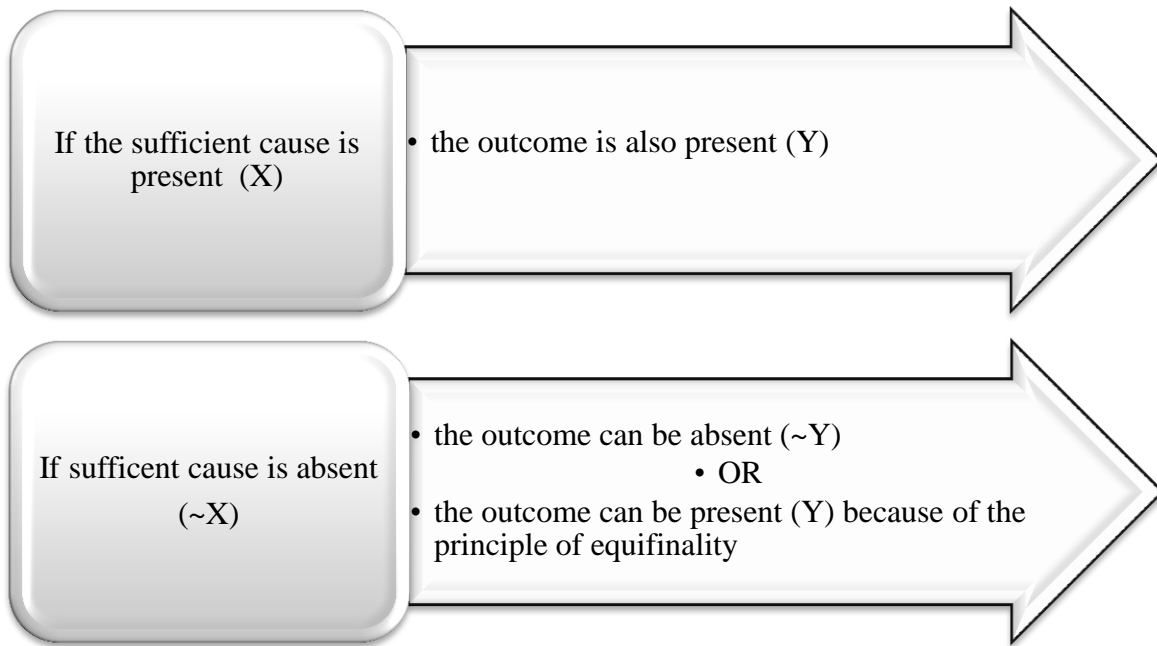
The synergy of causal complexity, necessity, and sufficiency can be illustrated in two tables:

FIGURE 2: NECESSITY SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF CAUSAL COMPLEXITY<sup>61</sup>



<sup>61</sup> In this table and in general upper case representations of conditions or outcomes (X or Y) mean that the condition or the outcome is present. In contrast, upper case representations with the “~” symbol in front (~X or ~Y) mean that the condition or outcome is not present.

FIGURE 3: SUFFICIENCY SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF CAUSAL COMPLEXITY <sup>62</sup>




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SET THEORY

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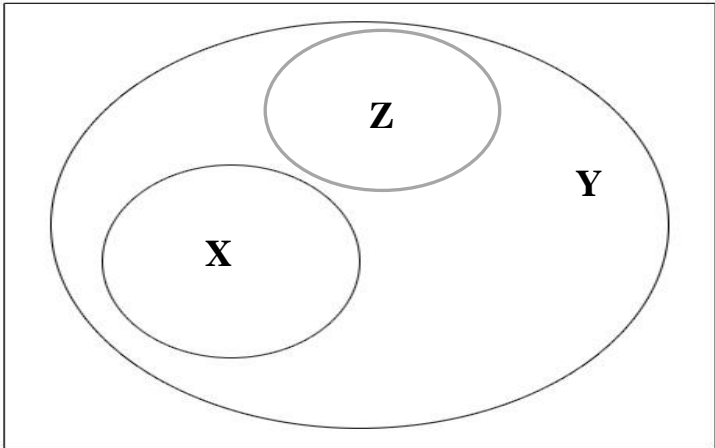
The language of necessity and sufficiency is logically linked to set theory. Schneider (2011: 58) argues that “If we say that a condition X is sufficient for Y, we can formulate this claim and say that all elements (i.e. cases) with the characteristic X are a subset of all elements (cases) with the characteristic Y.” Consider the hypothesis that *large shadow economy* (condition X) is necessary for an *ethno-territorial conflict* (outcome Y) to occur. By suggesting that *large shadow economy* (X) leads to *ethno-territorial conflict* (Y), this hypothesis presupposes a set theoretic relationship between X and Y. In other words, it presupposes that the set of minorities that live in countries with *large shadow economies* (X) is a subset of the set of minorities that experience *ethno-territorial conflict* (Y). Having

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<sup>62</sup> In this table and in general upper case representations of conditions or outcomes (X or Y) mean that the condition or the outcome is present. In contrast, lower case representations of conditions or outcomes (x or y) mean that the condition or outcome is not present.

established this set-theoretical relationship between X and Y helps tease out the understanding that *large shadow economy* (X) is a sufficient but not a necessary condition for ethnic conflict (Y) to occur<sup>63</sup>. Furthermore, it can lead to an acknowledgement that there could be other subsets of Y, such as ethnic grievances for example (Z), which can add nuances and help explain the outcome. Set relations can be captured by the following Figure:

FIGURE 4: SET RELATIONS



OPERATIONS WITH QCA

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To reiterate, QCA is an intermediate-N methodological approach that synergises the strengths of qualitative and quantitative methodologies while tackling their shortcomings (Rihoux 2003: 351). Instead of trying to identify covariance like quantitative methods, QCA aims to unravel the subset relationship between the outcome set and the sets of causal conditions. Therefore, QCA is rooted in set theory, ergo in necessity and sufficiency, ergo in causal complexity. Moreover, instead of trying to construct each case as unique, QCA aims for

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<sup>63</sup> It is pertinent to note that all QCA interpretations need to be supported by empirical and theoretical evidence in order to be valid.

modest generalisations and identifies patterns among types of cases. The QCA operations described in this section lay the basis of the research design employed in this dissertation.

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## DATA DICHOTOMISATION<sup>64</sup>

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The first QCA operation is data dichotomisation. The principle of data dichotomisation is very simple. It involves assigning a membership value of each case for each condition under investigation. If in a case a condition is present, large, or high, the case receives a membership value of 1. If in a case a condition is not present, small, or low, the case receives a membership value of 0. The membership values of 1 and 0 are qualitative anchor points. Some conditions in the social world are fuzzy and, in order to be dichotomised, qualitative thresholds have to be used. If qualitative thresholds are used, they should be transparent and justified on theoretical grounds (Rihoux and De Meur 2008: 42)<sup>65</sup>.

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## TRUTH TABLES

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The second QCA operation requires constructing a truth table and inputting the dichotomised data into it. Thus, the *truth table* is a visual analytical tool that contains information about each condition in each one of the cases under investigation. The aim of the truth table is to identify patterns in the data and to point out under which configurations of conditions the

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<sup>64</sup> Originally, this dissertation set out to use fuzzy set QCA (fsQCA). This dissertation is aware of the benefits of using fsQCA; however, the lack of valid data suitable for calibration has rendered the quest for fsQCA analysis unattainable.

<sup>65</sup> In order to ensure transparency, this dissertation uses data that is already dichotomised. Therefore, the process of establishing qualitative thresholds is not explained in more detail in this chapter.

outcome under investigation is present and under which configurations of conditions the outcome is not present.

The rows of the truth table have two interrelated functions. Firstly, each row of the truth table displays one of the logically possible configurations of conditions ( $2^k$ )<sup>66</sup>. Sometimes the number of cases under investigation (n) and the number of possible configurations ( $2^k$ ) differ. If there are more cases than possible configurations, the analytically identical cases are recorded in the same row. If there are fewer cases than possible configurations, *limited diversity* is observed. Ragin (2000: 78) explains that limited diversity is not the exception, it is the rule in social phenomena. As long as it is accounted for, it does not constitute a threat to the validity of the analysis. For complex social phenomena, such as ethno-territorial conflict, caused by multiple interacting conditions limited diversity is expected to be observed. The second function of the rows of the truth table is to display the membership values of the outcome set. Any row showing an outcome value of 1 (i.e. the occurrence of ethno-territorial conflict) should be understood as a sufficient condition for the outcome to occur. Any row showing an outcome value 0 (i.e. the lack of ethno-territorial conflict) should be understood as a sufficient condition for the lack of the outcome.

The following hypothetical truth table contains information about three sets of conditions<sup>67</sup> (A, B, C) and the outcome<sup>68</sup> set (Y). Let's assume that five out of the six logically possible conjunctures<sup>69</sup> yield a positive outcome (Y=1). Every conjuncture linked with a positive outcome represents one possible combination of sufficient conditions. Thus, the truth table helps identify the five conjunctural paths, containing sufficient conditions, which lead to a positive outcome.

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<sup>66</sup> In the expression  $2^k$ , k stands for the number of causal conditions. If there are three conditions under investigation  $2^k = 2^3 = 8$ .

<sup>67</sup> Let's assume that the conditions under investigations are the causes of ETC.

<sup>68</sup> Let's assume that the outcome under investigation is ETC.

<sup>69</sup> In this case the conjuncture is the combination of the three conditions A, B, and C.

TABLE 5: HYPOTHETICAL TRUTH TABLE<sup>70</sup>

| Row | Conditions<br>(Causes of ETC) |   |   | Outcome<br>(ETC) | <i>Hypothetical cases</i>                     |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|---|------------------|---|
|     | A                             | B | C | Y                |   |
| 1   | 1                             | 1 | 1 | 1                | Ethnic Minority Delta                         |
| 2   | 1                             | 1 | 0 | 1                | Ethnic Minority Gamma                         |
| 3   | 1                             | 0 | 0 | 1                | Ethnic Minority Kappa                         |
| 4   | 0                             | 1 | 0 | 1                | Ethnic Minority Zeta,<br>Ethnic Minority Eta  |
| 5   | 0                             | 0 | 1 | 0                | Ethnic Minority Lambda,<br>Ethnic Minority Mu |
| 6   | 0                             | 0 | 0 | 1                | Ethnic Minority Omega                         |

This can be expressed through the following solution formula:

$$A*B*C + A*B*\sim C + A*\sim B*\sim C + \sim A*B*\sim C + \sim A*\sim B*\sim C \rightarrow Y \quad (1)$$

This solution formula is the most nuanced and least parsimonious representation of the truth table analysis.

<sup>70</sup> Adapted from Ragin, C. C., 2009. Qualitative Comparative Analysis Using Fuzzy Sets (fsQCA). In: Ragin, C. C. and Rihoux, B., eds. 2009. *Configurational comparative methods: Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and related techniques*. California, CA: Sage, p. 91

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## SOLUTION FORMULAS

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The previous section inferred that the next QCA operation is the rendering and analysis of the solution formulas. What are solution formulas and what do they reveal?

Solution formulas are rooted the principles of causal complexity. They reveal all the combinations of conditions that interact together to produce the outcome<sup>71</sup>. They also reveal all the different paths that lead to the outcome<sup>72</sup>.

