

# The Dilemma of Statebuilding in Areas of Ethnic Violence: How International Efforts to Bolster Georgia's Statebuilding May Have Contributed to the Resurgence of Ethnic Violence Since 2003

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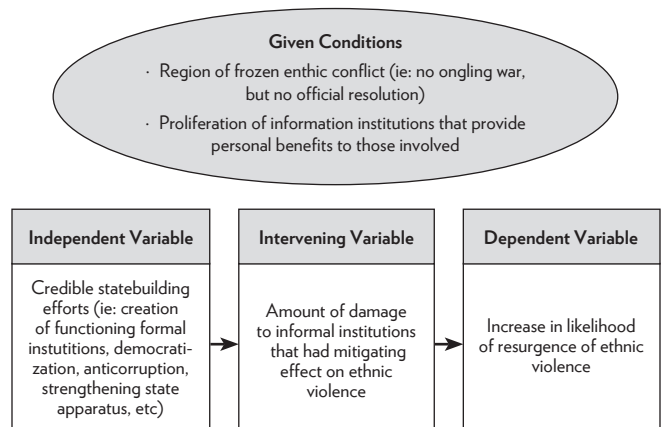
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In recent years, there has been a general consensus among scholars and policymakers alike that states with weak central governments, failing states or, at the extreme, failed states are more likely to witness ethnic violence take place within their territories. As an example of each, one need not look further than contemporary Sudan, Yugoslavia in the 1990s or Somalia in the past two decades, respectively. It is therefore no surprise that the role of the international community in such areas often includes promoting the process of statebuilding, based on the idea that countries with stronger, more democratic governments and functioning institutions are less likely to experience ethnic violence.

This paper, however, shall shed light on a negative side-effect of statebuilding that has hitherto been largely ignored; that is, in collapsed (or collapsing) states that had experienced ethnic violence in the past and in which many informal institutions exist, statebuilding can lead to an increase in the probability of ethnic violence occurring by destroying informal institutions that had a mitigating effect on ethnic violence. In such a situation, international support (economic or political) for these statebuilding efforts may have the unintended negative effect of increasing the likelihood of ethnic violence breaking out.

Using the case of Georgia and its two breakaway regions from 1990 to the present day, this paper shall demonstrate how the statebuilding efforts that have taken place in Georgia since the Rose Revolution of 2003, which included strengthening government institutions, anti-corruption campaigns and the severing of patronage networks, decreased or ended collaboration between elites who had personal interests in maintaining the fragile peace, and, by disenfranchising them, paved the way for the resurgence of ethnic violence. In this context, the international community's good intentions, which translated into financial and political support for Georgia's statebuilding efforts, may have inadvertently facilitated the re-escalation of

ethnic violence. The above ideas may be understood better if presented graphically:



It is important to note that, given the two conditions outlined above, this model does not claim that statebuilding will necessarily lead to the resurgence of ethnic violence. Rather, it implies that effective statebuilding measures will damage informal institutions and make an increase in ethnic violence more likely. The more international support these statebuilding measures have, the stronger this causality (i.e. the higher the likelihood).

Before delving into the topic, however, a few points must be made. The vast majority of academic literature available on the topic of the two unresolved ethnic conflicts in Georgia places them within the context of the larger, sub-systemic Russian-Georgian protracted conflict, or even the resurging global Russian-US rivalry. Scholars such as Per Gahrton have gone as far as labelling the region's new dynamics as 'The New Great Game,' in reference to the 19th century rivalry between Imperial Russia and the British Empire over control of the region that was known as The Great Game (Gahrton 2010, 1). The author supports most of the conclusions drawn by scholars who use system-level analyses to explain various aspects of the two ethnic conflicts, but finds that alone they provide an

incomplete picture of Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-South Ossetian ethnic violence. While Russia has proven to be a staunch supporter of both the Abkhaz and South Ossetian secessionist movements time and again, simply portraying Abkhaz and South Ossetian politicians and rebels as proxies of Moscow is painting a grossly incomplete image. This paper does not attempt to compete against, but rather complements these IR narratives. It seeks to clarify that in addition to the various actors' real-politik considerations in the region, there were often less visible factors at play affecting the situation on the ground.

