European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation 2003-2004

The causes of the "frozen conflicts" in the South Caucasus
State failures in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia

by

Sergio Giménez Ferrer

Supervisors:

Dr. A. Kreikemeyer
Prof. H. J. Giessmann

July 2004
Hamburg, Germany

Abstract

Frozen conflicts are inter-ethnic conflicts over territory between and within the states of the South Caucasus after the Soviet break-up, with a period of large scale warfare stopped after a cease fire, after which *de facto* states are functioning and a solution is unforeseeable. They are "frozen" because what provoked them persists in time. The war has stopped but the rationale of the wars or the potential of war are mostly intact. They are a product of a failed state building processes. The rationale of frozen conflicts can only be understood as function of three dimensions, closely interrelated but with variable levels of causation potential. First, the background conditions made of the ethnic composition of the region, "the past" of the conflicts and the context in which they come to be: after the soviet break up and amongst a process of democratization. Second, and most importantly, the core of the argument, as a product of elite strategies and ideologies animating a process of state and nation building, according to ethno exclusivist and exclusionary conceptions of the polity and the demos -or the state. Finally, elite strategies themselves and the conflicts' present state cannot be properly understood without taking into account the role of external actors.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse frozen conflicts as a product of state failures and of ethno nationalism, taking into account the three interrelated dimensions above mentioned.

Table of contents

Introduction

After the Soviet dissolution in 1991, 15 new states were soon born and internationally recognized. With their independence a process of state building started. In the South Caucasus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia gained independence after some centuries of imperial subjugation, and of seventy recent years of Soviet rule. The new states of the South Caucasus were though born "problematic". Their statehood, internationally recognized, has gone hardly beyond the nominal category, due to serious problems of polity and demos definition and acceptance, of sovereignty and territorial struggles and of inter ethnic war. The necessary process of state building truncated still today has hindered any political, economic and social progress in the region. The new states were actually born with on going inter-ethnic wars over secessionism and irredentism, which became soon civil wars, intrastate and interstate wars.

In 1988, amidst the agonic last days of the Soviet Empire, the then Union Republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, started a process of detachment and independence However, while they were fighting it from Moscow, other territories within their Soviet republics -South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan- were at their turn claiming territorial readjustments to Moscow, did not recognize themselves as part of the ongoing processes of independence within the given borders and were therefore fighting it from Baku and Tbilisi. When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, the territorial disputes opposing distinct ethnic groups became a central burden and a clear obstacle for the necessary process of state building first, and then of political transformation and economic development for the new and weak states. The violent conflicts in the South Caucasus, the secessionist territories of South Ossetia, Abkhazia in Georgia, and the secessionist territory of Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan on the one hand, and the irredentist dispute over the same territory between Azerbaijan and Armenia, have been baptised "frozen conflicts". Hence, frozen conflicts is a situation, as defined by many authors, of "no peace no war". [1]

---

[1] According to Heinrich, and always talking about the South Caucasus, the term frozen conflicts "implies immobilism and a deadlock in the peace settlement process, but not stability". Furthermore, he adds that the concept "implies that the parties to the conflict cannot defeat each other militarily", otherwise the conflict would probably not exist anymore; in Heinrich, H.G., "Frozen Crises in the Caucasus: Can the Circle be unsquared?" in 31st Vienna Conference, "Promoting Institutional Responses to the Challenges in the Caucasus. The OSCE, UN, EU and the CIS. Analysis-Case Studies-Outlooks", Diplomatic Academy Vienna, 5-7 July p.109-111. For Ghebali, in the context of the OSCE mission in the region,

When I first approached the political situation in the South Caucasus and I first knew about the label "frozen conflicts" referring to the status quo in the region, the word 'aporia' came to my mind. 'Aporia' comes from the Greek *a-poros*, which literally means "without a passage". The concept is defined as to be at loss about what to do or to say. It also means the impossibility to find a solution to a problem, which seems to have elude any rational gateway.

The term frozen conflicts, as the same words suggests, refers to conflicts which are at an impasse. Actually, it means that they are unresolved and irresolvable for the moment being, hence the fight stops but the problem persists and the solutions lack. Therefore, the term frozen conflicts does not say why and what they are, but just points out how they are today. In the context of the Caucasus, though, it is used by many authors, politicians and journalists to refer to the inter-ethnic and highly 'ethnicized' wars between states and separatists regions in the area, which arrived to a cease fire agreement -then no large scale war is present anymore- but have not found any solution. Consequently, frozen conflicts are not a new type of conflict. This is just an added adjective to note that the problems are still there and no solution has been nor is to be found, yet.

For the purposes of my work frozen conflicts are a well circumscribed geo-political inference: intractable and unresolved inter-ethnic -and highly ethnicized- conflicts over territory between and within the states of the South Caucasus after the Soviet break-up, with a period of large scale warfare stopped after a cease fire, after which *de facto* states are functioning and a solution is unforeseeable They are basically frozen because what provoked them persists in time. The war has stopped but the rationale of the wars or the potential of war are mostly intact.

---

frozen conflicts are those that have become intractable and where a solution, regardless all efforts, have not yet been achieved nor is foreseeable in the near future. They remain unsettled and with an intact level of escalation. He affirms that "the frozen conflicts are low-intensity armed conflicts. However, their potential for escalation is intact. Indeed, the possibility of new large-scale armed hostilities can certainly not be ruled out. The armed option is still theoretically valid and it remains, especially for the central State, a tempting one." In Ghebali, V.-I., "The Role of the OSCE in Conflict Management: Some Reflections on the Case of the 'Frozen Conflicts'", p.36.

Therefore, frozen conflicts are a constant in time of unresolved contradictions within an unchanged context. To understand the causes and the nature of the frozen conflicts, then, the unresolved contradictions and the context -from the their embryonic moments- must be tackled. Both, "context" and "contradictions" have undergone changes in the course of the freeze but of no impact on the rationale behind their causes.

By unresolved contradictions, the core of my argument, I mean the territorial and sovereignty questions surrounding the process of state and nation building -the dilemma opposing territorial integrity and sovereignty to self determination. I postulate that frozen conflicts are a function of state failures, in that state failures are a consequence of a double failed process of state and of nation building in the South Caucasus. On the other hand, and complementary, frozen conflicts are the product of a successful process of nation building within an "impossible" project of state building. If the former apply to the "titular" states, the latter applies to the separatist territories or statelets. In the first case, state failures are of a double nature: first and mainly, a failed process of definition and inclusion: the impossibility to match polity and demos, be by force -legitimate use of the physical violence-, be by persuasion -identity "selling" and incentives. Second, and related, the lack of a proper state machinery, in terms of efficiency and efficacy to be able to have the proper instruments to find a reasonable and peaceful solution to the first problem.

Now, as state building and nation building seem intimately related, and nation building is basically composed of nationalising policies, nationalism is the cause and the consequence of failed states, and hence a basic component in the rationale of frozen conflicts. Why? Because nationalism is the tool in the hands of the titular state's elites to undergo the state building -and nation building- processes in the South Caucasus- and at the same time the tool in the hands of the secessionist territories to counter veil or frustrate these processes. Finally, the fact that nationalism in the South Caucasus is linked to distinct ethnic groups with antagonist nation-building projects within a sole state, gives frozen conflicts a strong "ethnic" dimension. That is why in my work I will talk in terms of ethno nationalist state building projects, and the reason why frozen conflicts are the cause of contending ethnic nationalisms over opposed projects of nation building.

By context I mean background -demographic, geographic and historic coordinates-, transition processes and the relevant external actors involved. First, frozen conflicts, obviously, need to be seen against a background where their conditions and formation can be retraced. The background is basically made of the Soviet legacy and the particular cultural composition of the area. Besides, frozen conflicts are an issue only after independence, therefore the relevance of the Soviet empire, its traits and way it came to disappear. On the other hand, transition processes are: first, the passage from a part of the Soviet empire to a suddenly gained statehood. The way this statehood was gained is indeed relevant; second, the passage from a totalitarian and repressive regime to a democratic system, which given the above mentioned context seems of high importance to understand frozen conflicts. Finally, frozen conflicts are also to a great extent a function of the presence of external actors, determining the relative position of the South Caucasian states and of the external actors private interests in the zone.

I am assuming then that the problem, and its persistence, the freezing, are basically the same thing. The latter is just its festering. Both can be explained by the same variables. Even if the conflicts have worsened with time, the explicative variables remain the same. If not, it would not be appropriate to call them frozen conflicts. If they are frozen is precisely because basically they have not changed since the freezing. And the freezing is the impasse version of the causes of the conflicts themselves since they erupted explicitly in a violent form. Therefore, to understand the freezing it is necessary to know what took them to that point; and then, of course, to speculate why they have not been resolved. But I can anticipate, by a truism, that if they have not been resolved is basically because the problems that started the conflicts continue without being addressed properly towards a "reasonable" solution.

The core component of the frozen conflicts then turns infinitely around the problematic of state and nation building processes in the South Caucasus. Besides, this core problematic has an internal strategic and rhetoric dimension -choices made by the states in their state building enterprise- but also has a decisive historic -modern history, Soviet legacy-, demographic -ethnic composition-, contextual -transition processes- and external dimension -third party states involvement, namely neighbouring states.

The failures are caused by two clashing ethno nationalisms around antagonic or contradictory projects of state and nation building. The titular state has the advantage of statehood, hence it is actually the one to hold responsible of the state failures at he first place and the one fighting to protect not only its territory but its idea of the nation coinciding with that territory. As for the statelets, they fight their exclusion from that project. They consider themselves excluded, they want to exclude themselves and at the same time they demand the coincidence of their nation project with what they defend to be their mother land and territory within the state they are forced to be part of and that comprises their potential state. We see then two exclusionary state building projects: one that includes excluding -by assimilation-, and the other that directly excludes. In this sense it is possible to call these state building projects, ethno nationalist. Hence the relevance of ethno nationalism, of ethnicity and of nationalism in general to approach frozen conflicts. Besides, ethno nationalism when fighting over territory, with the subsequent secessionist projects, is often among the causes of state failures.

State building in the South Caucasus has meant so far the process by which the titular state's ethnic hegemonic group (or the one that happens to inherit it) appropriates its territory and operates its ethnic project on it. However, both as a reaction but also as an independent aspiration, other ethnic groups, organized and mobilized around nationalist secessionist demands, have contested territory and sovereignty and have established their own ethnic state building projects. They reinforce each other in this case. The irresolvable character produces the inter ethnic -not ethnic- clash, but also probably the ethnicitation of politics, popular mobilization, and the war. Both in are direct parties in the failures, both suffer and provoke them, ones voluntarily, the others at their regret. The coexistence of these two process has rendered so far state building impossible. And this impossibility has rendered democratization and social and economic development impossible, because the process of state building and of nation building are everywhere and every time prioritized over any other duties, which rest secondary and at the expense of the ultimate resolution of this "transcendental" one.

The dilemma is doubly "aporetic", then: no break up and borders alteration is even imaginable for the states and the "international community", but there are already full working *de facto* states in that region; the "autonomy" option is undesirable for both parties, but especially for the statelets, who do actually enjoy independence, but are kept

away from its "official" character by the entire "international community's" non recognition. Then, the centre is too weak and intransigent, and the peripheries too strong and intransigent to be willing to arrive at any agreement. Finally, external actors in the region contribute to this situation, strengthening both parties positions in attempt to alter the balance of powers; and they do that seeking their own interests.

Frozen conflicts have three interrelated dimensions: first, the "preliminaries" of the conflicts, around 1988, with low intensity violence but mainly provoking ethnic cleansings and local confrontations; second, the actual beginning of the wars with large scale confrontations around 1990 until 1994 depending on the case; and third and finally cease-fire agreements from 1992 to 1994, moment since the conflicts' warfare stops and they actually "freeze". All efforts for a settlement have been unsuccessful so far.

The three cases have been the product of the Soviet break up, have gone through a large scale warfare period against secessionist territories that enjoy *de facto* independence since the cease fire agreements.

In South Ossetia. In January 1992, a referendum was said by the Ossetian authorities to have scored 99 per cent vote in favour of joining the Russian federation and uniting with North Ossetia. In June 1992 a cease-fire was signed between the two parties and supervised by Russia, after some "serious fighting" that dates back to 1990. As for Abkhazia, in 1991 a large majority of the Abkhaz minority voted in favour of joining Russia as an autonomous Republic. The main fights took place in 1992-3. A Russian and United Nations sponsored cease fire was agreed in May 1994. After a referendum held in December 1991, Nagorno-Karabakh declared its independence from Azerbaijan in January 1992, under the name of Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh. The conflict between the self-declared independent Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh dates back to 1988 and last intermittently until May 1994, when a cease-fire, sponsored by Russia, is agreed between the two parts to the conflict.[2]

These conflicts, by this abnormal situation, do not count in the statistics over war or political violence, just because they do not provoke "classical" casualties, or because

---

[2] Herzig, E., (1999) *The New Caucasus. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, The Royal Institute of International Affaires, London, pp. 65-73. See also Minorities at Risk Chronologies.

they stay basically "frozen", contrary to the period they were still "boiling". However, the human cost of the Caucasus' status quo measured in terms of internally displaced people, emigration out of the region or impoverishment is enormous. It is a leaking source of misery for the region: both to the states and to the statelets. Furthermore, the dangers of contagion to the surrounding states is not to be underestimated, due to the strong ties and geo-strategic and geo-economic interests in the area. This makes the Caucasus a very relevant area for the future, both for the western and for the rest of the world. As some authors have pointed out, the western neglecting of the Caucasus could trigger another Balkan-like war in the nearby of the Europe[3].

Before announcing the development of my work I will first define some concepts I will be working with. I will have here a summary definition, and all along my work I will introduce the necessary subtleties and fine distinctions.

State and statehood

The state can be defined internationally in terms of "sovereignty", referring to the fact that the state is not subject to any higher political authority, or nationally in terms of the weberian monopole of the legitimate use of physical violence. In any case, what a state is, is important to define when a state stops to be -failed states. It depends very much on the ontological dimension of the state -its essence, what makes it- and the more instrumental vision: what it is made for. The role of the state has evolved in history to arrive at what today's theories refer to the essence and the functions of the state. [4] In

---

[3] See for example Smith (1999) *The Post-Soviet States. Mapping. The Politics of Transition*, Oxford University Press, New York, p.227.

[4] Introduced by Machiavelli early 16th century in its modern sense, under the form of "*stato*". His conceptualization of the state focused on power and its cumulating in a central figure for pure practical concerns regardless legal preoccupations. What we know today under a moderate form as "reason of state": so the exercise of power could be arbitrary as soon as it served the interest of the ruler. Bodin later on introduced the concept of legality or the rule of law as a justification of the state and its "raison d'être" and as a basis of sovereignty with the major duty of maintaining law and order. The treaty of Westphalia in 1648 symbolized this understanding. The basic outcome of this system was the obligation of the subject and its main duty to obey the sovereign. A classical definition of the state is the one that postulates: population, territory, sovereignty and legitimacy. In the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries this normative conceptualization was contested through different ideologies, Enlightenment, Anarchism and Socialism, progressively deteriorating the authority of the state. The result was the introduction of the concept of popular sovereignty, which would focus not on legal terms but on a more delicate concept: legitimacy. It basically seek to make a distinction between government and state, to limit the power of the state/authorities towards its citizens. Hence, once the quest for the state to assure the protection of insecurity stemming from the Hobbesian state of nature was accomplished, the next objective consisted in limiting the power of the sovereign and giving it to the people. Rousseau was one of the main developers

broad terms a state is a form of social organization in which a people agree to a regime -social contract- and where the state maintains a exclusive and legitimate use of coercive force. The state is supposed to provide with security, from inside and outside and a broad range of services -the welfare state- seeking the common well being. It regulates the market, collects taxes, has a loyal army, etc. It provides social and political rights and lately also economic and social rights. According to this definition, though, there might be quite a few states in the world.

That is the reason why I will use a minimalist definition of state, which is the one that exist nowadays. A minimalist definition is the one that consist on "theoretical" or nominal statehood internationally sanctioned. Statehood (a state) can be defined according to the Montevideo Convention of 1993 as a territory with permanent population, a government and the capacity to enter into relations with other states.[5] The Montevideo convention, in its article 3, states that statehood is *independent* of international recognition. However, the rule is actually the contrary: states are so when internationally recognized. Actually, territories where the Montevideo conditions are present, when not internationally recognized, do never acquire statehood. On the contrary, many states do not at all comply with the Montevideo requisites, but their statehood goes undisputed.[6]

<u>State building</u>

According to my minimalist definition of "state", state building is the process by which a state builds up or tries to build up a state. The redundancy is voluntary and seeks to express that statehood is recognized previous or regardless any state building potential or conditions, or to put the car before the horse.

---

of this idea. The immediate consequence of this swift was the increasingly use of the concept of self-determination. The unacceptability of such a concept by the "establishment" in many situations will find its counter act in democracy, and its constitutional foundation; a public space where compromise and negotiation can substitute oppression and conflict. See *International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, (1972), Collier MacMillan Publishers, London, pp.143-167.

[5] Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention: *The state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states.* This a regional American Convention and has not therefore any legal effect outside. However it is used by some authors as an authoritative document of international customary law. See http://www.molossia.org/montevideo.html.

[6] This is what is called declarative vs. constitutive theory of statehood. See online Encyclopaedia http://www.wordiq.com/definition/State.

Nation

The concept of nation is very important to understand that of state and of state building. The nation is broadly defined as people sharing culture, language and/or ethnicity. The concept is highly controversial and escapes any clear definition. For the purpose of my work I will call nation any group of people who believe they constitute a differentiate political, social, cultural project that ultimately needs a state to be realized. Actually that is often the case.

Nation building

A process of nation building is not exactly one by which a people invent their status, but the process by which a people apply their particular cultural, linguistic or ethnic project into a territory, where other distinct people may exist. Nation building is traditionally a process that comes after state building. Although they may also happen at the same time. The controversy about this enterprise is that according to some authors any successful and sustainable project of state building needs a posterior or parallel process of nation building, homogenization, the only path to peace within the ideal democratic system.

Nationalism

According to Gellner, and a most widely used scholar definition, when the political unit (state) and the cultural unit (nation) should be congruent.[7] A more comprehensive definition is that of Snyder, according to whom it is the "doctrine that a people who see themselves as distinct in their culture, history, institutions, or principles should rule themselves in a political system that expresses and protects those distinctive characteristics."[8]

---

[7] Gellner, E., (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, pp.1-7. Cited in Snyder, J., (2000), "Transitions to democracy and the Rise of Nationalist Conflict" in *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Ethnic Conflict*, Norton and Company, New York, p.22.
[8] Ibid., p.23.

Scholars distinguish between "ethnic" and "civic" nationalism depending on "their appeals to the collective good and on their criteria for including members in the group."[9] the first appeals to cultural or language traditions mainly, or even race in the most extreme case, the latter relies on political institutions and ideas. However, these are ideal types, and nationalism, depending on the case takes from one or the other on variable levels and depending on the historic and political conjuncture.

Ethno or ethnic nationalism

"The belief that the ethnic group comprises a national unit that has the right to possess its own sovereign state wherein full citizenship is a function of common ethnicity".[10]

Nationalism or ethno nationalism is also relevant as a political cleavage in that within a political context, the political fight over political, economic and other resources is spelled out in terms on ethnic or national logics –and not in terms of social class, religion or broader and more comprehensive ideologies like that of communism. There are uses and misuses of this fact. When the nationalist claims radicalize, which is more the exception than the rule, secessionist struggles appear as the natural outcome.

Ethnic group

"A Group of people sharing a distinctive and enduring collective identity based on common cultural traits such as ethnicity, language, religion, or race, and perceptions of common heritage, shared experiences, and often common destiny."[11] Also called communal or identity groups.

---

[9] Ibid., p.24.
[10] Henderson, E. A., (1999) "Ethnic Conflict and Cooperation" in Encyclopaedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict, vol. 1, p.751.
[11] Ibid., p.751.

Inter ethnic conflict

"Disputes between contending groups who identify themselves primarily on the basis of ethnic criteria and who make group claims to resources on the basis of their collective rights."[12]

Ethnic conflict

Used as a synonym of inter-ethnic conflict. However, the latter is more accurate in that it clarifies the contenders of the conflict but does not establish yet the rationale of the conflict. In my opinion, inter-ethnic conflicts have a ethnic dimension, but not the only one. An pure ethnic conflict may be one where an ethnic group attacks another for pure ethnic hatred or base merely on ethnic arguments.

"Ethnicized" conflicts

When an inter-ethnic conflict takes a very marked ethnic turn, and the ethnic component stays -or is forced to stay- in the centre of the stage, while other maybe more important components, like political or economic interests, stay hidden. This may serve private interests of elites that may have a particular interest in mobilizing the population to gain political influence or economic power.

Ethnic cleansing

Moving populations on ethnic basis to secure a territory.[13]

Irredentism

"The pursuit of the acquisition of the population and or the territory for which a group or state suggests it is culturally associated."[14]

---

[12] Ibid., p.751.
[13] Preece, J.J., (2000) "Ethnic Cleansing and the Normative Transformation of International Security" Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University, p.1.
[14] Henderson, op. cit., p.751.

<u>Secession</u>

"Often violent attempt of a political entity (a region within a state) to separate from a larger political unit (the state) usually with the intent of establishing an independent state."[15]

My work will be divided into three chapters:

The first chapter "Background and transition processes in the South Caucasus" is made of "background" conditions and the transition processes previous to the act of state building in the South Caucasus: decolonisation or Soviet break up and democratization. The first chapter is divided into three subchapters then.

The first subchapter "Ethnicity and recent history" is divided into three parts: "Multi ethnic states", "Soviet legacy: past grievances ancient hatreds and popular rivalries" and "The Soviet territorial design". The objective is to establish, if possible, correlations between the ethnic composition of the region, the Soviet legacy and particularly the Soviet territorial design with frozen and frozen conflicts. When a correlation is not possible I will point out precedents of the conflicts and conditions that may have heighten the probability of the conflicts.

The second subchapter "The Soviet break up: 'decolonization'" is divided into three parts: "After the empire", "Fix borders: *uti possidetis juris*" and "The end of the overarching identity and of totalitarism". Here I will see the possible correlations or links between the inherited Soviet territorial design when granted statehood, the natural weaknesses of the new states and the end of a common societal project and of a repressive regime with the frozen conflicts.

My third subchapter will discuss the impact of democratization on frozen conflicts, through three main arguments: possible empirical correlates between democratization and state violence; conditions under which democracy mitigates or exacerbates ethnic

---

[15] Ibid., 751.

conflicts and the "stateness" problem: the relations between state and nation building and democracy.

The second chapter "State building and ethnic war in the South Caucasus" is divided into three subchapters: "State and nation building", "Nationalism, ethnicity and violence" and "Nationalizing policies and real or perceived grievances". The first two analyse frozen conflicts and the core process of state and nation building in the light of the theories of the "failed states" and nationalism and ethnic conflicts. The last part, focuses in concrete elite strategies in the process of state building. The three of them though are centred in the concrete measures and decisions in the hands of the newly independent states elites and populations in their quest for statehood and "stateness". The second deals, using a Sartre's statement, with what they did with what it had been done to them. Here I will show both the connection of the first part with the second, and how in their process of state building, strategies of nation building clashed with antagonist and parallel strategies of alternative state building in an stateless situation, producing the subsequent inter ethnic violence, the war and the ultimate secessionism.

In my third chapter I will look at the role of the external actors in the frozen conflicts. The third chapter deals with a highly relevant variable in the situation, how the external actors have played with the region, promoting and contributing to the present situation. The South Caucasus is highly dependent on external allies, and their present situation is unexplainable without them. External actors will be basically two: Russia and the western allies, and by western allies I mean basically NATO and the US. External actors are also Iran and Turkey, with relevant role also, but to a lesser extent. The third part will connect with the second in the following way: First I will explain how external actors have reinforced both centripetal and centrifugal phenomena; on the one hand, the nation building strategies of "proprietary" states, because these have seek to detach themselves and to gain impendence from Russia; on the other hand, the stateless nations, because these have used the same actor for the opposite strategy. Second, how these external actors have positioned themselves in the region determining the state of the conflicts in accordance with their own interests, be direct or indirect, and how these external actors have competed with each other to assure their interests, contributing ultimately to the present anomalous "frozen" status quo. Part three finally clearly reconnects with part one in that external actors can be basically assimilated, until very

recently, to Russia, the heart of the former Soviet Union. So in certain way, the third part is the same thing under a different colour. However, the end of the Cold War and the penetration of western interests, but also the growing role of Turkey and Iran, very much motivated by the own South Caucasian states to go towards the West has though rendered more complex the situation.

The three dimensions of the problem should explain why and how the South Caucasus is today plagued by the so called frozen conflicts. In all three cases, I will relate the topics to my problematic, why and how they have contributed to the frozen conflicts.

The approach is "regional". The pattern can be applied to the three states. However, some distinctions will have to be made. For example, the concept of state failure, does not apply to Armenia as it does to the other two. Besides, depending the concept of "failed state" is defined, Georgia and Azerbaijan will not be "all the time" in the category. On the other hand, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh implies also and inter state conflict and not only an intrastate one. Also, Nagorno-Karabakh is a very ethnically homogeneous and of majority of Armenians territory, contrary to (at least originally) the other two, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. For the rest, Soviet past, transitions to democracy, nation building and ethnic -or ethnicized- conflicts and external role apply to all of them.

My position is that the first chapter -background and transitions- establishes obvious potentials of conflict. However, only in the second chapter -elite decisions, elite strategies, policies and ideologies- direct causations can be found to the conflicts. It can be argued though a connection between elite strategies and background or transitions processes. However, it can not be established in absolute terms: that is to say, the elite decisions, elite strategies and ideologies could have been otherwise, and this "otherwise" could have stopped the conflicts. But, once those elite behaviours were so that they "provoked" the conflicts as we know them today, the background and transition processes regain a especial dimension, rendering the conflicts particularly irresolvable. That is to say, if the background and the transitions processes were potential of conflicts and have not *sensu stricto* provoked them, once the conflicts have burst and escalated, they contribute to their intractability. As fort he third part -external actors- their role is similar somehow, though more visible, to that of the first chapter's

background and transition processes. Their presence cannot explain *per se* the conflicts. Even though they are for sure decisive in elite strategies, these could have been, again, different, regardless their presence. But, once the conflicts have taken the path they have, violent and maximalist positions, the involvement of external actors have actually directly contributed to the present state of the conflicts and added to the complexity of their irresolution.

1. <u>Background and transition processes in the South Caucasus</u>

Inter-ethnic intrastate violent conflicts[16] in the Caucasus have been explained as a consequence of ethnic, cultural or religious diversity within the states. According to the "ancient hatreds" and "popular rivalries" argument, the break-up of an empire reawakens old animosities and "unfinished business", remained latent. According to Zverev, after the Soviet dissolution, the "old ethnic wounds have reopened"[17]. For some, the end of the Cold War with the sudden increase in the number of "ethnic"[18] violent conflicts is the proof. Democracy, on its turn, can actually be a solution but also a problem in multi ethnic states.

