Who Rules Where Over Whom When the Fighting Stops? Explaining State and Secessionist Post-War Strategies for Controlling Territory and People

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Abstract

This study explains the causes of state and secessionist post-war strategies for controlling territory and people. The objective is to improve our understanding of how secessionist wars end and what happens next by providing new insights into two important cases and using these cases to build a more general framework, thereby contributing to a growing research agenda on war to peace transitions and post-war environments. The study uses a theory building research strategy with two case studies – the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict (covering the period 1994-2006) and the Serbia-Kosovo conflict (1999-2008) – to develop an empirically-grounded theoretical framework. The resulting framework does four things. First, it conceptualises strategies in terms of the constitutive features of territorial and demographic control (*territorial and demographic control strategies*, the outcome of interest). Second, it theorises states' and secessionists' post-war objectives in terms of a cleavage of reincorporation versus full separation which is broken down into objectives about de facto control and reflect the constraints of a post-war environment (*constrained objectives*, the main explanatory factor). Third, it identifies territorial and demographic features of post-war environments that actors use to translate objectives into strategies (*links and levers*). Fourth, it provides an argument about how the parts fit together. Objectives explain strategies, mediated by the constraints and opportunities of the environment: demographic and territorial control strategies are explained in terms of the actors' constrained objectives, and the links and levers which are used to translate objectives into strategies. The framework provides expectations about which control strategies are associated with particular constrained objectives (the observable implications of the framework), and through the theory building case studies and additional 'shadow cases', I provide evidence from seven post-war environments in the Caucasus and the Balkans in support of my argument, drawing on extensive empirical research from multiple sources, including fieldwork and archival research.

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Chapter 1: Controlling Populations and Territory After Secessionist Wars

1.1 Introduction

How do states and secessionists control populations and territory in the aftermath of a secessionist war? Just as a civil war is "a contest over the shaping of political order in a contested area, a means of determining who rules, how much, and in what ways",[1] a transition to a post-war environment is the continuation and the transformation of this contest, and a process of settling questions of de facto control: where will the territorial boundaries of control between the actors fall, and who will live within those boundaries? In other words, who rules where and over whom when the fighting stops? My research addresses how these questions are settled and investigates the causes of political actors' strategies for controlling populations and territory in the aftermath of secessionist wars.

Secessionist wars are characterised by violently contested divisions of control between conflict actors claiming an exclusive right to govern the same populated territory.[2] This 'multiple sovereignty' tears apart the existing political order as conflict actors mobilise to violently contest or preserve control of people and territory,[3] but their efforts to establish control according to how they believe people, territory and authority should be aligned do not end when the violence ends. Rather, in the aftermath of a war, the base state and the secessionists[4] (hereafter, the 'principal political actors', or just 'political actors') face a post-war challenge to settle sovereignty claims: the base state insists on the inviolability of its borders and territorial integrity and wants to reincorporate territory lost during the war; the secessionists, asserting a

[1] Staniland 2012, 246.
[2] Conflict actors are "governments, rebel groups, militaries, and organized political groups who are involved in interactions over issues of political authority". Raleigh et al. 2010, 654. While 'post-war' is not the same as 'post-conflict', I will refer to 'political actors' when discussing the post-war phase.
[3] On multiple sovereignty, see Tilly 1978, 192–193.
[4] Or the government and the rebels, in alternative terminology. Some scholars call the government or base state the 'parent', 'home', or 'central' state.

right to self-determination, want to preserve wartime gains and ultimately secure full and permanent separation from the base state.

Whatever the outcome, secessionist wars end with neither a clean break nor a quick return to the pre-war status quo. De facto control does not split evenly along a dividing line but rather fragments into pieces with ill-defined edges. Despite the brutal efforts, in severe cases, of the ethnic cleansers, populations are not partitioned into homogeneous political units under the authority of their 'own kind', and may remain displaced or vulnerable to further relocation. Few are satisfied with these outcomes, and each has something left to lose and something still to gain; a transition to post-war politics is then about reordering the pieces and shaping a new political order.

Consider the following accounts from a variety of post-war contexts. In 1996, Bosnian Muslims trying to return to their homes in Bosnian Serb controlled Jusići from which they had been ethnically cleansed in 1992, faced harassment by local Bosnian Serb police, and the local Bosnian Serb authorities "accused the international community of permitting an attack on 'Serb territory' in an effort to 'erode the borders of the Serb Republic'."[5] This was part of a pattern identified by Tuathail and Dahlman of shifting practices of 'ethnic engineering' used by local elites in post-war Bosnia to block the return of the displaced and preserve wartime gains.[6] In the years since Nagorno-Karabakh violently seceded from Azerbaijan, "about 14,000 Armenian 'settlers' have replaced the more than half a million Azeris forced to flee" during the war, and are concentrated in strategically important areas in occupied territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh where they receive support from the Armenian government.[7] In Northern Cyprus, the UN peacekeeping mission reported in 1995 that Greek Cypriots and Maronites "were the objects of very severe restrictions imposed by the Turkish Cypriot authorities" and that the effect of curtailing these basic freedoms would mean that, in time, "those communities would cease to exist in the northern part of the island."[8] In Sri Lanka, in 2012 – three years after the end of the war – an International Crisis Group

[5] Dahlman and Ó Tuathail 2005, 570.
[6] Ó Tuathail and Dahlman 2004, 455–456.
[7] International Crisis Group 2012d, 3.
[8] <https://unficyp.unmissions.org/operations-1974>

report noted 'heavy militarisation' of Tamil-majority areas and a process of 'Sinhalisation' – "a strategy … to change 'the facts on the ground' … and make it impossible to claim the north as a Tamil-majority area deserving of self-governance."[9]

These are all instances of former parties to an armed conflict using demographic and territorial control strategies in the aftermath of a war to pursue their objectives. These objectives originate in the divisions generated by wars that pit claims of territorial integrity against claims of self-determination and in subsequent efforts to shape the post-war political order that emerges from those divisions. My research explains how political actors try to settle questions of de facto control – who rules where and over whom – in the aftermath of secessionist wars. In this introductory chapter I provide a summary of my argument and conclusions before describing in more detail the rationale behind the project and the case-oriented, theory building research strategy I used to carry it out.

Summary

What are demographic and territorial control strategies and why do they matter for how we research the termination and aftermaths of secessionist wars? Simply stated, control strategies are what actors *do* to establish the facts of effective control of people and territory on the ground in their efforts to shape the post-war order. *Territorial control strategies* are the means by which actors allow or restrict access to an area, and regulate the presence and movement of other political actors within that area. *Demographic control strategies* are the means by which actors affect the presence, movement and behaviour of populations (rather than political actors) within an area, targeting the composition and location of populations – establishing 'demographic facts' on the ground, deciding who can live where – and their relations to political actors. My research question asks how and why these strategies come about: what explains the causes of state and secessionist post-war territorial and demographic control strategies?

As I will show over the following chapters, control strategies are crucial to how base states and secessionists shape and influence the post-war order: they do not only engage in peace processes or

[9] International Crisis Group 2012b; International Crisis Group 2012c.

statebuilding and reconstruction, nor only in violent 'spoiling' behaviour or other forms of post-war violence. These latter forms of behaviour do occur, and they matter, but they are not the only post-war story to tell.[10] Territorial and demographic control are the foundations of political order and of relations between rulers and ruled: resolving competing claims to control populated territory is perhaps *the* fundamental political problem. Violent armed conflict is one way political actors attempt to settle these claims; so are the control strategies used during transitions to a post-war environment. To study the causes of these strategies is to study political order in the making.

Secessionists sometimes try to integrate populations residing within the territory they claim, sometimes exclude them and other times resettle populations in areas they want to control. Some displaced populations are able to return home while others are blocked. Base states vary their level and type of support for loyal populations in secessionist entities. Secessionists sometimes tolerate enclaves outside their authority and sometimes try to dismantle and integrate them, and base states sometimes sustain these enclaves and sometimes neglect them. Boundaries and border regions are strategically and symbolically important for both sides, but their location, status and functions change over time. What explains the control strategies used by base states and secessionists in cases of terminated secessionist wars? My answer to this research question – and how I got there – is presented in the following chapters, with the core of the argument and empirical material in Chapters 2 to 6 and is summarised in this introduction.

First, a note on terminology. To *control* (territory or populations) is to allow or restrict access to an area and to regulate and influence the presence and activities of other actors and populations within that area. By *de facto* or *effective* control (I use the terms interchangeably), I mean control that exists in fact, even if not formally acknowledged.[11] *Civil war* is "armed combat within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign

[10] I focus on those strategies that are related to the post-war conflict cleavage and so take place within the time period and geographic area of that cleavage being contested. Chapter 2 will clarify which types of behaviour are demographic and territorial control strategies.

[11] I am *not* using 'effective' in the other sense of the word, that is, 'successful in producing a desired or intended result'. <https://www.lexico.com/definition/effective>

entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of the hostilities."[12] *Secessionist wars*, a type of civil war, are armed conflicts over territory; they are "about control of part of the state (who should control it and how),"[13] where an armed secessionist movement demands self-determination for a group and the territory it identifies as its homeland.

Secessionist wars are fundamentally different from wars for control of the government:[14] in the latter, there is no dispute over the state or its borders, but "If the territorial demands [of the secessionists] are met it will result in changes that are observable on a world map. The extent of territorial control for the center will shrink…. Thus this is a separate category [of wars], with direct effects for conflict resolution and postwar conditions."[15] While not ethno-nationalist by definition, in practice secessionist wars are "associated with the national principle – the idea that each people should be self-ruled, that ethnic like should be governed by like."[16] *Post-war* is the period following the termination of an armed conflict, defined in terms of battle-death thresholds, using the criteria of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP).[17] If secessionist conflicts are defined by the wartime cleavage that pits the territorial integrity of a base state against the self-determination claims of secessionists, the *post-war cleavage* is over reincorporating the secessionist entity into the base state or separating from it fully and permanently.[18]

Objectives explain strategies, mediated by the constraints and opportunities of the environment. I explain *demographic and territorial control strategies* (the main outcome of interest, or dependent variable) in terms of

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[12] Kalyvas 2006, 5.
[13] This definition does not include anticolonial wars. Conflicts over territory are contrasted with conflicts over government, which are "about control of the whole state (who should control it and how). See UCDP's definitions: <https://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/>.
[14] Relative and absolute numbers vary by dataset, but secessionist wars are by some counts the most common type of post-World War II civil war and have been rising in number, and a large proportion of self-determination movements escalate to violent armed conflict, but the success rate of secessionist movements is very low. See Fazal and Griffiths 2014; Sambanis, Germann, and Schädel 2018; In 2009, Barbara Walter claimed that self-determination conflicts were the 'chief source of violence in the world.' Walter 2009, 3.
[15] Wallensteen 2015, 104.
[16] Wimmer 2013, 2.
[17] Kreutz 2010. To distinguish 'post-war' from a lull in the fighting between conflict episodes, this means a period of at least a year with fewer than 25 battle deaths. In subsequent chapters I will make further distinctions between a war termination phase and post-war phases.
[18] Full separation may be either through independence or irredentism, i.e. union with, or annexation by, another state.

what I call the actors' *constrained objectives* (the main explanatory factor, or independent variable) and features of the post-war environment that act as *links and levers* for translating objectives into strategies. The argument – which I develop in full in Chapter 2 – is that in a transition from a war to a post-war environment, base states and secessionists form objectives that reflect their relative positions at the end of the war and their preferences for revising or preserving de facto control of populated territory. This must be done within the material and normative constraints of the environment that prevent or delay the actors from achieving their maximalist objectives. When the fighting has stopped but neither the full restoration of the pre-war status quo or the full separation of the secessionist territory has been accomplished and the post-war cleavage remains active – each side has something more to gain and something left to lose – the base state and secessionists attempt to meet their constrained objectives by using demographic and territorial control strategies, selecting strategies intended to align the facts on the ground with an intended outcome. Explaining how these strategies come about is the main aim of this study. Table 1.1 summarises the characteristics and definitions of control strategies and in Chapter 2 I expand on how the core outcomes are operationalised.

Table 1.1 Territorial and Demographic Control Strategies

	Associated core characteristic	**Definition**
Territorial control strategies (*who rules where*)	Access/denial of access to a territory	Measures which demarcate, regulate and enforce boundaries that allow or restrict entry to a territory, or which challenge another actor's ability to do so.
	Presence and absence within a territory	Measures which establish and sustain an actor's presence within a territory, or which challenge another actor's presence.
Demographic control strategies (*who rules over whom*)	Composition and location of populations	Measures which establish and sustain 'demographic facts' about who lives where i.e. which populations can and cannot reside within a territory.
	Loyalty and compliance of populations	Measures which influence and regulate a populations' interactions with political actors.

To translate constrained objectives into workable control strategies, actors must link the objectives to features of the post-war environment that are accessible and can be leveraged to control populations and territory. I call these features 'links and levers': areas of territory and segments of populations such as enclaves, border regions and displaced populations that have intrinsic or instrumental value to the base

state and/or the secessionists. The interaction between the actors' constrained objectives and these features of the post-war environment explains – at least partly – why political actors use the control strategies they do, and how these strategies subsequently generate continuity and change in de facto control in post-war environments.

Constrained objectives are derived from the actors' maximalist objectives in the post-war cleavage – restoring territorial integrity and reincorporating lost territory for base state, versus full separation for the secessionists. While maximalist objectives are ultimately about political status and encompass broader notions of statehood, recognition and legitimate authority, constrained objectives are about affecting de facto control in order to accomplish some political goal and 'right-sizing' and 'right-peopling' populated territory.[19] Base states care about de facto control because, even if their de jure territorial integrity continues to be recognised internationally, states are rarely willing to countenance any effective loss of territory.[20] Secessionists care about de facto control because, while their prospects for international recognition may be low, in order to survive they must attain something close to the empirical attributes of statehood, that is, effective control of territory and a permanent population.[21] In other words, actors need to create the facts on the ground and this is distinct from the politics of negotiations, recognition, legitimate authority and so on.[22]

The actors' constrained objectives are summarised in Tables 1.2 and 1.3, ranked by proximity to the maximalist objective.[23] In Chapter 2, where the theoretical framework is presented in full, I detail the profile of control strategies that are expected for each constrained objective (see Tables 2.3 and 2.4), that

[19] See O'Leary, Lustick, and Callaghy 2001.
[20] See for example Toft 2003; Walter 2009.
[21] Caspersen 2012.
[22] On the importance of 'creating facts on the ground' in territorial conflicts, see McGarry 1998; Altman 2017; Krause and Eiran 2018.
[23] For convenience I have so far referred to 'base states' and 'secessionists' as unitary actors, consistent with framing the conflict cleavage as government-rebel incompatibility. Each 'side' is an aggregation of multiple actors who can be defined by their position regarding the conflict cleavage and grouped according to a shared objective of reincorporation or full separation, but can work independently of each other (see also Chapter 3).

is, expectations about the strategies the base state or the secessionists will use to control people and territory given a particular objective.

Table 1.2 Base state constrained objectives

Rank	Objective	
1	*Full reincorporation*	
2	*Reclaim ground*	Partially reincorporate lost territory, re-establish a permanent official presence and jurisdiction, and reintegrate population into base state
3	*Retain links*	Keep a foothold in and access to secessionist territory: retain a physical even if non-constant official presence; preserve links to co-ethnics and populations loyal to the base state living on secessionist territory
4	*Undermine control*	Disrupt the ability of the secessionist authorities to control territory and populations

Table 1.3 Secessionist constrained objectives

Rank	Objective	
1	*Full and permanent separation*	
2	*Consolidate & extend*	Extend effective control throughout the claimed territory, remove internal boundaries and any competing sources of control; integrate or assimilate the whole population
3	*Preserve control*	Deepen control over areas held, isolate and contain areas not controlled, strengthen boundaries with base state; maintain the status quo
4	*Defend*	Prevent reincorporation by the base state

A secondary aim of this study is to consider the *consequences* of political actors' control strategies. In the case studies, I consider some of the implications and effects of control strategies as they are implemented, and in Chapter 6 I look at some of the lasting impacts of control strategies beyond the periods covered in the cases. The consequences of control strategies are not the main focus of this study, but explaining how and why particular control strategies come about can be the foundation for further research on their consequences on a range of post-war outcomes of interest.[24]

[24] The choice to put the focus of this study on the causes rather than consequences of control strategies was in part the outcome of the theory building and iterative nature of a case-oriented project. Such an approach generated a lot of output – some of which could be distilled into a theoretical framework explaining the causes of control strategies, much of which needed to be discarded, and a lot of additional material and insights into what matters for understanding the termination and aftermath of secessionist wars through the lens of de facto control of populated

Taken as a whole, the process investigated in this research is summarised in Figure 1.1. Note that this is one sequence of a dynamic process that repeats over time as objectives are changed or held constant and control strategies change or continue accordingly, with their consequences feeding into revised objectives and a developing post-war environment. My focus is "on process rather than on conclusive outcomes"[25] or as Tarrow puts it, "the process itself is the outcome."[26]

Figure 1.1



This is a theory building, case-oriented project for which I conducted detailed investigations into the termination and aftermath of two secessionist wars, drawing on original archival and field research as well as published primary and secondary sources. The two within-case analyses presented in Chapters 4 and 5 are theory-driven 'causal reconstructions' of what happened after the secessionist wars in Abkhazia and Kosovo, which ended in 1993 and 1999, respectively, and cover the post-war period until 2006 in the case of Abkhazia and 2008 in the case of Kosovo.[27] My investigations into these cases were used to identify the factors and mechanisms that can plausibly explain demographic and territorial control strategies, extracting where possible the generalisable from the particular details of the cases to develop a more general explanation, with a particular emphasis on concept development as a core component of theory building.[28]

territory. Not everything that matters should be forced into a theory, but nor should anything that cannot be reduced to a theory be discarded as irrelevant.

[25] Migdal 2001, 23.

[26] Tarrow 2010, 241.

[27] I discuss these cut-off points in the relevant chapters, and discuss more recent developments in Chapter 6.

[28] I explain my theory building research strategy later in this chapter.

The empirical focus of my project on the Caucasus and the Western Balkans – two regions that suffered multiple wars in the 1990s and that remain deeply divided – relates to another purpose of my research: an effort to make sense of the conflicts in Abkhazia and Kosovo. During these wars, local conflict dynamics unfolded alongside geopolitically significant developments, reshaping the political architecture of two historically contested regions and exposing fault lines where claims of sovereignty, territory, and nation do not align. These processes did not end when the most violent phases of the wars ended. Rather, efforts to shape the post-war environment – to control populated territory, to settle the questions of who rules where, over whom – continued long after the fighting stopped: displaced populations have been blocked from returning home in post-war demographic struggles, while minority populations have become entrenched within enclaves in secessionist territories and governed through parallel institutions or isolated and contained as threats, and new de facto boundaries have cemented divisions between the actors as they try to preserve or shift the extent of their territorial control. Decades after the wars ended, lasting and just settlements are yet to be reached and the underlying conflicts still threaten regional and international peace and security.

So in addition to meeting the theory building aim of the project, the intensive study of these two conflicts through the lens of demographic and territorial control can generate new empirical insights into substantively important cases. A better understanding of the conflicts in Abkhazia and Kosovo has much to offer scholars, policymakers and practitioners concerned with both local peacebuilding and transitional justice and the international politics of secession, recognition and geopolitical rivalry in the conflict zones of the European neighbourhood.

1.2. Researching the Termination and Aftermath of Civil Wars

Why is it important to investigate post-war demographic and territorial control strategies and how should it be done? Despite a growing body of productive research on the termination and aftermath of civil wars, there are gaps in this research agenda which has been too limited in the outcomes it tries to explain, and this matters for research on war to peace transitions and for the design and implementation of policies intended to facilitate a sustainable peace. Nonetheless, there are rich veins of scholarship on civil war, secessionist conflicts, de facto states, and war to peace transitions that can be tapped for insights to

advance research on post-war environments. In particular, the importance of controlling populated territory in civil war and the ways that armed conflict fragments control of people and territory provide useful entry points to improve our understanding of the aftermath of war.

Scholars have defined our recent history by the dominant forms of armed conflict, variously described as an "age of civil war", an "age of ethno-nationalist conflict," and an "age of secession."[29] We also live in an age of peacemaking and peacebuilding, with several studies arguing there has been an historic downward trend in global armed conflict.[30] Peace may be firmly on the agenda,[31] but peace after civil war is under-researched and under-theorised. Research on civil wars may have been one of the "most notable developments in political science"[32] but it has rarely been extended to the post-war phase, with discussions of what happens after war limited to policy implications or legacies.[33] Many scholars have noted the inadequacy of the conceptual, theoretical and methodological tools used to research peace.[34] Some have proposed different ways of thinking about post-war environments,[35] grappling with the challenge of understanding something that is substantively more than just the time period after a war, more than the peacebuilders' aim of rebuilding legitimate civil authority,[36] and also something that actors shape and exploit in pursuit of their aims.[37] Nonetheless, we are overlooking important aspects of the post-war environment, and this matters.[38] I argue research on the termination and aftermath of secessionist wars should focus on explaining political actors' demographic and territorial control

[29] Tarrow 2007; Wimmer 2013; Griffiths 2016.
[30] Philpott 2010, 3; On the 'decline of war thesis' see Goldstein 2011; Pinker 2011; Human Security Report Project 2013; For the contrary argument, see Braumoeller 2019.
[31] Wallensteen 2015; Davenport, Melander, and Regan 2017; Bellamy 2019; Caplan 2019.
[32] Kalyvas 2008.
[33] See for example Kalyvas 2006, 391; Steele 2009, 426; Mampilly 2011, 240–241.
[34] Klein, Goertz, and Diehl 2008; Höglund and Kovacs 2010; Autesserre 2014; Gleditsch, Nordkvelle, and Strand 2014; Regan 2014; Diehl 2016; Goertz, Diehl, and Balas 2016.
[35] For example: Doyle on the varying 'ecologies' of transitional authority: Doyle 2002, 79; Cheng refers to the 'post-war ecosystem' in her work on extralegal groups in post-war contexts. Cheng 2018.
[36] Doyle 2002, 71.
[37] As Lake argues, "postconflict institutions often prove limited in their abilities to contribute to durable peace because they offer wartime elites new venues in which to pursue conflict-era agendas." Lake 2017.
[38] 'Peace' should not be conflated with 'post-war' – while closely related and sometimes used interchangeably, these are distinct concepts. This project deals explicitly with 'post-war' and only indirectly with far bigger questions of peace. On how international peacebuilders see post-war environments, and how this can have very little to do with reality, see Autesserre 2010; See also Berdal 2009, chap. 1.

strategies. Why? I will explain in the following paragraphs how this approach helps address some of the limitations in existing research and extends insights from other research, and then set out the foundations of my argument.

Post-war environments lack clear conceptual and empirical boundaries, and there is a poor fit between the concepts used in existing literature and the empirics of post-war environments, with an overreliance on the concepts of negative and positive peace that does not serve research well.[39] Much scholarship on the termination and aftermath of civil wars is about peace *duration* – what explains negative peace, or the non-recurrence of war and the absence of fatal violence between the conflict parties – and/or peace *quality*. The latter is more diverse but often focuses on democratisation, peacebuilding, and positive peace. Negative peace – a convenient baseline indicator of war termination – is where most peace duration studies begin and often end. As a concept for understanding post-war environments, it is good as far as it goes, but it doesn't go very far.[40] By defining peace in terms of what does not happen – large-scale violence – rather than what does, it cannot capture variation in post-war environments along other dimensions. Just as there is a distinction between *civil war* and *civil war violence*,[41] and focusing on violence alone cannot capture all that is important about civil war, so too is there is a distinction between war termination and the absence of fatal violence. Just as the civil war literature has improved by expanding its focus to other aspects of armed conflict such as rebel governance,[42] so too are there payoffs to studying phenomena other than fatal violence and its absence in post-war environments.

Positive peace – associated with peace quality approaches – is not a viable alternative. Galtung's definition of positive peace – the absence of direct and structural violence[43] – is rarely used now; positive peace

[39] Part of the problem, I believe, is that 'critical appraisal of what is to be explained' is undervalued in political science, and this has led to overuse of a few well-worn dependent variables. Shapiro 2005, 99.
[40] This problem is behind the 'prefix peace', or the use of various terms such as 'brittle' or 'fragile' to describe the inadequacy of a particular peace or post-war settlement. Mac Ginty 2006, 2; The search for an appropriate conceptual vocabulary is similar to the problem of conceptual stretching in the literature on democracy. Collier and Levitsky 1997.
[41] Kalyvas 2006, 20.
[42] For studies that show the importance of social dynamics in civil war, see Wood 2008; Mampilly 2011.
[43] Galtung 1969, 183.

more commonly refers to fostering nonviolent interaction and reducing the probability of violence, in line with liberal theories of peace.[44] Approaches that invoke positive peace usually define a desired outcome and then evaluate how far a case adheres to or deviates from it and/or prescribe steps to achieving it, conflating the analytical deficiency of negative peace with its normative deficiency and associated concerns about the malaises affecting post-war societies.[45] This risks reducing all post-war activity to 'peacebuilding' or 'spoiling', failing to reflect the diverse objectives and strategies of the principal actors. It also biases research towards intervention strategies, as seen in the long lists of activities scholars enumerate that constitute peacebuilding,[46] obscuring the extent to which the interests of local actors and international peacebuilders do not align.[47] It is difficult to understand what is happening in a post-war environment if attention is devoted to desirable positive peace activities and not the behaviour of political actors with their own agendas. Nor are the latter necessarily spoilers: they have many motives and use strategies accordingly during a transition.[48] The concern with peace quality and positive peace leads many studies to assess outcomes in terms of success and failure, as seen in the mostly prescriptive and/or evaluative literature on peacebuilding and post-war reconstruction, which addresses what should be, or should have been, done by international actors. This almost inevitably takes the analysis down a dead-end. Success for whom?[49] In addition to being accused of having "shallow evaluation criteria"[50] and lacking comparative analyses that would aid theory development,[51] there is little agreement in the peacebuilding literature on what constitutes success.[52]

[44] Gleditsch, Nordkvelle, and Strand 2014.
[45] See especially Wallensteen 2015, 16–17.
[46] According to one study, 'positive peace' covers "a vast array of activities" intended to improve people's lives, raising the costs of violence and the benefits of peace, including: "democratization, the promotion of human rights, economic development, the repatriation of refugees, the establishment of truth commissions, and the promotion of civil society." Mason and Meernik 2006, 4.
[47] Zürcher 2011.
[48] See for example Kriger 2003; Grandi 2013; Daly 2014; Lake 2017.
[49] As Schmid argued, "positive peace seems to be an umbrella concept, devoid of meaning of its own, which people fill with their own subjective values." Schmid 1968, 223.
[50] Cramer 2006, 276.
[51] Autesserre 2014, 496.
[52] Call 2008, 173–174; Diehl and Druckman 2010, 3.

What are the findings of research on peace duration and quality? There is some consensus that the chances of war recurrence decrease over time and that factors which increase the risk of civil war in general also apply to recurrence, such as lootable resources and economic underdevelopment, but debates continue over which factors explain peace failure and there is little consensus on why wars recur.[53] More recent studies have taken a more disaggregated approach to what causes peace failure, for example looking at how splits within rebel groups during or after a conflict affect war recurrence,[54] but most focus on macro-level factors, in particular how the war ended and whether military victories or negotiated settlements,[55] or rebel or government victories,[56] are more conducive to preventing recurrence. The findings are rarely conclusive.[57] Perhaps the best that can be said is "the durability of the peace does vary with the outcome of the previous civil war but the pattern is not simple."[58]

Scholars are divided on the role of peace settlements:[59] some have argued that power-sharing institutions have a positive effect on preventing war recurrence,[60] but critics argue that power-sharing damages long-term prospects for peace and democratisation, and creates incentives that encourage groups who want to take control of the state to rebel in the belief that they will be rewarded in a subsequent settlement.[61] There is greater consensus that international peacekeeping works, on average, and decreases the chance of wars recurring;[62] more recent work shows to what extent and under what conditions peacekeeping is effective in reducing violence against civilians.[63] Regarding the quality of the peace (or lack thereof),[64]

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[53] Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom 2008; Suhrke and Samset 2007; Caplan and Hoeffler 2017.
[54] Rudloff and Findley 2016; Zeigler 2016.
[55] Licklider 1995; Downes 2004; Walter 2004.
[56] Toft 2010a; Toft 2010b; For a critique of Toft's findings, see Wallensteen 2015, chap. 3; See also Doyle and Sambanis 2006, 86–88.
[57] For a review see Kreutz 2010.
[58] According to Mason et al, government victories result in an initially more stable peace that becomes more fragile over time if rebel groups are able to recover, whereas rebel victories and negotiated settlements may lead to a more durable peace in the long term if a new, initially fragile post-war arrangement can be consolidated. Mason et al. 2011, 186–187.
[59] For a review see Binningsbø 2013.
[60] Hartzell and Hoddie 2003; See also Hartzell and Hoddie 2007.
[61] Rothchild and Roeder 2005; Tull and Mehler 2005.
[62] Doyle and Sambanis 2006; Fortna 2008; Howard 2008; Fortna and Howard 2008.
[63] Ruggeri, Gizelis, and Dorussen 2013; Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon 2013; Costalli 2014; Bove and Ruggeri 2016; Ruggeri, Dorussen, and Gizelis 2017; Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon 2019.
[64] Ghobarah, Huth, and Russett 2003; Mac Ginty 2006; Gates et al. 2010; Gates et al. 2012; Berdal and Suhrke 2012.

there has been intense focus on explaining the success or failure of post-war elections and programmes intended to facilitate transitions to a high-quality peace, often understood as democratisation but can also include rebuilding the rule of law, constitutional reform, transforming rebel groups into political parties and so on.[65] The relationship between peacebuilding and democracy-promotion is problematic, and researchers have explored whether they are mutually supporting or antagonistic and the dilemmas that arise from trying to achieve both.[66]

Research specifically on the termination and aftermath of secessionist wars is also limited in the range of outcomes it explains.[67] Studies often focus on whether the secessionist movement attains statehood and is recognised as a member of international society (and how the prospect or realisation of recognition may affect the conflict),[68] or, if secessionists achieve some of the empirical attributes of statehood but not recognition (so-called de facto states), how long and under what conditions they can survive. Research on de facto states has provided important insights into the internal and external development of political entities born of secessionist wars (such as their prospects for democratisation and their dependence on foreign support),[69] including recent work on base state and secessionist strategies, although the predominant focus remains on recognition and its absence, and the challenges of resolving so-called 'frozen' conflicts.[70]

There is extensive research (and commentary) on partition as a 'solution' to ethno-nationalist wars – that is, separating the opposing sides into ethnically homogenous territorial enclaves (a proposal which

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[65] For a review of research on post-war democratisation, see Bermeo 2003; See also de Zeeuw 2008; Manning 2008; Stromseth, Wippman, and Brooks 2006; Berti 2013.
[66] Paris 2004; Gurses and Mason 2008; Jarstad and Sisk 2008; Flores and Nooruddin 2009; Fortna and Huang 2012; Flores and Nooruddin 2012; Joshi 2013.
[67] One review of research on secession devotes a section to 'after secession', but is limited to a discussion of partition's effect on preventing recurrence, and the possibility of recursive secession, i.e. when a secessionist entity itself faces a self-determination movement trying to secede. Siroky 2011.
[68] Caplan 2005a; Fabry 2010; Coggins 2015a.
[69] Pegg 1998; King 2001; Bahcheli, Bartmann, and Srebrnik 2004; Lynch 2004; Kolstø 2006; Stanislawski 2008; Caspersen and Stansfield 2011; Blakkisrud and Kolstø 2012; Caspersen 2012; Broers 2013; Bakke et al. 2014; Florea 2014; O'Loughlin, Kolossov, and Toal 2014; Markedonov 2015; Dembińska and Campana 2017; Bakke et al. 2018.
[70] On value of studying strategies, see Ker-Lindsay 2012b; Broers 2013; Ó Beacháin, Comai, and Tsurtsumia-Zurabashvili 2016; Griffiths and Muro 2020; On secessionist strategies for gaining recognition, see Caspersen 2015b.

requires population transfers and perhaps permanently dismembering the pre-war state). This research is mainly concerned with if it 'works' at ending violence and preventing recurrence. The findings are inconclusive, and the ethical concerns are profound.[71] More policy-oriented literature looks at the successes and failures of various forms of settlements including power-sharing and -dividing, territorial autonomy, consociationalism, and decentralisation,[72] or, in the case of de facto states, if and how the international community should engage with such entities.[73]

The limitations discussed above apply to my two case studies and the two regions under study.[74] The aftermath of the war in Abkhazia is relatively under-researched,[75] and existing studies generally focus on Abkhazia's status as a 'de facto' or partially recognised state (common to studies of the post-Soviet secessionist wars),[76] or on policies for conflict resolution.[77] The emphasis on so-called 'frozen conflicts' is common to the other secessionist conflicts in the Caucasus.[78] The aftermath of the war in Kosovo and the wars of the Former Yugoslavia have been more extensively researched, but usually with an emphasis on international intervention and questions of status, and the role of the international community in post-war peace- and statebuilding.[79]

Where Do We Go From Here?

