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Scope

The aim of the Association for the Study of EthnoGeoPolitics (EGP), or EthnoGeoPolitics in short, is to further the study of and teaching on the cultural, social, ethnic and (geo-)political characteristics, processes and developments in different areas of the world, at universities, institutes and colleges in and outside the Netherlands. The association’s journal, *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics*, is above all intended to elicit analytic debate by allowing scholars to air their views, perspectives and research findings—with critical responses from others who may hold a different view or research approach (submit articles and responses to info@ethnogeopolitics.org). At the association’s website, www.ethnogeopolitics.org, one can find more information about its foundation, founding members, aims, activities and publications—in particular the freely downloadable copies of the journal’s issues.

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CAP January 2016 Events

Social Marginalization in Central Asia: Sixth Central Asia Fellows’ Seminar
January 12, 2016, 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Lindner Family Commons, Suite 602 1957 E St., NW

Kazakhstan Nationbuilding and Kazakh Nationalism: A Debate
January 14, 2016, 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Voesar Conference Room, Suite 412 1957 E St., NW

Cinema Club: Kyrgyzland (2014)
January 21, 2016, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Voesar Conference Room, Suite 412 1957 E St., NW

Religion-Branding? Central Asia’s Integration into the International Scene through Religion
January 26, 2016, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
Lindner Family Commons, Suite 602 1957 E St., NW

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Editorial

Relevance of Human Security in the Field of Ethnogeopolitics

Caspar ten Dam & Babak Rezvani

We are happy to announce the third and last issue of our journal this year. This is the first Special Issue of our journal, on the theme of Human Security (HS)—with contributions applying new and improved HS concepts and approaches to the South Caucasus as a whole or some countries and/or (border) regions within it.

The contributions are by young and aspiring scholars who already have made a track record in academia: Dr. Jason E. Strakes, Huseyn Aliyev and Anastasia Shesterinina. Their affiliations, areas of expertise and contact details can be found at the end of their articles.

Dr. Françoise Companjen, who came to know our Association for the Study of EthnoGeoPolitics (EGP) and had read some of the issues of our journal, approached us early this year with the proposal for a special issue on HS, in which she would be the Guest Editor and provide an Introductory article to the contributions (see the end of her article for her background and expertise as well).

Dr. Abel Polese already had reviewed the early versions of the contributions, and was willing to write a(nother) peer review as an open Critical Response to their final versions. We also found a second peer-reviewer willing to publish his comments on the contributions as a Critical Response: Dr. Jonathan Otto Pohl, who already has contributed with a major article on the Caucasus in the Spring 2015 issue of our journal.¹

The relevance, indeed critical importance of Human Security in the field of ethnogeopolitics ought to be so obvious as to almost go without without saying: the bottom-up HS concept, based on (but not limited to) the basic freedoms “from want” and “from fear”², can be used to explain most phenomena of violence, tensions and inequalities in human societies.

Actually, most of these phenomena appear to be ethnogeopolitical in nature, if only because both qualitative case studies and (semi-)quantitative datasets convincingly show that “most conflicts are internal, insurgent, ethnic and separatist in nature”—not just in our present times, but “since the dawn of human history”.³ So much for the so-called ‘New War’ theories and approaches, which describe forms of irregular and assymetric warfare in present and recent times and assume these to be uniquely tied to these times—while in fact these have been quite frequent, indeed rampant, in ancient and other ‘pre-modern’ times as well.⁴

Be as it may, HS among peoples themselves should be able to explain most of the aforementioned phenomena far better and more fully than the top-down notions of national state(-sanctioned) security—notions that too often amount to insecurty, particularly for inhabitants in repressive states even in the absence of armed conflict. Moreover, HS seen
from the perspective of non-state and semi-state actors, and not just state actors, can more fully account for both the existence and absence of actual security in society.

After all, as the contributions in this Special Issue show, people—be they individuals or groups of people—may and often do organize their own security beyond the state, against the state or in spite of the state. They do this as socio-economic classes, political movements, kin groups (extended families, clans, tribes, etc.) or combinations of those.

Such arrangements can either promote human security, or rather prevent and hinder it through continuous violence, discrimination and corruption, particularly against groups one considers to be ‘enemies’ and alien ‘others’. Thus attitudes ‘towards the ‘Other’ in the republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia, Armenians and Azeris respectively, do indeed approach the hatred zone’.

These phenomena belie the earlier romantic notions of HS as virtuous self-help arrangements invariably promoting and strengthening civil society, as Françoise Companjen points out in the Introductory article.

We hope and expect this Special Issue to markedly contribute to the research and academic debate on ethnogeopolitics in general and human security in particular. We hereby also celebrate the fact that it marks the five-year anniversary of our association and the three-year anniversary of our journal.

Caspar ten Dam, Executive Editor & Babak Rezvani, Editor-in-Chief
Leiden/Tblisi, Dec. 2015

Endnotes—References

2. Clearly, a most basic “freedom from hurt” forms part of the “freedom from fear” in the HS concept —after all, the most essential fear among people is to be hurt painfully, either physically or mentally, through torture, mistreatment etc., which could even supersede the fear to be otherwise harmed or actually killed (relatively) unpainfully. Therefore, the “freedom from fear” encapsulates the “freedom from fear to be hurt” and ultimately the “freedom from hurt”—and from “lethal hurt” as well. Incidentally, the “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want” cover most if not all basic rights in human rights law and humanitarian law (on proper i.e. proportionate warfare).
5. B. Rezvani, Conflict and Peace in Central Eurasia: Towards Explanations and Understandings Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015, p.1. This study essentially hypothesizes that a "so-called mosaic type of ethnogeographic configuration (in combination with other factors) is an important condition in explaining the occurrence of ethno-territorial conflicts" (Ibid., p.3). NB: this study is an updated and adapted version of the one titled Ethno-Territorial Conflict and Coexistence in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Fereydun (Vossiuspers UvA/Amsterdam University Press, 2013) mentioned by F. Companjen and J. E. Strakes in their contributions to this Special Issue of our journal.
Main Article

Paradoxes of Human Security: Evidence from the South Caucasus

Françoise Companjen (guest editor)¹

This EGP special issue is dedicated to Prof. Dr. Donna Winslow (1954-2010) who initiated the Human Security research programme at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Vrije Universiteit (VU University) Amsterdam.

Introduction

Security in the Caucasus is being jeopardized by an imbalance of power, a deficiency in democracy and a dearth of regional security institutions. In military terms Russia is the strongest power in the region. Turkey is considered to be the only democratic state in the region although Human Rights issues there are still a problem and, for the time being, Turkey is the only NATO ally in the region. As yet there are no answers to underlying tensions, especially fraught on the Turkish border, on the Azeri-Armenian border, and on the Georgian-Russian border. With the exception of Azerbaijan which has oil and gas as sources of income, the other two countries in the South Caucasus and Russia's provinces in the North Caucasus lag behind in economic development. The middle class is growing but slowly and not at the same pace at which the top elites are enriching themselves.

The upshot is that both political and economic development are out of kilter, fighting continues around Nagorno-Karabakh and in the North Caucasus and that one of the local responses in the North Caucasus has been the further Islamization of society. Moreover, state responses lag behind in terms of economic and social policies towards intrastate conflicts, transnational trafficking and crime.

Nowadays, security is growing more dependent on political, economic and social development, and concomitantly on issues of (dis)trust in local government and identity threats against transnational influences being part and parcel of feelings of (in)security.

Hence there has been a shift from state security to people's security concomitant with the mounting importance of such concepts as ‘informal networks’, ‘sense of belonging’, ‘identity politics’, expressed in ‘human security narratives’. Irrevocably, every security carries in it the seeds of new insecurity, especially marked in a region undergoing a rapid change from communism to a free market system, in which the dimensions of belonging, of identity and of predictability have been drastically shaken. Typically, these dimensions belong to the domain of human security. Human security is an emerging paradigm in the understanding of transnational vulnerabilities which challenge the traditional notion of national security, by arguing that the proper referent for international security should be the individual.
Problem formulation and paradox

Consequently, the bottom-up process might still be considered to be confined mostly to the realms of theory and this is an approach this EGP special issue wants to explore. The possible conflict of interest between individuals and states is a problem which should be investigated: after all, the norms and rules generated by a generalized human security approach might not coincide with those of individual citizens in particular local situations (oil/gas pipeline in the vicinity, new borders and/or snipers in the vicinity, access to clean water and fuel in the vicinity, etc.).

While agreeing that by shifting attention from the state to the people the concept of human security is a breakthrough and an innovation, we believe that a crucial aspect needs more attention. Human security has been conceptualized in an overly normative manner (Gasper 2005). Bottom-up approaches are thought to increase the participation of local actors and communities in solving problems of human security and governance.

Thus we included a contribution on how informal networks relate to human security. Importantly, the boundary between individual- and community-centered approaches is still blurred, as is illustrated in the contribution on Abkhazia. Thus the principal goal of this issue of EGP is to re-chart the relationship between the individual and the state (as for example Eriksen, Bal and Salemink 2010 have done for other parts of the world), this time taking the South Caucasus as its empirical focus. The first contribution breaking down Human Security into various dimensions and analytical levels is a case in point. The empirical evidence discussed in this issue of EGP clearly fits in the actor-structure debate and the individual-state continuum.

The EU, Human Security and the South Caucasus

The South Caucasus is part of the European neighborhood of the European Union. It is a shared space and in some ways a befriended pillar of support with regard to Iraq and Afghanistan. There is a direct overland connection with both Eastern Europe over Ukraine and with Southern and Western Europe through Turkey, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Austria, Germany and other countries. Even though the EU lacks the direct military security resources of a nation state, it still develops institutions (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the OSCE), instruments (mostly financial) and strategies (political) to influence surrounding countries. Policy for this shared European neighborhood space, as it is referred to, has been developed in various programmes.

These policies and programmes are partly based on notions such as “civilian power” (Duchêne 1973), “normative power” (Manners 2002) and “ethical power” (Aggestam 2008).3 Before 2004, the EU had a general policy frame for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, with programmes such as New Neighbors and Wider Europe. But after the major EU expansion of May 2004 (with ten countries: the Czech and Slovak Republics, the three
Baltic States, and Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus), there was a need of deeper engagement with the Eastern Neighborhood which stretches out a little farther.

Through initiative of Poland backed by a Swedish lobby, the Eastern Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was followed by a more multi-lateral Eastern Partnership (EaP) programme which was inaugurated in 2009. The Neighborhood and Partnership countries of Eastern Europe include: Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, the three South Caucasus states, and Russia (Decision no 466/2014/EU of the European parliament and of the Council of 16 April-May 8, 2014 L 135/17).

Azerbaijan thanks to its own oil and gas resources can remain relatively independent from the EU and other geo-political actors. Armenia, though included in the European Neighborhood instrument (EU regulation no 232/2014 of the European parliament and of the council of 11 March 2014), remains in the sphere of the Russian Federation who managed to include Armenia in the Eurasian Economic Union (January 2015), thereby preventing Armenia from signing an Associate Agreement with the EU. For an indication of the amounts involved in EU-Armenian bilateral aid: under the ENP 2007-2013: € 285.1 million; and 2014-2017: € 140-170 million. In line with the revised ENP's 'more for more' principle, an additional € 25 million were provided as grants to Armenia in 2013, and € 15 million in 2012 under the Eastern Partnership Integration & Cooperation programme (http://eeas.europa.eu/armenia/index_en.htm).

In the case of Georgia, the EU allocated € 33 million for Georgia's conflict zones Abkhazia and South Ossetia (European Commission 2007: 34). Between 1992 and 2006, the EU has spent some € 505 million on Georgia, one fifth of which on Emergency relief designed to overcome the effects of the transition from the Soviet Union to an independent state (European Commission 2007: 34; Companjen 2004), and almost half on the provision of basic human needs (food) (Ibid).

After that, under the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), for the period 2010-2012, budget support grants were arranged for Georgia of, on average, € 24 million per year (European Commission 2013: l 218/15 decision no 778/2013/EU of the European parliament and of the council of 12 August 2013), “In order to ensure efficient protection of the Union's financial interests linked to the Union's macro-financial assistance.” Although EU policy and activity are “soft”, based on co-operation and consultation, offering a “window of opportunity” (Rommens 2015) to the people who are motivated to change towards European norms, it also sets conditions, that: “Georgia adopt appropriate measures relating to the prevention of, and the fight against, fraud, corruption and any other irregularities linked to that assistance. It is also necessary that the Commission provide for appropriate checks and that the Court of Auditors provide for appropriate audits.” (Ibid, p 218/16:15).

In spite of this general EU-policy towards the south Caucasus countries, different interests between the largest European states remain: France, with a large Armenian Diaspora, is more interested in Armenia; Germany is more interested in trade with the three countries.
Security does not have a prominent role in this policy. Yet, after the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia, Europe received another, and after Ukraine in 2014, its latest wake-up call on what it means to be dependent on Russian gas. The South Caucasus could offer an alternative source of energy, although this could also be an invitation for more aggressive behavior from Russia. With various parties building pipelines as countermeasures to each other, one could say there is a “pipe-line war” going on with consequences both on the state level and on the level of possible environmental damage affecting the individual, which then becomes a human security problem.

The EU in a special report on foreign and security policy has defined Human Security by six policy principles, as: an integrated regional approach with a clear and open strategic direction and effective multilateralism, with focus on the observation of human rights, legitimate political leadership, and a bottom-up approach. Civilian commanders should be appointed to oversee all EU missions (EU “Madrid Report” 2007 under direction of Kaldor: http://www.worldgovernance.org/article78.html?lang=en).

Context: Particularities of the South Caucasus

It is important to contextualize human security both geographically (South Caucasus) and ethnically. Although much has been published on security issues concerning Russia (Ponsard 2012, De Haas 2010), Asia (Chari and Gupta 2003, Stokhof, Van der Velde, Hwee 2004), the Islamic Middle East (Cordesman 2014), security in the South Caucasus deserves more attention if only because people are still being killed by snipers in the unresolved conflict about Nagorno Karabakh (Companjen 2013).

The term security became especially relevant in the Caucasus after ‘9/11’. Western security advisors and the White House listened more sympathetically to what the Russians had been claiming for some time, namely that the Chechen border and Georgia’s Pankisi gorge were a safe haven for rebels. Freedom fighters striving for a right to autonomy or self-determination were socially reconstructed into terrorists (Winslow, Moelker and Companjen 2013).

The Presidents of Russia, the United States of America and Georgia under its President Eduard Shevardnadze campaigning for the 2003 elections, had found a common interest and agreed it would be good for “safety in general” to increase border security. A programme was started to equip and train the Georgian Army and set up a border security department. Ironically, what began as a common interest, diverged when after the November 2003 Revolution of Roses in Georgia, the newly elected President Mikheil Saakashvili voiced and emphasized more clearly a choice for the West.

Talks were held with NATO: first the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme and then on the Membership Action Plan (MAP). The Russians were not amused and as we know, the tensions increased to such an extent as to result in the war of August 2008. Most of the fighting took place in South Ossetia and further inland into Georgia up to 20 kilometers outside of the capital Tbilisi. The fighting spread towards Abkhazia as well (Companjen and Polese 2013).
The cultural and political particularities of the South Caucasus countries, with differences between Islamic Azerbaijan and Orthodox Christian Armenia and Georgia, have been extensively described and analyzed (Pelkmans 2003, Companjen 2004, Companjen, Marácz and Versteegh 2010, De Waal 2010, Rezvani 2013). For the purpose of understanding this issue's contributions, the conversion of political and economic power at the top, and various forms of corruption, clientelism and paternalism, are important features.

Another particularity of the South Caucasus we need to take into account is the presence of the many ethnicities (the Caucasian, Indo European and Altaic peoples) and minorities living in each other's countries and border areas. Thus Armenians live in southern Georgia's Samstke-Javakheti border area (Akhhalkala Ninotsminda), and many Talysh live in Southeastern Azerbaijan (Lenkeran, Lerik, Masalli and Astara). The Internally Displaced Person (IDPs) are from South Ossetia (both Georgians and Ossetians), Abkhazia (Abkhazians and Georgians) and Nagorno Karabakh (mixed: many Armenians and Azeri also fled back to Armenia and Azerbaijan).

The way central governmental forces deal with minorities in their respective countries is directly related to human security. After all, if minorities are not treated the same as the dominant group or population, if they are being discriminated against or are less able to use resources, these would be expressions of “fear” and “want”, which human security in the classic definition is all about, as we shall see in the next section.

Figure 1   Ethnic Groups in the Caucasus Region
From Security to Human Security

Security studies have been shaped during the Cold War in the context of the nuclear arms proliferation. Security belonged to the domain of International Relations and was a matter of State security and of defending territory. After WW II, Security Studies gradually split off from Political Science and International Relations and became a field of its own. What was first securely embedded in the arena of the State, was broadened towards human security, more in general in the context of intensified globalization (Kaldor 2007). The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the increase of information technology both extended the scope, the intensity, the velocity and the impact of transnational communications (Held et al. 1999).

The concept of human security now focused not only on war and intelligence as a threat to state sovereignty, but expanded towards people and their needs: “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear” (Human Development Report 1994). Placing the individual at the center of attention, security now included the right to water and food, to health, to feeling safe, to protection from slavery and involuntary human (sex) trafficking engendered by natural disasters and civil wars in the world. The new focus entailed complex cooperation of transnational organizations such as the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), with various NGOs giving medical care and enhancing human rights. Human security was and is strongly connected to economic development, informal networks for survival in the post-Soviet space, and in the way money gets spent.

The concept of Human Security has been elaborated on in many studies from various perspectives (Paris 2001, Gasper 2005, Mac Farlane and Yuen Foong Khong 2006, Kaldor 2007, and Beebe and Kaldor 2010, Farer 2010). New insights also are generated by interdisciplinary approaches inherent to the terms “human” and “security” representing two totally different bodies of literature, assumptions, and worldviews. Human Security is connected to economic development, law and social science. Economy and growth are based on different paradigms than the formal reasoning within law which is more “closed”. Human rights are rooted in a legal system whereas human security generally is not.

Akin to social science, Human Security is “open ended” with new insights being formulated on human nature and human needs evolving in a dialectical process as humanity develops and becomes more sensitive (Elias 1978). Furthermore, security publications generally are based on a theoretical perspective of Realism, of Realpolitik, the dominant paradigm in international relations.

The latest trend coming from the social sciences however, is to include a cultural perspective (Desch 1993, Nye and Welch 2011, Zwart 2010) and to include energy as a human security issue (Chari and Gupta 2003). The cultural trend entails shifting attention from the State to people and from territory to values. Leaning (2004) even makes a conceptual bridge with a ‘sense of belonging’. Thus Human Security is both objective and subjective, because needs and belonging entail agency embedded in cultural expectations.
A third analytical perspective is one of differentiation: drug cartels and human trafficking touch upon both the state level (state police, border security, etc.) and a meso level of transnational crime networks, and a micro human perspective on the health and wellbeing of local users and their direct environments, the one most associated with Human Security: freedom from want and freedom from fear at the individual level.

The three contributions

The three contributions deal with the South Caucasus, predominantly (not exclusively) at different levels of analysis. Jason Strakes takes a helicopter view, using the center-periphery theory as a frame: “The centre–periphery (or core–periphery) model is a spatial metaphor which describes and attempts to explain the structural relationship between the advanced or metropolitan ‘centre’ and a less developed ‘periphery’, either within a particular country, or (more commonly) as applied to the relationship between capitalist and developing societies” (Encyclopedia.com, Gottman 1980).

Moscow was the center during the Soviet times, with the “Transcaucasus” at its periphery, but after independence of the three South Caucasus states their capitals became the center and local regions and border areas became the periphery.

Borrowing from the indicators of Gottman’s Centre-Periphery model (1980), Strakes composes four dimensions of human security (geographic, economic, political, cultural) and analyses the situation of two groups of minorities (Armenians in Georgia and the Talysh in Azerbaijan) accordingly. It becomes clear that when comparing Georgia and Azerbaijan, depending on the centre or periphery location(s), human security is perceived differently varying from a point of view of confrontation, integration, indifference or as a bridgehead.

The next contribution by Huseyn Aliyev, more focused on the meso level, looks into informal networks and their crucial role in on the one hand providing human security where the state fails, but on the other hand showing how these informal networks can obstruct the transition to the rule of law due to clientelism, paternalism and corruption. Obviously in the long run these phenomena slow down, hinder or even cripple human security arrangements for all.

The contribution by Anastasia Shesterinina deals with border violence in post-conflict Abkhazia. The violence is contextualized historically (see also Companjen 2004). She focuses on the micro level of armed actors on both sides of the border, arguing that they are embedded in a structure of violence based on fear. The notion of freedom from fear is obscured due to weak governmental structures.

Analysis

So what do we learn about Human Security from these contributions? All the contributions show a perspective of duality and ambiguity at all three analytical levels: states, networks
and individuals. Moreover, at least two assumptions about the relation State-individual are revealed in all three as well. The classic definition of Human Security taken as a starting point in the contributions to this EGP special issue, namely economic and political security (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy 2006), is based on the assumption that some force, in casu the State, should ensure this freedom from want and freedom from fear. However, the State can also be an enemy of its own people, as oppression of political adversaries and the Colored Revolutions testify (O Beacháin and Polese 2010).

All three contributions show that the South Caucasus states are at some point either too weak (i.e. dysfunctional) or too strong (i.e. overbearing and oppressive) to ensure these freedoms, especially concerning the conflict regions. People continue to be killed, mostly by snipers, around the borders of Nagorno Karabakh. More than half a million IDPs and refugees are still waiting for a solution of this frozen conflict.