Some academics (e.g. George 2009, 168-173) have suggested that ethnic violence resurfaced in Georgia beginning in 2003 because from 1995 until then, the Georgians were too weak relative to the Abkhaz and South Ossetians to go about reintegrating the two breakaway regions. While that was true, two points must be made. First, the Georgian state was chronically weak from 1995 - 2003 because various elites from all three sides who operated via informal channels and were personally benefiting from this state of weakness made an active effort to keep the Georgian state that weak. Saakashvili had no intention of keeping that status quo after he rose to power. Second, after November 2003, the increase in Georgia's power relative to the two breakaway provinces was the same; however ethnic violence began to take place more frequently in South Ossetia than in Abkhazia. Therefore, some factor other than Georgia's relative state capacity must account for the difference in levels of ethnic violence. As will be demonstrated later on, the author believes that this discrepancy can be accounted for by the fact that informal South Ossetian - Georgian cooperation was damaged by statebuilding more so than the same kind of informal cooperation between Abkhaz and Georgian elites.

This paper treats the ethnic conflicts of Georgia as a given, and will not dwell on the causes behind them. That being said, primordial explanations for why ethnic violence resurfaced between the Abkhaz and South Ossetians on the one hand, and Georgians on the other in the Aftermath of the Rose Revolution must be dispelled on the basis that all three ethnic groups did not suddenly experience an increase in deep-rooted ethnic hatred beginning in 2003.

## Theoretical Considerations

'Statebuilding' shall be defined broadly as: the construction of a functioning, democratic state, with effective formal institutions, rule of law and working enforcement

mechanisms based on the economic and political values of liberal Western democracies. Borrowing one more parameter from Lake (2010, 265), it can be added that statebuilding must increase the legitimacy of the state by increasing popular support for it.

Most comparative research on political institutions focuses mainly on formal rules. In many cases, however, so-called informal institutions, "ranging from bureaucratic and legislative norms to clientelism and patrimonialism can play an equally important role in shaping political behaviour and outcomes" (Helme and Letivsky 2004, 725). Informal institutions will be defined as "socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels" (Ibid, 727). To narrow this definition further, four parameters must be added that highlight what informal institutions are not:

- 1) Informal institutions are not synonymous with weak institutions. Formal institutional weakness does not necessarily imply the presence of informal institutions. Clientelism and abuses of executive authority, as an example, both depart from formal rules, but whereas the former is an informal institution, the latter is not.
- 2) Informal institutions must be distinguished from other informal behavioural regularities. Not all patterned behaviour is based on rules set by incentives or rooted in shared mutual expectations about others' behaviour. In informal institutions, the violation of tacit rules must generate some kind of punishment or external sanction. When bribery is rooted in widely shared expectations among citizens and public officials, corruption may be considered an informal institution. On the other hand, when shared expectations are not involved and the bribe is merely a reaction to low public sector wages, it may simply be described as a behavioural pattern.
- 3) Third, informal institutions should be distinguished from informal organizations. In the same way that formal organizations, such as political parties or unions, are not equivalent to formal rules, so too should informal organizations, such as mafias, be distinguished from informal institutions.
- 4) Fourth, it is crucial to differentiate between informal institutions and the more general idea of culture.

While culture may help shape institutions, the shared expectations of informal institutions should not be mistaken for shared values- though shared expectations can be (and often are) influenced by cultural values (Ibid, 726-728).

According to Transparency International, corruption is operationally defined as the “abuse of entrusted power for private gain” ([http://www.transparency.org/news\\_room/faq/corruption\\_faq-#faqcorr1](http://www.transparency.org/news_room/faq/corruption_faq-#faqcorr1)). In other words, it is the use of public office for private and or personal gains. In their work on patron-client relationships, Eisenstadt and Roniger resolve that, in essence, patronage may be seen as a reciprocal relationship between a patron and a subordinate, characterized by three main features:

- 1) The relationship must be unequal;
- 2) The arrangement relies on reciprocity, of goods, political favour, wealth, votes...etc;
- 3) The emergence of patronage depends on close personal interactions between the client and the patron (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1980, 49-52).