Consider the example of a solution formula mentioned above. How can this seemingly cryptic notation be interpreted?

$$\begin{array}{cccccc}
 A * B * C + A * B * \sim C + A * \sim B * \sim C + \sim A * B * \sim C + \sim A * \sim B * \sim C & \rightarrow & Y & & & (2) \\
 \underbrace{\hspace{1.5cm}} & \underbrace{\hspace{1.5cm}} & \underbrace{\hspace{1.5cm}} & \underbrace{\hspace{1.5cm}} & \underbrace{\hspace{1.5cm}} & \\
 \text{Path 1} & \text{Path 2} & \text{Path 3} & \text{Path 4} & \text{Path 5} & 
 \end{array}$$

In the solution formula, the \* sign represents logical AND or, in other words, the intersection of the sets<sup>73</sup>.

The term, (A \* B \* C) represents the conjuncture of the conditions (A), (B) and (C) that leads to the outcome (Y). The term (A \* B \* C) constitutes Path 1 – one of the equifinal QCA solutions.

The + sign denotes logical OR<sup>74</sup>. It links the two causal paths and implies equifinality.

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<sup>71</sup> This function of solution formulas is rooted in the principle of conjunctural complexity.

<sup>72</sup> This function of solution formulas is rooted in the principle of equifinality.

<sup>73</sup> It is important to note that the QCA literature features alternative formula notations. In order to ensure clarity and consistency, this dissertation adheres to the notation outlined in this chapter.

<sup>74</sup> The logical OR is not exclusive in the same way as “either... or ...” formulations. Logical OR is based on the ancient Latin inclusive or “vel” (Schneider 2011: 158).

The term  $(A*B*\sim C)$  represents the conjuncture of the conditions (A), (B), and (not-C) that leads to the outcome (Y). The term  $(A*B*\sim C)$  constitutes Path 2 – the second one of the equifinal QCA solutions.

The sign  $\sim$  denotes logical NEGATION. The notation  $\sim C$  should be read as not-C.

Terms  $(A*\sim B*\sim C)$ ,  $(\sim A*B*\sim C)$ , and  $(\sim A*\sim B*\sim C)$  represent the other significant conjunctures of conditions that lead to the outcome (Y). These three terms constitute Paths 3 to 5 – the last three paths of the equifinal QCA solution for the given data.

The  $\rightarrow$  sign pointing to the outcome (Y) means that the formula to the left contains the causal explanation of the outcome to the right.

Moreover, if the empirical evidence and the theoretical understanding of the outcome (Y) allow it, the causes of ethno-territorial conflict –  $(A* B * C)$ ,  $(A*B*\sim C)$ ,  $(A*\sim B*\sim C)$ ,  $(\sim A*B*\sim C)$ , and  $(\sim A*\sim B*\sim C)$  – can be interpreted as sufficient but not necessary causes of (Y)<sup>75</sup>.

It is pertinent to note that the individual conditions such as (A), (B), and (C) are termed “INUS conditions” – an acronym that stands for “insufficient but necessary part of a condition which is itself unnecessary but sufficient for the result” (Mackie 1965: 245; cf. Goertz 2003: 68). In other words, conditions (A), (B), and (C) are not sufficient causes of the outcome Y; but, they are the necessary elements of the five conjunctures that form the five paths to the QCA solutions. In turn, each one of the five conjunctures  $(A* B * C)$ ,  $(A*B*\sim C)$ ,  $(A*\sim B*\sim C)$ ,  $(\sim A*B*\sim C)$ , and  $(\sim A*\sim B*\sim C)$  are sufficient, but not necessary for the outcome (Y) to occur.

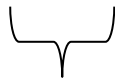
Having outlined the solution formula for the conditions associated with the occurrence of the outcome (Y); it is pertinent to outline the solution formula for the conditions associated with the lack of the outcome ( $\sim Y$ ).

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<sup>75</sup> The analysis of the outlined solution formula follows the logic proposed by Ragin and Rihoux (2004) in the article titled “Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA): State of the Art and Prospects.”



$$\sim A * \sim B * C \rightarrow \sim Y \quad ^{76} \tag{3}$$



Path 1

The above analysis asserts that solution formulas are integral features of QCA because they encompass all definitive features of causal complexity including conjunctural causation, equifinality, and causal asymmetry.

Solution formulas encompass conjunctural causation because they represent the groups of conditions that exert influence on the outcome (Y) only in combination. Solution formulas also encompass equifinality because they delineate the multiple causal paths combined by the logical operator OR (+)<sup>77</sup>.

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#### OPERATIONS WITH SETS: INTERSECTION AND UNION

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The previous section indicated that solution formulas rely on the logical operators AND and OR. How does this relate to set theory?

In set theory, the logical operator AND<sup>78</sup> is understood as the *intersection* of sets. This operation is performed when a new set is constructed so that the new set combines two or more individual sets. For instance, the intersection of set A and set B constitutes the set C which holds all elements simultaneously belonging to sets A and B (A\*B) (Klir, Clair, and

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<sup>76</sup> Since the solution formula for ( $\sim Y$ ) is not the mere opposite of the solution formula for (Y), causal asymmetry is in force.

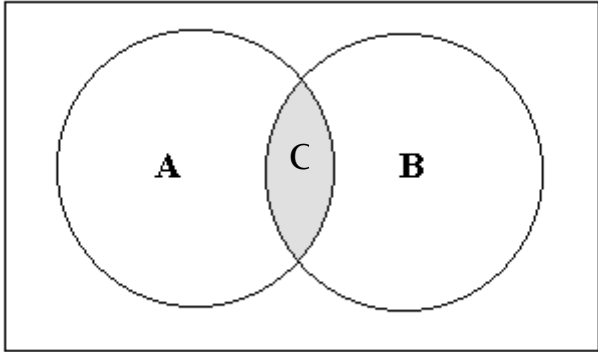
<sup>77</sup> This dissertation is highly aware that the QCA methodology makes use of Boolean minimisation. In order to preserve the comprehensiveness of causal complexity, this dissertation does not use Boolean minimisation.

<sup>78</sup> The logical AND is written out as the \* sign in solution formulas.

Yuan 1997: 55). The membership value of each case in the intersection set C is assigned based on the lowest membership value the case assumes across sets A and B. This rule can be formulated in the following way:

$$(A*B) (x) = \min (A(x), B(x)) \tag{4}$$

FIGURE 5: INTERSECTION SET: SET C



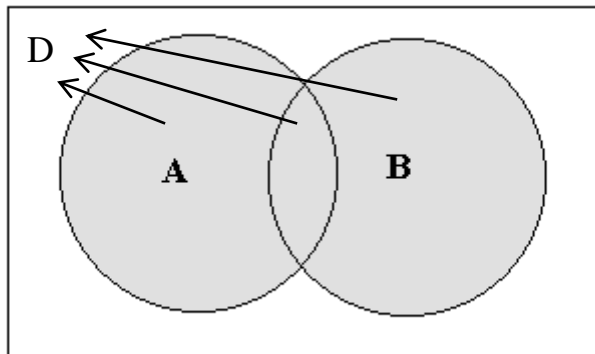
In set theory, the logical operator OR<sup>79</sup> is understood as the union of sets. Like set intersection, this operation entails the construction of a new set. However, unlike set intersection, a set D constructed through union holds all the elements within either set A or B, or both (A+B) (Klir, Clair, and Yuan 1997: 59). Therefore, the Boolean algebraic calculation of union is rooted in set theory. Calculating the membership values of the elements of set D requires assigning the maximum value across sets A and B. This rule can be formulated in the following way:

$$(A+B) (x) = \max (A(x), B(x)) \tag{5}$$

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<sup>79</sup> The logical OR is written out as the sign + in solution formulas.

FIGURE 6: UNION SET: SET D



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### CONSISTENCY AND COVERAGE

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Another good practice, identified by Rihoux, Ragin, Yamasaki, and Bol (2008: 168), is to measure consistency and coverage. Thus, the next QCA operation is namely the measurement of consistency and coverage.

One of the most pronounced methodological problems in the social sciences is that researchers can never be absolutely certain that they have identified all the causal conditions that impact the researched outcome; and even if all causal conditions have been identified there can be no absolute guarantee that they have been operationalised and measured correctly. In order to tackle this problem, this dissertation employs two innovative and advanced QCA measures of fit – namely, consistency and coverage.

The measures of *consistency* and *coverage* are the numerical proof of the degree to which the QCA solution formula represents the empirical data from which it has been generated (Schneider 2011: 68; cf Ragin 2006b: 291-310). Therefore, consistency and coverage values

help determine which conditions are relevant and significant for the analysis and which conditions are not. The *consistency* measure reveals how consistent the relationship between a condition and the outcome is. This can be expressed numerically as follows:

$$\text{Consistency } (X_i \leq Y_i) = \Sigma [\min (X_i, Y_i)] / \Sigma (X_i) \quad (7)$$

where  $(X_i)$  and  $(Y_i)$  signify the membership values of case (i) in the condition and the outcome. The consistency measure equals 1 when all of the cases assume lower values in the condition X than in the outcome Y<sup>80</sup>. The consistency measure is less than 1 and it decreases (Consistency  $\leq$  1) with the number of cases in which the value of the condition X is higher than the value of the outcome Y<sup>81</sup>.

The *coverage* measure reveals the degree to which the QCA solution formula covers the outcome under investigation. In other words, the coverage measure helps differentiate between the consistent but irrelevant conditions, and the relevant conditions. This dissertation differentiates between solution coverage and partial<sup>82</sup> coverage. *Solution coverage* indicates “how much is covered by the solution term,” while partial coverage indicates “which share of the outcome is explained by a certain alternative path” (Wagemann and Schneider 2007: 7).

Both coverage measures could be expressed numerically in the following way:

$$\text{Coverage } (X_i \leq Y_i) = \Sigma [\min (X_i, Y_i)] / \Sigma (Y_i) \quad (8)$$

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<sup>80</sup> This means that the condition set X is a perfect subset of the outcome set Y.

<sup>81</sup> This means that in some of the cases under investigation the condition X deviates from a perfect sub set relationship with the outcome Y.

<sup>82</sup> An alternative term for partial coverage is raw coverage.

When the solution coverage is calculated, X represents each case's membership value in the overall solution formula<sup>83</sup>. When the partial coverage is calculated, X represents each case's membership in one of the alternative paths.

As a rule of thumb, the coverage test follows the consistency test and it is only conducted for those conditions that pass the consistency threshold. In terms of the coverage score, while high solution or partial coverage values are desirable<sup>84</sup>, they are not an absolute requirement. One of the strengths of QCA, derived from its epistemological assumption of equifinality, is in identifying theoretically significant conjunctures that are statistically insignificant. Therefore, QCA approaches make a valuable distinction between the theoretical significance of a causal explanation and its empirical significance measured through statistical methods (Schneider and Grofman 2006: 25). This enables the analysis of cases or conditions that are typically disregarded by large-n methodologies.