The State is not always able to defeat criminal networks, and in corrupt places perhaps even earns revenues from these practices, thereby becoming part of the problem. The second assumption concerns an underestimation of individual agency and freedom to choose, for example that individuals are willing to take big risks for a “higher purpose”. This is a blind spot in the currently typical or dominant conceptualization of Human Security.

When it comes to the individual level, the contribution on the Abkhazian-Georgian border and borderlands shows that local actors can continue to fight even if formal cease-fires have been signed at the governmental level. This contribution also shows both the differences and interdependencies between the three analytical levels. At the micro level we have local actors still continuing to fight. The meso level is represented by the weak Abkhaz governance structures unable to stop the fighting. The macro level is expressed by the Georgian national government (in cooperation with the UN), which formally carries and still does carry the responsibility for providing human security and for solving the conflict but is unable to do so. The meso level concerns kaleidoscopic loyalties between donor orientation and local needs, as these contributions show. Human Security is only as strong as its weakest link and this is cooperation between people in organizations, whether it be between intelligence organizations, local knowledge accumulated in NGOs which does not reach the decision makers at the top, or financial aid which is not spread properly due to corruption.

When it comes to theoretical and thematic distinctions, first of all we have Human Security as a foreign policy, as a domestic policy and as conflict management (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy 2007). As to dimensions we have the dimensions of location, community and time (Leaning 2004), that partially overlap with the dimensions mentioned by Beebe and Kaldor (2010): individuals and communities, different sorts of security and the interrelatedness of security. The case of Abkhazia as described by Shesterinina (and the other conflicts in Eurasia, see Mahapatra 2013) underscore both the aspect of conflict management and of foreign policy. With ethnic minorities living across each other’s borders, all three contributions mark the importance of Human Security as foreign policy.
In view of special societal characteristics of the South Caucasus countries— with more importance given to extended families, informal networks, conversion of business and government at the top, adding to corruption— these aspects in the contribution by Aliyev, illustrate Human Security in two ways: Not only Human Security as a domestic policy, but also as a local domestic policy with a particular frame of reference.

Human Security as Beebe and Kaldor claim (2010: 5) is connected to individuals and the communities they live in, whether it be in an informal network (Aliyev), a structure of violence (Shesterinina) or in a community of an ethnic minority (Strakes). Secondly, human security is about the different sorts of security, not just protection from the threat of foreign enemies. Evidently, people of the Caucasus are subject to and victims of all sorts of crimes against humanity, such as territorial disputes, ethnic conflict and ethnic killings (Strakes, Shesterinina) and economic threats and poverty caused by the transition from a planned to a free economy (Aliyev).

The third aspect of human security recognizes the interrelatedness of security in different places. Due to globalization the world is interconnected through social media, transportation, and basic human sympathy. This means that insecurity may travel across the borders of countries in the (South) Caucasus and the rest of the world through terrorism, transnational crime, or pandemics. The unresolved conflicts of South Ossetia and Abkhazia “exploded” into a brief but real war between Russia and Georgia involving the EU and the USA. The same could still happen with regard to Nagorno Karabakh, only involving different states and therefore meriting more attention from the Western powers.

In conclusion of the analysis, we can say that for defining Human Security we need two sets of definitions of Human Security, one for HS as policy (both domestic and foreign), and one for HS as a concept. These sets of criteria per definition entail some normative, legitimizing force. Sets of criteria as already operationalized in various “Barometers” can be taken as a starting point to measure the degree of success of these policies. New criteria can be added to these lists after exploring concerns of people especially in conflict areas (less known than the familiar “well-being surveys”) rather than formulating normative statements beforehand often based on Western cultural assumptions (gender issues, development, democracy).

The second set of criteria concerns the concept of Human Security. But even then the content will vary depending on the analytical level macro, meso, micro one considers. From these contributions it has become clear that micro-level agency needs to be included in a definition of Human Security.

Therefore we agree with Sadako Ogat and Amartya Sena: “Human security naturally links several forms of freedom—freedom from want and freedom from fear, as well as the freedom to take action on one’s own behalf” (Ogata and Sen 2003: 10). Yet the boundary between freedom to take action on one’s own behalf, and freedom to escape from “a structure of violence” local people can also be “sucked into” without being quite aware of this, or joining the violence for lack of a visible alternative, is thin.
In trying to define Human Security, it is clear that the closer one comes to the micro, individual level, the more difficult it becomes to generalize, precisely because the cultural context, the sense of belonging, one's identity, one's conscience, and one's embedding in a system of both legal and cultural obligations, can vary.

Striving to be all-inclusive, at the same time reduces the value of Human Security both as a descriptive and a legitimizing concept for developing policy. At best one could say for now that “Human security naturally links several forms of freedom and responsibility as well as the freedom to take action on one's own behalf, as considered in dialogue through various relevant frames of reference”, in order to make it an inter-subjective definition. Dialogue is one way to bridge the subjective and the objective inherently present in the concept of Human Security.

Concluding Paradoxes

Evidence from the South Caucasus reveals two assumptions on the individual-state relations. The assumption that the state provides human security for its “helpless citizens” is incorrect. A States in itself is not sufficient; rather the quality of the state is of crucial importance. Neither a weak state nor a strong state can offer a more structural safety for citizens. Weak governmental structures cannot prevent individuals from taking up arms, especially if these are abundantly available.

Paradoxically, strengthening a state and its police and security forces, sooner or later also cannot provide human security—but rather threaten it: state institutions become so strong that they can crush any opposition, crack down on peaceful demonstrations, and lock up journalists and (other) dissidents, thereby hindering or even destroying political freedom (freedom from fear). Or they can discriminate against minorities—or numerical yet marginalized majorities. On the other hand, individual actors are far from passive: they can take risks and fight for their ideals, especially if they are embedded in a structure of violence, as is or was the case around the “frozen conflict” zones with weak local governments.

Another way to deal with the incompetence of governments (too weak or too strong) is through the informal networks that can offer great short-term opportunities but in the long run, because of the clientelism, paternalism and corruption involved, can also thwart the development of human security. These assumptions need to be worked out in the conceptualization of human security.

Finally, the contributions in this special issue show that including a cultural take and different levels of analysis (macro, meso, micro) could be a way forward to a better, more in-depth understanding of the meaning, relevance and impact of human security in order to develop adequate policy measures, reconnecting the individual and the state on the basis of local evidence.

As a matter of fact, it would be interesting to re-study the cases of South Ossetia and Abkhazia by investigating how more attention to the Human Security issues of the local
Inhabitants might have been more fruitful than the focus on territorial integrity. It could be an option worth trying for Nagorno Karabakh as well, as this conflict could still profit from policy-making Human Security as an integral part of Foreign Policy.

Figure II  Foreshadowed Matrix of possible cases and/or surveys for future research

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<th>Deforestation, oil spills</th>
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</thead>
</table>

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Endnotes

1. In an initial phase I began thinking about Human Security with the co-editors of our previous book on the Caucasus (2010) but due to change in work priorities I was soon to continue and finish this task on my own. I want to thank Abel Polese for the sparring we have done on various projects and themes during at least the past five years, and to Ton Salman for passing on some literature on HS. I also want to thank the editors of Forum EGP for giving me and the three contributors an opportunity to publish our work.

2. The EU refers to the South Caucasus as part of its European neighborhood; Russia refers to it as part of its “near-abroad”.

3. With thanks to Wolfgang Wagner who also pointed the way to some EU financial figures.

4. In the meantime, on November 23, 2014, Abkhazia has signed “a treaty on alliance and strategic partnership” with the Russian Federation.
References—Bibliography


NB: do you have any comments on Françoise Companjen’s article? Please send these to info@ethnogeopolitics.org, or through the contact form at www.ethnogeopolitics.org.

Some of the comments on this and any other contribution, the Editorial Board may publish as Critical Responses (maximum 3,000 words) in the next issue(s) of the journal. Extensive critical responses with own source references may be published as full-fledged, separate articles. Please supply your name, contact details, academic and/or other professional titles and affiliations, as well as your research specialisms and any major publications.
Main Article

Taming Post-Soviet Peripheries: Divergences in Human Security and Borderland Administrative Strategies in Georgia and Azerbaijan

Jason E. Strakes

Introduction

During the post-Soviet period, the problematic relationship between central authorities and peripheral subregions populated by concentrations of ethnic minorities has constituted a primary national security concern among states in the South Caucasus. Yet in the two decades since independence, despite the persistence of both popular narratives and official discourses regarding the potential threat of ethnic separatism sponsored by hostile foreign governments, the Armenian-majority municipalities of Samstke-Javakheti in southern Georgia (Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda) and the Talysh-populated districts of southeastern Azerbaijan (Lenkeran, Lerik, Masalli and Astara) have exhibited contrasting trajectories in their state-society relations and levels of human security.

In the first case, the expectations of various observers that tensions between Javakheti Armenians and the incumbent authorities in Tbilisi might escalate into a major intrastate conflict have not transpired, accompanied by increased government investment in infrastructure and civil integration (Cornell 2002: 196-208; Cornell et al. 2002; Young 2006; ICG 2011; Cuffe and Siroky 2012: 47); while in the latter case, the attempt by leaders of the Talysh-Mughan Autonomous Republic (Talış-Muğan Muxtar Respublikası/TMMR) to achieve a territorial demarcation from the administrative jurisdiction of Baku (that occurred between June and August 1993) has not been repeated, in spite of continued neglect and periodic tactics of repression by the central government (Cornell 2002: 106-107; Rezvani 2013: 174, 211-212).

The present study therefore applies a theoretical model of center-periphery relations previously employed by Bruno Coppieters (2005), which identifies several disaggregated non-military dimensions of security—geographic, political, economic, and cultural—in these territories, in order to examine the relationship between borderland provinces and the domestic and external threat perceptions of national elites in Georgia and Azerbaijan.

These facets of non-traditional or human security are applied as explanatory variables in order to account for how decision-makers in both states interpret internal challenges to national interests, and the resultant administrative actions taken in response. These actions range on a probabilistic continuum from armed confrontation to cross-border cooperation. The empirical material that corroborates these associations is derived from intensive micro-level case studies of local conditions building upon indigenous data sources in both...
subregions. These cases are of particular interest because they remain relatively understudied, in contrast to the vast scholarship on the unresolved secessionist wars or “frozen conflicts” resulting from the violent devolution of the Soviet-era legal status of the autonomous republics or oblasts in the Caucasus region (Cornell 2002: 1-19, 101; Rezvani 2013: 233, 274; 329).

Human Security and Elite Threat Perceptions: Analytical Objectives

In the years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the domestic security environment of the Black Sea/Caspian region has been characterized by three important political realities. These include the prevalence of multiple sub-national identity groups composed of ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities that have experienced recurrent tensions over rights, resources and representation; various unresolved territorial disputes and border control issues which pose a challenge to state cohesion and stability; and pervasive black-market sectors or informal economies in which illicit or hazardous materials serve as potentially lucrative commodities.

The political context of the South Caucasus is also defined by the dual pathologies of weak statehood and the consolidation of semi-authoritarian regimes. Such regimes have habitually relied upon informal mechanisms such as influence over patronage networks and multilayered state security services in order to consolidate central control and preserve their incumbency. The use of such tools and methods in defense of regime interests has often negatively impacted on the political and economic welfare of citizens (Faber and Kaldor 2006: 122-123).

Yet at the same time, it is also necessary to account for the subjective perceptions of internal security threats by elites faced with various challenges to the maintenance of popular legitimacy, territorial integrity and state sovereignty in recently independent nations (Nodia 2005: 40). This dynamic underscores the persisting separation between the masses and local elites in contemporary Caucasus states. Thus the zone of influence occupied by the central government in the national capital may be regarded by policymakers as serving as a “fortress” or “barrier” against resolute “feudalist” or centrifugal forces—including ethnic minority populations that have experienced long-standing grievances with authorities—that prevail in geographic areas both contiguous with ostensibly hostile neighbor states and physically and culturally removed from the seat of political power (Kakabadze 2010: 19-21).

Thus, it is essential to develop an expanded theoretical framework for analyzing human security that captures these distinctive regional qualities, as well as the spatial arrangement of prominent ethnolinguistic communities or identity groups within their respective countries of habitation.

While considerable attention has been paid to these factors with respect to the three South Caucasian “hot wars” (the 1991-1992 South Ossetia War, the 1992-1993 Georgian-Abkhaz War, and the 1988-1994 Karabakh War), significantly less attention has been paid to other latent
conflicts in the region in which political or economic disparities and related political dynamics have not escalated into acute hostilities due to the absence of a “triggering event”, alienation of citizens from social problems or lack of knowledge or indifference on the part of the dominant party (Melikishvili 1999; Brahm 2003).  

Theoretical Foundations: A Spatial Model of Human Security

The conceptual schema displayed in Figure 1 below identifies two connected spatial domains: one representing the “periphery”, or geographic subregions located at a significant physical distance from the capital city that lie parallel with the territorial boundaries of the state, and the “center” or the base of the administrative, fiscal and coercive apparatus through which incumbent political elites both govern the country's subdivisions and implement national security strategies.

This model incorporates a framework first introduced by political geographer Jean Gottman and subsequently applied to examine the internal and international security circumstances of post-Soviet Georgia (Gottman 1980: 11-25; Coppieters 2005: 342-348). The hypothesized correlations between these two sectors are defined by four relevant indicators, which include the physical location and geographic situation of provincial areas; the degree of popular mobilization and integration of local actors into the national political system; the level of economic development and sources of livelihood in the community; and the degree of difference between local cultural norms and practices and those of the societal majority. The model also considers how each of these relate to the perceptions of the national security environment maintained by elite decisionmakers.  

Figure 1: Spatial Model of Human Security and Elite Responses in the South Caucasus
In the first instance, the presence of geographic complexity in the form of difficult terrain, porous borders and contested spaces are assumed to pose a challenge both to the safety of their inhabitants, and to the ability of central governments to control outlying areas settled by minority populations that share linkages with their Diaspora beyond the immediate boundaries of the subregion.

These areas have occasionally become linked in national security discourses to disputed territorial units in the wider post-Soviet space occupied by ethnic and religious enclaves—including but not limited to the \textit{de facto} states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) in Azerbaijan—whose status has been contested militarily by neighboring or host governments and their subject populations.

Secondly, communities that lack sufficient representation in national governments may mobilize more radical political actors or protest movements that seek to establish international recognition or support for autonomy or separation, thus increasing official perceptions of internal and external threats.

Thirdly, in economic systems that have undergone transition from centrally planned to market-based policies, there have often been strong or “perverse” incentives for participation in parallel markets or illicit trade as an alternative source of income, particularly in the absence of sufficient wages or stable employment which often prevails in underdeveloped or marginalized areas.

Thus, the attempted preservation of one’s financial well-being through participation in criminal activity may at the same time increase the likelihood of involvement in conflict and violence while attracting intervention by state forces, thus decreasing the overall level of personal and communal security. Lastly, popular well-being may be affected by the degree of discrepancy between the prevailing social, linguistic or religious norms and practices of minority communities and those of the societal majority, and how these are manifested in public policies or laws related to the civil rights of national minorities, such as education in and use of the state language, and freedom of religious expression.

Thus, cultural as well as physical distance may be associated with inattention by the central government, reinforcing the real or perceived isolation and neglect of subregions; while conversely, the expression of distinctive local traditions may be associated with separatism or an attempt to usurp attributes of the dominant culture. These independent variables, which together constitute the level of human security within a given subregion, may in combination significantly affect the level of perceived threats to security and stability in a given national setting, and the administrative strategies pursued by elites in response.

Finally, the dependent variable is operationalized according to a bidirectional scale which contains four ordinal categories, each representing the practical approach chosen by decisionmakers relative to the level of perceived threats emanating from both peripheral areas within the national territory and sources outside its boundaries. The highest degree, \textit{confrontation}, indicates conditions in the provinces which are viewed as an acute and
immediate challenge to stability, necessitating reaction through the deployment of armed forces or police units in order to deter or suppress hostile elements or activities.

The second stage, integration, represents the delayed nature of threats which motivates state elites to co-opt or absorb popular grievances through the targeted provision of public goods, implementation of development or assimilation projects or limited or symbolic concessions to local demands.

At the third level, indifference, peripheral threats are not deemed sufficient to motivate a clear policy position or strategy toward a given subregion, leading to a standard of noninvolvement or “benign neglect” by central governments.

Finally, the lowest end of the scale, bridgehead, describes a condition in which the absence of threats and the cessation or successful resolution of local conflicts serve as a potential foundation for cross-border integration between micro- and macro-regions in the form of state visits, cultural or commercial diplomacy, trade agreements, or industrial and transportation infrastructure projects. This approach has been proposed as a mechanism to promote cooperation over disputed territories in the Black Sea region such as the de facto Republic of Abkhazia, as well as exemplified by a cross-border water sharing agreement negotiated between Georgian and South Ossetian representatives in July-August 2015 (Punsmann et al. 2009; IWPR 2015). In order to effectively capture the variation in these relationships, it is assumed that elite responses will fluctuate between these positions across time and observations.

Research Methods

A qualitative historical analysis of these associations invites the application of the method of “paired comparison” commonly employed in political studies, which involves the intensive structured assessment of two crucial country cases, guided by previously established theoretical assumptions and concerns (Tarrow 1999, 2010).

The version of this approach utilized in the present study is a Most-Similar Systems (MSS) research design, which relies upon the logic of “common paths and foundations”, in which the investigator selects cases that exhibit generally shared characteristics but a dissimilar outcome (or the “method of difference”), presumably allowing one to control for error variance in inferring cause and effect by isolating the most relevant factors that impact upon the dependent variable (Bunce 1999: 16; Tarrow 1999: 9; Tarrow 2010; Kevlihan 2013; Gisselquist 2014).4

In the case of Georgia, adverse conditions in Javakheti have never approached the intensity of the Karabakh insurgency, while a substantial change in government occurred with the November 2003 Rose Revolution (Vardebis Revolutcia) that ushered in a decade of efforts by the ruling United National Movement (Ertiani Nacionaluri Modzraoba/ENM) at enhancing state capacity through administrative reform; whereas in Azerbaijan, an initial unsuccessful attempt at achieving territorial autonomy by Talysh leaders and the absence of further ethnic
mobilizations has occurred along with the consolidation of a highly centralized single-party regime dominated by the Aliyev dynasty. The model specified above is thus applied systematically to these two cases in the following sections.

Human Security Analysis of Post-Soviet Peripheries

Javakheti Region of Georgia

Geographic Situation

The Samtskhe-Javakheti region (mkhare) of southern Georgia is situated at the borders of northwest Armenia and northeastern Turkey, which represents one of the most prominent latent conflict zones in the Black Sea region. Its territory consists of six districts (raioni), including Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda, Borjomi, Adigeni and Aspindza, totaling an area of roughly 6,500 km² (Civil Development Agency 2011: 11).

It is also one of two regions in Georgia (in addition to Kvemo Kartli) in which the largest and most diverse populations of ethnic minorities are compactly settled within the same administrative unit. The southernmost districts of Akhalkalaki (1,235 km²) and Ninotsminda (1,353 km²) are predominantly populated (up to 95 percent) by ethnic Armenians, estimated at 57,000 and 32,000 respectively. Together, these two districts are regarded by Armenian nationalist historians as remnants of the classical territories known as Javakh and Tayk, which were joined with Georgian-majority areas of Samtskhe-Javakheti by the Shevardnadze government in 1994 (Giragosian 2001: 2). The corollary relocation of the administrative capital to Akhaltsitke thus generated popular resentment toward “Georgianization” imposed from the center (Matveeva 2003).

The region has also been distinguished by its physical, social and political isolation from the rest of the country due to its location on a high arid plateau, its rugged mountainous terrain and harsh winter climate, as well as its proximity to the frontier of the Turkish province (il) of Erzurum regulated by the Aktaş/Kartsakhi checkpoint, which some associate with the collective memory and lingering existential threat of the 1915 Genocide (Lohm 2007; Metreveli and Kulick 2009; Chkheidze and Metreveli 2010: 180-181).

In contrast, during the Soviet era the region enjoyed closer integration with the Armenian SSR (in a sense originally possessing the status of “bridgehead”), as evidenced by compulsory education in Armenian and Russian rather than in the Georgian language, ties of local churches to the Armenian Apostolic Church and railway links to the northern cities of Spitak and Leninakan (Gyumri) in neighboring Lori and Shirak provinces (marzer) (Parseghian 2007: 39).

Yet, the popular conception of its status as a “peripheral” territory long precedes the modern period. Prior to the mass deportation of Meshkетian (Ahuska) Turks to Central Asia in November 1944, classical Georgian philologists identified the larger region of Meskheti as an
original center of Kartvelian national culture that had subsequently become an Islamicized hinterland populated by non-native “Tatars”, only becoming settled by 30,000 ethnic Armenians during the Czarist annexation of the territory following the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829 (Cherchi and Manning, 2002: 24, 31-32; Lohm 2007: 36; Ramishvili 2007).

This traditional narrative of the artificial “otherness” of Javakheti has thus continued to manifest itself in allegations of a growing threat of separatism and the need for preemptive action by Georgian media, intellectuals and political advocates despite the lack of sufficient conditions for secession (CIPDD/GYLA/Saferworld 2011: 15).

Claims of impending crisis have often been corroborated by reference to incidents such as confrontations between local residents and Georgian military personnel and the destruction of border posts during the 1990s, as well as alleged Russian supplies of small arms to radical groups (Melikishvili 1999: 96; Matveeva 2003; Øverland 2003: 5-6).