In this chapter the relationship or potential correlations between "background" conditions, transition processes and frozen conflicts[19] will be established. Whenever such correlations are not possible or unclear, one may see probabilities of conflict, of

---

[16] The most obvious form of war after the Cold War. Intrastate conflicts gain protagonism after the Cold War as opposed to inter state conflicts. Intrastate conflicts can take two forms, conflicts over government or conflicts over territory. When they are over territory they are nationalist violent secessionist conflicts. In Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Yearbook 2002, Appendix 1A, pp.63-76 and Ayres, R.W. (2002a), "A World Flying Apart? Violent Nationalist Conflicts and the End of the Cold War". *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 37, pp.105-117.

[17] Zverev, A. (1996) "Ethnic Conflicts in the South Caucasus 1988-1994" in Coppieters, B., *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, VUB University Press, 1/4 p.1.

[18] The conflicts in the Caucasus are "ethnic" in that "ethnicity" has become the core of the motivation. However, properly speaking, they are inter ethnic, where "ethnicity" is one of the motivations or source of antagonisms, together with political, economic or other motivations.

[19] Frozen conflicts in the Caucasus are the following: a " failed" state building process after a granted statehood and a newly gained independence in the aftermath of the Soviet dissolution. The failed state building process can be seen in terms of state failures and of nation building failures. The first relates to constitutive lacks, the latter to competing projects and not to constitutive lacks. Whenever I say frozen conflicts I refer to: the former core component, failed state building, and the particular way state failures and nation failures have come to be: inter ethnic war with a considerable ethnic component conducted through ethno nationalist ideologies in a fight between a centre or titular states against peripheries around the antagonist demands of territorial integrity, sovereignty and self determination. The outcome is secessionism and *de facto* independence from the titular state and the state of the conflicts is frozen along cease fire lines.

inter ethnic -or ethnic- conflict, or ultimately of violence.[20] If certain background conditions and transition processes are not being able alone to explain -no direct causation possible- they will though prepare the ground or open the way or put the seeds for such a quest. That is to say, these conditions will become explicative and relevant - and "worsening"- only when other elements, like the concrete process of state building undergone by the elites or elite strategies -second chapter- and the intervention of external actors -third chapter- will enter the picture.

To begin with, an analyse of the background components of the frozen conflicts is compulsory. The "background" is, first, the ethno-demographic composition of the region. I have isolated this component and others as possible explicative variables of the conflicts in terms of: a possible correlation between multi ethnic states, past grievances, soviet heritage and frozen conflicts. Together with the background, there are two transition processes: from the Soviet empire to independence, and from a repressive regime to democracy.

The impact of the "decolonisation" process in the conflicts can be seen in terms of inherited borders according to the principle of *uti possiditis juris*, and of the way the Soviet empire proper broke up; finally, in terms of the end of two cohesive Soviet traits: an overarching identity and a repressive regime.

Finally I will see if any correlates are to be found between transition to democracy and frozen conflicts. Basically the relationship of democratization and state violence, the mitigation or exacerbation potentials of democracy vis-à-vis ethnic conflicts and the interaction between state and nation building, democracy and frozen conflicts.

---

[20] Whenever I say "conflicts" I mean the situation in which there are disagreements between the holders of the "centre", and the non holders of the centre over the management or the distribution of economic or political goods in a given state -unless I am using it as a abbreviation of "frozen conflicts". Conflicts are not violence, and violence is not war. Whenever I say "violence", and hence "violent conflict" I mean large scale violence in the form of civil war. By civil war I mean intrastate warfare opposing a centre against a non centre contending power -although it could also be between two non centre contending powers. Whenever I say "inter ethnic violent conflict" I will mean the above meant by "violent conflict" when it opposes a centre made of an ethnic group distinct from ethnic group in a non centre. Whenever I say "violent secessionist inter ethnic conflict" I mean that the war in question is over territory. In the latter case, the war is over territory, not over government, the case of the frozen conflicts. Finally, whenever I say "violent ethnic secessionist conflicts" I assume that for some reason the core rationale for the conflict is a antagonism between two ethnic groups that leads to a fight for self determination and independence of a territory of a sovereign state.

1.1 Ethnicity and recent history

In the South Caucasus there were certain ethno demographic -and "sociological"- conditions that may help understand the rationale of frozen conflicts. The region has a relatively small population with around 15 million inhabitants in a small territory[21]. It has a high ethnic[22], religious[23] and cultural diversity. The three states have important minority groups in their territory or in other state's territory[24]-be the other two South Caucasian states, be in the neighbouring countries. The three statelets Abkhazia[25], South Ossetia[26] and Nagorno-Karabakh[27] are ethnically distinct from their respective states'

---

[21] Azerbaijan, with 87,000 sq km and 7,734,000 inhabitants; the capital is Baku (1,149,000). Armenia, with 29,800 sq Km and a population of 3,802,00; the capital is Yerevan (1,254,400). Georgia, with 69,700 sq km and 5,066,499 inhabitants; the capital is Tbilisi (1,253,000). In Euroasianet.org http://www.eurasianet.org/.

[22] There are three major families: First, the Caucasian People, with different ethnic groups; the Abkhaz and the Georgian are two stand-alone distinct groups, among others, of this family. Secondly, the Indo-European Peoples; within this one, and among others, one finds the stand-alone Armenians and under the group of the Iranians, the Ossetians. Finally, a third, group, the Turkic, to which the Azeris belong. In The University of Texas at Austin, Online Maps, Ethnolinguistic groups in the Caucasian Region, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/commonwealth/ethnocaucasus.jpg.

[23] In Georgia: Georgian Orthodox 36.7%, Sunni Muslim 11%, Russian Orthodox 2.7%, Armenian Apostolic 5.6%, other Christian 1.2%, other (mostly non-religious) 42.8%. In Armenia: Apostolic 64.5%, other Christian 1.3%, Yezidi (Zoroastrian/animist) 2%, other/none 32.2%. In Azerbaijan: Muslim 93.4%, (of which Shi'a 65.4%, Sunni 28%), Russian Orthodox 1.1%, Armenian Apostolic 1.1%, other 4.4% (1995). Source: http://www.worldstatesmen.org/.

[24] In Georgia: Georgian 57.9%, Mingrelian 9.1%, Armenian 8.1%, Russian 6.3%, Azeri 5.7%, Ossetian 3%, Abkhaz 1.8%, other 6.2% (2000). In Armenia: Armenian 94.6%, Kurdish 1.7%, Russian 1.5%, Azeri 0.5%, other 1.7% (2000). In Azerbaijan: Azeri 89%, Dagestani 3.2%, Russian 3%, other 3.8%, Lezgian 2.2%, Armenian 2%, almost all living in Nagorno-Karabakh (1995). Source: http://www.worldstatesmen.org/.

[25] They are recognized as a minority, ethnically and linguistically distinct within Georgia. They speak a language different from Georgian. The language was successively transformed into Latin, Cyrillic, and form Cyrillic to the Georgian alphabet, in both a process of "russification" and "georgianization". The language was repressed and replaced by Georgian, while before it has been the only language of the Abkhaz, to be restored in 1956, remaining a minor language. The Abkhaz are Muslims. In the Soviet census of 1989, the population of Abkhazia counted 525,000 inhabitants, of which 93,000 were Abkhazians, just 18%, whereas the Georgians were 46% of the population. According to this same census, in 1989, 94% of the Abkhaz considered Abkhaz their primary language, 79% considered Russian their second, and just 3% claimed another one. Hence, a distinct ethnic group, a history of union republic, a Muslim group, and with an important language schism with and within Georgia. In Minorities at Risk (MAR), Assessment and chronology for Abkhazians in Georgia and in Toft, M.D., "Multinationality, regional Institutions, State-Building, and the Failed Transition in Georgia", in Hughes, J., *Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union: Regions in Conflict*, pp.128-129.

[26] South Ossetians speak a distinct language, Ossetian, which is a north Iranian language. Like in the case of the Abkhaz, it was scripted into Latin, into Cyrillic, to be scripted into Georgian during 1938 and 1954 following the georgianization policies. Finally it was, after 1954, reencrypted into Cyrillic. As for language usage, like in Abkhazia, the use of Georgian, according to the 1989 Soviet census, was none. Most of the South Ossetians, 164,000 according to the above mentioned census, live outside Ossetia, in the borders of the Oblast. The population of South Ossetia proper was of 65,000 Ossetians, two thirds of a total population of 98,000, of which the rest were for the most part Georgians. In Toft, op. cit., p.131.

[27] Karabakhis are ethnic Armenians and speak Armenian. In Nagorno-Karabakh, according to the 1989 Soviet census, the total population of the enclave was of 189,000; Armenians were 145,000 or 76.9%, and

dominant ethnic group, speak a different language and are -or were before the war- multiethnic. So we have heterogeneous people, importantly inter-mixed in a small territory. The intermixing proofs particularly relevant in that the conflicts will provoke one of the most important problems: ethnic cleansing.[28] Subsequently, internally displaced people[29]. Those give the strong "ethnic" dimension of the conflicts -or are the evident consequence of this dimension- and are as today one of the main difficulties of the settlement and one of the most obvious and striking components of the state building and nation building contradictions and failures.[30]

- <u>Multiethnic societies</u>

Are multiethnic societies more prone to conflict and when so to violence? Is multi ethnicity *per se* synonymous of antagonisms? Empirical evidence seems to be that they are not. However, from a common sense position, it is argued that the more is fragmented a society within a state the more competing interests, and hence the highest is the probability of conflict and of violence -sometimes without making a distinction. I will not discuss here the truism that heterogeneous states can face more conflicts, having to accommodate multiple cultural, religious and linguistic groups, but the believe that multiethnic states are naturally condemned to violence and secessionism, and that multi ethnicity is behind war.

Ethnic minorities and the subsequent claims they may pose, the especial protection they may need, and nationalist political groups within states as a consequence of those are as pervading nowadays as is violence as a cause of them rare. On the other hand, conflicts that imply one or more ethnic groups are often if not always a mixture of several interests -economic, political, and so on- and ethnicity is just one of them. However, it

---

Azerbaijanis were 40,700. According to the 1979 census, there were 475,000 Armenians in Azerbaijan, of which 123,000 lived in Nagorno-Karabakh. Ibid., p.161.

[28] According to Preece "forcibly moving populations defined by ethnicity (race, language, religion, culture, etc) to secure a particular piece of territory". The term was introduced in the early 1990s after the Cold war to refer to practices around the world in "ethnic conflicts". However, affirms Preece, the practice is far from being new. In Preece, op. cit., p.1.

[29] Internally displaced people (IDP) are those populations that basically involuntarily as consequence of secessionist inter-ethnic war, have to abandon their homes within their own country to another part of the country. They are "refuges" in their own country.

[30] See Herzig, op. cit., pp. 66, 74, 76-79. Also, according to Preece, "the practice of ethnic cleansing is fundamentally linked to the political ideal of the homogeneous nation-state and the ethnic nationalism that underscores it", Preece, op. cit., p. 2.

is true though that when ethnicity takes the lead the conflicts tend to become particularly intractable.

According to the State Failure Task Force Report[31], high ethnic diversity[32] is one of the main explicative variables in the outcome of "ethnic wars", as they call it. But it is no the only one[33]. According to them, "the more ethnically diverse a society, the greater risk of ethnic war".[34] Besides, they conclude, this pattern is observed regardless other complementary variables, like ethnic discrimination or quality-of-life questions. Hence, for them, ethnic wars are, "by definition", impossible in homogeneous societies.[35] The task Force, besides, finds that that there is a strong correlation between ethnic wars and different types of state failures. Nearly half of the 61 ethnic wars that began between 1955 and 1988 either preceded or coincided with some other state failures events.[36] This is relevant because ethnic diversity is thought to be a direct cause in state break ups. There are two problems in these findings. First, the fact of choosing previous ethnic wars -without entering now to discuss the label- and trying to find similarities, only takes into account the cases where there was already "ethnic" war. However, we do not know anything about other countries where peace exits regardless high ethnic diversity. As some authors point out, the "non-conflicts cases are as important as those where conflict has occurred".[37] The second problem is that there are cases of secession and state failures in homogeneous societies, like the Somali case proofs. Therefore, if multi ethnicity is present in all cases of "ethnic" wars, multi ethnicity is also present in many more cases of ethnic peace.

---

[31] State Failure Task Force Report, Phase III Findings, September 30, 2000. For details on the nature of the project see http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/stfail/.

[32] They measure diversity into "high", "medium" and "low" based on the Correlates of War Data set. For details see p.37.

[33] Other variables used are: infant mortality, ethnic discrimination, regional memberships and upheavals.

[34] Specifically they affirm that "countries with highly diverse populations face odds of failure *five times* as high as countries with largely homogeneous populations. For countries with moderately diverse populations -typically comprised of two or three large groups and perhaps some much smaller ones -the odds of ethnic war were three times as high", p.35.

[35] Ibid., p. 36-37.

[36] Ibid., p. 34.

[37] Hughes, J., and Sasse, G., (2001) "Comparing Regional and Ethnic Conflicts in post-Soviet Transition States: An Institutional Approach", ECPR Joint Sessions, Grenoble, April 7-11, p. 2.

Some other authors, on the contrary, affirm that there is no clear pattern linking ethnic heterogeneity and violence.[38] Actually, the number of states[39] where an ethnic homogeneous population exist, in Europe there are only two, Norway and Portugal, is minimum. Hence, states are by definition multiethnic and multicultural.[40] However, the number of ethnic conflicts is small and its salience and durability is biased by some festering ones.[41] This seems like an empirical evidence.

A second empirical evidence is that after the Soviet break up, all former Soviet republics had important minorities and national groups, and the Soviet dissolution can be said to have been a fairly peaceful break up.[42] With the exceptions of Chechnya and Moldova -and the South Caucasian states- the rest of the republics have dealt with their minorities in a more or less peaceful manner. At least things have not taken a radical turn -secession and self determination- and hence ethnic diversity cannot be explicative alone.[43]

A third empirical evidence: there are around 50 ethnic groups in the South Caucasus; however, only a few of them have had violence outcomes and have ended in secession. This point is important and forgotten by those that "demonise" ethnicity and establish that multi ethnic states are condemned to war. In fact, if the assertion of "ethnic" wars occurring only in multi ethnic states forget those considerable in number of cases where multi ethnicity does not constitute a reason for war, it also forgets the fact that it is only a few of those ethnic groups that actually become "problematic". Which makes actually think that the "problem" may not be exactly multi ethnicity or not, but the "quality" of some of those ethnic groups. This finesse, confirming the relevance of several ethnic groups within a state, poses the emphasis in amore elaborated approach that bases on an imputation of ethnicity *per se*.

---

[38] Wimmer, A., (2002) *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict. Shadows of Modernity*, Cambridge University Press, p. 87.
[39] There are 193 independent sovereign states. For a detailed list http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/.
[40]For a detailed list see CIA, The World Fact Book
http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/fields/2075.html.
For self determination profiles until 2003 see
http://www.selfdetermine.org/conflicts/index.html.
[41] See Ayres (2000a), op. cit., p.5.
[42] Wallensteen, P., (1999) "State Failure, Ethnocracy and Armed Conflict: Towards New Conceptions of Governance", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 8-11, Purdue University, p.10.
[43] Smith (1996 and 1999) Hughes and Sasse (2002).

The same can be said about religious differences. Conflicts in the South Caucasus seem clearly to override any logic based on religious differences. The case of Ajaria[44], in Georgia, for example, proofs that national identity can be more important than religiosity, or that religiosity is irrelevant to explain violence or conflict. Ajaria, with a Muslim majority, the Muslims Georgians as they are called, has been conflictive but has not arrive to the extremes of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Independence has never been an issue, and they have never really contested being part of Georgia in the maximalist terms of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The situation has never arrived to an unilateral cession of Ajaria.[45]

The case of Ajaria proofs two things then: first, that religion is widely irrelevant to explain conflicts; second, that conflict does not imply violence; third, that problems of ethnic difference is not *per se* alone significant.

I can conclude, for the moment, that ethnic diversity cannot *per se* be a satisfactory explanation of "ethnic" violence and secessionism. It is though beyond discussion that whenever there is "ethnic" violence and secessionism, there is an ethnic groups behind opposing to another one in the same state. However, this fact does not proof that the problem lay properly speaking in the ethnic dissimilarity.

However, when ethnic dissimilarity is accompanied by political institutions along ethnic lines, with a past of confrontations, and when broadly the ethnic group has a well cemented sense of "nation", and when several of those coexist in a territorial hierarchy, these ethnic dissimilarities may actually take a strong dimension, and may explain

---

[44] Ajaria autonomous entity, contrary to the ethnic based of the others, was created on religious basis by the Soviet rule. They are Muslims. According to Toft, after Georgian successful homogenization policies -georgianization- the Ajar recognize themselves today as Georgians. They were though strongly repressed because of their religious beliefs and still today Georgian religious intolerance sees them as non real Georgians, which is seen as being Christian. The 1989 Soviet census estimated the Ajar republic contained a total population of 381,000. Of which 'Georgians' counted 317,000. The Muslim population has been estimated to be around 40%. Ajarians living outside Ajaria are a very small number. So basically, the Ajarians are Muslim Georgians, they feel Georgian and they speak the same language as Georgians. In Toft, op. cit., pp.127-128.

[45] Still, Ajaria, with a strong an mobilized elite and population towards their particular interests has regularly been a raison for confrontations with Tbilisi. Actually, a crisis opened between Batumi and the then president Aslan Abashidze and Saakashvili when Ajaria police and illegal army impeded the Georgian president to enter the territory last March 2004 (Euroasianet.org 16/03/04). Ajaria's political discourse has to do with Ajaria's economic interests -tax and revenue collections- while the religious and identity components are secondary. Hence, it has to do with Georgia's effective administrative control of a uncontested territory, at least in relative terms, compared with the absolute lack control over the other two.

explain probably for sure potential of conflicts, and may help to understand the violent outcomes. I will see then if it can actually be explained when high ethnic diversity is accompanied by certain historic legacies and a record of past confrontations.

- The Soviet legacy: past grievances, ancient hatreds and popular rivalries[46]

The frozen conflicts have a past and many specialists of the South Caucasus point out the relevance of the past to understand the rationale of frozen conflicts. Not so much in terms of a very disputable direct causation between past and present conflicts but in terms of the use of that history of the conflicts -or the history that would justify both past and present conflict equally- by the respective ethnic groups.[47]

History has been an instrument in the ethno political projects of state and nation building in the Caucasus and hence a particular component to understand elite strategies and the rationale of frozen conflicts.[48] According to Zverev, the break out of the conflicts can be explained also, among other geo political and geo economic interests, as a function of the "use of history in the service of particular nationalist demands".[49] In the same line, Herzig affirms that all three conflicts have been influenced by a particular vision of history of the parties. The author affirms that "the coexistence of contradictory historical claims was facilitated by selective use of sources, by tendentious interpretations and, on occasion, by deliberate falsification of the historical record".[50]

---

[46] By popular rivalries and ancient hatreds -the latter a component of former- it is basically meant that within states, at the time of their impendence, there are pre existing ethnic groups with strong national identities that clash between each other, impeding a peaceful process of state building or democratization, given that naturally those nations demand to be a state but there is often just one state where to build up on. Therefore, the wars of secessionism and the so called ethnic wars over territory and independence.

[47] See for example Potier (2001) *Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. A legal Appraisal*, Kluwer Law International, The Hague, pp.1-17. For a short view of the Georgian Abkhazian conflict See also Krylov, A., (2001) "Georgians and Abkhazians: Ethnic Origins and ethnic Conflict", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, no.2(8), pp.103-107. For a summary of the history of the conflicts and role of past confrontations in the justification and motivation of the present frozen conflicts see Dashdamirov (2001) "Ideological Contradictions of Ethnic Policies in the Caucasus", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, no.5(11), pp.48-53. See also MAR for a chronology of main events in the conflicts.

[48] See for example Krylov (2001) for summary of the case of Georgia and Abkhazia. See also Khoshtaria-Brosse (2001) for an example of school texts published in Abkhazia after independence reinforcing this idea of history manipulations. See Dashdamirov (2001) for the relations between ideology, history and ethnic policies in the South Caucasus.

[49] Zverev, op. cit., 1/4 p.3.

[50] Herzig, op. cit., p. 59.

In any case, can it be found any past grievances in the South Caucasus, some patterns of confrontation, that help understand frozen conflicts today? The answer is positive. There is indeed a clear "historic pattern" of confrontation. However, this pattern is more evident is some cases than in others. But the pattern exist. Still, according to the critics of the popular rivalries argument, the explicative capacity of the ethnic wars according to supposedly pre existing and well formed antagonism is false. For Snyder this view is simplistic and misleading and hides or underscores the relevance of elites to elaborate, exaggerate or "use" for their own interests such past patterns of confrontations to stimulate popular mobilization on nationalist grounds -otherwise inexistent.[51] This critique is very relevant in consonance with my position, in that past grievances are relative at the moment of the transitions -be to democracy, be to independence- and hence at the early stages of the state building process, and that the concrete elite strategies are definitely decisive. Nevertheless, to point out the often case of "elite manipulation" in "inventing" past grievances in ethnic conflicts, the case of the south Caucasus does not seem easily to fit that case. Actually, there is a clear pattern of confrontation which clearly mirrors the rationale of the frozen conflicts today, which may indicate the past of the conflicts is particularly important. As Hughes affirms: "in such cases as Nagorno-Karabakh, Chechnya, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, historical animosities are salient factors".[52]

Which are though these past animosities and ancient hatreds? They can actually be traced back beyond the Russian two century occupations in some cases, although past grievances as relating to the frozen conflicts are to properly be found and are significantly created during the Soviet rule[53]. Hence, they are basically born within the Soviet Union territorial and political logics.

Moscow used a double process of assimilation and of ethnic division *vis-à-vis* its territories. The first seek to dissolve local identities to avoid secessionisms, and the latter actually strengthen, for the same purpose. Hence an opposite parallel process to that of assimilation -made of "russification" a and of "sovietization"- was made to face

---

[51] Snyder, op. cit., pp. 31-38.
[52] Hughes, op. cit., p. 226.
[53] Specially because the notion of "nation" in modern terms was inexistent in parts of the Caucasus before that, notably in Azerbaijan. However, it is important to note that Georgia and Armenia had already "a well developed national identity" before the Soviet rule. In Cornell, E.S., (1997) "Conflicting Identities in the Caucasus", *Peace Review*, no.9(4), p.453.

more concrete and urgent centrifugal problems, consisting basically on a process of ethno nationalist "stimulation"; to incentive homogenization within the units, but also the creation of units within the units in a arbitrary hierarchy.

This is important to understand the pre existing potentials of nation and state building in the South Caucasus territories, not only in the Union Republics but also in those lower in the administrative hierarchy. The three states had an anecdotic history of independence or statehood; they were subsequently part of the Persian, the Ottoman, the Tsarist and finally the Soviet empire, after the Bolshevik invasion of the South Caucasus[54]. However, the two centuries of Russian rule, under the Tsarist and the Bolsheviks were of a much stronger impact than those before. It had a strong demographic impact and political impact on the South Caucasus. The borders as we know them today were already a consequence of Tsarist nationalities policies and got their more surrealistic character with the Soviet needs during 1920s and 1930s.[55]

The South Caucasus attained modernization -urbanization, industrial development, massive alphabetization, etc- under Soviet rule together with a well developed and rooted sense of national identity -the idea and "the feel" of the nation is present, which does not only affect the titular states but also some regions within them. This developed though at he expenses and thanks to a particular ethnic territorial "rigmarole".[56] So, we have nations with potential for statehood, as well as inexperience in state building. We have also more "national groups" with potential for statehood than states "available". And we have territorial "contradictions" and territorial centrifugal synergies.

In 1917, a Transcaucasian federation was created by the Bolsheviks comprising Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. In 1919 it was dissolved and the three states declared independence. Their independence would be short-lived. By 1921 they were forced back in the Soviet Union.

---

[54] Independent kingdoms and principalities were shortly established in Georgia and Azerbaijan, and in the territory that is today known as Azerbaijan. In Herzig, op. cit, pp.2-3.
[55] Ibid., p.3.
[56] Smith (1996 and 1999), Herzig (1999), Hughes (2001 and 2002) Coppieters (1996 and 2001).

In Nagorno-Karabakh, the controversy starts with its creation in 1923 as an Autonomous Oblast within the Union Republic of Azerbaijan.[57] Its formation was polemic, took several years and satisfied neither of the two parts.[58] The territory had never been administratively part of Armenia in modern history. The enclave was part of the Baku province during the Tsarist rule. Armenia and Azerbaijan fought over it in late 1910s and early 1920s before being absorbed by the Soviet empire. The population of the territory, 95% Armenian in the 1920s, was finally given to Azerbaijan with an autonomous status though. This decision will be contested by Nagorno-Karabakh in several occasions during the decades of Soviet rule under the Azeri Union republic, demanding its transfer to Armenia.[59] The most notable of this attempts of separation from Azerbaijan and unification with Armenia occurred in the mid-1960s, when the "Armenian leadership cited anti-Armenian discrimination, economic underdevelopment and demographic shifts to support its case".[60] Therefore, well back at the beginning of the century and well until the end of the Soviet rule, the controversies over Nagorno-Karabakh are obvious.

Abkhazia was a founding member of the Soviet Union. Hence, it had the same status as Georgia, Union republic, and so was codified in its 1925 constitution. This status was nullified in 1936, and it was downgraded to the category of Autonomous Republic within Georgia. The South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast was created in 1922 within the Republic of Transcaucasia. In South Ossetia and Abkhazia, like in Nagorno-Karabakh, the past of the frozen conflicts is strikingly similar to the present. The Ossetians tried to unite with North Ossetia in 1925. Abkhazia contested several times its status of Autonomous republic within Georgia and claimed its return to the Union republic status and its constitution of 1925. Both claims were done to Moscow.[61]

---

[57] According to some authors, like Sevdimaliev, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh would go even further back to the Giulistan and Turkmanchai Treaties of 1813 and 1828. In Sevdimaliev, R., (2002) "Ethnic Conflicts and Human Rights in the Caucasus (Study-Case of the Conflict in Nagorny Karabakh)" *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, no1(13) pp. 93.

[58] See Zverev, op. cit., 1/4 for details.

[59] In 1929, 1935, 1963, 1966, 1977 and 1987.

[60] Panossian, R., "The Irony of Nagorno-Karabakh: Formal Institutions versus Informal Politics" in Hughes, J., *Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union: Regions in Conflict*, Frank Cass ed., London, p.144.

[61] See Toft, op. cit., pp. 128-131.