Where should new research look to better understand post-war environments in general, and the aftermaths of secessionist wars in particular? My approach starts from what we know about the dynamics of civil wars and secessionist wars and the international context in which they occur. Specifically: the

[71] Mearsheimer and Van Evera 1995; Kaufmann 1996; Sambanis 2000; Horowitz 2003; Fearon 2004; Tir 2005; Downes 2006; Chapman and Roeder 2007; O'Leary 2007; Johnson 2008; Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2009; Jenne 2011.
[72] Weller and Wolff 2005; Hartzell and Hoddie 2007; Caspersen 2016.
[73] Ker-Lindsay and Berg 2018.
[74] See Chapter 3 for further discussion of the cases.
[75] For exceptions see Shesterinina 2014; Shesterinina 2015; Driscoll 2015; Prelz Oltramonti 2017.
[76] King 2001; Lynch 2004; O'Loughlin, Kolossov, and Toal 2011; Ó Beacháin 2012; Bakke et al. 2013; Caspersen 2012.
[77] Coppieters, Nodia, and Anchabadze 1998; Wheatley 2010.
[78] Walker 1998; King 2001.
[79] Cousens and Cater 2001; Bose 2002; Caspersen 2004; Caplan 2005b; Weller 2009; Hehir 2010b; Ker-Lindsay 2012a.

foundations of my argument and my theory building research strategy rest on the importance of de facto territorial and demographic control, why and how it is contested and divided, and what this tells us about actors' objectives and strategies.

Secessionist wars cut across some of the most important aspects of domestic politics and international relations, and expose the tensions between them: the territorial integrity of sovereign states; the rights of national and ethnic identity groups, including claims for self-determination; and the principles for regulating and maintaining an international system that often struggles to reconcile the rights of states and the rights of groups. Secessionist wars violently destabilise and reshape the political architecture of a region or the international system.[80] Even when they don't, enormous costs are expended to preserve the status quo against a self-determination movement's 'logic of political disintegration'.[81] The stakes are high: as Lemke and Crabtree put it, the emergence of a secessionist challenger – what they call a 'territorial contender', a competitor that has excluded the state from some of its territory – "is a dire threat to the sovereign state's legitimacy and capacity. Indeed, territorial contenders are the main threat to many sovereign states and thus are consequential actors in the international system."[82] Moreover, this international system "displays a complex architecture of fragmented authority" which is under-theorized,[83] and de facto control is not well captured by de jure international borders or by reference to states (recognised or not).[84]

This architecture includes forms of political authority that are very durable like the state but with varying levels of recognition, forms that are very short lived,[85] and all manner of other 'ephemeral political

[80] Goertz, Diehl, and Balas 2016, 122; Spruyt 2017; Roeder 2018, 2; As Vasquez puts it, "Territorial issues are so fundamental that the behavior associated with their settlement literally constructs a world order (including a world of anarchy)." Vasquez 2009, 165.
[81] Sambanis, Germann, and Schädel 2018, 659.
[82] Lemke and Crabtree 2020, 519.
[83] Florea 2014, 789; See also Dembińska and Campana 2017, 271.
[84] On the related problem of 'methodological nationalism' – that is, "the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world", or "the naturalization of the nation-state by the social sciences" see Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002.
[85] Kolstø and Paukovic 2014; Aliyev and Souleimanov 2017.

contraptions'[86] which get shaped and shoved by contradictory forces such as norms of territorial integrity and 'fixed borders' and of self-determination and nationalism,[87] and the dynamics of territorial expansion and contraction and the birth and death of states.[88] The international system since 1945 has made statehood and membership of international society more attractive and secessionism has risen as the benefits are seen to outweigh the costs,[89] but there remains a strong presumption against (non-consensual) secession in favour of preserving existing borders. As Goertz et al argue, "international norms have tremendous impact on secessionist civil wars because the international community holds the keys to final success: membership in the club of states", and non-recognition is costly for secessionists.[90] There are also norms in favour of negotiated settlements over military victories, and norms against the historical practice of population exchanges that would often accompany border changes.

The ruptures in control of territory and populations caused by war are prominent in civil war research and its emphasis on multiple sovereignty.[91] Civil wars share the common features of contested control of territory and a challenge to the sovereignty of the incumbent government,[92] which means that even though civil wars are heterogeneous and lack clear empirical and conceptual boundaries, rival conflict actors face similar structural conditions and are similarly motivated to control populated territory (albeit with an asymmetry of motives in secessionist wars). This is at the heart of how scholars think about civil war: "At core", argue Arjona et al, "all civil wars are a battle for control between a government and its competitors over civilians and the territory upon which they reside."[93] Populated territory is valued for

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[86] Kolstø 2006, 726.
[87] On territorial integrity see Zacher 2001; On the fixity of borders, see Atzili 2011; On the ethno-nationalist principle that "the political and the national unit should be congruent", that underpins most secessionist claims, see Gellner 1983.
[88] O'Leary, Lustick, and Callaghy 2001; Fazal 2007; Roeder 2007; Carter and Goemans 2011; Wimmer 2013; Coggins 2015a; Griffiths 2016.
[89] Fazal and Griffiths 2014.
[90] Goertz, Diehl, and Balas 2016, 121.
[91] See especially Wood 2003; Kalyvas 2006; Weinstein 2007; Mampilly 2011; Staniland 2014; Arjona 2016; Steele 2017; Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2019.
[92] Sambanis includes rebel control of territory in the civil war country as a defining feature of civil war. Sambanis 2004b, 829; Florea argues that de facto divisions of territory can mark the onset of armed conflict. Florea 2012, 86.
[93] Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015a, 1; Numerous scholars have emphasised how fundamental territory is to understand armed conflict: as Toft and Johnson put it, "there is something special about territory", and this is true of intra- and inter-state war, and international politics in general. Johnson and Toft 2014, 17; Among many other

both instrumental and intrinsic reasons, for the strategic and material benefits it brings and for intangible reasons of attachment to a homeland or sacred ground, making struggles for control existential. Multiple sovereignty and the need to control people and territory can give civil wars statebuilding-like qualities – rebels must establish territorial and social control to further their military objectives, creating local political orders as they fight and negotiate with the state and with civilians under their control in a form of 'competition in government' or 'competitive statebuilding'[94] – but mutually exclusive claims over sovereignty can also lead to forced displacement and ethnic cleansing as conflict actors seek to establish and defend an ethnically homogeneous homeland.[95]

Research specifically on secessionist conflict has investigated these dynamics, focusing on ethnic geography and ethnic demography to explain war onset and outcomes,[96] and ranges over questions of why some groups seek secession while others do not or pursue lesser demands, why these demands change over time, why some self-determination movements (SDMs) use violence while others do not, why some SDMs fragment while others stay cohesive, why some succeed while others fail,[97] and it has addressed the spectrum of state responses, from violent repression to accommodation.[98] The role of ethnofederalism as a cause of or solution to secessionist conflict has received substantial scrutiny, albeit with little consensus emerging, and has particular importance for the Balkans and the Caucasus.[99]

After a secessionist war, actors are confronted with a transformed and fragmented strategic environment that they need to shape, either by changing or preserving borders that demarcate the extent of their control or changing the composition and location of populations within those borders, or both. This is

studies on the intrinsic and instrumental importance of territory, see Goemans 2006; Regan 2009; Weidmann 2009; Kelle 2017; Stewart and Liou 2016; On how demographic factors affect calculations about war and peace in secessionist conflicts, see Konaev 2016; On the importance of political demography for conflict and security more generally, see Goldstone, Kauffman, and Toft 2012; Toft 2014; Côté, Mitchell, and Toft 2019.

[94] Kalyvas 2006, 219–220; Staniland 2012, 243; See also McColl 1969; Arjona 2016.

[95] Naimark 2001; Rae 2002; Mulaj 2008; Bulutgil 2018a.

[96] Siroky 2011; For further reviews of the academic literature see Toft 2012; Sambanis, Germann, and Schädel 2018.

[97] Jenne, Saideman, and Lowe 2007; Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour 2012; Cunningham 2014; Seymour, Bakke, and Cunningham 2016; Cunningham, Dahl, and Frugé 2017; Griffiths and Wasser 2019.

[98] Walter 2006; Walter 2009; Cunningham 2011; Cunningham 2013; Butt 2017.

[99] Cornell 2002; Hale 2004; Bakke and Wibbels 2006; Brancati 2009; Roeder 2009; Smith 2013; Anderson 2014.

why investigating de facto control of populated territory and the strategies that actors use to shape this environment can advance research on the termination and aftermath of secessionist wars. Focusing on demographic and territorial control strategies not only builds on research on state and secessionist strategies prior to and during armed conflict by extending the analysis to post-war strategies, it also expands the scope of conflict research by studying a wider range of strategies than those relating to fatal violence.[100] We are learning more and more from new scholarship about the strategies used by secessionists (such as service provision, adherence to International Humanitarian Law and restraint in civilian targeting)[101] and base states (such as the spectrum of responses from concessions, to policing to militarised repression)[102] during war, but we do not know enough about their post-war strategies.[103]

To explain strategies, I argue in Chapter 2 that we must look to the actors' objectives – an important but neglected part of research on conflict[104] and peacebuilding.[105] Fully understanding the importance of controlling populated territory as an objective is foundational to this project. As Lemke and Crabtree put it: "Territorial control matters because possession of territory is a fundamental element of statehood (whether sovereign or not).… What matters is the actual control of populated territory."[106] Moreover, as Coggins argues, while studies of civil war have focused on "violence and the physical control of people and territory", in reality effective control does not entail recognition of statehood and recognition does not entail effective control.[107] Understanding the ways in which these objectives – de facto control of

[100] Relatedly, Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood make a convincing case for studying a wider range of repertoires of violence. Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017 Research on nonviolent protest campaigns has also expanded the range of strategies/tactics studied in conflict research.
[101] Stewart 2018; Fazal 2018b; Fazal and Konaev 2019.
[102] Cunningham 2011; Butt 2017.
[103] Research on post-war violence - after secessionist and non-secessionist wars - is a notable exception, but the exclusive focus on fatal violence is a limitation for reasons already discussed. Exemplary studies of post-war violence include Grandi 2013; Boyle 2014.
[104] Staniland argues objectives have not been given enough attention in conflict research and there is a "need to theorize and endogenize the interests of actors in order creation…. These are fundamentally decisions about political interests…." Staniland 2012, 254; According to Fazal, "War aims constitute a key missing ingredient in the literature on civilian targeting in war. Political aims condition the behavior of all belligerents." Fazal 2018b, 194.
[105] Zürcher notes, "peacebuilders and local elites in postwar countries may have drastically divergent interests – a seemingly obvious assumption that nonetheless does not loom large in the peacebuilding literature." Zürcher 2011, 83.; See also Fortna and Huang 2012, 807.
[106] Lemke and Crabtree 2020, 520.
[107] Coggins 2015b.

populated territory and international recognition – can converge and diverge in the fragmented architecture of international politics is important for making sense of post-war environments.

Explanations of the termination and aftermaths of armed conflict must bridge wartime and post-war dynamics:[108] the convention of treating civil wars as discrete events with clear beginnings and endings defined by the level of fatal violence obscures the extent to which wartime dynamics may be important in shaping the post-war order,[109] and the wartime salience of territory continues post-war: "Concerns over control of territory" argues Toft, do not diminish with armed conflict; rather, "the fact of combat usually only reinforces the argument that because more brethren have died defending the land, it is even more incumbent on a new generation of fighters to regain or maintain control over that land."[110]

There is a long tradition in the social sciences researching how war creates and transforms states and societies, from the historical sociology of Tilly, Mann and others,[111] to the International Relations scholarship on war and international order,[112] to more recent studies on how war reconfigures gender relations,[113] the ways in which violent conflicts can have pro-social consequences on individual behaviour in post-war societies,[114] and the long-term legacies of armed conflict and violence on political behaviour, identities and attitudes.[115] In this research agenda, scholars are finding novel ways to bridge the phases of conflict: Daly uses organisational theories and social geography in her work on power sharing and conflict recurrence in Colombia to connect wartime and post-war dynamics, explaining variation in the "insurgent organizational capital" of demobilised armed groups;[116] Huang shows how post-war democratisation is more likely to follow wars when rebel governors are heavily reliant on civilians and how post-war politics

[108] As Grandi argues, her explanation of post-war violence depends on both the dynamics of the prior war and on "processes related to the emerging political system." Grandi 2013, 2; On bridging the phases of conflict, see also Cederman and Vogt 2017.
[109] For the relevance of this point to studying war onset, see Sambanis 2004a, 268.
[110] Toft 2003, 4; On the post-war importance of territoriality, see also Grandi 2013, 5.
[111] Tilly 1992; Mann 1993; Wimmer 2013; For a review see Wimmer 2014.
[112] Bobbitt 2002; Ikenberry 2001.
[113] Berry 2017; Berry and Lake 2017.
[114] Blattman 2009; Bellows and Miguel 2009.
[115] Balcells 2012; Rozenas, Schutte, and Zhukov 2017; Zhukov and Talibova 2018; Costalli and Ruggeri 2015; Costalli and Ruggeri 2019.
[116] Daly 2014, 341; See also Daly 2016.

"is endogenous to wartime politics";[117] Lake shows how post-war institutions provide wartime elites new ways to pursue their agendas, frustrating efforts to build a durable peace;[118] Driscoll shows how violence entrepreneurs – 'warlords' – can create post-war order out of anarchy by, in effect, becoming the state.[119] My approach is to focus on actors' strategies for controlling populated territory as a way to bridge wartime and post-war dynamics.

In light of the discussion so far about the strengths and limitations of the relevant existing research, I can clarify my reasons for the theory building research strategy used in this study (discussed more in section 1.3) and outline where the contribution lies. By explaining how and why post-war control strategies come about, this study aims to improve our understanding of post-war environments. I do this by developing an empirically-grounded conceptualisation of post-war control strategies that is distinct from other outcomes of interest that have been studied in the literature on the aftermath of civil wars, such as post-war statebuilding, positive and negative peace, and peace quality.

I justify my theory building approach on the grounds that existing concepts are too limited and have not served research well: our knowledge of post-war environments can be advanced by focusing on different specific outcomes. Rather than adding to the literature that tries to better explain the same outcomes that have already been well-covered – such as an alternative theory or model to explain peace failure, or the success of statebuilding – my contribution is to try to rethink the outcome itself.[120] De facto control of populated territory – more precisely, post-war strategies for controlling populated territory – provides this outcome.[121] The conceptual development required to do this is one of the reasons a theory building rather

[117] Huang 2016b.
[118] Lake 2017.
[119] Driscoll 2015.
[120] In other words, this is a 'Y-oriented' project, not an 'X-oriented' project.
[121] This distinguishes my research from research on post-war statebuilding: the latter tries to explain movement towards a particular outcome – statehood – which is distinct to the core outcomes I am trying to explain, and/or explains the strategies that actors direct towards the outcome of statehood, which to some extent overlap with how I conceptualise post-war control strategies but as I argue further in Chapter 2, there are important differences in the outcomes I explain and they should not be conflated with (post-war) statebuilding.

than theory testing approach was required – constructing the conceptual building blocks of the theory was part of the research process itself, and this was rooted in the case study investigations.

My focus on territorial and demographic control strategies also serves as a way to bridge wartime and post-war dynamics, in line with recent developments in the literature referred to above. However, I argue that it cannot be reasonably assumed that existing theories relating to wartime control strategies such as military conquest, or ethnic/political cleansing and forced displacement – which occur in a context defined by intense violent armed struggle – can be unproblematically applied to post-war contexts where this intense violent is no longer present and an armed military confrontation is no longer taking place. While the continued importance of controlling populated territory can guide the investigation of what matters to states and secessionists in post-war environments, new conceptual and theoretical tools are necessary to take into account what is specific to post-secessionist war contexts (such as a post-war cleavage reflecting the outcome of the war, and various constraints that I discuss in Chapter 2) and thereby explain post-war control strategies.[122] In combination with the discussion in the previous paragraph, this further justifies the theory building approach taken.

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In the context of an international architecture of fragmented demographic and territorial control and further ruptures to that architecture wrought by war combined with competing demands to create a new political order, post-war environments are formed and transformed through the interactions of political actors and populations as they try to settle the questions of who rules, where, and over whom. Why does this matter? Most states and societies have been shaped by violent armed conflict in some way, and international and regional orders are the outcomes of war. Wars are about "who gets to call the tune in the peace"[123] and the struggle to settle this fundamental political question is played out through the

[122] These conceptual and theoretical tools are the topic of Chapter 2.
[123] Betts 1994, 21.

creation of the post-war order.[124] Chapter 2 outlines how I think this works. The next section discusses my research strategy.

1.3. Research Strategy[125]

The scope conditions for this project are terminated secessionist wars. This is the broadest extent of cases to which the argument is intended to apply and puts the substantive scope of the project (and therefore the research agendas it contributes to) at the intersection of research on civil wars and war to peace transitions (but excluding wars over government) and national self-determination movements (but excluding those that never escalate to war).[126] Empirically, I have bounded the scope to a cluster of cases: a sub-population of terminated secessionist wars starting in the 1990s within two geographic regions – the Caucasus and the Balkans (see Chapter 3 for the list of cases).

I conducted in-depth case studies of the aftermaths of two secessionist wars – what Tarrow calls 'duel-process tracing'[127] – one case from the Balkans, one from the Caucasus, and 'shadow cases' of the other secessionist wars in the 1990s from these regions. A 'case-oriented' project "seeks to understand complex units" (in contrast to variable-oriented studies which "aim at establishing generalized relationships between variables"),[128] and focusing on 'case clusters' drawn from a sub-population of armed conflicts defined by type and region has several advantages.[129] It is a practical and feasible starting point for empirically intensive case-oriented conflict research which facilitates theory development that can push

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[124] I do not look at the difference between de facto control and (legitimate) authority: I look at *who* rules *where* and over *whom*, but not *how* they rule.
[125] Several aspects of the research strategy, and in particular the fieldwork, are discussed in the Appendix.
[126] This may be either due to successful government repression or if the objectives are for autonomy short of secession, or when secession is peaceful and mutually accepted. The scope includes cases where the secessionist entity achieves full international recognition, but does not extend to explaining relations between the new and rump state. While these inter-state relations may be conflictual (as, for example, was the case between Ethiopia and Eritrea), this is a different conflict cleavage and so outside the scope of my inquiry.
[127] Tarrow 2010.
[128] Della Porta 2008, 198; Ragin 1989; Note also that "Case-oriented researchers certainly think in terms of variables, but their attention is strongly focused on detailed contextual knowledge of specific cases and on how variables interact within the context of these cases." Brady and Collier 2010, 315.
[129] This draws on the 'clustered case studies' approach used by Coggins in her research on state recognition in the Former Yugoslavia and the Former Soviet Union. Coggins 2015a; I also draw on Staniland's use of a combination of within and across case comparisons from two regions. Staniland 2014.

the field beyond micro-level, single-case research designs that "do not add up to systematic knowledge" beyond that case.[130] This strikes a balance between limiting the analysis to a single conflict at the expense of breadth, precluding the possibility of identifying common mechanisms, and over-extending the analysis to all possible cases at the expense of depth, making heroic assumptions about the comparability of disparate conflicts.

Chapter 3 discuss the opportunities and limitations associated with researching conflicts in the Caucasus and the Balkans, and Abkhazia and Kosovo in particular. The cases were not randomly selected, but this would not have been suitable for a theory building project or for field research. Rather, I chose two cases – one from each region – from a coherently defined sub-population, aiming for theory building and new empirical insights into substantively important and politically relevant cases. These cases were also the most appropriate in terms of where field research could be done effectively, safely, and ethically.[131] These considerations were important for meeting my theory building objective and delivering on the empirical aims. A case-oriented approach made these aims mutually supporting: this is a study of secessionist conflict in the Caucasus and the Balkans *and* a study of state and secessionist post-war strategies for controlling people and territory. In a theory building project getting the empirical story right matters *a lot*, and the theoretical work gives the empirics structure and meaning.

My aim is not theory testing. I do not test hypotheses derived deductively from a theory (specified prior to any data collection) using evidence from cases that were randomly selected from a universe of equivalent units, the boundaries of which were precisely defined prior to the research and which could not be changed. The decision to use a theory building strategy – already discussed in section 1.2 in relation to how I aim to contribute to existing research – was made early in the project, reflecting my aim to rethink the post-war outcomes that can be the focus of research and to develop the analytical tools by which to do this. The choice to focus on strategies, also discussed earlier in this chapter, provided an

[130] Cederman and Vogt 2017, 2007–2008; See also Staniland 2017.
[131] I discuss this further in the Appendix.

entry point to guide the empirical research. So did anecdotal evidence from multiple cases of post-war environments such as the examples at the start of this chapter that motivated an investigation of what political actors *do* post-war to control people and territory that could not be reduced to spoiling or peacebuilding.

To avoid and overcome the limitations of previous research, it was necessary to empirically ground the conceptual development of these strategies in case study investigations as a way to identify the types of post-war strategies used: I needed to first answer the question, "what are the post-war strategies that actors use to control populated territory", rather than the question, "what are the post-war statebuilding (or peacebuilding, or democratisation, or diplomatic) strategies used by the actors", or "are wartime strategies of control such as ethnic cleansing and forced displacement also used post-war". Developing an appropriate conceptualisation of the phenomena I am trying to explain – territorial and demographic control strategies – and being able to show that they matter, theoretically, empirically and politically, was itself part of the research process, motivated by my critique of existing research on post-war environments and by the importance of de facto control of populated territory. By doing so, I would then have the building blocks of a theory. Note also that while a theory building approach was rooted in my initial engagement with existing research and the objective of developing empirically-grounded concepts, presenting the research in these terms, as a theory building rather than theory testing project, is also about transparency and presenting the thesis in terms of how the research was actually done, even (or especially) with the benefit of hindsight. Concept formation is part of theory building[132] – developing a concept "is more than providing a definition: it is deciding what is important about an entity"[133] – and for my research, this needed to be empirically-informed and guided by the case study investigations rather than adopting 'off-the-shelf' concepts from existing theories so that I could capture, to the extent possible, the full range of 'what is important' about control strategies. As should become clearer over the following chapters, the case study is both a *form of presentation* – the text of Chapters 4 to 6 – and a *form of inquiry*,

[132] Collier, Brady, and Seawright 2010, 140.
[133] Goertz 2006, 27.

which for this project was the entire research process, an extended investigation of two cases lasting several years and involving multiple field trips and archival work as well as desk-based research. These are both crucial elements of case study research but have different logics. So while the theoretical framework is presented in Chapter 2, before the empirical chapters, the investigations into the two theory building cases from which the framework was eventually built were conducted first. The research process is often iterative and non-linear, especially in case-oriented theory building projects, and the presentation of a piece of research can never fully reflect this, but it is necessary to present the theoretical framework first so that the case studies can then be presented using the conceptual language and analytical tools that form part of the thesis' contribution.

Moreover, a case is not a case *study*; to conflate the two would be like conflating a dataset with a quantitative analysis. A *case study* is an investigation into and selective reconstruction of a historical segment of social and political reality, bounded by substantive criteria in accordance with a research objective. This investigation and reconstruction – the case *study*, i.e. casing,[134] collecting and processing and evaluating the evidence, drawing conclusions – involves many iterations of a dialogue between theory and evidence, only one of which gets presented as the 'final' version. Chapters 4 and 5 present the reconstruction of these cases using the concepts and theory developed over the course of the investigation. This investigation – the entire research process – was an iterative process where the aim was not 'just' to explain the relationship between two variables, but required identifying and refining what the core concepts were, why they mattered, and how they relate to each other in a complex environment in an attempt to distil a plausible theory.

How did this work? Theory building in a case-oriented project begins with the construction of a historical narrative (in my case, two narratives): who was doing what to whom where. This was not purely inductive

[134] Casing is the methodological step of putting conceptual constraints around complex, unique empirical phenomena in order to make them comparable and amenable to theory building. In case-oriented research, the boundaries of cases are not necessarily defined in advance; rather, defining them is part of the research process. Ragin 1992 In this project, choices about when to begin and end the case studies were important in the theory building effort, and are discussed more in Chapter 3 and the case study chapters.

but was guided by a research objective which began with a focus on de facto control of territory and populations: who controlled what and where? How, where and by whom was that control attained, preserved and contested? Over time, as the research objectives were refined and questions were more clearly formulated and the evidentiary base expanded, these narratives were rewritten and became more focused and crucial factors – recurring patterns, critical junctures, for example – were identified. The aim is to turn a historical narrative into a more analytical and theoretical account, attempting to explain how the outcome of interest came about, using the evidence and case knowledge accumulated during the investigations to identify plausible causes of the strategies which can then form the basis of a more fleshed-out and general framework.

This requires converting particular concrete instances from the narratives – in my case, what the actors were doing to affect de facto control of people and territory and why – into abstract analytical categories that can be the building blocks of a theoretical framework and potentially travel to other cases. Working with two theory building cases, in an iterative rather than a linear process, it was necessary to move back and forth between the two narratives, looking for areas of convergence and divergence which would enable some calibration and mutual adjustment of the concepts and mechanisms being developed so as to find a good 'fit' between analytical categories and the empirics. As noted above, a 'final' version of the theoretical framework and the case studies is then presented on the basis of this process once it has reached the point of an internally coherent, logical and plausible argument that is supported by the evidence.

A theory building approach is also an opportunity to generate multiple insights and implications – conceptual, theoretical, empirical – from the case studies, the result of which is sometimes messy but as a research strategy the aim is precisely this richness of new insights rather than the confirmation or disconfirmation of a theory settled on prior to starting the research. This also means that theory building

is intentionally more open-ended than theory testing – the ambition, at least, is to have the first word on a topic, not the last.[135]

In addition to being well-suited to theory building and concept development, case study methods are appropriate for investigating mechanisms and change over time and for providing in-depth, contextually sensitive and historically informed explanations of important phenomena.[136] For the case studies in Chapters 4 and 5, I use process tracing and causal reconstruction, a method of within-case analysis based on a causal-process – rather than correlational – logic.[137] Such an approach aligns theoretical assumptions about the phenomena being studied and the methodology used to study them.[138] My focus on transitions from war to post-war environments and the process whereby objectives generate strategies, mediated by the constraints and opportunities of the environment (see Chapter 2), required such methodological tools and is why the within-case analysis is prioritised over cross-case comparisons of 'states of the world' or terminal outcomes.

Process tracing combines a detailed reconstruction of events with a theoretical explanation of a causal process,[139] and "involves a commitment to showing how a result was brought about". In practice, such an explanation requires identifying "a plausible mechanism and its observable implications", and producing a selective but "well-evidenced" theory-driven historical narrative documenting "that those observable implications in fact occurred".[140] This exercise in 'causal reconstruction' is the core task of process tracing, and should be done with reference to the theory being developed. The foundation of process tracing is the reconstruction of historical events,[141] and, depending on the research objective, the researcher then "converts a historical narrative into an *analytical* causal explanation couched in explicit

[135] Note that theory building does not mean grounded theory or purely inductive research; the early stages of the research (forming preliminary research questions, casing, initial data collection) were theory-guided and drew on existing research (see previous discussion of this chapter).
[136] So argue several civil war scholars: Sambanis 2004a; Collier and Sambanis 2005; Tarrow 2007; Blattman and Miguel 2010; Staniland 2014; Lyall 2015.
[137] Tarrow 2010.
[138] Hall 2003.
[139] George and Bennett 2005, chap. 10.
[140] Wood 2013, 253.
[141] On the importance of good descriptive research, see Gerring 2012.

theoretical forms".[142] "Causal reconstruction", explains Mayntz, "does not look for statistical relationships among variables but seeks to *explain* a given social phenomenon … by identifying the processes through which it is generated. Causal reconstruction may lead to a (more or less complex) historical narrative, but in its theoretically more ambitious version, causal reconstruction aims at generalizations … involving processes, not correlations."[143]

The two case studies in Chapters 4 and 5 are the core of the project,[144] but I also extend the analysis to the other armed conflicts that broke out in the Caucasus and the Balkans in the 1990s. Through briefer 'shadow' case studies in Chapter 7 that highlight similarities and differences across a larger number of cases, I consider the extent to which the framework developed in the theory building case studies can be applied more generally. The purpose of the shadow cases is not primarily to explain differences in final outcomes across cases – there are multiple factors that explain these differences so even the most closely matched comparisons are unlikely to provide a degree of control that would satisfy the standards of a potential outcomes model of causal inference.[145] Rather, their purpose is to clarify, refine and extend the argument and show the extent to which it works across the sub-population of cases. The shadow cases provide further evidence to judge how well the argument does at explaining political actors' strategies for controlling people and territory after secessionist wars, and show where modifications and further research are necessary.