Finally, the precedent of territorial disputes leading to armed combat between forces of the Democratic Republic of Armenia and Georgia in Akhalsikhe and Akhalkalaki during December 1918, the association of Javakheti with Russian influence following the South Ossetia War of 2008, the incomplete demarcation of the Armenian-Georgian borders and incidents involving relocation of observation posts and border guards during 2009, have reinforced the established view of the subregion as a site of unresolved tensions and potential hostilities between the two states (Abashidze 2009: 3-4; Tonoyan 2010: 301-302; Fremi 2011: 15).

A recent iteration of this discourse occurred in May 2014, in which a rumor was initiated via media outlets (later dismissed by the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) that Russian officials had begun distributing passports to Armenian citizens in Javakheti in corollary with the policy introduced by President Vladimir Putin of granting fast-track citizenship to Russian-speaking compatriots in the near abroad. Thus, as a result of these perceived liabilities to national security, central authorities have recurrently assumed a confrontational or interventionist orientation toward Javakheti, even where more conciliatory or supportive approaches have been pursued across different policy areas.

**Political Orientation**

The political landscape of Javakheti since the 1990s has been strongly conditioned both by its contiguity with Armenia and its perceived separation from the Georgian central government, fostering ambiguous public sentiments ranging from charges of neglect or forced assimilation, to the assertion of rights to self-rule (Guretski 1999; Tonoyan 2010: 295-296).

The main political tendencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the region have ranged between three essential positions: those that advocate for greater integration with the Georgian national administration, those which maintain that it should be granted
autonomous status within a federal Georgia, and a smaller proportion of radical activists who seek independence and/or unification with Armenia. Within the first category, Javakh NGO was first organized by local elite figures Samvel Petrosyan, Tigran Karakhanyan and David Rstakyan in 1988. It originated in the context of both a de facto lack of jurisdiction over the region by Tbilisi and the ensuing nationalist uprisings in the Armenian SSR and Nagorno-Karabakh.

These linkages allegedly contributed to the paramilitary dimension of Javakh, resulting in the importation of illicit weapons into the province. Yet, its original leadership reportedly included ethnic Russians (Dukhobors), Georgians and Pontic Greeks, only resorting to a platform of defending Armenian ethnicity after the attempt to forcibly install Georgian prefects by the Gamsakhurdia government in 1991 (Guretski 1999).

The primary autonomous institutional structure established in Akhalkalaki in February 1991 was a twenty-four-member Provisional Council of Representatives, governed by a seven-member Presidium composed of elected city officials. Yet, it dissolved during the same year due to a lack of public recognition of its authority (Parseghian 2007: 40). The failure of this body was succeeded by the formation of Virk (which remained illegal under the 1997 Georgian Law on Political Parties banning the formation of regional or ethnically-based parties), United Javakh/Democratic Alliance, New Generation (Nor Serund), and the youth and sports organization Jemi, which was founded by Rstakyan in 2005 largely in relation to the controversy regarding the planned closure of the former Russian military base at Akhalkalaki (Cornell et al. 2005: 23).

The arrest and imprisonment of local activists Gurgen Shirimony of Javakhk and Vaagn Chakhalyan of the Akhalkalaki Youth Organization for suspected connections to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutsyun) in July 2008, followed by Gregory Minasyan, director of Akhalsikhe Youth Center and Sargs Hakobjanyan, chairman of the Charles Aznavour Society on charges of espionage and possession of illicit arms in January 2009, engendered a rift between local residents and the national law enforcement agencies and criminal justice system. Popular information-sharing regarding the event via Internet-based social media also provoked demonstrations by organizations such as Mitk Analytical Center, Javakhk Patriotic Union and Yerkir Union, as well as public statements of support by government officials in Yerevan (Abashidze 2009: 4; Tonoyan 2010: 301).

Yet, despite seemingly favorable preconditions for separatism, anti-government opposition by Armenians in Javakheti has not become institutionalized as it did in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast of Azerbaijan beginning in the late 1980s (Parseghian 2007). While in the past shipments of propaganda materials from foreign advocacy groups across the Armenian border were a frequent occurrence, strict monitoring and customs regulations currently prevent their passage through checkpoints without prior approval by staff of the Embassy of Georgia in Armenia (ICG 2011: 5, n39).

The Council of Armenian NGOs of the Samtskhe-Javakheti Region of Georgia continues to promote a platform of federalism, but within the limits of constitutional reform. Despite the persistence of rhetoric regarding presumed external sponsorship of Javakh radicals among
the Georgian public and elite, with some exceptions (such as an endorsement of second official language status during 2008), the Armenian government has maintained a consistent position of seeking to restrain separatist tendencies in the region in coordination with Tbilisi authorities, advocating moderation and compliance with Georgian national laws (Tonoyan 2010: 297-298; ICG 2011: 12). Together these factors have contributed to a general decline of advocacy for autonomy as well as lack of popular support for separatist activism.

Importantly, central administrations during both the Shevardnadze (1993-2003) and Saakashvili (2004-2013) presidencies have maintained a policy of direct appointment of district governors (gamgebeli) and law enforcement officials, in conjunction with a strategy of reliance upon informal bases of influence and loyalty associated with local “clan” leaders—which previous analyses have identified as artificial political and economic constructs rather than sociocultural formations—in order to preserve the status quo (Wheatley 2004: 16-17; ICG 2011: 4-5).

This dynamic has been supplemented by the incorporation of municipal elites into the former Citizen’s Union of Georgia (Sakartvelos Mokalaketa Kavshiri/SMK) and ENM governments. A major change in policy between the pre- and post-revolutionary eras is represented by the shift from appointment of ethnic Georgians to local offices, to the general predominance of Armenians in the provincial administration. As of 2011, Javakheti was represented by ethnic Armenian deputies in two of the 75 single-member mandates seats in Parliament, in general proportion with the regional population (ICG 2011: 10-11).

Economic Conditions

Historically, the local economy of Javakheti has been primarily based upon subsistence agriculture. Although before 1991 the region actually possessed considerable resources for the export of foodstuffs and building materials within the USSR, the light industrial and mining facilities introduced during the Soviet period largely ceased to function after independence (Antonenko 2001: 35).

Until the construction of a major roadway funded by the U.S. Millennium Challenge Georgia program linking Akhalkalaki to Tbilisi in 2010, the region remained largely disconnected from the national transportation infrastructure, which prevented the effective distribution of goods and left it the most underdeveloped area of the country.

While the Armenian-majority districts are a major center for livestock, dairy production and potato crops, a lack of state subsidies to the agricultural sector and increased competition caused by policy changes such as the importation of potatoes from Turkey since the enactment of the Free Trade Agreement in 2007, has limited the ability of farmers to sell their harvest in Georgian markets (Antonenko 2001: 36; Wheatley 2009: 9, 51).

Until its final closure in June 2007, the most significant economic institution in the area was the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation 62nd Division military base in Akhalkalaki, which served as a significant source of income and sustenance in both formal and informal
dimensions. The base provided a major source of high-wage employment for the local population (up to 15 percent at the time of its closure) in service and support staff, school or hospital positions (Øverland 2009). This in turn provided the added benefit of Russian (as opposed to dual) citizenship as an obligatory condition for hiring local labor in 1998 (Antonenko 2001: 36; Metreveli and Kulick 2009: 25).

These facilities also offered social services (including public education and medical care) that both local and national governments were often unable to provide. Second, the presence of 3,000 Russian military personnel (composed partly of local enlistees) constituted a major consumer market for local merchants and retailers, and particularly for farm produce, which linked even remote villages with the activity generated by the base.⁷

These activities also fostered maintenance of the Russian rouble (RUB) as the primary unit of local exchange, in reaction to which Decree No.348 signed by President Shevardnadze in 1997 sought to impose circulation of the national currency and coordination with the Russian government for payment of local salaries in Georgian Lari (GEL) (Guretski 1999; UNHCR/UNAG 2003: 19).

A large proportion of community earnings also originate from foreign remittances from labor migration to southern Russia for seasonal employment, mainly in the construction sector. However, increasing visa restrictions on Georgian citizens followed by the cancellation policy introduced by Moscow in 2006 ⁸, combined with the closure of the Russian-Georgian border following the 2008 South Ossetia War, made travel increasingly difficult, necessitating initial transit via air flights through Yerevan or motivating permanent emigration (Antonenko 2001: 37; Øverland 2009: 50).

By the beginning of the last decade, the smuggling of illicit drugs and other contraband goods from Iran across the Armenian border reportedly provided one of the only alternate sources of income to the Russian military presence (Lieven 2001).⁹ While the southern borders of Javakheti may have served as a transit route for trafficking in illicit weapons, Household Surveys and Focus Groups conducted during the mid-2000s also reported a significant increase in firearm-related criminal activity among local youth, which was linked to high levels of unemployment.¹⁰ The proximity of Armenian communities to the border zone has had further significant effects on the popular economic welfare.

The customs checkpoint at the border village of Zhdanovakan in Ninotsminda (which is a major international crossing providing the sole form of employment for many local residents), was the site of a violent mass protest in December 2005 in response to the dismissal of ethnic Armenian officers and their replacement with Georgian staff, and the alleged practice of demanding bribes for the transportation of goods (Regnum 2005). During the same month, the closure of locally-owned small enterprises due to charges of tax evasion by the Ministry of Finance inspired protests by a reported 400 residents, resulting in...
intervention and violent dispersal by police units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Metreveli and Kulick 2009: 21).

At the same time, the improvement of border controls and reduction in smuggling in coordination with local police forces, combined with an increased security presence has contributed to increased perceptions of stability, if not intrusion of the state's presence from the center (ICG 2011).

However, such advances should not simply be associated with the transformations brought by the Rose Revolution. One of the first major efforts to reintegrate the region was introduced by presidential Decree No. 1281 implemented on 9 October 2002 on “Measures Upholding the Socio-Economic Development of Javakheti”, which approved a 2002-2005 strategic development plan negotiated with local representatives and Armenian officials (RFE/RL 2002; UNHCH/UNAG 2003: 19).

This action was met with skepticism based on previous experience of municipal leaders that necessary reforms would actually be implemented. The role of local “clan”-based power brokers in controlling municipal agencies and establishing personal networks of influence and patronage has further resulted in the employment of a large proportion of the working ethnic Armenian population in the public sector. Yet local representatives have also alleged that construction projects have employed foreign contractors rather than local labor, thus excluding the population from the benefits of increased domestic investment (Abashidze 2009: 6; Øverland 2009).

As of 2011, while the central government in Tbilisi has succeeded in better integrating and maintaining stability in the region by financing infrastructural projects and improving public utilities such as roads, water and gas supply systems and hydroelectric power plants, poor economic conditions in the two Armenian majority districts remain largely unchanged (ICG 2011).

*Cultural Distance*

The maintenance of a distinct Armenian cultural identity has remained strong in the two districts that constitute Javakheti, though with some internal variation, as the populations of rural villages are additionally divided between Gregorian and Roman Catholic Christians (Lohm 2007: n 103).

According to survey data collected in 2008, nearly half of the respondents in Akhalkalaki and over a quarter in Ninotsminda had no knowledge of the Georgian language (Wheatley 2009: 6-7). Incidents such as the dismissal of three Armenian judges by the Constitutional Court due to their failure of a Georgian language examination in May 2003 despite high qualifications, served to reinforce popular perceptions of separation, thus erecting a virtual barrier in which Georgian is regarded as a language used within and imposed by the state bureaucracy rather than among citizens in the region (Margaryan 2011).
Armenian and Russian have therefore remained the predominant languages, although familiarity with Georgian among the younger segment of the population has increased in recent years due to the expansion of public education in the state language via institutions such as Akhalkalaki Higher Education Institution—College and Institute “Tsodna” established during the Saakashvili era, with some local demand for the opening of a joint Armenian-Georgian university (Abashidze 2009: 8).

Additional surveys conducted by Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in the region found that while a majority of respondents expressed enthusiasm for learning the national language, a considerable number (20 percent) also perceived obligatory education in Georgian as a threat to the Armenian language (Bjørø 2007: 50).

Yet at the same time, the association of the local population with a unified Armenian national culture is possibly oversimplified, as those descendants of families displaced to the region from Eastern Anatolia during the First World War speak a distinctive localized variant of the Western Armenian dialect as well as accented Russian, with relatively few successfully completing formal education in Armenian universities. This lack of close integration with either the Russian, Georgian or Armenian identities has fostered additional perceptions of insecurity due to a form of “triple isolation” (Øv erland 2009).

One of the primary points of tension with the societal majority that has affected local security, is the dispute regarding the historical origin, status and right of reclamation of churches and architectural monuments, which led to several violent demonstrations and incidents in Akhalkalaki during 2005-2006 (Lohm 2007: 36-38; Abashidze 2009: 5; Tonoyan 2010: 298-300).

While conflict resolution mechanisms such as a joint Armenian-Georgian committee of scholars and historians have been publicly proposed by Patriarch Ilia II, the negotiations held in Javakheti with the Armenian Catholicos Garegin II in June 2011 failed to produce an agreement, despite the stated willingness of the Georgian government to officially register the Armenian diocese in preparation for the restoration and eventual return of churches (RFE/RL 2011).

The State Ministry of Reintegration of Georgia established in 2008, and the National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civil Integration in compliance with the Council of Europe (CoE) Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities (FNCM) implemented in 2009, have therefore remained the primary institutions concerned with managing issues of cultural dissonance, perpetuating the dynamic of elite penetration into the periphery.

**Talysh Region of Azerbaijan**

**Geographic Situation**

The Talysh minority of Azerbaijan belongs to an Indo-European ethnolinguistic group that also populates the northwestern provinces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the former Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics Vol.3 No.3 Winter 2015
territory of the semi-independent Lankaran Khanate from 1747 to 1813 which Orientalist scholars and expatriate advocates refer to collectively as “Talishistan” (Asatrian and Borjian 2005: 43; Asatrian et al. 2011).

The southeastern region of the country inhabited by the Talysh consists of five main districts (rayonlar), including Lenkeran, Lerik, Astara, Masally, and Yardimli, all but two of which share a border with the Iranian provinces (ostānha) of Ardabil and Gilan on the Caspian Sea coast (Gerber 2007: 11). This area contains nearly 400 towns and villages in which the Talysh are concentrated, and make up the absolute majority (up to 95 percent) in the rural parts of Lenkeran, Lerik and Astara (Clifton et al. 2005: 3).

According to the first post-Soviet census conducted in 1999, official estimates of the total population of ethnic Talysh in Azerbaijan totaled approximately 76,800, while the figure reported by the State Statistical Committee in 2009 increased to 112,000. However, these are regarded by observers as being underreported for political reasons; they estimate the actual number from 200,000 to as many as 500,000 based upon linguistic data (UNPO 2006).

While Astara is the only district of Azerbaijan that directly borders the Talysh-majority region of Iran, it also serves as a major trade center and crossing point between the two countries (Clifton et al. 2005: 11). According to security analysts, the Talysh Mountain range, which runs parallel to the 661 km Azerbaijani-Iranian boundary, inhibits the maintenance of effective border controls, which has reportedly made it a prominent route for transshipment of narcotics such as opium and heroin originating from Afghanistan (Ismailzade 2006).

Yet, while sharing the effects of physical distance from Baku which have often affected the Azerbaijani provinces (Derluguian 2007: 19), the region has not necessarily been defined by a sense of separation from its national setting as in the case of Javakheti. Rather, the clearest evidence of geographic isolation has been from Russian influence, as the even 1989 Soviet census revealed that less than five percent of the Talysh population reported Russian as their primary or secondary language, a trend which has continued despite substantial labor migration to Russia in the modern period (Clifton 2005: 4, 24).

Perhaps the singular event affecting local perceptions of secure living space was the attempt by a group of Azerbaijani Armed Forces officers led by Colonel Alikram Alekper Gumbatov to establish an autonomous political entity from 21 June until its collapse on 24 August 1993, which consisted of seven districts administered from the provincial capital of Lenkeran. The southeast therefore retains a certain legacy as a historic domain of the simultaneous internal conflicts (internationalized civil war, revolutions and coups d’état) which prevailed during the early 1990s. This dynamic has further been absorbed into national discourse surrounding the existential threat posed by the Armenian occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Thus, both official sources and foreign commentators continue to allege external sponsorship of Talysh separatism by expatriate organizations and the governments of Russia, Iran and Armenia to promote instability in the south. The proximity of the region to the Iranian border has also contributed to elite threat narratives, fostering popular aversion to attracting unwanted attention by the state security forces.
**Political Orientation**

The most prominent characteristic which distinguishes the political context of the Talysh districts from Javakheti is the prior precedent of an attempted "secession" and its bloodless suppression by the national armed forces in the early post-independence period. Yet, there is a sharp contrast between conventional views regarding the event and those of its participants.

Observers have frequently characterized the uprising as a struggle for influence between warlords loyal to competing elite factions (with links to the military revolt at Ganja led by Colonel Surat Huseynov) during 1992-1993, while it is often maintained that because the occupied districts were not populated by a majority of ethnic Talysh (an estimated 10 percent), the movement received little or no popular support (Parrot 1995; Kotecha 2006: 33).

Yet, former leaders maintain that the Talysh-Mughan Autonomous Republic (TMMR) had exercised the democratic right to declare autonomous status under the 1990 Constitution of the USSR, which remained in force during the period before the ratification of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It is for this reason that its representatives adopted the name of the Bolshevik-aligned Mughan Soviet Republic established in opposition to the liberal nationalist Musavat Party of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic from 15 May to 23 July 1919, which some interpret as an initial attempt at Talysh statehood. Elections were also allegedly held for the constituents of the legislature and included local Turkic representatives, from which a constitution was drafted.

Thus, former leaders of the coup maintain their goal was to be granted the status of a national-cultural territorial autonomy analogous to the system introduced to govern national minorities in the Russian Federation after 1991, rather than literal separation from Azerbaijan. However, government-affiliated analysts assert that in fact, Humbatov (Gumbatov) was an early proponent of Talysh independence in the southern districts, to which local Talysh intelligentsia were strongly opposed, and pressured him to moderate his views to advocacy for cultural, economic and political autonomy.11

While the 1993 revolt is also commonly perceived by observers as having been influenced by Russian interests, it received no direct assistance from Moscow, which according to this view has subsequently led Talysh nationalists to identify more closely with their Iranian constituents (Shafee 2008: 205).

However, this interpretation is at the same time contradicted by the significant level of integration of ethnic Talysh into elite national institutions, as exemplified by Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade, chair of the state religious administrative structure Spiritual Board of Caucasus Muslims, while individuals of Talysh descent are reportedly well represented in Azerbaijan's interior and security ministries and presidential administration (Abbasov 2007).

The legacy of the attempted secession has also continued to generate a significant countervailing influence on the political attitudes of Talysh citizens in Azerbaijan. As a
result, there is a general divergence in positions between those who do not recognize Talysh affiliation as a political movement and seek only cultural autonomy, nationalist advocates who claim forced assimilation and the pursuit of independence, and those that seek maintenance of cultural and linguistic traditions along with greater representation within national institutions (Gerber 2007: 16).

The primary political organizations include the Talysh People's Party, which was founded from the Soviet-era National Revival Party by Hilal Mammadov in 1991 and registered as the National Equality Party in 1993, whose platform opposed separatism and campaigned for integration of national minorities. However, the party leadership subsequently relocated to the Russian Federation. Among the strongest advocates for Talysh cultural autonomy in Azerbaijan is the Talysh National Movement (TNM) chaired by Farmoni Aboszoda (RFE/RL 2006).

However, in general there has been minimal popular interest in separatism, both due to lack of strong identification with a common “Talysh” identity and preexisting assimilation into Azerbaijani society, solidarity with state-endorsed sentiments regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict—and fear of association with politically subversive influences (Shafee 2008).

There is evidence that the central government has manipulated sensitive issues related to ethnic minorities for national security purposes. Advocacy groups reported that following the release of the Talysh-language newspaper Nightly Gathering (Shavnisht) in April 2006, its editor was reportedly subject to harassment and intimidation by police (UNPO 2008).

In February 2007, Novruzali Mammedov, director of the Institute of Linguistics of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, head of the state-subsidized Talysh Cultural Center in Baku and editor-in-chief of the newspaper “Voice of Talysh” (Talyshi Sado), and its secretary Elman Guliyev were arrested on charges of conducting espionage for the Iranian intelligence agencies. In June 2008, Mammedov was sentenced to a 10-year prison term for high treason by the Grave Crimes Court of Azerbaijan, after which he subsequently died in custody (Associated Press Wordstream 2008). The conviction was based largely upon testimony that the newspaper had received financial contributions and books from Talysh rights organizations in Iran, and had published inflammatory interpretations of Azerbaijani and Persian cultural history.

These actions were criticized by international human rights organizations as a strategy by the Azerbaijani government of suppressing opposition tendencies in preparation for the 2008 presidential elections, while domestic observers described it as a tactic to demonstrate its commitment to combating Islamic extremism to the U.S. and European governments (Bakinsky and Muradova 2007).

This pattern was repeated most recently with the arrest of the Institute of Linguistics’ succeeding director Hilal Mammadov in June 2012 on charges of drug possession, which has been frequently directed at independent journalists and opposition activists, but were
advanced to high treason and inciting national and religious hatred for which he received a five-year prison sentence (Abbasov 2012). Both individuals were recognized by observers as moderates whom opposed radical Talysh activism, and lobbied authorities to uphold existing legislation on language education under the Council of Europe (CoE) Framework Convention on the Rights of National Minorities, which the government of Azerbaijan ratified in 2000 (Mamedov 2012). These actions present the clearest manifestation of the official view regarding even limited Talysh political involvement as a threat to national stability, and the consequent resort to a policy of confrontation.