South Ossetia showed early sympathies for the Russian rulers. They collaborated on the side of the Tsarists when they invaded the Caucasus in 1801, and with the Bolsheviks when Georgia attempted to win independence between 1917 and 1921.[62] Apparently, the Ossetians, contrary to other Caucasian people "generally welcomed the Russian presence as offering protection from their more powerful local rivals".[63] Slightly different is the case of the Abkhazians; they were forcibly deported from their homeland by the Tsarist authorities following Russian annexation of adjacent territories in 1801 and between 1858-1866, or chose, within the same period, to resettle elsewhere in regions of the Ottoman empire and the present Turkey. However, due to pro-Russian Abkhaz, they became a Russian protectorate in 1810. In 1864, Abkhazia was formally annexed to Russia. After which there would be several Abkhaz rebellions against Russian rule (in 1864, in 1866 and in 1905). Abkhazians collaborated with the Bolsheviks, like the Ossetians, in its confrontation with independent Georgia between 1917 and 1921.[64] We see here then already a clear pattern of the present days: South Ossetia and Abkhazians sympathies for the Russians. Furthermore, it is arguable that the common cultural traits between Ossetians and Russians, both belong to the Indo-European People, helped establish early links against the Georgians. However, this might be more of a detail given that Abkhaz and Georgians belong both to the family of the Indo Europeans but to separate and distinct groups speaking different languages. As for the religious component, Muslim Abkhazia may explain early clashes with orthodox Russia, whereas Ossetians, being prominently Russian orthodox helped at the time to establish early sympathies.

It is then arguable that there is a strong past in the conflicts, and that a pattern of confrontations is to be found in that past to the present day. Frozen conflicts at present strikingly mirror those past confrontations. Those have been constants all along the Soviet rule, which is an indicator that the ancient hatred argument may not be such and aside component in the rationale of the conflicts.

---

[62] MAR Chronologies for Abkhazia and Ossetia (South).
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

- The Soviet territorial design

The discourse of past grievances in the conflicts depends on and starts from the Soviet territorial design. According to Brukaber the Soviet Union created a political system based on a "institutionalized multinationality".[65]

The modern version of ethnic identity and politics is nationalism and state ambitions. This concept was developed and reinforced within the Soviet regime. The Soviets undertook a territorial design which had several objectives. First, it seek to conciliate their interests, vis-à-vis the different South Caucasian Republics according to the political and strategic priorities at that moment aimed at protecting their territory from internal break ups and external threats. Basically, they used the principle of "*divide et impera*" or divide and rule to keep the territory under control. The result was a territorial disposition based on ethnic lines. The immediate result was that ethno national identities, territorially circumscribed, were encouraged and indeed developed strongly. On the other, it put the seed for inter-ethnic animosities and conflicts.[66] The Soviet territorial arrangement consisted of Union Republics: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia; Autonomous Republics: Abkhazia -with a short term of Union Republic-, Ajaria and Nakhichevan within Georgia; finally, the autonomous regions: Nagorno-Karabakh and South Ossetia. During all the Soviet period the disputes over levels of autonomy and territorial arrangements were constants. The system gave the different entities institutional tools, and these territories modernized and adopted nationalist premises in their way of handling identity and politics. Therefore, if South Ossetians and Abkhazians affirm that their inclusion in Georgia was an strategy to impede their national and state development, Georgians affirm their inclusion was meant to erode and fragment their nations. The same can be said of Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan.

The last "contribution" of the Soviet Union towards ethnic groups, under Gorbachev, and intimately related to the territorial design, occurred on 26 April 1990, when the Soviet Union's Supreme Soviet passed a law providing for notable enhancement of the rights of the autonomies. The centre, Moscow, basically encouraged secession demands

---

[65] Cited in Hughes, J., "Comparing Regional Conflicts in Post-Soviet Transition States" in Hughes *Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union: Regions in Conflict*, Frank Cass ed., London, p.3.
[66] See Cornell (1997) op. cit., p. 454.

in the autonomous territories within multinational Union republics, by recognizing their right of independence as much as the Union republics had it. The law was passed to keep under control and weaken the separatist aspirations of the some Union republics, as Azerbaijan and Georgia. Obviously, it had no applicability after the one year later break up of the Soviet Union but gave "legal" grounds to the autonomies' aspirations for statehood in South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh and has indeed been used by them to justify the legitimacy of their claims.[67]

To sum up, multi ethnicity is insufficient to explain the frozen conflicts and ethnic groups become relevant when equipped with nationalist ideologies; specially when they are given a territory and institutional tools. The potential of conflict is evident when the territorial and institutional design created nurtured ethno national identities within "gerrymandering" strategies confronting ethnic groups.

This fact is of a high relevance to understand the logic of the conflicts. The new states will be born according to these ethnic borders. The process of state building that will open with independence will be "staled" by them in a context of a double dimension of state failures: the proper to weak new states with little resources and lack of past statehood and the competing ethno nationalisms. If only elite strategies will actually explain the outcome of the conflicts in their radical way, the context in which impendence and state building is started -next subchapter- will be important to establish potentials of conflicts and indirect relations with the frozen conflicts.

1.2 The Soviet break up: "decolonization"

The above explained background conditions are insufficient to explain the frozen conflicts. They did not happen during the 70 years of Soviet rule. So, did the Soviet empire break up had to do with the appearance of violence and the radicalization of positions? It obviously did. But, to what extent? I will analyse in this subchapter three main arguments: one has to do with the consequences of an empire break up and the particularities of the Soviet break up as compared to other previous empires; the second

---

[67] Zverev, op. cit., 3/4 p. 6.

argument relates to the concept of inherited borders of the Soviet Union, and other with the end of the overarching identity and of totalitarism.

The decolonization process, i.e. the Soviet break up, is the condition *sine qua non* for the former Soviet territories statehood. The Soviet break has three components: the shape and nature of the empire itself, the break up proper and the way it broke up. The break up had three main consequences: the new states gaining statehood according to a previous Soviet territorial design; second, the end an strong societal project with an overarching identity, communism, and the end of a totalitarian an repressive regime.

- <u>After the empire</u>

Even if it cannot be established a correlation between the break up of empires and violence, the consequences of certain break ups on particular territories can heighten the probabilities of violence and of civil war.[68] It is arguable to see that instability is actually automatic after an empire break up. The whole order crawlers down and a new order needs to be build up out of the ashes. Hughes argues that the collapse of empires "is conducive to instability, if not to failed states".[69] It is clear as Fairbanks says that "weakening of the sate is a distinctive characteristic of post communist transitions."[70]

During the 20th century 27 empires were dissolved, from the Swedish to the late post communist unions. The break up is always followed by instability, and the new states born can suffer from different degrees of weaknesses. This opens a process of state building, even if statehood is automatically granted and it opens necessarily a process of state and nation building. After the empire, the three new states of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia were clearly glad of gaining finally independence after centuries of foreign rule. However, their statehood will be problematic, and soon they will show clear signs of weaknesses and apply to the different conceptualizations of the so called "failed states". The nature of their failures are multiple. And the explanations also. However,

---

[68] Wallensteen (1999), op. cit., p.10. See how the author affirms that the dissolution of an empire does not inevitably leads to violent break ups. According to the author the break up of the Soviet Union was mostly peaceful.
[69] Hughes, J., (2002) "Conflict and Accommodation in the Former Soviet Union: The Role of Institutions and Regimes" in Hughes *Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union: Regions in Conflict*, Frank Cass ed., London. p. 224-225.
[70] Fairbanks, op. cit. p.51.

by definition, it can be argued that given their size and dependence from Moscow, their independence had to be a hard one from the beginning.[71]

The reasons of those failures can be understood, first, as a consequence of the mere fact of decolonization, but particularly as a function of both the way the Soviet Union dissolved and the way the new states "gained" independence. Indirectly, that may help to understand the configuration logics of the conflicts.

On the other hand, after the dissolution there is a process during which the colonial legacy must be "recycled". This process of "recycling" can be as much a problem as an advantage. Some scholars have argued that the colonial inherited institutions were a burden and a raison for failures and conflicts. However, for others, the colonial institutions were more an advantage, or could have been as much an advantage for state building than a reason for state failures. According to Sorensen the post colonial legacy can be seen mainly as a help in the process of state building[72]. At least they had something to build up on. The discussion about the impact of colonial legacies, according to Sorensen, can be seen in any case in terms of constructive' vs. 'destructive positions',[73] i.e. those that see colonial territorial divisions and administrative or political institutions as the bases upon which construct a functioning state, but also, within the same structures, the seeds of its imminent failures. In the case of the South Caucasus, the heritage proofs effectively a double-edge sword. If the new independent states inherited their borders under a "phantom" federal system but with autonomous administrative institutions that allowed them to develop some levels of self government, they were also born "hosting" similar autonomous territories with their own institutions. This pose a clear challenge to the state building process of Georgia and Azerbaijan; notably taking into account their marked ethnic and homogeneous idea of the state.

The Soviet empire and its break up had though particular traits that distinguishes from other past cases. First of all, it was much more than the mere dissolution of a repressive, totalitarian gigantic regime. It was also the end of a whole societal project made of

---

[71] Fairbanks, Ch., "Ten Years after the Soviet break up. Disillusionment in the Caucasus and Central Asia", *Journal of Democracy*, vol.12, no.4, p.51.
[72] Sorensen, G., (2001) "War and State Making- Why doesn't it work in the Third World?", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 11-14, Purdue University, p. 5.
[73] Sorensen, G., (1998) "Democratization in the Third World. The Role of Western Politics and Research", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, February 25-27, Purdue University, p.6.

ideology, sociology and economy. It marked the end of an era, which may have had a particular impact. With the end of the Cold War, the new states did not only had to cope with a process of state and nation building, but with a process of radical transformation of their productive systems to a capitalist model. Furthermore, and to add to the difficulty, they had to undertake, within poor economic conditions,[74] a transition to democracy or some equivalent democratic oriented institutional design.

On the other hand, the way the Soviet Union dissolved may actually have had a clear impact on the circumstances encouraging the rationale of the frozen conflicts through potential for conflict. First, it is important to note a clear trait of the Soviet empire inexistent in other, consisting on the geographic proximity of the core and the periphery. Second, the speed by which it ended and finally the fact that it ended without military defeat. [75]

That the core was so close to the periphery it is of most importance in the role that Moscow came to play after the dissolution -see third chapter . In the South Caucasus this fact is strikingly relevant. Actually, Azerbaijan and Georgia share border with Russia, which has proofed particularly problematic them to develop independently and to secure their sovereignty in their process of state building. Actually, the dissolution of the Soviet empire was orchestrated from Moscow itself, hence granting independence - necessary step after which the new states were recognized as so- to the self declared independent states, but not to the self declared independent statelets. In any case, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia came to exist not as a product of war against Moscow, but as a product of Moscow -heart of the Soviet Union- giving up its territories.

Some scholars have analysed the aftermath of decolonisation and have discussed the subsequent weaknesses that transformed soon in state failures, together with centrifugal forces amidst inter ethnic violence as a function of the way the new states gain independence. The lack of a previous warfare process, using the classic European

---

[74] Fairbanks points out that these countries are undergoing a huge transformation in context similar to the European recession of 29. On his pat, Cornell points out also to the huge transformation that goes beyond that of a transition to democracy. In Fairbanks (2001), op. cit., p.51.
[75] Ibid. pp.225.

model[76], is one of the arguments used.[77] However, as evident as it seems to be that warfare was a condition for the European state formation, warfare in the new states of the South Caucasus after decolonization -after gaining statehood- has been far away to help in their state building process, on the contrary. But the conditions of state building of Europe and those after the decolonization processes that started in the 19th century and that culminated in late 20th have significantly changed.[78] And the significant change of the conditions may actually explain why war does not work anymore as a necessary processes of state building elsewhere, and particularly why it has not worked in the South Caucasus. According to Sorensen, war was as constructive as it was destructive[79]. But the present context -that from the European state to those of the European colonies state building- in which state building is undertaken has radically changed, which makes the role of war, among other classical prerequisites of state formation in Europe, of no validity. According to Sorensen, the present intromission of external actors seeking "narrow" political and economic interests, domestic preconditions, including the quality of the leadership, and the nature of war and of the what he calls the "life insurance" of the states impede that the conditions under which the European states undertook their process of state building can be found today.[80] Actually, it is indeed possible to find in the South Caucasus' context and conditions of state building those problems, which may relate both to the way they gained independence, and how later the wars have contributed to worsen the situation. One of Sorensen's arguments as for today's adverse context for a classical -and supposedly adequate- process of state building is the nature of war and the "life insurance" of the states. Indeed, the main difference in wars in today's states as compared to the European past is that they are basically fought against domestic enemies, not against external nations that threaten their annihilation, and this is reinforced by a complementary "life insurance" of the "international community" that

---

[76] According to Tilly "War makes states and states make war". In Tilly, Ch., (1985) "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime", in Evans, P. *et alt.* (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge University Press. Cited in Sorensen (2001), op. cit., p.1. Tilly and other scholars argue the strong interdependence of war, control over territory, bureaucracy, concentration of power, legitimacy and economic development in the state building and nation building process in Europe, which would explain their stability. Abundant empirical material seems to corroborate this fact in the case of Europe state building.

[77] Sorensen (2001).

[78] The first stage of state formation takes place in Europe and culminates in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, and according to Wimmer there will be six more stages afterwards. For details see Wimmer, op. cit., pp.75-77.

[79] Sorensen (2001), op. cit. p. 17.

[80] Or as Sorensen says, states today -with the establishment of sacrosanct borders- can blow up but they will always exist. They never disappear. This makes possible the category of failed states. In Sorensen (1999) "Development in fragile/failed states", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-11, Purdue University, p.6, and (2001), op. cit., pp.2-6.

assures the existence of the new states and a set of fix and unchangeable borders. This is according to many authors the rationale under failed states: domestic contenders and the protection of their nominal territories assured by the international community. And this takes to my next reflection about the inherited borders of the Soviet union and their relevance in explaining frozen conflicts.

- Fix borders: *uti possidetis juris*[81]

The most striking link between the frozen conflicts and the Soviet break up is the inherited border design of the Soviet Union. The form of the conflicts -contested territories and contestants- follow the borders of the former empire. In that sense, the Soviet legacy is evident, giving the form and shape the territorial disputes as a rationale of the conflicts.

It is important to note several elements: first, the new states were granted independence by a double process of empire break-up and of international recognition based on the principle of *uti possidetis*. The former contrast with state making or formation as a process of war making (see above). The latter is decisive to understand the potential of conflicts given the prior territorial design. An ethnically fragmented territory was inherited as the untouchable ground upon which the new states had to come to be. The sacrosanct rule of the untouchable borders has proved then extremely problematic. The borders today, which serve a purpose they do not serve anymore, continue though as to be the independent variables in the conflict. [82] According to Hughes, "as in many cases of decolonization in Africa and Asia, *uti possidetis* legitimated an artificial pattern of state territoriality which had been designed by the colonizing power". Many authors coincide about its arbitrarily, and how it fitted the interest of the hegemonic power, seeking both to protect the empire from outside and from inside.[83]

---

[81] The principle establishes that the new states born out of a colonial empire keep the borders assigned by the colonial power. The precedent for the practice of *uti possidetis* was set by the decolonisation of Latin America, when the internal colonial boundaries of the Spanish empire became, by mutual consent, the international boundaries of the successor states (though they were subsequently reconfigured by war). This precedent was generally followed in the decolonisation of Africa and Asia after 1945.

[82] See Hughes (2002), op. cit. p.18, and Brock (2001) "Nation-Building: Prelude or Belated Solution to Failing of States? Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 11-14, Purdue University, p.9 and Zverev (1996), op. cit., 1/4 pp.4-5.

[83] Hughes, op. cit., p.18.

Therefore, only the 15 union republics of the Soviet empire were recognized statehood. According to Wimmer "the international system of the 20th century thus imposed the nation-state form on transforming polities and at the same time froze their structure once this transformation was completed, preventing further disintegration along ethno-national lines"[84]. Besides, as Zverev points out, the rule was meant to "prevent wars between nations whose borders have been demarcated, often disregarding the ethnic composition of the territories in question" by the former colonial power and also to assure the protection of minorities within minorities and ethnic cleansings.[85] However, at the light of the events in the South Caucasus, the rule of the fix borders, if it has not been directly responsible for wars between nations and ethnic cleansing, it has for sure not prevented them.

It is arguable that dead the empire and gone its logics, the border design, which served those its logics, should be negotiable. But the norm is the contrary. This rigidity has proved a problem in South Caucasus. The fixed borders can indeed proof to heighten the probability of instability and of centrifugal powers. Their persistence will provide the titular states with clear borders but also the autonomies with motivations to undergo their independence claims.[86]

However, the arbitrariness of borders is more a rule than an exception, to begin with the European states. Hence, the struggle for territory -and for different conceptions of political power, among different ethnic groups in Europe was a constant. The problem is that nowadays these countries are not allowed to cultural and physical genocide and aggressive policies of assimilation and homogenization, as they were a common occurrence from the 16th until the 20th century Europe state building process. In Europe, the nation-state was a long warfare process.[87]

The extent and depth of the Soviet break up *vis-à-vis* the potential of conflicts, and ultimately its direct impact on frozen conflicts, can be better understood taking into account the end of communism and the end of the Soviet repressive machinery. In fact,

---

[84] Wimmer, op. cit., p.78.
[85] Zverev, op. cit., 1/4 pp. 4-5.
[86] Cornell (2002) "Autonomy as a Source of Conflict. Caucasian Conflicts in Theoretical Perspective", *World Politics*, no.54, p. 265.
[87] Wimmer, op. cit., p. 71, citing Tilly.

it obvious that the particular territorial design existed already since the 30s with the Soviet Union, and if there were constant complaints from the autonomous regions concerning their status, the theoretical potential of conflict was very much kept under control and had been "postponed" -or diminished- given other common societal priorities, the Soviet society within the family of communist countries through a overarching identity and, of course, strong repressive measures.

- The end of the overarching identity and of totalitarism

A common societal project, communism, and a strong repressive machinery can probably explain the reason why the frozen conflicts did not appear before the Soviet break up.

The Soviet empire was very successful, given its enormous territory in keeping centrifugal forces under control. This can be explained basically by its strong repressive measures. However, other reasons are also relevant and have an important impact on the South Caucasus. Above all, the communist ideology and societal project and its strong capacity for social cohesion. This global project of society and its ambition of universality was decisive in relegating to a second level other forms of political and social identification.[88]

It is arguable that the dissolution of the Soviet empire had a double impact: first, the fall of communism left a vacuum in terms of group identity which be filled up with a well developed national identity. Second, the end of the repressive machinery allowed the former repressed centrifugal energies to be liberated.

The disappearance of an overarching identity heightens the odds for using other forms of political identification: nationalism. Besides, given the background conditions and the borders issue, it is reasonable to affirm that the probability of conflict, and particularly inter-ethnic conflict as high. [89] As Cornell puts it: "the unifying glue…was no longer present", which he affirms was "a reason for the eruption of the violent

---

[88] Cornell (1997), op. cit., p. 455.
[89] Hughes, op. cit., p. 226.

conflicts".[90] Many scholars of nationalism and ethnic conflict coincide to affirm that the Soviet Union kept under control nationalist aspirations, and that its demise caused the reawakened of "primordial" identities: ethno nationalism, with unpredictable potential for conflicts. For example, Ernest Gellner affirms that communism 'defeated' nationalism capturing and controlling the state.[91] As for Eric Hobsbawm, he argues that fear and coercion kept the USSR together preventing ethnic violence.[92] According to Zverev, after the Soviet break up "old ethnic wounds have reopened", which has led in some cases to warfare.[93]

Still and in spite of the above stated conditions under which the South Caucasian states gained independence and the obvious potential remaining, they alone seem limited to explain frozen conflicts, hence they fall short to explain inter ethnic war and secession, and *de facto* states existing after the cease fire agreement. Actually, all the above conditions applying to the South Caucasian states were present in many if not all of the former Soviet republics. However, the conflicts at the scale they have developed in the South Caucasus have not done so in other places. All the former territories of the Soviet Union were more or less plagued with irredentist and secessionist claims.[94] And if the number of post-Soviet conflicts has been high[95], the number of wars -of violent ones- has been limited[96]. Furthermore, the violent ones, with the exception of Tajikistan, have searched secession, and those have ended -with the exception of Chechnya- in *de facto* independence. This proofs the difficulty to reduce the frozen conflicts to a sole explicative factor, and the need to try to approach the phenomena of the conflicts and their causes taking into account multiple factors with variable levels of causation. Indeed, it is possible that the democratization process opened in the South Caucasian states explains some of the difference vis-à-vis other central republics where similar problems have been controlled trough authoritarian regimes. Besides, the proximity of

---

[90] Cornell (1997), op. cit., p. 455.

[91] Gellner, E., (1997) *Nationalism*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London. Cited in Hughes and Sasse (2001), op. cit. p.1.

[92] Hobsbawm, E., (1990), *Nations and Nationalism Since 1970: Programme, Myth and Reality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Cited in Hughes and Sasse (2001), op. cit., p.1.

[93] Zverev, op. cit., 1/4 p.1-5.

[94] See Smith (1999), op. cit. p.34 and p.129

[95] The non violent conflicts are: Uzbekistan/Ferghana Valley, Ukraine/Crimea, Russia/Tatarstan, Russia/Bashkortostan, Moldova/Gagauzia, Northern Kazakhstan and Georgia/Ajaria. In Hughes and Sasse, op. cit., p.8.

[96] Apart from the three South Caucasian violent conflicts, there have been Moldova/Trandsnistria, Russia/Chechnya and Tajikistan. Ibid. p.8.

Russia and its role in the conflicts -third chapter- but mainly the role of the elites - second chapter- might finally make possible a differentiate understanding of the South Caucasian violent conflicts.

Then, the end of the repressive regime basically opened a process of transition to democracy. A democratization process that in quite a few senses has gone no further than formal democratic institutions and practices. Besides, the "electoral democracy" dimension, as a minimum, has often been disputed, given that the electoral results still arise doubts about the "equal and fair" principle. In any case, for the purposes of my paper the democratization process contributed to the frozen conflicts in that it underestimated the ethno nationalist of state building in the area, the structural weaknesses of the new states and the strength of the secessionists territories.

1.3 The transition to democracy

The Soviet break up opened a process of regime change in the post Soviet new states.In some cases lead to democracy, in others to autocracy and still in others to a difficult and hindered process of democratization.[97] This last case is the one applying to the South Caucasian states, what McFaul has named "partial democracies" as a middle way between dictatorships and democracies in the post communist states' political regimes.[98] For Sorensen, many countries of the Third World are stuck in a the initial phases of democratic transition, and ethnic violence constitutes a "setback" in early stages of transition to democracy.[99]

On the other hand and within their illegality, attempts of democratization in the statelets have been possible at the expenses of ethnic cleansing, and an over importance of the military and of security as an agenda priority. In South Ossetia and Abkhazia, one could properly talk of pure ethnic projects of state and democracy, where a minority imposes itself.

---

[97] For an analysis of regime change in the post Soviet states see McFaul (2002) "The Fourth Wave of democracy *and* Dictatorship. No cooperative Transitions in the Post communist World", *World Politics*, no.54, pp.212-244.

[98] For a typology of post Soviet regimes see McFaul, op. cit., p. 226.

[99] Sorensen (1998), op. cit., pp.1-5.

It seems that democracy and the subsequent social, political and economic developments only come after a minimum consensus can be reached over the state, ist borders, population and government. When these elements remain problematic, democratization worsens the situation. Sorensen, quoting Rustow[100], affirms, in the line of the "transitogists" theories, that no democratic process is possible without a previous "nationalization" or settlement of the national question in the state.[101] Hence, a process of democratization in a region with a highly unsettled "national question" can be seen not only as a cause of democratic failures but mainly as an obstacle for the state building process itself. In any case, where a process of state building is hindered by irresolvable contradictions, a process of democratization seems an impossible task.

The correlation or link between democratization and nationalist conflicts seems to be at first sight obvious by the fact that the more are the people that play a role in politics, what a process of transition to democracy allows, the more ethic conflict and centrifugal powers become likely. As Snyder points out: "as more people begin to play a larger role in politics, ethnic conflict within a country becomes more likely, as does international aggression justified by nationalist ideas".[102] Actually, most of the states undergoing bloody conflicts in the 1990s experienced some ameliorations in their political and civil liberties a short time before the violent clash started.

The democratic process opens the door to all centrifugal powers to have a voice and power to mobilize the population in many directions. As Sorensen puts it: "political liberalization opens for more, not less, conflict in a society because of the of horizontal legitimacy".[103] However, it can most reasonably be argued that the correlation of democratization and ethnic conflict is possible only given certain structural and conjuncture circumstances. If democracy opens voices to many contending parties, ultimately antagonist, it is also arguable and empirically evident, except for a couple of exceptions, that democratic institutions provide with powerful tools to accommodate differences and interests in a non violent manner. If democracy provides with the

---

[100]When "the vast majority of citizens in a democracy-to-be…have no doubts or mental reservations as to which political community they belong to", in Rustow, D.A., (1970) "Transitions to Democracy", *Comparative Politics*, vol.2, no.3, pp.337-365. Cited in Sorensen (1998), op. cit., p.7.
[101] Sorensen (1998), op. cit., p.7.
[102] Snyder, J., (2000) "From Voting to Violence" in *Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*, Norton and Company, New York, pp. 27-31.
[103] Sorensen (1998), op. cit., p.9.

possibility of inter ethnic or other groups interests to be accommodated, the transition process can be particularly dangerous when instability and change is the norm, even if towards a better model as that of democracy. In that sense, democracy may have conditions under which it actually mitigates or exacerbates the conflicts[104].

According to de Nerves, the conditions that can exacerbate ethnic conflict in a context of democratizations are: first, the speed ethnic issues are recognized; second, the level of ethnic tension when democratization begins; third, the size and power of ethnic groups in the State; forth, the ethnic composition of previous regime and its opposition; fifth, the presence or absence of external ethnic allies and sixth, the ethnic composition of the military.[105]

The conditions in the Caucasus seem to have been particularly hard to prevent ethnic conflicts and nationalist violence. First, ethnic issues where not "addressed" at the beginning of the process but were obliterated and violently treated. Second, ethnic tensions were very high before the democratization process, which started after the impendence. Third, ethnic groups were not of an equal size; forth, the ethnic groups had not been united against the Soviet rulers, on the contrary; fifth, leaders of the early large ethnic groups were not precisely moderates; sixth, external allies were present complicating the picture; finally, the army -although we can not properly talk of national armies at the beginning of the transition process but of militias and paramilitary forces with little if any political control- in Georgia and Azerbaijan was loyal to particularistic and dominant ethnic projects and not to any inexistent state whatsoever. According to de Nerves, all these non existent conditions are all against the ones necessary for mitigate ethnic conflicts in a transition to democracy.[106]

In the South Caucasus one finds precisely those conditions that, according to de Nerves, exacerbate the possibility of ethnic conflict in a democratization process[107]: first, the historical grievances, or at least the perceived historical grievances; second, the previous regime identified with a particular ethnic group, in Georgia with the

---

[104] de Nevers, R., (1993) "Democratization and Ethnic Conflict" in Brown, E.M. (ed.), *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, Princeton University Press, p.60.
[105] Ibid., pp. 61-62.
[106] Ibid., p. 69-71.
[107] Ibid., p.71-75.