## QCA AND CONFLICT RESEARCH

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So far this chapter has introduced the key concepts and methodological procedures that shape CQA. At this stage is pertinent to turn to the question, whether there is a need for QCA in conflict research. At present, conflict research is split along a methodological divide. Scholars such as David Laitin, James Fearon, Kristian Gleditsch, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Paul Collier, who draw on quantitative techniques, are “methodological worlds apart”<sup>85</sup> from

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<sup>83</sup> This refers to all sufficient conditions linked by the logical OR.

<sup>84</sup> In the same way as high  $R^2$  values are desirable in quantitative methodologies.

<sup>85</sup> The phrase “methodological worlds apart” is borrowed from Rihoux (2006).

scholars such as Bruno Coppieters, Christoph Zuercher, Emil Souleimanov, Svante Cornell, and Thomas De Waal<sup>86</sup>, who employ qualitative techniques.

Quantitative scholarship typically endorses linear, unifinal, and additive causality. As a result, it advances causal explanations of conflict that are confined to one or few variables<sup>87</sup>. This dissertation argues that causal simplicity simply is not good enough – it fails to capture the multiple combinations of causes and their dynamic interactions that produce an outcome. Therefore, this dissertation argues that QCA grounded in causal complexity is a more effective methodology than the traditional large-N techniques.

Moreover, the quantitative literature in the field of conflict research typically finds limited, if not no, evidence that ethnic grievances drive conflicts. This is partly due to the reliance on highly aggregated quantitative methodologies that do not differentiate between qualitatively different types of conflict. Moreover, the lack of evidence for the importance of ethnic grievances can be attributed to the failure of quantitative approaches to capture the essence of ethnic grievance. Quantitative methodologies cannot measure ethnic grievances directly; instead, they have to rely on proxies. Proxies are single independent variables designed to mirror the relationship between the social phenomena and the outcome under investigation. The most common proxy for ethnic grievance is the ethno-linguistic fractionalisation (ELF) index – a relatively static measure that fails to capture the dynamics and complexity of inter-ethnic relations. This dissertation challenges the ability of quantitative approaches to rigorously measure ethnic grievances and argues that csQCA provides a more effective

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<sup>86</sup> The list of scholars who employ qualitative techniques features the names of scholars who research the South Caucasus.

<sup>87</sup> A particularly popular causal explanation of conflict championed in the quantitative literature is greed (Collier and Hoeffler 2004).

methodological design for unravelling the complex relationships between causal conditions and outcomes.

A third weakness of quantitative research designs is that they truncate outliers. Thus, they run the risk of losing theoretically significant findings that are statistically insignificant. Unlike quantitative approaches, QCA is geared towards equifinality and aims to identify all possible paths leading to the outcome under investigation. Therefore, QCA surpasses the standard quantitative techniques by prioritising theoretical significance rather than statistical significance, and by analysing cases or conditions that are typically discarded by quantitative research.

In turn, qualitative approaches to conflict analysis yield rich causal explanations of a single case or a small number of cases. Single case studies are typically loaded with assumptions about the case's uniqueness – the understanding that “nothing can be learned about one unit by studying another” (Gerring 2004: 351). Such assumptions render individual cases non-comparable and hinder the analysis of patterns in conflict research. Moreover, the conclusions of single case studies are not generalizable and have negligible cross-unit relevance. As an intermediate-N approach, QCA edges out single case studies because it facilitates the analysis of patterns and leads to rigorous limited generalisations.

Moreover, small-N approaches are particularly vulnerable to selection bias. By keeping the number of cases under investigation small, the researchers can select only those cases that fit their theoretical constructions. Therefore, they could build theories based on shaky empirical grounds. This dissertation argues that, where possible, researchers should investigate the

universe of cases in order to produce valid cross-case comparisons and to generate the potential for rigorous conclusions.

Furthermore, a common weakness of both qualitative and quantitative scholarship is that they rarely incorporate non-cases in their research designs because they assume symmetric causality. Therefore, cases that did not experience conflict are disregarded and the valuable insights that they provide regarding the paths to diluting or resolving inter-ethnic tension are overlooked. This dissertation challenges the assumption of symmetric causality and argues that the analysis of critical junctures and non-cases is particularly fruitful in the field of conflict research. Not only does it help avoid selection bias, but it enriches the analysis by adding nuances.

Last but not least, a common problem of qualitative and quantitative methodologies is that they are not suitable for intermediate-N comparisons. However, conflict research is ripe with examples of intermediate-N research agendas. For example the study of the conditions that leads to the occurrence of ETC in specific regions, such as the South Caucasus, typically entails intermediate-N comparisons. Therefore, they require an intermediate-N methodology such as QCA. Just like their names indicate, small-N and large-N methodologies are not designed to operationalise intermediate-N cases. Therefore, QCA is particularly useful for area studies and for the analysis of regional security and regional conflict patterns.

Overall, this dissertation argues that QCA edges out the traditional qualitative and quantitative approaches. It is geared towards rigorous intermediate-N comparisons. It disaggregates conflict data and prioritises theoretical significance rather than statistical significance. It enables the analysis of conflict patterns and leads to rigorous generalisations. It balances out



cross-case analysis and within-case analysis. Last but not least, it enables the frustrated scholar to close the “gulf that exists between this sense that the complexities of social phenomena can be unravelled and the frequent failures of our attempts to do so” (Ragin 1989: 19).

## ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT IN THE SOUTH CUACASUS

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The previous chapter introduced the key principles of, and operations with, QCA. These principles and operations inform the research design for this dissertation. This dissertation employs a QCA approach to the analysis of necessary and sufficient causes of ETC and the lack thereof based on causal complexity, set logic, and consistency and coverage tests.

The key research question of this dissertation is under which configurations of conditions did ethno-territorial conflicts erupt and under which configurations of conditions was conflict avoided between the ethnic minorities and the central governments in the South Caucasus between 1991 and 1993<sup>88</sup>. The first analytical step is to truncate any causally irrelevant conditions, i.e. conditions that did not vary across the universe of cases. Once the causally irrelevant conditions are truncated, the next logical step is to outline the hypotheses of the causes of ETC and not-ETC to be tested formally. The third analytical step is to search for necessary conditions of ETC and not-ETC. The fourth analytical step is to analyse the sufficient conditions of ETC and not-ETC and to outline the solution formulas. In order to ensure transparency and consistency, this dissertation employs *fsQCA* software – a free QCA software available from the University of Arizona<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>88</sup> In order to avoid selection bias, this dissertation analyses the universe of cases of compactly settled ethnic minorities of comparable size in the South Caucasus. Therefore, this dissertation analyses seven cases – the Armenians, Lezgins, and Talysh in Azerbaijan; and the Abkhaz, Armenians, Azeri, and South Ossetians in Georgia. Only three of these minorities experienced ETC – namely the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, the Abkhaz, and the South Ossetians. All other four minorities maintained peaceful relations with the centre.

<sup>89</sup> The *fsQCA* software is available for free download from the following website <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~cragin/fsQCA/software.shtml>. The authors of the software recommend the following style of referencing the program: Ragin, Charles C., Kriss A. Drass and Sean Davey. 2006. *Fuzzy-Set/Qualitative Comparative Analysis 2.0*. Tucson, Arizona: Department of Sociology, University of Arizona.

## TRUNCATING CAUSALLY IRRELEVANT CONDITIONS

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By analysing the universe of cases, this dissertation can identify some commonalities shared by all cases. This is particularly useful because it facilitates the removal of causally irrelevant conditions. The rationale behind this proposition is that if a condition does not vary across all cases, it does not exert an impact on the outcome. With this in mind, it is pertinent to look at one of the best established claims of quantitative scholarship – namely that poverty and conflict are correlated. The ethno-territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus erupted in states that were not poor, neither in the context of the post-Soviet space, nor in a global context. The following table reveals that, in 1990, the GDPs of Azerbaijan and Georgia were considerably higher than the average GDP in the poorest countries in the world, and still higher than the average GDP in the countries with low to middle income<sup>90</sup>. This understanding renders poverty, as measured by GDP<sup>91</sup>, as one of the causally irrelevant factors in the South Caucasus. Moreover, the data in Table 6 supports the proposition that GDP decline was a consequence, rather than a cause of the conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia.

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<sup>90</sup> It is important to note, that in the early 1990's the shadow economy in the South Caucasus was in bloom and it was supplementing incomes and providing opportunities for profiteering, too.

<sup>91</sup> This dissertation has already discussed the problems associated with measuring poverty with the proxy GDP. To reiterate, the relationship between proxies and theories is problematic (See Table 3). Moreover, GDP measures suffer from the level-of-analysis problem because it “measures” poverty on the state level and it is not sensitive to sub-state nuances or nuances between the centre and the periphery.

TABLE 6: DEVELOPMENT OF GDP PER CAPITA, CONSTANT 2000 \$US<sup>92</sup>

|                              | Year  |       |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|
|                              | 1990  | 1995  |
| Azerbaijan                   | 1,250 | 488   |
| Georgia                      | 1,493 | 458   |
| Low to middle income (world) | 961   | 1,035 |
| Low income (world)           | 310   | 338   |

Another particularly popular finding of both qualitative and quantitative conflict research is that mountainous terrain facilitates conflict. Yet, this finding does not hold to scrutiny when the evidence from the cases and non-cases of ETC in the South Caucasus is considered. This chapter suggests that the condition mountainous terrain can be truncated from the analysis of peace and conflict in the South Caucasus because of two reasons. First, the fact that one of the highest mountain ranges in Europe runs through the South Caucasus means that the terrain of most of the region is rough. In particular, some of the terrain of Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia is rough, which has led to the fallacy that rough terrain played an important role in the onset of ethno-territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus. However, the analysis of non-cases reveals that ETC did not erupt in all potential hot-spots. Therefore, the narrative of the South Caucasus as a “jagged land” of “mountain men and holy wars” (Griffin 2001) is misleading and it distracts from the analysis of causally relevant conditions. Second, a more careful analysis of the patterns of violence in the three cases of ETC in the South Caucasus reveals that, at the start, these conflicts revolved around major cities, not mountains (Zuercher 2007: 57). These two reasons lead to the conclusion that the

<sup>92</sup> Adapted from Zuercher, C., 2007. *The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict, and Nationhood in the Caucasus*. New York, NY: New York University Press. p.46.

mountainous terrain in the Caucasus did not play an important role in the onset of ethno-territorial conflict. Therefore, the condition mountainous terrain can be truncated from the analysis of the causally relevant conditions.

The “resource curse” hypothesis<sup>93</sup>, another popular feature of contemporary conflict research, can also be truncated from further analysis. In the South Caucasus, Azerbaijan is the only resource rich country. Yet, Azerbaijan’s resources – oil and natural gas – require expensive infrastructure in order to be extracted; therefore, they do not have the same lure for rebels as, for example, precious minerals that are far easier to extract. Moreover, the modes of extraction of resources in Azerbaijan meant that the extraction of oil and gas provided employment opportunities in the areas where the Lezgin and the Talysh minorities lived<sup>94</sup>. The high rates of employment led to higher opportunity costs for rebellion and decreased the risk of ethno-territorial conflict<sup>95</sup>. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, the proximity to natural resources was not as close and this factor “did not play a significant role” in the rise of ethno-nationalist leadership and in the conflict onset (Kaldor 2007: 157). Therefore, the “resource curse” hypothesis can be rejected when the empirical evidence from the South Caucasus is considered.