Economic Conditions

The local economic system of the Talysh region is divided between mountain and lowland sectors that are both heavily dependent on agriculture, with grazing and livestock predominant in the highlands and production of crops such as rice and tea in the plains (Clifton et al. 2005: 5). The lowlands are also better integrated into the national transportation network, which has allowed for the wider distribution of goods and generated a comparatively higher level of income (Ibid.: 5).

However, the region in general continues to suffer from high rates of unemployment and poverty. According to testimony by TNM representatives, during the first decade of independence the population was actively involved in highly competitive trade relations between Iran and Russia, serving as intermediaries in the export of metals and wood products from Moscow to Tehran, as well as the import of Iranian textiles and agricultural produce (Sivertseva 2009: 2). This bilateral commerce reportedly generated a significant degree of wealth among ethnic Talysh citizens.

However, as the Azerbaijani central government subsequently gained control of informal trade routes while privileging its trade and investment relations with Turkey, these connections were eliminated, forcing former business owners to resort to parallel market activities such as smuggling of illicit drugs as an alternative source of income (Sivertseva 2009: 3). Corruption in the form of obligatory payment of bribes camouflaged as “taxes” imposed by local administrators has also limited the ability of Talysh entrepreneurs working in Russia to establish small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the region (USAID 2004: 12).

During the mid-2000s, involvement in the cross-border drug trade from Iran increased, largely influenced by high unemployment among local youth, who are willing to risk the dangers associated with smuggling for lack of viable alternative options (Gerber 2007: 27). According to local electoral data published by international observers in 2005, the district of Lenkeran has been strongly affected by social problems such as unemployment, labor migration to Iran and Russia, and criminal activity, particularly in the form of human and drug trafficking (Eurasianet 2005).

According to a 1992 bilateral agreement on Facilitated Border Crossing Rules, Iranian and Azerbaijani nationals living close to the frontier are granted visa-free travel up to 45
kilometers inside the border zone, while the checkpoint at Astara is a major conduit for the importation of Iranian food products such as butter, eggs, potatoes, sugar and rice, and the sale of clothing and audiovisual equipment by Azeri traders (Abbasov 2007).

While in recent years there have been observable efforts to improve infrastructure and public services in areas such as the provincial capital of Lenkeran, these are likely reflective of the national modernization and development programs such as the State Program on Socio-Economic Development of Regions of Azerbaijan implemented in major population centers throughout the country during the past decade, rather than a targeted policy directed at improving the quality of life of the Talysh population (Abbasov 2007).

Cultural Distance

The notion of a common Talysh cultural identity in Azerbaijan is further complicated by the various intrinsic linguistic and sectarian cleavages. The majority of ethnic Talysh in the lowland areas of southern Azerbaijan are Shia Muslim, while a smaller percentage in the highlands are Sunni (Clifton et al. 2005: 5). A substantial body of ethnographic research dating to the Soviet period indicates that geographic distribution is also linked to linguistic patterns.

While highland communities exhibit strong maintenance of the northern Talysh dialect, the lowland areas of the southeastern districts display a significant degree of bilingualism and assimilation with national language policies (Clifton 2009: 2; Mustafayev 2010). At the same time, previous ethnographic studies suggest that Talysh are on average more observant of religious customs in daily life than the typical Azerbaijani citizen, including regular mosque attendance, prayer and reading of the Quran (Sivertseva 2009: 3).

In addition, pilgrimages to sacred shrines (pirs) in Iran are a common practice, which has fostered much cross-border contact with Iranian clerical authorities. It is this association which has fostered a perceptual link with the real or alleged promotion of religious radicalism and sponsorship of radical Shia opposition groups. Such is exemplified by the arrest and sentencing of Shia cleric Said Dadashbeyli of the Northern Imam Mehdi Army and a dozen members in 2007 based on allegations of links to the Iranian Quds Force.

The Azeri-language broadcast of the Iranian-government sponsored television station Sahar TV also serves as a major conduit of cultural and educational programming to the southern Talysh community. However, its content has been characterized by Baku officials as an instrument to disseminate hostile propaganda, although agreements signed between the public broadcasting ministries of Tehran and Baku in 2007 established terms of regulation. Most recently, the establishment of a Talysh-language radio program (Tolishiston Sado) founded by Armenian intellectuals Garnik Asatrian and Ara Papian, broadcast from stations in the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR), has been attributed to Iranian sponsorship, despite assertions of support for cultural rights rather than political objectives (Goble 2013).
Results and Interpretation

The data displayed in Table 1 below presents a summary of the quality of local human security, and the level of elite threat perceptions and the dominant administrative strategies implemented toward the Javakheti and Talysh subregions of Georgia and Azerbaijan.

First, the legacy of succession and the status quo of unresolved territorial conflicts in the wider Caucasus region have maintained a preoccupation with external threats (Russia and Armenia in Georgia; Armenia, Russia and Iran in Azerbaijan), although Tbilisi has sought to reduce the impact of distance in Javakheti by expanding infrastructural and transportation links with the center. In the political realm, the gradual incorporation of local elites into state institutions has decreased tendencies for oppositional mobilizations, although citizens in Javakheti continue to question the degree of effective representation of their communities.

Thirdly, whereas in Georgia the promotion of socioeconomic reforms has been accompanied by the suppression of informal economic activity in Javakheti, in Azerbaijan these conditions have not led to a concerted policy of intervention to develop and integrate the Talysh region by the Aliyev governments.

Significantly, it is in the cultural domain that both Javakheti Armenians and Azerbaijani Talysh have experienced moderate to low levels of freedom to practice their indigenous cultural traditions. Still, the assertion of these rights—such as the status of churches, language promotion or independent interpretations of national history—have contributed to elite perceptions of attempts to challenge the dominant ethnicity, periodically motivating policies of assimilation or repression by Georgian and Azerbaijani authorities.

Finally, due to the persistence of low-intensity diplomatic disputes between Georgia and Azerbaijan and their neighboring states, evidence of the potential for the evolution of a “bridgehead effect” in both subregions remains minimal or absent.

Table 1: Summary of Human Security Conditions and Elite Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia (Javakheti)</th>
<th>Periphery</th>
<th>Center</th>
<th>Administrative Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Security Condition</td>
<td>Threat Perception</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic</td>
<td>Low/Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate/High</td>
<td>Integration/Confrontation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Indifference/Integration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Low/Moderate</td>
<td>Low/Moderate</td>
<td>Indifference/Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate/High</td>
<td>Integration/Confrontation</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Azerbaijan (Talysh Region)</th>
<th>Periphery</th>
<th>Center</th>
<th>Administrative Strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Security Condition</td>
<td>Threat Perception</td>
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<td>Geographic</td>
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<td>Political</td>
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<td>Economic</td>
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Conclusions and Implications

While numerous preceding studies have examined the role of ethnicity and territory in internal conflicts in the South Caucasus, few if any have explicitly examined the interconnections between community-level security conditions and the patterns of governance exercised by national governments. What are the implications of these findings for public policies in the region?

The value-added implications (or applications) of human security suggested by the present study are twofold: a) to provide a template for assessing the level of threats to citizens by connecting the behavior of sub-national actors to the ability of governments to provide for the safety and security of their citizens; and b) to facilitate greater state engagement with local-level populations in a development assistance capacity.

This interface is intended to contribute to a more sophisticated theoretical framework not only for security analysts, but also for state agencies engaged in regional public administration and policing, which moves beyond strictly tactical and logistical concerns of surveillance and interdiction toward inclusion of local perspectives as a necessary aspect of successful conflict management and prevention.

One particularly important knowledge asset provided by the human-security perspective is the necessity for recognizing the interrelationship between social-cultural factors and the practice of law enforcement in transitional country environments, as historically the role of police agencies in the Black Sea/Caspian region has been to safeguard the ruling elite and suppress opposition rather than to protect the rights of citizens.

Although during the past two decades the security services of many post-communist nations have been restructured as a result of efforts at democratization and institutional reform, and foreign assistance programs for training of new police forces have been implemented, public security units in the region often continue to employ similar practices as in previous eras, including a tendency toward extrajudicial coercion and the excessive use of force (Strakes 2011: 81-107; 2013: 305-306).

Thus, the conventional emphasis on enhancing the capacity of police forces to reduce crime and instability, while neglecting the relationship between law-enforcement practices and social conditions in the communities in which they are applied, will only exacerbate these problems.

For instance, in countries with complex human security situations such as Georgia, the strong cross-border relationships maintained by ethnic minorities based upon familial, linguistic and economic links have often fostered the perception of anti-smuggling operations as discrimination and targeting of their communities by the central government (Cornell et al. 2005: 19, 24).

Therefore, it is important that resources are not employed in a manner that simply enhances the technical capacity of law-enforcement structures, but are also directed toward improving...
their ability to interface with populations in a manner necessary to successfully reduce violence and criminal activity.

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Endnotes

1. These are exemplified by the ruling New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) and the state oil industry in Azerbaijan since 1993, and the Shevardnadze regime and the “thieves in law” prior to the 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia, as well as the Interior Troops and National Police in Azerbaijan and the Constitutional Security Department and Financial Police in Georgia during the Saakashvili era.

2. These factors are in turn linked to the concepts of freedom from fear (discrimination and political repression) and freedom from want (economic deprivation) presented in the recent theoretical literature on human security, which concerns the well-being of the communities that populate hinterland areas, rather than simply the safeguarding of governing elites (Faber and Kaldor 2006: 121).

3. While the second and third variables are drawn from previous definitions of human security, the first and fourth are also intended to capture the geographic (safety of living spaces) and cultural (safety of traditions) dimensions of local security conditions (UNU-CRIS 2009: 9, 10-11). Unlike previous studies which identify and test a series of hypotheses related to multiple correlates assumed to affect the likelihood of ethno-territorial or identity-based conflicts, these indices are intended to provide a more parsimonious approach to analyzing the process through which human security situations are constituted by indigenous circumstances, as well how they influence and are impacted by government policies.

4. At the same time it is necessary to consider the potential pitfalls involved in the comparative method identified by political scientists, such as the lack of “degrees of freedom” in small-N studies, and the resultant inability to identify alternative explanations for an observed outcome. In the present study the explanatory variables are disaggregated into their constituent parts, i.e. different types of domestic and international actors and structures that have pursued various interests and strategies. These actions or behaviors in turn serve as mechanisms that can be identified and traced across time, thus indicating the logical and empirical links between independent and dependent variables (Tarrow 1999: 10-11; 2010: 238-240). This additional specification, combined with attention to “dual process-tracing”, therefore introduces a greater number of observations within each case than if each correlate were treated simply as a single unit of analysis.

5. According to the 2002 national census, this composes the second largest national minority group in Georgia as a whole (Yerkir 2007: 2).

6. As defined in the section ‘Theoretical Foundations’ (see Figure 1), this describes a condition of cross-border integration between micro- and macro-regions in the form of state visits, cultural or commercial diplomacy, trade agreements, or industrial and transportation infrastructure projects.
7. At the same time however, the population of Ninotsminda did not exhibit the same degree of dependency on Russian the military base. Despite the incidence of popular demonstrations in response to the planned closure between 2002 and 2007, many have sought to identify causes for the absence of an expected escalation of crisis in the wake of the Russian withdrawal (Antonenko 2001).

8. In response to escalating diplomatic tensions with the Saakashvili government, the Russian government introduced visa cancellations and deportation of remittance laborers holding Georgia passports, as part of a combination of punitive measures including import bans on agricultural and trade goods and restrictions on air, land, and sea transit and postal and banking communications between December 2005 and October 2006.

9. In a well-publicized incident in December 2001, an Armenian national carrying 300 grams of uranium-235 for a potential buyer in Turkey was apprehended in a joint operation between provincial police and the Georgian Ministry of State Security (BBC, 2001).

10. In addition, a higher number of respondents (54 and 76 percent respectively) reported a negative impact of the commercial availability of firearms on both community safety and intercommunal relations, more so than in other Georgian regions (Wood and Hiscock 2006: 20, 95).

11. Interview with a research fellow (anonymous) in Domestic Policy Analysis Department of Center for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SAM), Baku, October 2014.

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Informal Networks and Human Security in the South Caucasus

Huseyn Aliyev

Introduction

The present-day South Caucasus has suffered from the lack of human security ever since its independence from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. From the early moments of the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the populations of the region have been continuously affected by the lack of effective governance, economic crises, chronic social inequality and rampant corruption. Sociopolitical and socioeconomic problems of post-communism have been exacerbated by the outburst of armed conflicts, which engulfed the South Caucasus during the last years of Soviet rule.

The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, which started in the late 1980s, coincided with several separatist conflicts in neighboring Georgia. Although all of these conflicts raged as full-scale wars only until the mid 1990s and soon after transformed into frozen conflicts, their effects on post-communist transition have been significant. Military build-ups, which started along the borders of de-facto independent separatist enclaves of Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the 1990s, continues to these days.

For nearly two decades since the breakup of the USSR, the political elites' struggle for power and the failures of democratization and transition to market economy continues to plague the South Caucasus's republics. Although political transition and fairly efficient institutional reforms conducted in Georgia under President Mikheil Saakashvili, allowed the country to move past the Soviet legacy in overcoming small-level corruption and allowing for a humble economic progress, the lack of elite consensus, systemic clientelism and deeply-entrenched graft have continued to exist.

In Armenia, the dominance of the national-conservative Republican Party of Armenia (Hayastani Hanrapetakan Kasaksutyn, HHK) since 1999 has prevented democratization and supported the controlled succession of power from its leader, Robert Kocharyan, to his hand-picked successor, Serzh Sargsyan. Even more entrenched appears to be the political regime in Azerbaijan, where the flawed elections and legalization of limitless presidential terms enable Ilham Aliyev, the son and successor of the deceased communist-era leader and then long-time President of the country, Heydar Aliyev, to remain in power indefinitely. All of the above has led to a systemic lack of human security across the South Caucasus.

However, the entrenchment of undemocratic governments, slow pace of democratization and the lack of human security are phenomena not unique to the South Caucasus. According to a recent report by Freedom House (Habdank-Kolachkowska 2014), most of non-
Baltic post-Soviet countries are affected by a lack of post-communist transition, prevalence of an autocratic mindset among the ruling elites and the continuity of a Soviet political legacy.

Yet, the population of the former Soviet Union has long been accustomed to dealing with problems created by the lack of effective governance and multitude of economic challenges, by employing a variety of coping mechanisms used to alleviate the lack of human security. One of the most widespread forms of private safety nets—used by populations across post-Soviet Eurasia since the early decades of the communist period—is the reliance on informal networks and other forms of private safety nets.

Doing things informally and using contacts, connections and inter-personal networks instead of formal institutions, is a deeply-rooted tradition and a widely practiced coping mechanism tested by decades of Soviet rule. The function of informal networking in alleviating the lack of human security in the South Caucasus remained essential during the entire post-communist period. In Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, the reliance on informal networks not only pre-dates the Soviet occupation, but is also enmeshed into local traditions of using tight kinship networks and embedded in indigenous forms of social organization.

This contribution seeks to examine the ways in which informal networks substitute for and paradoxically contribute towards the lack of human security across the South Caucasus. The main goal of this contribution is to demonstrate the crucial role that informal networks have played both in providing human security to the population and in serving as obstacles to effective post-communist transition for over two decades that followed the end of Soviet rule in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

This study shows that in the present-day South Caucasus, informal networks perform essential functions of private safety nets, supporting family and kinship structures, assisting in the search for jobs, providing preferential and selective access to healthcare, education and other public services. Yet, along with their ‘positive’ human security functions, the South Caucasus’s informal networks also appear as highly elitist, exclusionist and homogeneous structures, which foster clientelism, paternalism and corruption, therefore, presenting long-term challenges to human security.

In this study, the concept of human security is understood as consisting of two main functions: the provision of economic security (‘freedom from want’) and security from political persecution and limitations on civil and political rights and freedoms (‘freedom from fear’) (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy 2007). Following the focus on these two forms of human security, empirical sections of this chapter are organized along the analysis of socioeconomic and sociopolitical aspects of human security and the lack thereof.

Unlike a large and growing literature on human security, which seeks to analyze the phenomenon through the lenses of international politics and therefore tends to emphasize international organizations and other external actors as key guarantors of human security
this study focuses on internal mechanisms of human security.

Understanding informal networks

The research to-date on inter-personal networks in the social sciences has been booming with studies in disciplines as diverse as behavioural psychology and micro economics (Easter 1996). Informal networks are circumscribed in the literature under a plethora of definitions and concepts, ranging from Mark Granovetter’s (1973) ‘strong-tie networks’ to Richard Rose’s (2000) ‘social networks’ and Endre Sik’s (1994) ‘capital networks’.

For instance, Richard Rose (2000: 149) describes informal networking in post-communist spaces as “face-to-face relationships between a limited number of individuals who know each other and are bound together by kinship, friendship, or propinquity”. Grødeland presented informal networks in post-communist Central Eastern European and Balkan societies as “an informal circle of people able and willing to help each other” (2007: 220). For the purpose of this chapter, networks are conceptualized simply as \textit{groups of individuals with mutual interests, cooperating and communicating with each on a more or less permanent basis}.

Crucial functions performed by informal networks in social life, politics and economy have been described by a large and growing body of literature on informal political networks (Helmke & Levitsky 2004; Ledeneva 2013), informal economy (North 1990; Loayza 1997) and informal networks as a sociological phenomenon (Misztal 2000). In Alena Ledeneva’s (2012: 378) wording: “[i]ndividuals as well as structures enable, provide for, but also depend on the informal workings of networks and the informally-built networks deserve attention.”

However, the vast majority of informal networks perform a combination of social, political and economic functions. For instance, Russian informal networks—known as \textit{blat} ¹ networks—operate in economic areas, everyday life and politics.

Although informal networks exist in most contemporary societies, they acquire institutional functions—ability to perform roles normally reserved to state and non-state formal institutions, such as public agencies or civil society organizations—only under certain circumstances. The current literature on informality concedes that informal social networks rise to prominence when the state and civil society are incapable or unwilling to perform their basic functions in providing welfare, social security and other public services (Weatherford 1982; Lomnitz 1988; Siegel 2009; Morris & Polese 2014b).

This withdrawal of the state creates niches that become filled by informal institutions that serve as alternative mechanisms of human security (North 1990). The current research on informal networks in Russia (Patico 2002; Ledeneva 2013), Uzbekistan (Rasanayagam 2011), Ukraine (Polese 2008; Onoshchenko & Williams 2013), Mexico (Daymon & Hodges 2009), China (Gold \textit{et al.} 2002; Chen \textit{et al.} 2013), Brazil (Fereira \textit{et al.} 2012), Arab countries (Barnett

\footnotesize{Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics Vol.3 No.3 Winter 2015}
et al. 2013) and sub-Saharan Africa (Hart 1973) have confirmed that networks thrive and proliferate when formal institutions are too weak, corrupt and ineffective to provide populations with basic human security.

While economic hardships have given rise to shadow or second economies, which in some corners of the world function on a scale exceeding formal economies (Schneider et al. 2010), the weakness of political institutions encourages the expansion of political networks (Helmke & Levitsky 2004), dubbed ‘power networks’ by Ledeneva (2013). Yet, even in societies with well-functioning political and economic institutions, networks still operate in social areas, which makes it beneficial to foster inter-personal networks of friends and acquaintances (Fox 2004).

Whereas informal networks serve as important private safety nets for populations in many contemporary developing and developed countries, it has been acknowledged in the literature that it is in post-communist and, most of all, in post-Soviet as well as in post-Yugoslav contexts that the function of networks in relieving the lack of human security becomes particularly far-reaching (Rose 2000; Misztal 2000; Gibson 2001; Round & Williams 2010).

From the early years of the Soviet-era, economic shortages and other shortcomings of the planned command economy of the USSR forced millions of Soviet citizens to rely on informal connections and contacts, employed for procuring food and other deficit items (O’Hearn 1980; Sampson 1987).

The problems of post-communism, such as financial crises and economic underdevelopment, stagnant industries and mass unemployment during the first post-communist decade, have ensured that informal networks—inherted from the communist period—survive and thrive across the territory of the former Soviet Union. Many scholars have argued that in contrast to Western European and even Central Eastern European countries (Miller et al. 1997; Pichler & Wallace 2007; Grødeland 2007), the spread and importance of informal networks in the post-Soviet region is enormous (Raiser et al. 2001; Aliyev 2015).

If the accession to the European Union, effective transition to market economy and democratic institutional reforms, have started reducing the significance of informal networks in Central Eastern European post-communist countries (Grødeland 2007; Aasland et al. 2012), the failure of democratization and the elites’ continuous reliance on Soviet-era forms of governance have done little to undermine the role of informality in post-Soviet societies. As demonstrated by recent studies (Giordano & Hayoz 2013; Morris & Polese 2014a), informal networks are as important in post-Soviet spaces as they used to be during the immediate post-communist period of the 1990s.
Informal networking in post-Soviet countries is often bogged down in corruption and clientelism (Morris & Polese 2014b). One-off payments for preferential treatment in state institutions and offerings of informal gifts to officials, as well as maintaining professional and semi-professional relationships based on continuous exchanges of gifts and money, are widespread in one form or the other in most post-Soviet societies.

However, the exchanges of monetary gifts and out-of-pocket payments to officials are not always seen as negative and even less often understood as bribery (Round et al. 2008; Morris & Polese 2014b). Instead, exchanges of material gifts and payments are seen as a necessity—a social tradition, an expression of gratitude and a sign of respect (Patico 2002; Morris & Polese 2014a). Therefore, the functioning of post-Soviet informal networks amidst the lack of human security is neither entirely positive nor exclusively negative.