The word ‘elite’ would be very difficult to operationalize for the purposes of this paper. Generally speaking, though, it shall encompass individuals such as political figures, heads of security, top police officials, businessmen, the heads of smuggling groups, ethnic warlords, and anyone else with enough authority or power to significantly affect the kinds of informal institutions discussed in this paper. Admittedly, the word ‘significantly’ is vague, but its implied use will become clear.



## Background

Ethnic Ossetians are descendents of the Alan tribes that had migrated in ancient times from what is now modern Iran. Their language is related to that of the Pashtuns in Afghanistan. The exact time of their migration is debated. While a small number of scholars, such as Stuart Kaufmann, have argued that the Alans are descendants of the Sarmatians who arrived in the region in the sixth century AD (Kaufman 2010, 97), the majority of historians agree that the Ossetians were most likely driven into the region by Mongol invaders and Tamerlane’s armies in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries AD (Birch 1996, 152).

The Abkhaz people, on the other hand, speak a West Circassian language of the North Caucasian family (distinct from South Caucasian, which includes Georgian), and they trace their lineage to the Hittites, powerful warrior tribes that ruled Anatolia in the third and second centuries BC (Chirikba 1998). The Abkhaz and Ossetians came under occupation by various larger powers throughout history, including the Byzantines, the Ottomans and the Persians, until they both became parts of the Russian Empire in the 1800’s. Without going into the specific details of their history, for brevity’s sake, it is important to note that both within Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union, the Abkhaz and Ossetians were given special status recognizing their ethnic distinctiveness. However, in both Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union, the regions of these two ethnic groups’ regions were administratively treated as part of Georgia. Abkhazia, for example, became the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia within the Soviet Union Republic of Georgia.

## The Early 1990s

In August 1992 war broke out between Abkhaz rebels seeking secession and Georgian troops. Given its influence with both the Abkhaz and the Georgians, Russia was able to play the role of mediator. Intensive negotiations between the Abkhaz and the Georgians took place in late November and December of 1993, under the aegis of the UN and with active mediation by Russia. In February 1994, both Russia and Georgia signed a series of agreements that provided for Russia to assist in the development of the Georgian army, for the deployment of Russian border guards and, critically, for Russia’s right to keep its military bases in Georgia. In return, Georgia’s territorial integrity was recognized but “no specific arrangements were made for settling the conflict” (Krutikov 1994, 59-60).

However, on September 27th, 1993, Abkhaz rebels breached the previously mentioned ceasefire agreement and took the Abkhaz capital, Sukhumi. On May 14th, 1994, all parties signed the Moscow Agreement, which was essentially another ceasefire agreement. Georgia also called for the Commonwealth of Independent States to send peacekeeping troops (all of whom ended up coming from Russia) to maintain the fragile ceasefire in Abkhazia.

As in the case of Abkhazia, war broke out in South Ossetia on January 5th, 1991. When the Soviet Union collapsed, South Ossetia had few -if any- ties to the central Georgian government in Tbilisi (George 2009, 113). Fighting raged on for months. A ceasefire agreement that was signed on June 24th, 1992, and came to be known as the Sochi Agreement brought an official end to the war (Kuznetsova 1992, 45-46).

With the signing of the Sochi and Moscow Agreements in 1992 and 1994 respectively, the two ethnic conflicts in Georgia were now frozen, in the sense that there was little to no ethnic violence in either breakaway region, but no comprehensive peace agreements were reached between Georgia on the one hand and the two breakaway regions on the other.