Data and Evidence

My research draws on archival and field research in Tbilisi, Sukhumi, Belgrade, Pristina, Mitrovica and New York between October 2016 and June 2018, in addition to primary and secondary material from government, IO and NGO sources, academic studies, and news media.[146] Case study research on post-war environments poses several challenges: conflict-affected areas are often data poor, but case study

[142] George and Bennett 2005, 211.
[143] Mayntz 2004, 238; See also Héritier 2008.
[144] In Chapter 6, I discuss more recent developments and compare the two cases.
[145] On matching and using the potential outcomes framework to improve process tracing, see Lyall 2015.
[146] The field research was carried out during the following dates: Georgia: October to December 2016, April to June 2017; Abkhazia: May/June 2017; Serbia: October 2017; Kosovo: October to December 2017.

methods have high data demands. In such environments, no single method of data collection or generation will be adequate, not only because of data scarcity but because of the increased likelihood that available information is misleading or false. This makes the collection of data from multiple sources essential.[147] This section briefly summarises the key points relating to the data and evidence used in this research.[148]

I undertook fieldwork – that is, "gathering evidence in context – within the settings where the political decisions, events, and dynamics of interest took place or are recorded"[149] – as a way to generate data and gain insights into historical events where published sources were insufficient. In addition to conducting semi-structured interviews with direct and indirect participants in the conflicts under study, background and informational interviews with experts helped corroborate (or cast doubt on) other sources of evidence and fill gaps, as well as suggest new lines of inquiry. I carried out interviews and meetings with local and national government officials, representatives of international organisations who work (or worked) in the case study areas, local and international NGO workers, in particular those working on conflict resolution and peacebuilding issues, and experts from domestic and foreign universities, think tanks and media. As much as was possible, I tried to make sure that I was interviewing respondents from all sides of the conflict and hearing the perspectives of Georgian, Abkhaz, Serb and Albanian interlocutors, and sought out different views within those communities. Some interviews were on-the-record, some were off-the-record and for informational purposes only, according to the preferences of the respondent. Most interviews were conducted face to face; a small number were done via phone.

The purpose of interviews was to contribute to the generation of data needed for the historical narratives that form the basis of the causal reconstruction of my two cases. Therefore the selection procedure for respondents combined purposive and reputational sampling, which involved identifying potential

[147] Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read 2015, 29.
[148] My research was approved by the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC), Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford. Reference Number: SSH_DPIR_C1A_16_032 (20 June 2016). See Appendix for more on research ethics and risk management.
[149] Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read 2015, 8–9.

respondents who have been involved in (or have knowledge of) the process, events or actors being studied, and because knowledge of this target population is partial, the initial respondents are asked to suggest further relevant subjects.[150] The particular challenges of conducting interviews in conflict-affected areas of the Caucasus and the Balkans not only require meeting the demands of the ethical approval procedure and ensuring strict adherence to good ethical practice throughout and after conducting the research, but also mean that interviews should not be relied on as the main source of evidence. While valuable, interviews are only one of several data collection techniques used.

Besides data generation, the fieldwork proved to be indispensable in other ways. Conducting field research requires flexibility and adaptability,[151] and being forced to confront the iterative back and forth between theory and empirics while in the midst of data collection helped with synthesising and analysing competing arguments and perspectives. More importantly, I believe that investing in an extended engagement with field research is necessary to develop anything approaching the deep knowledge of cases required for serious theory building and for making informed judgments about what *matters*, and goes some way to earning the right to be listened to on difficult questions of war and peace.

For the Abkhazia-Georgia case study, I obtained all available documents from the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) deposited in the UN Archives in New York, which includes daily, weekly and monthly situation reports written by the mission's Chief Military Observer, the cables between the mission and UN Headquarters, and reports from UN officials involved in talks and negotiations with Georgian, Abkhaz and Russian politicians. I made two visits to the archives: July 2017 and June 2018. UN archives are made available after 20 years, so the accessible material covers the period 1992 to 1998.[152]

[150] Tansey 2007.
[151] LaPorte 2014; Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read 2015.
[152] The daily situation reports begin in August 1993, the weekly situation reports begin in August 1994, and the cables begin in December 1992. There are some gaps: some files are missing (this can happen for many reasons – often because the field mission does not submit the relevant documents to the archive), some are classified as 'Strictly Confidential' (for example if they contain personal information about UN staff). All references to UN archival material include the series, box number and file number (for example S-1829-0047-09 refers to series S-1829, box 47, file 9). For more information see <https://archives.un.org>

In addition to the field and archival research, I have made use of an extensive range of primary and secondary sources including news media and reports from national governments and international organisations and NGOs, as well as academic literature on the case studies from history, area studies and the social sciences.

1.4. Outline

This introductory chapter has set out my research objectives and strategy, and provided the rationale for the project that is rooted in what we know and what we don't know but should about the termination and aftermath of secessionist wars and post-war environments. I have argued for an approach that starts with the central importance of de facto control of populated territory during and after armed conflict, and that puts actors' strategies and objectives at the core of the theoretical framework. I have summarised the main argument – objectives explain strategies, mediated by the constraints and opportunities of the environment – and the following chapters, outlined below, will fully elaborate on that argument and provide the empirical substantiation and supporting evidence in the case studies.

Chapter 2	Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework. It systematises control strategies and constrained objectives into analytical categories so as to fashion the building blocks of an argument that explains base state and secessionist post-war control strategies.
Chapter 3	Chapter 3 is a bridge between the theoretical framework and the empirical chapters. It provides background information on the wars in the Caucasus and the Balkans and discuss the purpose and structure of the theory building case studies.
Chapter 4	Case study 1: Georgia-Abkhazia, 1993-2006
Chapter 5	Case study 2: Serbia-Kosovo, 1999-2008
Chapter 6	Chapter 6 discusses more recent developments in the Georgia-Abkhazia and Serbia-Kosovo cases, and then compares the two case studies and contrasts the control strategies used by the principal political actors.
Chapter 7	Chapter 7 clarifies, refines and extends the project's argument and contribution. It starts with five 'shadow cases' of other secessionist conflicts to examine the wider relevance of my argument. I then use the shadow cases as the basis for an evaluation of the overall argument and framework and suggestions for further research before summing-up and concluding.
Methods Appendix	The appendix provides further information on how the research was conducted, with a focus on ethics and risk management during the field research, and the research process in a case-oriented theory building project.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

Objectives explain strategies, mediated by the constraints and opportunities of the environment. My theory building investigations of the aftermaths of the wars in Abkhazia and Kosovo show how base states and secessionists use strategies to control territory and populations in post-war environments in pursuit of objectives related to a post-war cleavage of reincorporation versus full and permanent separation. These strategies extend far beyond the use of violence or participation in peace talks and negotiations: what matters – substantively and theoretically – in a transition to a post-war environment and the formation of a post-war political order is how the principal political actors go about establishing, challenging and preserving the 'facts on the ground'; that is, their strategies for controlling populations and territories.

This chapter distils the insights from the empirical investigations.[1] It systematises control strategies and constrained objectives into analytical categories so as to fashion the building blocks of a theoretical framework that explains base state and secessionist post-war control strategies. The purpose of the chapter is to conceptualise the moving parts of post-war environments and offer some propositions about how these cogs and wheels fit together. This is not a deterministic argument – strategies are chosen by actors, and there will always be multiple possible strategies for them to choose from – but by understanding the actors' objectives and the environment in which they operate, I can make a plausible argument for explaining control strategies in post-war environments.

[1] See the discussion in Chapter 1 on the research strategy.

2.2. Territorial and Demographic Control Strategies

Strategies are the means by which actors try to bring about particular outcomes.[2] Territorial and demographic control strategies are a sub-set of strategies for controlling territory and populations (which includes contesting another actors' control).[3] My focus is on territorial and demographic control strategies used by base states and secessionists in the aftermaths of secessionist wars.

What are the core characteristics of territorial and demographic control strategies? In my framework, to be a control strategy, a strategy must be *about* – that is, trying to in some way influence or affect – at least one of four constitutive characteristics of control (meaning that core characteristics are individually sufficient but not necessary to classify a measure as a control strategy).[4] The core characteristics associated with territorial control strategies are *access* to a territory (and *denial* of access), and *presence and absence* in a territory. The core characteristics associated with demographic control strategies are the *composition and location* of populations, and the *loyalty and compliance* of populations (see Table 2.1).

[2] In my framework, 'strategies' has a similar meaning to what other scholars call 'repertoires'. My definitions draw on work by Wood and Gutiérrez-Sanín, who in turn draw on Tilly. Wood 2008; Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017; Tilly 1978; Tilly 2003; See also Ron 2000; Hoover Green 2018.

[3] The distinction between territorial and demographic strategies is mostly an analytical one, and there is a lot of overlap empirically: the links between demographic engineering and territorial control, for example, are a key focus of civil war research. As Greenhill notes, "history illustrates that engineered migration can be a very effective way to consolidate control over territory." Greenhill 2008, 17; See also McGarry 1998; Kassymbekova 2011; Krause and Eiran 2018; McNamee 2018.

[4] The characteristics are based on the definition of de facto control (Chapter 1).

Table 2.1 Territorial and Demographic Control Strategies

	Associated core characteristic	**Definition**
Territorial control strategies (*who rules where*)	Access/denial of access to a territory	Measures which demarcate, regulate and enforce boundaries that allow or restrict entry to a territory, or which challenge another actor's ability to do so.
	Presence and absence within a territory	Measures which establish and sustain an actor's presence within a territory, or which challenge another actor's presence.
Demographic control strategies (*who rules over whom*)	Composition and location of populations	Measures which establish and sustain 'demographic facts'[5] about who lives where i.e. which populations can and cannot reside within a territory.
	Loyalty and compliance of populations	Measures which influence and regulate a populations' interactions with political actors.

Territorial control strategies are the means by which actors *allow or deny access* to an area, and influence and regulate the *presence and absence* of political actors within that area. This includes demarcating areas of effective control in order to restrict and regulate access to a territory claimed by an actor by establishing, changing, preserving and regulating boundaries. Boundaries have important security and defensive functions (and so can also be targeted for removal by rivals' control strategies), and their access/denial function can take many forms, such as raising the cost of unwanted entry, targeting certain groups to be excluded, or attempting absolute exclusion.[6] As points of contact and interaction as well as division, boundaries are used by actors to mediate their relations and exchanges with each other.[7] Boundaries need not be permanent or have a fixed location to demarcate, regulate and enforce access – mobile and stationary checkpoints, for example, serve similar functions. Closely related to controlling access, territorial control strategies also include measures to establish an actor's presence in an area (that is, the presence of their personnel and agents, including proxies) or to undermine another actor's ability to be present in an area. These strategies may involve excluding rival actors from an area (monopolising

[5] The phrase 'establishing demographic facts' is from McGarry 1998, 616.
[6] Andreas 2003; Staniland 2005; Hassner and Wittenberg 2015.
[7] Kratochwil 1986.

territorial control) and/or establishing and entrenching a permanent presence through institution-building and defensive measures within an area to prevent expulsion by another actor.

Demographic control strategies are the means by which political actors affect the presence and behaviour of populations (rather than political actors) within an area. Post-war struggles over control are about settling the question, 'who is to be ruled?' as well as 'who rules?', so demographic control strategies target the *composition and location* of a population in an area and how populations interact with political actors, principally relations of *loyalty and compliance*. This is a deliberately minimal definition of demographic control, and I do not extend the definition to include more substantive relations of legitimate representation and so on. Composition and location are about establishing demographic facts on the ground by putting the 'right' people in the right place and making them stay there, and keeping the 'wrong' people out (the definitions do not specify *which* populations are targeted because this depends on the objective). This includes measures that add to or subtract from the population (such as through promoting in-migration or out-migration), that provide incentives for (some of) the population to remain in an area, that sort and segregate the population of an area into a particular demographic profile,[8] and that prevent targeted groups from residing in an area.[9] These measures take their most extreme wartime form in forced displacement and ethnic or political cleansing,[10] but also include other 'push factors' (such as sanctions and/or positive incentives) intended to move particular groups to a particular location and regulating the movement of populations within an area.[11]

Demographic control strategies also target the relationship between populations and political actors: these strategies deploy incentives and sanctions to induce a population's compliance with the preferences of a

[8] Weiner and Teitelbaum 2001.
[9] In post-war contexts, demographic control strategies deal with the consequences of displacement and blocking or facilitating the return of displaced populations. See Black and Koser 1999; Ó Tuathail and O'Loughlin 2009; Jenne 2010; Adelman and Barkan 2011; Toal and Dahlman 2011; Zaum 2011; Milner 2011; Schwartz 2019a; Camarena and Hägerdal 2020.
[10] Jackson Preece 1998; McGarry 1998; Lischer 2007; Steele 2009; Greenhill 2010; Steele 2011; Zhukov 2015; Bulutgil 2018b; Lichtenheld 2020a.
[11] On how states monopolise and regulate the right to authorise movement see Torpey 1998; See also Adamson 2006; Klem 2014.

political actor and to encourage the target population to be loyal (such as paying taxes or political support in elections or, at least, not supporting a rival actor), or to encourage defection (i.e. non-compliance or disloyalty) among a population under the control of a rival actor.[12] Contrary to much research on armed actor-civilian relations, I do *not* assume that the principal political actors necessarily expect to govern (segments of) the populations they target with control strategies and that they will therefore necessarily be concerned with the loyalty or compliance of that population.[13] Rather, political actors might only target the composition and location of populations, with some groups targeted for expulsion, or treated with indifference (that is, there is no effort to govern but rather to isolate and contain a segment of the population).

In these core definitions, I do not distinguish between base state and secessionist strategies or different possible targets of these strategies (for example, if secessionists or the base state are targeting the loyalty of a majority group in a secessionist entity or the presence of a minority group that remain loyal to the base state), nor do I assume that the core characteristics have equal importance. However, in practice control strategies only make sense in relation to (a) an actor and their objectives (not least because in secessionist conflicts there is an asymmetry between the actors' objectives), (b) specific territories and populations and (c) whether existing patterns of control are being changed or preserved. Therefore, I use the core characteristics as the conceptual building blocks of *strategy profiles*. Strategy profiles are combinations of strategies constructed from the core characteristics (for example, secessionist strategies that restrict the access of rivals to, and exclude a targeted population from, an area) that are expected to be associated with particular constrained objectives (see sections 2.3-4). This means categorising control strategies in broad terms but there are advantages to doing so, especially in a theory building project. Demographic and territorial control strategies do not always have indicators like acts of fatal violence or

[12] Note that my interest is in the actors' strategies, not with the true preferences of the population.
[13] Kalyvas notes that the intention of an actor to govern a target population is what distinguishes the methods of civil war violence and state terror/persecution from genocide and mass deportation (i.e. there is no such intention in the case of latter). Kalyvas 2006, 29.

the signing of a peace agreement that are relatively straightforward to identify and measure. So, while narrowing the definition would increase precision, this would risk being at the expense of capturing – to the extent possible – the full range of demographic and territorial post-war control strategies actors use, which I have chosen to prioritise in order to meet my theory building aims. An additional advantage of focusing on broad strategy profiles rather than individual strategies in isolation is that it becomes possible to identify the connections between the actions undertaken by base states and secessionists to affect control and how different territorial and demographic strategies are linked through an overarching political objective (for example, how securing access to an area of territory is necessary for supporting the presence of a population, or how establishing a permanent loyal population in a particular area supports efforts to deny a rival from accessing a territory, and so on).

The definitions given in this section are of control strategies in general – instances of their use could be found in many different contexts, not just related to armed conflict or its aftermath. The strategy profiles outlined in section 2.4 are the expected control strategies in *post-war* environments (and specifically after secessionist wars), mediated by the constraints and opportunities of that environment. As argued in Chapter 1, part of my justification for a theory building approach is that theories of wartime dynamics (including violently coercive control strategies such as forced displacement) cannot be unproblematically applied to post-war contexts which are not characterised by high intensity militarised armed conflict, so being able to explain the post-war control strategies identified in this study marks an advance on theories of wartime dynamics that explain a narrower range of war-specific violent control strategies.

It is also important not to conflate post-war demographic and territorial control strategies with post-war statebuilding. They are related but controlling populated territory and statebuilding are conceptually and empirically distinct: statebuilding cannot be done without controlling populated territory but populated territory can be controlled without building a state. This means the demographic and territorial control strategies identified and explained in this study are analytically prior to statebuilding and more extensive in the range of political orders they may ultimately be relevant to explaining (not every form of political order is a state). Statebuilding entails establishing institutions and structures of authority, which leads to questions of *legitimate* authority which I am deliberately bracketing so as to retain the distinct focus on de

facto territorial and demographic control. These distinctions matter for clarifying the core outcomes that this study has identified and tries to explain, as the following sections discuss in more detail.

2.3. Post-War Environments: Objectives and Constraints

I assume that base states want the full reincorporation of the secessionist territory and the restoration of their territorial integrity within the internationally recognised borders of the pre-war state.[14] I assume that secessionists want full and permanent separation from the base state, either through becoming an independent state or through irredentism and incorporation into another state. Conceptually, this characterises the post-war cleavage between the principal political actors in terms of their maximalist and mutually exclusive objectives that reflect the national projects of the base state and the secessionists. Empirically, this picture may be made more complicated by other domestic and regional dynamics that introduce more actors and other conflict cleavages: for example, base states may face more than one secessionist entity or be kin-states to national minorities in other states in the neighbourhood, and secessionists may be co-ethnics with secessionist (or otherwise politically mobilised) minorities in neighbouring states, and these scenarios could influence objectives. Moreover, in any given case there will be scope for bargaining, concessions and compromises both between a base state and a secessionist movement and internally between individuals and factions on each side. Nonetheless, for the sake of clearer theorising it helps to start with these two maximalist positions of a state-secessionist dyad and work from there to map out a spectrum of possible post-war objectives related to de facto control of populated territory.

Objectives are not formed in a vacuum, so understanding the context is important, not least because this context is also the very thing that the actors are trying to influence.[15] A post-war environment is the

[14] As Suny and Cheterian have noted, in the Balkans and the Caucasus, base states have generally been prepared to offer "more than autonomy [but] less than independence", so while some questions of political status are negotiable – for example federalism – the base state's territorial integrity is not. Suny and Cheterian 2012, 658.

[15] This means it is difficult to make strong causal claims, especially when using observational data (empirically, there is not much distance between objectives and strategies, so it is problematic to try and separate out a 'treatment' and then observe an effect) but the causal-process logic that underpins this theoretical framework – outcomes are

political order that the base state and secessionists are actively trying to shape, not just a time period after fighting has stopped. Secessionist wars do not end with a clean break or a quick return to the pre-war status quo and the end of military activity does not mean that one of the actors has met their maximalist objectives nor does it mean the end of attempts to revise control of populated territory. How close the political actors are to their maximalist objectives depends on the outcome of the war, but however the war ends, the actors will try to shape the post-war order according to how they want people, territory and authority to be aligned. Winning the war militarily is rarely enough to meet maximalist objectives. The political objective in a secessionist war is not just to defeat the opposing armed forces but to settle questions of who rules where over whom, and this takes time after the fighting has stopped: war termination is a process, not an event, or a switch from one 'state of the world' to another.

This is most clearly the case for militarily successful secessionists hoping for recognition and fearing reincorporation, but even in cases where secessionists are militarily defeated, a base state battlefield victory is not the same as fully reincorporating secessionist territory. The base state still has to reclaim control of the population and the territory, and this is a post-war process of extending state authority that may take time even if unopposed by an organised secessionist actor. Unless a mutually acceptable lasting settlement can be agreed (or enforced),[16] the parties will be in a situation that neither are satisfied with, and each side will have something further to gain or something further to lose.

My theoretical framework needs to explain what base states and secessionists do to shape these environments when neither the full restoration of the pre-war status quo nor the full separation of the secessionist territory has been accomplished and a post-war cleavage remains active. This may be a very short period of time or continue for decades but every terminated war goes through such a transition

generated through processes – goes some way to addressing these issues: getting the descriptive aspects right matter more than causal inference in a theory building project, and the case studies should be judged by the extent to which I manage this.

[16] This is rare: post-war, it is very little difficult to reach an acceptable agreement that lasts because the level of trust is so low and the experience of war creates credible commitment problems. Downes 2004; See also Walter 2002.

period into a post-war environment. This environment will be characterised by a particular set of constraints within which political actors operate as they try to shape de facto control of populated territory within that environment.

Constraints are any factors which delay or prevent the base state and/or the secessionists from achieving their maximalist objectives. These constraints – which may be material or normative – mean that maximalist objectives are not realised when the violent stage of the conflict ends, and are obstacles in the way of base states and secessionists satisfying these objectives during the transition to a post-war environment. Both side faces material constraints after being weakened by the war, and international norms against secession are – usually – a major constraint against secessionists receiving recognition. International norms in favour of negotiated settlements and against redrawing boundaries and exchanging or transferring populations act as restraints on both sides from ending the conflict as they may wish and also shape their post-war options, although such norms are not consistently enforced or respected.

External actors impose further constraints on what base states and secessionists can do. The international importance of secessionist wars means neighbouring states, great powers and international organisations (IOs) always take an interest in how secessionist wars end, and have their own preferences about how de facto control should be distributed, in pursuit of their regional and wider foreign policy interests.[17] The relative weakness of the principal political actors increases the scope for external actors to pursue their own agendas and exert influence, and/or increase the base states' and secessionists' reliance on external support (notably in secessionists' reliance on patrons for their survival and base states' reliance on other states to support their territorial integrity and to not recognise secessionists' statehood claims). External actors want regional stability and influence over post-war environments – which may mean a preference for preventing a return to violence over a resolution of the conflict – and can facilitate and frustrate the objectives of the principal political actors indirectly (by supporting or undermining one or the other

[17] Coggins 2015a; Sasse 2016; Siroky 2016; Malyarenko and Wolff 2018; Souleimanov, Abrahamyan, and Aliyev 2018.

conflict parties) or directly (if they have territorial and demographic interests in the secessionist entity or the base state, such as supporting co-ethnics/co-citizens, or a physical presence such as military bases or peacekeepers).

The presence of international military forces and/or observers to enforce, regulate or monitor a ceasefire or peace agreement will, depending on the mandate and the willingness to (impartially) enforce it, create security conditions that can both constrain and enable the base state and the secessionists by preventing or limiting the use of force to pursue objectives. International mediators may affect the objectives and strategies of the base state and the secessionists insofar as the principal political actors are willing to engage in a political process and if they judge that changing or preserving the demographic or territorial facts on the ground will help or hinder their negotiating position. International organisations involved in post-war environments may have a mandate to carry out humanitarian or development assistance, such as facilitating returns, with a vested interest in fulfilling that mandate, which can work with or against the interests of the principal political actors.[18]

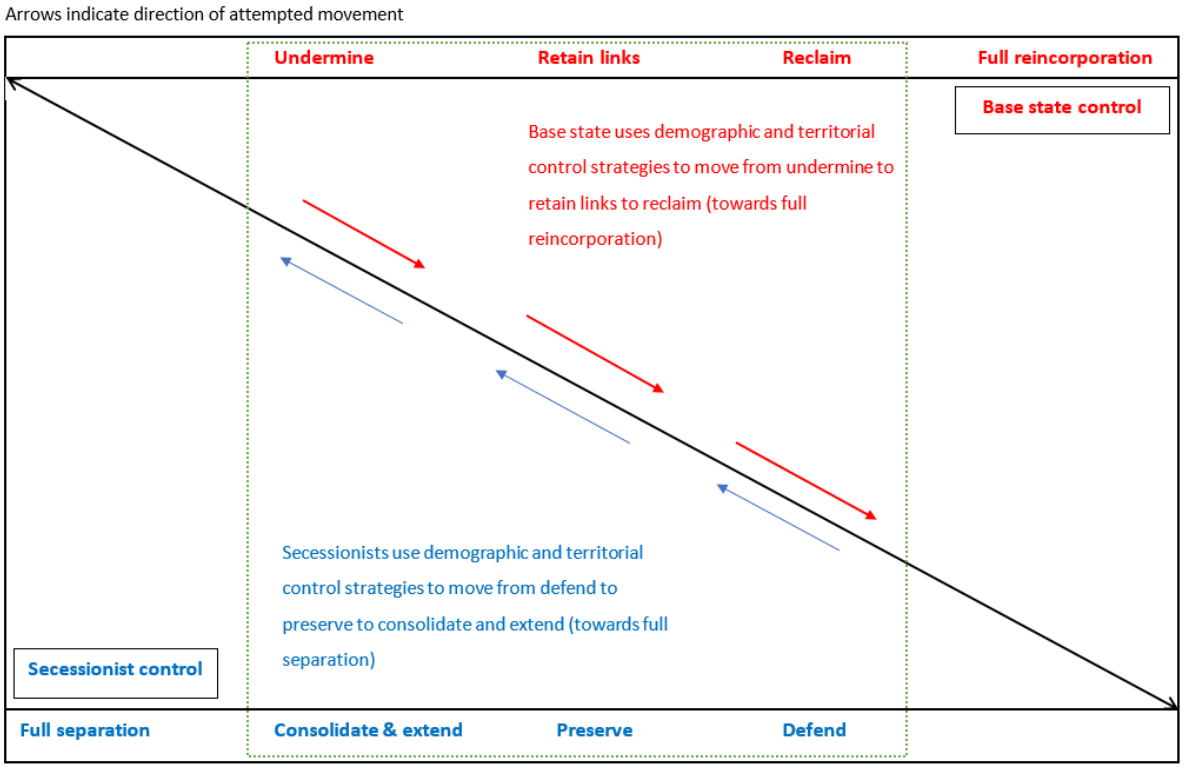
Given these post-war conditions, I argue that base states and secessionists formulate *constrained objectives* that can feasibly be acted upon, reflecting their relative positions at the end of the war (the balance of losses and gains of control between the principal political actors, or how far they are from their maximalist objective) and their preferences for revising or preserving de facto control. While they ultimately want the environment to reflect their maximalist objectives, in practice their objectives are developed in relation to the constraints of that environment. Put another way, constrained objectives are all partial and sub-optimal versions of the actors' answers to questions of who should rule where and over whom. Maximalist objectives may remain the official negotiating position of each side in peace talks – positions on which the sides may be willing to make concessions – but constrained objectives are distinct

[18] The characteristics of my two theory building cases have certainly influenced the importance attributed to external actors. The extent to which external actors are more generally involved in post-war environments, if at all, is an empirical question but in all the cases of the wider sub-population studied in this project, with the exception of the Russia-Chechnya conflict, there was significant international involvement of some sort.

from concessions reached via negotiations in that they reflect how the actors want to affect de facto control of populated territory and not (directly) formal political or constitutional issues such as status or power-sharing.

If we think of the constrained objectives along a spectrum (figure 2.1), we can then simplify this range of possible positions by taking three points for each actor along the spectrum, in addition to the maximalist objective. This creates plausible ideal-types that concretise points along the spectrum into specific constrained objectives the actors may form in post-war environments; that is, when a post-war cleavage is active and neither full reincorporation nor full separation has happened (as demarcated by the dotted line in the figure). This does not mean that the constrained objectives discussed below are exclusive – objectives may at times overlap and factions within the principal political actors (a radical wing, for example), or their local allies or proxies, may have objectives on different points on the spectrum. Nonetheless, for the purposes of theory building, this spectrum helps frame the links between objectives and control strategies. The substance of these constrained objectives is based on the actors' maximalist objectives in relation to the post-war cleavage and their relative positions at the end of the war. They are presented below in ascending order of the actor's preference.

Figure 2.1 Objectives



Base State Constrained Objectives

If a base state loses control of most or all of a secessionist entity, it will want to *undermine* the secessionists' ability to exercise de facto control over that populated territory. This reflects the weakened position of the base state after experiencing significant loss of control to the secessionists: the base state has limited or no access to the secessionist territory and limited or no permanent presence within the entity in terms of state agents. There may be no remaining population that is loyal to or recognises the authority of the base state, or this population may be inaccessible to the base state if the secessionists have established exclusive control and can deny the base state access. In such conditions, the constraints mean that the aim of the base state is to weaken the secessionists' claim to statehood by denying them the core empirical attributes of a state – effective and exclusive control of a territory and a permanent population – and to prevent any consolidation of control which would strengthen the secessionists' sovereignty claim. This objective is revisionist but weakly so – the base state is trying to reduce the secessionists' level of control but recognises it has low prospects of reincorporating lost territory or

otherwise changing the level of the base state's control and can only try to reduce the likelihood of the secessionists achieving their objectives.

If the base state has lost most but not all de facto control to the secessionists, it will want to *retain links* to the secessionist entity and keep de facto control over at least some of the territory and population, prioritising strategically, materially and symbolically important territory. This objective tries to preserve the status quo and prevent further losses – as long as the base state has access to some parts of the secessionist territory and the population residing there (such as coethnics of the base state majority who do not recognise the authority of the secessionists) it wants to hold on to those links, but does not aim to extend de facto control any further if the constraints imposed are too great to attempt a revision of the status quo and expectations of reincorporation are low. This means ensuring that there is a continued official physical presence, even if covert and non-permanent, within the secessionist entity (minimally, this means state agents or local proxies and perhaps an institutional presence), enabling the base state to monitor and preserve influence over local developments by maintaining a connection with populations still loyal to or dependent on the base state and, if successful, retaining jurisdiction – a core attribute of sovereignty – over the population. This objective also means keeping this population resident in the secessionist territory – base states recognise that their sovereignty claims over the territory are weakened if none of 'their' people live there. These links can also take the form of sustaining a bridgehead into the secessionist territory, holding on to key strategic areas that allow the base state to keep access and supply routes open.

Short of full reincorporation, base states want to *reclaim control* of populated territory lost to secessionists and the government may settle for the partial reincorporation of some lost territory back into the base state, or see this as a step towards eventual full reincorporation. This is a strongly revisionist objective: the base state has higher expectations of (partial) reincorporation if the constraints that would otherwise prevent the base state from moving towards its maximalist objective are seen to be (partially) surmountable and the benefits of extending de facto control back into the secessionist entity are judged to outweigh the costs of reclaiming ground. Reclaiming control means re-establishing a permanent and exclusive official presence of state agents in and jurisdiction over parts of the secessionist entity and the

population residing there. If accomplished – de facto or de jure – this would entail partitioning the secessionist territory (or would precede full reincorporation).

Secessionist Constrained Objectives

The secessionists' most basic aim is to *defend* 'their' territory and people: they want to avoid being reincorporated into the base state, reversing their battlefield gains and losing whatever territory they control after the war is over.[19] Having gained some de facto control of territory, preventing any reversal of these gains is sometimes the best that secessionists can hope for in an international society that does not in general look favourably on secession and when external support is likely to be low and unable to compensate for the secessionists' relative material weakness. The prospects for full separation are seen to be low as secessionists lack the capacity to extend or deepen de facto control of populated territory, so the aim is to defend the status quo. Successful territorial defence of the secessionist entity is a necessary condition for any of the other objectives.