Georgians, in Azerbaijan with the Azeris; third, the manipulation, during the former regime, of demographic balances for political reasons and assimilation objectives, like it happened in the three secessionist territories both from Moscow and from their respective Union Republics; forth, the opposition to the authoritarian regime had been complicated, given that for the statelets, the opposition to their given Union Republics implied at some point their support to the Soviet legal system and to the Soviet Union, even if demanding a revision of their status. In any case, the independence movements in Georgia and Azerbaijan were indeed based on ethnic lines, given that none of the secessionist minorities participated in them, for obvious reasons: they were precisely undergoing their liberation mainly from their Union republics and not from the Soviet rule. Fifth, leaders definitely embraced radical positions on ethnic rights, most obviously in Georgia, with Gamsakhurdia's aggressive discriminatory policies; in Nagorno-Karabakh, however, independence did not follow any nationalizing policies, for the obvious reason maybe that Nagorno-Karabakh was overwhemly Armenian populated. Sixth, ethnic groups were of uneven size in all cases; seventh, there were neighbouring states where similar ethnic groups to the ones in conflict, like the Turks with the Azeris. Eight, the military was made and loyal in ethnic terms, when existing such national army. Finally, the ethnic issues were basically ignored or treated with brutal measures in the early stages of the state and constitution building, hence exacerbating the democratization potential of unleashing conflict.

For other authors a democratization process can basically exacerbate conflicts because it opens the way to elite nationalist discourses and their manipulation of the electorate. According to Snyder, "nationalist conflicts arise as a by-product of elites' efforts to persuade the people to accept divisive ideas".[108] These authors, like Snyder, that defend this idea based on elite strategies and interests, significantly play down the theories that explain inter-ethnic violence during a process of democratization as a product of the of ancient hatreds or popular rivalries. For them, nationalist claims and the ethno nationalist cleavages are formed in the early stages of the democratization process, and only or mainly elite discourses can eventually exacerbate them or mitigate them. They affirm nationalism is weak at the early stages and does not pre-exist intact and latent in a supposed formed and oppressed nation, as the theories of popular rivalries and ancient

---

[108] Snyder, op. cit., p. 32. See also Julie, A.G., Ethnic Conflict and the Failed State: Frozen Conflicts in the Republic of Georgia."

hatreds suggest.[109] But even in this case, we see in the South Caucasus, since 1988, hence well before independence, a nationalist escalating rhetoric both from the Union Republics and their secessionist autonomies, and later from the newly independent states and their secessionist regions, using biased interpretations of history, past grievances, ethnic cultural and linguistic diversion but specially real or perceived discriminations as the argument of either their secession or their disrespect for claims of autonomy.

If the theory of elite discourse is definitely central not only to explain the link between democracy and ethic conflicts but mainly the link between state building and ethnic conflict, it does not seem plausible to diminish important elements relating to past animosities and confrontations, and of the concrete policies of the elites and the perception not only by the competing elites but by their population of discriminatory polices to see nationalist positions more obvious and less dependent on conjuncture and manipulating discourses, like in Abkhazia or Nagorno-Karabakh.

In the line of state building and its failures some authors see the cause of nationalist movements arising during democratization processes and their disintegrating potentials. A sovereign state is a prerequisite to democracy, where "congruence between demos and polity exist". Linz and Stepan have called this the "stateness" problem.[110] Consequently, given the grave problems of Georgia and Azerbaijan to define or agree on the polity or to identify the demos or to persuade the demos within their supposed polity, and to hold sovereignty, given then their different levels of state failures, democracy democratization has come to be more a problem than a solution to their territorial disputes. The ultimate statement is that a due process of state building and then any odds for a stable democracy goes through a process of nationalisation and hence homogenization, the only patch for sustainable state building, and the mitigation of nationalist centrifugal powers. According to McFaul, the lack of territorial disputes in the South Caucasus -Rustow's requisite for successful transition to democracy-, together with their relative geographic distance form the West -compared with Bulgaria,

---

[109] Ibid., pp. 31-38.
[110] Linz, J., and Stepan, A., (1996) " 'Stateness', Nationalism, and Democratization" in *Problems of Transition and Consolidation*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, pp. 16-17 and pp. 24-25. See also Hughes, op. cit., p. 124, who explains that the "stateness" question refers to the relationship between nation-building, state-building and democratization. Who should the state govern?

Romania and Yugoslavia, for example- explains their "failed" transition to democracy and the stagnation of their process of state-building. The author calls these countries "anomalies" in the context of the post-Soviet transition to democracy. [111]

The consequence in any case is of some kind of un incomplete or hindered process of democratization in the South Caucasus, where "electoral democracies" do not attain the exigencies of liberal democracies.[112] According to Sorensen the western insistence on democracy for the transition states has failed to appreciate the role of nationalism and that of the "political community.[113] It could be argued also that in states with a forming and weak civil society this insistence can proof particularly problematic. Actually, according to Snyder, "exclusionary nationalist is more likely when the country is poor and the population lack skills needed for successful democratic participation."[114]

1.4 Conclusions

Multi ethnic states are not more prone to secessionist inter ethnic violence. As for ancient hatreds and popular rivalries, they are mostly born out of the Soviet experience, even if some confrontations can be retraced back to the Tsarist empire or before. It is arguable that they constitute, ancient hatreds and popular rivalries -as a product of Soviet legacies- powerful arguments and coadjutant components of the frozen conflicts. I do not think though that a direct correlation is possible. The proof is that only after the Soviet break up -the end of repressive measures and of an overarching identity- they start to be relevant. The inherited borders are of particular importance to understand the "shape" frozen conflicts will take. On the other hand, the lack of a common societal project and the end of the repressive regime, the intensity and the content of frozen conflicts. If the content refers to separatist ethno nationalisms, the shape refers to the Soviet territorial design, which will justify both the new states and their structural weaknesses, the base upon start their state building process and also the base upon fail it. The episodes of previous confrontations can be better explained in the particular institutional context of the Soviet empire, and how this magnified the correlation between multi ethnicity and confrontation, and how it itself encouraged confrontation

---

[111] McFaul, op. cit., pp. 239-242.
[112] Sorensen (1998, op. cit., p.3.
[113] Sorensen (1998) op. cit., p.1.
[114] Snyder, op. cit., p. 37 .

within certain rules and behaviours: the nation and nationalism. Finally, the "context" of democratization will particularly contribute to the frozen conflicts. Mainly because the background in the Caucasus and the structural weaknesses of the new states were not appropriate conditions for democratization.

All these conditions suggest obviously potential for conflicts, and they indeed explain potential for a particular form of conflicts, over territory and inter-ethnic. However, what these conditions do explain is the complex and intractable nature the conflicts take once radical positions are taken and the maximalist demands take the lead: the elite role. My point is that the relative importance of the conditions explained in my first chapter regain a vital relevance when and during and after we see the course of the conflicts against the elite strategies in their handling their independence, i.e. how the process of state building has been handled by the states.

2. State building and ethnic war in the South Caucasus

Frozen conflicts -focusing on elite decisions and strategies and specially the ideologies behind the policies adopted by them- can be properly understood by looking at the process of state and nation building. A failed process of state building is the core of the analysis *vis-à-vis* the causes and nature of frozen conflicts. I will approach this "failure" from the theory of the "failed state" -the first subchapter. Then, as in the case of the South Caucasus, the failed process of state building is a function of ethno nationalist ideologies and hence of ethnic projects of state and nation building. I will analyse the clear link between the state failures in the Caucasus as a function of ethno nationalism and the ethnic content of the conflicts -the second subchapter. In the third subchapter, I will explain in more concrete terms the relevance of the failed state and of ethno nationalism in the context of state building in the Caucasus to understand the frozen conflicts.

The "titular" elites, from the very beginning of the Soviet break up, used aggressive policies of assimilation and discrimination towards their minorities, through a classical model of nation building, with nationalist discourses and so on. Then, on the other hand, the affected minorities, if with a well defined national identity and with resources, have reacted to this aggression by cutting themselves off the hegemonic ethnic group national project. The polarization of the dispute, the politisation of ethnicity and the ethnicisation of the conflict and how these, together with the territorial dispute, have rendered them particularly intractable.

There is an undisputable relation between elite strategies and background conditions. However, elite strategies are not a function of those: they were not condemned to take the form they took. This assertion would imply overriding the "free" political choices the elites could have taken to avoid the conflicts. What I affirm is that those conditions and transitions were "used" to justify a choice, and took a special relevance to explain the conflicts when the political choices had been made.

In any case, inter ethnic conflicts that become highly ethnicized provoke strong popular mobilization. Besides, the population and the elites are willing to make high sacrifices and it pervades the political life and becoming a priority over other problems.

2.1 State and nation building

In this subchapter I will explain the theory of failed states, the conditions under which today a state is to be labelled "failed". Then, how this category applies to the South Caucasus and the relations between state failures and frozen conflicts.

- The theory of the failed state

The "failed state" concept is the product of a prejudice: what the state is. Under international law a state has four main characteristics: a defined territory, a permanent population, an effective government and the capacity to enter into formal relations with other states.[115] A state can be defined according to three main schools of thought: the social contract theory puts emphasis on the relations between state and society, and affirms the state is based on an agreement between the population and a set of rules or political regime. Another option to define the state is the weberian statement that a state must have the monopole of the legitimate use of physical violence; finally, a state can just be based on its international recognized juridical statehood. According to Zartman a state collapse occurs when "the basic functions of the state are no longer performed".[116] For Ignatieff it is the "inability to maintain the monopoly of the internal means of violence".[117] Among the most cited roots of state failures are colonial legacies and the ethnic divisions. In any case, weak states or failing states are those that do not control their territory, depend too much on what external actors do, or do not have any instruments not only of repression but of persuasion towards their population.

State failures and failing states are not absolute but relative categories. They more a "process" than a "state." They refer to dysfunctions comprehensible only against a particular criterion of what appropriate state functions are, or more broadly what a state is. An agreement seems to be that there is something that does not work properly or at any reasonable optimum. Failing states have undesirable internal and external consequences. Internal, in terms of their own survival, external, in terms of the spill

---

[115] See Montevideo Convention 1993.
[116] Zartman, W., (1995) (ed.) *Collapsed States*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder. Cited in von Einsiedel, S., "State Failure and the Crisis of Governance: Making States Work", p.3.
[117] Ignatieff, M., (2002) "Nation-Building Lite." *The New York Times Magazine*, July 28. Cited in Einsiedel, op. cit., p.3.

over and contagion potentials over the rest of the states.[118] Failed states, besides, make reference a system in which they are "problematic pieces". Still, some authors affirm that failed states are not responsible alone of their failure, but it depends to a large extent on the system they should fit on: the interstate system or the international system.[119] Scholars are basically critical not only with the concept/reality's meaning but with the label itself.[120] According to Wallensteen " it is not easy to easy to define a state failure. Nor is it simple to identify what a functioning state is".[121] According to Dorff state failure or failed state is inappropriate, being "Failing state" more adequate as expressing a "continuum along which increased weakening of the state governing capacity occurs".[122] Buzan outlines conditions to expect in "weak" states and which heighten probabilities of failures, like ethnic wars or territorial desputes.[123]

As Spanger reminds, state failure is far form being a new phenomenon; since the 1500, the history of the state, as an European invention, is actually the history of failure[124]. Only a few of the state projects has survived so far. And the borders of Europe, even if already under a very much Westphalia model, until very recently, have been under strong and often dramatic transformation. Hence, Spanger affirms, state failure is not a monopoly of the Third World, or any other part of the world where this category would not properly apply. However, the reasons and the context for that failure is what actually has radically changed. The reasons because what seems to distinguish today's state failures from those of the secular European state building process is that if then the threats to the existence were as strong from inside as from outside, today the threats are basically coming form inside. This is explained by Stohl and Lopez in terms of

---

[118] Stohl, M., Lopez, G. (1998), "Westphalia, the end of the Cold War and the New World Order: Old Roots to a "NEW" Problem", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, February 25-27, Purdue University, p.7.

[119] See for example Nicholson (2000) "The Cosmopolitan World Order: Are states a declining institution?" and Claphan (2000) "Failed States and non-states in the modern international order", Papers presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University.

[120] See for example Spanger (2000) "Failed State or Failed Concept?", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University.

[121] Wallensteen, P., "Beyond State Failure: On Internal and External Ways of Ending State Failure" Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University, p.2.

[122] Dorff, R.H., (2000) "Addressing the Challenges of State failures" Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University, p.3.

[123] Buzan, B., (1991) *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security. Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, Lynne Reinner, Boulder. Cited in Stohl and López. op. cit., p.6.

[124] Spanger, Hans-Joachim (2001), "The Ambiguous Lessons of State Failure". Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 11-14, Purdue University, p. 3.

"domestic" versus outside "contenders" in the state building process.[125] And they affirm that today's failed states are basically threatened from inside contenders. On the other hand, there is the second component: the context. Today's new states have what Sorensen has called a "life insurance" that assures their existence regardless all short comes.[126] The combination of these two features -the lack of external threats or the international support of statehood and the sole inside contenders- make some authors blame the "inter state system" or the "international community" for the existence and persistence of failed states. Jackson has gone to distinguish between "nominal" and "empirical" states, the former being no more than what he calls "quasi states" whose statehood relies almost entirely upon their international recognition. According to Jackson "the postcolonial international guarantee has brought into existence a significant number of insubstantial or marginal or even nominal states…of which some have clearly failed, or collapsed, and cease to be 'states' in any significant empirical meaning of the term".[127]

Therefore, the concept of failed state, controversial as it is, has led some authors to chose a different nomenclature more appropriate to complex realities. Sorensen uses "fragile state"[128]. According to Wallensteen there are levels of failure before attaining a complete failure -rare anyway- and what him and still others called "collapsed state".[129] For Robert Jackson there at the first place "quasi-states"[130] which could either fail or collapse. As for Zartman, he has developed the concept of "state collapse."[131] As for who are the failed states, there seem to be some constant candidates, like Somalia as a paradigm, but it depends very much on the authors taste. For Wallensteen state failure cases are China, Lebanon. Somalia, Afghanistan, Albania, Uganda.[132] As for Dorff,

---

[125] Stohl and López, op. cit., p.7

[126] Sorensen (2001).

[127] Jackson, R.H., (1998) "Great Power Responsibility and the Failed States". Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, February 25-27, Purdue University, p.6.

[128] Sorensen (1999), op. cit., pp.1-3. Failed status as a "magnified" version of previous fragile status. A question of degree.

[129] Wallensteen (1999), op. cit., p. 6-8. According to the author there are "minimized", "discriminatory", "transitory", "de facto divided" states and so on. For the author state failure is a dynamic process, and one type of failure can lead to other types. See also Wallensteen (2000) p.2, where he affirms that "there is a continuum of functioning states, ranging from the complete state failure to the state that is optimal in meeting legitimate expectations".

[130] Jackson, R.H., (1998), op. cit., p.6. The author discusses "empirical" vs. "juridical" statehood.

[131] Dorff, H.R., (1999) "Responding to the failed State: What to Do and What to Expect". Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University, p.2.

[132] Wallensteen (2000), op. cit., pp. 1-10.

general different types of state failure are the Yugoslav state, Somalia, Haiti.[133] And Rotberg names Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sudan.[134] For Clapham failed and collapsed states are basically African states.[135]

Wallensteen points out two basic ideas to understand state failures and their interaction with violent ethnic conflict: first, that "there is conflict, with or without the state, i.e. the state is not, by itself, the solution to the hobbesian dilemma"[136] Second, that "state failure can take place without civil war, and that there can be civil war -a general category comprising ethnic war, I presume- without state failures"[137] The author distinguishes, as far as state failure is concerned, between what he calls failures of "under-consolidation" and of "over-extension"[138]. He focuses in the first category, the one most widely analysed and used to mean "state failures". Within this category he distinguishes two possible forms: on the one hand "state break-up", which means that the parts take different directions, and on other, "state operations ceasing altogether".[139] In this latter case, the relevance of ethnic power and of ethnic conflict is central. The case in the South Caucasus, according to this model, falls into the failure by under consolidation and a subsequent break-up.

In sum, fragile states or weak states -like the South Caucasian- are liable to have state failures or to enter into failing paths, the quantity, quality and durability of which can lead to their collapse. But their collapse or the deterioration of the content of their statehood will rarely if ever be enough to disintegrate given a internationally sanctioned "life insurance". Therefore, there are "failed states" where states can actually live regardless their failures. In any case, as state failures are not irreversible, unless we include in the category such cases as the Soviet dissolution, the Yugoslav break down or the peaceful divorce of the Czechoslovakian state, the fact that statehood is assured can allow them to recover or to regain for the label of states without adjectives. However, the problem may be, like in the South Caucasus, the cost of such process.

---

[133] Dorff (1999), op. cit. p.3.
[134] Rotberg, R.I., "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators", p.10.
[135] Clapham (2000).
[136] Wallensteen (1999), op. cit., p.2.
[137] Wallensteen (2000), op. cit., p.1.
[138] Wallensteen (1999), op. cit., pp. 2-4.
[139] Ibid., p.4.

- <u>State building and state failures</u>

When the South Caucasian states were born, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia they were born, according to Sorensen's concept, "fragile states". They were indeed weak states. One can talk in their case of constitutive weaknesses in that their birth determined the extent and depth of those -first chapter. Also, it can be said that they had structural weaknesses in that former to their independence, the autonomy they enjoyed was very much dependent on Moscow; and when the Soviet union disappeared, their structural weaknesses became more striking and evident, reinforced by their constitutive weaknesses. These structural and constitutive weaknesses will constitute the seed upon which elite strategies and political choices of the independent states will lead to institutional and governmental state failures afterwards.

On the other hand, competing national projects on ethnic bases -after being handle on maximalist terms by the political elites- will appear as the main or core of the state building process obstacle, even more important than the institutional and governmental fragilities, and aggravating them. Also upon the previous inherited conditions, this notably determined the new states' fragility and the later path of "failing states" they took, using Dorff's term. This was so notably in the cases of Georgia and also Azerbaijan at the early stages of their independence. At some moments, notably in 1993, when both governmental and institutional and national state building obstacles will collude, Azerbaijan and Georgia will be about to collapse.[140]

It is then arguable to distinguish between state and "nation" building failures, unless we assimilate one to the other, or we assume one needs the other. It seems that the lack of a successful or unproblematic nation building process is actually hindering any process of state building, which at its turn has made impossible political reforms. And the lack of political reforms, in a vicious circle, impact negatively in as impossible state building process. This may bring light to the possible intimate relationship between state and nation building. In the South Caucasus one would have one state and several nation building projects. The one failure stems from this contradiction. Another way to look at failures is to see the badly resolved contradiction, instead of at the contradiction itself.

---

[140] Fairbanks, p.50.

Still another way is to look at the conditions that allow such a contradiction to be present. Still another last way is to look at state failures as the incapacity to eliminate - or accommodate- such contradictions. According to Cornell, "it could be said that the process of nation building in the Caucasus republics has so far been unsuccessful: the governments have been unable to make minorities feel a sense of belonging to the State".[141]

Where stems then the nation-building failures, or the state failures of Georgia and Azerbaijan if we assume that state-building ultimately needs a process of nation building or an agreement between polity and demos? Basically and mainly from the classical policies of nationalization and homogenization coming from the dominant ethnic groups, in the Georgian case more obviously than in the Azerbaijani case, but also from strong peripheries with distinct ethnic identities with statehood ambitions upon similar ethno nationalist premises. On the other hand, the nation building process started in the South Caucasian states before any "empirical state" could be worked out, using Jackson's nomenclature. According to Sorensen -and referring to Rustow's ideas- the "political community" in traditional states is a long process of "nationalization" but that clearly follows and not precedes the necessary state building process, understood as a clear definition of the borders and the control of the territory by a consolidated elite.[142] However, in the South Caucasian case, the order of the sum has been particularly altered, with some components even absent, given a very different result, contrary to any arithmetic rule.

Therefore, state failures in the Caucasus can be approached from different points of view. Particularly two. It is reasonable to divide the nature of the state building failures process into two dimensions: one related to institutional-governmental break down[143], the other to competing nation-building projects within a sole state -hence with just one state building project allowed.[144] Both provoke anarchy and disorder. But only the second threatens the disintegration according to secessionist demands. They reinforce each other, but they constitute different problems in the context of frozen conflicts.

---

[141] Cornell (1997), op. cit., p. 456
[142] Sorensen (1998), op. cit., p.7-8
[143] See for example the political-Institutional capacities approach to state failures in Lynch, D., (2003) "A Regional Insecurity Dynamic", in *The South Caucasus: A Challenge for the EU*, Chaillot Papers no.65, Institute for Security Studies, Paris, p.12-13.
[144] See Sorensen (1998), op. cit., p. 8. The material and non material components of state making.

Thus state failures have manifested through two war processes in the South Caucasus, or in a twofold violent form depending on which dimension of the failures: the institutional-governmental and the inter-ethnic wars on ethno nationalist premises. With their newly gained statehood security from external and internal threats became priorities. As Cornell says "the road to reform and development runs directly through the issues of sovereignty and security and not around them".[145] However, precisely sovereignty and security -both related to my two dimensions of the state failures- were two particularly weak points in the new states. These issues were and are at the core of a process of state building, and their non resolution has become a burden to normalization of the social and political life. Whether the conflicts preceded, coincided or happened after the Soviet Union dissolution, the point is that this caused border disputes, ethnic rivalries and power struggles -the process of state building- to take the lead over economic reforms or democratic institutions[146]

It is arguable then that the institutional and governmental weaknesses of Georgia and Azerbaijan had a determinant impact on the frozen conflicts, in that the states lacked resources with which cope with the opposition of well organised national minorities against the ethno nationalist projects of state and nation building of the titular states. The lack of "resources" justifies also, on the other hand, nationalising policies that had to "choose" beneficiaries of the state project, which of course happened to be those belonging to the dominant ethnic group, in Azerbaijan, the Azeris, in Georgia, the Georgians. As Wimmer points out, the lack of sufficient political, legal and economic resources at the disposal of the states elites' after independence do not allow for a "non discriminatory integration of the entire population".[147] According to Wallensteen, if ethnic cleavages within a society are seen as issues of discrimination, their potential to cause state failures can be neutralized, within a "reasonably consolidated state apparatus with political strategies", with appropriate policies of integration of minorities (assimilation). However, there was not any reasonable consolidation of any state apparatus in Georgia and Azerbaijan.

---

[145] Cornell, E. *et alt* (2004) "Regional Security in the South Caucasus: The Role of NATO", Central Asia-Caucasus Institute p. 1-2.

[146] Nuriyev, E., (2000) "The Post-Soviet Caucasus within New Geopolitical Framework: Towards Conflict or Peace?", AFB-TEXTE, Information Unit Peace Research Bonn, no.3, pp. 2-3. See also Cornell (2004), op. cit., p. v.

[147] Wimmer, op. cit., pp.66-69.

This "relative deprivation" argument could explain the subsequent "politization of group frustration" [148] in ethnic terms, because there exists a perception -present and past- and a more or less reality that resources are being distributed according to ethnic logics.[149] In Addition to inter-ethnic problems, then, all three countries have used violence to "alter leadership" through insurgencies and assassinations.[150] Which is a direct consequence of the state weaknesses relation to institutions and government, but that cannot be isolated from the main state building problem in Georgia, but also in Azerbaijan, relating to inter ethnic wars over territory.

Consequently, if the main cause of frozen conflicts in the South Caucasus is a failed state building process, the failed building process has two interrelated dimensions: the institutional and governmental in the form of violent power struggles over government within the dominant elite and the violent power struggles between elites of distinct ethnic origin over territory -always in a context of constitutive and structural weaknesses after the recent independence. Before independence, and afterwards somehow, the struggle against Moscow, was also happening at the same time and very related to the other two.

The level of this threefold struggle, "external" against Moscow, and internal over government -intra-ethnic- and over territory -inter-ethnic- varies depending on the case. They are all present in the South Caucasian pre-states -in the last years of the Soviet union- and after their independence. The most dramatic case is Georgia. With two three autonomous regions, it had the most challenges to territorial integrity from the beginning. Then, sharing borders with Russia and with its initial anti-Russian flavour, it had the hardest time after independence to deal with its break away border problems. Finally, the internal struggles over power in Tbilisi have been of notable violent character.

Georgian Supreme Soviet voted impendence from the Soviet Union (April 9, 1991) after a referendum in Georgia had voted "yes" to independence (Mars 17 1991). In the

---

[148] Henderson, op. cit., pp.753-755.
[149] Wimmer, op. cit., pp.68-69.
[150] Cornell (2004), op. cit., p.4.

first Georgian presidential elections (May 26 1991) Gamsakhurdia will be the first freely elected president of Georgia. However, the elections mark the beginning of a violent intra-ethnic struggle over government in Georgia, between followers and detractors of the President, which will continue well beyond the violent overthrown of the president late that year its death in 1994. What started in Georgia after independence can properly be called a civil war, in which Georgians fought Georgians. The paramilitary military forces -in the absence of any Georgian national army- under control of military leaders of war lords, were spitted those pro-Gamsakhurdia and those against. It took some years after Shevardnadze (arriving to power in Mars 10 1992) was able to defeat the war lords and their loyal armies to be able to establish some political control over the military forces. The question, in any case, is that power mutinies have been common in Georgian internal politics, together with two attempts of assassination of president Shevardnadze, various states of emergency and in general the lack of a peaceful process of policy making. Corruption and human rights violations have also been and are still today one the main problems of internal politics in Georgia.[151]

Of the three states, Armenia was the most stable in the transition process to its independence. The very solid tradition of nationalism which was pervading of all political groups, the communist and the opposition, together with the lack of major territorial problems, made possible very quickly a stable government.[152] Armenia remains one of the most homogeneous former Soviet territory after the Azeri population left the country 1988-89. This explains, among other things, that the problems of state failures in Armenia are not related to sovereignty and territory control, as they are very much in Georgia and Azerbaijan. Armenia has resolved from the beginning its problems of territory and sovereignty, but that is far form being the case in the other two South Caucasian states.