## **Corruption, Smuggling, Extortion and Patronage: South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Georgia After the Two Wars**

According to Closson, by the mid-1990s, the informal trade which had originated during wartime burgeoned into networks of profit, enlisting a broad spectrum of actors. Scholars have suggested that networks of profit should either eventually harden into state institutions or weaken the state as a result of the economics of deliberate violence. In the case of Georgia, the rise of what Closson calls “networks of profit” were detrimental to the process of post-war statebuilding, and led to the simultaneous delegitimization and weakening of the central government (Ibid, 179). Charles King, a renowned expert on the region, best summarizes the situation in post-war Georgia by describing it as “a dark version of Pareto efficiency,” whereby equilibrium has been reached by elites from within the various conflict actors- an equilibrium that renders the two ethnic conflicts frozen yet unresolved (King 2001, 525). King observes that such situations developed when “even after one camp has secured a partial or complete victory in the military contest [analysts posit that Abkha-

zia and South Ossetia had both successfully defeated the Georgian army], the basic networks, relationships, and informal channels... replicate themselves in new, state-like institutions in the former conflict zones” (Ibid, 528). The economic structure that developed in the region after the two wars depended on the participation of several entities in order to function, including South Ossetian traders, Russian peacekeepers, Georgian smugglers and the Georgian police... Such cooperation was taking place on multiple levels, from the highest (between the President of Georgia and the de facto presidents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia), to the lowest (petty smugglers and poor policemen).

Following the end of Georgia’s two wars with South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the early 1990s, its president, Shevardnadze, was more concerned with the country’s stability than anything else. As such, in the process of privatizing the country’s industries, he offered tax exemptions to favoured corporations, thus creating patron-client networks where they previously did not exist. By 2001, an estimated 30% to 70% of the Georgian economy was illicit (George 2009, 131). Shevardnadze had previously been Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev. He was therefore able to bring the experience he had gained by rising through the former Soviet bureaucracy back with him to Georgia, where he effectively built for himself a broad base of clients. The president used personalized authority to secure allies and punish enemies, and stabilized the economy while turning a blind eye to the extensive corruption networks that were developing, so long as they did not threaten his allies’ interests or, more importantly, his grip on power.

Birch agrees and adds that, like in Georgia, elites in the two breakaway regions took advantage of the status quo stalemate to reward their support groups (Birch 1999, 528). For example, during the post-war period, the pursuit of personal interests was often intricately woven into government policy, at the expense of the Georgian state’s overall wellbeing. This was reflected in the cooperation that began to take place across ethnic divisions to maintain smuggling corridors, extortion checkpoints and illegal distribution networks both South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Examples abound. Just outside the entrance to the regional capital, Tskhinvali, the South Ossetian highway police were entrusted with the job of monitoring trade that was coming from / was on its way to Vladikavkaz, the capital of the Russian Republic of North Ossetia. Instead, however, they acted as facilitators rather than invigilators of illegal

trade along this route. Beside the same highway, markets emerged that sold licit goods such as petrol, timber, scrap iron and wheat flour, with hundreds of trucks laden with these goods coming from Russia every year (Kupatadze 2007, 50). The Ergneti smuggling market, which was located just on the de facto 'border' between Georgia and South Ossetia, on the road to Tskhinvali, offered opportunities for interethnic mixing and stability that years of confidence building measures could not deliver. Estimates of the value of smuggled goods entering Georgia through the Ergneti market alone reached US \$100 million annually (George 2009, 138).

Elites in the South Ossetian administration received major revenues from controlling this contraband trade, the road linking South Ossetia to the neighbouring city of Vladikavkaz in Russia, and the Roki mountain tunnel that links North and South Ossetia. The tunnel remains one of the few ways across the Caucasus mountain range, which extends from the Caspian Sea in the East to the Black Sea in the West. Ironically, an estimated US \$60-\$70 million in goods passed through the tunnel each year from 1995-2003, compared with an official South Ossetian budget of roughly \$1 million for the same time period. Furthermore, drugs (especially heroin) were being smuggled through both Abkhazia and South Ossetia in all directions (King 2001, 537).