Another set of hypotheses prominent in conflict research – such as the link between federal collapse, regime change, and conflict (Hegre, Ellingsen, Gates, and Gleditsch 2001)<sup>96</sup>; and

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<sup>93</sup> The “resource curse” hypothesis holds that resource rich countries are more prone to conflict (Bannon and Collier 2003; Le Billion 2005).

<sup>94</sup> Since the Lezgin ethnic minority (BBC Monitoring Service 1996a) and the Talysh ethnic minority (Minahan 2002c: 1841) populated territories close to the resource rich Caspian Sea, they had access to Azerbaijan’s natural resources.

<sup>95</sup> The counter argument is that revenues from the employment boost were directed towards financing the growing ethno-nationalist movements, thus, increasing the likelihood of rebellion. Nevertheless, the Lezgin and the Talysh entrepreneurs of ethnic violence failed to gain popular support and to trigger conflict. Therefore, the greed for lootable resources was not a strong enough mobilising force in these two cases.

<sup>96</sup> The conditions ‘federal state collapse’ and ‘regime change’ are truncated from further analysis because they do not vary across the cases.

the link between the availability of weapons and conflict (Marsh 2007) – can be rejected. Not only do these hypotheses operate on the wrong level of analysis but they also fail to explain why ethno-territorial conflict erupted only in three of the cases, while the other four ethnic minorities avoided large-scale violence. This understanding underpins the dissertation’s position on the levels-of-analysis problem in conflict research.

To reiterate, this dissertation argues that data about conditions operating at state level is either over-aggregated or under-aggregated and fails to explain why some inter-ethnic relations in the South Caucasus turned violent while others did not. Driven by the research question, this dissertation is particularly interested in the dynamics on the sub-state level and in the diverse relations between ethnic minorities and the centre<sup>97</sup>. Therefore, this dissertation incorporates a sub-state level of analysis. Moreover, this dissertation recognises the importance of the regional and international levels of analysis because the regional actors and diaspora groups played an important role in shaping the patterns of conflict and peace in the South Caucasus. Therefore, following the innovative model of multiple levels of analysis research design advanced by Cordell and Wolff (2011: 6-10), this dissertation employs a four levels-of-analysis approach<sup>98</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> It is important to note that in recent years a trend has developed in conflict research aiming to disaggregate conflict data and to focus on the group-level or the micro-dynamics of conflict (Kalyvas 2008; Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010).

<sup>98</sup> This methodological decision is reflected in the analysis of empirical data in chapter 3.

## HYPOTHESES

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Having truncated the causally irrelevant conditions, it is pertinent to outline the hypotheses about the causally relevant conditions leading to ETC or lack thereof. This dissertation aims to test two sets of hypotheses. The first set contains three hypotheses expressed in terms of causal complexity. This dissertation hypothesises that:

(Hypothesis 1) The outcome of inter-ethnic relations in the South Caucasus cannot be explained through isolated conditions but through combinations of social, political, and economic conditions<sup>99</sup>.

(Hypothesis 2) The peaceful or conflictual outcome of inter-ethnic relations in the seven cases can be the result of different conjunctural paths<sup>100</sup>.

(Hypothesis 3) The absence of the conjunctures that lead to conflict does not explain peace ipso facto<sup>101</sup>.

The second set contains an extra seven hypotheses related to the conditions that lead to ethno-territorial conflict or the lack thereof:

(Hypothesis 4) The risk of ethno-territorial conflict is greater when the inter-ethnic cultural differences are greater.

(Hypothesis 5) The risk of ethno-territorial conflict is greater when the national conceptions of the state's titular nation and the ethnic minority verge on ethnic/exclusive national conceptions.

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<sup>99</sup> This hypothesis draws on conjunctural causation.

<sup>100</sup> This hypothesis draws on equifinality.

<sup>101</sup> This hypothesis draws on causal asymmetry.

(Hypothesis 6) The risk of ethno-territorial conflict is greater when there were previous conflicts between the ethnic minority and the centre and when these conflicts were mythified.

(Hypothesis 7) The risk of ethno-territorial conflict is greater when the size of the shadow economy is greater and when it provides lucrative opportunities for profiteering.

(Hypothesis 8) The risk of ethno-territorial conflict is greater when radical ethnic leadership exists simultaneously on the state level and on the sub-state level within the ethnic minority population.

(Hypothesis 9) The risk of ethno-territorial conflict is greater when the ethnic minority has an autonomous status and can employ the autonomous institutions and symbols to its advantage.

(Hypothesis 10) The risk of ethno-territorial conflict is greater when the ethnic minority receives military, political, or financial support from an external actor or when an external actor demonstrates preparedness to provide support if necessary.

## QCA APPLICATION

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Having truncated the causally irrelevant conditions and having outlined the hypotheses in the previous two sections, it is now pertinent to return to the overarching research question and to search for the causes of conflict and the conditions of peace in the South Caucasus. As outlined in the methodology chapter, this dissertation employs a QCA approach to causal analysis.



In their QCA guide to “good practices” that ensure “transparency,” Rihoux, Ragin, Yamasaki, and Bol (2008: 167) assert that the researcher should provide detailed information about the data used. Moreover, the researcher should display the dichotomised data in a truth table. This important information is located in Appendices 2 and 3. Therefore, the next sub-section is dedicated to the search for necessary conditions of conflict and the lack thereof, while the second sub-section is dedicated to the search for sufficient conditions. Sub-section three provides a summary of the results, and the last chapter theorises the results.

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#### SEARCHING FOR NECESSARY CONDITIONS

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Having specified and dichotomised the sets of conditions, and having displayed the truth table, it is now pertinent to run the test for necessary conditions. When searching for necessary conditions, this research design observes the principle of asymmetric causality; therefore, it conducts independent analysis for the positive<sup>102</sup> and the negative<sup>103</sup> outcomes. In order to ensure transparency and consistency, this dissertation uses the free and user-friendly *fsQCA* software available from the University of Arizona (Ragin, Drass, and Davey 2006).

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<sup>102</sup> The positive outcome is the occurrence of ETC.

<sup>103</sup> The negative outcome is the non-occurrence of ETC.

TABLE 7: ANALYSIS OF NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR THE OUTCOME ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT (ETC) – CONSISTENCY AND COVERAGE TESTS

| <b>Outcome Variable: Ethno-Territorial Conflict (ETC)</b>   |   |                    |                     |
|---|---|--------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Conditions tested</b>  | <b>Conditions Labels</b>                | <b>Consistency</b> | <b>Coverage</b>     |
| High Cultural Differences   | HCD                                     | 0.333333           | n.r. <sup>104</sup> |
| Not- High Cultural Differences  | ~HCD                                    | 0.666667           | n.r.                |
| Ethnic/Exclusive National Conception  | ENC                                     | 1.000000           | 0.600000            |
| Not- Ethnic/Exclusive National Conception   | ~ENC                                    | 0.000000           | n.r.                |
| Past Conflicts and Myths  | PCM                                     | 1.000000           | 0.750000            |
| Not- Past Conflicts and Myths   | ~PCM                                    | 0.000000           | n.r.                |
| Shadow Economy  | SE                                      | 0.666667           | 0.500000            |
| Not- Shadow Economy   | ~SE                                     | 0.333333           | n.r.                |
| Radical Ethnic Leadership   | REL                                     | 1.000000           | 0.500000            |
| Not- Radical Ethnic Leadership  | ~REL                                    | 0.000000           | n.r.                |
| Autonomous Status   | AS                                      | 1.000000           | 1.000000            |
| Not- Autonomous Status.   | ~AS                                     | 0.000000           | n.r.                |
| External Support  | ES                                      | 1.000000           | 0.750000            |
| Not- External Support   | ~ES                                     | 0.000000           | n.r.                |
| <b>Combinations of Conditions Tested (Set Intersection<sup>105</sup>)</b>   | <b>Conditions Labels (Set Notation)</b> | <b>Consistency</b> | <b>Coverage</b>     |
| Ethnic/Exclusive National Conception + Past Conflicts and Myths + Radical Ethnic Leadership + Autonomous Status + External Support        | ENC+PCM+REL+AS+ES                       | 1.000000           | 1.000000            |
| Not-( Ethnic/Exclusive National Conception + Past Conflicts and Myths + Radical Ethnic Leadership + Autonomous Status + External Support) | ~(ENC+PCM+REL+AS+ES)                    | 0.000000           | n.r.                |

<sup>104</sup> The notation n.r. denotes ‘not relevant’.

<sup>105</sup> See **Figure 5** for further details on Set Intersection.

Table 7 enables the search for necessary conditions of ETC. It displays the consistency and coverage scores calculated for each of the seven conditions and their negations relating to the outcome ethno-territorial conflict (ETC). The consistency scores reveal the “degree to which [each] condition is consistent with the statement of being a necessary condition for the outcome” (Schneider 2011: 77). As indicated in the previous chapter, a consistency score of 1 denotes perfect consistency, and any deviation from the perfect score denotes less than perfect relationship between the condition and the outcome. This research design observes a consistency threshold of 1. The coverage score is a “numerical expression of the empirical importance of a necessary condition” (ibid.: 77). A high coverage score indicates the high empirical importance of the necessary condition, while a low coverage score indicates the low empirical importance of the necessary condition<sup>106</sup>. The coverage test is only relevant for those conditions that have a high consistency score because if a condition does not qualify as necessary then its empirical importance is irrelevant.

The consistency tests indicate that there are five necessary conditions for the occurrence of ETC across the seven cases. The necessary conditions are (1) ethnic/exclusive national conception; (2) past conflicts and myths; (3) radical ethnic leadership; (4) autonomous status; and (5) external support. All other conditions do not pass the consistency test and cannot be interpreted as necessary.

In the last two decades, the study of ethnic conflict has been dominated by the greed and grievance debate. Within this debate, a number of scholars have put forward an argument about the salience of ethnic or cultural differences that can be interpreted as one of necessity (Smith 1993: 60-61). Based on the “ethnic grievance” theories, a researcher would expect the

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<sup>106</sup> The value of QCA is that it enables the analysis of theoretically important, but empirically unimportant conditions.

condition High Cultural Differences (HCD) to be necessary for the outbreak of ETC. On the other hand, a number of scholars have put forward an argument about the salience of greed that can be interpreted as one of necessity (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). Based on the “greed” theories, a researcher would expect the condition Shadow Economy (SE) to be necessary for the outbreak of ETC. Yet, both of these conditions fail to meet the consistency thresholds; therefore, neither of these two conditions can be interpreted as necessary for the onset of ETC in the South Caucasus between 1991 and 1993.

Nevertheless, five other conditions – ENC, REL, PCM, EX, and AS – display perfect consistency scores of 1 and can be interpreted as necessary conditions. What is more interesting is that the intersection set of all five sets of conditions displays a perfect consistency score, too<sup>107</sup>. This means that these five conditions and their intersection are non-trivial necessary conditions for the occurrence of ETC. This finding supports the conjunctural causation hypothesis (Hypothesis 1) that suggests ETC in the South Caucasus cannot be explained through isolated conditions but through combinations of social, political, and economic conditions.