In sum, since their independence the three new post Soviet states have endured a difficult and multiple process of transitions in their quest of state building. So far, the three of them have suffered variable levels of institutional failures. With the exemption of Armenia, with a more stable process, both Georgia and Azerbaijan have been at the

---

[151] See Human Rights Watch. See also MAR Chronologies for Abkhazia and South Ossetia (South) pp.13-26.
[152] See Herzig, op. cit., pp.15-23.

point of collapse. Their process of state building, if amidst efforts of democratic compliance, have been often tainted by different degrees of abnormalities. Elections have often proved top be not "free and fair"; power has often been won by the force and after all kinds of more or less violent coups and popular revolts. Assassination and political violence has been systematically used. On the other hand, all Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, together with the *de facto* independent states have poor record as far as human rights respect is concerned. Georgia counts as the most corrupt countries in the world, and its religious intolerance is and has always been a concern for the international community[153] As Waal points out, for example, "independent Georgia has been blighted by chronic corruption and bad government".[154] The situation seems to have gotten better though in Georgia after Shevardnadze's resignation. The rose revolution seem to have been able to manage peacefully and successfully what some where already calling a danger of state collapse in late 2003. In Azerbaijan, the dynastic dimension of political power does not seem to be more of an advantage for democratic compliance. As for Armenia, the role of the military and the fact that country is in a state of war, puts security over any other political and economic needs. Both Georgia and Azerbaijan have been at some points close to the abyss of state collapse. This has happened when the territorial disputes have being complemented with respective political mutinies and social massive protests over unresolved social and economic problems.[155]

Before entering to explain in my third subchapter the impact of those nationalist policies based on ethnic premises that can well define the strategies of state building in the South Caucasus and are behind the most serious state failures and have caused frozen conflicts, I will first, in my next subchapter, analyse the relevance and the nature of nationalism and ethno nationalism and the "ethnic" content of the frozen conflicts.

---

[153] See Human Rights Watch, "Agenda for Reform: Human Rights Priorities after the Georgian Revolution", Briefing Paper, February 24, 2004
http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/02/24/georgi7650.htm#P198_32962.
[154] Waal (2002) "Reinventing the Caucasus", *World Policy Journal*, vol. XIX, no.1, p. 54.
[155] Fairbanks, op. cit., p. 50.

2.2 Nationalism, ethnicity and violence

State failures have a lot to do with the South Caucasus in different ways and can directly make understandable the rationale of frozen conflicts. Basically, state failures, as failures of "under consolidation", are of a double nature: constitutive and structural relating to institutions and government, and mainly relating to competing and antagonist projects of nations building on ethnic basis. But its is the latter one directly responsible of the concrete form of the state failures in the Georgia and Azerbaijan: secessionism. Indeed, according to Wallensteen many state failures reflect the clash of "territorial integrity" and "self-determination". The author points out that state failures (state break up) has to do with state building: how were states constructed and who dominated them.[156]On the other hand, and related to this, because state failures -and hence state building difficulties- are often associated with ethnic divisions or ethno nationalism. Buzan includes ethno nationalism as one of the conditions under which weak states can fail. Some authors have gone even to establish a correlation between the two.[157] However, as Wallensteen points out, state failures can occur without civil war and this can occur without state failures.[158]

In any case, ethno nationalism is then behind the secessionist demands, and ethno nationalism is a particularly recalcitrant version of the nationalist ideologies. The clash of two opposed projects of nation building has provoked then inter-ethnic war and its ethnic dimension.

- Highlights of the conflicts

In Nagorno-Karabakh the "opened" conflict can be said to start on 20th February 1988, when the Soviet of the autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabakh hold a referendum whose result claimed its reattachment to Armenia. A "war of laws" will start the 12th July by a decision of the Karabakh to leave Azerbaijan and rejoin Armenia and the counter decision by Azerbaijani union republic's Supreme Soviet to annul it immediately. On 31st August 1991, with the reestablishment of the independent

---

[156] Wallensteen (1999), op. cit., p. 8.
[157] See State Failure Task Force, op. cit., p. 34.
[158] Wallensteen (2000), op. cit., p.2.

Republic of Azerbaijan -the one that had existed in 1918-20- by a declaration of the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet, Karabakh understood abolished the Soviet territorial design and hence proclaimed on 2nd September 1991 the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. Then, on 26th November 1991, Azerbaijan's Supreme Soviet abolished the autonomy of Nagorno-Karabakh, against which on 10th December, the Karabakh Supreme Soviet - consisting only of Armenians- proclaimed the secession from Azerbaijan after a referendum.[159] Karabakh lives a *de facto* independence ever since, and the cease fire agreement after the war against Azerbaijan with the intervention of Armenia somehow confirmed this status, and it persists still today a problem of the unresolved double claim of independence and voluntary annexing to Armenia of Nagorno-Karabakh.[160]

On the 18th March 1989 in the Abkhazian town of Lynkhny a proposal of independence and restoration of the 1925 constitution of Union Republic was agreed. In August 1990, the Georgian Supreme Soviet passed an election law prohibiting locally-based parties to participate in Georgian Parliamentary elections. On 25th August 1990, Abkhaz delegates to the to Abkhazian Supreme Soviet passed without their Georgian colleagues a Declaration on the sovereignty of Abkhazia, justified on the basis that previously the Georgian Supreme Soviet, in 1989-1990, had adopted legislation annulling all the treaties concluded before 1921 -their annexing to the Soviet Union-, hence annulling also the then created Georgian autonomies of Ajaria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Abkhaz declaration was of course rejected by Georgian Supreme Soviet shortly later. In March 1991 Georgian president of newly self declared –but still "legally" under the Soviet Union- independent Georgia, Gamsakhurdia, accused Abkhazian authorities of traitors and pro-Russian. The Abkhazian newly elected chairman of the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet, Ardzinba, responded that Abkhazian parliament considered Abkhazia still a part of the USSR, and that the newly issued draft of the Union treaty granted equal rights to Union and Autonomous Republics.[161] A referendum held on the 17th March 1991 in Abkhazia voted in favour of the preservation of the Union, by 98.4% out of 52.4 % of electorate participation, after which Gamsakhurdia threatened with nullifying the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet and their autonomy. Russian military

[159] Zverev, op. cit., 2/4 p.3-18.
[160] See Herzig (1999), see Zverev (1996), see MAR Chronologies.
[161] What I mentioned in my first chapter as the last "contribution" of the Soviet regime to the potential of conflicts in the South Caucasus. Under Gorbachev and very close to its last days, which granted the autonomous regions with the Union republics the same right to secession as the Union republics were using to secede from the Soviet union.

presence after Ardzinba appeal to Moscow forced Gamsakhurdia to make concessions and to allow the parliamentary elections in Abkhazia to proceed and on a ethnic-quota basis in October-December 1991. The Abkhazian Supreme Soviet, with the abstention of the Georgian members and their complaints of ethnic discrimination, voted in July 1992 to return to the 1925 constitution.[162]

The main fighting in Abkhazia took place between 1992-93. The Georgian National Guard, commanded by Kitovani[163], and with very disputable control from Tbilisi government and Shevardnadze, forced into Sukhumi and took the city, with the subsequent atrocities and violations of all kinds occurring in the clash by both parts. In response to the attack of the Abkhazian capital, Ardzinba mobilized military support both from the North Caucasus peoples, specially Chechen fighters, and from Russia, especially through the Russian military bases in Abkhaz territory of Guduata and Bombora. The military balanced changed and the well supported Abkhazian troops won the fight over the region, kicking out almost all Georgian troops and the civilian population from Abkhazia. A very often broken cease fire agreement and a basically Russian peace force to enforce in Abkhazia put a provisional end to the large scale warfare in May 1994.[164]

Claims of South Ossetia were at the beginning of a more modest nature compare to those in the other two territories of Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh. If their situation will end up also in war, secessionist claims and *de facto* independence, their claims started by a demand of upgrade from their status of autonomous region to that of Autonomous republic, the status that Abkhazia had actually enjoyed after losing its short-lived status of Union republic in the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the Ossetians were seen to have less rights to complain, if any, by the Georgians, in comparison with the Abkhaz, with whom the discussion about who were the original settlers of the territory called Abkhazia was particularly polemic. The Ossetians were

---

[162] The one that gave Abkhazia the status of Union Republic in the Soviet Union, and which lasted some months before its status was downgraded to that of autonomous republic within Georgia. In Zverev 3/4 p. 4-5.

[163] One of the military leaders who through a military coup overthrown Gamsakhurdia's regime and brought Shevardnadze to power in 1992. He commanded his own army under no political control in the early years of independence. He will be years later imprisoned by Shevardnadze's' government. See MAR Chronologies for Abkhazia and Ossetia (South).

[164] Herzig, op. cit., p.77-78.

seen as relative new comers[165], so their claims of autonomy were hence perceived by Tbilisi as doubly troubling.

The conflict in South Ossetia became a political issue when in November 1989, the South Ossetian Soviet approved the decision to transform the Autonomous region into an Autonomous republic, always as a part of Georgia. In August 1990, after Georgia's interdiction of regional parties to participate in the Georgian parliamentary elections, the South Ossetian Soviet declared itself an independent republic of the Soviet union -going then a step beyond the initial demand- and appealed to Moscow to be recognized as an independent subject of the Soviet federation. In October 1990 Gamsakhurdia won the Georgian parliamentary elections, and on December 9th elections were held in the newly created, self declared and unrecognized by Moscow Union republic of South Ossetia. On December 11th Georgia abolished the South Ossetian autonomy. On 17th March 1991 South Ossetia voted in favour of the Union in the referendum -like Abkhazia had done- boycotted by Georgia, and ignored Georgia's referendum on independence of 31st March of the same year. In a referendum held in South Ossetia on 19 January 1992, boycotted by local Georgians, more than 90% of the participants voted in favour to join Russia. In June 22nd a cease fire was agreed and the war that had been going on for two years was stopped.[166]

The first stage of the arm conflict started in November 1989 and lasted until January 1990. It started with a march of around 20,000 Georgians to Tskhinvali, organized by Gamsakhurdia and the Georgian Communist Party leader under the motto of defending the Georgian population. However, the marcher were stopped by the Soviet ministry of interior army. Still, fighting occurred between paramilitary Georgian troops and South Ossetians in the border with South Ossetia. After a provisional stabilization of the conflict in 1990 caused by internal disaccords of the Georgian national movement and Gamsakhurdia's new mandate after wining the elections in October 1990, the conflict escalated again. In December 1991 Georgia started a blockade with South Ossetia, which lasted until July 1992. On its part, South Ossetia cut the gas supplies coming from Russia to Georgia. In January 1992 Georgian police and paramilitaries entered

---

[165] Zverev explains that even the name "South Ossetia" has been eliminated from the Georgian publications and replaced by "Samachlabo", op. cit., 3/4 p.5.
[166] Ibid., p. 5-9.

Tskhinvali and attacked the population. After some stabilization in early 1992, the fights intensified with Georgia's daily missiles in mid-April on the residential quarters of Tskhinvali. The fights and mutual massacres continued intermittently with several failed attempts of cease fire on may and early June 1992, until the definitive Russian sponsored cease fire on June 22.[167]

- Inter-ethnic violence

The main cause of frozen conflicts is clearly the antagonism nationalist projects of state and nation building in the South Caucasian states. Besides, and as a worsening component, the nationalist projects are basically and strongly drown along ethnic lines. The failed projects are a consequence -as far as elites' strategies and policies is concerned- of two main failures: one, institutional and governmental -intra-ethnic- which has caused civil wars both in Georgia and Azerbaijan, in struggles over government. On the other hand, the inter-ethnic conflicts within states, or within states with implications of third state.

In spite of the strong inter relation of the South Caucasian violent inter-ethnic conflicts, they have affected more particularly Georgia and Azerbaijan than Armenia. The reason is obvious: those two countries host secessionist nationalities, while Armenia is a homogeneous state without any break away territories. But, Armenia is a major actor in the intra-state conflict which opposes Azerbaijan to Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia is *de facto* in war against Azerbaijan because of Karabakh. Therefore, the frozen conflicts have intra-state and also an inter-state dimension.

In general terms, inter-ethnic conflicts are a function of: first, the goals of ethnic groups and their level of organization; second, the political opportunities within the structures of the state where the mobilization takes place; and third, the extent of international involvement. [168] As for the last of this prerequisites or conditions, "contiguity" and "alliances", both present in the Caucasus, "intensify and expand interethnic conflict and create enduring rivalry between ethnic belligerents".[169] As for the goals, they were of a

---

[167] Ibid., p. 5-9.
[168] Henderson, op. cit., p.757.
[169] Ibid., p.761.

drastic nature; the opportunities, high, given the very recent and instable states and the support from external actors/allies totally determinant. The level of the goal determines the reaction of the titular state. A maximalist goal encountered a classical maximalist response. The weaknesses of the states helped the goal be attained, together with the external support. The persistence of antagonist positions, the continuity of the state weaknesses, and the support of external actors, provoked the stagnation of the whole process.

The three conflicts have a flux starting point around 1988, when the three Georgian autonomous units requested their removal from Georgian jurisdiction, and when Nagorno-Karabakh formally requested its annexation to Armenia. The violence clashes proceeded among legal wars, nationalistic rhetoric, ethnic cleansing and in some moments large scale warfare, until a cease fire agreement will stop the inter ethnic wars, after the defeats of Tbilisi and Baku and the *de facto* independence of the break away territories.

Common to the three secessionist conflicts is then a past of confrontations and grievances and the fact that they were well organized, politically, and concentrated in a distinct region[170] -first chapter.[171] Besides, a fixed and strong historical vision of the parties and the prejudices and stereotypes associated. On the other hand, the unilateral declaration to their status; and at certain stages of the conflict, the secessionist territories had direct support from third parties -third chapter- which gave them military superiority to their opponents.[172]

What are particularly interesting traits to all three conflicts as far as elites' strategies is concerned? First the way independence was struggle in a context of empire break down and new states' building and the procedure and arguments that followed; second, the shape the particular demands took; third and finally, the measures undertaken by those attain the objective.

---

[170] This is not so clear in South Ossetia where the population is more dispersed.
[171] See MAR Assessments.
[172] Herzig, op. cit., p.59-65.

First, the usage by both titular states and national minorities of the Soviet legal framework to justify either the territorial integrity -the titular states- or self determination -the break away territories. This "legal" struggle over what was "legitimate" will have two main paradoxes. First, the titular states started working out their secession from the Soviet Union around 1988, and hence tried to revert the Soviet legal and constitutional design back to their inclusion in it in 1921; the main arguments being that they had been illegally occupied, their new independent status having its direct link in the years they enjoyed independence, just after the Tsarist empire and the new Bolshevik revolution, between 1919 and 1921 then. However, this attempt of "deinstitutionalization"[173] contrasts with the arguments used by Tbilisi and Baku according to which the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia had to stay as part of Georgia because they had been so during the Soviet rule. Actually, both states argued that the creation of autonomies within their territories was artificial and intended the erode their national projects. The second paradox concerns the secessionist territories in their attempt also to revert the Soviet institutional and constitutional system; first, and using the same argument that the titular states, they will infer their right to independence from the fact that once the titular states had nullified the Soviet union ties and logics, they did not have to be anymore part of a Soviet territorial and political design either, detaching them from the territories within which they constituted autonomous republics. Parallel to this own "deinstitutionalization" process though they will support the Soviet union's new constitution and they will address all their demands to Moscow until the Soviet dissolution. It is clear then the ambiguous nature of the independence process of the titular states, which will only be real anyway until Moscow recognises them, in that it occurs against the Soviet Union -Moscow- but with Moscow.

As a complement of this first trait, and a clear pattern in the South Caucasian conflicts in the use of laws, the prolific quantity of laws to fight through their independence. These laws, again paradoxically, will emanate either from legal institutions -the Soviet- or illegal institutions -the ones created unilaterally by states and statelets, like parliaments or those of illegally upgraded territories- depending on what served better

---

[173] See for example Hughes, op. cit., p. 231-232 How nation and state building in the post-Soviet states have dealt with ethnic and regional challenges examined as a model of two trends: "deinstitutionalization" and "re-institutionalization."

the interest and purpose of the elites in question. For example, all three break away territories will justify their independence on the basis of a law passed in 1990 in the Soviet union, and granting broad rights to minorities, according to which the autonomous territories had the same right to secede than the Republics themselves. Obviously, the law was solely intended to weaken secessionist Union republics and protect the Soviet union integrity, but it also strengthen the autonomous entities and served after the dissolution as a justification still. On the contrary, these same secessionist territories will violate systematically the legal framework of the Soviet union by either unilaterally upgrading their status -rejected by Moscow- and actually providing themselves with the an unsanctioned political power, or by declaring their annexing to another Soviet territory.

Second, the objectives of self determination have oscillated between two possibilities without much coherence. The claims of self determination demands and movements, be legal, be rhetoric, be *de facto*, have suffered from a still unresolved schizophrenia: independence in the form or a new state, or demands to be included in another state. Hence, the preference over secessionism and irredentism is still not clearly stated by South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh. The irredentism demands of Nagorno-Karabakh are particularly evident, because Armenia is actively in war against Azerbaijan, and because Armenia has voted the annexation of Nagorno-Karabakh, at the same time that has not recognized -like no other state- the independence of Karabakh. As for South Ossetia and Abkhazia, they represent two "non reciprocal" demands of annexation to Russia in two versions: Abkhazia demanded to be integrated as a new member of the Russian Federation but South Ossetia wanted to be part of North Ossetia within the Russian Federation. The paradox is that in these case neither Russia nor North Ossetia have shown any signs of accepting such demands. Therefore, the three statelets have shifted from secessionism of irredentism or have ambiguously demanded both at he same time.

Third, a policy of ethnic cleansing which preceded and coincided with the warfare period, among the use of extreme nationalist rhetoric by all actors, states and statelets was used by the elites to dispose and construct their ethnic states, be as independent ones, be as apart of another similarly ethnic territory -like in Karabakh with Armenia or

in South Ossetia with North Ossetia.[174] Georgia, like Azerbaijan, suffered a humiliating defeat against a much smaller enemy supported from outside -from Russia in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and from Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh; and both have Georgian and Azerbaijani populations in the respective secessionist territories that have suffered ethnic cleansing and engrossed major internally displaced population figures - or as it is badly labelled, refugees. Besides, during their respective wars they had to cope, as explained above, with mutinies that threatened the collapse of the state. In Nagorno-Karabakh, after the cease fire, the conflict provoked 20,000 deaths in both sides[175]; around 200,000 Armenians had to leave their homes in Azerbaijan to Armenia, to Nagorno-Karabakh or to Russia. Then, 185,000 Azeri and 11,000 Muslim Kurd who lived in Armenia, together with 47,000 Karabakh Azeri had to leave Armenia. Besides, around 500,000-600,000 Azeri have been forced to abandon their houses in the zones where Armenia keeps illegally occupying Azerbaijani territory.[176]In Abkhazia, the war is estimated to have caused between 4,000-8,000 casualties and massive economic damage. After the violence there were 200,000 Georgians who had to leave their houses to other parts of Georgia.[177] Actually the Georgian population remaining in Abkhazia is qualified by some researchers as a "majority at risk".[178] Finally, in South Ossetia, after the conflict, most of Georgian population was displaced to Georgia. The Ossetians who where living in Georgia, around 100,000, went back to either south or north Ossetia. Also, many Ossetians emigrated from South to North Ossetia.[179]

There are though some important dissimilarities of the conflicts, in spite of the fact that they are intimately related, and obey to similar logics which can be traced in similar contexts. First of all, Nagorno-Karabakh is an extremely homogeneous territory and has a clear support from a state in the region, Armenia, to which it belongs naturally ethnically speaking, and to which it constantly has wanted to be part of since the very beginning of the Soviet territorial design. In that sense, this conflict has a strong historic pattern and a striking ethnic abnormality, in that Nagorno-Karabakh is literally a

---

[174] According to Preece (2000), op. cit., p. 2 "the practice of ethnic cleansing is fundamentally linked to the political ideal of the homogeneous nation-state and the ethnic nationalism that underscores it".
[175] See Smith (1996), op. cit., p. 286.
[176] The territories occupied are: Agdam, Fizuli, Jebrail, Kelbajar, Kubatly, Lachin and Zangelan. In Herzig, op. cit., p.66. For IDP in the South Caucasus see also UNHCR Refugees by number 2003, p.12.
[177] IDP figures in the South Caucasus, in Refugees by Numbers, UNCHR, 2003, p.12.
[178]MAR, Assessment for Abkhazians in Georgia, p.2.
[179] See Herzig, op. cit., p.74. For IDP figures in the South Caucasus see also Refugees by number, UNCHR 2003, p.12.

Armenian-populated territory in Azerbaijan. South Ossetians and Abkhazians are a clear minority on their respective territories, and while Abkhazians are very much concentrated and have even a past of Union republic, hence their more radical demands since 1988, South Ossetians are more dispersed in North Ossetia and within Georgia, with no past of Union Republic.

In Georgia, contrary to the conflict in and over Nagorno-Karabakh, which has been since the cease fire almost strictly frozen[180], there have been so called "low-intensity" attacks of paramilitary forces made of contingents of the internally displaced populations. There was also a brief return to warfare in may 1998, and 30,000 people had to flee again away from the region of Gali[181], where they had returned recently to their homes. The situation in Abkhazia becomes even more complicated given the fact that within Abkhazia, exactly in the Kodori gorge[182], there is an enclave of Georgians and the territory is actually out of Abkhazia's control. On the other hand, the Russian military support has been proved by them helping build a border along the Inguri river, which in its central and western parts separates Abkhazia from Georgia.[183]

It is important to understand the relevance and significance of Nagorno-Karabakh for Armenia, both population and elites. Actually, nowadays, the government of Yerevan is composed of Karabakhis. The president, R. Kocharian, is the former president of Nagorno-Karabakh, and present defence minister of Armenia, S. Sarkisian, is former defence minister of Nagorno-Karabakh. The policies of Yerevan so far over Nagorno-Karabakh and the strong relations of Yerevan with Stepanakert proof that the Armenian elites give to Nagorno-Karabakh the same importance as to Armenia itself.[184] On the other hand, the population of Armenia seems also pretty much persuaded and convinced of this fact and this was clear when former Armenian president Ter-Petrossian lost popular support and its office when he tried to negotiate a solution over Nagorno-Karabakh that was perceived as putting Armenia's economic and social development before the maintenance at any rate of Nagorno-Karabakh. Nagorno-Karabakh proofs to be for Armenian politics the sacred cow of national security, and the main pillar of

---

[180] See "Tension between Armenia, Azerbaijan rising over Nagorno-Karabakh" (29/07/2003) in Euroasianet.org http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav072903.shtml.
[181] At the south west border between Abkhazia and Georgia.
[182] Eastern part of Abkhazia.
[183] See Toft, op. cit., pp. 123-139.
[184] Cornell (2004), op. cit., p.7.

Armenian nationalism, the rest becoming secondary.[185] Armenia, contrary to Georgia and Azerbaijan, has strong and influential diasporas groups, specially in the US, which has been argued to be a added difficulty to the settlement, in that Armenians outside Armenia can sometimes be stronger in their positions, maybe because from outside things are seen differently.[186] In any case, like in the case of Georgia with its own break away territories, all the parties involved in the conflicts seem to be waiting a political context where to get a favourable deal, which explains the interest of some in keeping the status quo.

The fact that the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh opposes not only an state against a secessionist territory but also the inter state dimension, and specially its international dimension, with the Turkey as an ally of Azerbaijan and Iran as an allay of Armenia - third chapter- has brought some authors to affirm that this conflict is the most dangerous one. [187]

In any case, what defines the frozen conflicts today is precisely the fact that the cease fire, after Georgia and Azerbaijan defeats, has created *de facto* states. However, neither Baku nor Tbilisi accept any territorial secession or federative arrangement, being very clear about territorial integrity. On the other hand, the position of the break away territories is particularly intolerant, especially in Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh, where any return to Georgian and Azerbaijani jurisdiction is seen as a lose and as a defeat.

After seeing the character of the frozen conflicts as a consequence the nationalist rhetoric and ideology -ethno nationalism- a clear trait of the frozen conflicts is their "ethnic" content, which explains their strong intractability. This can seen as a broader phenomenon known as the "ethnicisation of politics".

---

[185] Toft, op. cit., p.156.
[186] Hughes, op. cit., p. 237.
[187] Waal (2003) and Cornell (2004).

- <u>Ethnic or "ethnicized"</u>

Political autonomy is indeed undesirable for both parties, states and statelets. Why? Basically because of two reasons: the above stated fact that the statelets do enjoy already independent and have already functioning *de facto* states, but also because of the "ethnicisation of politics"[188], the strong "ethnic" component in the rationale of frozen conflicts, which precedes the present status quo but also has reinforced it notably.

The concept of ethnic group and its assimilation into the nation concept, its content and consequences, is a thorny topic. It is plagued of ambiguities. The following reflections are meant to clarify the ethnic content of the South Caucasus conflicts, to cast the relevance of ethnicity in the conflicts. Are the frozen conflicts actually "ethnic conflicts"? The answer is not clear. They are and they are not.

First of all, as a preliminary reflection, it is important to remind that ethnic groups and ethnic identities in coexistence are not undesirable or dangerous *per se*; it does not automatically lead to conflict, and this at its turn does not lead automatically to violence.[189] These causalities are fallacies. Ethnicity can be, not is, pernicious; first, when it is politicized and sold in terms of exclusion and irreconcilable distinctions; second, when it is threatened or perceived as so. On the other hand, the politics of identity, based on ethnic arguments, is not a monopoly of the stateless nations. It is a political tool used widely by majority as much as minority groups but for different reasons.[190] In the first case, to create cohesion and enroot power and to perpetuate stability through the status quo. In the second case, to contest the established order, thought unfair, arbitrary and discriminatory. [191] This logic is particularly dangerous in that it can lead to different types of civil war on ethnic basis and to different sorts of

---

[188] See Wimmer, op. cit., p. 96-113. When the political life conducted along ethnic lines; which makes political leaders, at least, work for the interests of their ethnic group/nation, and the people mobilise according the criteria, be for the construction of a state, be by the already existent state in its construction.
[189] In my first chapter, when trying to cast the possible correlations of multi ethnic states and "ethnic" conflict and/or violence, I explained this false belief, among other things, by noting the strong ethnic heterogeneity of states and the relative small number of violent "ethnic" conflicts in the contemporary state system.
[190] See Leach, C. W., and Brown, L. M., (1999) "Ethnicity and Identity Politics", Encyclopaedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict, vol. 1, pp. 766-770.
[191] See Wimmer, op. cit., p. 64.

state failures in multiethnic non democratic states in transition. This to say that the ethno nationalist argument is not a monopoly of the subordinate group in a quest to provoke chaos and anarchy. It can be argued that it is even legitimate as a demand. However, with two dangers: a titular state, occupied by a dominant group, non tolerant or willing to give away any real political power, and peripheries, the subordinate groups, with maximalist uncompromising demands. Finally, the believe that ethnicity divides is as true as the contrary: ethnicity actually does often create inclusive and not divisive societies. The question is then not nationalism vs. non-nationalism, but what nationalism, where and when. The problem is when the conflict between two groups that coexist appear, and the ways it can be resolved. There will almost always be conflict and competition. What is not at all obvious is that there has to be antagonism and violence.