While a voluminous body of literature has been produced on informal networks in Russia (Ledeneva 1998; 2013; Burawoy et al. 2000; Lonkila 2011), along with a decent number of studies on informal networking in Central Asia (Schatz 2004; Rasanayagam 2011; Radnitz et al. 2009), not much is known about the functioning of informal networks in alleviating human security in the South Caucasus.

The few existing studies on informal networking in Armenia (Babajanian 2008), Azerbaijan (Aliyev 2014a) and Georgia (Dershem & Gzirishvili 1998; Aliyev 2014b) show that the reliance on networks is indispensable in different areas of daily life and that therefore the importance of informal networking has not decreased since the end of Soviet rule.

However, a detailed and nuanced examination of the informal networks' role in providing the population of the South Caucasus with the 'freedom from want' and the 'freedom from need' is still absent. This study offers a first, preliminary examination of the role of informal networks in providing at least some human security in the South Caucasus.

Challenges to human security in the contemporary South Caucasus

Since the break-up of the USSR in December 1991 and the independence of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, the glacial pace of political transformation was one of the key challenges to human security. The most notable development in the area of political governance in the South Caucasus was the regime change that occurred during the second post-communist decade in Georgia.

Having succeeded in ousting from power the 'old school' leader of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, the pro-Western and pro-reform oriented United National Movement (UNM) led by Mikheil Saakashvili launched a series of ambitious institutional reforms. During the two terms of Saakashvili's presidency—from 2004 to 2013—comprehensive judicial, legislative and administrative reforms have been implemented, transforming the notoriously corrupt Georgian institutions into transparent and modern structures. The effectiveness of the reforms has been reflected in the country's ranking on international corruption and democracy ratings.2
However, Georgia’s successful transition is far from being complete and it remains particularly vulnerable to political processes in the country. The transition of power from UNM to the Georgian Dream Coalition in 2012 was not only the first democratic transition of power in the South Caucasus since the end of Soviet rule, but it was also followed by the continuous persecution of the former regime’s officials and UNM’s politicians, including the former President Saakashvili.

This trend of settling scores with the (new) opposition, which seems to dominate the current political landscape in the republic, threatens the previous achievements of Georgian political reforms. Furthermore, the UNM’s failure to resolve territorial conflicts—resulting in the Russo-Georgian War over South Ossetia in 2008—has left the burden of unresolved separatist conflicts on the new government. Yet, despite all setbacks and demerits of the Georgian case, Georgia’s governance reforms are indeed a success story in the South Caucasus.

In Armenia, since the electoral victory of the Republican Party in 1999, a controlled succession of power and steady deterioration of democratic governance have led to the decline of human security. Classified as a semi-consolidated authoritarian state by Freedom House (Habdan-Kolaczkowska 2014), during the last decade Armenia has witnessed a number of parliamentary and presidential elections flawed by vote rigging and corruption scandals.

The same period was marked by continuous pressure on the political opposition, occasionally eased by the government’s offers of dialogue and insignificant concessions. With no significant progress in democratic institution-building, rampant corruption continues to keep Armenia at the lower ends of international corruption ratings.

However, the decline of human security and the nearly complete failure of democratization are most notable in present-day Azerbaijan. Since the ascend of Heydar Aliyev—a former member of the communist nomenklatura and a Soviet-era leader of the country—to the presidency in 1993, Azerbaijan’s ruling elites have struggled hard to preserve the old forms of governance (Guliyev 2012). Reliance on ‘power networks’, informal distribution of offices and the elites’ unwillingness to embark on democratic institutional reforms have become the norm of the day in post-communist Azerbaijan (Safiyev 2013).

Although the government’s attempts to preserve and revive the Soviet-styled forms of governance had been in earnest during the decade of Heydar Aliyev’s presidency, the situation with corruption and clientelism markedly worsened under Ilham Aliyev, who had succeeded his father in 2003 as the leader of Azerbaijan (Habdan-Kolaczkowska 2014). With amendments made to the constitution allowing limitless presidential terms, persecution of the free press and independent civil society intensified during the third presidential term of Aliyev (Ibid.).
On the economic scene, during the first post-communist decade Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, similarly to other former Soviet countries, were crippled by the economic crises of the 1990s. Although heavily industrialized during the communist era, the economies of the South Caucasus's republics were highly dependent on material and technical support from other parts of the former USSR and Russia. Throughout the 1990s, the gross domestic products (GDP) of Azerbaijan and Georgia were similarly low, whereas Armenia's GDP was even lower. Along with economic underdevelopment of the early 1990s, basic living standards—salaries, availability of jobs, consumer prices, quality of education and healthcare—have all fallen behind the Soviet standards.

However, on overcoming harsh economic downfalls of the immediate post-Soviet decade, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia started to slowly recover their economies, embarking on a steady economic growth from the late 1990s onwards. Over a ten-year period from 2001 to 2011, the GDP’s of Armenia and Georgia had tripled and Azerbaijan's economic boom—largely spearheaded by the growth of the oil industry—positioned the country firmly among the world's fastest growing economies.

Even the global financial crisis of 2008-09 has failed to significantly slow down the growth of the South Caucasus's economies. Yet, the overall economic boom and relative improvement of economic well-being and living standards that were to follow, have done little to relieve rampant unemployment and the lack of access to adequate and all-inclusive healthcare, education and other public services.

As found by the representative survey conducted in 2013 by the South Caucasus-based research institute, Caucasus Research Resource Centres (CRRC), around 60 per cent of respondents in all three South Caucasian republics admitted that they do not have a permanent job. This data starkly contrasts official unemployment statistics, according to which only one per cent of population is unemployed in Azerbaijan, seven per cent in Armenia and 15 per cent in Georgia. High inflation rates and low incomes in the South Caucasus are combined with difficulties of finding decent jobs.

As shown in this section, challenges of human security in the South Caucasus are multiple. The contemporary history of the region has demonstrated that regime changes and economic progress do not necessarily lead to political transformation. The ruling elites in all three countries appear to be particularly resilient to pressures to democratize and to reform their institutions.

The decades of post-communist sociopolitical and socioeconomic challenges, along with the long history of economic hardships and political repressions under communism, have forced the population of the region to rely on informal coping mechanisms, among which the use of informal inter-personal networks is by far the most widely employed private safety net.
Informal networks and human security in the South Caucasus’ history

Historically, ethnic groups in the South Caucasus were highly reliant on informal and semi-formal structures of social association (Gadlo 1998; Kosven 1960). In pre-Soviet times, a vast diversity of kinship networks and other forms of social association flourished across the region. In Armenia, the bulk of social networking was usually centred on large patriarchal families (azg) (Babajanian 2008). Similar structures existed in different parts of Georgia. In Azerbaijan, semi-formal communities (mahalla) served as the main centers of social association and entrepreneurship (Sattarov et al. 2007).

Until the inclusion of the region into the Russian Empire, the absence of central governance, endless feudal warfare among numerous principalities and khanates and resulting economic instability have led to an increased reliance on semi-formal community structures for protection from political and economic crises. Composed of kinship-centred networks, these structures were organized along ethnic, religious and geographic belonging.

The incorporation of the South Caucasus into the Russian state at the beginning of the nineteenth century gradually put an end to devastating raids and conflicts within the region and created the preconditions for economic development. It also reduced reliance on informal and semi-formal structures. However, Armenians, Georgians and the Turkic-speaking ethnic groups of present-day Azerbaijan, administratively divided into Russian gubernias, retained their traditional forms of societal organization.

Significant changes in the social structure of the South Caucasus nations took place after the Bolsheviks' ascent to power in the wake of the 1917 October Revolution. After a brief period of independence in 1918-20, the republics in the South Caucasus were absorbed into the newly born Communist state. The short-lived independent states, as well as the Tsarist administrative divisions of the South Caucasus were swept away in the Bolsheviks’ state-building project, resulting in the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

On surviving the relatively liberal years of the New Economic Policy (NEP) of the 1920s, the region plunged into the age of Stalinist terror in the 1930s. Traditional forms of social organization became subject to fierce persecution from the Communist authorities. Azerbaijan's mahalla communities were forced underground, Georgia's traditional Councils of Elders were dissolved and the Armenian azg families were persecuted as archaic and feudal structures (Ishkanian 2008). As described by Killbourne-Matossian: “...Communists regarded the [Armenian traditional] family as a 'backward institution'” (1962: 63).

By the late 1930s Soviet authorities claimed the completion of their transformation of traditionalist societies of the South Caucasus; ethnic and cultural differences of the region's residents, per Soviet policy, had been blended into a single Soviet society (Sovetskoe obschestvo), while individual identities had been re-shaped into an image of a 'Soviet person' (Sovetskii chelovek). This so-called Sovietization of the South Caucasus aimed at the eradication of all non-Soviet traditions and structures, and the transformation and transplantation of social capital, previously centred in predominantly rural traditional
communities into bursting industrial urban centres of the Soviet Transcaucasus (Zakavkaz’e). Soviet rhetoric belied a more complicated reality.

Based on five-year plans, the Soviet command economy was never capable of providing the vast population of the USSR with basic day-to-day necessities. The inability of the Soviet economy to supply consumer goods, food items, durables and public services was particularly notable in the peripheral regions of the Soviet Union, such as Central Asia and the Caucasus (Schatz 2004). Empty shelves of government stores and shops throughout the 1930s and particularly the 1940s gave birth to an immense and multidimensional 'second economy' in the Soviet Union. This vast 'economy within the economy' was brought to life and controlled by informal inter-personal networks operating upon the principles of reciprocity of favours or blat (Ledeneva 1998).

Although South Caucasus residents were often unfamiliar with the term blat, the spread and density of their informal networks surpassed their Russian and Ukrainian contemporaries. Numerous historical accounts provide a vivid illustration of the enormous scale of the network-operated ‘second economy’ of Soviet Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (Altman 1983; Mars 1983; Sampson 1987). While some scholars argued that among the three republics, the Georgian informal economy was the most sophisticated and deeply entrenched in popular culture (Altman 1983; Greenslade 1980), perhaps no certain answer exists as to which Soviet Socialist republic in the South Caucasus had the most advanced 'shadow economy'.

There are a number of explanations as to why informal networking was thriving in the Soviet South Caucasus. Firstly, economic shortages and distribution of goods and services between the Soviet core (European Russia) and the periphery (South Caucasus) was always unequal (Sampson 1987). For example, Gertrude Greenslade (1980: 40) wrote that the income differences and gaps in consumption per capita between the European part of the USSR and the South Caucasus were significant, as was the availability of goods and services in different parts of the USSR.

Similarly to Central Asia, the majority of households in the South and North Caucasus had to rely on networks for basic human security in almost every aspect of socioeconomic life (Schatz 2004). Secondly, the majority of South Caucasus’s informal networks were kinship and family-based. Unlike the Russian networks of friends and acquaintances, the ‘circles of trust’ in the Caucasus were usually restricted to kin relatives and close friends.

Persecuted by the communist authorities, traditional kin and clan structures evolved into ‘underground’ venues of informal civic association, entrepreneurship and social life. Informal networks in the South Caucasus not only supplied their members with goods and services, but also preserved cultural heritage and traditional ways of life.

In an age of severe censorship, persecution of all forms of political or cultural dissent and persistent economic hardships, informal structures both offered and created impermeable
enclaves of free expression that were difficult for communist nomenklatura to penetrate, and made available to the population the gains and spoils of the 'second economy'.

In other words, regardless of the gains made during the Soviet period with respect to mass literacy and basic public health, the fundamental sociopolitical and socioeconomic weaknesses of the Soviet state and its decades-long negligence and unwillingness to provide its population with human security, in conjunction with efforts by the communist leadership to blend all Soviet people into a uniform mass, encouraged the growth and ensured the strength of informal networks in the Soviet South Caucasus.

However, the Soviet-age networking in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia was not all about protecting the population from the negative effects of Communism. Corruption thrived in the South Caucasus on a scale unknown in many other regions of the USSR. By the 1960s corrupt practices reached colossal proportions; entire industries and governments of Socialist republics had to be continuously re-staffed and reorganized to curb corruption (Greenslade 1980; Valiyev 2011). Since not all transactions and payments of the 'second economy' could be reciprocated with favors and exchanges, the use of bribes, material and non-material alike, was widespread.

At most levels of its operation, with the exception of favors distributed among family members, the functioning of networks required monetary exchanges. Inevitably, each network, at some point, had to cooperate with other networks. Bribes and gifts were used to 'bridge' connections between networks and to obtain goods and services not readily available within a network. Besides, hierarchy, allegiances and loyalties within and between networks were necessary to ensure the smooth operation of the informal economy. They led to the development and consolidation of clientelism.

An intricate web of patron-client relations steadily emerged, not only in sectors of governance and economic production, but also as a means of inter-network communication and cooperation. Among many other endogenous and exogenous factors, the erosion of the Soviet economy from within, as well as the weakness of local republican governments bogged down by corruption led to the demise of the Soviet Union.

Yet, well before the break-up of the USSR, informal networks in the South Caucasus acquired another function. Under perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness), apart from securing material needs and safeguarding private association of their members, these networks also began serving as centres of political and nationalist dissent. The so-called neformaly (informals) groups of the mid and late 1980s became as widespread in the South Caucasus as elsewhere in the Soviet Union (Alekseeva 1990; Shubin 2006).

At the early stages of their existence, neformaly networks in the Caucasus prioritized political action as their key objective and sought to undermine the ageing Soviet system from within through the expression of political, social, cultural and environmental dissent. Notwithstanding similarities with Russian contemporaries however, neformaly networks in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were staunchly nationalist. By the early 1990s, the majority
of informal networks in the South Caucasus transformed into political or social movements, in the process, ceasing to be informal.

Human security functions of post-Soviet informal networks

What happened to the sophisticated web of informal networks after the end of oppressive Soviet rule in the South Caucasus? A number of sociopolitical and socioeconomic developments of the immediate post-Soviet period predetermined not only the survival of informal networking but also its proliferation. The violent collapse of communist administrations in 1991-92 had brought to power dissident governments of Abulfaz Elchibey in Azerbaijan, Levon Ter-Petrosyan in Armenia, and Zviad Gamsakhurdia in Georgia. Elchibey, Ter-Petrosyan, and Gamsakhurdia, renowned and popularly supported political dissidents, had no experience of running state administrations, however.

Whereas Ter-Petrosyan remained as Armenia's President until 1998, the first Presidents of Azerbaijan and Georgia had served less than a year each. By 1993 they were replaced by the former members of Soviet nomenklatura: Heydar Aliyev in Azerbaijan and Eduard Shevardnadze in Georgia. The lack of political stability and economic crises of the 1990s resulted in the South Caucasian countries' GDPs dropping by over 40 percent as compared to their performance under Communist rule.

Devastating wars fought between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh and between Georgia and the Russian-supported separatists in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as the start of the First Chechen War in the neighboring North Caucasus, had send waves of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) across the entire region. These and other hardships of post-communism ensured the survival of informal networks and their importance for daily lives of post-Soviet residents of the South Caucasus.

According to surveys administered by the World Values Surveys (WVS) across the South Caucasus in the mid 1990s, the overwhelming majority of respondents (from 85 to 95 percent) relied on kinship and family networks on a daily basis. By contrast, less than 70 percent of the population in the Baltic republics and in the Eastern European post-Soviet republics (Moldova and Ukraine) used kinship networks daily. The same survey also reported that a majority of the South Caucasus' residents (over 80 percent) were unhappy with their economic well-being and believed that life was better during the Communist period.

Therefore, most of all, dire socioeconomic conditions and the lack of sociopolitical stability encouraged the proliferation of informal networks and their expansion into many areas of the day-to-day activity of post-Soviet residents in the South Caucasus. The following sections will examine in more detail the functions of post-communist informal networks in addressing human security deficits in economic and political spheres of the South Caucasus's countries.
Socioeconomic functions of informal networks

Having managed to overcome the harsh 1990s, the economic sectors of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia embarked on a process of steady economic recovery and growth. The relative improvement of economic well-being, particularly in urban areas, undermined the informal networks' function of procuring scarce consumer goods and food items: the shelves of shops and markets were no longer empty, as was often the case during perestroika and the early years of post-communist transition. Yet, low incomes and the lack of jobs prevented the population from purchasing these goods. Networks and connections were still indispensable in looking for good jobs, as well as in securing access to state institutions.

Not surprisingly, the results of the European Values Survey (EVS) conducted in the South Caucasus in 2008 do not notably differ from the mid-1990s surveys, administered in the region by the WVS. For instance, similar to ten years ago, over 80 percent of the respondents relied on their kinship and friendship networks in their daily lives. This demonstrates that informal networks have not lost their role in alleviating the lack of human security.

Present-day informal networks, unlike the networks of the communist era and the informal groups of the early 1990s, are no longer employed to obtain scarce material goods but instead are used to gain access to public goods and services, which still remain difficult to procure for the majority of the population.

For example, over a quarter of respondents to the CRRC's (2013) survey in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia believed that informal connections and contacts are important in getting a good job. Many survey respondents (on average 30 percent across the region) have also mentioned that they work for members of their kinship network, indicating that family ties play an important role in the allocation of jobs. Connections, contacts and family links are important not only due to the scarcity of jobs but also because of the low levels of interpersonal and individual trust among people beyond their own networks.6

Unlike Western societies, where future employees are selected based on their letters of reference and professional skills, the best form of reference for an employee in the South Caucasus is an individual's personal connections and family ties. Equally important is the use of networks in accessing public services such as healthcare and education, as well as dealing with formal institutions, in particular, receiving formal documents.

As presented by the Life in Transition (EBRD 2011) report, although the use of connections and gifts in dealings with formal institutions has significantly decreased over the past decade in Georgia, in Armenia and Azerbaijan, employing network and out-of-pocket payments in order to receive preferential treatment in government institutions or to access healthcare and educational institutions are still widespread.
Informal networks continue to retain their socioeconomic functions also due to the low levels of household incomes observed in each of the South Caucasian republics. As reported by the Caucasus Barometer survey (2013), over 60 percent of respondents in Georgia, 40 percent in Azerbaijan and over 50 percent in Armenia confirmed that their monthly income is below US$300.

At the same time, the majority of survey respondents—over 60 per cent in Armenia and Georgia—stated that a minimal monthly income necessary for a normal life should be between US$400 to US$800. In Azerbaijan, around 60 percent of participants thought that minimal monthly income has to be over US$1,200. In addition, over half of the survey participants in all three countries perceived their current economic rung as either low or very low.

Inadequate household incomes are further exacerbated by the lack of financial security and the low use of formal financial institutions. According to the same Caucasus Barometer survey, only 12 percent of public in Armenia, 11 percent in Georgia and 18 percent in Azerbaijan admitted that they have personal savings. Yet, it appears that these savings are usually kept away from formal financial institutions, since, as reported by the survey, only 40 percent of the population in Armenia and Azerbaijan have bank accounts (60 percent in Georgia).

Bearing in mind that less than half of the population trusts banks in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (CRRC 2013), the use of formal financial institutions remains limited. Borrowing money from relatives and friends, rather than taking loans from banks, is a common trend in the region and over half of survey participants said that they have debts. Whereas over 60 percent of respondents across the region mentioned that they regularly borrow money, many confirmed that they would not be able to borrow money outside their kinship circles.

As shown by the Life in Transition (2011) report, unlike residents of other post-communist regions, the South Caucasus’s population had the heaviest rates of reliance on informal private safety nets during the Global Economic Crisis of 2008-10. Similar results were presented by the Caucasus Barometer surveys held from 2008 to 2013 in the region: over 80 percent of the respondents in all three South Caucasian countries relied on their family members and relatives in emergencies and employed their private networks to solve various household problems, ranging from fixing a car to taking care of an ill person.

The plurality of the above socioeconomic functions of informal networks arises from the weakness of formal institutions and their inability to provide the population with essential mechanisms of human security. The lack of public safety nets offered by the state encourages the proliferation of informal networks into areas of socioeconomic activity normally reserved and regulated by the state, such as creating jobs, providing access to healthcare and education, and other welfare services.
Sociopolitical functions of informal networks

The post-communist history of the South Caucasus is rife with anti-regime protests and cases of civic activism. The role of informal institutions in the Georgian 'Rose Revolution' has been acknowledged (Khutsishvili 2008), along with the importance of political 'power networks' employed by the ruling elites in all parts of the South Caucasus (Aliyev 2013; Safiyev 2013). However, in contrast to the perestroika period when the lack of human security and weakness of state institutions resulted in the rise of underground political networks of dissidents, the current setbacks of democratization and reforms in the South Caucasus have had very little impact on the sociopolitical functions of informal networks.

As shown by the WVS surveys (2010-14), less than quarter of the public in the South Caucasus had any interest in politics and over 95 percent of respondents in Azerbaijan and 85 percent in Armenia and around 70 percent in Georgia admitted that they would never sign a (political) petition, join a boycott or a strike. When asked by the Caucasus Barometer survey (2013) how often do they discuss politics with family and friends, over half of respondents in Armenia and Georgia and around 70 percent in Azerbaijan stated that they never talk about politics with members of their informal networks.

These data show a notable retreat of the South Caucasus's population from politics. However, with the exception of Armenia, where over 60 per cent of the public expressed their lack of trust towards the government, only 22 per cent of respondents in Azerbaijan and 15 percent in Georgia said that they have no trust in their governments. Again with the exception of Armenia (15 percent), over half of the surveyed public in Azerbaijan and Georgia believed that people are treated fairly by the government in their respective countries.

Yet, trust towards the government differs from the levels of institutional trust. Hence, well over half of survey participants in Armenia and Georgia, and 89 percent in Armenia thought that court systems in their respective countries favour some citizens over others.

The informal networks’ retreat from politics in the present-day South Caucasus comes along with the lack of civic engagement. The majority of representative surveys conducted in the region during the last ten years conclude that on average less than three percent of the public in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia participate in the work of formal civil society.