Having discussed the necessary conditions of ETC, it is pertinent to search for the necessary conditions of the lack of ETC (~ETC).

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<sup>107</sup> See Figure 5 for further details on Set Intersection.

TABLE 8: ANALYSIS OF NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR THE OUTCOME LACK OF ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT (~ETC) – CONSISTENCY AND COVERAGE TESTS

| Outcome Variable: Not-Ethno-Territorial Conflict (~ETC) |                    |             |          |
|---|--------------------|-------------|----------|
| Conditions tested                                       | Conditions' Labels | Consistency | Coverage |
| High Cultural Differences                               | HCD                | 0.250000    | n.r.     |
| Not- High Cultural Differences                          | ~HCD               | 0.750000    | n.r.     |
| Ethnic/Exclusive National Conception                    | ENC                | 0.500000    | n.r.     |
| Not- Ethnic/Exclusive National Conception               | ~ENC               | 0.500000    | n.r.     |
| Past Conflicts and Myths                                | PCM                | 0.250000    | n.r.     |
| Not- Past Conflicts and Myths                           | ~PCM               | 0.750000    | n.r.     |
| Shadow Economy  | SE                 | 0.500000    | n.r.     |
| Not- Shadow Economy                                     | ~SE                | 0.500000    | n.r.     |
| Radical Ethnic Leadership                               | REL                | 0.750000    | n.r.     |
| Not- Radical Ethnic Leadership                          | ~REL               | 0.250000    | n.r.     |
| Autonomous Status                                       | AS                 | 0.000000    | n.r.     |
| Not- Autonomous Status.                                 | ~AS                | 1.000000    | 1.000000 |
| External Support  | ES                 | 0.250000    | n.r.     |
| Not- External Support                                   | ~ES                | 0.750000    | n.r.     |

Table 8 reveals that the lack of autonomous status was the only necessary condition for avoiding ETC in the South Caucasus between 1991 and 1993. This finding should be taken with a pinch of salt. Although there were autonomous regions in the South Caucasus, such as Ajaria and Nakhchivan, that did not experience ethno-territorial conflict, these two regions were not populated by ethnic minorities. The population of Ajaria does not form a distinct ethnic group per se. In the time span of the investigation, it was not considered to be a distinct ethnic group within Georgia because the Ajarians were recognised by the Georgian elites as a sub-ethnic Georgian group, and because many Ajarians identified themselves as Georgians both civically and ethnically. The population of Nakhchivan also cannot be considered an ethnic minority because more than 90 per cent of the population of Nakhchivan was ethnically

Azeri and, therefore, they were not a minority within Azerbaijan. Therefore, the finding that the lack of autonomy was a necessary condition for the lack of ETC stands, because all of the **ethnic minorities** under investigation, who did not experience ethno-territorial conflict, did not have an autonomous status.

Moreover, the findings from the search for necessary conditions of the lack of ETC tests corroborate the causal asymmetry hypothesis (Hypothesis 3), because they reveal that even if the presence of a number of conditions is necessary for the presence of ETC, the absence of these conditions is not necessary for the absence of ETC. This is an important finding because the asymmetric nature of the necessary conditions is often overlooked and no separate analysis is conducted for the occurrence of conflict and the lack of conflict.

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#### ANALYSING THE SUFFICIENT CONDITIONS

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The next step in the QCA application is the analysis of the sufficient conditions for ETC and not-ETC with the aid of the *fsQCA* software.

Table 9 reveals the product of the truth table algorithm (Ragin 2008c: 44-5) displaying the outcome, ETC, and the seven conditions, HCD, ENC, PCM, SE, REL, AS and ES. Since seven conditions are integrated in the analysis, it is not surprising that most of the cases of ethnic minorities are analytically different and occupy different truth table rows (i.e. rows 1, 4, and 5 describe one case only). However, some cases are analytically identical and occupy

the same truth table row (i.e. rows 2 and 3<sup>108</sup>). The columns “Case Label” and “Ethnic Minority” reveal which empirical cases the rows of the truth table represent. The column “Path” lists all the five possible paths leading either to the outcome ETC (Outcome score 1) or to the outcome not-ETC (Outcome score 0). Each path can be interpreted as a sufficient condition for the occurrence of ETC (if the value of the “Outcome” column corresponding to the path is 1) or for the non-occurrence of ETC (if the value of the “Outcome” column corresponding to the path is 0). The fact that there are multiple causal paths leading to the two outcomes suggests that equifinality can be observed.

TABLE 9: TRUTH TABLE ALGORITHM – THE PATHS THAT LED TO ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS<sup>109</sup>

| Row | Path | Conditions |     |     |    |     |    |    | Outcome | Case Labels | Ethnic Minority            |
|-----|------|------------|-----|-----|----|-----|----|----|---------|-------------|----------------------------|
|     |      | HCD        | ENC | PCM | SE | REL | AS | ES | ETC     |             |                            |
| 1   | p1   | 1          | 1   | 1   | 0  | 1   | 1  | 1  | 1       | NKA         | Nagorno Karabakh Armenians |
| 2   | p2   | 0          | 1   | 1   | 1  | 1   | 1  | 1  | 1       | ABK<br>SO   | Abkhazia<br>South Ossetia  |
| 3   | p3   | 0          | 0   | 0   | 0  | 1   | 0  | 0  | 0       | LEZ<br>TAL  | Lezgins<br>Talysh          |
| 4   | p4   | 0          | 1   | 1   | 1  | 1   | 0  | 1  | 0       | ARG         | Armenians in Georgia       |
| 5   | p5   | 1          | 1   | 0   | 1  | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0       | AZG         | Azeri in Georgia           |

<sup>108</sup> Consider row 2 for example. It shows that the cases of the Lezgin and Talysh minorities are analytically identical. This is not surprising considering all the common features these two cases share.

<sup>109</sup> A note on notation: The value of 1 in the truth table means that a particular condition or an outcome is present, large, or high. The value of 0 in the truth table means that a particular condition or an outcome is either not present, small, or low.

Table 9 already holds the most complex and precise solution to the question under which configurations of conditions did ETC erupt and under which configurations of conditions was ETC avoided in the seven cases of ethnic minorities living in the South Caucasus between 1991 and 1993. Rows 1 and 2 can be interpreted as the two causal paths containing the sufficient conditions leading to ethno-territorial conflict. Rows 3, 4, and 5 can be interpreted as the three causal paths containing the sufficient conditions leading to the lack of ethno-territorial conflict. The following equations represent the complex solution terms for the outcome conflict (ETC) and the outcome not-ETC (~ETC) that can be obtained from this table:

$$\text{HCD} * \text{ENC} * \text{PCM} * \sim \text{SE} * \text{REL} * \text{AS} * \text{ES} +$$

$$\sim \text{HCD} * \text{ENC} * \text{PCM} * \text{SE} * \text{REL} * \text{AS} * \text{ES} \rightarrow \text{ETC}$$

$$\sim \text{HCD} * \sim \text{ENC} * \sim \text{PCM} * \sim \text{SE} * \text{REL} * \sim \text{AS} * \sim \text{ES} +$$

$$\sim \text{HCD} * \text{ENC} * \text{PCM} * \text{SE} * \text{REL} * \sim \text{AS} * \text{ES} +$$

$$\text{HCD} * \text{ENC} * \sim \text{PCM} * \text{SE} * \sim \text{REL} * \sim \text{AS} * \sim \text{ES} \rightarrow \sim \text{ETC}$$

This complex solution terms can be represented in a better format. Figures 7 and 8 are constructed with the aim to provide a more comprehensive visual representation of the solution term. Figure 7 displays the two paths of configurations of conditions leading to ETC, and Figure 8 displays the three paths of configurations of conditions leading to the lack of ETC.



FIGURE 7 THE PATHS TO ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT



FIGURE 8: THE PATHS TO AVOIDING ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT



How to read the solution formulas in these figures? Consider Path 1 in Figure 7. Path 1 describes an analytical case of an ethnic minority that has been given autonomous status (AS); it has an ethnic/exclusive national conception (ENC); it has experienced past conflicts and it has mythified these experiences (PCM); it has radical ethnic leaders (REL); it has external support or the promise of external support (ES); it has high cultural differences when compared to the titular nation of the state (HCD); and it does not have access to a large shadow economy (~SE). The empirical case of the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians fits this

analytical description (see row 1 of Table 9). Now consider Path 2 in Figure 7 for another example. Path 2 describes an analytical case of an ethnic minority that has been given autonomous status (AS); it has an ethnic/exclusive national conception (ENC); it has experienced past conflicts and it has mythified these experiences (PCM); it has radical ethnic leaders (REL); it has external support or the promise of external support (ES); it does not have high cultural differences when compared to the titular nation of the state (~HCD); and it has access to a large shadow economy (SE). The empirical cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia fit this analytical description (see row 2 of Table 9).

The three paths to avoiding ethno-territorial conflicts displayed in Figure 8 can be read following the aforementioned pattern. In Figure 8, Path 1 describes the empirical cases of the Lezgin and Talysh ethnic minorities (see row 3 of Table 9); Path 2 describes the empirical case of the Armenian ethnic minority in Georgia (see row 4 of Table 9); and Path 3 describes the empirical cases of the Azeri ethnic minority in Georgia (see row 3 of Table 9).

The next logical question is how to interpret these solution terms and paths. This section has already suggested that each path can be interpreted as a combination of sufficient conditions leading to ETC or to the lack thereof. Nevertheless, this claim should not be made lightly. In order to ensure analytical rigour, the consistency and coverage scores for each path should be verified. In doing so, a consistency threshold of 1 is observed. The results of the robustness checks are recorded in Tables 10 and 11.

TABLE 10: GOODNESS-OF-FIT TEST FOR THE SUFFICIENT CONDITIONS FOR ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT

| Path   | Configuration of conditions              | Outcome | Consistency | Coverage | Case Labels |
|--------|--|---------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| Path 1 | HCD * ENC * PCM * ~SE *<br>REL * AS * ES | ETC     | 1.000000    | 0.333333 | NK          |
| Path 2 | ~HCD * ENC * PCM * SE *<br>REL * AS * ES | ETC     | 1.000000    | 0.666666 | ABK<br>SO   |

The results in Table 10 reveal that Path 1 and Path 2 have consistency scores of 1, i.e. perfect consistency. Path 1 covers one of the three cases of ethno-territorial conflict, namely the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and has a consistency score of 0.333333. Path 2 covers two of the three cases of ethno-territorial conflict, namely conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and has a consistency score of 0.666666. The consistency and coverage scores reveal that Path 1 and Path 2 can be interpreted as sufficient configurations of conditions that stand up to the goodness-of-fit test (Grofman and Schneider 2009: 665-667).