If secessionists do not face an immediate threat of reincorporation, they can focus on the distribution of de facto control within the secessionist entity. In the immediate post-war phase, secessionists are unlikely to have attained complete control over the territory they lay claim to (especially if there are areas still populated by those loyal to the base state and where the base state retains influence and can undermine secessionist control), so their aim is to *preserve* control of (some) territory and (some) people. This entails deepening control over the areas they do hold, isolating and containing the areas they do not control, and a stronger 'border' with the base state, which they want to turn into an international border that gives them full control over who can enter (and leave) their territory. The constraints discussed above still hold and limit what is possible for the secessionists, as does the continued presence of the base state in some

[19] I assume that any self-determination movement that has escalated to an armed conflict with the state has attained at least some territorial control and a segment of the population views the movement as a legitimate authority and thus has something to lose, even if this happens very rapidly after a military defeat. Re-establishing full control of the entire populated territory of a (formerly) secessionist entity entails a longer process of extending base state authority.

areas of the secessionist entity, so this objective is about maintaining the status quo: there is no aim to increase the amount of populated territory under secessionist control but rather to resist internal and external threats to revise the distribution of control which would further threaten their tenuous status. This reflects a moderate but still present fear of reincorporation (preserving control as necessary for survival) and moderate prospects for full separation (preserving control as necessary for securing statehood).

Beyond preservation, secessionists want to *consolidate and extend* their wartime gains in control of populated territory. This is a strongly revisionist objective, with the secessionists seeing relatively higher prospects for overcoming the constraints that would otherwise prevent full de facto separation and the permanent exclusion of the base state from the secessionist entity (prompted by greater external support, for example, or a weakened base state). Even with poor prospects of international recognition (or being incorporated by a neighbouring state), secessionists can still undertake state- and nation-building projects in an attempt to sustain the other empirical attributes of statehood and a viable economy and provide public goods.[20] This objective entails an intention to extend effective control throughout the claimed territory (and over all populations within it) and remove competing sources of authority. In cases where the national 'homeland' of the secessionists extends beyond the pre-war territorial boundaries of the secessionist entity into neighbouring states or further into base state territory, this objective may also include the aim to integrate these territories and peoples.

2.4. Translating Constrained Objectives into Control Strategies

Secessionist conflicts and their aftermaths are about mutually exclusive political visions of how to align demographic and territorial control. Constrained objectives help us think about how base states and secessionists want to align people and territory – and *which* territory and *which* people (the '*where'* and the '*whom'* of who rules where over whom) – in the particular context of constraints and opportunities in the

[20] King 2001; Caspersen 2012; Bakke et al. 2013; Bakke et al. 2018.

aftermath of a secessionist war. If objectives are to explain strategies, how do constrained objectives (answers to the question of who should rule where over whom) get translated into territorial and demographic control strategies (the means used to establish or challenge these answers on the ground)? This is the final step of the theoretical framework.

Before this final step, a few further clarifications on the scope of what I am trying to explain are necessary. Base states and secessionists are not the only actors that use control strategies (warlords, criminal organisations, international organisations and other states may also be trying to control territory and populations), they do not exclusively use control strategies as defined here to pursue their objectives (my definition does not cover diplomacy or negotiations, for example), and they have objectives other than constrained objectives (relating to matters other than the post-war cleavage and de facto control of populated territory)[21] but these are not the focus of my research (although they will be discussed in the case studies as appropriate). Control strategies are used by political actors in all contexts, not just post-war, but these strategies serve particular purposes in post-war environments relating to the post-war cleavage and the formation of a post-war political order and this is what my research aims to explain.

Links and Levers

To translate constrained objectives into workable control strategies, base states and secessionists must link them to territorial and demographic features of the post-war environment that are accessible and can be leveraged to affect de facto control. I call these features *links and levers*. Links and levers are areas of territory and segments of populations that have intrinsic or instrumental value to the base state and/or the secessionists and function as mitigating factors between constrained objectives and control strategies.[22] Chapter 1 discussed the importance and value of populated territory and how it becomes

[21] Base states, for example, may need to sustain a national project in the post-war rump state: the material damage and national trauma of losing territory makes recovery and revival a priority that is (at least partly) independent of developments in the secessionist entity. Secessionists may seek increased engagement with the outside world to mitigate the consequences of isolation and enhance their status.
[22] Not to be confused with linkage and leverage. Levitsky and Way 2006.

fragmented during armed conflict; this section identifies specific aspects of territory and populations that are important and valuable in the aftermaths of secessionists wars.

Links and levers may be intrinsically valuable in the sense that they form a core part of the actors' vison about how control should be distributed (territory that is part of a homeland, or a population that is part of the 'nation', for example) or instrumentally valuable because they can be used to get closer to that vision, or prevent a rival's vision being realised (such as strategically important territory, or the latent power provided by a larger population).[23] Links and levers vary in the extent to which they are accessible and manipulable, but what makes them important is that they are the areas where the political actors overlap and interact and where their objectives regarding de facto control of populated territory are most likely to clash.

I elaborate on the role of links and levers in the theoretical framework in the next section; this section discuss their origins. It is characteristic of wars over territory that even when the secessionists are partially successful in breaking away from the base state, the break is never 'clean', and this has post-war consequences. A combination of pre-war geography and demography and changes caused by war means that certain areas of territory and segments of population take on particular value and importance to the actors in post-war environments, especially in matters of territorial and demographic control, as the following examples show.

There are sometimes areas of the secessionist entity that remain (partially) controlled by the base state or are populated by people still loyal to the base state and have become a minority in secessionist territory (such as Georgian-populated regions in Abkhazia and Serb-majority enclaves in Kosovo).[24] Sometimes there are 'border' areas where the line between secessionist and base state controlled areas is porous and unclear and the population is ethnically mixed (such as between South Ossetia and Georgia proper,

[23] On the importance of demographics and latent power in ethnic conflicts, see Krcmaric 2014.
[24] This is what Horowitz calls 'heterogeneity before, heterogeneity after': "There are always ethnic minorities in secessionist regions." Horowitz 2003, 8.

before 2008) or that emerge within the secessionist entity separating different communities (such as the North-South divide between Serbs and Albanians in the city of Mitrovica in north Kosovo). There are cases where the secessionists seize control of territory within the base state that is not part of their proclaimed 'homeland' but is used as a buffer zone and a potential bargaining chip to trade back to the base state in exchange for recognition (as with Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan). There are cases where populations allied with or loyal to the secessionists live in the base state (such as Albanians in southern Serbia, bordering Kosovo). And there are populations (from both sides of the conflict) displaced during the war from their homes in areas that, post-war, are controlled by the 'other side' (such as Georgians displaced from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Azeris displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh, Bosniaks displaced from Republika Srpska, and Serbs displaced from Croatia and Kosovo).

For these reasons and more, post-war environments are messy and complicated, and base states and secessionists want to simplify this complexity through reincorporation or separation, but they also use the links and levers this messy complexity provides to pursue their constrained objectives. It is a limitation of de facto state research that these complexities are often overlooked or downplayed: the assumption is generally that (to be a de facto state) the secessionists control all the populated-territory of their proclaimed state, but often they do not. This matters not because of slight deviations from an ideal-type of the state, but because the parts (people and/or territory) that are not fully controlled are levers that the base state and secessionists use to meet their objectives, and/or obstacles that frustrate their efforts to achieve them.[25]

Table 2.2 summarises the links and levers used by base states and secessionists in post-war environments. The list is unlikely to be exhaustive and was generated inductively from the cases; I cannot make strong claims about their frequency in post-war environments. A focus on different conflicts would likely

[25] See also Markedonov 2015, 199–200.

generate a different list but the basic analytical point – actors use valuable territorial and demographic features of the post-war environment to translate objectives into strategies – could be generalised.

Table 2.2 Links and Levers in Post-War Environments

Enclaves	Areas of territory where the majority of the population recognise the base state as the legitimate authority, but are located entirely within territory controlled by the secessionist entity.[26] The base state has at least partial de facto control within the enclave and the secessionist authorities have little or no de facto control. Example: Serb enclaves in south and central Kosovo
Contested border regions	Areas of territory within a secessionist entity but adjacent to the base state that are (at least partly) de facto controlled by the base state and where the majority of the population recognise the base state as the legitimate authority, and vice versa (i.e. areas of territory within the base state but adjacent to the secessionist entity where the population recognise the authority of the secessionists). Located between base state and secessionist-controlled territory, border regions are strategically important, especially for secessionists' defence concerns. Examples: Gali region and Kodori Valley in Abkhazia; north Kosovo; Preševo Valley in Serbia; occupied regions around Nagorno-Karabakh
Boundaries	De facto territorial demarcations that define and delimit the extent of political actors' effective territorial control (where one actor's control ends and another's begins) and hence have strategic and defensive value, and regulate the movement of populations from one area of control to another. Territorial boundaries do not necessarily coincide with de jure borders, demographic control or the political loyalties of the populations they contain. Boundaries may originate in pre-war administrative borders, natural boundaries, and/or ceasefire lines, or emerge as unofficial dividing lines within territories. Examples: the Administrative Boundary Line between Georgian and Abkhazia; the North-South divide along the Ibar river separating Serb and Albanian communities in north Kosovo.
Populations on the 'wrong side' of post-war boundaries	Populations living in secessionist territory that are loyal to, recognise the authority of or otherwise dependent on the base state, or vice versa. These populations are usually concentrated in enclaves and border regions,[27] but because people and territory differ in relevant ways to do with accessibility and leveragability, I treat them as separate categories. Such populations – which includes both those who returned after being displaced during the war and those who never left – may be seen as potential threats or assets to security and national projects as voters, as taxpayers, as (potential) citizens, as collaborators, as a fifth column and so on.[28]

[26] Enclaves controlled by secessionists could exist in the base state, but I know of no cases that would fit the definition of an enclave (rather than border regions).
[27] The geographic concentration of these populations matters in this context – dispersed populations are harder to access and leverage and lack concentrated populations' capacity to collectively mobilise.
[28] Other scholars have called populations in this situation, 'stranded minorities'.

	Examples: Georgians living in Abkhazia, Serbs living in Kosovo, Albanians living in southern Serbia
War-displaced populations	Populations forced to leave their homes during the conflict who have not permanently returned or been resettled.[29] In most but not all cases, this means populations who recognise the authority of the base state but had previously been living in areas that, post-war, are controlled by secessionists. Such populations may also be seen as potential threats or assets to base states and secessionists. Examples: Georgians displaced from Abkhazia; Serbs displaced from Kosovo; Serbs displaced from Croatia; Azeris displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh; Bosniaks displaced from 'Republika Srpska' and Serbs displaced from FBiH

Expectations: From Constrained Objectives to Strategy Profiles

Control strategies only make sense in relation to (a) an actor and their objectives, (b) specific territories and populations that are targeted by the strategies and (c) whether existing patterns of control are being changed or preserved. To capture all these aspects, I present the expected outcomes as *strategy profiles*, using the core characteristics associated with demographic and territorial strategies (section 2.2). Tables 2.3. and 2.4 map out an expected strategy profile for each constrained objective, built from the core characteristics of control strategies and the links and levers which connect objectives to strategies.[30] These conceptual building blocks are just that – analytical categories, extracted and condensed from the investigation of the cases and then refined to articulate the logic of the argument with a conceptual vocabulary that captures what is important about complex political processes.

The logic of the argument is as follows: if an actor has a given constrained objective, the theory expects that the state or the secessionists will adopt one or more of the control strategies in the profile, with links and levers acting as mitigating factors between objectives and strategies that influence which control

[29] To avoid the question of whether the statehood (recognised or not) of the secessionist entity is legitimate, I use the term 'displaced populations' to refer to all people displaced as a direct or indirect consequence of the war and its aftermath rather that 'IDPs' (internally displaced persons) or 'refugees'.

[30] Recall the earlier comments about the scope of what I'm trying to explain: these profiles do not encompass everything that base states and secessionists are expected to do; rather, they are expectations about the measures used to control people and territory given a particular objective.

strategies the actors are able to use. Actors adopt control strategies in the expectation that doing so will establish or influence the 'facts on the ground' of territorial and demographic control in a way that aligns with their constrained objective and brings about the intended outcome. Depending on the objective, the desired outcome may entail a revisionist logic – de facto control needs to change – or a status quo logic – de facto control needs to stay the same.

In order to make the 'facts on the ground' align with the intended outcome, the actors need to target features of the post-war environment that are accessible and can be leveraged to affect de facto control directly or indirectly – the mitigating factors that I am calling links and levers. The exact role of these factors is actor- and context-specific and depends on whether the objective is revisionist or status quo (an enclave can be targeted for removal or containment, or the focus of preserving control, for example), but the tables below specify where different links and levers can be expected to feature in each strategy profile.

In terms of causal mechanisms, the distance between objectives and strategies is rather small. This means the logic of how and why a particular constrained objective, in a given context, contributes to a particular strategy coming about can be based on simple assumptions about the actors that underpin the argument. When it comes to the pursuit of constrained objectives, I assume that – in this particular context – actors follow a logic of consequences. That is, they deliberately assess the costs and benefits of particular strategies and the likely outcomes relative to their alternatives, given the resources available and mitigating factors in the environment: actors expect that the strategy will close the gap between current de facto control and an intended outcome.[31]

[31] Means-end reasoning of this sort about objectives and strategies is what Falleti and Lynch call a familiarity trope in relation to causal mechanisms – the mechanism itself is not directly measured but is generally accepted to exist, at least in certain contexts. In the case studies, this can be combined with what they call a narrative trope, which requires substantiating a causal argument through a logically and empirically persuasive story connecting objectives and strategies. Falleti and Lynch 2008, 338.

Given this simple step from objectives to strategies, the more important part of the theory is getting the objectives and the strategies right – which is why I have placed so much emphasis on the importance of concept development in theory building – and identifying the links and levers that act as mitigating factors between objectives and strategies. Once these parts are in place, the path from the interaction between the actors' objectives and the post-war environment to control strategies is relatively straightforward, and summarised in the tables below. It is the task of the case studies presented in the following chapters to explain why particular control strategies were used by a given actor, based on the specific context. When presenting the case studies, gaps between concepts and empirics inevitably emerge, but the framework presented here represents a reasonable trade-off between the demands and limitations of evidence, concept formation and theory building.

Table 2.3 Base State Objectives and Strategies

Constrained Objective	Expected Profile of Demographic and Territorial Control Strategies
Undermine secessionist control	**Logic:** Revisionist – weaken and reduce the extent of secessionist de facto control of territory and people in the secessionist entity. **Territorial strategies:** Restrict access in and out of secessionist controlled territory to isolate secessionists via control of boundaries. *Possible examples: Blockades, sanctions, prevent movement of people and goods in and out of secessionist territory.* Target secessionists' exclusive presence in the territory via border regions and enclaves (if present). *Possible examples: Raids by security personnel or proxy armed groups, political visits by base state central government officials.* **Demographic strategies**: Support and sustain the presence of any coethnics/loyal populations residing in secessionist territory via contested border regions and enclaves (if present). *Possible examples: Provision of material support, advocate for the rights of the population.* Prevent coethnics/loyal populations residing in secessionist territory complying with or switching their loyalty to the secessionist authorities. *Possible examples: Punish defectors, reward loyalty.*
Retain links	**Logic:** Status quo – maintain the extent of base state de facto control of territory and people in the secessionist territory. **Territorial strategies:** Sustain the operational presence of base state personnel and institutions (or local proxies/agents) in the secessionist entity via border regions and boundaries (and enclaves if present). *Possible examples: Preserve pre-war authority structures such as local police and courts in enclaves, recruit local population to act as base state proxies.* Sustain access to and exclusive control over border regions (and enclaves if present within secessionist territory), keep open boundaries and bridgeheads into secessionist territory, and counter secessionist efforts to control or influence these areas. *Possible examples: Locate personnel in key strategic locations and institutions not controlled by secessionist authorities, build security institutions in these areas to exclude rival secessionist institutions.*

	Demographic strategies: Support, sustain, and add to any loyal and compliant populations residing in enclaves and border regions within secessionist territory still (partly) controlled by the base state. *Possible examples: Promote returns of the displaced and in-migration of loyal populations, discourage out-migration of current population, provide material and political support to the population.* Establish and sustain jurisdiction and provide public goods/services for any loyal/compliant population, and counter competing secessionist efforts to govern that population. *Possible examples: Build and maintain parallel institutions in areas such as justice, healthcare and education, punish/disincentivise participation with secessionist institutions.*
Reclaim ground	**Logic:** Revisionist – increase the extent of base state de facto control of territory and people in the secessionist entity. **Territorial strategies:** Extend the boundary of effective control into secessionist territory and establish and sustain the permanent and exclusive presence of base state personnel with state officials in charge of core governance functions. *Possible examples: Fortify and defend newly claimed territory with security personnel and physical infrastructure and locate administrative structures there, purge or co-opt secessionist personnel and remove local proxies, reintegrate reclaimed territory into base state national structures and institutions.* **Demographic strategies**: Settle and sustain a loyal and compliant population in reclaimed territory. *Possible examples: Resettle displaced populations, provide incentives for in-migration from the base state proper.* Target the loyalty and compliance of the population of the secessionist entity to prevent them supporting the secessionist authorities. *Possible examples: Positive and negative material incentives, establish and extend public goods provision/services and jurisdiction over the population.*

Table 2.4 Secessionist Objectives and Strategies

Constrained Objective	Expected Profile of Demographic and Territorial Control Strategies
Defend	**Logic:** Status quo – prevent the base state from regaining any de facto control of territory and people from the secessionists. **Territorial strategies:** Establish defensible boundaries between base state and secessionist territory to deny unwanted access. Expel/dismantle or co-opt any base state presence (or their proxies), especially from contested border regions. *Possible examples: Physical demarcation and border infrastructure, defended exclusively by secessionist security/military personnel.* **Demographic strategies**: Expel/repress populations seen as hostile or threatening who reside within secessionist-controlled territory. *Possible examples: Restrict freedom of movement of groups perceived to be loyal to the base state, forced relocation of such groups from strategically important areas such as border regions.* Defend and mobilise co-ethnics and politically loyal supporters. *Possible examples: Compulsory military service.*
Preserve control	**Logic:** Status quo – maintain the extent of secessionist de facto control of territory and people in the secessionist territory. **Territorial strategies:** Demarcate and regulate boundaries to exclude base state interference and secure an exclusive presence in secessionist-controlled areas. *Possible examples: Reinforce border defences, turn border regions into buffer zones to give strategic depth to defences; contain any areas not controlled by secessionist authorities and/or partly controlled by the base state (establish internal boundaries through enclavisation and gerrymandering) to deny base state personnel access to secessionist-controlled areas.* **Demographic strategies**: Establish and retain an advantageous demographic balance within the secessionist territory. *Possible examples: block the return of displaced populations from the base state, encourage in-migration of co-ethnics from the diaspora to secessionist-controlled areas.* Isolate and contain populations seen as threatening or disloyal who reside in secessionist-claimed territory (i.e. coethnics of the base state majority group or groups loyal to the base state).

	Possible examples: Discourage movement of targeted populations to secessionist-controlled areas, discourage political, economic and civic engagement of targeted populations outside enclaves and border regions, counter base state efforts to retain links to the populations on secessionist territory. Solidify compliance of loyal populations in secessionist controlled areas. *Possible examples: public goods/service provision*
Consolidate and Extend	**Logic:** Revisionist – increase the extent of secessionist de facto control of territory and people in the secessionist entity. **Territorial strategies:** Monopolise exclusive control over the secessionist entity, establish empirical attributes of statehood and integrate all claimed territory into unified national structures. *Possible examples: Extend control to the borders of secessionist territory and formalise border control (exclusively managed by de facto authorities' personnel), remove internal boundaries by dismantling enclaves and integrating contested border regions, remove or co-opt any remaining base state official presence from all claimed territory.* **Demographic strategies**: Make the demographic balance within the secessionist territory more favourable to the secessionist side. *Possible examples: encourage in-migration and discourage out-migration of loyal populations; facilitate out-migration of populations perceived to be non-loyal/threatening.* Integrate all populations residing in secessionist-claimed territory into common structures administered by secessionist authorities and dismantle any remaining base state institutions connected to the population. *Possible examples: extend the franchise, expand eligibility for citizenship, create national education institutions, require military service of all residents, extend tax collection to all residents.* Move loyal populations to areas (previously) under base state control. *Possible examples: Settle displaced populations in enclaves and border regions.*

The dynamic processes by which objectives are formed and generate strategies which are then implemented over time can only be partially captured by this simplified representation of how objectives and strategies map onto each other. However, it is crucial to capture continuity and change over time because, as discussed in section 2.3, a transition to a post-war environment is, by definition, a process that happens over time – the actors are trying to shape their environment according to their objectives but constraints and competition between the actors means that this is a process not an event that continues throughout the case study period.

Consequently, the narrative reconstructions of the case studies are better suited for showing descriptively how this interactive process actually develops and repeats over time as objectives are changed or held constant and control strategies change or continue accordingly, with their consequences feeding into revised objectives and a developing post-war environment. Trying to capture – at least descriptively – these processes of continuity and change was a major focus during the research for the case studies, and the empirical chapters try to accurately represent what happened. The empirical difficulties in doing so in sufficient detail in a case study mean that there are inevitably gaps in the reconstructions, and the comprehensive development and testing of a theory of change in post-war objectives and strategies remains a challenge for further research.

Relatedly, there is an important point about when post-war environments end – when is a situation no longer 'post-war', when and why does a post-war environment become (for want of a better term) 'normal politics', and what does this mean for explaining specifically *post-war* control strategies? There are important theoretical and conceptual problems here relating to the conflict incompatibility, how it is contested by the actors and the extent to which conflict gets channelled into legitimate political institutions, but in this study decisions were mostly driven by practical issues and the specific details of the case studies – these choices are discussed in more detail in the relevant chapters.

***

This chapter has presented a framework derived from theory building case studies into post-war state and secessionist strategies for controlling people and territory. I have set out the analytical building blocks of a

theoretical framework, arguing that objectives explain strategies, mediated by the constraints and opportunities of the environment. With these conceptual and theoretical parts now in place, it is possible to present the empirical core of the project.

Chapter 3: Introduction to the Case Studies

"Today, the Caucasus region receives much less attention among scholars and decision-makers than a few years ago."[1]

"The Balkans are on no one's list of priority areas to study these days."[2]

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is a bridge between the theoretical framework and the empirical chapters where I explain the purpose and structure of the case studies in a theory building project. The aim of the chapter is to clarify expectations about what I can and cannot conclude about the causes of post-war strategies for controlling people and territory from case studies of the conflicts in Abkhazia and Kosovo in particular, and the Caucasus and Balkans more generally.

3.2 Background to the Cases

Research on Secessionist Conflicts in the Caucasus and Balkans

There is a substantial body of research into the wars of the 1990s in the Balkans and the Caucasus that has developed, tested and refined conflict theories, with many studies comparing conflicts within and across these regions (and sometimes encompassing all post-communist Eurasia).[3] A large amount of scholarly work on secessionist conflict in particular originates in research on the wars triggered by the collapse of the Soviet Union and of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), with a particular focus on the role of ethno-federalism, ethnic geography and demography, security dilemmas and nationalist ideologies as causes of war. The constituent republics of these multinational federal entities were recognised as independent states, but lower level, ethnically-defined territorial units and minority

[1] Published in 2020. Markedonov and Suchkov 2020, 1.
[2] Published in 2019. Serwer 2019, 2.
[3] Of the many studies consulted for this research that compare the conflicts within and across the Caucasus and the Balkans, and in addition to those cited elsewhere in the text, see Woodward 1995; Cornell 2001; Kaufman 2001; Zürcher 2002; Koehler and Zürcher 2003; Toft 2003; Zürcher 2007; Caspersen 2008c; Caspersen 2008a; Caspersen 2008b; Cheterian 2008; Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2008; Fawn and Richmond 2009; George 2009; Souleimanov 2013.

groups were not, even when there were popular and elite demands for independence or separation. The demands – and their rejection by the newly-recognised states – would become the fault lines of several subsequent secessionist conflicts.

Studying Eurasian conflicts is mutually valuable for scholars of armed conflict and for policymakers and practitioners: conflict research benefits from serious engagement with the wars of the Caucasus and the Balkans, while research on these regions can be improved by drawing on theories of armed conflict.[4] With many shared historical, social and political features and wide variation in conflict-related outcomes of interest to scholars, there is potentially much to learn about matters of war and peace from studying the conflicts of these regions. For my interest in territorial and demographic control, these conflicts are particularly important – the role of nationalism and the importance of a territorial homeland, the redrawing of borders and the transformation of internal boundaries into external borders, the displacement of populations, and majority-minority relations were all crucial in the wars in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. This makes the Balkans and the Caucasus a logical place to start for a study of the termination and aftermath of secessionist wars and an opportunity to extend our knowledge of post-war environments in new directions.

Focusing on these regions does potentially limit the generalisability of my argument.[5] However, the argument I made in Chapter 2 does not depend on factors generally used to explain conflict onset in these regions (such as ethnofederalism, the collapse of multinational states at the end of Cold War, the legacies of communism), so my focus on demographic and territorial control strategies and constrained objectives has potential to travel to different contexts. Studying a fairly small sub-population of cases has its own advantages and avoids making unwarranted assumptions about the comparability of disparate cases, so limitations on generalisability are not necessarily problematic. Moreover, while studies of secession have focused on the collapse of the USSR and Yugoslavia, most civil war theories have their

[4] On the benefits to peace and conflict research of studying the wars of the Caucasus and/or the Balkans, see Fairbanks 1995; Laitin 2001; Koehler and Zürcher 2003; Baev 2007; Siroky 2009; Suny and Cheterian 2012; Broers 2015a; Coggins 2015a; Gavrilis 2018; Serwer 2019.
[5] This has been a problem for research on ethnofederalism: see Anderson 2014.

origins in the study of sub-Saharan African armed conflicts and asymmetric insurgencies:[6] by drawing on the insights from civil war research on the importance of strategies for the effective control of populated territory, I contribute to a literature on the aftermath of secessionist conflict that has mostly looked at institutional responses such as autonomy and decentralisation and I can thereby contribute to a broader literature on peace and conflict.

Despite the similarities noted by comparativists in studies of the Caucasus and the Balkans, the wars in these regions – and how they ended – were different in ways relevant to explaining post-war control strategies. Table 3.1 lists the cases within the empirical scope of my project and shows the diversity of ways in which the outcomes of the wars have been categorised, depending on which aspect is considered important for the research objective. These outcomes matter for the constraints faced by base states and secessionists in post-war environments and for the objectives they form, so it is important to consider the extent to which my two theory building cases are representative of the other cases in the Balkans and the Caucasus and of secessionist wars more generally.

The list of cases is based on the datasets/lists compiled by the three scholars listed in the table. The conflict actors, contested territory, and dates are all based on UCDP data and coding rules unless otherwise stated.[7]

[6] Smith 2013.

[7] See <https://www.ucdp.uu.se/>. Slovenia's secession from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991 is excluded because it was a minor armed conflict that only lasted a few days. Croatia's secession at the same time escalated to an armed conflict which UCDP codes as terminated following Croatia's recognition as an independent state even as the internal war in Croatia continued, so I include only the latter secessionist conflict between the government of Croatia and the separatist Serbian Republic of Krajina, or Republika Srpska Krajina (RSK). The RSK was formed in 1992 from two Serb-majority Autonomous Oblasts in Croatia, which are coded as separate actors in the UCDP dataset, which is why the onset dates in different datasets do not always match.

Table 3.1 Cases: Secessionist wars in the Caucasus and the Balkans

	Conflict Actors		Contested territory	Dates	Outcomes
	Base State Government	Secessionists[8]			
Caucasus	Azerbaijan	Republic of Nagorno Karabakh	Nagorno Karabakh	1991-1994[b]	Ceasefire agreement[c, 9] De facto partition/ongoing[d] De facto state – alive[e]
	Georgia	Republic of Abkhazia	Abkhazia	1992-1993	Peace agreement[c] De facto partition[d] De facto state – alive[e]
	Georgia	Republic of South Ossetia	South Ossetia	1992[b]	Ceasefire agreement with conflict regulation[c, 10] De facto partition[d] De facto state – alive[e]
	Russia	Chechen Republic of Ichkeria	Chechnya	1994-1996 1999-2007[11]	Ceasefire agreement (1996)[c] Failed[d] De facto state – disappeared (forceful reintegration, 1999)[e]
Balkans	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republika Srpska)[a]	Serb	1992-1995	Peace agreement[c] De facto state – alive[e]
	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Croatian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Herceg-Bosna)[a]	Croat	1993-1994	Peace agreement[c] Increased autonomy[d]
	Croatia	Serbian Republic of Krajina (Republika Srpska Krajina)[a]	Serb	1992-1993, 1995	Ceasefire agreement (1993); Peace agreement (1995)[c] Failed [coded as one conflict 1992-1995][d] De facto state – disappeared (forceful reintegration, 1995 [coded as one conflict 1991-1995][e] followed by the peaceful

[8] Note that the relevant actors in the post-war phases may have different names, reflecting a transition from a rebel actor to a political organisation, or new political actors may have superseded the wartime secessionist organisations.
[9] Subsequent recurrences of violence are coded as ending in 'low activity' by UCDP
[10] Subsequent recurrences of violence are coded as ending in 'ceasefire agreement with conflict regulation' by UCDP
[11] UCDP codes this conflict as terminating in 2007 due to a change in the incompatibility and in the rebel actor: the conflict had transformed into a primarily Islamist conflict, so I no longer include it within the scope of my study after the military defeat of the secessionists in the early 2000s.

					reintegration of Eastern Slavonia[12] in 1998[e]
	Yugoslavia (Serbia)	UÇK (KLA)	Kosovo	1998-1999	Peace agreement[c] Independence[d] De facto state – disappeared (statehood)[e]

[a] = Irregulars also fought on the secessionist side (UCDP codes these as separate conflict dyads)

[b] = Recurrences of armed conflict of an intensity below UCDP's threshold for war (for clarity, these are not listed here but see Chapter 7)

[c] = Outcome as coded in UCDP/Kreutz's Conflict Termination Dataset[13]

[d] = Outcome as coded in Toft (2012)[14]

[e] = Status of de facto state (which largely overlaps with the contested territory) at 2011 as coded in Florea's De Facto States in International Politics Dataset[15]

There was no single common path to war but in all of the cases the conflicts were sparked by the international recognition of the republics of either the USSR or Yugoslavia and the rejected demands of separatist movements within the newly independent states. Explanations of the causes of these wars are well-covered in existing studies, and are not the main concern of my research, but some background information helps establish the context of the theory building case studies in Chapters 4 and 5 and the shadow cases in Chapter 7.[16] This section introduces the conflicts of the Caucasus and the Balkans, and I give more detail on the wars in Abkhazia and Kosovo later in this chapter.