In South Ossetia the illegal trade with Russia benefited all sides. The South Ossetian government applied vague "transit taxes" on various goods, while Georgian authorities, especially the interior ministry, were able to take a cut by fining truck drivers on the outskirts of Tbilisi. A Russian word was even coined to describe corrupt Georgian officials who offered valuable information and protection to smugglers: *krysha*- literally, "roof" (Kupatadze 2007, 50). The gradual increase in international humanitarian aid flowing into the region simply exacerbated the problems, by providing more fuel for the fire. Organizations were set up in Tbilisi to receive humanitarian assistance destined for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in South Ossetia. Instead, however, these organizations sold the goods for profit in local markets (King 2001, 545-546). It is partly because of these tacit agreements between South Ossetian and Georgian officials that relations between Tskhinvali and Tbilisi were generally cordial, notwithstanding the lack of a final conflict settlement. The de facto South Ossetian president, Eduard Kokoity, openly supported Eduard Shevardnadze in his bid for re-election to the Georgian presidency in early 2000 (King 2001, 546).

The general situation in Abkhazia was similar. If anything, the behaviour of Abkhaz police officials in the two districts of Abkhazia that border Georgia proper was even worse than that of the police in South Ossetia. The Abkhaz police have been noted to execute well-planned crackdowns on groups engaged in the smuggling of illegal goods to and from Georgia, not to enforce the law, but simply to eliminate the competition and maintain their monopoly on trans-border smuggling (Kukhianidze 2009, 221). In fact, Kupatadze claims former Abkhaz President Vladislav Ardzinba's clan "continues to influence smuggling within the separatist region" (2007, 51). Closson goes even further and suggests that Ardzinba's family headed the petroleum smuggling business, whereby petroleum was smuggled from Russia aboard one of Ardzinba's nephews' ships, and then taken to Georgia by another nephew's trucks.

The Abkhaz Presidential Guard and the State Security Services of Abkhazia also controlled five checkpoints and the main bridge across the Inguri river, which formed part of the de facto border between Georgia and Abkhazia. There they demanded illegal payments from freight transporters and extorted the local population. Beginning in 1995, even two of the largest Georgian insurgent groups remaining in Abkhazia, the Forest Brothers led by David Shengelia and the White Legion, headed by Zurab Samushia, had shifted their focus away from fighting as insurgents toward operating as business groups in commercial activities (Closson 2010, 186-187).

To make matters worse, the peacekeeping force that was deployed on the de facto border between Abkhazia and Georgia starting in 1994 often did not have the resources necessary to monitor, let alone interrupt smuggling across the Inguri river. Often, the poorly paid Russian peacekeepers were bribed in return for unfettered passage (Closson 2010, 185). It is reported that around 5-10% of the gasoline that entered Georgia was smuggled on trains from Russia that were actually transporting the aforementioned peacekeepers as well (Closson 2010, 185).

Perhaps most alarmingly, smugglers operating in both of the two breakaway regions also engaged in what Alexander Kupatadze termed "Radiological Smuggling," in collaboration with Georgian smugglers (Kupatadze 2007, 40). It seems that the same groups that smuggled items such as cigarettes and fuel into and out of Georgia's "grey zones" (i.e. South Ossetia and Abkhazia), sometimes also smuggled radioactive materials. By taking advantage of the debilitated border security, weakness (or sometimes com-

plcity) of law enforcement figures and corruption of public officials, these smugglers used Georgia as both a source of these materials (Georgia inherited Soviet facilities and military bases with radioactive materials in them) and as a transit country for material that was originally stolen in Russia. In fact, this smuggling business employed the services of high ranking security officials as high up as the former head of President Shevardnadze's security, as well as large business tycoons who had the contacts necessary to sell abroad. The radioactive material itself could be used in devices other than nuclear weapons to create so called 'weapons of mass disruption,' which, in the wrong hands, may prove to be powerful psychological and political weapons. For years this has been (and continues to be) a primary concern for the US and its allies, especially since evidence surfaced to suggest that Iran had attempted to purchase such radioactive materials on the black market in the late 1990s (Kupatadze 2007, 41-47).