TABLE 11 GOODNESS-OF-FIT TEST FOR THE SUFFICIENT CONDITIONS FOR THE LACK OF ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT

| Path   | Configuration of conditions                        | Outcome | Consistency | Coverage | Case Labels |
|--------|--|---------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| Path 1 | ~ HCD * ~ENC * ~ PCM * ~<br>SE * REL * ~ AS * ~ ES | ~ ETC   | 1.000000    | 0.500000 | LEZ<br>TAL  |
| Path 2 | ~ HCD * ENC * PCM * SE *<br>REL * ~ AS * ES        | ~ ETC   | 1.000000    | 0.250000 | ARG         |
| Path 3 | HCD * ENC * ~ PCM * SE<br>*~ REL * ~ AS * ~ ES     | ~ETC    | 1.000000    | 0.250000 | AZG         |

The results in Table 11 reveal that Paths 1, 2, and 3 have consistency scores of 1, i.e. perfect consistency. Path 1 covers two of the four cases of negative outcome, namely the Lezgin and Talysh minorities in Azerbaijan, and has a consistency score of 0.50000. Path 2 covers one of the four cases of negative outcome, namely the Armenian minority in Georgia, and has a consistency score of 0.250000. Path 3 covers one of the four cases of negative outcome, namely the Azeri minority in Georgia, and has a consistency score of 0.250000. The consistency and coverage scores reveal that all three paths can be interpreted as sufficient configurations of conditions that stand up to robustness checks.

## SUMMARISING THE RESULTS

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This chapter revealed that a significant number of conditions championed in conflict research are causally irrelevant when the empirical evidence from the South Caucasus from the universe of cases of compactly settled ethnic minorities of comparable size is considered. These causally irrelevant factors are – poverty, unemployment, resource curse, federal collapse, regime change, state weakness, availability of arms, and rough terrain. These factors have been rendered causally irrelevant because they suffer from the level-of-analysis problem or do not vary across the cases and, therefore, do not exert influence on the outcome under investigation.

All causally relevant factors were integrated in the QCA analysis. The QCA analysis corroborated the first three Hypotheses. First, it revealed that ETC and the lack thereof cannot be explained through individual conditions, but through combinations of conditions pertaining to the motives, means, and opportunities of the warring parties. Second, it revealed that there

are two conjunctural paths to ETC and three conjunctural paths to the lack of ETC. Third, it revealed that the conjunctural causes of conflict and the conjunctural causes of peace in the South Caucasus are different and analysing them separately provides interesting insights.

One particularly interesting finding of the QCA analysis is that the two conjunctural paths leading to ethno-territorial conflict share significant similarities, but differ from one another by the presence or the absence of two conditions – namely high cultural differences (HCD) and access to a large shadow economy (SE)<sup>110</sup>. Path 1 reveals that the ETC over Nagorno-Karabakh erupted in an environment featuring high cultural differences and relatively small shadow economy among other conditions. Path 2 reveals that the ETCs over Abkhazia and South Ossetia erupted in an environment featuring lower cultural differences and relatively big shadow economy among other conditions.

Another particularly interesting finding of the QCA analysis is that the only condition which distinguishes the conjunctural path leading to the lack of ETC between the Armenian minority and the Georgian minority, and the conjunctural path leading to the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, is autonomy (AS).

These findings are discussed in the next section.

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<sup>110</sup> See Figure 7 for a visual representation of the two paths leading to ETC.

## THEORISING THE RESULTS

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*“There are places where it makes more sense to partition live populations than to maintain national unity around a mounting toll of corpses.”*

*– An anonymous European Diplomat 2010<sup>111</sup>*

What do the findings from the QCA analysis reveal about the causes of ethno-territorial conflict and the conditions of inter-ethnic peace in the South Caucasus between 1991 and 1993? Do the findings offer any new insights that can advance scholarship and policy? The aim of this section is to answer these questions.

The analysis of the causes of ethno-territorial conflict in the South Caucasus reveals that the struggles over Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia shared a number of commonalities. They erupted in autonomous regions where radical ethnic leaders had strong external support. Moreover, the three conflicts erupted in contexts that were characterised by exclusive ethnic national conceptions and memories of past conflicts surrounded by myths of ethnic kinship and ethnic struggles. Yet the causal commonalities finish here. The conflict over Nagorno Karabakh was driven by strong cultural differences and to a lesser extent by the shadow economy, while the conflicts over Abkhazia and South Ossetia were driven by the lure of the shadow economy and to a lesser extent cultural differences. These findings provide interesting insights into conflict research in which “ethnic grievance” narratives are typically pitted against “greed” narratives. It infers that both strands of scholarship contribute to the understanding of the complexity of the multiple causes and multiple paths leading to conflict, and they should be integrated in synergy rather than competing against each other. Therefore, it infers that both “greed” AND “grievance” are important features of comprehensive conflict

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<sup>111</sup> Quoted in Beary (2010).

analysis. Zartman (2011: 299) offers an eloquent description of the value of the aforementioned proposition. He suggests “social science inquiry hangs on a pendulum. New explanations emerge and attract the momentum of scholarship, lining up true believers and drawing the fire of true doubters, until a counterproposition appears and the pendulum swings in a new direction. In the dialectic of scholarship, by the time a synthesis is made out of the thesis and its antithesis, a new thesis arises based on some other parameter and the pendulum swings in a new direction. The movement encourages exclusivist and exaggerated claims in order to draw attention to the new explanatory angle” (Zartman 2011: 299). The value of this research is that it incorporates a variety of explanatory angles into a narrative that champions multiple conjunctural causation rather than “exclusivist and exaggerated claims.”

Moreover, the analysis of the causes of the lack of ethno-territorial conflict reveals that three of the ethnic minorities – namely the Lezgin and Talysh in Azerbaijan, and the Armenians in Georgia – had radical ethnic leaders among other factors. The radical Lezgin organisation, Sadval, unsuccessfully proclaimed the independence of the Lezgin Republic in 1991 (Minahan 2002b: 1088). Then in 1993, Sadval arguably led a rally “in the rayon centre of Kusary in Azerbaijan, in which 70,000 people took part” and “six people were killed”<sup>112</sup> by the Azerbaijani OMON forces (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts 1993b; 1993c). Yet, even after the “Lezgin massacre” (ibid.), no full-scale conflict was observed<sup>113</sup>. Furthermore, Talysh radical ethnic leadership, personified by Alikram Humbatov, also failed to incite ethnic conflict even after he proclaimed the independence of the Talysh-Mugan Republic in 1993 (Minahan 2002c: 1841) and allegedly organised rallies in Lenkoran (BBC Summary of

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<sup>112</sup> It is interesting that six people were killed during the Kusary rally. Cordell and Wolff (2011: 47) point out that six people, exactly the same number, were killed in the “March on Tskhinvali” in 1989 – an event that is often cited as a trigger for the ethno-territorial conflict in South Ossetia.

<sup>113</sup> Perhaps one reason for this is that the Lezgin ethnic leadership was split between the radical Sadval and the more moderate Samur organizations. This suggests that even if strong ethnic leadership exists, but it is splintered in radical and moderate groups, this could diminish the proliferation of ethnic radicalism, and as a corollary it could diminish the risk of ethno-territorial conflict.

World Broadcasts 1993e). Likewise, the Javakhk radical leadership of the Armenians in Georgia failed to incite conflict and did not interfere when Shevardnadze sent the Mkhedrioni – “a paramilitary militia affiliated with the standing National Guard but subordinated to direct presidential control” – to the Akhalitskhe district, one of the two districts within Georgia populated by Armenians (Giragosian 2001). The failure of radical ethnic elites to amass large-scale support and to incite ethnic conflict contradicts the primordialist understanding that the entrepreneurs of ethnic violence can manipulate ethnic identities boundlessly, can mobilise popular support easily, and can recruit rebels for their “cause” effectively.

Furthermore, a comparison between the conjunctural paths that describe the inter-ethnic relationships between the Abkhazian, South Ossetian, and Armenian minorities and the Georgian majority reveals that they only differ by one causal condition – namely autonomous status<sup>114</sup>. This finding is not surprising considering the universe of cases under investigation, but it is not inconsequential either. The understanding that autonomy facilitates ethno-territorial conflict in complex environments such as the ones in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the lack of autonomy hinders ethno-territorial conflict in notably similar environment, such as the one where the Armenian minority in Georgia lives, suggests that further attention needs to be paid to this factor. Why does autonomy have such a strong impact on the outcomes under investigation? This dissertation argues that the defining characteristics of autonomy interact with the other causes of conflict discussed in this chapter and augment the risk of conflict. One of the most obvious definitive features of regional autonomy is the institution of borders. For autonomous ethnic minorities, the outline of the borders constitutes another tangible and credible symbol that perpetuates their identity and separates them physically and symbolically from the ethnic other. Another definitive feature of autonomy is

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<sup>114</sup> See Path 1 in Figure 7 and Path 2 in Figure 8 for a visual representation.



institutional design. Autonomous regions typically have state-like institutions with formal chains of command. This facilitates the rise of strong unified ethnic leadership and provides such leadership with a legitimate platform from which to disseminate ethnic narratives of kinship and ethnic struggles, thus, increasing group cohesion, willingness, and capacity for collective action. Moreover, autonomous regions typically have control over language legislation and school curriculums. This is particularly important considering the proposition that the education system is one of the prime facilitators in moulding ethnic identities and recruiting future rebels. Furthermore, autonomous regions are more capable of channelling external support. As a corollary, external actors are more likely to provide political, financial, and military support to autonomous minorities. Therefore, the multi-faceted nature of regional autonomy contributes to the establishment of a context in which the risk of ethno-territorial conflict is greater.

What are the implications of these findings for scholarship and policy? The search for the causes of conflict and the conditions of peace is the symbolic search for the Holy Grail in security scholarship. A number of scholars in the field of security have suggested that regional autonomy is the Holy Grail. In the words of Meyer (2000), autonomy is the “cure-all prescription” for ethno-territorial conflict; in the words of Gurr (1994:366), it is the “effective antidote for ethnopolitical wars of secession.” However, the findings of this dissertation suggest that, under certain conditions, regional autonomy augments rather than curtails the risk of ethno-territorial conflict. This understanding has important implications for security policy and practice. It suggests that autonomy could not be the antidote or the cure-all prescription for ethno-territorial conflict. In fact, it leads to the realisation that there could be no unique approach to engaging with ethno-territorial conflicts. Indeed, ethno-territorial conflicts are inherently complex social phenomena produced by the interaction of multiple

conjectural causes. This is not to say that the complexity of ethno-territorial conflicts renders them unintelligible and unmanageable. Rather, it suggests that understanding them and managing them requires tackling the plethora of causes and underlying dynamics systematically.

## CONCLUSION

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The aim of this dissertation was to analyse the configurations of conditions under which ethno-territorial conflicts erupted, and configurations of conditions under which inter-ethnic peace was preserved between the ethnic minorities and the central government in the South Caucasus between 1991 and 1993. This dissertation identified seven compactly settled ethnic minorities of comparative size. In order to avoid selection bias, this dissertation engaged with the universe of cases. The aim to analyse an intermediate number of cases and an intermediate number of causal conditions rendered standard qualitative and quantitative methods unsuitable for this research. Therefore, this dissertation engaged with an innovative methodological approach that bridges the qualitative-quantitative divide – namely Qualitative Comparative Analysis. The application of the QCA approach was aided by the freely available and user friendly *fsQCA* software. The benefit of using the *fsQCA* software is that it ensures transparency and replicability of the results.