With networks currently performing many of the civil sector's socioeconomic functions in the South Caucasus (Aliyev 2014a), participation in civic activities appears rather unattractive to many people. Since non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have proven incapable of advancing political rights and interests of the population, the levels of popular trust towards civil society organizations are even lower than trust to state institutions.7 Amidst the above detailed failures of state and civic institutions, the role of informal networks in providing human security has only increased.
The dark side of informal networking

As shown in the previous sections, informal networks perform multiple functions in assisting the population in areas neglected by the state and civil society. Yet, similar to informal networks in many other parts of the world (Al-Ramahi 2008; Daymon & Hodges 2009; Chen et al. 2013), the South Caucasus networks function both as effective and time-tested mechanisms of alleviating human security problems and as hierarchical and homogenous structures encouraging corruption and clientelism.

Many scholars of post-communist society argue that the rise of informal networks in post-Soviet countries have reinforced and strengthened the deeply-rooted patron-client networks and the tradition of bribery (Rose 1995; Ledeneva 1998; Burawoy et al. 2000). Among other post-Soviet regions, the South Caucasus suffered the heaviest impact of corruption and clientelism in post-Soviet spaces.

Although the shadowy role of informal networks in promoting corrupt practices and patron-client relations in the South Caucasus has been emphasized by a number of studies (Börzel & Pamuk 2011; Guliyev 2012; Aliyev 2013), the ‘dark side’ of informal networking in the region still remains under-explored.

Whereas it is particularly challenging to identify and measure the participation of informal networks in corrupt practices through survey data, findings of recent surveys suggest that, similarly to how the attitude towards corruption has been explained by Morris and Polese (2014b) in Russian and Ukrainian contexts, corruption is not necessarily seen as negative.

As reported by the 2013 CRRC survey on volunteerism and civic participation in Georgia, just over a quarter of respondents believed that making informal payments to get a higher pension or giving a gift to a doctor in return of preferential treatment, do not constitute bribery. In consequence, regardless of the high corruption scores assigned to Armenia and Azerbaijan, although not to post-‘Rose Revolution’ Georgia, the popular understanding of which practices constitute corruption and which do not differ significantly from the Western perception and understanding of corruption.

For instance, only four per cent of respondents of the Caucasus Barometer survey (2013) in Armenia, 27 per cent in Azerbaijan and only one per cent in Georgia mentioned about encountering corrupt practices over the past year. Barbara Misztal explained that in many communist countries, corruption “...became judged in less straightforwardly negative terms and was seen as a sign of societal life and energy since, under the conditions of the opposition between “them” [formal institutions] and ‘us’” (2000: 215).

With the end of state communism in the South Caucasus, informal payments and gift-giving is still seen as part of daily life and as a social custom. For informal networks the use of out-of-pocket payments, gifts and other forms of material gratitude offered in return of services or preferential treatment to officials or individuals is essential for cementing the network ties and maintaining reciprocity. Building up patron-client relations within networks is
understood as manifestations of natural hierarchy based on the traditional respect for elders in the South Caucasus's societies.

As with all other forms of social and inter-personal interaction, hierarchies within informal networks are centred on one's age, sex and position within the family or a wider kinship group. The distribution of public goods and services among network members also depends on the proximity of kinship ties. Hence, non-blood relatives and friends are usually left on the margins of networks in terms of the access to public goods and services.

Due to the homogenous nature of South Caucasus’ informal networks and due to the existence of an intricate system of hierarchy within such networks, the distribution of network-provided public goods is unequal and exclusionist. Accordingly, networks are private safety nets—indispensable to the population due to the retreat of the state and (weakness of) civil society—that fall short of providing either a substitute of human security or a semblance of public safety nets offered by the state in Western countries.

The homogenous structure of informal networks and their exclusionist and segregationist modes of operation, although developed as the result of the lack of human security in political and economic areas under Soviet rule, continue impeding institutional improvements and undermining the effectiveness of reforms.

Even in reformist Georgia, where successful institutional reforms have managed to some extent to root out petty corruption and eliminate the use of informal networks and connections in dealings with formal institutions, informal relations continue surviving and thriving in politics as well as in areas overlooked by reforms, such as unemployment, communal services and healthcare (Aliyev 2014b).

Conclusion

The main objective of this contribution has been to explore the role of informal networks in substituting formal mechanisms of human security in the present-day South Caucasus. Contemporary informal networks in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were formed under Communist rule and it was during the Soviet period that the informal networks in the region acquired their current characteristics.

Having transformed from traditionalist forms of social capital under the pressure from the Sovietization, the Caucasus's informal networks became typical Soviet-era informal structures supplying their members both with public goods, which the communist economy was unable to provide, and serving as niches of civic association forbidden by Soviet authorities.

Despite extensive political and economic changes of the post-Soviet period, numerous problems of post-communism such as unemployment, social inequality and the inherent weakness of formal institutions have persisted, necessitating the continued existence of
informal networks. As a consequence of incomplete post-communist transformation, informal networks not only preserved many of their communist-era functions, but also acquired a number of new responsibilities, such as the provision of jobs and access to financial resources, the importance of which was insignificant under communism.

Although on the one hand, the networks serve as important private safety nets and coping mechanisms assisting populations in times of crises and emergencies, they on the other hand enable public goods to be distributed unequally, allowing narrow circles of individuals, connected to political and economic power centres, to reap benefits at the expense of state institutions and the society at large.

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Endnotes

1. Expert on blat, Alena Ledeneva (2009: 1) defines blat as: “the use of personal networks for obtaining goods and services in short supply and for circumventing formal procedures. Blat networks channelled an alternative currency—an informal exchange of favours—that introduced elements of the market into the planned economy and loosened up the rigid constraints of the political regime.”

2. For instance, Transparency International has moved Georgia from 133rd place (out of 177, with the highest score representing the highest level of corruption) on its Corruption Perception Index, which the country occupied in 2004, to 55th place in 2013. Similarly, Freedom House has upgraded Georgia on its democracy scores from semi-authoritarian regime in 2003 to hybrid or transitional to democracy political regime. See Freedom House “Nations in Transit” at https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/nationstransit#.VeLrXZf5 PfA.

3. In 1993 the GDP of Armenia (in current US dollars) was USD $356, Azerbaijan's GDP was USD $530 and Georgia USD $550.

4. See the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), 2011.

5. As reported by the CRRC survey (“Caucasus Barometer 2013”), administered in 2013, average monthly incomes across the South Caucasus range from US$200 to US$300.

6. Less than a quarter of respondents to the CRRC (2011) survey in Azerbaijan and Georgia agreed that most people can be trusted. In Armenia, the number of those who trust other people (strangers) stood at 10 percent of respondents.

7. According to the data collected by the Caucasus Barometer survey (2013), less than a quarter of respondents expressed their trust towards NGOs in Azerbaijan and Georgia. In Armenia, only 17 per cent of the public said that they have any sort of trust towards NGOs.

NB: do you have any comments on Huseyn Aliyev's article? Please send these to info@ethnogeopolitics.org or post these on www.ethnogeopolitics.org.
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HOW PEOPLE MAKE THE WORLD: The Ten Global Challenges

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From the Foreword by Bertrand Schneider, Secretary General of the Club of Rome:

...The title chosen by Hans TenDam is a profession of faith, and his book is a model of lucidity, without illusions, yet also not prophesying catastrophe.

The world is in a sorry state. As it makes its way through the great transition, it seems to be assailed by natural disasters, geopolitical upheavals, by the great challenges of poverty, hunger, unemployment and pollution. We are leaving behind a society in which we knew and understood the nature, pace and rules, and now without realizing it we are being thrust into a global society, characterized by immense complexity and uncertainty.

As we make our way into the unknown, we have to attempt a fresh analysis, identify the new struggles ahead, and become actors in this planetary theatre without having learned our lines. TenDam stresses that understanding and action must be the key words. We must be able to adapt to change if we are to cope with this latest phase in the human adventure.

We must learn our way into this new era. As we stumble through the intertwined complex of contemporary problems, it is important for everyone to be involved. Every individual is more or less directly concerned with the problems of the world and the changes in store, even if it is easier to perceive the symptoms than the causes. The best hope for the survival of society thus lies in thousands of small, wise decisions by millions of ordinary people as they realize what is happening, rather than in reliance on leaders of governments to propose dramatic solutions. We must recognize that the possibilities of positive change reside in the motivations and the values that determine our behavior as individuals - the behavior of nations and societies ultimately reflects that of their citizens.

...In the face of the new global situation two very different attitudes are possible. One is to give up the struggle, overwhelmed by a sense of gloom and doom, and turn inward, away from the mind-boggling complexities and difficulties. The other attitude is the exact opposite: instead of feeling a helpless victim, to opt for action and try to create a new society. The current instability of the world is too often perceived as a threat, whereas it could open up new horizons and give people fresh opportunities to become Peace Builders and World Makers.
Main Article

Border Violence in ‘Post-Conflict’ Abkhazia

Anastasia Shesterinina

Introduction

In the two decades since the end of the 1992-93 Georgian-Abkhaz war, the border area between Georgia and Abkhazia has seen multiple, diverse forms of violence. This area stretching from the heights of the Caucasus Mountains to the Black Sea along the Inguri river was relatively peaceful before the war and was barely touched during the war. As the war ended, it became the epicenter of organized political violence in Abkhazia. This article seeks to explain why violence has persisted in the Georgian-Abkhaz border area into the post-war period.

This aspect of the complicated history of the Georgian-Abkhaz relations is rarely a focus of academic research. Historically, Abkhazia was gradually depopulated, as the majority of the Abkhaz were deported in the 19th century and declared ‘guilty’ by the Russian Empire, to be resettled in the first instance predominantly by the population from West Georgia.

As the Empire was crumbling, Abkhazia sought help from the newly founded Democratic Republic of Georgia in a struggle against the Bolsheviks in 1918. The ensuing period of Georgian military presence, with punitive measures against the Abkhaz, shaped the negative view of Georgia among the Abkhaz population, leading to Abkhaz support for the establishment of Soviet power across Abkhazia in 1921. At that time, Abkhazia was granted the status of a Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) and was associated with Georgia through an alliance treaty.

Shortly thereafter, by the decision of then Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, Abkhazia was formally integrated into the Georgian SSR as its Autonomous Republic. Repression in the political, economic, and cultural realms followed this 1931 status change. In the first decades as an Autonomous SSR Abkhaz schools were closed, the Latin-based Abkhaz alphabet was replaced with Georgian scripts, and the toponymy was changed from Abkhaz to Georgian. Moreover, a mass resettlement of the Georgian population into Abkhazia dramatically changed the demographic composition of Abkhazia (see Chart 1 in the Appendix).

Georgian-Abkhaz tensions both at the macro and micro levels intensified as a result. The Abkhaz elite constantly appealed to Moscow in an attempt to restore their region's rights. Public gatherings and clashes took place periodically (1957, 1967, 1978, 1989), culminating in the first violent events in the late 1980s and the war of 1992-93. Abkhazia emerged from this war as a winner militarily (and in the popular imagination).
Yet, its status remains contested. To date Abkhazia’s independence has been recognized only by Russia and a handful of other states.\(^8\) Decades of negotiations have not resulted in an agreement on the status of Abkhazia and a normalization of relations with post-Soviet Georgia. Neither has it been possible for up to 240,000 Georgians displaced from Abkhazia as a result of the war to return to their homes and former communities (HRW 1995; Trier \textit{et al.} 2010: 21).

Nor has violence ended. The Georgian-Abkhaz border area has been characterized by a protracted period of armed clashes, low-level guerilla activity, and crime in the lowlands of the Gali region, including the Six-Day War of 1998. Episodes of fighting with heavy weaponry took place in the highlands of the Kodori Gorge until 2008, when Russia assisted Abkhazia in establishing control over this area during its war with Georgia.

This article focuses on selective violence\(^9\) against civilians in the Gali region during the early post-war period. This region was predominantly Georgian\(^10\) before the war of 1992-93. According to the census of 1989, 74,712 Georgians, or 93.8% of the total population, lived in the Gali region. After the war, the region turned into an area of contested territorial control by the emergent Abkhaz state and Georgian armed elements, crossing the border into Abkhazia to carry out violent activities there.

Georgian government structures were absent from the region, while the Abkhaz government had not established full control and struggled to build institutions there. In these conditions the Gali region became a hotbed of post-war violence in Abkhazia, including targeted killings of civilians by both Abkhaz and Georgian armed actors.

I address the problem of continuing border violence by drawing on an original events dataset, individual life story interviews and focus groups, and secondary materials gathered over eight months of fieldwork in the area in 2010-13. The events dataset draws from a media archive compiled by the author based on local and international news sources\(^11\) and provides an outline of violence events over the initial post-war year of 1993-94. With this chronology, I trace the processes of post-war violence at the micro level in interaction with relevant macro-level (i.e. state and international) developments.

I then review four alternative explanations for the persistence of border violence into the post-war period: the state weakness, political settlement, destabilization, and external actor logics. I argue that these explanations, developed at the macro, state level, have limited value in addressing the complex, relational structure of border violence in Abkhazia, especially its local patterns of variation and related social relationships with which it is intertwined.

Instead, I focus on the micro level, looking at how events developed among key actors on the ground. I utilize Kalyvas’ (2006) wartime space continuum related to levels of local control and patterns of collaboration with coercive actors.
I locate violent events in the Gali region in the contested zone, predominantly controlled by the Abkhaz, and argue that a complex, embedded social structure of violence based on fear emerged between armed actors on both sides of the border and the local population in Gali. In this structure local residents are subjected to pressure from both sides to collaborate, and as a consequence suffer reprisals. This in turn supports the continuation of violent conflict between Abkhaz and Georgian forces.

I conclude by addressing the implications of this analysis for our understanding of human security in the South Caucasus. I argue that the positioning of Gali locals ‘between two fires’ highlights the centrality of fear and clarifies the notion of freedom from fear where governance structures are barely present (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy 2012).

‘Post-Conflict’ Border Violence: Chronology of Events (1993-94)

This section establishes a detailed record of post-war violence in the border area between Georgia and Abkhazia to demonstrate the complexity of the situation on the ground. The variation in border violence is analyzed in the following section. Observing the Abkhaz advance to Sukhumi in September 1993, Alexandr Kavsadze, head of the Georgian delegation, said that “[i]f, at the price of shedding enormous amounts of blood..., the Abkhaz troops do manage to take the city, the territory of Abkhazia will become an arena of permanent war” (Urigashvili 1993). He was not far from the truth.

As the Abkhaz forces were nearing victory, hundreds of thousands of Georgian civilians fled. The border area became “almost entirely depopulated” (S/26795, annex, 1993: para.36). Those who stayed behind, especially if “pointed out as collaborators of the Georgian forces,” were often killed (S/26795, annex, 1993: para. 19).

The situation was not better for the remaining population. “[A] wave of marauding” swept Sukhumi (Chelnokov 1993). In the countryside, “[b]ands of armed individuals... terroriz[ed] the population” and generated “a permanent state of fear, preventing farmers from working in their fields” (S/26795, annex, 1993: para. 29, 25).

The Gali region, which enjoyed relative calm prior to and during the war, now turned into a “borderland buffer zone” (Zhdkov 1996: 355). Small-scale, localized clashes in the area escalated into a constant ‘small war.’ The armed forces frequently exchanged fire. The so-called ‘uncontrolled’ Georgian armed groups12 crossed the Inguri river to destroy infrastructure, lay mines, and ambush. They freely operated in areas with dense forests, marshes, and rivers, especially in lower Gali (Interview, 14 December 2011). Arguably, Boris Kakubava, leader of a Mkhedrinoni unit, a paramilitary group engaged in the war, formed these groups with displaced persons (DPs)13 in preparation for a new invasion of Abkhazia (Zverev 1996).
However, Georgia's leadership preferred a peaceful resolution. A first round of negotiations began in Geneva on 30 November 1993. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed as a result. The parties agreed to avoid the use of force, exchange prisoners of war, and find a solution to the DP problem (S/26875, annex, 1993). On 13 January 1994, in a second round of negotiations, both parties committed to "ensure the safety of refugees, displaced persons, and personnel" involved in the implementation of DP return processes (S/1994/32, annex: para. 4). The process of return was scheduled to begin first in the Gali region on 10 February 1994.

On the ground, however, Abkhaz military positions in the Gali region were being constantly attacked. On 18 December 1993, Abkhaz posts by the Inguri power station were fired upon. A Georgian armed group crossed near the Inguri bridge. The fighting continued overnight. Although the Georgian units were pushed out, localized clashes persisted throughout the winter. “[A]cts of looting and violence” against civilians, carried out “by uncontrolled armed groups,” continued as well (S/26646, 1993: para. 7; S/1994/32, annex: preamble).

The United Nations (UN) Secretary General argued that “the present ceasefire,... not based on a written agreement, is fragile” (S/26646, 1993: para. 21). Yet, no large-scale attacks were attempted, despite the insistence on another invasion of Abkhazia by Georgian opposition representatives (Razorenova 1994). In Tbilisi Kakubava called for a military campaign (Razorenova 1994). Locally, Dato Shengelia, later Minister of Internal Affairs of Abkhazia (in exile), was reported to have armed locals to engage in guerrilla activities (Darchiashvili and Nodia 2003).

Such activities intensified before Russian President Boris Yeltsin's visit to Tbilisi. Wary of a possible attack by Georgian armed forces and 'uncontrolled' groups amassed at the border on 20 January 1994, the Abkhaz destroyed the Inguri bridge to prevent passage and prepared for a Georgian infiltration into the easily accessible lower part of the Gali region.

On 3 February 1994, Russia and Georgia signed a Treaty of Friendship, Neighborliness and Cooperation, in which Russia repeated its commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity. Conditional on the settlement of Georgia's conflicts, Russia agreed to assist Georgia in building up its army, in return for the establishment of Russian military bases in Georgia. The Treaty, thus, “created a real mechanism for Tbilisi to return to the status quo ante” (Rotar 1994: 10). Officials warned that “[t]he fragile... truce in the Caucasus could be disrupted if [it was] interpreted as encouraging the resolution of the Abkhaz... problem... by force” (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 5 February 1994). In Abkhazia the treaty was viewed as a threat and “entail[ed] a further escalation of tension,” the Abkhaz argued (Gorodetskaya 1994).

Large-scale fighting recommenced in the Gali region almost immediately after the treaty was signed. Abkhaz forces began to purge the area of Georgian armed groups. On 5 February, days before the planned DP return, they attacked Georgian forces in Upper Gali, arguably in response to preceding fire against Abkhaz positions. The Georgian forces fled. So did the
locals who suffered from the attack. The fighting moved to Gali’s lower zones thereafter and continued for a week. As a result, Abkhaz forces had established control over the entire region. Up to 500 lives were lost, 800 houses burned, and 3000 civilians once again displaced (S/1994/253: para. 17; HRW 1995).

In Georgia these hostilities were viewed as “punitive actions” against Georgian civilians (Rotar 1994). The Abkhaz, in contrast, said that the operation was not directed against Georgian civilians, but rather aimed to counter a plan by Georgian armed elements to cut off Abkhaz-controlled border regions, where most Georgians had lived prior to the war, for reunification with Georgia. The Georgian government denied these accusations.

Reacting to these events, on 9 February, Georgia and Russia jointly called for the return of all DPs and the deployment of peacekeepers across Abkhazia (Fuller 1994a). In response to this action, described as provocative by the Abkhaz, “the Abkhaz parliament issued a statement proclaiming Abkhazia’s independence from Georgia” (Fuller 1994a).

In the third round of talks that followed, the Georgian side reiterated its calls for the all-inclusive DP return and peacekeeping deployment, while Abkhaz representatives rejected these demands or “any document that included recognition of Georgia’s territorial integrity” (S/1994/253, para. 9). The sides grew “diametrically opposed” on the issue of DP return and Abkhazia’s status (Inal-Ipa 2000: 115). Negotiations were deadlocked.

Unease with the deadlock deepened in Georgia. Militant forces voiced opposition to the negotiations and advocated military action. On 26 February 1994, Eduard Shevardnadze, Chairman of the Georgian Parliament, accepted that “a renewal of hostilities in Abkhazia was inevitable unless progress was made towards a political settlement” (Fuller 1994b).

Indeed, Georgian troops and weaponry were observed at the border in late February. Concerned with a potential attack, the Abkhaz government drafted soldiers. On 24 March, fighting restarted in Gali and Kodori. Georgian troops clashed with Abkhaz forces, who pushed them out and even occupied two villages outside of Abkhazia (Fuller 1994c).

Following the resumption of hostilities, Georgian-Abkhaz talks resumed in Moscow. On 4 April, the parties signed a Declaration on Measures for a Political Settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict, committing to a “strict formal ceasefire” and non-use of force (S/1994/397, annex I). A Quadripartite Agreement on Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons was signed (S/1994/397, annex II). For the first time, Georgia agreed to exclude a reference to its territorial integrity and ceded to the Abkhaz demands for restrictions on the return to Abkhazia of those who had fought against the Abkhaz in 1992-93.

Shevardnadze saw this as the only way to break the deadlock. The opposition in Georgia, on the contrary, found it “could lead to loss of Georgian control over Abkhazia” (Fuller 1994d). For Abkhazia, the agreements were “accepting it as a state-entity of equal status to Georgia,” a view that shaped arguments by the Abkhaz in the future (Hewitt 1996). Despite the
political progress, the situation on the ground did not improve. On 14 April, for instance, 25 armed persons were reported to have crossed from Georgia proper to Saberio in the Gali region. Another crossing took place ten days later. Deaths and injuries resulted from the ensuing clashes, including both civilians and Abkhaz military personnel.