In the Caucasus, Abkhaz and South Ossetian secessionists fought for separation from Georgia, the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians fought to secede from Azerbaijan, and Chechen separatists fought two

[12] Eastern Slavonia was part of the wartime Serbian Republic of Krajina and was administered by the UN after the war before being reintegrated into Croatia in 1998 (see Chapter 7).
[13] Kreutz 2010.
[14] Toft 2012.
[15] Florea 2014.
[16] Explanations for the causes of the wars in the Caucasus and the Balkans reflect debates in civil war onset more generally. In addition to the scholars cited above, see Posen 1993; Kalyvas and Sambanis 2005; Zürcher, Baev, and Koehler 2005.

wars against the Russian Federation. Within the Soviet system of hierarchically-organised ethno-territorial units,[17] Russia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan were union republics, the highest level unit. Abkhazia and Chechnya[18] were Autonomous Republics (the next unit down) within Georgia and Russia, respectively, and South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh were Autonomous Oblasts (or regions, a further level down) within Georgia and Azerbaijan, respectively. Within each lower level unit, the titular ethnic group were the majority of the population.[19] Self-determination movements started to mobilise in the final years and months of the Soviet Union and escalated as the newly independent states were recognised.

The final political status sought by the secessionists differ, and has changed over time as part of long-running centre-periphery bargaining processes of which the wars in the 1990s were only one very violent stage. The political leadership in South Ossetia declared independence but sought unification with their ethnic kin in the Russian region of North Ossetia (and thereby to effectively become part of Russia). Abkhaz secessionists have at times seemed open to a confederal arrangement with Georgia but the demands hardened for full independent statehood. The Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians began with demands for union with Armenia and an end to their status as an enclave within Azerbaijan, and the de facto authorities would subsequently declare an independent republic which has not been recognised by Yerevan, but the territory and population have de facto become largely integrated with Armenia. Chechen secessionists established de facto independence from Russia between 1991 and 1994, inflicted a defeat on Russia's military to hold on to their independence for a few more years before succumbing to in-fighting, a crushing defeat when the Russian military returned in 1999 and then, with some secessionists switching sides to fight with the Kremlin, were supplanted by an Islamist insurgency that spread across the north Caucasus. For all the differences, though, these conflicts were "primarily political conflicts over territory and ownership thereof"[20] and "fundamentally about controlling turf"[21] where base states clashed with

[17] What Brubaker calls 'institutionalized multinationality'. Brubaker 1996, 23.
[18] Until 1991, Chechnya was part of the Checheno-Ingushetia Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. For simplicity, I will only refer to the post-1991 entity of Chechnya.
[19] Except for Abkhazia – see later in this chapter and Chapter 4.
[20] Cornell 2001, 2.
[21] King 2008, 219.

self-determination movements trying to separate from the centre. All of the conflicts in the Caucasus are linked through Russia's political and military dominance of the region: to varying degrees, Russia has been a crucial actor not only in its own secessionist wars with Chechnya but all the conflicts in the South Caucasus.[22]

The conflicts in the Balkans are linked through their common origins in the collapse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the attendant multiple crises and rising nationalism. The wars that followed saw some of the worst acts of organised violence in Europe since the end of the Second World War, including genocide in Bosnia during a war in which more than 100,000 people were killed and 2 million people were displaced. Less than three years after the settlement that ended the war in Bosnia in 1995, violence broke out in the Serbian province of Kosovo.

Slovenia and Croatia were the first republics to declare their independence from Yugoslavia, both in June 1991. Slovenia fought and won a brief war against the Yugoslav National Army (JNA), but when Croatia seceded, which unlike Slovenia had a substantial Serb minority, Croatian Serb nationalists rebelled and took control of large areas of territory, declaring the Republika Srpska Krajina (RSK). The following year, Bosnia held an independence referendum which was widely supported by the Bosnian Muslims but boycotted by Bosnian Serbs who, with the support of Belgrade, subsequently rebelled and declared a Serb Republic within Bosnia. Bosnian Croats followed suit and declared a Croat republic, backed by Zagreb.[23]

The wars in the Balkans were also linked through what has been called a 'Serbian project', implemented as Yugoslavia was collapsing, that aimed to "establish the new borders of a set of territories linked to Serbia that would be 'for' the Serbs."[24] This project has a long history: the issue of "what territory should be encompassed with the borders of the Serbian state has always prevailed over other concerns."[25] Belgrade's role in the conflicts is therefore crucial. Gow and Michalski argue it is misleading to think in

[22] Baev 1997; Cornell 2001, 323.
[23] <https://www.icty.org/en/about/what-former-yugoslavia/conflicts>
[24] Gow 2003, 2.
[25] Biserko 2012, 15.

terms of multiple discrete wars between 1991 and 1999. Rather, "the essence of Serbia's political-territorial aims in the war [was] the creation of new borders in the west [i.e. the border with Bosnia] and the consolidation of existing borders in the south [i.e. Kosovo], and in both cases strategically ensuring that there would be a more or less ethnically homogeneous and … reliable population within those borders."[26]

The Wars in Abkhazia and Kosovo

Theory building projects present challenges for case selection (the relevant dimensions of variation and how the cases are distributed within the population – or the parameters of the population itself – may not be known prior to beginning the research), which means it is difficult to control for the full spectrum of possible variation along all relevant dimensions (such as conflict intensity and duration, modes of warfare, type and extent of external intervention and so on). Moreover, case-oriented research with fieldwork makes logistical and ethical considerations equally or more important when choosing cases. That said, the Georgia-Abkhazia and Serbia-Kosovo cases have characteristics that strengthen their value for my research objectives. Neither war ended with the total and immediate defeat and repression of the secessionists or with the secessionists gaining full independence, recognition and UN membership (outcomes which are rare anyway), and in neither case did the war recur.[27] This means there is a substantial time period in which a post-war environment developed and constrained objectives could be formed and control strategies used and therefore can be investigated in depth and over time, an essential requirement for theory building case studies. As I argued in Chapter 2, regardless of the manner of war termination there is a transition period when each side has something further to gain or something further to lose, when a post-war cleavage is active and a new political order is being formed. This is the period in which I expect constrained objectives and control strategies to be relevant and important.

[26] Gow and Michalski 2007, 147.
[27] There were outbreaks of violence in both cases, but not at a level of war recurrence. The Georgian-Russian war of 2008 profoundly changed the situation in Abkhazia but took place almost entirely in South Ossetia, Georgia's other breakaway region (see Chapter 6).

The similarities and differences between the two cases have been hotly debated,[28] and I do not believe they are suitable for a method of agreement/method of difference research design: in particular, the unprecedented international intervention and UN administration of Kosovo with security enforced by NATO means comparisons with Abkhazia should be made cautiously. Moreover, secessionist movements usually fail, so Kosovo is unusual in the extent to which it has been internationally recognised and Abkhazia's existence in the grey zone of partial recognition and de facto statehood is also relatively rare.[29] The conflicts have also differed in their importance in world politics and in the attention they have received from the international community. The international significance of Kosovo, especially for debates on humanitarian intervention, is often commented on – "Kosovo is of profound importance to contemporary international relations";[30] the Kosovo war was "a struggle over the redefinition of the international system as such"[31] and in "fundamental ways … a turning point for international politics"[32] – while the war in Abkhazia has never been the focus of international attention in the same way. Judah, noting that Kosovo's strategically important location has made it a vital interest for the EU and the US, remarks that by comparison Abkhazia has been "almost completely ignored."[33] Similarly, Asmus contrasts the huge investment of political will and resources by the international community in bringing peace and stability to the Balkans with the "tiny fraction" of attention and resources given to the conflicts in Georgia and the lack of authority or influence exercised by the UN and OSCE.[34] Nonetheless, a comparative discussion that is informed by the within-case analyses of Chapters 4 and 5 can be insightful and useful for explaining post-war control strategies (see Chapter 6).

Abkhazia and Kosovo presented their base states with similar problems – a demand for secession that the base state refused to accept, preferring to fight to preserve its territorial integrity, in the context of the

[28] De Waal and Baran 2006; See also De Waal 2006; Baran 2006.
[29] The issue of international recognition or non-recognition of secessionist entities has been studied in relation to both cases, often comparatively. Hehir 2009; Neff 2009; Harzl 2011; Siddi 2011; Ker-Lindsay 2012b; Fabry 2012; Coggins 2015a.
[30] Hehir 2010a, 1.
[31] Weller 2009, 5.
[32] Abadi 2019.
[33] Judah 2008, 128.
[34] Asmus 2010, 11–12.

disintegration of the multinational states of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, respectively. The subsequent wars differed in important ways, and this will matter to some extent for the analysis that follows, but the main conflict cleavage of territorial integrity versus self-determination (and, post-war, of reincorporation versus full and permanent separation) makes them suitable for theory building case studies of demographic and territorial control strategies.

Georgia and Abkhazia

The conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia has its origins in a Georgian national project that has struggled to peacefully manage the coexistence of many non-Georgian minorities within a single republic.[35] In two cases – in Abkhazia and South Ossetia – the conflicts between the centre and periphery escalated to war.[36] "Georgians are accustomed to the idea of a multinational community" says Stephen Jones, "but most believe in an ethnonational one. This contradiction has been a challenge to all Georgian governments."[37] Rising Georgian nationalism in the early 1990s, notoriously expressed by the first post-independence President Zviad Gamsakhurdia as 'Georgia for Georgians', was seen by the Abkhaz – even with political representation in the Soviet Abkhaz administration disproportionate to their relatively small numbers[38] – as part of a long-running existential threat to their national identity. This threat was a continuation of the 'Georgianisation' of Abkhazia during the Soviet era and (with some parallels to Kosovo's loss of autonomy)[39] the downgrading of their status as a full Republic of the USSR to an Autonomous Republic within Georgia in the early years of the Soviet Union.[40] The Abkhaz began mobilising for independence as the USSR started to disintegrate and took advantage of the violence in

[35] See Coppieters, Nodia, and Anchabadze 1998; Hewitt 1999; Coppieters, Darchiashvili, and Akaba 2000; Coppieters and Legvold 2005; Wheatley 2005; De Waal 2010; Jones 2015.
[36] Georgia also has significant Armenian and Azeri populations with which it has had generally peaceful but sometimes tense relations.
[37] Jones 2015, 145.
[38] According to the 1989 Soviet census, less that one fifth of the population of Abkhazia were ethnic Abkhaz.
[39] On the relationship between lost autonomy and separatist mobilisation, see Siroky and Cuffe 2015.
[40] As Jones puts it, "Abkhazians had reason to fear Georgian hegemony". Jones 2015, 96; See also Kaufman 2001, chap. 4.

Tbilisi in late 1991/early 1992 as Gamsakhurdia was deposed in a coup.[41] By early 1992, the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet had taken control of local armed forces and introduced compulsory military service,[42] and in July 1992 the former Soviet Abkhazian constitution of 1925 was adopted, essentially declaring that Abkhazia was a sovereign republic and not part of Georgia.[43]

Exactly how this conflict escalated into open warfare is unclear. The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict had now become entangled with an uprising in western Georgia of supporters of the deposed Gamsakhurdia who had kidnapped senior Georgian government officials and were attacking railways. What is known is that on August 14th 1992, about 3,000 Georgian troops under the command of Georgian Defence Minister Tengiz Kitovani entered Abkhazia – ostensibly to rescue the hostages and protect the railways, but ended up advancing on the Abkhaz capital, Sukhumi.[44] The Abkhazian Guard responded by attacking the advancing Georgian troops and the Abkhaz leadership declared a 'patriotic war' and mobilised the adult male population.[45] Georgian forces took control of the capital and the Abkhaz leadership fled north to Gudauta. The war lasted 13 months, with multiple failed attempts to broker ceasefires and hold talks.

Atrocities were committed by both sides,[46] with around 8,000 killed, 18,000 wounded, and quarter of a million people were displaced. Most of the displaced were ethnic Georgians (see Chapter 4), but up to 40,000 Abkhazians, Russians, Greeks, and Armenians were also displaced during the war.[47] The war was notable for the extensive criminality and the private interests of the Georgian paramilitary groups: the National Guard and the Mkhedrioni "were engaged in a struggle for control of the black market",[48] and the Georgian armed forces "depended on personal loyalties to commanders and on the promise of

[41] A new governing State Council was formed in Tbilisi, with the former Soviet Foreign Minister and First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, Eduard Shevardnadze, invited to return to Georgia as its head. The impact, however, "was minimal in the short term, because power in the real sense was not bestowed by formal institutions and remained in the hands of the informal paramilitary groups." Wheatley 2005, 68.
[42] Jones 2015, 95.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Accounts differ as to whether Shevardnadze ordered the advance or if Kitovani was acting on his own initiative.
[45] Kaufman 2001, 119–120; Jones 2015, 95–96.
[46] Jones 2015, 97; See also Human Rights Watch 1995; Kaufman 2001, 122–123.
[47] Jones 2015, 97.
[48] Wheatley 2005, 72.

plunder and profit more than it did on ideas of national service."[49] This influenced the character of the armed conflict, which Zürcher described as being more like a war between two start-up firms than a war between a state and rebels, with the secessionist 'firm' a "more efficient organizer of violence" than the state,[50] another important contrast with the war in Kosovo which pitted insurgents against regular state forces. The type and extent of Russian support for the Abkhaz is also unclear but material support from the Russian military and Ministry of Defence as a way to undermine Georgia and to secure Russia's security interests in a strategically important area is well-documented.[51] The decisive turning point in the war came when Abkhaz forces broke a ceasefire and captured Sukhumi in September 1993 – this is where my case study will begin in Chapter 4.

Serbia and Kosovo

A complete account of the origins of the war in Kosovo would need to consider the historical significance of Kosovo in Serbian political consciousness as well as the 'Serbian question' – whether all Serbs should live within a single state – and the 'Albanian question' – should all Albanians live within a single state.[52] The ethnic geography and demography of the Balkans is of course important in understanding the roots of the conflict, and there is a long history in the region of attempts to the change the locations of borders and people in the pursuit of national projects, but these are largely beyond the scope of this study. For my purposes, the significant turning point for understanding the war of 1998-99 is the revocation of Kosovo's status as an autonomous province within Serbia in 1989 – which was "followed by a Belgrade policy aimed at changing the ethnic composition of Kosovo and creating an apartheid-like society"[53] – and the rise of Serbian nationalism and Slobodan Milošević's ascent to power in the late 1980s.

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[49] Jones 2015, 11; As Wheatley puts it, "Kitovani clearly intended that the regular and irregular fighters loyal to him would gain control of Abkhazia and its lucrative shadow economy." Wheatley 2005, 73.
[50] Zürcher 2007, 8–9.
[51] Jones 2015, 96.
[52] See Vickers 1998; Malcolm 1999; Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000; Judah 2008; Judah 2009; Weller 2009; Perritt 2010; Biserko 2012; Pettifer 2013; Visoka 2017.
[53] Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000, 1.

The nonviolent resistance to Serb repression in the early 1990s,[54] led by 'president' of the self-declared Republic of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova, was seen by more radical factions within the Kosovo Albanian community as futile. An armed group – Ushtria Çlirimtare ë Kosovës (UÇK), or Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) – emerged in the mid-1990s and by 1996 was launching attacks on Serb police in Kosovo. Serb repression increased and the insurgency and counterinsurgency escalated through 1998 and early 1999, with the notorious Račak massacre of 45 Albanian civilians by Serb security forces in January 1999. International efforts to broker a peace agreement in early 1999 were unsuccessful and ultimately NATO launched a bombing campaign in March to coerce Milošević to withdraw Serb forces from Kosovo.

Tragically, the onset of the air war was followed by a dramatic escalation in the Belgrade's campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Albanian population: almost 1.5 million people – about 90% of the Kosovo Albanian population – were displaced from their homes.[55] The war has been described as both a counterinsurgency against the KLA and a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the population,[56] and it is important to understand, as far as possible, Belgrade's war aims. According to Gow, "statehood was the issue and the point of the campaign was to establish control of territory by removing the possibility of any political, or military, resistance […] the aim was to secure territory by removing not only armed opposition but also the entire potentially antagonistic local populations [and to] reinforce existing [borders]."[57] Over 13,000 died in the war, the majority of whom were ethnic Albanians, as were the victims of widespread atrocities and war crimes.[58] After 78 days of bombing, Milošević capitulated, which is where I begin my case study in Chapter 5.

[54] Clark 2000.
[55] Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000, 90.
[56] Ibid., 2.
[57] Gow 2003, 200; See also Hayden 1999; Ball et al. 2002; Ron 2003; Greenhill 2010; On the aim of transforming the demographics of Kosovo, see also Naimark 2001, 179; Petersen 2002, 244.
[58] Human Rights Watch 2000; International Crisis Group 2000b.

3.3 The Case Studies: Purpose, Structure, and Evidence

Theory building case studies are, firstly, *empirical investigations* into a historical segment of social and political reality, bounded by substantive criteria in accordance with a research objective – in this case, the development of a theoretical framework to explain base state and secessionist post-war strategies for controlling populated territory. Secondly, case studies as a *form of presentation* are selective reconstructions of that period of history based on what was found during the investigation. In Chapter 2, I outlined the conceptual building blocks of the framework and an argument about how they are connected and affect each other. These building blocks and the argument were extracted and distilled from the investigation of the two cases and are used in Chapters 4 and 5 to reconstruct the post-war period to show how the argument works in the two cases.[59]

The first purpose of the case study chapters is to present the reconstruction of the post-war struggles for de facto control: how did the base states and secessionists shape the post-war political order in their attempts to control populated territory? When the fighting stopped, what constrained objectives did they form, what control strategies did they use to try to meet these objectives, and what links and levers did they use to translate their objectives into strategies, within the constraints and opportunities of the post-war environment? Getting the story right descriptively is necessary for this kind of project and requires demonstrating there is sufficient evidence to support the theoretical framework.

To meet this purpose, and to take advantage of what is possible with case study methods, in the narratives I can modify the language of Chapters 1 and 2 where, for convenience and clarity, I spoke of base states and secessionists as unitary actors. The base state-secessionist dyad is a useful cleavage around which to structure a theory, but does not neatly map onto who the actors are in actual cases. In the case studies I try to capture the detail of who was doing what to whom by disaggregating the two sides into the many individuals, organisations, factions, principals and agents who actually carry out control strategies. To

[59] See Chapter 1 on the distinction between the case study as a form of inquiry and a form of presentation.

keep the focus on the post-war cleavage, though, the case studies divide the relevant actors into the 'base state side' encompassing all actors who are pro-(restoring) territorial integrity (necessarily including the base state government) and the 'secessionist side' encompassing all actors who are pro-separation (including the secessionist authorities, recognised or not). These actors share a position regarding the post-war cleavage and maximalist objectives but can and do work independently of each other and sometimes with diverging objectives.

In general I try to avoid the ethnic essentialism of the terms 'Serbs', 'Albanians', 'Georgians' or 'Abkhaz' to refer to the entire ethnic group, but for convenience will sometimes use them as problematic shorthand for political organisations (much as how we refer to states – e.g. 'the Georgians' as shorthand for the Georgian government).[60] I share Sorens' perspective that "there are ethnically and nationally distinctive groups, and that there are leaders within those groups who have to decide whether to make demands for institutional change and whether to organize violence to achieve their ends"[61] but in general, I do not find the 'ethnic conflict' label useful. There was, and is, a Georgian-Abkhaz and a Serb-Albanian cleavage, but the war and the post-war environment can be productively analysed as a conflict resulting from mutually exclusive sovereignty claims over territory, and not 'just' a particularly intense instance of ethnic conflict.[62] Even if the war was 'ethnic', or the violence become 'ethnicised', the post-war environment is best characterised as a *political* conflict over statehood, status and populated territory, and that should be the focus of explaining control strategies.

A further consideration for meeting the first purpose of the case studies is making choices about when to begin and end the causal reconstruction, and how to divide up the narratives in ways that accurately reflect changes over time. Consistent with theory building case-oriented research, I did not define the

[60] Likewise, I use 'Tbilisi' and 'Belgrade' as shorthand for the governments of Georgia and Serbia, respectively, and 'Sukhumi' for the Abkhazian de facto authorities and 'Priština' for the Kosovar Provisional Institutions and government.
[61] Sorens 2012, 5.
[62] Ibid., 6.

exact start and end points of the case studies prior to starting the research,[63] but it became apparent during the investigations that it was analytically and practically useful to segment the case studies into phases and this is how the chapters are structured. There is a war termination phase when constrained objectives are first formed and the post-war environment starts to take shape,[64] and subsequent post-war phases divide up the cases according to changes in the actors' constrained objectives, significant events and developments and changes in context (see the summaries in Tables 3.2 and 3.3). There are trade-offs between segmenting the case studies into meaningful phases that capture important developments, and giving the misleading impression that nothing changes *within* the phases when they are in fact comprised of multiple smaller changes and adjustments in the ongoing process of formulating objectives and implementing control strategies. These are not just presentational issues – as I discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.4), questions of continuity and change over time are important, and there is a great deal of heterogeneity in post-war environments which case study research should try to capture.

The second purpose of the case study chapters is to evaluate how well the evidence supports or undermines my overall argument. This is not circular or self-confirming: in theory building, especially using duel process-tracing, trying to carve out analytical concepts and a theoretical framework from the empirical material generated by investigating two cases does not mean theory and empirics will fit perfectly, especially when the temporal and substantive scope that the theory tries to covers is large. The standard should be a plausible analytical explanation of an outcome, or a good fit between what the framework expects and what actually happened. Consistent with the theory and practice of process tracing (see Chapter 1), the case studies aim to produce more than just a description but also a causal explanation showing how outcomes were generated – what explains the control strategies being used.

My framework does not work well for some parts of the cases – there are gaps and mismatches between expectations and reality. As the case studies will show, there are instances where the expected strategies

[63] Cross-national studies of war recurrence or post-war democratisation can define a cut-off point of, for example, 5 or 10 years, but there were not good theoretical reasons to impose an arbitrary (but comparable) timeframe for my research, and the case studies show the value of flexibility here.
[64] In my two cases, this period lasted 6 to 8 months after the date of termination as coded by UCDP.

do not happen and instances where strategies are observed but not expected by the theory. The latter is more of a problem for the theory: as I conceptualise the outcome as a strategy profile, the elements of which are not individually necessary, *not* observing some of the control strategies associated with an objective is not necessarily a problem. Control strategies that *are* observed but are consistent with a *different* constrained objective are more of a problem but, as the case studies will discuss, actors can and do move along the spectrum of objectives, factions on the same side will have different objectives, and agents and proxies might not implement the strategy they were delegated to carry out, and so the observed strategies will reflect these particular dynamics. These gaps and mismatches are also partly a result of operationalising the outcome rather broadly as strategy profiles, but the advantage is that it is possible to capture over time a lot of state and secessionist activity relating to control of populations and territory. This activity is missed when the focus is on static outcomes such as recognition or a narrower range of activities such as violence.

A causal reconstruction, as well as being limited by feasibility and data availability, is necessarily selective. Decisions over what evidence to include and exclude are not obvious. As a form of inquiry and empirical investigation, case studies generate more evidence than can be used, and so a lot of material is excluded that was relevant and helpful, while on the other hand, there are parts of the narratives where the evidence is thinner. But the selective and partial nature of the evidence is not just about missing data or space limitations: the selection of evidence is theory-driven and should be guided by the scope and aims of the research.[65]

The standards for process tracing narratives are high,[66] but the realities of research mean that 'good enough' does not necessarily mean meeting the textbook standard. As Bennett and Checkel put it, "conclusive process tracing is good, but not all good process tracing is conclusive".[67] I do not attempt to

[65] According to George and Bennett, an analytical causal explanation "may be deliberately selective, focusing on what are thought to be particularly important parts of an adequate or parsimonious explanation; or the partial character of the explanation may reflect the investigator's inability to specify or theoretically ground all steps in a hypothesized process, or to find data to document every step." George and Bennett 2005, 211.
[66] Waldner 2015.
[67] Bennett and Checkel 2015.

provide comprehensive historical accounts; rather, the reconstructions are built with evidence that is salient to explaining the causes of the control strategies, and in the case studies I have erred on the side of getting the empirical story right and not stretching the theoretical framework beyond what it can bear.[68] Other choices could have been made – they are not arbitrary, but they are contestable, and not the final word. These choices, and the argument as a whole, are an invitation to other researchers to show that other choices – conceptual, theoretical, methodological, empirical – are better.

3.4 Case Summaries

The tables below summarise the two case studies and show how they are divided into phases with the actors' constrained objectives and a brief overview of the main control strategies used in each phase. The tables also note any significant control strategies that were observed but are not consistent with the expectations of the theory (possible explanations are discussed in the relevant chapters).

Before moving to the cases, a brief note on terminology is necessary. In conflicts over contested territory, words matter, and I believe that anyone who writes about these highly politicised issues should take responsibility for doing so with sensitivity and a commitment to not only academic standards of integrity and honesty but a higher ethical standard of empathy and humility. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to use terminology that is accepted by all sides, and I expect that some of the place names and terms I use will be interpreted as a sign of bias. This is not the case. I have tried to adopt the terminology and conventions most common in international and academic usage and which are most widely known and used outside the regions (e.g. Sukhumi rather than the Abkhaz 'Sukhum' or the Georgian 'Sokhumi' for the capital of Abkhazia, and Štrpce/Shtërpcë for the town in southern Kosovo where the convention is to use both the Serb and Albanian names). Where place names in contested territories have different renderings, I try to acknowledge and draw attention to these differences. Similarly, I use the language of

[68] In the case studies, I have tried to give due consideration to how pieces of data – from the interviews, from the archives, and from secondary sources – were selected and filtered, their weight in terms of their probative value as evidence, taking into account factors such as the origins and credibility of the material, the possibility of political bias and deliberate deception, the original intended audience of the material, the consistency of data with other sources, and problems associated with the length of time that has passed since the conflicts ended.

'secessionist war' and 'civil war', 'secessionists', and 'de facto states', not because they are unproblematic and neutral but because they are the most widely used and understood in academia and are the most appropriate for communicating my research. I hope that no political bias or partisanship will be inferred from these choices.[69]

[69] See also Allen Nan 2011; Yemelianova 2015.

Table 3.2 Summary: Georgia-Abkhazia (Chapter 4)

War: August 1992 – December 1993			
War Termination Phase: September 1993 – June 1994			
Post-War Phase	**Actors (dates)**	**Post-War Constrained Objective**	**Observed Profile of Control Strategies**
1	Secessionist side (summer 1994 - summer 1998) Abkhazian de facto authorities	Preserve control	**Territorial strategies:** Demarcate and regulate boundaries (internally between Gali region and Kodori Valley and the rest of Abkhazia, and at the Abkhazia-Georgia boundary) to exclude interference by Georgian state actors and allies; secure Abkhaz-controlled territory by containing Kodori Valley; and turn the border region of Gali district into a buffer zone to give strategic depth to defences and deny pro-Georgian militias and state actors access to Abkhazia. **Demographic strategies**: Retain the post-war advantageous demographic balance by obstructing the return of displaced ethnic Georgians. Isolate and contain the Georgian population in Gali. **Observed but not expected**: Some apparent attempts to integrate the ethnic Georgian population in Gali. Increasingly coercive measures in Gali in response to Georgian armed groups, escalating to violence and further displacement of Georgian population in May 1998.
	Base state side (summer 1994 – summer 1998) Government of Georgia	Undermine secessionist control	**Territorial strategies:** Target Abkhaz authorities' exclusive presence in the Gali region via armed groups so as to violently undermine Sukhumi's control (e.g. mine warfare, attacks on Abkhaz militia). Restrict access in and out of Abkhaz-controlled territory across the Georgian-Abkhaz boundary to isolate the de facto authorities. **Demographic strategies**: Prevent population (especially in Gali) complying with or switching loyalty to Abkhaz authorities (threats and violence against 'collaborators').

		Retain links	**Territorial strategies:** Sustain a Georgian government presence in Upper Kodori Valley (e.g. deploying police units) so as to prevent further territorial loss. Keep boundaries open so that access to both Gali and Kodori remain possible. **Demographic strategies**: Support and sustain the Georgian population in Gali region and Kodori Valley by trying to facilitate returns of the displaced to Gali and provide public goods and services (e.g. paying teachers' salaries in Gali, deploying police to Kodori).
			Observed but not expected: Escalating violence in Gali in May 1998 by Georgian armed groups attempting to take control of territory.
2	Secessionist side (autumn 1999 – end 2006) Abkhazian de facto authorities	Moving from Preserve to Consolidate and Extend control	**Territorial strategies:** Removal of any remaining Georgian security actors or rival sources of authority from all claimed territory was mostly accomplished in Gali after violence of May 1998 (but not attempted in Kodori Valley). More emphasis on demographic strategies in this phase. **Demographic strategies**: Integrate all populations into common structures: using 'Abkhazisation' to consolidate and extend Abkhaz authority over the Georgian population of Gali. Increase the relative and absolute size of the Abkhaz population by encouraging diaspora returns.
	Base state side (autumn 1999 – December 2003) Government of Georgia	Undermine secessionist control	**Territorial strategies:** Georgian and Chechen fighters (with alleged support/complicity of Tbilisi) attempt to undermine Abkhaz control through armed incursion into Kodori Valley. **Demographic strategies**: Very limited; some continuity from previous phase. **Observed but not expected**: Reintroduction of Georgian military into Kodori Valley following militia activity.
	Base state side (January 2004 – end of 2006) Government of Georgia	Reclaim control	**Territorial strategies:** Extend effective control into Abkhaz territory by re-establishing control over Upper Kodori Valley, establish the permanent presence of central state agents. Civilian administration and police installed in Kodori valley following removal of Kvitsiani's Monadire militia. Part of a wider effort to assert central authority over uncontrolled areas, including a crackdown on partisan/criminal groups in Gali and Zugdidi, putting central state officials exclusively in charge of core governance functions.

			Demographic strategies: Support the population of Kodori Valley by establishing jurisdiction, and providing public goods.
Case study ends with developments in Kodori Valley in 2006 and subsequent collapse of Georgian-Abkhaz talks. Major post-case study developments (discussed in Chapter 6): Georgian-Russian war in August 2008 followed by Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia			

Table 3.3 Summary: Serbia-Kosovo (Chapter 5)

War: February 1998 – June 1999			
War Termination Phase: June 1999 – December 1999			
Post-War Phase	**Actors (dates)**	**Post-War Constrained Objective**	**Observed Profile of Control Strategies**
1	Secessionist side (winter 1999 – spring 2004) Priština (Provisional Institutions)	Preserve control	**Territorial strategies:** Demarcate and regulate boundaries to exclude the influence of Belgrade; contain areas controlled by Belgrade and Kosovo Serbs (allow/acquiesce in formation of internal boundaries through enclavisation and division of Mitrovica) to deny Belgrade access to and influence over Albanian-controlled areas of Kosovo. **Demographic strategies**: Establish and retain an advantageous demographic balance for Kosovo Albanians by obstructing the return of the displaced Serb population; coerce more Serbs to leave (or tolerate/fail to prevent it). Isolate and contain Serb population (and other minorities) by preserving wartime demographic sorting and separation of Albanian and non-Albanian communities. **Observed but not expected**: Intra-Albanian conflict – outside the scope of the theory, but inconsistent with an objective of preserving control.
	Base state side (winter 1999 – spring 2004) Government of Serbia	Retain links	**Territorial strategies:** Sustain access to and exclusive control over the border region of north Kosovo and the Serb-majority enclaves south of the River Ibar: create defendable territory through enclavisation and division of Mitrovica, enforced by proxies, to avoid losing any more de facto control. Counter efforts by Kosovar institutions and international actors to extend authority to Serb-controlled areas. Sustain the presence of (official and/or unofficial) Serbian state agents (and institutions) in these areas. **Demographic strategies**: Sustain (and increase) the Serb population of Kosovo in Serb-controlled enclaves and north Kosovo by promoting returns of the displaced and in-migration of Serbs. Establish and sustain public goods provision and jurisdiction via parallel institutions, especially healthcare and courts, to keep Kosovo Serb population loyal to Belgrade and prevent Kosovar institutions and international actors establishing control.