The causal analysis that this dissertation conducted was completed in two stages. In the first stage, the causally irrelevant conditions that do not vary across the cases or that suffer from the level-of-analysis problem were truncated. In the second stage, the causally relevant conditions were integrated into a formal analysis of the necessary and sufficient conditions of ETC and the lack thereof. The results of the formal analysis revealed that the occurrence of ethno-territorial conflict in the South Caucasus can be explained in terms of two conjunctural paths, while the lack of ethno-territorial conflict in the region can be explained in terms of three conjunctural paths.

The value of this research is that it maintained the complexity of the causal explanations in each conjunctural path. Rather than championing individual determinants of ethno-territorial conflict and inter-ethnic peace, this dissertation incorporated a variety of explanatory angles into a narrative that championed multiple conjunctural causation.

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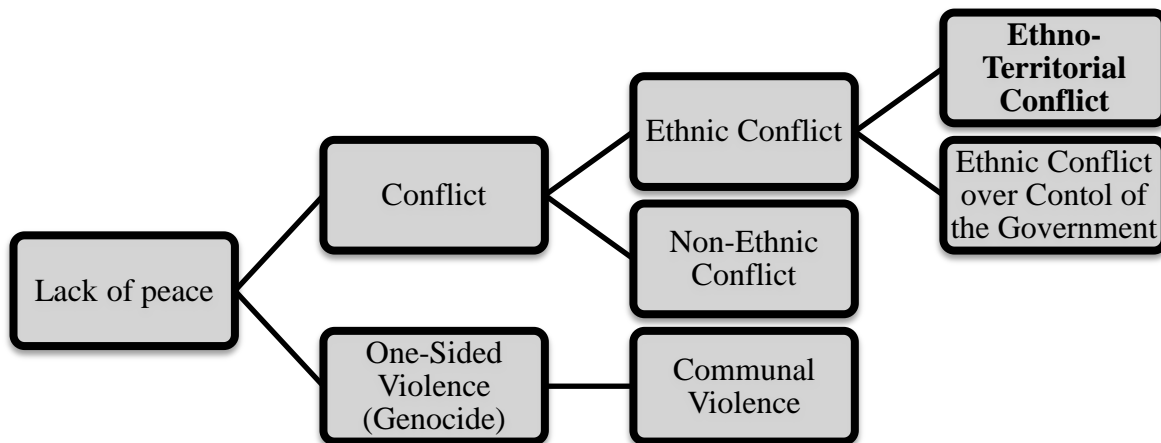
## APPENDIX 1 – A TYPOLOGY OF CONFLICT

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The following diagram presents the typology of conflict developed for the purposes of this dissertation. It follows the logic of Cordell and Wolff's (2011: 4-5) conflict typology. Other explicit conflict typologies have been developed by the Correlates of War project (Sarkees 2010), the Upsalla Conflict Data Program (Gleditsch 2011), and the Political Instability Task Force (Marshall, Gurr, and Harff 2009).

See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the logic of conflict typology.

FIGURE 9: A TYPOLOGY OF CONFLICT





## APPENDIX 2 – DATA ON THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

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There is no single database that contains the relevant and valid variables pertaining to inter-ethnic relations in the South Caucasus. Therefore, this section draws data from a variety of sources. The aim of this section is to use disaggregated data with cross-level validity. In particular, the data pertaining to the role of cultural differences, ethno-national conceptions, radical ethnic leaders, and past conflicts and myths, and autonomous status employed in this dissertation is highly disaggregated and it operates on the state and the sub-state level. The data on external support operates on the sub-state, the regional, and the international level; and the data on shadow economy operates on the state level.

### DATA ON MOTIVES FOR ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT

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The data pertaining to the motives for ethno-territorial conflict in the South Caucasus accounts for the following conditions: (a) high cultural differences; (b) ethnic/exclusive national conception; (c) past conflicts and myths; and (d) shadow economy.

The qualitative data on high cultural differences (HCD), ethnic/exclusive national conception (ENC), and past conflicts and myths (PCM) is extracted from Cornell (2002: 111-124). The advantage of employing Cornell's (ibid.: 111-124) data is that it is disaggregated and accounts for the differences between each ethnic group and its respective majority ethnic group<sup>115</sup>.

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<sup>115</sup> See Appendix 3 for the dichotomisation of all data.

The HCD<sup>116</sup> data is highly disaggregated and accounts for intra-group differences<sup>117</sup>. The data takes into consideration the religious and linguistic structure of the ethnic minorities. It is important to note that some minorities were not homogenous and different sections within them shared different religions. This could have a two-fold effect. On the one hand, religious splits within minorities arguably made the members of the ethnic group more tolerant to the members of other religions and by extension other ethnic groups. On the other hand, the religious splits in some of the ethnic minorities such as Abkhazia meant that a proportion of the minority shared religious beliefs with the majority. These effects reduced the religious differences. Moreover, the Soviet legacy meant that many ethnic groups shared Russian as a common language – this factor reduced the degree of linguistic differences. Last but not least, while the Lezgin and the Talysh spoke some degree of Azeri; the minorities in Georgia generally did not speak Georgian. This factor increased the linguistic differences in Georgia. These specificities are reflected in the membership scores.

The ENC data reflects the degree to which the national conceptions of the centre and the ethnic minority resemble an exclusive ethnic national conception. The disaggregated data enables the analysis of the deviations of the levels of inclusion of minorities. Some minorities are included in the state's national conception, while others are not. Moreover, some minorities align their civil identities with the identity of the centre, while others do not. This measure accounts for the levels of social inclusion, integration, and intermarriage on a sub-state level and on a nation-state level.

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<sup>116</sup> Religion and language are two of the most important tangible symbols of ethnicity that can be employed as a “resource” by the shrewd entrepreneurs of violence in order to catalyse conflict.

<sup>117</sup> The data takes into consideration the religious and linguistic structure of the minorities. Some minorities are not homogenous and different sections within them share different religions.

The PMC data simultaneously captures the history of inter-ethnic relations<sup>118</sup> and the role of ethnic narratives, myths, and perceptions<sup>119</sup>. The PMC data is sensitive to the fact that some degree of communal conflict existed among all the ethnic groups in the South Caucasus. However, the PMC data prioritises the importance of large scale previous conflicts.

The data on shadow economy (SE) is extracted from Zuercher (2007: 47). It measures the estimated proportion of the shadow economy to GDP. This measure operates on the state level. While it would be better to use a disaggregated measure that operates on the sub-state level, such data is not available. At this point it is important to make a general note about data pertaining to economic factors. Hard data on economic factors from the South Caucasus for the years under investigation is hard to come by<sup>120</sup> because of two interrelated reasons. Firstly, in the final years of the Soviet Union, the Soviet government's capacity was diminishing, including its capacity to collect official statistics. Secondly, in the first few years of the existence of the new independent states in the South Caucasus, each state set out to create its own statistical office making "fundamental changes to [the Soviet] tools and methods" and using "alternative data" (Geostat 2012). As a result, there is a lack of data from the region for the years under investigation, including data on the opportunity cost of violence and on the levels of unemployment<sup>121</sup>. Therefore, these two conditions have to be excluded from the analysis.

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<sup>118</sup> In other words, the PMC data accounts for the episodes of conflict or the lack thereof.

<sup>119</sup> The operationalisation of this variable depends on understanding the histories and especially the instrumental historiographies that dominated the social and political discourse in the South Caucasus.

<sup>120</sup> The Quality of Governance Dataset that compiles comparative data from a great range of other datasets contains no hard data on economic factors from the South Caucasus for the years under investigation (Teorell, Samanni, Holmberg, and Rothstein. 2011).

<sup>121</sup> Speculations that the high levels of unemployment in the South Caucasus led to ethno-territorial conflicts are questionable, because the Soviet legacy meant that unemployment was generally low. There was hidden unemployment in some of underdeveloped regions; however, it was *hidden* per definitionem and it was never recorded. Therefore, it cannot be measured robustly. Furthermore, Zuercher (2007: 47) explains that "it was only with the violent escalation of conflict that unemployment ... became a mass phenomenon" in the South Caucasus, which suggests that unemployment was not a cause of conflict but a consequence.

## DATA ON THE MEANS OF ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT

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The data on means of ETC in the South Caucasus accounts for conditions: (e) radical ethnic leadership and (f) autonomy, and it is extracted from Cornell (2002: 111-124).

The REL data accounts for the presence of radical ethno-nationalist leadership both on the state level and on the sub-state level. The data is built on the premise that “radical leadership in the central government is unlikely to lead to conflict unless a challenging radical movement emerges among the minority population” (Cornell 2002: 120). Moreover, the REL data carries an analytical distinction between the presence of radical leadership and the presence of popular support for radical leadership.

The data on autonomy reveals whether ethnic minorities had a degree of regional autonomy or not. Arguably, this data is easy to code because it is a well-known fact that that Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia were autonomous regions, while the regions populated by the other four minorities under investigation did not have autonomous status.

Furthermore, since this dissertation has argued that the mountainous terrain and the availability of weapons in the South Caucasus are not causally relevant conditions, this subsection does not collate specific information about these two conditions.

## DATA ON THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ETHNO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICT

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The data on external support (ES) is extracted from Cornell (2002: 122-123). It reveals the degree of military support from outside available to each ethnic minority. External support can vary by type and degree – it can range from tacit diplomatic support to full scale military

intervention. The data on external support that this dissertation relies on looks at the availability of political or military support, or the overt promise of such support.

Specific data on the existence of ethnic kin is not collated because all the ethnic minorities under investigation had ethnic kin. Moreover, data on the atypically low governmental capabilities is not collated because this condition did not vary across the cases considering the recent collapse of the Soviet Union and the internal struggles that shaped the political environment within Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The data described in this section is summarised in the following section in a truth table. All ensuing analysis relies on this data.

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THE TRUTH TABLE WITH DATA FROM THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

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TABLE 12: TRUTH TABLE – THE COMBINATIONS OF CONDITIONS LEADING TO ETC IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS<sup>122</sup>

|            |                            |            | Outcome | Conditions <sup>123</sup> |     |     |    |     |    |    | Truth Table Row |
|------------|----------------------------|------------|---------|---------------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----------------|
| Country    | Ethnic Minority            | Case Label | ETC     | HCD                       | ENC | PCM | SE | REL | AS | ES |                 |
| Azerbaijan | Lezgins                    | LEZ        | 0       | 0                         | 0   | 0   | 0  | 1   | 0  | 0  | 1               |
|            | Nagorno Karabakh Armenians | NKA        | 1       | 1                         | 1   | 1   | 0  | 1   | 1  | 1  | 2               |
|            | Talysh                     | TAL        | 0       | 0                         | 0   | 0   | 0  | 1   | 0  | 0  | 3               |
| Georgia    | Abkhaz                     | ABK        | 1       | 0                         | 1   | 1   | 1  | 1   | 1  | 1  | 4               |
|            | Armenians                  | ARG        | 0       | 0                         | 1   | 1   | 1  | 1   | 0  | 1  | 5               |
|            | Azeri                      | AZG        | 0       | 1                         | 1   | 0   | 1  | 0   | 0  | 0  | 6               |
|            | South Ossetians            | SO         | 1       | 0                         | 1   | 1   | 1  | 1   | 1  | 1  | 7               |
|            |                            |            |         |                           |     |     |    |     |    |    | 8 –             |
|            |                            |            |         |                           |     |     |    |     |    |    | 128             |

A critical look into the number of cases and the number of conditions under investigation foretells the “omnipresent problem of limited diversity” (Schneider 2011: 67). Limited diversity is not the exception but the norm in social sciences. Since there is no empirical data

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<sup>122</sup> A note on notation: The value of 1 in the truth table means that a particular condition or an outcome is present, large, or high. The value of 0 in the truth table means that a particular condition or an outcome is either not present, small, or low.