Because of the lucrative economies of stalemate, key elites on all sides saw little incentive to go beyond the parameters outlined in the ceasefire agreements that followed the two secessionist wars- they preferred not to implement a peaceful resolution to the conflict. When elites did meet to talk, they usually simply agreed on the idea that they hold more talks in the future, because so long as the sides maintained "dialogue," humanitarian aid and financial assistance would keep flowing into the region (King 2001, 548-549). It was this intricate web of relationships that developed between supposed enemies that helped control ethnic violence between 1995 and 2003. Corruption and patron-client relationships helped create a status quo equilibrium in which elites from all sides and from various areas, such as politics, law enforcement and business cooperated to maximize their own interests. In his study, Closson concluded that the networks of profit that flourished in Georgia and the two breakaway regions before the Rose Revolution did not transform and harden into formal institutions, but rather negatively affected statebuilding in Georgia. These networks impeded the creation of respected "government institutions and a regulated market economy, contributed to high levels of criminal activity perpetuated by state security services, and inhibited conflict resolution as a result of lucrative profits paid to elites" (Closson 2010, 181). Nationalist Georgian rhetoric was kept at a minimum. Likewise, Abkhaz and South Ossetian calls for separatism were mollified. Ethnic violence was kept in check as long as all elite groups were privy to the trade and were benefiting from these 'networks of profit.' As evidence for the fact that these networks had an ef-

fect on the level of violence, the author draws on George's account (2009, 139), whereby she describes that during times when elites disagreed on how to divide spoils, violence tended to escalate. For example, an outbreak of ethnic violence in Abkhazia in early 1998 has been directly linked to groups that were concerned that peace agreements would endanger their economic well-being (Ibid, 139).

## **The Rose Revolution and Saakashvili's Crackdown on Informal Institutions**

In November 2003, fraud during Georgia's parliamentary elections led to weeks of angry protests, the resignation of president Shervardnadze and the swearing in of the leader of the opposition and Shevardnadze's former pupil and Minister of Justice, Mikheil Saakashvili. At the time of what later became known as 'The Rose Revolution,' Columbia University Law School graduate Saakashvili became the youngest leader of any state in Europe. He had widespread popularity among the Georgian masses because he promised to fight corruption, reinvigorate Georgia's economy and, most importantly, reintegrate the two breakaway provinces back into Georgia. Mere days after becoming president, Saakashvili launched a three-pronged reform campaign that involved a program of anticorruption, statebuilding and democratization (George 2009, 167). He immediately began to strengthen the security forces manning the borders and to decrease the level of influence of regional politicians in both Georgia and South Ossetia (Closson 2010, 191). At the same time, he ended the Georgian Defence Ministry's sponsorship of Georgian guerrilla groups operating along the border with Abkhazia. Corrupt law enforcement officials were sacked. As a result, smuggling through Abkhazia became more chaotic and disorganised (Kupatadze 2007, 50). Saakashvili's boldest move, however, came when he attempted to forcibly close down the Ergneti market in May/June 2003. When he ordered his troops into the market, he was met by armed Ossetians who violently defended their position for six weeks, before the market was finally closed. Soon after that, traffic through the Roki tunnel on the Russian side of the border with North Ossetia was initially curbed. "All imports of petrol products were to be directed first to Tbilisi for official accounting purposes and then distributed out to the regions" (Closson 2010, 191). Saakashvili sacked over 20 top Georgian police officials for their involvement with smuggling across the de facto South Ossetian-Georgian border. Saakashvili had effectively disrupted some of the

most important cross-ethnic elite ties that were based on informal institutions. In closing down the Ergneti market he had also eliminated the primary meeting place between ethnic Ossetians and Georgians.

Saakashvili's focus returned to Abkhazia in 2005, where his Special Units' efforts to curb smuggling led to the deaths of many Georgian police officers at first, and then eventually to the deaths of Abkhaz and Georgian civilians (Ibid, 193).