2	Secessionist side (summer 2004 – spring 2008) Priština (Provisional Institutions)	-	The secessionist side was pursuing de jure international recognition rather than de facto control and not primarily following a constrained objective in this phase, so my theory is less relevant. The objective of de jure recognition is similar to 'consolidate and extend' (i.e. moving up the spectrum in the direction of full separation), but there is little evidence of Priština using the control strategies expected with this objective i.e. dismantling base state-run parallel structures, or establishing unified, integrated political structures that extend across whole territory. **Observed but not expected**: Political and diplomatic strategy leading to declaration of independence more prominent than demographic and territorial control strategies. Some evidence of continued use of strategies expected for a 'preserve control' objective e.g. obstructing Serb minority returns through bureaucratic inertia.
	Base state side (summer 2004 – spring 2008) Government of Serbia	Retain links	**Territorial and demographic strategies:** Continuation of strategies used in the first phase but with a greater emphasis on maintaining control over north Kosovo (in anticipation of possible partition and to block recognition) and a diminishing emphasis on enclaves south of the Ibar (where the population was becoming more integrated into Kosovar structures and participating in politics). Counter efforts by Kosovar institutions and international actors to extend authority to north Kosovo: non-cooperation with internationally-recognised authorities, sustain the active presence of security services and parallel institutions, use financial and employment incentives/sanctions towards the Serb population to prevent cooperation with internationally-recognised authorities. **Observed but not expected:** Mixed messages from Belgrade and Kosovo Serb political actors regarding political participation of Kosovo Serb population in Kosovo elections and cooperation with Kosovar institutions and international actors. Limited further returns of displaced Serbs to their Kosovo homes and few Serbs relocating to Kosovo.
Case study ends with Kosovo's Unilateral Declaration of Independence in February 2008. Major post-case study developments (discussed in Chapter 6): EU mediated technical talks start in 2011, leading to the Brussels Agreement in 2013			

Chapter 4: Georgia and Abkhazia

4.1. Introduction[1]

For Georgians, "Abkhazia is Georgia", an inseparable part of Georgian territory, while for Abkhazians, "Abkhazia is Abkhazia", a sovereign and independent nation.[2] These mutually exclusive claims over the same piece of land and the ensuing clash between what has been called the "aggressive integrationalism" of Tbilisi and the "aggressive separatism" of Sukhumi were necessary but not sufficient for war to break out in August 1992.[3] The war ended with the secessionists having secured a military victory and de facto control of most of Abkhazia but no international recognition, and the fundamental incompatibility between Georgian territorial integrity and Abkhaz self-determination remained. The situation became characterised as one of the post-Soviet 'frozen conflicts', a situation of 'no war, no peace',[4] and at the political level, this was true: national representatives in Tbilisi and Sukhumi have not meaningfully closed the gap between the two sides or moved closer to a comprehensive peace settlement in UN- or Russian-mediated talks at any point in the post-war period.[5] But a struggle between the two sides to establish facts on the ground continued, a struggle over where the territorial boundaries of control between the actors would fall, and who would live within those boundaries.

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[1] Many people in Tbilisi, Zugdidi, Sukhumi/Sukhum and elsewhere took the time to meet with me to discuss my research and offer their insights or help me with my research in other ways. I do not directly cite or quote them all here – some meetings were off-the-record or for informational purposes only – but I am thankful for their generosity with their time and for their assistance in helping me understand the current situation and history of the conflict. I am particularly grateful to Giorgi Jangiani, Paata Zakareishvili, Vano Abramashvili, Iago Pasanadze, Rezi Koiava, Ghia Nodia, Marina Elbakidze, Guranda Bursulaia, Stephen Jones, Jonathan Wheatley and Rustam Anshba. The analysis – and the errors – are my own.

[2] Nodia 1998a, 26; Lakoba 1995.

[3] Coppieters 1998, 5. The term 'aggressive integrationalism' is used by Chirikba to describe Tbilisi's policy towards Abkhazia; 'aggressive separatism' is a phrase attributed to Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze; Chirikba 1998.

[4] Walker 1998; King 2001; Lynch 2004.

[5] The most commonly used rendering of the Abkhaz capital is Sukhumi. The Abkhaz name is Sukhum, while the preferred Georgian rendering is Sokhumi. See also Chapter 3 for a discussion of place names in contested territory.



Figure 4.1 UN map of Georgia. Source: United Nations, Department of Field Support Geospatial Information Section

War Termination, September 1993 – June 1994

The war's decisive moment came in September 1993. Abkhaz troops, supported by elements of the Russian military and fighters from the north Caucasus, violated a ceasefire agreement signed in July 1993 (an agreement mediated and guaranteed by Russia) and seized control of Sukhumi, Abkhazia's capital.[6] This was followed by the "exodus of nearly the entire Georgian population of Abkhazia" which left "virtually all of Abkhazia … out of the control of the central authorities."[7] Large areas of post-war Abkhazia were depopulated with extensive damage to property, especially in Gali and Ochamchire, where most of the ethnic Georgian population lived.[8] The displacement of over 200,000 Georgians from

[6] Jones 2015, 97.
[7] Wheatley 2005, 79–80.
[8] "According to some sources, presently, large towns such as Gali and Ochamchira are virtually empty, the Abkhaz capital, Sukhumi is only 25-50% populated and the suburbs as well as villages south of the capital along the coast are abandoned. According to information available, most of the house have been shelled, burned or looted. In the

Abkhazia meant that by the end of the war the Abkhaz went from being a minority within Abkhazia – about 17 per cent of the pre-war population – to constituting about 50 per cent.[9]

By Zürcher's assessment, Abkhaz forces were "in control of the entire territory of Abkhazia" a few days after they had taken Sukhumi.[10] The towns of Ochamchire and Gali were the last towns controlled by the Georgian military, and fell to Abkhaz forces on 30 September.[11] However, as discussed below, Abkhaz forces did not in fact control the entire territory, as parts of Kodori Valley and Gali region were not fully under Abkhaz control.[12] September 1993 was the nadir for the Georgian state. In autumn 1993, supporters of the deposed Georgian president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia,[13] known as 'Zviadists', took advantage of the Abkhaz war to reignite Georgia's centralist war and seized control of most of western Georgia.[14] MacFarlane et al cite sources who claim that the Zviadists "were assisted by the Abkhaz, the latter presumably seeking to establish a buffer between their own region and central Georgia."[15] By this point, the Georgian government could only claim to govern 67 per cent of its territory,[16] and would later be dependent on Russian support to defeat the Zviadist uprising.

By October 1993, the Abkhaz forces had "reached the line purported to be their border and had no wish to go further."[17] There was, however, discussion over whether to press the advantage and take control of more territory as a bargaining chip:

> In this moment when we liberated the country we came to the border, we didn't go further. Many people said, maybe we should do like Karabakh, we should go further and take more and

villages, one house out of one hundred have been left untouched and inhabited." UNOMIG Document, 'Checklist on voluntary repatriation to Abkhazia', 30 December 1993, UN Archives S-1833-028-08

[9] Hansen 1999 I do not discuss here the contentious question of whether the displacement of Georgians from Abkhazia was part of a deliberate policy of ethnic cleansing or 'just' flight from the conflict, or a combination of both. My focus is on the subsequent questions about return and ongoing displacement in the post-war period in the context of attempts to affect demographic and territorial control.

[10] Zürcher 2005, 108.

[11] Jones 1997, 541.

[12] 'Kodor Valley' is the Abkhaz name

[13] Zviad Gamsakhurdia was the first president of post-Soviet independent Georgia, overthrown in a military coup in 1992.

[14] Cheterian 2008, 203.

[15] MacFarlane, Minear, and Shenfield 1996, 12.

[16] George 2009, 108.

[17] Mackinlay and Sharov 2003, 90.

> then trade, and then we could give it back to them. But nobody wanted, nobody needed extra losses in this war and that's why [Abkhaz leader] Ardzinba said no, just go to the border and finish it.[18]

And so a de facto border or separation line emerged that would be formalised as a ceasefire line in subsequent conflict regulation mechanisms. This line, which more or less follows the course of the Inguri river (or Ingur, in the Abkhaz rendering), is the standard Abkhaz reference point for demarcating where Abkhazia ends and Georgia begins: as Abkhaz politician Stanislav Lakoba put it, "For years Georgia and Abkhazia had fixed territories and borders – for 300 years the river Ingur divided Abkhazia and Georgia."[19] As the line more or less demarcating the boundaries of post-war de facto territorial control between Georgia and Abkhazia, this boundary area inevitably became contested. For the Abkhaz it was their first line of defence, and marked the border of their new state. As the discussion below of Gali region will show, the boundary did not fully reflect effective control or the political loyalties of the populations it divided, and with such a large displaced population living on the Georgian side – temporarily, they believed – the ability to regulate movement across this boundary would become another vital lever for the two sides.

On 1 December 1993, the parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding, marking the date at which UCDP code war termination.[20] There were some residual clashes during the final months of 1993 between the Abkhaz forces and the few Georgian-populated villages in Kodori Valley still outside their control, with the Georgian Ministry of Defence sending 100 men to assist local defence forces;[21] the presence of Georgian personnel in Kodori Valley would repeatedly be a point of contention with the Abkhaz authorities for the next fifteen years. By December 1993, the UN's Chief Military Observer

[18] Interview, Maxim Gunjia, Sukhumi (Sukhum), May 2017. Maxim Gunjia is a former Foreign Minister in the Abkhaz Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The question of Abkhaz attempts to extend their territorial control beyond its historically accepted boundaries for tactical advantage did not go away: in April 1996, UNOMIG reported comments from the Abkhaz de facto foreign minister Lakerbaya that "there were militant elements among the Abkhaz … who would like to occupy additional territory on the other [i.e. Georgian] side of the Inguri river, including the port of Poti" as a response to mines being laid by Georgian partisans. Cable from Bota to Annan and Goulding, 'Meeting with the Abkhaz 'Foreign Minister'' 11 April 1996, UN Archives S-1829-0048-02.

[19] Lakoba 1995.

[20] <https://www.ucdp.uu.se/additionalinfo/392/1>

[21] Georgian Chronicle, December 1993

(CMO) reported that the Abkhaz authorities were not making "any efforts to gain control of this area [along the Kodori valley east of Amtkel]" which was populated by Svans,[22] who, in the CMO's assessment, "were not offensive, they only wanted to defend their villages."[23] In March 1994, Abkhaz forces renewed their efforts to secure control of territory in Kodori Valley, pushing further east into the gorge and establishing a presence as far as the village of Lata in the lower part of the valley, forcing the remaining Georgian troops to withdraw.[24] The Abkhaz advanced no further, however: in upper Kodori Valley, the local Svan population – now equipped with weapons abandoned by the retreating Georgian military – "prevented … the Abkhaz forces from entering [upper] Kodori valley. In fact, the Svans seem to control the region with little concern for the wishes of Tbilisi."[25]

The border region of Kodori Valley is another feature of the post-war environment where Abkhaz and Georgian interests overlapped and clashed: the links and levers provided by the territory and its population created threats and opportunities both sides used in pursuit of constrained objectives. While governments in Tbilisi have generally taken the view that the Svan population of Kodori Valley should be given autonomy and controlled by local representatives, there has also been an understanding – in Tbilisi, at least – that these local actors should represent Georgian interests. In the aftermath of the war, "the local Svan leaders only de jure recognized themselves as part of Georgia, whereas de facto they retained their independence from both Sukhum and Tbilisi."[26]

This analysis from UNOMIG's CMO on the military aspects of 'the Kodori question' underscores the region's importance:

> From the Abkhaz point of view the valley gives connection to the North Caucasian Federation through two of the three passes to which the valley leads. These two are claimed to be controlled by Russia but they are in areas where Russia has difficulties with North-Caucasian ethnic

[22] An ethnic sub-group of Georgians, from the Svaneti region of north-western Georgia, who had fought against the Abkhaz during the war.
[23] Cable from Hvidegaard to Annan, 'Contribution to Report', December 1993, UN Archives S-1829-0048-05. The same cable also reports instances of Svans preventing Abkhaz residents returning to villages that had been mixed Abkhaz/Svan prior to war.
[24] Shesterinina 2014, 277.
[25] Cornell 2001, 161–162.
[26] Yamskov 2009, 167.

> minorities. From the Georgian/Svan side the valley is one of the two possible attack axes towards Sukhumi. Many Georgians, [including] highranking military, are dissatisfied with the appeasement policy of Shevardnadze and argue for regaining Abkhazia by force. Nearly all the Svans in the upper valley wish to return to Gulripsh/Sukhumi and have expressed their will to fight for this possibility. Therefore, from a military point of view the Abkhaz interest in clearing the valley is obvious. So is the Georgian in maintaining a "bridgehead" there, and it is likely that they will hesitate longest possible to withdraw, claiming that armed persons do not belong to the Georgian forces but are Svans who cannot lay down their weapons as long as they receive no guarantees.[27]

In the spring of 1994, the parties signed two cease-fire arrangements: the Quadripartite Agreement in April 1994, addressing IDP returns, and the 'Moscow Agreement' a month later, which established a security zone (SZ) and restricted weapons zone (RWZ) and gave Georgian and Abkhaz civil authorities responsibility for law and order on their respective sides of the cease-fire line.[28] The cease-fire was enforced by a Russian-dominated peacekeeping force (also mandated to facilitate the safe return of the displaced) which deployed in June 1994 under the auspices of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-PKF).

There was a "confusing and tortuous path" leading to these agreements, and political efforts to reach a settlement had been repeatedly undermined by military efforts on the ground to gain a tactical advantage before a ceasefire froze the situation.[29] The negotiating positions in the talks in early 1994 that eventually led to the establishment of the SZ and the CIS-PKF provide useful early evidence of the how the parties' objectives were being formed with regard to the boundaries of territorial control. For the Georgian side, the conflict zone "meant Abkhazia and nothing more" but for the Abkhaz side it included both sides of the ceasefire line, encompassing Abkhaz and Georgian territory.[30] Any proposals on demilitarisation and weapons limitation seen as asymmetric, imposing tighter restrictions on the Abkhaz side of the Inguri River, were rejected by the Abkhaz, as were proposals that would see deployment of peacekeepers to Kodori Valley or the Psou River on the border with Russia.[31] Georgian negotiators pushed for a Security

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[27] Cable from Hvidegaard to Annan, 21 August 1994, UN Archives S-1829-0048-05
[28] <https://www.usip.org/publications/2002/04/peace-agreements-georgia>
[29] Mackinlay and Sharov 2003, 90.
[30] Cable from Hvidegaard to Annan, 'Geneva Talks, Comments on Communique', 17 January 94, UN Archives S-1829-0047-08.
[31] Cable from Shimura to Annan, 'Second Day of Talks', 13 April 1994, UN Archives S-1829-0047-07

Zone extending far enough into Abkhazia to include all of Gali region, and were willing to accept an equally deep zone into Georgian territory, but the Abkhaz side objected, "asserting that the maximum zone of demilitarization they can accept is 12 km from Inguri because there was a canal there which was their first line of defence on the west [i.e. Abkhaz] side of the Inguri."[32]

We can see here how the wartime objectives of secession and counter-secession are starting to transform into the post-war objectives discussed in the next section. Sukhumi not only needed to demand equal sovereign status with Georgia, but strategically they needed to be able to defend their wartime gains and prevent any renewed Georgian offensive. Tbilisi, for its part, tried to limit the amount of control the Abkhaz would have over Gali.



Figure 4.2 The Restricted Weapons Zone and Security Zone (Based on map taken from UN Document S/1994/818, 12 July 1994)

Gali region was perhaps the most important link and lever in the post-war environment.[33] As Wheatley puts it, after the fall of Sukhumi, the "conflict between the Georgian and Abkhazian sides moved to the district of Gali, which had been home to a nearly homogeneous Georgian population and had escaped

[32] Cable from Shimura to Annan, 'Fourth Day of Talks', 15 April 1994, UN Archives S-1829-0047-07
[33] Gali (or Gal to give its Abkhaz name) is the name of the region and the main town in the region. For brevity, I usually use Gali as shorthand to refer to the whole region unless otherwise stated.

the worst ravages of the war – at least until Abkhaz units occupied the district" in September 1993.[34] Gali is important for several reasons at the nexus of territory and demographics. It occupies a strategically and militarily important location on the boundary between Abkhazia and Georgia, and the land is fertile and the area is economically important to the wider region.[35] Its ethnic Georgian/Mingrelian population found itself after the war as a minority in a de facto state they did not recognise. The Abkhaz authorities have been ambivalent about how to treat a population variously seen as a threatening fifth column, citizens to be integrated in a national project of civic rather than ethnic nationalism, a resource to be taxed, and a substantial voting bloc to be courted or disenfranchised. These factors have made Gali a bargaining chip and a potential area for cooperation and confidence-building (and the focus of international peacebuilding NGOs, at times to the annoyance of both Sukhumi and Tbilisi). They also mean that the population has been treated with suspicion by both Abkhaz and Georgians, and that Gali is a sore spot both sides use to hurt each other.

There have been discussions about partitioning Abkhazia, informally if not part of official negotiations, with Gali being returned to Georgian control in exchange for recognising Abkhazia's independence. According to former diplomat Maxim Gunjia, in the early 1990s the international community was proposing to the Abkhaz, '"give Gal district to Georgia … and the rest will be yours.' And we just said no, because we understood if you give them Gal district they will take more and more. It wasn't negotiable at all."[36] Georgian politician David Darchiashvili has a different perspective on why this proposal did not gain traction: "if circumstances developed differently [the] Abkhaz would have been ready to concede Gali district, but since they have this district, which is the rich district, good for agriculture, they of course keep it."[37]

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[34] Wheatley 2005, 121.
[35] Tarkhan-Mouravi 1996, 21.
[36] Interview, Maxim Gunjia, Sukhumi, May 2017
[37] Interview, David Darchiashvili, Tbilisi, November 2016. David Darchiashvili was a Georgian parliamentarian and is a Professor at Ilia State University, specialising in defence and security issues

To finish this section with a comment on the role of external actors as a crucial constraint on Georgian and Abkhaz action, the deployment of Russian peacekeepers consolidated Russia's dominant political and security role in the region. The Russian military and defence ministry are known to have provided support to the Abkhaz that made a decisive difference in defeating the Georgian forces, and their well-established presence in military bases in the region meant they were in a position to drive Russian-Abkhaz relations, more so than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the war's early stages, Moscow had no consistent policy – rather, Russia's policy was "often inconsistent and confused"[38] – but when Marrack Goulding, UN Under Secretary-General, met with officials from the Russian defence and foreign ministries in Moscow in September 1993 he reported his concerns to the UN Secretary-General that Russia saw the UN as being 'in competition' with them in the former Soviet republics. The Russians, he noted, strongly advocated the importance of Russian peacekeepers in the 'Near Abroad', and resented Western criticism of Russia's defence of its interests in the region.[39] Shortly after these meetings, the UN Representative in Georgia would convey the following message to Goulding about a meeting between the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Boris Pastukhov, and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Edouard Brunner:

> Pastukhov … made a political declaration, a sort of "message to the West" …. It went something like this: Russia has its political and strategic interests which it is intent on protecting. It will not allow anyone to do it for Russia. If we are not understood, if we are dealt with in the same way as we were dealt with before this latest phase of our development occurred, we will find ways to dispel such misconceptions.[40]

By 1994 there were "consistent and well-coordinated attempts to deny access to all international organizations which hoped to attempt conflict management in the Caucasus [and] the [Russian] Foreign and Defence Ministries worked hand in hand to prevent any serious UN involvement in Abkhazia."[41] Nonetheless, the UN successfully insisted on giving the UN observer mission (UNOMIG) a mandate to monitor the CIS-PKF as well as the ceasefire.

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[38] Trenin 1996.
[39] 'Note to the Secretary-General. Visit to Moscow.' 7 September 1993, UN Archives S-1834-0071-04.
[40] Fax from Starcevic to M. Goulding, 8 November 1993. UN Archives S-1833-0004-02
[41] Baev 1997, 19.

The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict has provided Russia with substantial leverage in the South Caucasus: as Antonenko puts it, the "conflict has become and remains an important instrument of [Russia's] policy since [the end of the war]",[42] and the strategic manipulation of territorial conflict as a way to retain influence over the former Soviet Republics is emphasised in many analyses of Russian policy in the region.[43] While this meant being "willing to raise the possibility of a dismembered Georgia",[44] the complete collapse of Georgia was not in Russia's interest either (seen in their support of Shevardnadze against the Zviadist rebellion).

Georgian views on Russia's role in the conflict have emphasised the Kremlin's support for Sukhumi as a means to control Georgia, or even to punish the former Soviet republic for its pro-Western orientation. Former Georgian foreign minister Irakli Menagarishvili notes the consistency in Russia's approach: "Their goal was clearly to use this instrument [i.e. involvement in Abkhazia] to keep Georgia, the South Caucasus under control."[45] Abkhaz perspectives emphasise that, at least in the first years after the war, Russia did not support Abkhazia: as Natella Akaba, a former politician and current civil society leader, put it, "at [the end of the war] Russia was completely on the Georgian side. I know that the Georgian people think that the Russians always supported Abkhazia but it is wrong. During the Yeltsin time [until 1999], and when Shevardnadze was Georgian leader [until 2003], Russia didn't support Abkhazia."[46] Russian support and opposition towards each side may have varied, but for the purposes of this analysis, suffice to say that Russia had a near-constant and often determinative military and political presence in an area deemed vital to its security interests.

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[42] Antonenko 2005, 209.
[43] Nodia 1998a, 41.
[44] Lynch 1999, 128.
[45] Interview, Irakli Menagarishvili, Tbilisi, April 2017
[46] Interview, Natella Akaba, Sukhumi, May 2017. Natella Akaba is Secretary of the Public Chamber of Abkhazia, an advisory body to Abkhaz President, and head of the civil society organisation, Women of Abkhazia.

UN-mediated talks began in Geneva in November 1993, and various working groups continued to meet – sometimes with lengthy suspensions – throughout the post-war period until 2006, but never made any substantial breakthroughs. Writing four years after the end of the war, Georgian political scientist Ghia Nodia summarised the status quo: "Nobody is happy, but nobody is terribly unhappy either, and life goes on … Any resolute attempt by either of the parties to change the situation dramatically in its favour could undermine the existing – if fragile – balance and boomerang on the initiator, so everybody is cautious."[47] And so the wartime cleavage became a post-war cleavage – restoring Georgia's pre-war territorial integrity versus full separation for the Abkhaz, even if neither side was willing or able at this stage to push for their maximalist objective. The political stalemate persisted throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, but as I show in this chapter, a stalemate did not mean that nothing was happening or changing on the ground – even preserving the status quo can require a lot of activity.[48]

4.2. First Post-War Phase: Summer 1994 – Summer 1998

In June 1995, the Abkhaz de facto authorities were insisting that UNOMIG personnel needed Abkhaz visas. Such a demand, noted the Chief Military Observer (CMO), "contradicts the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia. Facts are, however," he goes on to say, "Abkhaz authorities reign over Abkhazia and control the entrance points at Psou and Inguri."[49] But the situation since the signing of the Moscow and Quadripartite Agreements was rather more complicated. In August 1994 in Kodori Valley, where Abkhaz forces had halted their advance in spring that year and left the upper reaches of the valley in control of the local Svans, there were still approximately 300 Georgian troops who, under the terms of the agreement, should have withdrawn. The Abkhaz authorities were

[47] Nodia 1998c, 41.
[48] At this point that the Abkhaz leadership were not openly pushing for independence, but were taking a "gradual approach, proposing the establishment of confederal links with Georgia, reflecting an equal right to national self-determination and sovereign status", something the Georgian government refused because this would concede Abkhazia had the right to secede. Coppieters 2003, 191. The ambiguity of objectives about legal status emphasises the importance of investigating what was being pursued on the ground in terms of de facto control of populated territory.
[49] Cable to Annan from Hvidegaard, 'Demarche by "Friends of Georgia"', 20 June 1995, UN Archives S-1829-0048-04. The River Psou demarcates Abkhazia's northern border with Russia.

again looking to extend their control and remove any remaining Georgian state presence from Kodori Valley, while Tbilisi was still trying to retain a foothold in the area. The picture in Gali was even more fragmented: in a report to the UN in November 1995, Liviu Bota[50] recounts a meeting with Major General Agrba, Abkhaz 'Minister of Interior', where the latter "pointed out that since the end of the war, Abkhazia has not maintained control over 21 of 28 towns in the Gali Region. [Agrba] stated that these villages, despite being on Abkhazian territory, have been under the de facto control of Tbilisi."[51]

UNOMIG reports from September 1996 describe in more detail what this village-level distribution of control looked like: the mayor of Nabakevi, a town in lower Gali, told the observers that no Abkhaz militia had been in the town for a year, and the population were "unwilling to take part" in upcoming Abkhaz elections. "For all practical purposes", the report concludes "this town is part of GEO [Georgia]. All information is slanted to discredit ABK [Abkhazia], and all economic ties are with Georgia. Increased presence by Abkhaz authorities would probably cause more residents to leave the village."[52] This fragmented post-war environment was not limited to Kodori Valley and Gali and what was left of the Georgian presence in these areas. A cable from Bota in March 1996 captures the challenges both sides faced: "The truth of the matter is that the Abkhaz Authorities have little or no control over what goes on in the [Restricted Weapons Zone] North of the Gali Canal.... Nor do the Georgian Authorities have any real control over the actions of pressure Groups or the many thousands of IDPs in the Zugdidi sector."[53]

[50] Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNOMIG, July 1997 – October 1999
[51] UNOMIG 'Special Report: Abkhaz militia operations in the security zone', 03 November 1995, from Bota to UNHQ, UN Archives S-1829-0048-03
[52] UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 24 September 1996, UN Archives S-1829-0081-01. To make the text more readable, when quoting UNOMIG reports I will subsequently write 'Abkhazia/n' and Georgia/n' and so on rather than the abbreviations ABK, GEO etc as used in the original reports.
[53] Cable from Bota to Annan, 'Current mine threat to UNOMIG', 30 March 1996, UN Archives S-1829-0048-03

Secessionist objectives and strategies

"If you are strong enough to defend yourself, to defend the state, you are also a state. We have the capacity to defend ourselves, it's also important as a feature of state, if people are ready to defend a country and even die for it, which they did, it's real, it's not quasi, it's real".[54]

"It was … nation-building against [the] external environment, instead of nation-building with the support of [the] external environment."[55]

Preserve Control

Sukhumi had few options in summer 1994. Russian military support during the war would not be extended to diplomatic support for their independence as political talks began, and while a weakened Georgia and the presence of peacekeepers meant that a reversal of battlefield gains was unlikely, the Abkhaz could not do much to move closer to their maximalist objective. Some analyses have suggested that the Abkhaz strategy was to use the UNOMIG and CIS-PKF presence to freeze the status quo and hope the demographic balance would swing in their favour by encouraging diaspora returns and migration from the north Caucasus.[56]

My analysis takes a similar starting point. The prevailing constrained objective for the Abkhaz in this period was to preserve control: as their wartime leader and president put it in 1995, "the Abkhaz should do their utmost not to lose in the peace process what they had gained on the battlefield."[57] Territorially, these battlefield gains meant de facto control over almost all Abkhaz territory with the exceptions of Svan-controlled parts of Kodori Valley, a very tenuous hold over Gali (especially lower Gali)[58] and the restrictions imposed by the CIS-PKF who were responsible for security around the cease-fire line.

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[54] Interview, Viacheslav Chirikba, former foreign minister of Abkhazia, Sukhumi, May 2017
[55] Interview, Maxim Gunjia, Sukhumi, May 2017
[56] MacFarlane, Minear, and Shenfield 1996, 57.
[57] UNOMIG Cable to Annan from Hvidegaard, 14 June 1995, Subject 'Special Session of the Abkhaz Parliament', UN Archives, S-1829-0048-04
[58] Johnson 2015.

Demographically, the Abkhaz were no longer a small minority but close to being a majority, something that had existential significance for a population that feared for its survival.[59]

Even in the first years after the war, Sukhumi often had to prioritise domestic concerns over the main conflict cleavage: "by the end second half of the 90s, already the oppositional movements started to form, the media became quite critical, there was a high rate of criminality…, and that's how Abkhazia became more and more focused on internal dynamics, on political dynamics, rather than the relations with Georgia [and] the Geneva process."[60] The war, combined with the collapse of the Soviet Union, meant that Abkhazia "suffered a colossal economic collapse."[61] Such internal issues meant that extending control was not feasible with resources necessarily devoted to those areas and people already under de facto Abkhaz control. Nonetheless, if Sukhumi was to have any chance of preserving control, let alone move closer to their maximalist objective, they could not ignore the problems posed by the parts of Gali and Kodori that were not under their control or the thousands of displaced Georgians wanting to return home.

How did Sukhumi translate this objective into control strategies? Preserving control entailed a profile of demographic and territorial control strategies clustered around three key links and levers: preventing the strategically important Svan-controlled parts of Kodori Valley from being a threat to Abkhaz interests by excluding or limiting the influence of any remaining Georgian state presence; retaining their new demographic advantage by obstructing the return of Georgian IDPs; and responding to and containing the multiple challenges presented by Gali and its Georgian population. Other control strategies were used, some of which are not consistent with a 'preserve' objective, especially with regard to Gali, which I discuss in the relevant sections.

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[59] Abkhaz aspirations for statehood and sovereignty and the incomplete extension of authority throughout Abkhaz territory means that 'consolidate and extend' is perhaps a better description of Sukhumi's objectives. However, their materially weak position makes an emphasis on preserving control over the areas held by the end of the war the most plausible position consistent with the evidence.
[60] Interview, Liana Kvarchelia (Director, Centre for Humanitarian Programmes), Sukhumi, May 2017
[61] Gumba and Ketsba 2004, 158.