After this preliminary reflection, and going back to the "ethnic" component in the frozen conflicts, the conflicts in the Caucasus oppose various ethnic groups, hence creating an interethnic not an ethnic dispute. That the dispute be interethnic, contrary to ethnic, would imply that the motivation, or main one, goes away from the "ethnicity" question, to settle in the political and territorial disputes. Or that the dispute is "inter-ethnic" contrary to "ethnic" is that ethnicity would be one among the issues at stake, so to say. Actually, the disputes are about territory, dissimilarities on the idea of the state and the nation (the polity) and who belongs to it (demos) and as for the future of their status.[192] As Henderson points out, "often the image of ethnic groups in conflict is an ideological construct of nationalist historians and politicians pursuing their own political goals.[193] Hence, ethnic groups, that use ethno-nationalist politics and approaches to policies that happen to be violent and that end up in a secession (*de facto*)

---

[192] Henderson, op. cit., pp.751-753. See also Snyder's (2000) core argument. Snyder defends that the main cause of inter-ethnic conflicts, what makes them appear, is elite strategies. This approach as opposed to those that used the "ancient hatred" argument or the "popular rivalries". Also core argument of Julie George, where she centres her explanation not on the appearance but in the "persistence" of the conflicts. The basic argument is the same: elite strategies and interests; she introduces the argument of "bargaining possibilities" as a explicative variable of the freezing in the frozen conflicts. See also Ayres (2000b) as far as ethnic conflict outcomes and "bargaining capabilities" is concerned. All these authors belong to a general trend called "instrumentalism", as opposed to "primordialism".
[193] See Henderson, op. cit., p. 753.

does not correlate with the ethnic difference being the base of the conflict. The conflict is between two ethnic groups over some political goods, tangible or intangible.[194]

However, it is also true that at least the justification of the secessions in the three break away territories of the South Caucasus, and the obvious ethno nationalist project of the three Caucasian states in their process of state and nation building proof that "ethnicity" is a central component of the whole story. If the conflicts have an initial "ethnic" component, its relevance seem to have gotten more and more important with time - during the freezing- due to the isolation of the different contenders among each other, and because of the ethnic cleansings that followed or preceded the ethnic wars, creating ethnic models of state, dominated by one ethnic group -like in Azerbaijan and Georgia-, or made of one ethnic group after "cleaning" the territory, what the South Ossetian but specially the Abkhazs have done. It is specially striking to see that South Ossetians and Abkhazians were indeed a minority in what they believe their mother land. The "ethnic" strong component of the conflicts have several explanations in the context of the frozen conflicts, but one of them is -in accordance of the above said- the fact that the elites in control of the Soviet administrative and political institutions[195] in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and also in Nagorno-Karabakh, were mostly Abkhazians and South Ossetians, if not it is hard to understand how they could have organized themselves and vote through all the laws necessary in their "legal" justification of their independence. The consequence of the initial "ethnic component" and its reinforcement with time is the "ethnicisation of politics" in the South Caucasus.

It is arduous if not an impossible task to clearly distinguish what an ethnic conflict is from an "ethinicized" one. Some authors make a distinction[196]. All conflicts that involve inter-ethnic strife over political resources are ethinicized in an way or another. It is even arguable that there are only "ethnicized" conflicts, sometimes over a solidly constructed ethnic "reality", other not. The result is the same. The question is then not how solid the ethnic group is in 'ethnic terms', an ethnic conflict, but how solid is the

---

[194] See for example Leach and Brown (1999), op. cit., 766-773. According to the authors: inter ethnic conflicts and the associated violence have "more to do with the conflict associated with ethnic group identity and the political process than with ethnicity itself" (p.773).

[195] As it should be quite obvious by now after my first chapter emphasis on the Soviet legacies but specially the Soviet territorial design and its transfer intact after the break up to the independent South Caucasian region, is the strong correlation between the ethnic component of the conflicts and the previous ethnic component of the actors at play, both states and statelets.

[196] See Ghebali, op. cit., p. 29.

ethnic discourse and its political use, ethnicisation. The relevant is not the "good fundament" of the difference but the perception of the difference, its political use and the power that this use has to mobilize the population. Hence, there is not properly speaking ethnic from "ethnicized" conflicts unless we believe this flux and historic category called ethnic has any real independent existence from its historic, rhetoric, social or political elaboration. The ethnic is an argument, a belief, in that sense is real, but it is not self evident as being black or white, and not even in this case has any meaningful consequences if there is not a elaboration behind. The relevance of the ethnic group does not depend on its historic or rhetoric justification but on its elites' use, the level of its population mobilization and the context where these occur.

That this is true, that ethnic dissimilarities fall very short to explain the violent outcome, the persistence and the "freeze" is clear by the fact the multiple ethnic groups that form the South Caucasus region -first chapter. This does not mean though that the ethnic component is just an instrument, without any relevance. Ethnic differences should not be underestimated as detonator of interethnic clashes. As Henderson points out: "efforts to 'construct' ethnic identities without a cultural basis are often unsuccessful."[197] This makes arguable a decisive component of the criticized "ancient hatred" thesis. However, its importance is difficult to assess.[198] According to Hughes, the relevance seems disputable, constituting a "residual factor", while the triggering element is mostly centred on "the centre periphery elite conflicts over attempts to modify or disassemble Soviet era autonomies or otherwise distinctive territorialized structures by nationalist and nationalizing states."[199]

If it seems to go without saying that the bigger the ethnic composition of a society, the bigger the probability of ethnic conflict, the norm appears to be the contrary. Actually, if the present states in the world share a trait is the absolute lack of ethnic homogeneity. However, violent interethnic conflicts, even if of growing number in certain periods, are still an exception and not norm.[200] Hence ethnic differences do not correlate with ethno-

---

[197] Henderson, op. cit., p.754.
[198] Ibid., p. 226.
[199] See Henderson, op. cit., pp.752-753.
[200] Henderson, op. cit., p.753.

nationalist political constructions.[201] Furthermore, it can be argued that ethnic mobilization is possible without being accompanied by a nationalist discourse, the case of Ajaria is an example -first chapter. According to Henderson, "when ethnic mobilizations are accompanied by nationalism, the results are often violent". [202] And he adds: "When ethnicity becomes the basis of nationalist mobilization, that is, where ethnic groups mobilize for political autonomy and the possession of a state; the potential for inter-ethnic conflict is heightened".[203] The author points out the relevance of mobilization on ethnic nationalist bases and its tendency to conflict, "regardless of the political goals of groups, regimes and third parties" because of three elements that accompany these: its power to create strong group identification with the nationalist demands and the willingness to make sacrifices, generate often state repression and include third part intervention, creating the danger of a spill over.[204] Then, another component is territory. According to Henderson territorial disputes are the most likely to give rise to violent conflicts, among states or within states. The author concludes that "endowed with symbolic value in the context of interethnic disputes such territorial issues are among the most intractable and enduring in world history".[205] On the other hand, the world, to begin with Europe, is full of regions with strong nationalist demands. However, these rarely (or never) end up in secession. Consequently, ethno nationalism does not correlate with independence demands[206]. And when they exist, they do not correlate with violence.

The focus on the elites maybe tends to forget the population. I believe that this population is not stupid and the elites are probably not so intelligent. If they receive support there must a reason. However, what cannot be argued is a correlation without adjectives between elite discourse and population mobilization towards nationalist and secessionist positions. Hence, elite maximalist discourse does not correlate with population support.[207] Some authors seem to suggest that the elites in question manipulate the electorate, still immature. According to Melikishvili "it is the destructive elements among the ethnic elite that start conflicts through manipulating peoples'

---

[201] See Wimmer, op. cit., p. 47. He criticizes the so-called "neo-romantic" approach and gives examples of communities with a strong belonging feeling that do not arrive to nationalist mobilization.

[202] Henderson, op. cit., 756.

[203] Ibid., p.758.

[204] Ibid., p.758.

[205] Ibid., 761.

[206] See Catalonia, Galicia in Spain. See Belgium.

[207] See the small support of the maximalist among the nationalist parties in Spain.

minds".[208] However, according to Henderson (explaining the main instrumentalist theories of ethnic conflict) "while ethnic leadership may exploit perceived differences in order to promote their interests, unless they respond to actual grievances and aspirations their movements flounder".[209] According to Wimmer, "history is full of failed, and therefore forgotten attempts at putting ethnicity at the centre of the political drama".[210]

The ethnic issue in the centre of the dispute, and the overrating of the ethnic cleavage has left behind probably more amenable solutions to the conflicts that could be over political power or participation, or economic independence -like in Ajaria. This ethnic issue has proofed of a major obstacle to the solution of the conflicts and to the general process of state building in the South Caucasus.

In the following subchapter I will analyse some of the most obvious nationalising policies and violent actions that explain the early escalation of the conflicts and is at the core of the present situation of the frozen conflicts.

2.3 Nationalising policies and real or perceived grievances

The elites of the titular states, already since the last days of and within the Soviet empire, started an active policy of discrimination and ethnic cleansing towards their respective ethnic minorities. Also, these elites chose the most unfortunate or ill-fated of all strategies possible given these circumstances: an aggressive policy of nation-building with a very classical flavour[211]. As Hughes puts it: "the task of building or consolidating nation-states in such conditions was a formidable one".[212]

Nationalising policies were put in practice after the Soviet break up by the new independent states of the South Caucasus.[213] According to Brukaber, this is a common

---

[208] Melikishvili, L., (2002) "Georgia: Potential Seats of Ethnic Conflicts", Central Asia and the Caucasus, no.2(14), p. 51.
[209] P. 754
[210] Wimmer, op. cit., p. 96. See Wimmer (pp. 97-104) for theories of ethnic popular mobilization.
[211] See Smith (1996) p. 34
[212] Hughes, op. cit. p.225.
[213] See Smith (1999), op. cit., pp.73-78. For a discussion on the clash in the post-Soviet states between two opposite concepts of state building in multiethnic societies: federalization vs. nationalizing state, see Coppieters (2001).

trait of new states.[214] By "nationalising" policy I mean the one that seeks broadly to create or produce a common political identity, but that always stems or is imposed by a dominant group. However, nationalising policies can have different intensities. In the South Caucasus they have been particularly radical, specially in Georgia. By radical I mean the imposition of a regime that could be called "ethnocracy" -the rule of a state by one ethnic group, where the pattern of ethnic dominance is clear-cut.[215] This has had dramatic implications for the state building process in the region. The imposition of "ethnocracy has been done both by titular states, with the intention of assimilation, and by break away territories by ethnic cleansings. Although these ethnic cleansings happened also in Armenian's process of state building against Azeri residents probably motivated by the on-going conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia-populated Nagorno-Karabakh. The objective is a project of statehood on ethnic basis.[216] The consequences have been disastrous for the region's stability, which, as Brock points out, proofs "the failure of the 'classical' notion of state-building to accommodate ethnicity".[217] What are state and nation building policies and how political opportunities, private interests and elite strategies influenced the outcome and nature of the wars?

Having inherited an atomised ethno territorial design, given the history of the contested borders, and the strength of the peripheries' elites, the model chosen by these states to build their state, i.e. a model based on a "classical nation-state, consolidated around an ethnic core, including all the trappings of a national bureaucracy, economy and armed forces, an education system in the language of the titular nationality",[218] has actually assured the violent escalation and the freezing. Besides, the ethnic dissimilarities, and how the confrontations had already been worked out around antagonist conceptions of ethnicity and territory "crystallized" due to exclusive and exclusionary ethno nationalist discourses.

---

[214] Brukaber, R., (1996) Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Cited in Smith (1999), op. cit., p. 73.

[215] See for example Wallensteen (1999), op. cit., p. 8-12.

[216] Zverev, op. cit., 1/4 , p.1-2.

[217] Brock (2001), op. cit., p.6. See article for an analysis of the concept of nation-building stressing the idea of "political as against ethno-centric nation-building" (p.3).

[218] Smith (1996), op. cit., p.34.

- <u>Georgia/Abkhazia/South Ossetia</u>

Georgia discriminated other minorities or was perceived as having done so.[219] The atomized ethno administrative structures from the Soviet era were present in Georgia in their three versions: an autonomous republic or oblast in South Ossetia, a Autonomous Republic in Abkhazia and Ajaria, and Georgia itself as an Union Republic. As many authors coincide to point out ethno national divisions constitutes to be Georgia's most serious obstacle of state-building[220]. However, if the ethnic nationalist divisions provided with potential for conflict the violence and the break up of the conflicts can only be justified or understood as a product of elite strategies, discourses and policies, both the central elites' in Tbilisi, Yerevan and Baku, and those in the peripheries autonomous regions: Tskhinvali, Sukhumi and Stepanakert.

Georgia was the first Union republic to held free parliamentary elections on a multi party basis, and the first also to held the first free presidential elections. It will be also the second in 1991, after Lithuania, , to formally secede from the Soviet Union.[221]

On 28 October 1990, Zviad Gamsakhurdia's nationalist party, Round Table Free Georgia Bloc, won the first free elections in Georgia.[222] Gamsakhurdia's slogans before and after the elections were basically two: 'Georgia for the Georgians' and 'Georgia for Christians Georgia'. Besides, Abkhazia and South Ossetia regionally based parties, and hence those nationalist oriented, had been banned participation[223]. Gamsakhurdia was then elected chairman of the Supreme Soviet and formed the first non communist government out of the Round Table/Free Georgia coalition. All parties to the election though, be nationalist or communist shared in their campaigns the messages of independent Georgia and Georgia territorial integrity and unity.

Gamsakhurdia was since before and after his election a militant nationalist that saw his country plagued of enemies, in the form of Russian imperialist or separatist outsiders

---

[219] See De Nerves (1993): a condition for future ethnic conflict.
[220] Toft, op. cit., p. 138.
[221] Nodia, G., (1996) "Political Turmoil in Georgia and the Ethnic Policies of Zviad Gamsakhurdia" in Coppieters, B., *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, VUB, p 1.
[222] There were six Georgian Nationalist blocs competing in the elections against the communists. Gamsakhurdia's bloc won 155 of 250 seats, and the communist finished second with 64 seats. Ibid. pp.1.
[223] Article 8 of the laws governing the election required all parties registered to have country wide reach. See Nodia and MAR Chronologies for Abkhazia and Ossetia (South).

illegitimately occupying his mother land. He saw actually both the Russians and the separatists in a conspiracy pact to dismember the historic Georgia land and nation. His election after a free vote of the Georgian population started already "spoiled" in that the Ossetians and the Abkhazs had been hindered to take part. Those two, and the Ajarians to a lesser extent, were in the eyes of the early nationalist governments the most obvious dangers for the survival of the Georgian nation. However, the Georgian aggressive policy of control and mistreatment of its minorities goes beyond those well entrenched ones, to affect the Russians, the Armenians or the Azeris in their Georgian territories. In any case, the priority of Gamsakhurdia in his mandate was actually to reverse what he thought an artificial and illegitimate occupation of his country by the Russians and the wiping out or domestication of the new comers threatening its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The separatist regions and their subordinate autonomy status within Georgia were seen by Tbilisi both as an artificial Soviet devise to weaken and destroy the Georgian nation, but also as an argument to keep them after independence under Georgian control, given that they had always been so. However, as Toft points out, the Abkhazia's precedent and short lived Union republic period of several months in 1925, marks an important difference with respect to South Ossetia and Ajaria, and has been used as an argument by the Abkhazs to justify their right to secession as much as the Georgians have their own for independence.[224]

Gamsakhurdia apparently had a clear hard liner past attitude towards minorities and nationalities in his country. As Toft points out, "his dissident writings often invoked the idea of an imperilled Georgian nation, the destruction of its land, language and culture".[225] Hence, his election was perceived as a threat by minorities. Gamsakhurdia's background and his early policies and slogans, but also in the case of a more moderated Shevardnadze -a moderation more a product of the adverse circumstances than anything else probably- were seen as a natural continuity of the past discriminations of the Georgian majority against the minorities, but now, with their independence as more evident in quest of nationalization.

---

[224] Toft, op. cit., p.134. See also Nodia.
[225] Ibid., p.133.

Tbilisi's policies since before and with Gamsakhurdia seem clearly disproportionate and counter productive. The early military options, specially in a weak institutionalized Georgia and with a lack of loyal army were "suicidal" and are key elements in the radicalization of the conflicts and their present freezing. The military options in South Ossetia and Abkhazia gave an excuse to Russia to military intervene -third cahpter. Besides, the sympathies and strong contacts of the Russian military and the South Ossetia and Abkhazia leaders well known. Also, the intervention of the North Caucasus army was expectable, to help their fellow ethnic friends of South Ossetia. Radical secessionist claims and the escalation of the conflicts and their complications are a clear product of Tbilisi wrong intolerant and aggressive policies. Intolerant because the Georgian leaders did not make any substantial and clear effort to revert the popular view and perception by the minorities that their intentions were to "annihilate" them. According to Zverev, the conflict in Abkhazia is a direct product of chauvinists policies during Gamsakhurdia mandate. Prohibition of participation of local parties, language policies, and so on.[226]And aggressive because after the territories' reactions against whet their perceived the continuation and the intensification of their mistreatment was handled by military means. But the lack of organized military means, of institutional resources, of legitimacy of the Georgian government and the confrontations with the powerful Russia complicated the picture clearly -third chapter.

It is arguable to think that if policies at the early stages of constitution and institution building in Georgia had been more moderated, violence could have been prevented. It can be argued that the nationalist elites had it easy to mobilize populations that contrary to what Snyder thinks, were actually very much persuaded that either their Georgian land was in danger or that their ethnic identities, cultures and political autonomies were in danger. In the case of Abkhazia -and also in Nagorno-Karabakh- the relevance of the popular hatred and the past grievances is of a major importance probably. However, I do not agree with Toft assertion that Gamsakhurdia and later Shevardnadze had little if any options to stop the secessionist tendencies, because "tensions among the different groups had already reached breaking point".[227] On the contrary, in the case of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, it will be later recognized by Georgian leaders that both the

---

[226] Zverev, op. cit., 3/4 p.4. See also MAR Chronologies for Abkhazia and South Ossetia.
[227] Ibid., p.132.

march over and the abolition of South Ossetias' autonomy in 1989 and 1990 and the invasion of Abkhazia in 1990 by the paramilitary forces were grave political mistakes.

- Azerbaijan/ Nagorno-Karabakh/Armenia

The case in Nagorno-Karabakh has a key difference with respect to the Georgian cases. The independence of the enclave can not be understood as a consequence of Azerbaijani aggressive nationalizing policies. To begin with, because Karabakh was mainly populated by Armenians, whereas in South Ossetia and Abkhazia the Abkhaz and the Ossetians were hardly 18% of the total population of the respective territories and an anecdotic number if counted within all Georgia. However, the immediate justifications for their demand of annexation to Armenia in 1988 were that the region had been and was starved of resources by Baku, had been denied proper cultural rights and was suffering a policy by Baku to alter demographic balance. It was an internally produced nationalist irredentism" quickly supported in Armenia.[228]

Azerbaijan though, like Georgia, had undergone at different levels and with variable intensities policies of homogenization in its territory, one of the main justification then of karabakhis' complaints. Zverev points out, for example that among other groups "the Kurds and the Talysh, of Iranian Stock, had been listed as Azeris in their internal passports and not counted as separate nationalities in the Azerbaijani population censuses for the last decades".[229] Zverev affirms though that even in the case that these grievances had not occurred, the willingness to get detached from Azerbaijan would have probably as well been present, given that they possessed a separate sense of identity. However, a sense of distinct identity alone seems to me a very limited argument to justify their demands. The Karabakh case is not imaginable at this scale without obvious conditions: first, the clear and near support of Armenia; second, the majority of Armenian population in the enclave.

Therefore, the role of nationalist elites in Yerevan and their strong ties with Karabakh are key factors to explain the conflict in this case. And the diasporas of Armenians also, especially in the US. The reaction of Azerbaijan will be of annulling the Karabakh's

[228] Hughes, op. cit., p.29.
[229] Zverev, op. cit., 2/4 p.2.

autonomous status. The conflict will very quickly degenerate into violence and ethnic cleansing.[230] According to Panosian, the "mutual cleansing was the culmination of a decades-long process of homogenization in the two republics".

2.4 Conclusions

In this chapter I have shown that state failures and inter-ethnic conflicts are a function of elite strategies and discourses, i.e., the concrete ideologies that were animating their projects of state and nation building, both in the case of the titular states and the secessionist territories. I have tried to proof that their concrete decisions had a decisive impact on the course and escalation of the conflicts and the present freezing, and therefore that the violence was avoidable and that the past and the context of the conflicts cannot explain *per se* the situation, even if has a strong role, especially during the escalation, the war and after the freezing.

I have explained frozen conflicts -as a function of elite strategies- as a product of two interrelated state failures: one, institutional and governmental, the other, a product of competing asymmetric national projects. Asymmetric because one group possesses the state, and the other does not. The main importance for the process and rationale of the frozen conflicts lies in the latter. The former, though, reinforces the level and depth of the failure and indirectly but certainly determines the present situation.

The ideology in question behind the projects of the states and of the statelets has equally been based on a intolerant and "ethnic" conception of the polity and of a narrow definition of the demos according to particular ethnic groups. This is what is called ethno nationalism and the state model that should follow "ethnocracy". Once these exclusivist -in the three states- and exclusionary -in the three statelets- projects of state and nation building were in function and the wars took place, the background of the conflicts, -"the past" and the context- which had been particularly interpreted to fit

---

[230] "Arm fights around Karabakh, anti-Armenian progrons in others parts of Azerbaijan, in Sumgait near Baku in February 1988, and in Baku in January 1990. Between 1988 and late 1991 Armenians in NK, and more generally in Azerbaijan, were attacked by Azeris. Almost the entire population of Baku (close to 220,000) was forced to flee, as were Armenians in other parts of Azerbaijan, except in parts of Karabakh where they resisted. Simultaneously, the entire population of Armenia (160,000) was intimidated to leave or forcibly expelled"(Toft, p.145).

particular interests of the different ethnic groups, regained a major importance and constitute a worsening condition for any possible solution.

Finally, I have shown the relevance of the "ethnic" component in the frozen conflicts, and how, after the nationalist rhetoric, the policies of discrimination of the states and the policies of ethnic cleansing of the statelets, the ethnicisation of politics has rendered the conflicts particularly intractable.

The anomalous situation in the South Caucasus, the frozen conflicts, were since the beginning a product of particular projects of state and nation in weak states that became failing states and that can properly be called today, specially in the case of Georgia, "failed". If the South Caucasian states were indeed born weak, their failures can only be understood as a product of elite strategies and projects. The same discourses that animated the preliminaries of what would become ethnic wars animate today the unresolved same conflicts. That is the reason why the conflicts persist, because the "unresolved contradictions" -a function of ideologies and state failures- have not changed.

However, frozen conflicts, as a function of state failures and of elite strategies and ideologies in a process of state and nation building are also -and have been- particularly dependent on external actors. Indeed, state failures and elite discourses, and the fact that the conflicts are frozen depends very much on the fact that external actors were present in the region and involved in the conflicts, providing support to some of the contenders. Bur it also means that the states, Azerbaijan and Georgia, lost the wars against their break away territories and, very importantly, a *de facto* secession occurred and unofficial states have been functioning ever since. I will explain then in my third and last chapter the decisive external actors' role in the frozen conflicts.

3. <u>The role of external actors in the frozen conflicts</u>

After the Soviet dissolution and of decades of isolation of the South Caucasus from the rest of the world within the Soviet Union, the region became again, as it had been before the Bolshevik invasion in the 20s, a particularly important geo strategic region, connecting Europe with Asia. The region, freed from the Soviet control, opened to the world, and the world started showing several interests. The South Caucasus became soon important *per se* as a potential energy corridor, particularly for the oil and gas reserves of the Caspian sea, but also to the broader potential energy resources coming from Central Asia, through the South Caucasus towards Europe. This ad far as the economic interest are concerned, which soon mobilized and created confrontations in the area between Iran and Azerbaijan, Russia and Azerbaijan, Georgia and Russia and Turkey against Iran and Russia on the side of Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The conflicts in the region, and their later frozen character has proofed a dangerous situation beyond the borders of the three South Caucasian states. Soon since the beginning of the conflicts, external actors, in a mixture of ethnic similarities and sympathies and geo economic interests aligned with one or another of the South Caucasian states facing their respective civil wars and violent conflicts. The end of the Cold war, furthermore, revealed and reawakened also ancient rivalries and "unfinished business" not only between the new states among themselves and towards their territories, but also among them and surrounding nations and between the surrounding nations among themselves. Basically, the confrontation in a broad sense has between Russia-Armenia-Iran against Georgia-Azerbaijan-Turkey-US. The logic of alliances follows very much this pattern. However, it has evolved in time. In any case, frozen conflicts remain as the same word says, frozen, precisely because the antagonism of the main actors is mirrored by the antagonism of the allies of the actors.

Thus, if elite's strategies and discourses were a function of political opportunities, political culture or ethic interests, in my third chapter they are a function of external allies. In that sense, frozen conflicts are a consequence of external actors policies and interests in the South Caucasus directly; but also indirectly, in that the local elites' strategies have depended on or being a function of external actors. The process of state building in the South Caucasus and state failures, ethno nationalism and the inter ethnic

violence is very importantly a product of external actors presence and actions in the region.

3.1 Impact an overview of external actors

External actors have impeded a "natural" or internally conditioned struggle over political goods in the South Caucasus. External actors, reverting or manipulation the relative power of the parties in the conflict have stopped the stronger to win and to "impose" peace. Russia has clearly helped shift the course of the events in South Ossetia and Abkhazia providing with military support to the separatist regions, and if it belongs to speculation it is arguable that without that military support from outside the wars would not have been frozen but won by Tbilisi or Baku. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia provided with the necessary military support to the enclave, and Russia at its turn, supported Armenia. On the other hand, the intervention of external ethnic neighbouring allied has contributed to the worsening of the situation, like the role of Turkey in Azerbaijan mainly. Finally, external actors, by their policy of non recognition of *de facto* states and their insistence on territorial integrity have driven the Caucasus to a situation of legal and political abnormality[231].

The dangers of contagion provoked by the frozen conflicts due to the strong ethnic alliances and geopolitical interests of the surrounding countries has been both a consequence of external actors involvement, but also a cause of the growing interest of external actors in the area, fearing a spill over of the war with unpredictable consequences.

Russia has been since the beginning of the Soviet break up a constant in the area and the conflicts. The western influence comes some years later, basically the US and increasing interests of NATO, motivated by indirect concerns such as natural resources, counter-terrorism, but with an increasingly major direct concern also in terms of the danger of contagion of the conflicts to external countries and then the odds for a war at a large scale. Finally, Turkey and Iran, after the Cold War have also been able to re-

---

[231] See Panossian (2002), op. cit., pp.143. Reflections on "formal" and "informal" politics in the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh.

establish their traditional bounds with the South Caucasian People, and have also contributed to the present complexity of the frozen conflicts.

Iran has tried to hinder political stability and economic development in Azerbaijan, fearing that a strong Azeri nation would end up attracting and mobilizing the around 20 million Azeri that live in the north of Iran with the border with Azerbaijan. Iran fears future demands from Azerbaijan over its "historic" territory, in terms of irredentism, or else separatism movements from the Azeri populated northern border of Iran. On the other hand, Azerbaijan and Iran have face some pre-war situations and important tensions over the control of the oil and gas resources in the Caspian Sea.