<sup>123</sup> The conditions are labeled with the labels outlined earlier in this section. HCD stands for High Cultural Differences. ENC stands for Ethnic/Exclusive National Conception. REL stands for Radical Ethnic Leadership. PCM stands for Past Conflicts and Myths. ES stands for External Support. SE stands for Shadow Economy. AS stands for Autonomous Status.

to fill in rows 8 to 128<sup>124</sup> in the truth table, no inferences will be made about the other configurations of conditions after row 7.

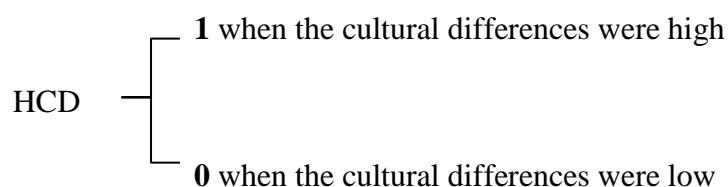
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<sup>124</sup> The truth table with seven conditions has  $2^k$  conditions, and since  $k=7$ , this truth table has  $2^7=128$  possible configurations of conditions.

## APPEXNDIX 3 - DATA DICHOTOMISATION

This Appendix outlines the dichotomisation procedure for each of the conditions identified in the research design.

### Condition (a): High Cultural Differences (HCD)



Data Source: Cornell (2002: 111-113)

Remarks: The data takes into consideration the religious<sup>125</sup> and linguistic<sup>126</sup> structure of the minorities. It is important to note that some minorities were not homogenous and different sections within them shared different religions. This could have a two-fold effect. On the one hand, religious splits within minorities could make the members of the ethnic group more tolerant to the members of other religions and by extension other ethnic groups. On the other hand, the religious splits in some of the cases such as Abkhazia for example mean that a proportion of the minority shares a religious belonging with the majority. These effects reduce the religious differences. Moreover, the Soviet legacy meant that many ethnic groups shared Russian as a common language – this factor reduces the degree of linguistic differences. Last but not least, while the Lezgin and the Talysh spoke some degree of Azeri; the minorities in Georgia generally did not speak Georgian. These specificities are reflected in the dichotomised scores.

Even with these remarks in mind, assigning the membership scores for the HCD set is particularly challenging. When outlining the best practices for assigning the membership scores, Ragin (2008: 77) acknowledges that it is “often not possible to select an indisputable ... threshold.” In order to reduce the vulnerability of the assigned thresholds, Cornell’s (2002: 2012) indications of religious and linguistic differences are followed closely. Cornell’s (2002) work on the South Caucasus is seminal and its validity is established. Therefore, this dissertation uses Cornell’s indication of how to dichotomise the highly complex data on cultural differences.

According to Cornell’s coding, the Azeri in Georgia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians receive a membership value of 1 because they are characterised by high cultural differences. The Armenians, South Ossetians and Abkhazians in Georgia and the Talysh and Lezgins in Azerbaijan receive a membership value of 0 because they are characterised by low cultural differences.

<sup>125</sup> High religious differences are greater than sectarian differences because “the importance of sectarian differences have to a large extent been reduced by the impact of Soviet secularization” (Cornell 2002: 112).

<sup>126</sup> High linguistic differences are “larger differences than of dialectal character” (Cornell 2002: 112)



### Condition (b): Ethnic National Conception (ENC)

ENC =  $\begin{cases} 1 & \text{when the national conception was ethnic and exclusive} \\ 0 & \text{when the national conception was neither ethnic, nor exclusive} \end{cases}$

Data Source: Cornell (2002: 113-115)

Remarks: This condition takes into account the relationship between the national conception of each minority and their respective majority. On the state level, the national conception (of the majority) can be either civic and inclusive, or ethnic and exclusive. Likewise, on the sub-state level, the national conception can be either civic and inclusive, or ethnic and exclusive.

In the period between 1991 and 1993, Georgia's national conception was predominantly ethnic and exclusive in relation to most of their minorities.

In the period between 1991 and 1993, Azerbaijan's national conception was predominantly civil and inclusive in relation to all other minorities but the Armenians. The relations with the Armenians were complicated by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that erupted as early as 1989. Moreover, the Azerbaijani national conception excludes the Armenians on religious grounds.

On the sub-state level, the national conceptions of the Abkhaz, South Ossetians, and Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians were clearly ethnic and exclusive. Therefore, they are assigned a membership score of 1.

The Azeri and Armenians in Georgia also had ethnic national conceptions and receive a membership score of 1.

The Lezgins, and Talysh had a civil and inclusive nationalist conception. Many Lezgins and Talysh had an Azerbaijani civic identity<sup>127</sup>. They are assigned a membership score of 0.

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<sup>127</sup> Between 1991 and 1993, the label Azerbaijani carried a civic and territorial meaning. In contrast, the term Azeri carried an ethnic meaning.

### Condition (c): Radical Ethnic Leadership (REL)

REL =  $\begin{cases} 1 & \text{when ENL was present on the state and the sub-state level} \\ 0 & \text{when ENL was not present on either the state or on the sub-state level} \end{cases}$

Data Source: Cornell (2002: 119-122)

Remarks: Cornell (2002: 119) conceptualises the term radical ethnic leadership as a type of ethnic leadership, which relies on a “rhetoric promoting the ethnic group in question,” which employs “historical myths to mobilize population along ethnic lines,” or which advances “policies of altering political status” such as demands to upgrade or downgrade the autonomous status of a territory. Radical ethno-nationalist leadership can be present on the state or the sub-state level, or both. The conflict potential increases during the time when radical ethno-nationalist leadership is present on both levels. Nevertheless, radical ethno-nationalist leadership on the state level rarely produces conflict unless challenged by strong opposition from a minority.

The regimes in both Georgia and Azerbaijan can be described as both radical and ethno-nationalist.

Likewise, the ethnic leadership in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Arminian-populated Javakheti region can be described as nationalist. The interaction between ethno-nationalist leadership on the state and the sub-state level warrants a membership score of 1 for the above listed cases.

The Talysh ethnic leadership also exhibited radical ethno-nationalist sentiments; however, it was inconsistent (the Humbatov affair is a clear example). A fraction of the Lezgin ethnic leadership was radical ethno-nationalist (the Sadval organisation proclaimed the independence of the Lezgin Republic); however, it was offset by a moderate Lezgin leadership with no radical claims to independence (the Samur organisation advocated for greater civic rights for the Lezgin minority, but they were against the movement for Lezgin independence). Although the radical ethnic leaderships of these two groups were not as consistent or as strong as leadership in other cases, they did emerge and, thus, they provided the opportunity for the release of any popular feelings that may have been present. Therefore, the Talysh and the Lezgin receive membership score of 1.

The Azeri minority has been labelled the “silent mass” (Cornell 2002) because it did not have any pronounced ethnic leadership. Therefore, it receives a membership score of 0.

**Condition (d): Past Conflicts and Myths (PCM)**

PCM =  $\begin{cases} 1 & \text{when there was at least one highly mythified conflict} \\ 0 & \text{when there was no history of previous conflict} \end{cases}$

Data Source: Cornell (2002: 115-116)

Remarks: This data captures simultaneously the histories and the historiographies of inter-ethnic relations. In order for a case to receive a membership score of 1, there has to be a history of conflict and a historiography that mythifies the fighting.

The Lezgin and the Talysh have no history of fighting the Azeri; therefore, they receive a membership score of 0.

The Azeri in Georgia have a brief history of fighting against the Georgians; however, these conflicts are not mythified. Therefore, this case receives a membership score of 0.

The Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, Abkhazians, the South Ossetians, and the Armenian minority in Georgia have highly mythified histories of conflict against the core. Therefore, they receive a membership score of 1.

**Condition (e): External Support (ES)**

ES =  $\begin{cases} 1 & \text{when the ethnic minority had strong external support} \\ 0 & \text{when the ethnic minority had no external support} \end{cases}$

Data Source: Cornell (2002: 122-123)

Remarks: This condition accounts for military and political support. Cases are given a high membership score for this condition when they had access to “political and military support from another state [or non-state actor] or overt promises of such support” (ibid.).

The Azeri in Georgia had no political or military support from any state or non-state actor, nor did they have any promises for support from abroad. In fact, the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan actively discouraged and dissolved inter-ethnic tension. Therefore, these two cases receive a membership score of 0.

There were rumours that the Russian support gave birth to the Lezgin organisation Sadval. Likewise, there were rumours that Iran was involved in the Talysh Gumbatov affair. Since there is no precise estimation of the degree, if any, of the support received, these two cases receive a membership score of 0.

The three cases of open military and political support from abroad are Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians receive overt support from Armenia. Abkhazia and South Ossetia receive overt support from Russia. Therefore these three cases receive a membership score of 1.

**Condition (f): Autonomous Status (AS)**

$$AS = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{when the ethnic minority had an autonomous status} \\ 0 & \text{when the ethnic minority had no autonomous status} \end{cases}$$

Data Source: Olson (1994: 782)

Remarks: For data on the ethno-federal structure of the South Caucasus, see Appendix 4.

**Condition (g): Shadow Economy (SE)**

$$SE = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{when the proportion of the shadow economy was 86 per cent} \\ 0 & \text{when the proportion of the shadow economy was less than 30 per cent} \end{cases}$$

Data Source: Zuercher (2007: 47)

Remarks: The original data reveals that the size of the shadow economy relative to the GDP was 30 per cent in Azerbaijan and 86 per cent in Georgia. The years covered by the original data are 1990-1993. This data captures the size of the shadow economy on the state level. No data is available for the size of the shadow economy on the sub-state level. In order to dichotomise the data, a qualitative threshold of 50 per cent is observed. Therefore, and all ethnic minorities in Georgia receive a membership score of 1, and all the ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan receive a membership score of 0.3

APPENDIX 4: FEDERAL STRUCTURES AND SIZEABLE ETHNIC  
MINORITIES IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS <sup>128</sup>

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|   | Union of Soviet Socialist Republic   |  |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Soviet Socialist Republics</b>               | Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic | Georgia Soviet Socialist Republic              |
| <b>Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics</b>    |                                      | Abkhazian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic |
| <b>Autonomous Oblasts</b>                       | Nagorno-Karabach Autonomous Oblast   | South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast               |
| <b>Ethnic minorities</b> (no autonomous status) | Talysh                               | Azeri  |
|   | Lezgin                               | Armenian                                       |

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128 Source; Olson, J. S. (1994) *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT, Greenwood Publishing Group