Kodori Valley[62]

"We had a gentlemen's agreement with the Svans up there. [The Abkhaz] forces didn't go to Kodor because it was kind of a gentlemen's, tacit agreement"[63]

"The upper reaches of Kodor, because the Abkhaz army had plans to go there, but the terrain is very rough and it's very fraught with many casualties because the Svan population was there, very militant, and the Georgian army. So it was decided to spare lives of people"[64]

Given the strategic importance of Kodori Valley, one of Sukhumi's first post-war priorities was to contain the threat of an area not under their control with a pro-Georgian population that fought against them in the war, and to deny a strategic bridgehead to Tbilisi by excluding any official Georgian presence. Sukhumi was hostile to the presence of any rival claim over Abkhaz territory: in August 1994, Abkhaz leader Ardzinba told UNOMIG's Chief Military Observer (CMO) that "as the Kodori Valley is clearly Abkhaz territory he would allow no one to interfere with Abkhaz authority in the area. He stated that a CIS-PKF permanent presence in the valley was a violation of the agreement which he would not tolerate."[65] Nonetheless, having secured control as far as Lata, the Abkhaz soon agreed to joint patrolling of Upper Kodori Valley with the CIS-PKF and the Svans, and to not deploy troops further east than Lata.[66] Over the coming months, a delicate arrangement was reached that more or less kept the peace in Kodori Valley for the rest of the 1990s.

Under the terms of the cease-fire, Georgian troops were required to withdraw from Kodori Valley, and began to do so in August 1994, but at the end of that month, UNOMIG confirmed "the presence [in upper Kodori Valley] of [a] Georgian unit of approximately 300 personnel."[67] As the last Georgian troops

[62] Or Kodor Valley, to give the Abkhaz name
[63] Interview, Maxim Gunjia, Sukhumi, May 2017
[64] Interview, Viacheslav Chirikba, Sukhumi, May 2017
[65] Cable from Hvidegaard to Annan, 'Meeting with Mr. Ardzinba', 9 August 1994, UN Archives S-1829-0048-05.
[66] UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 20 August 1994, UN Archives S-1829-0081-02
[67] Complicating the matter, though, the report continues that the commander claims "to receive orders only from the leader of the Republican party which is in opposition to [Georgian president] Shevardnadze." UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 20 August 1994, UN Archives S-1829-0081-02

withdrew, the Georgian side also became less supportive of the Svan population, apparently in order to make progress in the return of Georgian IDPs (Sukhumi refused to countenance any returns until all Georgian troops had left). The Svans declared their intention to protect their autonomy, and that "they cannot accept instalment of Abkhaz civil authority." The UNOMIG assessment in September 1994 was pessimistic: "Abkhaz attempts … to install their authority including militia in Svan villages is assessed as likely to be met with strong opposition. As most of the Svans fought against the Abkhaz and therefore will be prosecuted according to Abkhaz law, the Svans seem to have the choice only between actively resisting the Abkhaz or leaving the valley and moving into Georgia."[68]

By October, UNOMIG was predicting a "long and protracted guerrilla war" would start as soon as the CIS-PKF withdrew.[69] But a compromise – a 'gentleman's agreement' – between the Abkhaz and the Svans was reached. In this local arrangement, facilitated by talks and joint patrols mediated by UNOMIG and the CIS-PKF, the Abkhaz agreed to not deploy more troops or to extend their territorial control further into the gorge as long as the Svan population that remained had not fought against the Abkhaz and there was no Georgian state military presence. Most Svans who had fought in the war had already left the area, and those who remained were reassured by the continuing CIS-PKF presence as a buffer between them and Abkhaz forces in the lower part of the valley. The peacekeepers and UNOMIG confirmed that Kodori Valley was cleared of Georgian troops by October 1994.[70]

So only eight days after predicting war, UNOMIG's CMO reported that the Abkhaz had "reaffirmed their intention to install civil authority in the area, but did … not mention the possible moving in of troops", while the Svans were emphasising that they "just wanted to live in peace", concluding that "peaceful co-existence in the valley" was possible.[71] Subsequent reports noted improving relations

[68] UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 27 September 1994, UN Archives S-1829-0081-02
[69] Cable from Hvidegaard to Annan, 'Kodori Valley', 09 October 1994, UN Archives S-1829-0048-05
[70] Report by Hvidegaard on Operation Search and Explain, 17 October 1994, UN Archives, S-1829-0048-04
[71] Report by Hvidegaard on Operation Search and Explain, 17 October 1994, UN Archives, S-1829-0048-04

between the Abkhaz and the Svans[72] and the return of hundreds of refugees by August 1995,[73] and that there was now a power struggle between the de facto leader of the Svans and the Tbilisi-appointed official administrator for the region, ostensibly on the same side.[74] Georgia's efforts to retain a link to Kodori Valley continued (I return to this part of the Kodori Valley narrative in the next section) and the relative stability would collapse in the 2000s, but for the rest of the 1990s upper Kodori Valley remained outside of effective Abkhaz control but was not an immediate threat to them.

Return of Displaced Populations

> *"On 14 September [1994] approximately 2000 [Georgian] refugees gathered in busses, truck and cars on the Zugdidi side of the main bridge over the Inguri river. The CIS PKF agreed to escort the column but would not provide any security guarantee for returnees once they reached the Gali side…. Shortly before midday two busloads of armed Abkhaz militsia appeared at the Gali side of the main bridge and warned that any refugees attempting to cross would be shot at. Consequently the refugees abandoned the return operation."*[75]

For Sukhumi at this point in the post-war phase, to preserve control meant managing demographics, and this meant preventing, or at least restricting, the return of the displaced Georgian population.[76] The displacement of the Georgian population meant the Abkhaz went from a small minority to being close to a majority, and so the possibility of over 200,000 Georgians returning was seen as threatening for several reasons:[77] the fear of being a minority again and what this would mean for sustaining an Abkhaz national project, the security implications of a potentially hostile population loyal to Tbilisi in the strategically important Gali border region, the voting power of a large segment of the population should Abkhazia's

[72] See UN Archives, S-1829-0056-02 for other reports on benign Abkhaz-Svan relations.
[73] UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 1 August 1995, UN Archives S-1829-0081-02
[74] UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 15 November 1994, UN Archives S-1829-0081-02
[75] UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 20 September 1994, UN Archives S-1829-0081-02
[76] Cornell 2001, 179; MacFarlane, Minear, and Shenfield 1996, 38–42.
[77] I'm grateful to Anastasia Shesterinina for this point.

demands for independence be put to a referendum, and a basic lack of capacity in a war-torn economy to cope with so many people returning at once.

A UNOMIG report from June 1994 describes events that set the tone for the early post-war period: following the destruction of an electricity pylon by unidentified saboteurs (most likely Georgian partisans – see below), the military observers remark, "There is hardly any doubt that Abkhaz authorities will use such cases [of sabotage] as justification for a thorough screening of people who want to return to Abkhazia, thus ensuring that only people who are acceptable to them are allowed to return."[78] This meant only IDPs who had lived in Gali before the war had a chance of returning: the population in Gali was majority-Georgian prior to the war, whereas other areas in Abkhazia were more mixed. Gali, as one Abkhaz civil society leader described it to me, was "another reality.… only Georgians live there," and as a result, "it was very difficult to think about the returning of all Georgian refugees because [there would] be very dramatical consequences after this war when people killed each other on [an] ethnic basis." Ethnic Georgians from these areas were more likely to have fought in the war and were therefore prohibited by the Abkhaz from returning.[79] Coppieters sums up the position of the Abkhaz leadership: "their refusal to grant a right of return to the whole Georgian population from Abkhazia was the price the Georgian authorities had to pay for their refusal to recognize Abkhazia's sovereignty."[80] The Abkhaz authorities also imposed quotas on the number of people who could return – set at no more than 200 per week in May 1995, for example.[81] Between the end of the war and May 1998, approximately 53,000 IDPs out of a

[78] Cable from Hvidegaard to Annan, 'Abkhaz Statement', 15 June 1994, UN Archives S-1829-0048-05
[79] "from the very beginning the position of Gal residents was very difficult because they are on the territory of Abkhazia but their ethnicity is, they perceive it, is Georgian ethnicity. Georgia invaded Abkhazia but, most of Gal residents they didn't support this war, they even supported Abkhazia. But many Abkhazians forget about this, they only remember that they are Georgians. Georgians are enemies, they are Georgians, they are enemies." Interview, Arda Inal Ipa (Co-Director, Centre for Humanitarian Programs), Sukhumi, May 2017
[80] Coppieters 2003, 191.
[81] These figures are from the Minorities at Risk project. Minorities at Risk 2006.

total of more than 280,000, returned 'spontaneously'[82] (that is, outside of the official framework managed by the UNHCR that never functioned as intended), mostly to lower Gali.[83]

The boundary between Abkhazia and Georgia was another link used by the Abkhaz militia as part of their efforts to control the presence of IDPs in Gali. In July 1996, the militia destroyed a bridge used by IDPs to cross the Inguri river, a move intended to "channel IDPs across the only recognised crossing point at the nearby Inguri Main Bridge."[84] A month later, the militia had increased their patrols along the Inguri in a further effort to restrict entry and exit to a single point.[85] Free movement back and forth from Zugdidi to Gali was – and still is – a crucial part of life for the IDPs,[86] so regulating the boundary and crossing points was a powerful tool for controlling the movement of the population, and determining which populations could and could not reside in Abkhazia.

However, there were differences between the actions of the central authorities in Sukhumi and Tbilisi and local authorities in Gali and Zugdidi. Even on such an important and sensitive issue as returns, UNOMIG noted in December 1995 that while the Abkhaz authorities were not accepting applications for repatriation, at "the local level, i.e. between the administrations of Zugdidi and Gali, the cooperation is improving. Several persons cross Inguri every day in both directions without any hindrance. There are indications that this local cooperation and reconciliation policy is not supported by the central Georgian and Abkhaz authorities."[87]

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[82] As a civil society expert from Gali described event to me: "all of them [the IDPs] believed that it will be a short time … and they thought that in a short period they will return.... And after … some time it was a little bit stable … they start returning to Gali. But it was not political decision to return Gali people, it was absolutely the people, the people decided to return." Despite the hardship and the dangers of crossing the Inguri back to Gali "a majority of the Gali population returned to Gali region" but "no one recognised their status" Interview, Eliko Bendeliani (Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflicts), Tbilisi, April 2017

[83] 'Georgia', Country Report on Human Rights Practices Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 25 February 2000

[84] UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 16 July 1996, UN Archives S-1829-0081-01

[85] UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 05 August 1996, UN Archives S-1829-0081-01

[86] Prelz Oltramonti 2016, 247.

[87] UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 13 December 1995, UN Archives S-1829-0056-02

Gali Region

Returns were closely tied to developments in Gali more generally, and control over who was returning to the region was one of several control strategies used as this cable from UNOMIG's Chief Military Observer describes:

> … the Abkhaz authorities are very anxious to regain control over the Gali District. To obtain this they are trying to deploy Border Guard units along the Inguri, until now denied to them by the PKF, to strengthen the militia, claiming it to be necessary to combat criminality and to register the population as a means of control. In the restricted weapons zone they are trying to limit UNOMIG relations with the population by warning them not to speak with our patrols and by restricting UNOMIG movements. The reasons are political, economical and psychological. Politically, it is necessary for them to demonstrate that they firmly control the whole territory of Abkhazia and they also see it necessary to control who is returning. They still maintain that nobody who fought against their side can return. Economically, they would like to control the Gali District being the most important and productive agricultural area of Abkhazia. Psychologically, there is a requirement to demonstrate that the authorities are in full control, not least to the non-Abkhaz part of the population.[88]

There was a lot at stake in Gali for both sides. The Abkhaz priority was to prevent Gali from coming under the control of Tbilisi or the Abkhazian 'Government in Exile':[89] the intent to ensure Gali did not return to Georgian control is clear from a press statement from the Abkhaz Security Service in June 1995, as reported by UNOMIG: "Sukhumi should increase the number of its militia, security and administrative personnel in Gali region, otherwise the Abkhaz would lose control over the military and political situation there and a pro-Georgian local administration, independent of Sukhumi, might be established."[90] As it was put to me by a former official from the Abkhazian Government in Exile, "Since Gali district was almost absolutely uncontrolled by the Abkhazian de facto government they [i.e. the de facto authorities] needed to execute their power there and show that Georgia is not able to control this territory, and that only Abkhazian government is able to control."[91] This entailed excluding any official Georgian presence and countering Georgian efforts to undermine Abkhaz control (which made controlling the border

[88] UNOMIG Cable to Annan from Hvidegaard, 01 August 1995, Subject: 'Comment on the Situation in Abkhazia', UN Archives, S-1829-0048-04

[89] The 'Government in Exile' was the Tbilisi-recognised body with an executive and a legislative structure, comprised mostly of ethnic Georgians who had been part of the pre-war Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (dissolved in 1994) and deputies who had been elected to the Georgian Parliament in 1992. Wheatley 2005, 121.

[90] UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 26 June 1995, UN Archives S-1829-0056-02

[91] Interview, former official from the Abkhazian Government in Exile, Tbilisi, November 2016

crucial), and isolating the region so that any remaining Georgian influence would be contained and not threaten the rest of Abkhazia. In effect, Gali was treated by the Abkhaz authorities as "a troublesome but necessary buffer zone between Abkhaz territory and 'the enemy'."[92] This behaviour is consistent with the objective of preserving control, and I will present evidence of control strategies directed towards this end, but – perhaps inevitably given that Gali in the 1990s was so contested, fragmented and volatile[93] – the picture is far from clear and I also look at Abkhaz actions in Gali that are more ambiguous.

Many of the most prominent control strategies used in Gali were focused on removing competing sources of authority or rival security actors from Gali. The Abkhaz militia[94] extensively used 'sweep' or 'cleaning' operations to deal with the security threat posed by Georgian partisans (see next section) and remove hostile actors – in effect, a counterinsurgency tactic. This technique for controlling territory – or at least denying control to any pro-Georgian actors – often had harmful consequences for the civilian population: by 1995 violence was increasing and the Abkhaz militias stepped up their operations, but the Abkhaz effort was undermined by Sukhumi's inability to control the militia. An analysis (from 1997) on the problems in Gali claimed that there was "no effective authority in Gali district."[95] Reporting from Amnesty International sums up the deteriorating situation after a major sweep in March: "Fears for the safety of ethnic Georgians in … Abkhazia continue after reports that at least 10 people were killed and dozens of others were tortured or ill-treated when Abkhazian militia swept through the Gali district…. The attacks were carried out as some 400 to 600 militiamen took part in what was described by Abkhazian authorities as an operation to register Georgian refugees and locate "partisans" who had infiltrated the territory with them."[96] A UN report concluded that the "operation was excessively

[92] Trier, Lohm, and Szakonyi 2010, 48.
[93] Johnson 2015; Prelz Oltramonti 2016; Prelz Oltramonti 2017; Shesterinina 2015.
[94] 'Militia' in this context means police, not military personnel (the latter were prohibited from the Security Zone by the Moscow Agreement), who were only permitted to carry small arms.
[95] Dale 1997, 94.
[96] Amnesty International 1995.

forceful", further noting that "the Abkhaz authorities have stated that they were unable to exercise full control over the militia and other elements present in the area."[97]

As well as deploying the militia against the partisan threat, it was used more widely to respond to any perceived attempt by Georgian actors to establish control over any part of Abkhazia. When presidential and parliamentary elections in Georgia were scheduled for November 1995, tensions rose and the militia presence was increased. Tbilisi publicly stated that elections would not be held in Abkhazia but "the Abkhaz authorities claim[ed] to have information that Georgia will attempt to establish some jurisdiction in the Gali Region, or to coerce the population into voting. Therefore, Abkhazia feels that it is executing its right to maintain internal security."[98] Hundreds of militia were deployed in Gali, resulting in the majority of the local population fleeing east across the Inguri to Georgian controlled territory until the operation ended.[99]

Militia operations were an important tool in the Abkhaz repertoire, but other means were also used to contain and isolate Gali and its population. In 1995, the Abkhaz authorities redrew the administrative district boundaries, the effect of which was to leave Gali at just 37% of its pre-war size and make ethnic Georgians a minority in the neighbouring districts of Tkvarcheli and Ochamchire.[100] The effect was to contain almost all remaining ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia within a single district and cut Gali off from the rest of Abkhazia.[101] A similar containment and isolation effect was achieved by neglecting Gali in terms of infrastructure and economic development: as Prelz Oltramonti's research shows, road and rail links between Sukhumi and Russia were, with Russian support, well developed, but the road connecting Sukhumi and Gali was not renovated until after 2008.[102] There was also a demographic dimension to this isolation, keeping the Gali population confined to their region: Prelz Oltramonti finds that "the

[97] UN Document S/1995/342 (01 May 1995)
[98] UNOMIG 'Special Report: Abkhaz militia operations in the security zone', 03 November 1995, UN Archives S-1829-0048-03
[99] UN Document, S/1996/5 (02 January 1996), para 24
[100] Yamskov 2009, 170.
[101] Trier, Lohm, and Szakonyi 2010, 34–35; Prelz Oltramonti 2016, 253.
[102] Prelz Oltramonti 2016, 253.

Georgian/Mingrelian population of Gali was isolated from the rest of Abkhazia [and] could not easily travel within Abkhazia in the 1990s", "they were scared and harassed in their own district by members of the Abkhaz de facto authorities" and as result they "tended to maintain a low profile and restrict their movements."[103]

The control strategies described so far are plausibly consistent with the objective of preserving control – contain and isolate the territory and the population in order to secure what was gained in the war. There is evidence from other sources the Abkhaz used control strategies that, within my framework, would be better explained by a 'consolidate and extend control' objective. Specifically, there were measures targeting the Gali population that suggest an attempt to integrate or assimilate, rather than contain and isolate. Certainly, a number of my Abkhaz interlocutors emphasised a desire on the part of Sukhumi at this time to integrate the Gali Georgians who would have citizenship rights in an independent Abkhaz republic. Others emphasised the difficulties of integrating the Gali population in the face of the violence conducted by Georgian armed groups:

> it was very hard with the lack of resources, with the lack of recognition, it was very hard to integrate Gal district. And people living in Gal district, they were victims actually. They couldn't cooperate with our government, with our authorities, because in the morning, in the afternoons, in daylight, they see they live in Abkhazia. At night-time they live under pressure of these [Georgian] terrorists, they come to their houses at night and finish them. Anything could happen.[104]

On the ground, the Abkhaz directed various measures at the Gali population and while some could be seen as attempts to assimilate the population, the picture is very mixed and it is hard to draw firm conclusions. These measures included introducing taxes for crossing into and out of Gali,[105] registering the population and issuing documentation to those with residency rights,[106] and plans to prevent schools where Georgian was the language of instruction from operating in Gali. However, despite the clear

[103] Ibid.
[104] Interview, Maxim Gunjia, Sukhumi, May 2017
[105] UNOMIG described this as "yet another attempt by the Abkhaz to assert their authority, thus increasing their legitimacy." UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 10 September 1996, UN Archives S-1829-0081-01
[106] UNOMIG Cable from Hvidegaard to Annan, 01 August 1995, Subject: 'Comment on the Situation in Abkhazia', UN Archives S-1829-0048-04

intentions of the latter policy, it was undermined by a lack of capacity: commenting on a statement made by the Abkhaz Minister of Education that no Georgian schools would be opened in Gali and all children must be educated in Abkhaz or Russian, UNOMIG observers noted that the Abkhaz authorities in Gali do not "enjoy enough influence … to enforce such a policy."[107] Taxation and education policy may be classic tools of nation-building and assimilation, but in the context of Gali in the 1990s, may have been more extractive and punitive to the extent that were actually put into practice.

Given the largely lawless and often violent context of Gali between 1994 and 1998, it is difficult to untangle all the different strands of evidence relating to how and why the Abkhaz were attempting to affect demographic and territorial control, although on balance, the evidence presented here from what was happening in Kodori Valley and Gali and how the Abkhaz dealt with the displaced population sits fairly well with an objective of preserving control. A recognition of the need to integrate the Gali population was present, though, and will be more prominent in the next post-war phase dealt with later in the case study, and attempts at some degree of integration of the Georgian population may be explained by the Abkhaz authorities' objectives starting to move along the spectrum from preserving control to consolidating and extending control (which would be consistent with developments in the second phase).

Base state objectives and strategies

"the sense of the violation of territorial integrity, I would even say the national integrity of Georgia as such, it was an enormous grievance."[108]

Undermine Secessionist Control and Retain Links

In 1994, after several years of violent turmoil, Georgia began a period of consolidation as Shevardnadze brought the National Guard and Mkhedrioni militia under control.[109] By 1995 the Interior Ministry had a monopoly over the use of force in Georgia proper and over the next two years, from a state of near total

[107] UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 31 October 1995, UN Archives S-1829-0081-02
[108] Interview, David Darchiashvili, Tbilisi, November 2016
[109] Driscoll 2015.

collapse, Georgia underwent a 'miraculous recovery'.[110] Given these conditions, Tbilisi's main priority was not Abkhazia, and "the Shevardnadze government prioritized other agendas."[111] There was talk of using military force to 'solve' the Abkhazia problem, with senior military figures disappointed that the military were not at least deployed to take control of Gali, believing this option was feasible if the political leadership had been willing. According to General Davit Tevzadze, a Georgian commander during the war who went on to become Defence Minister in 1998, "We … in army were quite disappointed because there was possibility to enter Gali and take that region. It was possible. But Shevardnadze did not dare to do it." Asked if it would have been possible for the Georgian military to enter Gali after 1994, General Tevzadze said "Yes, it was, two or three times, there were good opportunities for that."[112] However, military options were not being seriously pursued by Tbilisi, and the government was cautious not to become embroiled in another war.[113]

Despite the weakness of the state and the considerable territorial losses incurred, Tbilisi remained committed to recouping those losses. Relations with Russia at this point were premised on this aim and based on an implicit reciprocal deal – albeit one that was interpreted differently by each side: Georgia needed Russian assistance with restoring its territorial integrity and the return of the displaced, Russia wanted a stable Georgia within its sphere of influence.[114] Tbilisi also enjoyed international support (rhetorically, at least) for Georgian territorial integrity, so it was reasonable to think Sukhumi could eventually be forced into making concessions in the negotiations – an approach aimed at isolating the Abkhaz by undermining their credibility internationally and their viability as a political authority.

While Tbilisi had lost effective control of most Abkhaz territory, they didn't completely lose their influence or presence in Abkhazia – links and levers remained accessible, and Georgian efforts subsequently focused on retaining these connections, specifically in Gali and Kodori and through the

[110] Wheatley 2005, 87; Nodia 2000, 188.
[111] George 2009, 125.
[112] Interview, Davit Tevzadze, Tbilisi, December 2016
[113] Nodia 1998c, 41.
[114] Baev 1997, 47; Lynch 1999, 138–139; Aprasidze 2005, 181.

war-displaced population. As the previous section showed, excluding Tbilisi from these areas was a focus of Sukhumi's control strategies, which would eventually lead to violent escalations and crises in both places, in 1998 in Gali and on several occasions in the 2000s in Kodori Valley. On balance, these considerations make undermining secessionist control and retaining links a plausible assessment of the base state's constrained objectives.

That said, the Georgian side was not unified; there were several groups who, while on the same side of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict cleavage, disagreed on strategy. There were splits between the government in Tbilisi and more hard-line factions and groups such as the Government in Exile over whether Abkhazia should be reincorporated via a political process or by force, and sometimes the hardliners wanting to reclaim ground took matters into their own hands.[115] In January 1995, for example, Tengiz Kitovani (leader of the Georgian National Guard during the war) "led a motley force of some 700 lightly armed supporters in a bid to retake Abkhazia" but were stopped and arrested by Georgian police. The escalating violence in May 1998, discussed in the next section, further demonstrates this. Divisions also existed at a more local level: an UNOMIG report from 1996 emphasised the need to understand the different groups active in Zugdidi in western Georgia – essentially, the conflict zone's frontline – and noted that the "Zugdidi administration representing the central government in Tbilisi, the Abkhazian government in exile and the supporters of the late Zviad Gamshakurdia [sic] all have different interests and goals not always corresponding to the general picture of the conflict between the Georgians and the Abkhaz."[116]

In these conditions, how were the constrained objectives translated into control strategies? Undermining secessionist control and retaining links entailed a profile of demographic and territorial control strategies focused on two key areas that I focus on in this section. First, undermining control involved targeting the Abkhaz presence in Gali. This was the area of Abkhazia most accessible to the Georgian side as long as

[115] Wheatley 2005, 87.
[116] UNOMIG report, 'Action taken within UNOMIG at local level to increase confidence and security', 15 February 1996, UN Archives S-1829-0048-03

the cease-fire line remained porous, and, like Kodori Valley, was an Abkhaz vulnerability. Unlike Kodori Valley, there had been no 'gentleman's agreement' between the locals and the Abkhaz authorities, turning Gali into a literal and figurative battleground for control of this border region with Georgian armed groups engaged in low-level insurgency against the Abkhaz militia and the CIS-PKF. Second, retaining links logically entailed focusing on Gali and Kodori Valley as the two regions where there was still a Georgian presence and influence to be maintained. The situation in Kodori Valley was rather different for reasons already described, but Tbilisi still needed to sustain a pro-Georgian presence in the strategically important upper Kodori Valley so it would remain accessible. It was Gali that bore the brunt of the contest between Georgian attempts to sustain a presence and some de facto control and Abkhaz attempts to exclude it.

A further lever that could feasibly be part of the base state's demographic control strategies to retain links to Abkhazia is the large number of ethnic Georgians displaced by the war. Georgian IDPs – including those not from Gali and who had almost no prospect of returning – were not resettled or integrated in other parts of Georgia.[117] Both the legal right of return and the desire of the displaced to return to their homes are of course the primary issues here, but analysts at the time noted the political utility of this large population of IDPs for the Georgian government. One noted that the 200,000 IDPs were "a ready reserve of recruits for the mafias and extremist political groups" and that Kitovani's failed assault on Abkhazia in 1995 "reflected an expectation that refugees could be mobilized around a bid for political power."[118] Another remarked that "fear, frustration and growing militancy among elements of the displaced population constitute resources that can be employed for political opportunism," suggesting that the Georgian government benefited from "having a highly visible and mobilized IDP constituency which can garner international sympathies, maintain pressure on the Abkhaz authorities and lure the attention of the electorate away from Georgia's other pressing difficulties."[119]

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[117] Mitchneck, Mayorova, and Regulska 2009.
[118] Aves 1996, 185; The IDPs themselves were "pushing hard for a military solution to Abkhazia's status: retaking the region by force." Caskie 1997.
[119] Hansen 1999, 61.

These analyses go beyond the demographic control strategies that I focus on and it is difficult to accommodate them neatly into my theoretical framework but they demonstrate the post-war importance of displaced populations in the strategies of both base states and secessionists in pursuing their objectives. In my framework, a base state with the objective of retaining links needs to keep a loyal population present in the secessionist entity, particularly in the enclaves or border regions it is trying to retain links to, so as to preserve a meaningful sovereignty claim – it would require further research to demonstrate there was a policy of not integrating Georgian IDPs for this reason, but if the analyses above are correct, the instrumental use of a displaced population should be part of the analysis of post-war environments as well as concerns about fulfilling the right of return.

Gali: Armed Groups and Mine Warfare

AG: "They were taking revenge on behalf of their families who were terrorised, intimidated by the Abkhaz side."

NB: "What was objective of the support from the Georgian government?"

AG: "To keep them as leverage over the Abkhaz"[120]

The exact nature of the relationship between the Georgian armed groups or partisans, such as the White Legion and the Forest Brothers, and the government in Tbilisi is disputed.[121] They are known to have had at least indirect support from the Interior Ministry, but some groups remained independent or with varying degrees of integration with or subordination to government structures, and did not always operate with an alignment of interests. According to a former official from the Abkhazian Government in Exile, "they were guerrillas, they were representatives of internally displaced persons and people who live in Gali and in Kodori valley. It was absolutely impossible to stop them because Georgian state did not have

[120] Interview, Archil Gegeshidze, Tbilisi, July 2017. Archil Gegeshidze is a former Georgian Ambassador to the USA and served in the Shevardnadze administration.
[121] I use the terms 'partisan' and 'armed group/factions' interchangeably. Pro-Government Militias Database (PGMD) n.d.; Pro-Government Militias Database (PGMD) n.d.

enough power to stop them and sometime these guerrillas even went against Georgian central government and created problems and difficulties for them".[122] The Abkhaz tend to view the relationship as more direct: according to Viacheslav Chirikba, "They were on the payroll of the [Georgian] Interior Ministry".[123]

The groups were more closely aligned with local actors based in and around Gali and Zugdidi, and also had legitimacy with the Georgian public.[124] The campaign waged by these groups – ambushing Abkhaz militia, attacking checkpoints, acts of sabotage, and by 1996, a 'mine warfare campaign' – was partly directed at undermining Abkhaz claims to viable statehood by showing their inability to meet basic sovereign functions of security and territorial control. The Abkhaz viewed them as intent on destabilisation, "trying to create a foothold in Kodori and Gal for the later attempt to retake Abkhazia."[125]

The armed groups' activities were also directed at controlling the Georgian population in and around Gali and Zugdidi. Georgians in Gali who cooperated with the Abkhaz authorities were threatened and intimidated, and sometimes murdered, so while some of those who supported the partisans, by giving them shelter for instance, did so because they shared their objectives, others did so out of fear.[126] Georgian armed groups would also patrol the Georgian side of the Security Zone – officially the responsibility of the Georgian Interior Ministry – and the main Inguri River crossing points in order to prevent food supplies from entering Abkhazia and monitor any trade conducted across the border.[127] This was not the main activity of the groups, but it shows the importance of being able to regulate activity around the boundary line and control who could and could not access contested territory – a crucial dimension of territorial control (as mentioned above, the Abkhaz militia were engaged in similar actions on their side of the boundary) and an important strategy for retaining links to Gali. The partisans were

[122] Interview, Tbilisi, November 2016. Other Georgian respondents would sometimes refer to the relationship as 'not completely independent' from the Tbilisi government.
[123] Interview, Sukhumi, May 2017
[124] "the guerrilla movement is legitimate in the eyes of the Georgian public ... and there is pressure on the government to support the guerrilla movement openly (as the exiled government of Abkhazia does)." Nodia 1998b.
[125] Interview, Viacheslav Chirikba, Sukhumi, May 2017
[126] This was mentioned in several interviews by both Georgian and Abkhaz respondents.
[127] UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 9 May 1995, UN Archives S-1829-0056-02

able to take the fight to the Abkhaz only as long as they could cross the ceasefire line and then fall back to the safety of Zugdidi, and the livelihoods of the displaced often depended on being able to cross back and forth from Zugdidi to Gali.[128]

It is hard to attribute motives with certainty to the partisan attacks in Gali, which may have served multiple purposes. UNOMIG reports on an attack in Gali on the militia and an administration building in neighbouring Ochamchire in October 1996 capture this uncertainty: "They may have been designed not to produce excessive casualties, but to provide a symbolic demonstration of the Abkhaz authorities' inability to secure their "country." They may also have been an attempt to incite an Abkhaz army reinforcement, which would serve as an excuse for Georgian army intervention."[129] These aims are not exclusive, and the former is consistent with the 'undermine' objective while the latter – as will be seen in the events of May 1998 – seems to have misjudged Tbilisi's position.