Turkey, with ethnic, linguistic and religious ties with Azerbaijan has soon established strong links with Baku, and has been giving military and logistic support to Azerbaijan in its war against Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh. Turkey, furthermore, assures through a treaty the status of the Azerbaijani territory of Nakhichevan.[232] Besides, relations between Armenia and Turkey are very tense. Turkey keeps a blockade on Armenian borders until their military forces withdraw from the illegally occupied territories of Azerbaijan around Nagorno-Karabakh. On the other hand, Armenia keeps pressing Turkey and the international community to acknowledge the Armenian genocide during World War I by the Turks. Furthermore, Armenia claims somehow its historic territories from the north of turkey, which were lost after a treaty with Turkey and the Bolsheviks after the World War I.

The Relations between Russia and Georgia have been particularly tense, and the involvement in the South Ossetian and Abkhazian wars particularly striking. Georgia has been trying to force Russia to withdraw their military bases from their territory. Georgia turned very quickly and actively towards the Western world after their independence -they claim to be and they feel Europeans- with not much success. Russia has seen this attitude as hostile and has clearly supported the least powerful irregular armies of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to win their battle of independence against Tbilisi. However, the role of Russia is particularly ambiguous. If Moscow has indeed and does still support the Abkhazians and the South Ossetians in their rebellions against

---

[232] Herzig, op. cit., p.89.

Georgia, at the same time it has denied to both separatist territories all demands of adhesion to the Russian federation, a constant demand of the two territories since the Soviet dissolution. Besides, it has never recognized the *de facto* states.

On the contrary, Armenia holds voluntarily one Russian military base. Armenia has always had since the Soviet break up good relations with Moscow. Russia has backed up Yerevan in its fight against Baku over Nagorno-Karabakh to, affirm some authors, keep Azerbaijan weak and dependent, in order to keep possibilities of influence over the oil and gas reserves of the Caspian sea.[233]

However these classical confrontations are all relative and the alliances seem to change with the time. For example, there seem to have been rapprochements between Moscow and Baku, and Between Moscow and Tbilisi in a pragmatic Russian policy, away from the traditional confrontations.

The role of the western world has had a very anecdotic impact on the frozen conflicts so far. However, regional and universal multilateral organizations have been very intensively involved in finding a resolutions, even of without any significant success so far. On the other hand, the prospects of rich oil resources, which later proofed exaggerated, made the US to show a more active role in the area. Also, after the attacks of September 11th and all the panoplies about the axes of evil being somehow established in Georgian's Pankisi gorge, made the US make very clear movements towards the area and particularly with Tbilisi. Finally, and most important probably, the west, specially the US, but also more and more the EU and NATO are aware of the geo political interest of the are in terms of its potential of contagion and the dangers of a war involving NATO countries, like Turkey, countries with nuclear weapons, like Russia, and so on. This has made NATO particularly to start in the late years a clear rapprochement to the countries in the South Caucasus. The EU, on its turn, has revised its definitions of the its zone of influence very recently, including now the South Caucasus also in this zone.

---

[233] Pavel, op. cit., pp.45-47.

The growing western interest in the area can be a beneficial for the countries in that the western world is interested in promoting independent and strong states in the South Caucasus. However, their insistence on non touchable borders has been so far an element fostering the abnormalities, like *de facto* functioning states, or the case of a "micro-state" in Nagorno-Karabakh. However, that attitude is not only western but is held by all the international community, specially Russia, which is playing very ambiguously, supporting the secessionist to weaken the states and gain influence in the area but never officially recognizing their status or accepting their demands to be integrated in the Russian Federation.

Some authors affirm in any case that all these external actors care more about themselves than about the South Caucasus itself. [234] Also, they point out that the "great powers" fight against each other to control the area and that this hinders the necessary measures to be taken to find a solution to the frozen conflicts.[235]

The international involvement in the Caucasus has had several consequences: first, the policies of external actors in the region tend to be magnified and misinterpreted, in positive or negative terms. Like in the case of the US military support to Georgia through the GTEP[236], which is seen by Georgia as a clear support of their cause against the separatist countries, and contributing then to alter the balance of power and allow to regain their territory. However, this should be exaggerated to Lynch, according to whom, this is not meant to change the forces of the parties, or in any case is not enough for that. However, Cornell suggests the contrary.[237] Other consequence of massive external involvement in the area are: inconsistency of the policies of external actors, either with themselves or with those of the rest; the impact of the external intervention is minimum as far as solutions are concerned; the region not coping with its problems directly and constantly relaying on external help; the South Caucasian states make the external actors fight between each other to obtain advantages and be able to negotiate their problems in different tables; lack of seeking of common solutions among the three states and the three statelets together beyond selfish geopolitical interests; finally,

---

[234] Waal, op. cit., p.51.
[235] Nuriyev, op. cit., p. 16. See also Hughes, op. cit., p.237 and how international competition is an obstacle to conflict resolution.
[236] See also Waal, op. cit., p.56.
[237] Cornell (2004), op. cit., p. 9.

despite the attention it has received the region remains strategically ambiguous (as compared to Central Europe and Eastern Europe in the early 90s).[238]

3.2 The ambiguous and pervading role of Russia

The Russian role over the former Soviet Transcaucasia and presently Russian re-baptised "near abroad" will be since the beginning very active and justified on several grounds: security, economic and broadly geo strategic.[239] The proximity of the Caucasus to the Russian border is at first glance a major element to understand Russia's policies towards its "near abroad". However, Russia's ambitions, interests and needs in the South Caucasus clashed at the beginning of impendence with an immediate reaction of the new states to head towards the west, especially in Georgia, also clearly in Azerbaijan and to a less extent in Armenia.

Finished the Cold War, the western states viewed a chance to gain influence over resources in the area, be political, strategic or economic. However, it has been an implicit, very obvious until very recently, that the Caucasus was still a "zone of influence" for Russia. This logic has started to change somehow with Russian own shifts in its policy priorities, motivated by several reasons: for example, the war in Chechnya and its lack of resources.

Russia has played an intrusive role in the region, helping the separatist countries and given military, economic and logistic support. Finally, South Ossetia and Abkhazia have formally, even if unsuccessfully, demanded to be integrated in the Russia. Russia has also supported Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh in their war, be separatist, be irredentist against Azerbaijan. By supporting pro-Russian separatist movements in the Caucasus, Russia has assured both its influence in the region and has impeded the penetration of western influence.

But, in what way has Russia contributed to the conflicts, their break up and their present freezing? As I explained in my first chapter, the three republics are a product of a previous Soviet border design. When examining the role of the Soviet Union -Moscow-

---

[238] See Cornell (2004), op. cit., p. 12. See also Heinrich, op. cit., p.109.
[239] See Trenin, D., (1996) "Russia's Security Interests and Policies in the Caucasus Region" and Danilov, D., (1996) "Russia's Search for an International Mandate in Transcaucasia", both in Coppieters (ed.) *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, VUB University Press.

dealing with the South Caucasus -and by extension with all the Soviet Union territories- I used, as several other authors have also done, the term of *divide et impera* or divide and rule. It can be argued that after the Soviet empire dissolution, the Russian Federation has basically played the same strategy to continue keeping the area under its control. However, if Moscow, under the red flag, basically supported Tbilisi and Baku in their fights against the constant demands of their autonomous territories, especially Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh, with the break up of the empire, Moscow will shift to support the secessionist territories for the same purpose it had before contained them: to control the three former Union republics.

The way Moscow has oriented its foreign policy towards its former Soviet republics depends on every case and on every time. The policies of Moscow towards the neighbouring countries have reasonably been more intrusive, like with Georgia, than with more far away ex-Republics. On the other hand, Moscow had pre established good relationships with some Republics, like with Armenia, which had continued after the break up of the Soviet Union, and particularly bad relationships with Georgia. The pattern just after the break up will follow this logic, even if it will obviously evolved with time. As Lynch explains, there will be a shift in Russia's policies towards the South Caucasus from strong proactive and coercive military measures -sometimes in support of states, others the secessionist territories- in early 90s, to increasingly diplomatic and geo-economic strategies.[240] According to Baev Russia has behaved "simultaneously as an old colonial power in retreat and a young expansionist state, as a guardian of the status quo and as a dynamic predator".[241] This may explain the ambiguities.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Moscow will actually "invent" two institutions, one political and one security oriented to maintain its influence over the former territories in a less "expensive" way: the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States)[242] and the CSTO (Collective Security treaty/Organization).[243] However, neither

[240] Lynch (2003), op. cit., p.15-21.

[241] Baev, P., (2003), "Russia's Policies in the North Caucasus" in Lynch, D. (ed.) *The South Caucasus: A Challenge for the EU*, Chaillot Papers no.65, Institute for Security Studies, Paris, p.41.

[242] Or "Community" or "Confederation", was established by a treaty signed at Minsk, Belarus, on December 8, 1991, by the heads of state of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. Between December 8 and December 21, the three original signatories were joined by Armenia, Azerbaijan (its parliament, however, rejected ratifying its membership until 1993), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan,

Georgia nor Azerbaijan automatically decided to be parties to them. Later, given the complicated nature of the inter ethnic territorial conflicts and the involvement of Russia in both states, they decided to enter the CIS. Still, Russia has used these supposedly multilateral organizations to continue its unilateral on bilateral based policies towards the Caucasus, be political be military. For example, the CIS peace contingent in Abkhazia is almost 100% made of Russian soldiers.

However, the three new states, Armenia, Azerbaijan Georgia, will immediately after their independence, shift towards the west, searching to approach the western security, political and economic institutions. The case of Georgia in probably the most obvious and paradigmatic in this case. For Georgia and for Azerbaijan, and to a lesser extent to Armenia, the shift to Europe will respond to both strong motivations: first, and more obviously in the case of Georgia, their European identity and culture, and second and most important, their conviction that their survival and progress as states would be more assured with western support and within western institutions, protecting them from what they saw an intrusive role of a powerful neighbour impeding their state and nation building projects.

Therefore, the political, economic and security interest of Russia in the South Caucasus found after leaders and populations against in both Georgia and Azerbaijan. However, state weakness, the shy weak western support and their dependence on Russia for military, economic or energy support will force them to shift towards a more realistic policy with their powerful neighbour and to re-establish links with their two century hegemonic capital, Moscow.

The territorial conflicts will be the core of the weakness through which Russia will implement its political and economic interests in the area. The conflicts will force

---

Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. When Georgia joined in 1993 all of the former republics of the USSR except the Baltic states had become members of the CIS. Its headquarters are in Minsk. The organization was conceived as the successor to the USSR in its role of coordinating the foreign and economic policies of its member nations. The treaty recognized current borders and each republic's independence, sovereignty, and equality, and established a free-market ruble zone embracing the republics' interdependent economies and a joint defence force for participating republics, the CSTO. Source: The Columbia Encyclopaedia, Sixth Edition, 2001 http://www.bartleby.com/65/co/CommonweIS.html.

[243] Of the South Caucasian States only Armenia belongs. Signed in 1992 at Russian initiative, was abandoned by Georgia and Uzbekistan in 1998. Present members then: Belarus, Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Georgia and Azerbaijan into the CIS. The conflicts will force anti Russian Tbilisi to sign a military treaty with Moscow. The conflicts will justify Russian military basis permanence in Georgian territory. But mainly the conflicts will basically allow Russia to weaken the pro-Western former Republics, with such strategic territories as Abkhazia in the Black sea and Azerbaijan resource rich Caspian Sea, by helping the separatist territories and later by acting at the same time as a arbiter under the umbrella of the CIS.

Still, the way Russia has undergone its policies of intrusion and weakening of the South Caucasus can arguably be called ambiguous, in spite of the clearness of the objective of weakening and hindering the process of state building and hence of "promoting" the state failures, by encouraging the conflicts and their freezing. Actually, it is not very erroneous to call Russia a "promoter" in the present state of the conflicts in so far as finally the freezing is a direct consequence of their intervention before their particular Russian-sponsored solution of continuity through a cease fire agreement. Socor calls this Russian policy "controlled instability".[244] According to Socor this intervention has gone to the point of fomenting and at the same time managing the conflicts, so that Russia has played "the dual role of party to and arbiter to the conflicts".[245] For Socor, the objectives of Moscow have changed from impeding the countries independence to stop them from approaching -and eventually integrating- Western institutions, European and Euro-Atlantic.[246] In the same line, Gürer affirms that "Russia took advantage of the erupting territorial conflicts to strengthen its position in the region, and therefore had hardly any interest in finding a solution to these conflicts".[247]

In what way Russia has justified its pro-secessionist policies? Basically two justifications: terrorism and the Chechen problem and its own border potential ethnic war containments. The border insecurity problem due to Georgia's lack of control over

---

[244] Socor, V., (2004) "Frozen Conflicts in the Black Sea-South Caucasus Region", Institute for Advanced Strategic and Security Studies, IASPS Policy Briefings: Geostrategic perspectives on Eurasia, no.52, part one. According to the author, Russia "frustrates their resolution (unless it be on terms ensuring Russia's dominance over the whole of the affected country); perpetuates its military presence; capitalizes on the geopolitical and socioeconomic consequences of mass ethnic cleansing (of Azeri from Karabakh and of Georgians from Abkhazia); fosters state weakness and chaotic conditions in the target countries; distracts these from the agenda of systemic reforms; and discourages Western interest in developing organic ties with Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

[245] Ibid., part one. See also Cornell (2004), op. cit., p.25.

[246] Ibid., part one. See also Cornell (2004), op. cit., p.16. See also Nuriyev (pp. 2, 6, 9-10, 15-16).

[247] Gürer, H., (2001) "Conflicts in the South Caucasus, an Overview" in 31st Vienna Seminar (2001), "Promoting Institutional Responses to the Challenges in the Caucasus. The OSCE, UN, EU and the CIS. Analysis-Case Studies-Outlooks", Diplomatic Academy Vienna, 5-7 July, p.95.

its territory has been one of Russia's reasons of concern, and has used this legitimate concern to interfere with Georgia's territorial disputes. Concerns of Russia about terrorists from Chechnya finding shelter in the Pankisi gorge, for example, or more in general the international crime networks operating from the Pankisi gorge have also been used as official justification to intervene.[248]

A key component in Russia's justification to intervene in the Conflicts has been the problems of spill over its territory, the North Caucasus, when some north Caucasian people intervened militarily helping South Ossetians and Abkhazians, and when Russia compelled somehow to take part and assure that the war would not affect it. However, this does not explain why the help was to the secessionist territories and not to the central governments. At some point Russia event went to threaten Tbilisi of attacking it, if it could not put an end to the anarchy and the war.[249] The Problem with the North Caucasian People in the conflict over South Ossetia especially made Russia concerned about its own secessionist potentials in the North Caucasus.

In spite of Russian's legitimate and contradictory policies vis-à-vis the South Caucasian territorial and ethnic wars, it can arguable be said to have been pro secessionist, in that it very much provided with military and logistic support to all secessionist territories in Georgia and to Armenia against Azerbaijan. On the other hand, and even if a lack of war is something to be content about, a type of war ending consisting on a cease fire has been more a defeat for Tbilisi and Baku than anything else, which in the long term may have rendered the conflicts particularly intractable. The outcomes of the war then, through a cease fire agreement are a direct product of Russian ambiguous behaviour, empowering the break away territories and then freezing the situation in a way Georgia and Azerbaijan were dependent on Moscow.

On the other hand and as a complement of the above, it can be argued that the decisions to take a hard line position by such minority populations as the Abkhaz and the South Ossetians can only be understood if their elites were counting on Russian support, aware of how Moscow-Tbilisi relations were deteriorated. Elites in the secessionist countries, well linked with the Russian military were counting on their powerful

---

[248] See Baev, op. cit., pp.41-45.
[249] Cornell (2004), op. cit., p. 13.

neighbour, and responded to Tbilisi's aggressive policies with extremist demands "legally" founded on the still Soviet system, and later legally founded on its dismantlement, but specially on Russian military support, taking into account their inexistent military power. Nagorno-Karabakh, the same, was counting on Armenia's support and on Armenia's Russian military support. In this case, also, the relations between Russia and Azerbaijan were quite tense, so both Yerevan and Stepanakert were persuaded that Russia would have interest in supporting their irredentist cause. Therefore, hard political positions against Azerbaijan were a function of determinant external allies.

At present, even if some authors affirm that positions between Tbilisi and Moscow are hardening[250], a constructive dialogue and a environment of negotiations seem to be taking the lead[251]. Recent information in the press affirms that Moscow has had a constructive and cooperative role with Georgia to settle the crisis that burst in the south region of Ajaria in spring 2004.[252] It seems then that the new policies of newly elected Georgian president Saakashvili, after the so called 2003 rose revolution, seem to seek even more rapprochement with Russia than that of Shevardnadze to find a peaceful solution for the conflicts. However, it is still to be seen if Moscow will have the same attitude in South Ossetia and specially in Abkhazia where there are more interests at stake.[253]

Actually, the newly peacefully resolved conflict in Ajaria, after its president's Abashidze resignation, proofs as much the possibilities of Tbilisi-Moscow's cooperation potentials and new president Saakashvili's leadership abilities as the dangers of instability in Georgia and the potential of violence, as it has been evident in the Ajaria case and the latest controversial local elections[254], which is finally in theory a less troubling situation as those of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Other potential zones of

---

[250] Cornell (2004), op. cit., p.2.
[251] See Euroasianet.org (06/02/04) "Players hope Georgia's anticorruption drive will help clean up national sport" http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav020604a.shtml and (18/05/04) "Georgia: Pankisi's Chechens worry about implications of Tbilisi-Moscow rapprochements" http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav051804a.shtml.
[252] See Euroasinet.org (19/05/04) "Did Russia and Georgia make a deal over Ajaria?" http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav051904.shtml.
[253] See Euroasianet.org (06/04/2002) " Saakashvili's political punch prompts Kremlin to rethink policies" http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav040604.shtml.
[254] See Euroasianet.org "Doubts shadow Saakashvili's Ajaria Election victory" (22/06/04) http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav062104.shtml.

conflict in Georgia are for example the Armenian populated region of Javakheti[255]. Or the recent problems that have raised after Georgia has been accused of mistreating its Azeri minority population, the second biggest in the country.[256]

3.3 Ethnic alliances and self interests: Turkey and Iran

The break down of the Soviet empire permitted Turkey and Iran to become again, as the had been historically, important actors in the South Caucasus.[257] According to some authors, the "opening" of the region allowed a competition to influence the area based on a false premise: that the Russian role would completely disappear and that the South Caucasian states would be not able to build up own internal and external policy relations based on their particular interest away from the two former empires representatives, Persian and Ottoman.

Turkey rediscovered after the Soviet dissolution that around 120 Turkic peoples were all spread in the new independent states of the Caucasus and Central Asia.[258] Iran, as with similar pan-Turkic ambitions, also tried to be a key cultural reference promoting a vision of a "millennium-old Persian cultural sphere" still strong and alive even after two centuries of Russian domination.

The reality proofed the contrary. Armenia already very closely linked to Moscow, in 1993 Azerbaijani president Aliyev, after the coup against anti Russian Elchivey, brought Azerbaijan back into the CIS. Also, Shevardnadze, after Gamsakhurdia almost took the country to a suicide, went back to the CIS and signed military agreements with Russia that put Tbilisi completely dependent on Moscow. Finally, all peace mediations of Turkey and Iran failed, while Russia was able to mediate in all the conflicts, at least to attain a cease fire. The strong international presence in mediating the conflicts will force to modesty the initially ambitious intentions of Iran and Turkey.[259]

---

[255] See Herzig, op. cit., p.46.

[256] See Euroasianet.org "Georgia Treatment of Azeri minorities rises concern" (23/06/04) http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav062304a.shtml.

[257] For an assessment of historic origin of the Iranian foreign policy see Nahavandi (1996) "Russia, Iran and Azrbaijan. The Historic Origins of Iranian Foreign Policy" in Coppieters (ed.) *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, VUB University Press.

[258] See De Pauw (1996) p. 1 There are Turkic speaking people, apart of Azerbaijan, in former Soviet Union territories of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

[259] Herzig, op. cit., pp.112-113.

Still, since the Soviet demise, Ankara and Tehran have been cautious in their relations with Moscow, proof of which is the fact that they did not recognize the self proclaimed independent states of the South Caucasus until Russia did it itself.

If the role of Russia as a former super power or core of the hegemonic Soviet Union has been clearly protagonist and also ambiguous given the complexity of Russian interests and the difficulty to find a balance between them, Turkey an Iran have been more limited and more clear in their involvement. Still, their presence has contributed to their present situation in a decisive way. If the impact of Russia on the conflicts can be established as a direct main causation component, in the case of Turkey and Iran they have indirectly contributed to the present state of the conflicts, adding to their "irresolvability", complicating the situations, reinforcing the complexities and adding a strong potential of contagion.

If strategies of Turkey have been basically sponsored by Washington and NATO in its attempt o continue its policy of slow penetration into the area, gaining ground over Russia, and isolating unfriendly Iran and its revolutionary Islamic model of cultural and social development, Iran has seek to strengthen ties with Moscow to produce exactly the contrary, trying to overcome the US blockade by weakening its penetration in the South Caucasus. Iran has worked on the improvement of its relations with Russia -there exists actually a strategic partnership between the two- to avoid Turkish and US penetration and the Countries' western aspirations. Caspian Sea controversies. Possible attack of Iran over Azerbaijan (problem over Caspian Sea status)[260]

Turkey has been also mixed even, if very contained due to its responsibilities as a NATO country, in the fights over Nagorno-Karabakh. Some fighting has been reported to have happened, even if anecdotic, against Armenians at some point of the war. Turkey keeps a blockade on Armenia, having the country almost completed lad locked and isolated if it was not for the piece of border with friendly Iran. But a main component of Turkey as a neighbouring country between two South Caucasian states in war, Armenia and Azerbaijan, and being ethnically united with Azerbaijan and having a

---

[260] Cornell (2004), op. cit., p.13.

past of war against Armenia and Armenian population in its northern borders, becomes a potential source of complications. The situation has surprisingly take a new turn when Turkey prime minister, Erdogan, in late January this year, has stated that his party may decide to re-open the border with Armenia "if friendly initiatives of Turkey may reciprocated".[261]

However, given the Armenian occupation of Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, this decision, motivated by Turkish pressure to comply with the conditions for its entrance in the EU, and the willingness to permit the poor populations of the northern part of the country to trade with Armenia, may actually complicate the peace settlement process. The Azerbaijani president, Aliyev, warned with withdrawing from the peace talks, to which the Turkish ambassador in Baku responded that Turkey maintains the 10 year old three conditions for any opening of the borders with Armenia: withdrawal from Azerbaijani territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, the end of Armenian territorial claims on Turkey's Eastern Anatolia region and an end to Armenia's campaign to secure international recognition of the 1915 killing of 1.5 million Armenians by Turkey's Ottoman Empire as a genocide. The conclusion is that Turkey has made clear that his alliance with Azerbaijan untouched and solid.[262] Actually, according to Herzig, the "the success of the Azeri lobby in mobilizing public support has been instrumental in holding Ankara back from establishing normal relations with Armenia until the Karabakh dispute is resolved".[263]

The geo economic concrete interest of Turkey in region are clear by taking a look at its ambitions of becoming an energy corridor between the Caspian Sea and Europe. There is an on going project, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, under construction and connecting Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Mediterranean coast of Turkey. Another planned project is the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline.

Iran is said to be especially concerned about the emergence of Azerbaijan as a strong state, hence supporting Armenia in conflict. The same, by the way, could be said of

[261] In Euroasianet.org (08/04/04) "Azerbaijan: Turkey could proof spoiler for Nagorno-Karabakh peace". http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav040804.shtml.
[262] See Euroasianet.org (23/04/2004) "Azerbaijan and Turkey coordinate Nagorno-Karabakh negotiating position" http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav042304.shtml and also see (08/04/04) http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav040804.shtml.
[263] Herzig, op. cit., p. 110.

Turkish fears of a strong Armenian republic. So, in that sense, a kind of complex ambiguity can also be found in states as Turkey and Iran, which while fearing strong South Caucasian states, have also a great interest in seeing them consolidate and stop any dangers of spill over in their borders, and end the animosities that hinder turkey and Iran economic interests in the area.[264]

As with Turkey, but to a lesser extent, being the north west Iranian border mostly secure -contrary to Kurdish separatism in the north eastern Turkish border- Iran has suffered some minor border violations and fighting spill over.[265] But it has been specially the refugees flows from Nagorno-Karabakh spelled out Azeri population after the ethnic cleansings and the war itself that have been a especial concern for Tehran.

In sum, if the role of Russia in the conflicts outcome seems indisputable, it both supplied with intangible -political sympathies and support, even if ambiguous or short-termed- and decisive tangible support -military- allowed military victories for the secessionist territories, Iran and Turkey have been minor participants, important in the case of Turkey in supporting Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. Iran, in any case, adds to the spill over potentials of the conflicts.

3.4 Western role

I will not discus here the role of international organizations involvement in the South Caucasus, but they have been very actively present since the beginning of the Conflicts. The OSCE and the UN have been deeply committed even if no results have been achieved. The OSCE in Nagorno-Karabakh and South Ossetia, and the UN in Abkhazia. Besides, the three countries belonging to the OSCE and the Council of Europe, has led these organizations to try to find during different occasions a solution to the conflicts; the Minsk Group (France, Russia and US) in Nagorno-Karabakh; the Group of Friends of the UN Secretary General (European States) over Abkhazia. Besides, some unilateral western involvement has been particularly intense, like Germany, or the United

---

[264] Ibid., pp.108-110. Actually, the development of transport infrastructure, apart from relying on deficient Soviet era ones , are worsened by the conflicts in that the best roads and railroads connecting Turkey with Russia, for example are closed because they go through Armenia. And the same for Iran whose best roads and railroad go through Nakhichevan.
[265] Herzig, op. cit., p.109.

kingdom special envoy (Georgia in 2002, whole region in 2003). In any case, the discussions over Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia all remain frozen within the UN, OSCE, and other bodies."[266]

Therefore, by western influence I mean the role of NATO, the EU and individual so called western countries, like European states and -mainly the US. International organisations, specially those of a regional scope, like the Council of Europe or the OSCE, but also of universal scope, like the UN, have been very much involved in the conflicts. However, their impact on the conflicts break out, development or outcome is close to zero. Their presence in the mediation being important, their efforts to seek a peace settlement clear, or their efforts to make indirect conditions of the conflicts better being indisputable, their capacity to directly affect their nature has been none. NATO, the EU but especially the US rapprochement to the region may have been but could be relevant to alter the balance of powers and the alliances that may explain their nature. Still, so far, and with the exception of the US in Georgia, the real role of the west in the conflicts' present state can only be understood in negative terms, i.e. the conflicts are the way they are because the "west" was not there or did not want to be there; the frozen conflicts are what they are because of a "lack of west" in them.