Saakashvili's anticorruption reforms led to the removal of Shervardnadze-era bureaucrats who had engaged in criminal activities, the replacement of the entire traffic police force, the creation of real customs control along the borders and the rewriting (and, more importantly, reinforcement) of the tax code. While all of Saakashvili's reforms led to initial successes, there was a major negative side-effect developing.

Starting with the Rose Revolution, there was a rise in ethnic violence between the Abkhaz and Georgians on the one hand, and South Ossetians and Georgians on the other. Instances of shooting, assassination, kidnapping, mine-blasting, ambushing and robbery increased as paramilitaries defined along ethnic lines from all sides began to clash. The breakdown in community relations at Ergneti became a symbol, mirrored in the lack of negotiations between authorities in Tbilisi and Tskhinvali. The author of this paper asserts that Saakashvili's three-pronged campaign efforts disrupted many of the existent informal institutions that extended across ethnic lines. Consequently, as the relationships that were based on reciprocity and expectations of mutual benefit broke down, so too did inter-ethnic elite cooperation. Elites who from 1995 to 2003 were on supposedly opposing sides in a frozen ethnic conflict (but in reality were partners in one way or another) no longer had the opportunity to collaborate with one another as a means of maximizing their own personal utility. This translated into the removal of a major buffer against the re-escalation of ethnic conflict, as fewer and fewer elites regarded a state of peace as being more beneficial to them personally than a state of violence.

Some readers may wonder how damaging informal institutions implies an increase in the likelihood that ethnic violence will resurface. For one thing, many of the elites who were personally benefiting from the status quo before the Rose Revolution were political elites capable of mobilizing ethnic support for themselves using ethnic rhetoric.

The leaders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia both began to use nationalist ethnic rhetoric more frequently, and Saakashvili, out of fear for his legitimacy, retaliated in kind (George 2009, 173-175). In the 1990s Balkans, it was specifically this kind of Milosevic-like ethno-nationalist rhetoric that contributed to the destabilization of Yugoslavia and the rise of ethnic violence (Saideman, Fall 2010). The same kind of scenario was replicated in Georgia after the Rose Revolution, albeit on a smaller scale.

After the Rose Revolution reports of low-level clashes between Georgians and Abkhaz became steadily more frequent, and even more so between Georgians and South Ossetians. All this contributed to the beginning of an international crisis, which in August 2008 burst into full scale war when, in the middle of the night on August 7/8 Saakashvili ordered Georgia's armed forces to invade South Ossetia. The war, of course, cannot be entirely explained by the model, but the rise in ethnic violence certainly contributed to the probability of it happening. This is what was implied when the author expressed that the model presented in this paper does not seek to compete with, but rather complement system-level explanations.

## The Role of the International Community in Georgia's Statebuilding

Stewart (2009, 809) argues that in seeing the eagerness of Georgia's new leader and due to the nature of his academic and professional backgrounds, Western countries were eager to support him without fully considering the side effects that their support may create.

Between the events of the Rose Revolution in November 2003 and the presidential elections of January 2004 when he became president, Saakashvili put out calls for assistance to the Organization for Security and Cooperation of Europe (OSCE). At a donor's meeting held in the Netherlands, 6 million Euros were pledged to assist Georgia. The OSCE's support was not limited to money. In 2004, during Bulgaria's Chairmanship of the OSCE, support for democratization in Georgia was declared a priority of the OSCE's (Jawad 2008, 620), which gave Saakashvili's statebuilding efforts enormous political clout and legitimacy within Georgia. The IMF also pledged financial support for Georgia's efforts, in the amount of \$750 million.