However, on 14 May 1994, the Agreement on a Cease-fire and Separation of Forces was at last signed (S/1994/397, Annex 1). The parties agreed to observe the ceasefire and refrain from military actions. Troops and heavy weaponry were to be withdrawn from the security and restricted-weapons zones and peacekeepers deployed. Critically, the Agreement formally acknowledged the previous infiltrations of the Georgian armed groups into Abkhazia and stipulated that "[a]ll volunteer formations made up of persons from beyond the frontiers of Abkhazia shall be disbanded and withdrawn" (S/1994/397, annex I: para. iii (e)).

This demand was not implemented. Abkhaz positions in the Gali region and Kodori were recurrently fired upon in the wake of the agreement. DPs were reported to have attempted a crossing of the Inguri behind artillery fire, but were deterred by Abkhaz forces. Locals collaborating with the Abkhaz were targeted. On 22 May, for instance, the Gali mayor's brother and another Mingrelian were killed in an ambush.

Georgy Kondratyev, Russia’s Deputy Minister of Defense, described the situation “as explosive and argued for the swiftest possible deployment of peacekeepers” (Fuller 1994e). The Russian-led peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was soon stationed in the 12 km security area on each Inguri side, the area of utmost post-war tension (S/1994/397, Annex I; S/RES/937, 1994). Peacekeepers were authorized to “return fire if attacked, but … ‘it [was] not their task to disarm or eliminate’ armed formations” (Fuller 1994f).

The deployment of peacekeepers and partial withdrawal of troops and heavy weaponry by both warring sides from the restricted-weapons zone improved the situation on the ground (S/1994/818: para. 21). But not for long. Troops and weaponry were not withdrawn from Kodori. Thus, tensions there involved “not just small arms but also artillery” (Litovkin 1994).

Moreover, in late June 1994, the CIS peacekeepers initiated a return of 10,000 DPs in violation of the Quadripartite Agreement. A UNHCR spokesman said many were accused by the Abkhaz of carrying arms (Fuller 1994g). The ‘spontaneous returns evidently put a strain on the local situation’ (S/1994/818, para. 24). In the next round of talks in Sochi in early July, the Abkhaz protested and insisted on a phased and screened procedure. Assurances by the peacekeepers “that measures were being taken to prevent the uncontrolled return” did not help in advancing the negotiations (Fuller 1994g). The negotiations were again stalled.

Contrary to these assurances, on 14 September, Kondratyev initiated another mass return (Fuller 1994h). Although it was called off, the Abkhaz leaders reacted by putting their armed forces on combat alert. Demonstrations against the indiscriminate mass return took place across Abkhazia.
Kondratyev’s action can be related to two earlier events. The first was a mass gathering of DPs that blocked movement across the Inguri bridge. The second was of greater personal significance. On 13 September, two peacekeepers were killed in an ambush. The gunmen were identified as “Mingrelian-speaking former residents of Abkhazia” (Fuller 1994i).

Abkhaz personnel, locals, and peacekeepers were targeted in similar attacks throughout the summer. For example, a car carrying six Gali officials was ambushed on 6 August. All were killed. Deaths from landmines also increased. Officials and locals, including those crossing the Inguri into Abkhazia, became victims. On 12 July, for example, five men were killed by a mine during a crossing. In late July, cars of the Gali administration and regional department of internal affairs exploded on mines, with casualties.

In response, Abkhaz forces conducted operations to neutralize Georgian armed groups. House-to-house searches were carried out in an attempt to clear the area of armed elements. Abkhaz forces claimed success, killing four members of an armed group and seizing some weapons stockpiles. Another group was found later, but most escaped. A similar operation took place in mid-August, when the Abkhaz forces captured twelve men carrying arms and mines, including former residents of Abkhazia who had fought against the Abkhaz in 1992–93.

The issue of DP return thereafter became even more sensitive. By September, thousands returned spontaneously, bypassing the official repatriation procedure, while Abkhaz authorities officially agreed to the return of only 28 Georgians through formal channels. Of these 28, 22 refused... on the grounds that their safety in Abkhazia could not be guaranteed (Fuller 1994j).

The Geneva talks focused on this issue in late August 1994. Georgia’s representative refused ‘on principle’ to participate unless the Abkhaz authorities allowed full repatriation... and had pronounced his readiness to head a spontaneous march... across the border (Fuller 1994k). Despite such protests and threats from the Georgian negotiating team, the talks produced a draft document on the conditions for the return, finalized in mid-September.

The repatriation began on 12 October, three months after the deployment of peacekeepers (Fuller 1994). However, the established procedures made it highly incremental, with only a few Georgian families allowed to return at a time, and the process “threaten[ed] to become ‘eternal’” (Eismont and Kuznets 1994).

Those opposed to a peaceful resolution of this issue joined forces in the Union for the Liberation of Abkhazia. The Union’s stated objective was DP return. At the core, however, it aimed at the restoration of Georgia’s territorial integrity, if necessary through the use of military means (Fuller 1994). At its first meeting, Tamaz Nadareishvili, head of the pro-Georgian Council of Ministers of Abkhazia (in exile), noted his links to Georgian armed groups active in Abkhazia. These forces were, thus, viewed as interrelated.
Following these elite-level developments, on 25 October, “armed Georgians attacked an Abkhaz military post” by the Inguri power station (Fuller 1994n). “An Abkhaz soldier and a Georgian gunman were killed” and civilian houses were once again burned (Fuller 1994n). Georgian armed groups were spotted in Abkhazia thereafter. Border violence became systematic, with frequently recurring incidents.

As a result of these events, a further round of Geneva talks was postponed. The following month, the decision in Abkhazia to adopt a new constitution on 26 November, declaring Abkhazia “a sovereign law-based state,” entirely ‘froze’ the negotiations (Fuller 1994o). Shevardnadze reacted by saying that “Georgia will not hold talks with the Abkhaz side as with representatives of an independent state” (Sevodnya, 29 November 1994). The Liberation Union led “some 700 lightly armed supporters in a bid to retake Abkhazia” (Wheatley 2005: 87).

Viewed as “the single most important obstacle to the development of the Georgian state,” or "a cornerstone of Georgia's statehood," the conflict has not seen peaceful resolution to date (Nodia 2006: 12; Darchiashvili 2003: 122). Georgia used military actions in May 1998, when large-scale armed activity restarted in the Gali region and turned into the Six-Day War. Localized clashes and guerrilla activities continued along the border.

Analysis

The overview of border violence presented above demonstrates that, in contrast to the common belief and characterization in the literature, the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict since the end of the war has not been ‘frozen’ into a ‘cold peace’. According to Nodia (2006: 12), in “zones of frozen conflict’ there is no final settlement, and a precarious peace is occasionally interrupted by episodes of low-key violence.”

The ‘post-conflict’ condition in the border area between Georgia and Abkhazia has not been one of peace. Rather, it has been defined by the persistence of organized political violence, and thereby of low-intensity armed conflict. While the political process ‘froze’ on a number of occasions, “events have developed dynamically” on the ground (Lynch 2005: 193).

Over the period of 1993-94 and thereafter, the Georgian-Abkhaz border area established as a result of the war was characterized by multiple, diverse forms of violence. On the one hand, Georgian and Abkhaz regular armed forces situated on the two sides of the Inguri and in the Kodori Gorge were engaged in frequent crossfire incidents. On the other hand, ‘uncontrolled’ Georgian armed groups carried out guerrilla activities on the Abkhaz side of the border.22 Both were met with crackdowns by the Abkhaz, who organized ‘clearing’ operations to push the Georgian armed elements beyond Abkhaz-controlled territory, as a result of which Abkhaz forces occasionally crossed into Georgia proper.

The situation in this period was therefore dynamic and complex, defined by constant motion toward and away from violent action. It dramatically affected both sides, as casualties were
regularly incurred from violence, and the local population was repeatedly forced to move back and forth across the border and unable to find peace in their homes.

Notwithstanding the complexity of the situation and its importance for our understanding of the conflict and its settlement, not to mention the daily life of individuals and families caught up in the border zone, few studies analyze post-war violence in the Georgian-Abkhaz case. Most literature looks at the political process—formal talks and other peace initiatives. Some studies do note post-war violence and acknowledge displacement, looting, and marauding right after the war and the Six-Day War of 1998, but do not consider the dynamics and significance of ongoing violence. Most focus on the macro level, overlooking the critical micro-level processes on the ground.

Alternative Explanations

Given the local and regional significance of the problem and international attempts at its resolution, why has violence continued in the Georgian-Abkhaz border area beyond the period of the war? The most prominent explanations focus on state weakness, political settlement, destabilization, and external actor logics.

First, Georgia's state weakness, its inability to control the legitimate use of violence and the whole of its territory, is seen as key for understanding the emergence of armed actors and their activities after the war (Interviews, 3 April 2013 and 20 April 2013; Fairbanks 1995). Darchiashvili and Nodia (2003: 18), for example, attribute activities of “Georgian partisan groups... in the conflict zone” to state weakness. As a result, Nodia (2004: 12) suggests that “strengthening the state is... a priority for [Georgia's] governments.”

This explanation is overextended when applied to post-war violence. It is too broad to account for the variation in type, location, and timing of violence. Neither does it account for changes in Georgia's state capacity over time. Whereas the Georgian state has become stronger with time due to changes in domestic politics and Western support, violence in the Georgian-Abkhaz border area has continued apace.

This argument is, moreover, affected by the issue of endogeneity. While the Abkhaz saw an opportunity in Georgia's pre-war weakness and division, as Nodia (1998) argues, state weakness was in important part shaped and augmented by the war and ensuing violence. “The story of the Georgian wars,” Zurcher (2007: 147) maintains, “is the story of a weak transition state quickly degenerating into a failed state” as a result of conflict. This factor is, thus, key to an overall understanding of the case, but it cannot explain recurring Georgian-Abkhaz violence in the border area.

The absence of a political settlement is as well attributed the responsibility for the protracted nature of conflict and, by extension, post-war violence. “If no such agreement is reached,” Walker (1998: 20-1) rightly says prior to May 1998 events, “[a] future leader of Georgia, may well eventually decide to order the Georgian army to occupy Gali.” Moreover,
commenting on arms availability, Darchiashvili (2005: 32) corroborates that “if even tentative settlements are reached..., the problem of uncontrolled arms is unlikely to remain so potent.”

While mistrust, hostility, and enemy images exacerbated by the war would not vanish, a settlement could change the situation on the ground (Gurgulia 1999). However, reaching a settlement is extremely challenging in the Georgian-Abkhaz case. It had previously been plausible for the two sides to enter a federative arrangement (Coppieters et al. 2000).

Yet, compromises were not forthcoming, positions hardened on the issues of DP return and Abkhazia's status, and Abkhazia continued to build its de facto political, economic, and social institutions in isolation from Georgia. Therefore, the window of opportunity drastically narrowed.

This left both parties perceiving any potential future settlement to be a zero-sum game, which would likely mean either giving up some or all territory the Abkhaz had won in the war, or the recognition of Abkhazia by Georgia. Neither option seems likely, while other solutions are conceivable. In either case, furthermore, it could be expected that parties on one side or the other, dissatisfied with the result, would continue to use violence to attain their objectives.

The likelihood of continued violence, even in the event of a settlement, draws on studies of civil war recidivism that see war recurrence as a result of the way in which wars end. Political settlement, as opposed to victory, is found to be more likely to lead to post-war violence. Settlements, it is argued, allow the sides to retain the capacity to resume combat, while victory leads to the disarming of the defeated side (see Quinn et al. 2007). The Abkhaz victory, however, did not lead to Georgia's disarmament. On the contrary, Georgia as a state has been rebuilding its formerly weak army.

Border violence can as a consequence be seen as the defeated side's attempt to destabilize its rival. This logic resonates in and outside of Abkhazia (Interview, 29 December 2011; Khintba 2003; Markedonov 2008; Lynch 2004). A UN report, for instance, notes that violent acts by groups infiltrating Abkhazia “seem to be carried out... [to] destabiliz[e] the situation” (S/1995/10: para. 28). According to this logic, Georgia could benefit from the constantly volatile Abkhaz border. Destabilized Abkhazia, said to be unable to control its border and territory, or armed activity in these areas, cannot be seen as a potentially sovereign state.

Yet, this argument overlooks the reality of internal differences in Georgia with regard to Abkhazia. Actors in Georgia have disagreed on the ways in which to treat the problem and on the meaning of a military solution. For Shevardnadze, Russia's assistance was perceived to be one option in subduing the Abkhaz (Interview, 3 April 2013). For others, for example, Kakubava, paramilitary units were to carry out the task.

Thus, in early 1995, as the Liberation Union led a 700-strong armed group in an attempt to retake Abkhazia, the Georgian government prevented this from happening. The destabilization argument is, therefore, also overextended. While it is relevant to some actors...
on the Georgian side, the argument is too broad to account for internal differences within Georgia and the localized nature of post-war violence at the Georgian-Abkhaz border.

The external actor logic is another alternative. This explanation is offered in two ways. First, peacekeepers are said to make all the difference. Deployment of peacekeepers, it is argued, positively impacts post-war peace “by reducing uncertainty about... intentions [and]... controlling accidents or skirmishes that might otherwise escalate to war” (Fortna 2008: 9).

For the post-war peace to last, Walter (2001: 5) finds, a third-party has to provide security guarantee—“verify demobilization” after a peace agreement is signed. Referring to the Georgian-Abkhaz case, therefore, Andrei Kozyrev, Russia's Foreign Minister, said “he was confident that there would be no further war in Abkhazia” (Fuller 1994g).

This was not the case, however, as violence in the Gali region and the Kodori Gorge and the Six-Day War of 1998 took place in the presence of peacekeepers. Kondratyev, thus, correctly said that “[p]eace, no matter how valuable it is, cannot be supported indefinitely by Russian soldiers' bayonets” (Litovkin 1994a).

One of the recent critical accounts on the failures of peacekeeping to prevent violence attributes such failures to insufficient attention paid to micro, localized violence, referring to an urban bias in peacekeeping (Autesserre 2006). However, peacekeepers in the Georgian-Abkhaz case were deployed in the very area of localized violence. While they were not authorized to counter it, they were positioned in its epicenter.

Continuation of hostilities regardless of the deployment indicates that peacekeepers did not play a significant role in preventing violence. Instead, they became the target of attacks. If anything, not the presence of the peacekeepers, but rather the Russian military presence since 2008, when Russia recognized Abkhazia and reinforced its borders, has been capable of preventing some of the border violence in Abkhazia.

In the second variant of the argument, Russia is seen as implicated in the persistence of violence by virtue of supporting a status quo produced by the Georgian-Abkhaz war. “As a former imperial center, Russia is not a neutral third party,” Lynch (2004: 81) argues, “it has become a party that is deeply involved at multiple levels in sustaining a status quo.” This is a strong argument, given the reduction in border violence that followed Russia's assistance to Abkhazia in 2008. However, even after 2008, violent events, although at a smaller rate, continued. This logic, hence, does not explain how and why violence persisted.

Overall, the four alternative logics all draw on the macro, state level of analysis. By doing so, they overlook critical changes in the context and fail to account for the variation in post-war violence. They reflect on the structural factors for the prevention of violence and tell us little about the mechanisms of the emergence and persistence of violence on the ground. However, as Sambanis (2004: 263) suggests, “it is the interaction between micro-motives and macro-structures that determines the expression of violent conflict.”23
The Social Structure of Violence

In order to better understand how and why violence continued in post-war Abkhazia, I focus on the ground level, while keeping in mind relevant developments at the state and international levels, and look closely at the social space created at the Georgian-Abkhaz border following the 1992-93 war.

I argue that a complex, embedded social structure of violence based on mutual fear and antagonism emerged between the armed actors on both sides of the border and the local population. In this structure the local population, especially in the Gali region, was positioned so as to provide collaboration to both conflict parties. Those who did not voluntarily collaborate were terrorized into compliance by actors on both sides. The local population was, as a result, situated ‘between two fires’ and variously involved in border violence, allowing the parties to continue their conflict by violent means.

I draw on Kalyvas’ (2006) conceptualization of wartime space to characterize this social structure. Kalyvas takes insights from insurgency and counterinsurgency studies, which point to the importance of the relationship between the conflict parties and the population to the conflict parties’ ability to establish control over territory during a war. Violence is, thus, seen as “an interaction between armed actors (be they rebel or state-allied actors) and the civilian population,” in particular with regard to “asymmetric information: political actors desire information that civilians possess” (Kalyvas 2012: 660).

Based on this understanding of violence, Kalyvas finds that there exist different zones of control and collaboration at the time of a war. He conceptualizes this wartime space as “a 5-zone continuum, from areas fully controlled by incumbents in one end to areas fully controlled by insurgents in other” (Kalyvas 2012: 660).

Three contested zones in the middle—fully contested and mostly controlled by either incumbents or insurgents—are found to be most prone to selective violence against civilians, particularly that in response to collaboration with the other side. This is the case above all in the latter two zones. These zones are of greatest interest for the Georgian-Abkhaz case.

Indiscriminate violence in these zones is counterproductive: “it decreases the opportunity costs of collaboration with the rival” (Kalyvas 2006: 144). “[C]ompliance guarantees no security under conditions of indiscriminate violence... [while] collaboration with the rival faction may... increase one's chances of survival” (Ibid.: 143). In contrast, selective violence “personalizes threats; if people are targeted on the basis of their actions, then refraining from such actions guarantees safety” (Ibid.: 144). Armed actors, if they are smart, thus “rely on selective violence to deter defection (i.e., active collaboration with the rival actor)” (Ibid.: 173).

Kalyvas’ conceptualization of wartime space significantly clarifies the situation of border violence in ‘post-conflict’ Abkhazia. The border area between Georgia and Abkhazia is akin
to a zone of contested control. It is a contested area predominantly controlled by the Abkhaz and this control was being challenged by Georgian armed elements.

The Abkhaz victory in the war produced this “new border zone” (Weiss 2012: 216). The Abkhaz, however, were unable to fully control the border thereafter, which facilitated the infiltration by Georgian armed groups into the Abkhaz-controlled territory. “There are 80 km from the sea to the mountains,” an Abkhaz soldier explained, “It was difficult to close it off” (Interview, 4 November 2011). “The border was long and we were few... there were gaps between us” (Interview, 12 November 2011).

In this situation, both parties required and sought collaboration from the local population: the Abkhaz to keep control of the territory, the Georgians to continue challenging Abkhaz control. The Abkhaz, especially initially, terrified the DP population that returned to the Gali region. “Georgians mobilized them to fight. Once we came, we did horrors as well,” an Abkhaz soldier admitted (Interview, 2 November 2011).

Abkhaz soldiers arriving at the border were poorly equipped and provided for. “They had no one to feed them and went to villagers’ houses, asking for things. If not given, they took what they needed by force” (Interview, 31 October 2011). “At first, relations with the locals were poor,” an Abkhaz commander concluded, “Reservists were uncontrollable” (Interview, 2 November 2011). At the same time, Georgian governance structures did not have a presence in the region to check violations by Abkhaz forces against civilians.

With time, the Abkhaz attempted to restore order and establish a more stable relationship with the local population in the region. “We gathered the locals” (Interview, 2 November 2011). “Some ran away, not knowing what intentions we had; others welcomed us with bread and salt,” an Abkhaz police officer said (Interview, 2 November 2011).

The locals were incorporated into the Abkhaz-established political, economic, and social institutions. “Mingrelians were made heads of the village administrations,” for example (Interview, 24 April 2013). These institutions, especially the rule of law, were very weak initially. “Even when the police [was] accessible, Gali residents [were] reluctant to turn to them because it [left] them vulnerable to retribution from Georgian armed elements” (IDMC 2012: 62).

The Abkhaz, furthermore, sought information from the local population, including on the activities of the Georgian armed groups. “The locals told us where someone crossed,” an Abkhaz police officer reported (Interview, 2 November 2011). Such information helped counteract these groups.

However, it was generally understood that “the population was not reliable” (Interview, 2 November 2011). The Georgian armed groups sought collaboration as well (see below). These groups ostensibly stayed and “hid weapons among the locals and in abandoned houses. The locals changed at night and participated in their operations” (Interview, 3 November 2011).
Thus, a commander said, “[w]e went into houses, cleared them, sometimes in the upper zone, sometimes in the lower” (Interview, 2 November 2011). As a result, “[t]here was a mass psychosis among the population” (Interview, 2 November 2011).

The fear experienced by the local population was only augmented by the Georgian armed groups. They were meant to fight for the benefit of Georgia and Georgians in the area and primarily target Abkhaz forces. However, the ‘uncontrolled’ Georgian armed “[g]roups that crossed the river worked to keep the population in fear” (Interview, 2 November 2011).

The main targets of these groups were Abkhaz forces, particularly representatives of the de facto Abkhaz Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), regularized forces of the de facto Abkhaz Ministry of Defense (MOD), and reservists, not allowed in the 12 km security zone, but participating in all major military operations.

To defend the border area from intrusions following the war, Abkhaz forces traveled to the border from other regions of Abkhazia in shifts, each group guarding a specific part of the border at a time. A group “stayed at the border for 10-12 days, then shifts changed” (Interview, 12 November 2011). As the assigned group drove to the border, it was easy to spot them along the main road leading to Gali region.

Georgian armed groups took advantage of this vulnerable position. They laid mines along the road leading to Gali. “It was very dangerous to go to the border. There were mines everywhere” (Interview, 3 November 2011). Thus, on 23 February and 11 March 1994, cars carrying Abkhaz reservists and medical staff respectively exploded on mines.