If Russia, Turkey and Iran, especially Russia, had a rapid role in the conflicts, the western intervention took much longer to appear. The impact of the west in the area can be seen as indirect though, in that Russia's pervading and invading policies were a measure of foreseeable penetration of the western world. The western role in the South Caucasus has been shy and very limited in the early days of the Soviet dissolution. It seemed that somehow the west assumed that the Caucasus was logically a Russian zone of influence, and they have allow Russia to do and undo at their own sake. However, this situation has been progressively changing for several reasons. First, the own Russian shift in their foreign policy towards the Caucasus from an early aggressive and interventionist policy, to a more pragmatic one. The reasons are Putin's own vision of the interests in the Caucasus, the logic priorities of the Russian policies given the its military and economic limitations and specially the war in Chechnya.

---

[266] Cornell (2004) p. 1 and p. 4 "unsteady cease-fire lines".

The west saw the Caucasus as a natural zone of influence of Russia, and as such, they did not think the conflicts had a lot to do with them. According to Socor "Even as Euro-Atlantic interests grew vital in this region (strategic-military access eastward, energy transit westward, security on NATO's and EU new southeastern border), the main Euro-Atlantic actors apparently chose to postpone conflict-settlement efforts, rather than risk a falling-out with Russia at this time."[267] Nuriyev reminds that Georgia and Azerbaijan tried to approach the Western world after independence but they did not obtain any help.[268]

The Euro-Atlantic (NATO) interests and strategic position in the region can be basically explained by three elements: first and obviously, the recession of Russia in1990 and hence the opened chance for western oriented politics; secondly, the mid-90s discovery of Caspian oil and gas potential, as a "key to Europe's energy balance" in the future; thirdly, the "operational requirements" for antiterrorism after September 11th. Other interests are the important role as a transit corridor of the South Caucasus, the direct access to the Greater Middle East and the Caspian Basin -loosening dependence on Russia energy resources and passage-, and the region uniting the Black Sea with the Caspian Sea.[269] The three South Caucasian states are since 1994 members of the NATO Partnership for Peace.[270] NATO, following the 21 November 2002 Prague summit and the latest June 2004 Istanbul summit gave itself a more global role widening the scope and depth of NATO members and partners.[271] According to Cornell, after the Istanbul Summit the South Caucasus can be seen as an "integral part of the NATO security architecture".

The role of the EU in the South Caucasus is according to Cornell one of "isolation" and "absenteeism".[272] In 2003 the EU took the decision to leave the South Caucasus out of the Wider Europe/New Neighbours initiatives. This decision has very recently been

---

[267] Socor (2003), op. cit., part one.

[268] Nuriyev, op. cit., p.20.

[269] Cornell (2004), op. cit., p.20.

[270] It is bilateral military agreement between NATO and individual states. The Partnership for Peace is chiefly aimed at defence cooperation and is the operational side of the Partnership framework, designed to reinforce stability and reduce the risk of conflict. Since its creation in 1994 it has been joined by 30 countries. See: http://www.nato.int/issues/pfp/index.html. See Cornell (2004) pp.66-76 for detailed explanations of the role of the Partnership in the South Caucasus.

[271] See Prague Summit Declaration http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p02-127e.htm and Istanbul Summit Declarations http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2004/p04-097e.htm.

[272] Cornell (2004), op. cit., p.22.

revoked and now the Caucasus is actually included in the neighbouring countries definition and policies,[273] the so-called "European Neighbourhood Policy".[274] It seems like this important shift in the EU policies towards the South Caucasus have been motivated by the Georgian Rose revolution, and it is having a certain positive contagion over the other two states, hindered by the Karabakh conflict.[275] The EU initiative and support of Saakashivili reform projects in Georgia can be important to reinforce Georgian position in the conflicts, force the country to adopt peaceful manners and hence find an eventual defreezing for the conflicts in South Ossetia but especially in Abkhazia. However, these are speculations, and no clear impact is still to be discerned in this sense. The EU created in 2002 the figure of the special representative for the South Caucasus which has been criticized as "shy" position for uselessness, dedicated to "a mere observation" of regional security issues and frozen conflicts.[276] The European Union has intensified its aid to as EU Special representative to the South Caucasus has said "help relieve tensions between Georgia and its break away territories".[277] In any case the EU can be said to have been so far absent from the "regional security picture" in the South Caucasus. [278]

The US involvement in military terms is the only relevant of all western interventions so far on a possible impact on the conflicts.[279] It is the only country that can be said to have had a real impact, even if minor in the conflicts' status quo. Their interests in the area after the September 11th attacks[280] and their fear that terrorists were looking for shelter in the out of Tbilisi control Pankisi gorge, forced them to establish close contact with Georgia. The US began the Train and Equip program (GTEP) in 2002 "to enhance

---

[273] The decision to include the South Caucasus in the EU "Neighbouring Initiative" was formally confirmed June 14 by EU foreign ministers before the summit in Brussels of June 17-18 2004. One consequence of this decision is the $1 billion dollar that Georgia will received for reforms. The project seems far-reaching in that "The New Neighbourhood Initiative should help Georgia become more EU-compatible". See Euroasia.org (17/06/04) "EU extends cooperation with Georgia but expresses caution on accession issue" http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav061704.shtml.

[274] Members are: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine. See http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/partners_en.htm.

[275] See Euroasianet.org (15/06/04) "Caucasus: EU increasingly targeting Georgia over conflict-stricken Armenia, Azerbaijan" http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav061504.shtml.

[276] At present Finish diplomat Neikki Talvitie. See http://ue.eu.int/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=453&lang=EN&mode=g.

[277] See Euroasinet.org (15/06/04).

[278] Conell (2004), op. cit., p.20-24.

[279] See US Department of State about US Foreign policy in Central Asia and the Caucasus http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2003/19606.htm.

[280] See Heinrich, op. cit., p.112.

Georgia's abilities to control its territory and to fight terrorism".[281] When I affirm that the US is the sole actor that might have but that could certainly have an impact on the frozen conflicts is that they have invested on military measures that might strengthen the position of Tbilisi. However, military solutions to the conflicts seem improbable. Still, a stronger position of Tbilisi in the negotiation table might give it odds for a favourable deal.[282]

3.5 Conclusions

I have shown in this chapter how relevant external actors have in shaping the present form of the South Caucasian territorial disputes and hence contributing decisively to the frozen conflicts. The most and overwhelmly relevant external actors has been and is the Russian Federation. Then, to a much lesser extant Turkey and Iran. Finally, I have given an overview if the changing influence and impact of the western countries, from its virtual inexistent to some growing commitment to the are. However, the sole western actor that has had a real or potential impact on the frozen conflicts is the US.

After the Cold War, the South Caucasian states regained their past role as transit corridors, both for energy resources but also as a strategic proxy region between Europe and Asia. Actually, the above mentioned external actors, in a mixture of ethnic sympathies and geo strategic and geo economic interests have established alliances with the three South Caucasian states and the three statelets. Of course, these alliances have had an important impact on the conflicts, and today, the frozen conflicts, their causes and their situation since the freezing in not understandable without them.

The fall of the Berlin wall did not also reawakened ancient hatreds and "unfinished business" among the South Caucasian people, but also among Russia, Turkey and Iran, or among the South Caucasian states and the former. This has added to the complexity of the situation, adding a dangerous dimension of spill over of the wars, which has

---

[281] This assistance helped create, train and equip four combat infantry battalions and one mechanized company to defend Georgia against potential terrorist threats in the Pankisi Gorge. GTEP graduated its first class of trained infantry in December 2002 and the Red Bridge border guard station opened in March 2003. See http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2003/19606.htm.

[282] See Euroasinet.org (16/06/04) "Georgian civil society seeks role in US financed military reform" http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav061604.shtml.

constituted one of the main causes of concern for the western countries lately, and the motivation behind a more proactive attitude in the region, counteracting the power of Russia, over its naturally understood "zone of influence".

Russia has been and is indeed the main key actor in the area and a clear cause, without palliatives, of the present state of the South Caucasian territorial disputes. Russia has played an ambiguous role in the South Caucasian conflicts, but it is responsible of their actual shape in that the military defeat of Georgia against South Ossetia and Abkhazia, being a product of its own military, political and strategic incapacities, is also very much a product of military support given to the statelets. On the other hand, Russia has been able not only to "encourage" the conflicts in their radical form, but also to sponsored a peaceful end of the war, but not of the conflicts, which has actually sanctioned *de facto* states and has occurred after military defeat of Georgia and Azerbaijan. Russia has justified its intervention in the South Caucasian conflicts by two main arguments: first, the danger of spill over into its territory in the North Caucasus, but also related to fears about terrorists finding shelter in uncontrolled territories of Georgia. However, the real rationale under the intervention is a mixture of changing foreign policies that seek to extent its influence on the South Caucasus, for geo strategic and also geo economic interests and to stop any penetration of Western powers. The way to do that has been, it seems, in a quite ambiguous policy, to support secessionisms in the Georgia and Azerbaijan, which would weaken them and make them more dependent on Moscow.

Finally, Turkey and Iran, have added to the insolvability of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, where Turkey and Armenia animosities mainly, and Iran and Azerbaijan, have added to the complexity of ethnic alliances and past and present animosities.

Conclusions

The frozen conflicts must be understood in a precise context of decolonisation, the dissolution of the Soviet empire, and the opened process of democratization. Besides, the conflicts have a clear coherent past. The present shape and content of the conflicts, the territorial disputes and the demands of both states and statelets mirror past confrontations and follow a pattern that can be traced back to the origin of the Soviet Union, the ethnic territorial design it instituted and the political cleavages and values it promoted. It is undeniable in the case of the South Caucasus the strong weight of the past in the present rationale and nature of the frozen conflicts. The Soviet break up, and the evaporation of both strong repressive measures and a common societal project and its potential of creating a common identity among peoples and nations can be said to have given free rein to "unfinished business" and "ancient hatreds". The potential of conflict was high already during the weakening of the Soviet Union and its dissolution opened the Box of Pandora in the South Caucasus. Besides, the fact that the new states inherited the borders of the Soviet Union and their independence was basically granted by Moscow and their statehood recognised by the "international community" in spite of constitutive and structural weaknesses and territorial disputes explains the birth of time bombs, which would not take much time to "explode".

On the other hand, a transition to democracy in weak states with strong centrifugal powers, an immature civil society and uncompromising political elites in multi ethnic and divided societies, where such a past of grievances existed and where antagonic visions of the polity and the demos coexisted, the so called "stateness" problem, was a perfect ground for potentials of conflict and of ethnic conflict.

However, in spite of the strong relevance of the past of the conflicts and the transition processes, frozen conflicts can only be satisfactorily comprehended as a function of elite strategies and ideologies within a process of state and nation building and taking into account the central role of external neighbouring states. It is inappropriate to establish a causation, as intuitive as disputable, between the past of the conflicts, or their potential of violence and of inter ethnic violence, and the frozen conflicts. The course the events took are a function of elite strategies in the new states and the statelets in a process and "counter process" of state and nation building. The ethnic wars were not inevitable and

the present state of the conflicts is not understandable without the active and biased external actors' intromissions seeking particular interests and altering the "natural" course of the state building process in the area.

State and nation building projects being the core problematic of frozen conflicts, and the respective elites' having orchestrated the projects in question, state failures were soon to appear provoked by the contradictions inherent to the projects in question. The main component of state failures consisted on antagonic and competing asymmetric projects of nation building. They were antagonic because they were built along ethnic lines, competing because they were fighting over the definition or redefinition of the borders of the state and the population that should belong or not, and asymmetric because states were challenged by nations with state ambitions within their territory. The intensity and depth of the schism between the ethnic groups, and the ultimate ethnic wars will arrive after biased interpretations of history, ethno nationalist rhetoric, uncompromising and intolerant attitudes and important strategic mistakes taken by the states' elites, specifically the decision to use force to recover the secessionist territories. The process of state and nation building in the aftermath of the Soviet dissolution was marked by ethno nationalist projects of society. In the case of the "titular states" this took the form of homogenizing and exclusionary policies; in the statelets, of exclusivist and ethnic cleansing policies. Both seek a model of society oriented to "ethnocracy", where political life is a function of ethnicity.

Finally, external actors will play a key role in the conflicts. The outcome of the wars through their freezing and the military victory of the break away territories will depend to a great extent on their presence and intromissions. It is arguable that he military defeats of Georgia and Azerbaijan were possible because South Ossetia and Abkhazia obtained military support from Russia, and Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia and Russia. On the other hand, the conflict have acquired a spill over potential that becomes progressively of growing concern for the western states and NATO.

To allow secessionism in inter-ethnic conflicts within states is to open the way to the politics of the ethnic. This could really become a problem in a world of almost two hundred states but probably hundreds of potential secessions based on ethno-nationalism. My position is that the state can be an appropriate space of cohabitation but

some conditions are required. What cannot in any case be an appropriate policy is an aggressive discriminatory policy of nation-building in multiethnic societies, where on the other hand the priority was actually state-building. It seems really a way of building a house from the bridge, but not only that. It is wrong just the mere concept of house; a house where no peaceful cohabitation can be easily imagined if concurrent "nationalities" coexist.

Bibliography

Aras, Bülent (2001), "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward Transcaucasus", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, no.5(11), pp.78-97.

Ascher, I., Patten, A., Monczewski, D. (eds.) (1999), *State Building and the Reconstruction of Shattered Societies*, Conference Report, April 20, University of California, Berkeley.
http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1018&context=iseees/bps

Ayoob, Mohammed (1999), "Explaining Political Decay and Political Regeneration: The critical role of Political Society and Political Culture", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 8-11, Purdue University.[283]

Ayres, R., William (2000a), "A World Flying Apart? Violent Nationalist Conflicts and the End of the Cold War", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 37, pp.105-117 (Previous electronic draft of the same name used). http://facstaff.uindy.edu/~bayres/papers/worldflying.zip

Ayres, R. William (2000b), "By the Pen or By the Gun: Peace and Outcomes in Violent Intrastate Nationalist Conflicts", paper presented at the 41st Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Los Angeles, CA, March 14-18. (Previous draft used under the name "By the Pen or By the Gun: Types of Endings and Conflict Recurrence in Violent Intrastate Nationalist Conflicts").
http://facstaff.uindy.edu/~bayres/papers/By%20the%20Pen%20or%20By%20the%20Gun.zip

Ayres, R. William (?), "Strategies, Capabilities, and Demands: Explaining Outcomes in Violent Intrastate Conflicts" (Previous electronic draft of the same name used).
http://facstaff.uindy.edu/~bayres/papers/strategiesoutcomesII.zip

Bain, William (2001), "Trusteeship: A Response to Failed States". Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 11-14, Purdue University.

---

[283] All Papers of the four Conferences (1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001) are to be found in here: Purdue University, International Programs, Failed States Conference, http://www.ippu.purdue.edu/failed_states/.

Bain, William (2000), "National Security, Human Security and the Practice of Statecraft in the international society", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University.

Brock, Lothar (1999), "State Failure and Global Change: From Violent Modernization to War as a Way of Life? Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 8-11, Purdue University.

Brock, Lothar (2001), "Nation-Building: Prelude or Belated Solution to Failing of States? Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 11-14, Purdue University.

Brock, Lothar (2000), "Enforcement and Intervention vis-à-vis failing states", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University.

Carment, David (2003), "Assessing State Failure: Implications for Theory and Policy", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 407-427.

Clapham, Christopher (2000), "Failed States and non-states in the international order", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University.

Cheterian, Vicken (2001), "Little Wars and a Great Game: Local Conflicts and International Competition in the Caucasus", Working Paper 32, Swiss Peace Foundation, Institute for Conflict Resolution.

Cohen, Ariel (2001), "Cause of Alarm: Russia's Policy in the Southern Caucasus-The Recent Trends", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, no.2(8), pp. 7-11.

Coppieters, Bruno (ed.) (1996), *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, VUB University Press. (Electronic version used: http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/contents.htm).

Coppieters, Bruno (2001), "Federalism and Conflict in the Caucasus", *Central Asian and Caucasian Prospects*, The Royal Institute of International Affaires, London.

Cornell, E. Svante (2002), "Autonomy as a Source of Conflict. Caucasian Conflicts in Theoretical Perspective", *World Politics* no.54, pp.245-276.

Cornell, E. Svante *et alt* (2004), *Regional Security in the South Caucasus: The Role of NATO*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. http://www.silkroadstudies.org/nato.pdf

Cornell, E. Svante (1997), "Conflicting Identities in the Caucasus", *Peace Review*, no.9 (4), pp.453-459.

De Nevers, Renée (1993), "Democratization and Ethnic Conflict" in Brown, E., Michael, *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, Princeton University Press.

Dashdamirov, Afrand (2001), "Ideological Contradictions of Ethnic Policies in the Caucasus", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, no.5(11), pp. 48-55.

Dorff, H., Robert (1999), "Responding to the failed State: What to Do and What to Expect". Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University.

Dorff, H., Robert (2000), "Addressing the Challenges of State failures", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University.

Eusoasianet.org, Georgia Archives
http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/georgia/articles/index.shtml

Eursoasianet.org, Armenia Archives
http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/armenia/articles/index.shtml

Euroasianet.org, Azerbaijan Archives
http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/azerbaijan/articles/index.shtml

Einsiedel, Sebastian, "State Failure and the Crisis of Governance. Making States Work".
http://www.undp.org/surf-kathmandu/cprp-asia/resources/research%20etc/ipa-state-failure.doc

Eivanov, Jannatkhan (2002), "The Antiterrorist Campaign and New Geopolitical and Security Trends in the Regional Systems of Central Asia and the Caucasus", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, no.4(16), pp.19-29.

Fairbanks, Charles H. (2001), "Disillusionment in the Caucasus and Central Asia", *Journal of Democracy*, Vo.12, no.4, pp. 49-56.
http://www.cacianalyst.org/Publications/Fairbanks_JoD.htm

George, A. Julie, (?) "Ethnic Conflict and the Failed State: Frozen Conflicts in the Republic of Georgia."
http://www.gov.utexas.edu/content/research_papers/midwest_903/george_midwest_03.pdf

Ghebali, Victor-Yves, (?) "The Role of the OSCE in Conflict Management: Some Reflections on the Case of the 'Frozen Conflicts'."
http://www.isn.ethz.ch/osce/about/navig_about/am01/chapter2_ghebali.pdf

Henderson, Errol, A. (1999), "Ethnic Conflict and Cooperation" in *Encyclopaedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict*, Academic Press, San Diego, vol.1, pp.751-764.

Holm, Hans-Henrik (1998), "The Responsibility That Will Not Go Away. Weak States in the International System". Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, February 25-27, Purdue University.

Holm, Hans-Henrik (2000), "Is there a Failed State Order?", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University.

Holm, Hans-Henrik (2001), " Writing the Rules for Disaggregated World Order", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 11-14, Purdue University.

Hughes, James, (ed.) (2002), *Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union*, Frank Cass Publishers, London.

Hughes, James, and Sasse, Gwendolyn (2001), "Comparing Regional and Ethnic Conflicts in post-Soviet Transition States: An Institutional Approach", ECPR Joint Sessions, Grenoble, 7-11.

Herzig, Edmund (1999), *The New Caucasus. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, The Royal Institute of International Affaires, London.

Human Rights Watch, Europe/Central Asia, Azerbaijan
http://www.hrw.org/doc?t=europe&c=azerba

Human Rights Watch, Europe/Central Asia, Armenia
http://www.hrw.org/doc?t=europe&c=armeni

Human Rights Watch, Europe/Central Asia, Georgia
http://www.hrw.org/doc?t=europe&c=georgi
International Crisis Group (IGC), Crisis Watch, 1st June 2004, no.10.
http://www.crisisweb.org//library/documents/crisiswatch/crisiswatch_2004/cw10.pdfweb.pdf

International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences (1972), Collier MacMillan Publishers, London, pp.143-167.

Jackson, H. Robert (1998), "Great Power Responsibility and the Failed States". Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, February 25-27, Purdue University.

Jackson, H. Robert (2000), "A few thoughts on the Pluralist Ethics of World Politics", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University.

Khoshtaria-Brosse, Edisher (2001), "The Caucasian Political Tangle: Past and Present", Central Asia and the Caucasus, no.5(11), pp. 65-71.

Krylov, Alexander (2001), "Georgians and Abkhazians: Ethnic Origins and ethnic Conflict", Central Asia and the Caucasus, no.2(8), pp.103-107.

Leach, C. Wayne, and Brown M. Lysa (1999), "Ethnicity and Identity Politics" in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict*, Academic Press, San Diego, vol.1, pp. 765-775.

Linz, Juan, and Stephan, A. (1996), "'Stateness', Nationalism, and Democratization" in *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

Lynch, Dov (ed.) (2003), *The South Caucasus: A Challenge for the EU*, Chaillot Papers, no.65, Institute of Security Studies, Paris.

Matveeva, Anna (2002), "South Caucasus: Nationalism, Conflicts and Minorities", Minority Rights Group International.
http://www.minorityrights.org/admin/Download/pdf/SouthCaucasusreport.pdf

Malek, Martin (2003), "Terms of Reference of Security in the South Caucasus", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, no.6(24), pp. 7-13.

Melikishvili, Lia (2002), "Georgia: Potential Seats of Ethnic Conflicts", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, no.2(14), pp. 48-51.

McFaul, Michael (2002), "The Fourth Wave of Democracy *and* Dictatorship. Noncooperative Transitions in the Post-communist World", *World Politics*, no. 54, pp.212-244.

Nicholson, Michael (1998), "Failing States Failing Systems", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, February 25-27, Purdue University.

Nicholson, Michael (1999), "Globalization, weak States and Failed states", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 8-11, Purdue University.

Nicholson, Michael (2000), "The Cosmopolitan World Order: Are states a declining institution?", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University.

Nuriyev, Elkhan (2000), The Post-Soviet Caucasus within New Geopolitical Framework: Towards Conflict or Peace? AFB-TEXTE, Information Unit Peace Research Bonn, no.3.

Minorities at Risk (MAR), Assessment for Armenians in Azerbaijan, pp-1-7
http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=37301

MAR, Chronology for Armenians in Azerbaijan, pp.1-27
http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/chronology.asp?groupId=37301

MAR, Assessment for Ossetians (South) in Georgia, pp.1-4
http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=37203

MAR Chronology for Ossetians (South) in Georgia, pp.1-8
http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/chronology.asp?groupId=37203

MAR, Assessment for Abkhazians in Georgia, pp.1-4
http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=37201

MAR Chronology for Abkhazians in Georgia, pp.1-26
http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/chronology.asp?groupId=37201

OSCE Mission in Georgia http://www.osce.org/georgia/

Potier, Tim (2001), *Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. A legal Appraisal*, Kluwer Law International, The Hague.

Preece, J. Jackson (2000), "Ethnic Cleansing and the Normative Transformation of International Security" Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University.

31st Vienna Seminar (2001),"Promoting Institutional Responses to the Challenges in the Caucasus. The OSCE, UN, EU and the CIS. Analysis-Case Studies-Outlooks", Diplomatic Academy Vienna, 5-7 July. http://www.ipacademy.org/PDF_Reports/IPA2.pdf

ReliefWeb
Http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/ByCountry/Georgia?OpenDocument&StartKey=Georgia
&Expandview

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty http://www.rferl.org/reports/caucasus-report/

Rotberg, Robert I. (?), "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators"
http://www.brook.edu/press/books/chapter_1/statefailureandstateweaknessinatimeofterror.pdf

Rotberg, Robert I. (2002), "Failed States in a World of Terror", *Foreign Affaires*, v81 i4 p127,
(electronic copy), pp.1-6.
http://duke.usask.ca/~wjb289/big/POLST112/rotberg_failed_states_in_a_world_of_terror_For
eign_Affairs.pdf

Sabanadze, Natalie (2002), International Involvement in the Caucasus, European Centre for
Minority Issues, Working Paper no.15.
http://www.ecmi.de/doc/download/working_paper_15.pdf

Sevdimaliev, Ramiz (2002), "Ethnic Conflicts and Human Rights in the Caucasus (Study-Case
of the Conflict in Nagorny Rarabakh)", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, no.1(13), pp.91-99.

SIPRI Yearbook (2002), *Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, Oxford
University Press.

Smith, Graham (1999), *The Post-Soviet States. Mapping. The Politics of Transition*, Oxford
University Press, New York.

Smith, Graham (1996), *The Nationalities question in the post-soviet states*, Longman, London.

Snyder, Jack (2000), "Transitions to democracy and the Rise of Nationalist Conflict" in *From
Voting to Violence: Democratization and Ethnic Conflict*, Norton and Company, New York.

Socor, Vladimir (2004), "Frozen Conflicts in the Black Sea-South Caucasus Region", Institute for Advanced Strategic and Security Studies, IASPS Policy Briefings: Geostrategic perspectives on Euroasia, no.52.
http://www.wena.sk/En/Documents/Socor-Frozen_Conflicts_in_the_Black_Sea.doc

Sorensen, Georg (1998), "Democratization in the Third World. The Role of Western Politics and Research", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, February 25-27, Purdue University.

Sorensen, Georg (2001), "War and state making-Why doesn't it work in the Third World?", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 11-14, Purdue University.

Sorensen, Georg (2000), "Sovereignty, Security and State Failure", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University.

Sorensen, Georg (1999), "Development in fragile/failed states", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 8-11, Purdue University.

Spanger, Hans-Joachim (2000), "Failed State or Failed Concept?", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University.

Spanger, Hans-Joachim (2001), "The Ambiguous Lessons of State Failure", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 11-14, Purdue University.

State Failure Task Force Report, Phase III Findings, September 30, 2000.
http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/stfail/SFTF%20Phase%20III%20Report%20Final.pdf

Stohl, M., Lopez, G. (1998), "Westphalia, the end of the Cold War and the New World Order: Old Roots to a "NEW" Problem", Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, February 25-27, Purdue University.

SIPRI Yearbook (2002), *Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, Oxford University Press.

State Failure Task Force Report (2000), Phase III Findings, September 30.
http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/stfail/SFTF%20Phase%20III%20Report%20Final.pdf

Stewart, Susan (2003), "The Role of the United Nations in the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict", *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Issue 2.

Ter-Gabrielian, "Strategies in Ethnic Conflict."
http://www.cwis.org/fwj/41/ethnic.html

Waal, Thomas (2002), "Reinventing the Caucasus", *World Policy Journal*, Volume XIX, no.1, pp.51-59.

Wallensteen, Peter (2000), "Beyond State Failure: On Internal and External Ways of Ending State Failure" Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 7-10, Purdue University.

Wallensteen, Peter (1999), "State Failure, Ethnocracy and Armed Conflict: Towards New Conceptions of Governance". Paper presented at the Conference on Failed States, April 8-11, Purdue University

Wimmer, Andreas (2002), *Nationalist exclusion and ethnic conflict, Shadows of modernity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Yenokian, Aghasi (2002), "Armenia: Contradictory Approaches to the Karabakh Settlement", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, no.1(13), pp. 100-105.