It is the United States, however, that has been by far the strongest supporter of Georgia's statebuilding efforts. It provided almost \$1.7 billion to Georgia in aid from the

late 1990s to 2008, specifically designed to facilitate statebuilding efforts (Myers 2008). The vast majority of this financing poured into Georgia after the Rose Revolution. According to the official US Department of State Website:

*Assistance Goals:* United States Government (USG) assistance promotes consolidation and advancement of the democratic reforms undertaken since the November 2003 Rose Revolution [and] assists Georgia's integration into the Euro-Atlantic community through the implementation of free-market reforms. And among the priorities of this program is to:

- Reform, train and equip the Georgian military to meet NATO standards and to support contributions to international peacekeeping and security operations
- Improve the capacity of the Georgian Border Police and Custom Service to fight smuggling, increase revenue and improve border control
- Increase the skills of the Georgian judicial and law enforcement officials
- Enhance forensic capabilities to meet international standards
- Improve executive, parliamentary and local government capacity, transparency, accountability and citizen outreach, as well as institutional checks and balances
- Strengthen the rule of law by improving judicial independence, legal profession reform, judicial and legal education, and the criminal procedure code, and by supporting the implementation of jury trials
- Bolster political party competitiveness and promote free and fair elections
- Strengthen civil society, independent media and civic education

During a conference held at McGill University, former US ambassador to Georgia Kenneth Yalowitz insisted that it was primarily this US assistance that enabled Saakashvili to implement his statebuilding plans (Yalowitz 2010). To summarize, international assistance aimed at strengthening Saakashvili's campaigns was crucial in the destruction of critical informal institutions that had a mitigating effect on ethnic violence. Without international assistance Georgia's post-Revolution reforms would not have occurred as rapidly as they did or on the scale that they were on. The US and its European allies, by contributing their financial and political support unintentionally contributed made it more likely that ethnic violence will resurge.

## Caveats

At first glance, there seems to be a number of weaknesses with the model presented on page 2. Some of those shall be addressed here. Critics may point out that Georgia was receiving some statebuilding funding from the international community even prior to 2003. The response to that is that while that was true, the Georgian leadership's overtures and various allusions regarding its intentions to statebuild were not credible. Georgia's head of state from 1994 to 2003, Shevardnadze, was unwilling to take the necessary steps that accompanied the process of statebuilding (Jawad 2008, 620), most likely because he or his allies were complicit in many of the informal institutions that would have been targeted by reform. And, as the model suggests, internal statebuilding efforts must be credible before external support plays a role. Credibility was lacking prior to the Rose Revolution but abundant right after it. With that in mind, it must be pointed out that some of the author's colleagues have suggested making international support for statebuilding an independent variable in the model. The problem with that is that international support for statebuilding efforts alone cannot account for the destruction of informal institutions, it simply strengthens the causality between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

Another issue may be the generalizability of this model. The reader may have qualms with the presentation of only one case study in this paper. This was done for brevity's sake. The case of Georgia was used specifically because it involved not one but two ethnic conflicts. The conclusions drawn from the model can, however, be applied to other regions with similar conditions. For example, in Saddam Hussein's Iraq ethnic stability was fragile. Evidence suggests that his use of oil money and patronage networks to co-opt traditional leaders of ethnic groups (George 2009, 7) were just as important as his brutal use of repression in maintaining ethnic stability in the country. Following the US invasion in 2003, statebuilding efforts (in this case supported entirely by external actors) broke many of those patronage ties. This most likely contributed to the rise in inter-ethnic violence that ensued.

## Conclusion and Outlook

The model that was developed for this paper is obviously not foolproof. However the explanatory power afforded by it is potentially too important to ignore. In areas where ethnic conflict exists, and where inter-ethnic cooperation

through informal institutions plays a big role in mitigating ethnic violence, statebuilding measures can lead to an increase in the probability of ethnic violence occurring by destroying the aforementioned informal institutions. International support for said statebuilding efforts may, by bolstering these efforts, have the unintended negative effect of increasing the likelihood of ethnic violence breaking out.

The Western community continues to struggle with defining the ideal 'modern state' and designing programmes to achieve this state. While critical approaches have contributed significantly to understanding international practices of statebuilding, less attention has been given to understanding the effects of assisting statebuilding initiatives in countries that have unresolved ethnic strife and in which informal institutions play an important rule. If the international community wishes to maximize the positive impact of sponsoring various governments around the globe in their statebuilding efforts, then the specific context of each target state must be considered more carefully, in order to minimize the negative effects.

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