Georgian armed groups also ambushed Abkhaz forces. “The typical scenario was as follows: our group left for the border. They were waiting by the road to ambush our car. They shot, threw grenades, and used machine guns. We fought back” (Interview, 3 November 2011). An Abkhaz armed forces vehicle was, thus, ambushed by a Georgian armed group in Saberio on 12 September. A clash ensued.

Among those targeted in mine explosions and ambushes were not only Abkhaz military, but also local residents, especially Mingrelian Gali residents taking official positions in Abkhazia or generally collaborating with the Abkhaz.25 Georgian armed elements sought information on Gali residents who provided support to Abkhaz forces. “People were punished by paramilitary groups for collaborating with the Abkhaz” (Interview, 26 April 2013). Thus, in late July 1994, cars of the Gali administration where many local Mingrelians worked exploded on mines.

A significant aspect of the functioning of these ‘uncontrolled’ Georgian groups was their need for a support base among the population returning to Abkhazia in order to carry out their guerrilla activities. These groups were partially drawn from former residents of
Abkhazia who had fought against the Abkhaz in 1992-93 and had private ties to the locals (Interview, 23 April 2013). Thus, they implicated the local population in a number of ways.

First, the very crossing of the Inguri river could be challenging for groups lacking knowledge of the local terrain. The river is characterized by areas of varying difficulty in terms of crossing and Abkhaz patrols. Some areas are more shallow and easy for crossing, others less so. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the Abkhaz had gaps in their patrolling.

Local knowledge of the Inguri area, especially where the river could be safely crossed and a hiding place found, was necessary for these groups to go unnoticed by the Abkhaz. “People who have lived in the area... know all the paths” (Interview, 4 November 2011). The locals were, thus, used as guides and for precise information on Abkhaz patrols. “Without local guides, no one would be able to cross” (Interview, 14 December 2011).

Second, to correctly time mining of the roads and plan the ambushes, the groups required an understanding of when, where, and in what capacity the Abkhaz armed forces could be located and acted upon. In these planning and reconnaissance tasks, the local knowledge was once again indispensable. The locals “know by heart where they can pass, where the patrol stands, and at what time it will appear” (Interview, 25 April 2013).

Finally, the Georgian armed groups required a hiding place before and after their planned action. They often stayed in locals’ houses, especially if they could not escape after mine laying or ambushes, and stockpiled weapons there. “Partisans were hiding in homes; they knew someone and used that” (Interview, 2 November 2011). “Without this support, they would not be able to hide or stockpile the weapons” (Interview, 6 December 2011).

It is not surprising, then, that the Abkhaz punished locals for collaborating with the other side. The Abkhaz counterinsurgency-like military operations to ‘clear’ the terrain and ‘neutralize’ the armed elements directly responded to these collaboration patterns.

In their house-to-house searches, Abkhaz forces targeted both Georgian armed groups and locals suspected to be implicated in guerrilla activity. As a result, both suffered. Georgian gunmen were often caught. Locals were again displaced and their houses were burned. “If partisans stayed somewhere and it was found out, not only this house, but the whole street was burned” (Focus group, 2 May 2013).

In early February 1994, for example, when the Abkhaz ‘combed’ the lower part of the Gali region, not only guerrilla groups were pushed out, but also houses were burned and thousands of locals once again displaced. Those suspected of collaboration with Georgian armed groups suffered the most. “On 5 February 1994, seven people were killed. My father was there and died, but the Abkhaz said they only killed partisans” (Focus group, 2 May 2013). “I escaped to Zugdidi [in Georgia] and watched our houses burn” (Ibid.).

As UNOMIG observers put it, “the Abkhaz were doing what needed to be done: rooting out the guerrillas with overwhelming force and depriving them of their base of support. That
meant destroying the rebuilt homes of suspected guerrilla supporters” (Goltz 2006: xxii).

“Under the pretense of anti-partisan operations, they killed everyone. This way it was easier to hold the population in fear” (Focus group, 2 May 2013).

To coerce civilian collaboration, Abkhaz forces used both targeted killings and collective punishment. They succeeded in some instances described above. However, as mentioned before, indiscriminate violence was counterproductive. As Kalyvas (2006: 160) argues, “the deterrent aim of indiscriminate violence often fails. Confronted with high levels of indiscriminate violence, many people prefer to join the rival actor rather than die a defenseless death.” In the Abkhaz case it forced civilians to flee to Georgia and created a pool of supporters for Georgian armed groups.

As a result, both sides obtained collaboration from the local population, indispensable for their aims, and variously involved the population in border violence. The locals provided collaboration voluntarily, for instance, by virtue of being related to members of the armed groups or simply seeking peace from the current government. Some were induced into collaboration by rewards, such as the potential return of the Gali region to Georgian control or official positions in the local administration.

In most cases, however, local civilians were terrorized into compliance, targeted by both Georgian and Abkhaz armed actors in their guerrilla activities and house-to-house searches respectively. Collaboration was attained through continued intimidation.

Predominantly based on fear, this social structure of violence established at the Georgian-Abkhaz border after the war greatly affected the state of the conflict over the post-war decades. The sides were able to prolong their conflict by violent means as they accessed support from the local population through a combination of coercion and consent. The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict remained unresolved: “a no-war, no-peace status quo prevailed for almost two decades” (Shaffer 2009: 135).

Implications: Border Violence and Human Security

This article has demonstrated that the Georgian-Abkhaz post-war environment has been characterized by complex patterns of border violence. Combined with elite-level processes, developments on the ground have prolonged the conflict beyond the period of the war.

The way in which the social space was set up along the border among the actors involved after the war greatly influenced this process. A fear-based social structure was established between armed actors on both sides of the Inguri river and the local population. Collaboration from locals made it possible for the parties to prolong their conflict by violent means.

This puzzling, but poorly understood post-war situation raises critical human security concerns. It falls under freedom from fear—“a condition characterized by freedom from
pervasive threats to people's rights, their safety, or even their lives" (Axworthy 1999 in Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy 2012: 30).

Among the five thresholds of this dimension, three—"[f]acing violence, [v]iolent deaths..., [and d]isplaced population statistics"—are present (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy 2012: 121). Border violence faced by the displaced population returning to the Gali region resulted in chronic fear, frequent civilian deaths, and further displacement.

The case argues for another threshold in the freedom-from-fear dimension—forced collaboration with armed actors and/or active participation in violence. The needs of armed actors for local collaboration augmented both real and perceived fears experienced by the local population, placing this population 'between two fires.' It also widened the armed actors’ repertoires of violence against civilians. Not only 'collateral' damage, but also targeting 'collaborators' in retaliation led to civilians deaths.

The local population—the referent of human security in this case—were not simply innocent victims, however. They were also actors with choices and, even if constrained, agency. This population, therefore, should be the focus of local and international policy if the recurrence of violence is to be halted in Abkhazia. As Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy (2012: 121) argue, in conflict related "crisis situations... human security would be concentrated on the protection of populations, and aimed at restoring previous levels of security.”

Where governance structures are absent or weak, however, it cannot be realized. Whereas Georgia did not have access to the Gali region, as it was predominantly controlled by the Abkhaz armed forces, Abkhaz governance structures were barely present and, if present, were often part of the problem rather than its remedy, during the period discussed. As a result, though the protracted conflict “remain[s] the main challenge to state- and nation-building in Georgia, [n]either the Georgian authorities nor the international community have a clear strategy for solving this problem,” and the violent processes persist (Nodia 2006: 23).

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Endnotes

1. I use the term ‘border’ to indicate “the emergence of a new border zone,” whereby “the cease fire line has turned into a de-facto border” (Weiss 2012: 216). The preferred terminology in Georgia is ‘administrative border.’ In Abkhazia, it is viewed as a ‘state border.’

2. The spelling of proper nouns differs in Georgia (e.g., Inguri) and Abkhazia (e.g., Ingur). I use the former.

3. Russians were meant to populate Abkhazia, but rejected their settlement there due to difficult living conditions. As a result, the territory was repopulated by other groups, including Georgians.

4. By the 1990s, Abkhaz constituted only 17.8% of the population, while Georgians made up 45.7%.
5. For example, in a letter of 1952, the Abkhaz elite appealed to restore Abkhaz schools closed in the 1940s.
6. By 1992, Georgia declared independence, annulled Soviet law, restoring its constitution of 1921, while Abkhazia held a referendum in support of the Union and, after it collapsed, restored its 1925 constitution.
7. Disregarding the Ceasefire Agreement of July 1993, the Abkhaz side launched an unexpected attack on Georgian-held Sukhumi. As a result of this attack the war ended in September 1993 with Georgia's defeat.
8. Russia, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Nauru, Vanuatu, and Tuvalu recognize Abkhazia.
10. Mingrelians, considered to be a subgroup of the Georgian population, were the main group in the region.
12. These groups are often referred to as partisan or diversionist. The former term is preferred in Georgia, the latter in Abkhazia. They arguably have ties to Abkhazia's former local government-in-exile (Darchiashvili and Nodia 2003: 18). The White Legion and the Forest Brothers are key examples (Walker 1998: 12; Darchiashvili 2003: 21).
13. The term 'refugees' (defined by international convention as those who flee by crossing borders) is preferred in Abkhazia, while 'internally displaced persons' (i.e. those that move within their own country) is preferred in Georgia. I adopt Walker’s (1998: 11) notion of 'displaced persons' that encompasses both terms.
14. Although Shevardnadze publicly announced that "separatists will be driven out" (Broladze 1993).
15. There was no formal ceasefire since the beginning of the war apart from the Memorandum's reference to non-use of force.
16. For Georgia, return of all DPs meant a return to the pre-war demographic balance, which favored Georgia's policy in Abkhazia. The Abkhaz government, on the other hand, insisted that those involved in the war against them not return. This policy had “a very specific objective to maintain the present demographic advantage in favour of ethnic Abkhaz, so as to have strong political trumps in hand at the talks on future state status” (Litovkin 1994).
17. Earlier, Pavel Grachyev, Russia’s Defense Minister, ordered the use of “all available force” to repatriate DPs (Hewitt 1996).
18. There were “75,000 to 150,000 mines... [and more] still being laid” (S/1994/1160, para. 6).
19. UN military observers reported that “depots of weapons and ammunition exist[ed]” (S/1994/1160: para.15). The UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) was mandated to monitor the compliance of the sides with the Ceasefire Agreements of 27 July 1993 and 27 July 1994 and observe the CIS peacekeeping mission's operations (S/RES/858, 1993; S/RES/937, 1994).
20. The Gali population returned spontaneously regardless of the official process. By 1995, 40,000 people, or half of the pre-war population, periodically returned, “mov[ing] back and forth” (Interview, April 22 2013).
21. “From the perspective of human security, this can be seen as post-conflict violence,” David Darchiashvili explained, “From Georgia’s official position, morally, Georgia could not accept the status quo... Therefore, Nadareishvili was involved in the fight” (Interview, April 20, 2013; see also Darchiashvili 2003).
22. Violent crime was as well widespread. However, it is not addressed here (see Kukhianidze et al. 2004).
23. See also Kalyvas (2003).
24. This is mostly the repatriated population displaced as a result of the war and DPs moving back and forth.
25. Peacekeepers also came under attack. Although they did not clearly side with the Abkhaz and on a number of occasions initiated DP returns against Abkhaz demands, they were nonetheless seen as supporting an “unjust peace” that preserved the Abkhaz victory, and therefore as justified targets (Walker 1998: 20).
26. On UNOMIG, see endnote 19 above.

Appendix

Chart 1. Demographic changes in Abkhazia: 1886-2003 *

*: The chart is based on the official census data of the Soviet Union, Georgia, and Abkhazia.

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NB: do you have any comments on Anastasia Shesterinina's article? Please send these to info@ethnogeopolitics.org, or through the contact form at http://www.ethnogeopolitics.org.
My new Cartoon "The Expert"  Caspar ten Dam

After many years, I have finally come up with a new Cartoon character, the “[Terrorism] Expert” (see picture on the left), loosely based on my own personality (as I see it) and several of those I have encountered since the 1990s in the academic world. I seek to place one freely downloadable “The Expert” cartoon per month on my website www.ctdamconsultancy.com (see ‘Events’).

Some of these cartoons have been reproduced in the previous Autumn 2015 issue, and others may be reproduced in future issues of this journal. In any private or small-scale use of these cartoons, my authorship (“Copyright C. ten Dam”) must stay visible in reproductions. For any commercial or other large-scale use, my prior permission is required. One of my cartoons is shown on page 20. Below is shown another one.
A turn for constructivist human security research? Review of this Special Human Security Issue


Abel Polese

Dissatisfaction with current theoretical instruments, and their limited capacity to explain newly identified phenomena, has often been the starting point for the emergence of critical scholarship challenging existing concept and paradigms. Recent events and their critical interpretation have generated an interesting amount of critical scholarship challenging orthodox economic and security-related paradigms.

Already in the nineties Wendt had criticised the main paradigms in IR to introduce social and cultural elements (Wendt 1999), opening the path to critical IR studies rediscovering the role of perception and identity, while introducing a critical perspective in the Harbermasian and Foucauldian tradition, as well as from post-colonialism and anti-hegemonic thinking.

Gibson-Graham’s (1996) seminal critique on capitalism, and the way it is reproduced and performed in scholarship and beyond, has prompted a geographically diverse debate that, moving across disciplines, has been trying to offer alternatives to neoliberal capitalist positions and fed works from anarchic geographies (Springer 2014) to non-normative approaches to development (Escobar 2011).

Even economists seem to have rediscovered other disciplines and look now at path-dependency and historico-cultural factors when trying to understand the gaps between regions (see Acemoglu and Robinson: *Why Nations Fail*).

If we look specifically at the post-Soviet region, a number of recent developments have challenged from various perspectives the Weberian concepts of the state. States have been threatened, their territorial integrity have been denied, borders have been subverted and questioned, and sovereignty erased from some of their territory (Companjen and Polese 2012; Ó Beacháin 2012; Ó Beacháin, D, & Polese; Kevlihan 2013).

As a result, non-state and non-political actors (or, better, non traditionally politicised actors) have deserved a greater deal of attention once there has been acknowledgement of the continuum line between civil society, informality, informal governance and insurgency (Polese and Kevlihan 2015).
What the diverse scholarship above has in common is the clear message that the existing institutions and governance structures have proved limited vis-à-vis the fast-evolving and comprehensive nature of threats to society and political and human communities. When coined in the mid-nineties, Human Security was seen as an innovative and novel approach to grasp new phenomena.

However, the message of the papers in this collection is that new phenomena, approaches and new discoveries and social science research have highlighted the need for a concept of security that goes beyond the initial one. That we call it a “beyond human security” or “post-human security” approach, is a matter of terms only.

The reality is that the initial definition of human security fails to deal, totally or partly, with the phenomena illustrated by our authors as clearly shown in the introduction by Françoise Companjen, who has also the merit to have initiated this project with the goal of widening the dialogue on human security to make the debate more inclusive and comprehensive.

What Aliyev shows is the capacity of social networks to go beyond their networking and surviving function to create an informal security mechanism complementing, integrating or fully replacing the formal one that should be the domain of the state. Positive and negative aspects of social networking do not comprehensively explain, he contends, the relationship between informal networks and human security. His empirical evidence illustrates the role of informality in substituting the state in economic and political areas.

Previous works on “real governance”, looking openly at the variety of actors influencing governance and its perception, have emphasized the limits of formal institutions in state-led governance and security (Burris, Hancock and Herzog 2007; Titeca and De Herdt 2011), leading to rethink the relationship between state-originated and other forms of security.

Addressing the problem of continuing border violence through an approach mixing micro and macro levels, and providing a number of complementary explanations, Shesterinina shows the limits of a state-centred perspective in explaining the persistence of border violence into the post-war period.

Acknowledging the complexity and integrating structure of violence in Abkhazia, she has shown the way social relationship comes to become more important than the state and its institutions, opening the way for an understanding of human security that goes well beyond the state.

Engaging with the relation center-periphery, Strakes also proposes a framework looking at non-traditional security. In an effort to investigate the relationship between localized identities and elite security practices in prominent latent conflict situations, he provides a
preliminary interpretation of the way decision-makers respond to national challenges and the strategies chosen in response.

Whilst engaging with diverse and somehow complementary aspects of human security, the authors can be credited for opening a debate featuring a high degree of interdisciplinarity and acknowledging the interlinkages between powers, market forces and states. The pieces here acknowledge the shift from state security to people’s security.

The Southern Caucasus region is perfectly located to challenge the above-mentioned paradigms, given that its historical and sociopolitical evolutions have fostered its diversity and increased the number of special cases one can find. As a result, phenomena that can be observed partly in other regions are clearly visible in the Caucasus, making it possible to construct clear-cut case studies highlighting the limits of current theoretical instruments to understand security.

This should not be taken, however, as a statement that human security is only related to the Caucasus region. This narrow and specific focus has enabled the authors to present an in-depth approach so as to identify and clearly explain a number of phenomena that, one might notice, are findable in a variety of other world regions. This collection should thus be seen, rather than a mere analysis of a region where human security takes several meanings, as an encouragement to go beyond the approach here endorsed, and to start a dialogue on human security that transcends geographical and disciplinary boundaries.

It is by pulling together the pieces of human security that will enable completion of the matrix presented in the introduction by Companjen and give human security the profundity it deserves in scholarly and policy debates, a thing this contribution is intended to start but that still has a long way to go.

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References


A Review of the Special Issue on Human Security in the South Caucasus


J. Otto Pohl

This short article reviews the issues of human security in the South Caucasus as presented by four separate writers. The South Caucasus has been a region of three major armed conflicts since the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) that have threatened human security. These conflicts are the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, the secession of Abkhazia from Georgia, and the secession of South Ossetia from Georgia. All three of these conflicts have obviously posed a considerable threat to the human security of the civilian populations in the South Caucasus. In particular these conflicts have challenged the human security of the civilian populations when the concept is viewed through the lens of looking at it as “freedom from fear.”

Françoise Companjen's introductory piece, "Paradoxes of Human Security: Evidence from the South Caucasus", provides both a background on the current geopolitical position of the South Caucasus and an explanation of the term “human security.” She then shows how the other three articles fit into her larger framework. Finally, she concludes that human security in the region remains complex and difficult to solve due to both foreign and domestic factors.

Anastasia Shesterinina's article “Border Violence in 'Post-Conflict' Abkhazia” deals with continuing threats to human security along the border between Abkhazia and Georgia even following the end of the Six Day War in 1998. She, however, focuses on the years 1993-1994 immediately after the war leading to Abkhazia's de facto independence.

She starts with a very brief history of Abkhazia from the 19th century until the 1992-1993 War. Then she goes into a much more detailed account of the violence along the border of the newly de facto independent Abkhazia and the parts of Georgia remaining under control of Tblisi. In particular she deals with the region around Gali.

Most of this violence was at the hands of irregular forces. She argues that the formal end of fighting between the Abkhaz and the Georgians did not end violence along the border for either ethnic group. But, rather created a situation where the border zone which had seen little fighting in 1992-1993 became a zone of intermittent armed conflict.
Most of the post-war violence involved the intimidation of the civilian population into collaborating with one side or the other. This situation resulted from the continued existence of contested zones along the new de facto border between Georgian and Abkhaz forces. This lack of total control of the region by either side allowed both sides to threaten the human security of the local population. This population was not “free from fear.”

Huseyn Aliyev’s article, “Informal Networks and Human Security in the South Caucasus”, deals with informal networks as a way to deal with “fear from want” in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. These informal networks provide preferential access to public goods and therefore serve as a private safety net. They also foster corruption and clientelism.

Kinship and family networks as a means of acquiring goods and services date back in the South Caucasus to before the Bolshevik Revolution and survived the entire Soviet era albeit in an altered form. In the post-Soviet era they have taken on even greater importance. These networks are used by the vast majority of the population of the South Caucasus on a daily basis. They are used to acquire jobs, goods, health care, and education. These networks often have involved corruption, in particular the use of bribes.


He views these two areas of tension through the lens of center-periphery relations. He compares these two regions because he believes they are the most similar to each other of all the various center-periphery tensions in the South Caucasus. He gives a lengthy description of the history and current conditions first in Javakheti and then in the Talysh Region of Azerbaijan. He concludes that the integration of these areas in order to prevent them from further moving along a path of secession requires the provision of human security in the form of police protection for ethnic minority communities.

Taken together, these three papers show that state institutions in the South Caucasus are too weak to guarantee human security, especially the physical protection of citizens from armed attack. The weakness of state institutions has led to the development of a number of non-state institutions to provide for human security, including paramilitary groups in places like Gali on the border of Abkhazia and Georgia.

The lack of physical security for citizens has deteriorated along the lines of the centralized nation states of Georgia and Azerbaijan losing control over the secession of ethnically distinct territories. This has reached an advanced stage in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, and Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan. However, latent threats of such secession also exist in the Armenian inhabited territory of Javakheti in Georgia and the Talysh Region in
Azerbaijan. The intractable nature of these ethnic conflicts, and the weak state structure in the region, means that human security will continue to be threatened along these lines in the South Caucasus for the foreseeable future.

These problems have been most apparent in the South Caucasus of all the regions of the former Soviet Union following its break-up. But, they are not unique to it. Similar problems exist in Central Asia and other areas. One just needs to look at the Central Asian region, where regional ethnic tensions have manifested themselves in Russian populated areas of northern Kazakhstan, the Uzbek population around Osh in Kyrgyzstan, and Gorno-Badakhshan in Tajikistan.

Across the Caucasus mountains from Georgia and Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation has also had to deal with similar ethnically-based human security problems in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Karachai-Cherkessia. Thus this examination of the problems of human security in the South Caucasus helped us shed light on understanding HS, as analyzed in the introduction by Françoise Companjen.

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