UNOMIG reported three incidents of mine attacks in March 1996 that "represent both an escalation in violence and a complicated destabilisation [in Gali]. It is now clear that this is a deliberate and indiscriminate policy intended to destabilise the [Restricted Weapons Zone] North of Gali Canal."[130] This marked the start of the 'mine warfare' campaign, as UNOMIG referred to the attacks by partisans on Abkhaz militia and Russian soldiers.[131] Mines were laid almost exclusively within the RWZ and the SZ on the Abkhaz side of the Inguri river in Gali region (see figure 4.3). According to an internal UN report in March 1997, mine incidents increased significantly from July 1996 to February 1997, with spikes in activity connected to political events, such as Abkhaz elections in November 1996.[132]

[128] Prelz Oltramonti 2016, 247.
[129] UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 01 October 1996, UN Archives S-1829-0050-07
[130] UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 11 March 1996, UN Archives S-1829-0056-01
[131] The CIS-PKF were seen by Georgians as biased and a cover for Russia's desire to control its near abroad
[132] "Memo to File: Abkhazia Mine Warfare Intensifies", March 1997, UN Archives S-1834-034-09



Figure 4.3 UN Archives 'Memo to file – Abkhazia: Mine Warfare Intensifies' March 1997, UN Archives S-1833-0034-09.

Kodori Valley: Retaining a Bridgehead into Abkhazia

I described events in Kodori Valley in the previous section, but this area played an important part in Tbilisi's control strategies to retain links in Abkhazia that needs further discussion. Kodori Valley was not the focus of attention that Gali was in this phase, but retaining the small foothold of control in upper Kodori Valley was crucial for Georgian efforts to keep at least a semi-official presence in Georgian territory. Its importance would become most apparent in the 2000s – a topic for later in the case study – but during the 1990s Tbilisi was working to keep access open to Georgian-controlled parts of the valley.[133]

[133] Due to its inaccessibility, Kodori Valley might be better described as an enclave, but for most of the case study period, Tbilisi was able to maintain access to Kodori Valley, even if only during summer or via airlift.

A further dimension to the 'gentleman's agreement' discussed earlier is that Kodori Valley would have been very difficult to take by force, as General Davit Tevzadze explains: "[Kodori Valley] was very important. In 1993, Abkhazians could not manage to enter it.… It was impossible to take it, for years. Three or four times they tried, the Abkhazians, after 1994, to gain that area. Operations are quite tough."[134] This worked in Tbilisi's favour in managing to retain links. In July 1996, for example, the Georgian Interior Ministry sent a police unit to the area to combat crime at the invitation, according to the ministry, of the locals. The Abkhaz protested the deployment of what they called a 'Georgian military sub-unit', claiming it was a violation of the Moscow agreement. UNOMIG and the CIS-PKF dismissed the Abkhaz claims, and the analysis offered in the former's report is telling: "Although the Abkhaz have never had a de facto presence in the Valley, the Georgian Government has managed to erode Abkhaz credibility still further in the region which they reaffirm to be within the integral boundary of Georgia."[135] The UN would later report that the arrival of the Georgian police unit led to "a noticeable decrease in lawlessness in the valley and a greater sense of security amongst the indigenous Svanetians."[136] Both the sustained territorial presence of official base state actors and the protection of a (mostly) loyal population in the secessionist entity are important strategies for retaining links.

Six Day War, May 1998

> *"With the support of local Georgian returnees, the Georgian guerrillas gradually extended their control over Gali. By April 1998, the Abkhazian 'government-in-exile' in Tbilisi … felt confident enough to conduct symbolic actions intended to signify that Georgian jurisdiction extended to Gali."*[137]

Events in spring 1998 – shortly before Georgian Independence Day on May 26 – brought the situation in Gali to a crisis point, leading to an escalation of violence in the 'Six Day War' in May between Abkhaz

[134] Interview, Davit Tevzadze, Tbilisi, December 2016
[135] UNOMIG Weekly Situation Report, 10 July 1996, UN Archives S-1829-0081-01
[136] UN Document S/1996/843, October 1996, para 28
[137] Another defeat for Georgia 1998, 2.

forces and Georgian armed groups, the worst since the end of the war. While not initiated or supported by Tbilisi, the objectives of the armed groups escalated to an apparent attempt to reclaim ground in Gali and re-establish control over at least part of Abkhazia. "It was sort of a guerrilla uprising in Gali," according to former Georgian politician and diplomat Irakli Menagarishvili, "with the aim to push out Abkhaz representatives of the Abkhaz administration, armed personnel or militia, all these representatives. To so-called 'liberate' Gali from Abkhaz rule." The involvement of the Georgian government seems to have been minimal with no intention of getting involved in the uprising: "A group of special forces had been sent to Gali, but the intelligence they gathered, to my best knowledge, that any military action had no prospect to do something positive for the positive solution of the local problems.… There was a request to move Georgia's regular formations to Abkhazia but I think it was quite wise not to do that."[138] These developments are not consistent with either retaining links or undermining control but suggest an escalation in the objectives of the armed groups, either taking matters into their own hands or mistakenly believing that Tbilisi would support their actions.

According to UN reporting, the "Abkhaz side claimed that they were defending their territory against what they considered to be 'Georgian terrorist groups', while the Georgians argued that they were defending the Georgian population against … the Abkhaz militia."[139] In addition to distributing aid and organising visits for Georgian politicians to the region,[140] the Georgian armed groups managed to take control of two villages in Gali and kill multiple Abkhaz police officers,[141] but then faced a decisive counter-offensive by up to 2,000 Abkhaz forces.[142] The armed groups were 'crushed',[143] around 40,000 ethnic Georgians were forced to flee, and 1,400 homes were destroyed by the Abkhaz forces.[144] Notably,

[138] Interview, Irakli Menagarishvili, Tbilisi, April 2017.
[139] UN Document SG/1998/497 (11 June 1998)
[140] Nodia 2000, 190.
[141] The Jamestown Foundation 1998; Fuller 1998.
[142] New York Times 1998; Other estimates put the figure of Abkhaz personnel at 1,500. See Another defeat for Georgia 1998.
[143] Cheterian 1998.
[144] UN Document SG/1998/647 (14 July 1998). Further damage assessments in UNOMIG Situation Reports in UN Archives S-1829-0266-07

Shevardnadze refused to send in the Georgian army to support the armed groups. Rather, the Georgian government and the Abkhaz authorities negotiated a ceasefire and signed the 'Protocol on a Ceasefire and Withdrawal of Armed Formations' on May 25. In July 1998, UNOMIG reported that "Gali district appears to be under the effective control of the Abkhaz authorities"[145]

By October, the UN reported that "the Abkhaz militia have consolidated their control over the whole of the Gali district".[146] Extensive research by Shesterinina, based on interviews with Abkhaz fighters, concludes that for the Abkhaz the Six Day War meant the successful prevention of any plan to partition Gali and return it to Tbilisi's jurisdiction. There were no more attempts by Georgian forces to retake Gali; Shesterinina quotes an Abkhaz fighter as saying: "We often had cleaning operations prior to 1998. 1998 was the biggest one… After that they were fewer and fewer."[147]

The violence in Gali in May 1998 marks the end of the first post-war phase and was a key turning point in the struggle for territorial and demographic control. In terms of the objective of preserving control, the threat posed to the Abkhaz from Gali was substantially reduced now that the back of the partisan's insurgency had been broken and Sukhumi's grip over the key border region was increased. Gali remained contested but the focus would shift to Kodori Valley as domestic and international developments changed the post-war context.

4.3. Second Post-War Phase: Autumn 1998 – Autumn 2006

The transition to a new post-war phase reflects major domestic and international changes that took place between the violence of May 1998 and the end of 2003 and transformed the context in which the base state and the secessionists formed and acted on their constrained objectives. In 1999, the Abkhaz authorities formally declared independence and held a referendum to endorse the constitution of an independent state of Abkhazia. In 2003, the Rose Revolution removed Shevardnadze from power and

[145] UN Document S/1998/647 (14 July 1998)
[146] UN Document S/1998/1012 (29 October 1998)
[147] Shesterinina 2014, 297. The quotation is from page 317.

brought Mikhail Saakashvili to the Georgian presidency, leading to more aggressive efforts to restore Georgia's territorial integrity not only in Abkhazia but also South Ossetia. In late 2004/early 2005, the results of the election to replace the Abkhaz president, Viacheslav Ardzinba, were contested after accusations of Russian interference, requiring a compromise solution that lead to the Kremlin's preferred candidate elected as vice-president on a joint ticket with Sergei Bagapsh as president.[148] In terms of the peace process, the mediated and bilateral talks between Tbilisi and Sukhumi continued, resulting in the Istanbul Statement (1999)[149] and Yalta Declaration (2000)[150] on confidence-building measures but with little tangible progress. In December 2001, Dieter Boden, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General and Head of UNOMIG, put forward a new set of proposals intended to bring the sides closer to a settlement.[151] Sukhumi refused to receive the document, and the process remained deadlocked. Promising signs in 2006 of a breakthrough ultimately came to nothing and were rapidly overtaken by other events (see later in this chapter).

Accounts of the state of the conflict on the ground from the 2000s give a mixed picture. On the one hand, a Crisis Group report from 2007 pointed to a number of 'successes': "ceasefire violations are rare, approximately 45,000 internally displaced (IDP) Georgians have returned to homes in the Gali region, the two sides cooperate on operating the Inguri power plant, and a strategic railway through Abkhazia may restart."[152] On the other hand, focus group research from the same year involving ethnic Abkhaz and Georgians from Gali reported that

> the Georgian population in the area is still being held hostage to conflicting interests. Despite some measures taken by Sukhumi to improve their situation, the Gali Georgians are far from enjoying equal status. At the same time, the Georgian side is undermining attempts to integrate the Gali Georgians in Abkhazia in order to prevent Sukhumi from extending its influence in the region.… neither of the parties obviously sees the Georgian-Abkhaz overlap in Gali as presenting

[148] The transitions from Shevardnadze to Saakashvili and from Ardzinba to Khajimba are both well covered in Hale 2015, chap. 7.
[149] <http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/services/cds/agreements/pdf/geo5.pdf> See also UN Document S/1999/805.
[150] See UN Document S/2001/242 for the Yalta Declaration and Programme of Action on Confidence Building
[151] 'Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competencies between Tbilisi and Sokhumi', commonly known as the Boden Document
[152] International Crisis Group 2007a.

> potential for cooperation … both Sukhumi and Tbilisi exploit it as a tool for tactical manoeuvring.[153]

The most consequential change, however, was Vladimir Putin's ascent to Russian presidency in 1999 combined with the recovery of the Russian state after the turbulent 1990s which brought a resurgence in Russian involvement in its so-called 'Near Abroad' and closer links with Abkhazia. Russian policy under Putin was summed by one analyst as "punish Georgia, end Abkhazia's isolation, and change the balance of power in the conflict."[154] The onset of the second Chechen war, with spillover into Georgia's Pankisi Gorge gave the Kremlin "a major new incentive to meddle" in Georgian affairs,[155] further adding to a toxic mix for Russian-Georgian relations.

The unresolved conflict with Abkhazia has been a key lever Russia could use against Georgia, and Russian political, security and military elites came to see Abkhazia as "a sort of 'buffer' zone between Russia and an increasingly Western-oriented Georgia."[156] Russia's increased involvement in the conflict in this period was a recurring theme with both Georgian and Abkhaz experts and political elites I interviewed, with many emphasising Russia's importance for subsequent developments. For the Abkhaz, Russian financial support and a loosening of trade restrictions and cross-border movement provided important economic relief and Russia's role as mediator in Georgian-Abkhaz talks started to shift in their favour diplomatically. For the Georgians, their increasingly Western orientation meant Russia had decided, according to a former Georgian Ambassador to the US, that "Georgia had to be punished [and] the most effective and the easiest way to punish Georgia was to take sides in favour of the Abkhaz in the mediation process".[157]

Secessionist objectives and strategies, 1999-2006

The preponderance of Russian political, military and economic power in the region means that a strengthened and revisionist Russia would inevitably change Abkhazia's internal politics and the dynamics

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[153] Fischer 2007, 5.
[154] De Waal 2010, 166.
[155] Lieven 2001.
[156] Antonenko 2005, 232.
[157] Interview, Archil Gegeshidze, Tbilisi, July 2017

of Georgian-Abkhaz relations, and several developments in Russian-Abkhaz relations converged by the early 2000s. Russia's policy in the 1990s had been to isolate Abkhazia through sanctions, but this did not have the intended effect of forcing the Abkhaz leadership to make concessions; rather, "it contributed to a hardening of the Abkhazian position."[158] From around 1999, Russia eased the embargo and trade restrictions and opened up the Russian-Abkhaz border; in 2002 rail links between Sukhumi and Sochi were resumed, and in 2006 Russia further liberalised the border regime, allowing foreign citizens to enter Abkhazia.[159] This increased engagement coincided with the stalled Georgian-Abkhaz political process.[160]

In a development that would have lasting consequences for the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict, in 2002 the Russian Duma passed a new citizenship law that allowed Abkhaz to apply for Russian citizenship. Sukhumi encouraged this, and by the end of that year, "over 50,000 Abkhazian residents had received Russian passports,"[161] and within a few years, 80% of the population had Russian citizenship.[162] The process had begun even earlier, with reports in 2001 that "nearly the entire Abkhaz elite – including the president, prime minister, foreign minister and the heads of its armed forces – hold Russian passports."[163] Under international law, conferring citizenship and providing passports on Georgian territory without the consent of the Georgian government "runs against the principles of good neighbourliness and constitutes an open challenge to Georgian sovereignty and an interference in the internal affairs of Georgia."[164] For Abkhazians, Russia's 'passportisation' policy provided them with opportunities to travel outside of Abkhazia that would otherwise be impossible,[165] but it also increased the unrecognised state's dependency on their patron.[166] The full impact of these developments would become apparent in the 2008 Georgian-

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[158] Antonenko 2005, 223.
[159] International Crisis Group 2006a, 15.
[160] As Antonenko puts it, "While the UN-led political process was on hold after the Abkhazians refuse to consider the Boden Document, Russia accelerated its engagement with Abkhazia." Antonenko 2005, 240.
[161] This includes those who received Russian stamps in their old Soviet passports which were later replaced by official Russian passports. Ibid.
[162] Littlefield 2009, 1473. Littlefield cites the following source for this claim: Itar-Tass, 'Russian Ministry Confirms 80 per cent of Abkhaz are Russian Citizens', 19 August 2005.
[163] Shakirov 2001.
[164] *The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia: Volume One* 2009, 18.
[165] Technically, anyone in Abkhazia could get a Georgian passport, but for obvious reasons this was only an option for ethnic Georgians.
[166] On passportisation see Illarionov 2009; Artman 2013; Nagashima 2017.

Russian war and Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These events are beyond the scope of this case study, but have their roots in developments that are very much part of my analysis.[167] Writing in 2004 and reflecting on the factors deterring Georgia from retaking Abkhazia by force, Viacheslav Chirikba wrote that "the majority of the population of Abkhazia are technically Russian citizens, which essentially differs from the situation at the time of the Georgian-Abkhazian war of 1992-1993. Russia will immediately be faced with the necessity to intervene directly in this conflict in order to protect the lives of its citizens."[168]

Moving From 'Preserve' to 'Consolidate and Extend'

Russia's increasing involvement in Abkhazia – with the financial support, lifting of sanctions, and relative improvements in security – enabled Sukhumi to shift objectives to one of consolidating and extending effective demographic and territorial control as part of an Abkhaz nation-building project. A 'consolidate and extend' objective for a secessionist entity should mean sustaining and developing the empirical attributes of statehood in the absence of international recognition, something that involves extending effective control throughout the claimed territory and building internal legitimacy with the population.[169] The reality on the ground did not quite turn out this way in Abkhazia, but this section shows how Sukhumi deployed a profile of control strategies that reflect a change in their constrained objectives from 'preserve' in the first post-war phase in the direction of 'consolidate and extend' in the second.

The May 1998 defeat of the Georgian partisans somewhat increased Sukhumi's territorial control over Gali and the threat from the partisans was reduced but not gone. Politically, Sukhumi's demands for independent statehood – rather than some lesser compromise such as a confederal or a union state arrangement – had hardened and settled on a position of 'territorial indivisibility', that "territory should match sovereignty and that the lands over which they governed fundamentally required independence

[167] See Chapter 6 for a discussion of the 2008 war and more recent developments
[168] Chirikba 2004, 347.
[169] On how unrecognised states develop their internal legitimacy, see especially Caspersen 2012; Bakke et al. 2013; Bakke et al. 2018.

from Georgia."[170] This was formally expressed in 1999 in an independence declaration and a referendum to approve the constitution of an independent state of Abkhazia. There was almost universal support for independence among Abkhaz voters, but the population of Abkhazia at this point was half its pre-war size, and a large proportion of the ethnic Georgian population was still displaced. The legitimacy of the referendum was not recognised outside of Abkhazia, but as a point in Abkhazia's post-war trajectory from preserving to consolidating and extending control, the 1999 referendum matters. With some areas of territory still not fully controlled, Sukhumi needed to give formal expression to their claim to statehood based on attaining the empirical attributes of a state. As one of the key architects of the 1999 declaration, Viacheslav Chirikba explains, the declaration was "one point of reference [of Abkhazia becoming a state] though I think it was earlier, it was formalised in 1999. In principle it was there before that. Maybe not from the day of military victory, maybe in a couple of years we already had … statehood. The official declaration, it was 1999".[171]

By 2001, Abkhazia's wartime leader and first president was increasingly absent from public life due to illness, and by 2005 Abkhazia had a new president, Sergei Bagapsh. The elections were controversial – Russia's preferred candidate, Raul Khajimba, lost in the initial ballot to Bagapsh but refused to concede. Amid rising tension a second election was held with Bagapsh and Khajimba on a joint ticket to provide stability (if not much choice), with Bagapsh duly elected president with Khajimba as vice president in a peaceful turnover of power.[172] Seen by some as evidence of increasing political maturity,[173] these developments in Abkhaz politics in the early 2000s suggests a trajectory towards consolidation of de facto

[170] Julie George also notes that "this position of territorial indivisibility was reached after a decade", that is, it was after the ceasefire was signed that the bargaining position hardened, despite pressure from Russia and the United Nations to moderate their demands for full secession. George 2009, 142. Similar comments were made to me by a number of Abkhaz politicians and civil society figures – full independent statehood was not the immediate post-war aim, at least until the referendum in 1999 (Interviews, Sukhumi, May/June 2017).

[171] Interview, Viacheslav Chirikba, Sukhumi, May 2017

[172] On the Abkhaz elections, see Ó Beacháin 2012; Ó Beacháin, Comai, and Tsurtsumia-Zurabashvili 2016; Smolnik 2017.

[173] The managed transition of power has been contrasted by some with the tumultuous Georgian record in its first decade of independence of coups, rigged elections and (non-violent) revolutions.

statehood, so it is plausible to characterise Sukhumi's constrained objective in the second phase as moving along the spectrum towards 'consolidate and extend control'.

How was the objective of ~~preserving~~ consolidating and extending control translated into control strategies? Sukhumi still faced demographic problems and control strategies were therefore still focused on demographic control, in particular with regard to returns. One the one hand, the Abkhaz wanted to avoid becoming a minority again. On the other, they faced continued international pressure to guarantee the safe return of Georgian IDPs and had pressing economic needs for which they lacked the requisite human capital.[174] The Abkhaz authorities have – without much success – tried to improve the demographic situation by encouraging ethnic Abkhaz in the diaspora to return. Citizenship is available to the estimated 700,000 ethnic Abkhaz and their descendants in Turkey, but no more than 1,000 have permanently settled in Abkhazia. An official from Abkhazia's Foreign Ministry was candid about what motivates their policies: "we need Abkhaz from the diaspora to return… it's a question of our survival. We would like 50,000 to come, and then we will not be so touchy about Georgian returnees" (the population of Gali was about 45,000 at this point).[175]

Control over IDP returns remained the focus of Abkhaz efforts to meet the various demographic demands of their state-building project. The control strategies that followed reflect changing objectives, but not an immediate or full embrace of 'consolidate and extend'. Consider the following evidence of what Sukhumi was doing from 1999 onwards.[176] Sukhumi bypassed the official UNHCR-managed returns process and unilaterally invited IDPs to return to Gali in March 1999 – motivated in part by a need to generate income from Gali's fertile agricultural land[177] – but in the absence of adequate security

[174] As an Oxford Analytica report put it in 1998, the Abkhaz were trying to find "much-needed but less problematic manpower" than returning IDPs to replace lost human capital. Oxford Analytica 1998.
[175] As told to the International Crisis Group in July 2006. International Crisis Group 2006a, 9. The diaspora figures are also from this report.
[176] Sukhumi also imposed restrictions on the freedom of movement of the Abkhaz population, and "do not permit free travel by Abkhaz to Georgia proper", although residents of Gali could – for a fee – cross more easily to Georgia, according to International Crisis Group research from 2007. This is consistent with general attempts at demographic control but not exclusively to a 'control and extend' objective. Ibid., 10.
[177] Hansen 1999, 60.

guarantees this offer "did not affect significantly the return of IDPs to Gali, who continued to travel back and forth to the area to tend their property."[178] Moreover, this move was seen by some on the Georgian side as tactic to undermine their 'all-or-nothing' demand that would enable the return of Georgians to Sukhumi and not just to Gali.[179] The were also still material limitations on Abkhazia's capacity to absorb returnees: the return of families created "new demands on local infrastructure and the administration of schools … Abkhaz officials have only supplied school materials in the Russian or Abkhaz languages."[180]

However, more noticeable changes in demographic control strategies were starting to emerge in the 2000s that had a greater focus on the type of relationship between the Abkhaz authorities and the population – this is the key difference expected and, I argue, explained by a change in constrained objectives towards 'consolidate and extend'.[181]

Integration and 'Abkhazisation' in Gali

"We are doing everything we can to integrate the Gali population into our society."[182]

"The policy … [of Presidents] Bagapsh and Ankvab, was to integrate these people, they understood that most of them have Georgian passports and Georgian ID but we have to close our eyes if we want to create a good basis to form this society, [an] Abkhaz nation."[183]

[178] US State Department Human Rights Report, Georgia, March 4, 2002. The report estimates that around 40,000 people were living in Gali "on a more or less permanent basis" at this point.
[179] Hansen 1999, 60.
[180] Caucasus Report 2001 It is hard to say whether this is attributable to a lack of capacity, a lack of concern for minority language rights, or both.
[181] This objective also expects an extension of territorial control, and this was not observed in this phase – parts of Kodori Valley remained outside of Abkhaz control, and a full implementation of a 'consolidate and extend' would entail trying to remove the Georgian presence from this enclave (there is some evidence that this was on Sukhumi's agenda; see below) but the clashes and crises that occurred in this area that are the topic of the next section explain why this was not possible for Sukhumi in the early 2000s.
[182] Sergei Shamba (Abkhaz de facto foreign minister, 2007). Shamba went on to say: "And this only irritates Georgia, which is afraid of losing these people. That's why they are doing everything they can to destabilize the situation and show that Abkhazia cannot control its territory." As quoted in Rimple 2007.
[183] Interview, Arda Inal-Ipa, Sukhumi, May 2017. Sergei Bagapsh was president from 2005 to 2011, Aleksandr Ankvab from 2011 to 2014.

In her study of unrecognised states, Nina Caspersen argues that the attempts that started in the 2000s "to forge a more inclusive Abkhaz identity should be seen as significant, as the Abkhaz leadership had explicitly used the argument of *national* self-determination to legitimize the entity's claim to independence", rather than a purely ethnic nationalism.[184] Even if we take these commitments to integration – such as those quoted above – as genuine, this should not be understood as an inclusive civic nationalism embracing minority rights. With the conflict unresolved and a continued fear of hostilities resuming, argues Clogg (based on research conducted in Abkhazia in 2005), the Abkhaz state-building project has been expressed in terms of defying Georgian imperialism and aggression. As a consequence, many Abkhaz "see their security as potentially undermined by the ethnic Georgian population in the Gal/i region, whose close links to Georgia give rise for concern [and so] the post-war Abkhaz state-building project is underscored by Abkhaz fears … for their identity and their physical survival as a distinct ethnic group."[185] This is the context in which the demographic control strategies used in the 2000s to integrate and assimilate Gali's Georgian population must be understood: they were still oriented around the conflict cleavage and deployed towards affecting demographic control, in pursuit of the empirical attributes of statehood.

The policy in Gali in this period has been called 'Abkhazisation', or the effort to make the population 'more Abkhaz.'[186] This change gained prominence in the Bagapsh administration, but has its origins in the early 2000s. Zurab Shengelia, a Georgian expert on the region, argues a policy of 'cultural expansion' into Gali was started by the Abkhaz around 2001, when it became easier to move around internally within Abkhazia and a number of new developments began:

> [the] Abkhaz are reducing Georgian language schools in Gali …. Gali is the most economically developed region in Abkhazia.… Obviously, they need Gali, the necessity is high but their intentions are …. 'Abkhazisation', to change the identity of Gali people into Abkhazian people in order to have power over it. Obviously, they [Gali Georgians] have resisted it…. Georgians were

[184] Caspersen 2012, 97.
[185] Clogg 2008, 311.
[186] The history behind this policy is complicated, and has its roots in the argument that – to summarise crudely – at least some Georgians in Gali are not 'really' Georgians, but Abkhaz who were 'Georgianised' by policies enacted during the Soviet Union, and 'Abkhazisation' is the reversal of this process.

> mistreated but Abkhazians started to see the necessity of this region … so they started to have this policy of making it more Abkhazian.[187]

Research conducted in Gali in 2005 found the population were anticipating an increase in efforts at Abkhazisation and were concerned about heavy taxation, but also reported that they felt a greater sense of optimism regarding changes under the Bagapsh administration.[188] Other developments at this time are consistent with a profile of control strategies targeted at the population to incorporate them into official Abkhaz structures, reversing to some extent the isolation and containment of Gali in the first post-war phase. In 2005, for example, the UN reported that Abkhaz law enforcement agencies were starting to try and recruit more ethnic Georgians from Gali district into their ranks,[189] and Gali Georgians were also being conscripted into the Abkhaz military.[190] In 2006, a new law on Abkhaz citizenship had "exacerbated the apprehension and fear among the local Georgian population that those wishing to remain would be forced to renounce their Georgian citizenship."[191] The implication of these policies seems to be that Gali Georgians were being given a choice of loyalty – comply with the de facto authorities and accept Abkhaz citizenship – or exit.[192]

Base state objectives and strategies, 1999-2003

Undermine Secessionist Control

Internal fragmentation, argues Wheatley, had "incapacitated the Georgian political elite."[193] The final years of the Shevardnadze presidency were characterised by corruption and state capture, and Tbilisi did little to change the status quo in Georgian-Abkhaz relations. The Rose Revolution and the arrival of a zealous reforming president would change that, but the period between 1999 and 2003 was not very different to the preceding years. Tbilisi, or at least factions within the government, continued to try to

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[187] Interview (via translator) with Zurab Shengelia (Director of the Centre for Georgian-Abkhaz Relations, Tbilisi State University), Tbilisi, December 2016. I am grateful to Natalia Mosashvili for her excellent translation services in this interview.
[188] Velidze 2005.
[189] UN Document S/2004/822 (18 October 2004), para 23
[190] UN Document S/2006/19 (13 January 2006), para 9
[191] UN Document S/2006/19 (13 January 2006), para 9
[192] These issues would become even more important after the 2008 war, a topic to which I return in Chapter 6.
[193] Wheatley 2005, 136.

undermine Abkhaz claims to statehood and to hold on to the remaining semi-official presence in Kodori Valley, but influence in Gali had diminished since May 1998 and the partisan groups increasingly directed their efforts to criminality. The regional and international context, though, was changing around Georgia and would drive developments in the early 2000s, especially in Kodori Valley, the main focus of this section.

The few observable control strategies of note in this period are still broadly consistent with undermining secessionist control and to a lesser extent retaining links in Gali and Kodori – for example, in the 2005/06 school year, Tbilisi was paying the salaries of teachers in lower Gali in the ten schools that were using Georgian as the language of instruction[194] – but there was not much Tbilisi could do to change facts on the ground, and their diplomatic efforts consisted of attempts to wrest control of Gali away from the Abkhaz and the CIS-PKF. Tbilisi's policy had consistently been to internationalise the peacekeeping operation and replace the CIS-PKF with a UN-led operation, and in 2002 Tbilisi proposed the creation of a "joint Georgian-Abkhaz administration in the Gali district" under international supervision, with a civilian police component added to the peacekeeping operation.[195] International support for Georgia's territorial integrity would, however, not lead to any such changes without Russian agreement.

In a similar vein, there were reports in 2002 that Shevardnadze would try to change the CIS-PKF mandate so as to redeploy the peacekeepers deeper into Abkhaz territory. Local commentators at the time explained why this plan would fail: "Such a move … would leave Abkhaz officials with little choice other than to renew hostilities as it would deprive them control over an area of key economic and strategic significance. Moving the peacekeeper checkpoints would leave the Gali district … under the control of Georgian forces."[196] Tbilisi could do nothing to change the facts on the ground – there was no way to

[194] Clogg 2008, 316.
[195] Statement to the UN General Assembly by Irakli Menagarishvili, Minister Of Foreign Affairs, New York, 19 September 2002. From November 2003, UNOMIG included a civilian police component, but it only ever deployed on the Georgian side of the cease-fire line; Sukhumi withheld consent for a similar deployment on Abkhaz-controlled territory.
[196] Devdariani 2002.

retain or re-establish links to Gali through the presence of Georgian state actors or proxies – and the status quo prevailed.

Undermining Control via Kodori Valley (2001)

> *"Sukhumi reportedly made another attempt to expand their jurisdiction on the upper Kodori Valley, where the local population has remained loyal to Tbilisi. At the end of June [2001], the Abkhaz "First Deputy Defense Minister" Givi Agrba appealed to the local Svan population to accept the Abkhaz jurisdiction over the valley for certain privileges. The above appeal was met with a critical reaction of the Georgian Government representative to the valley, Mr. Emzar Kvitsiani."*[197]

> *"when [the] Georgian[s] were in Kodori Gorge, it was [a] very serious factor of destabilisation, it was threatening, frighten[ing] us, because it is very close to Sukhum and twice there were Kodor events, when [Chechen warlord] Gelayev was used … and Saakashvili want[ed] to use this place to fight with Abkhazians again, again, and again."*[198]

If little was changing in Gali, Kodori Valley – in a reversal of the first post-war phase – became increasingly volatile and was now the link through which the Georgian side would try to change the status quo, first by Georgian partisans in an improbable alliance with Chechen rebels, and then by Saakashvili. The events of 2001, described in this section, are controversial and the facts are contested, but what evidence there is coheres at least partly with the base state's objective of undermining Abkhaz control.[199] As with Gali in the 1990s, it was partisan groups with unclear links to the Georgian government that were conducting operations on the ground (I return to Saakashvili's far more clear-cut endeavour to reclaim ground in Kodori Valley in the next section).

[197] UNOMIG monthly situation report (on file with author)
[198] Interview, Arda Inal-Ipa, Sukhumi, May 2017
[199] In addition to the cited sources, this section draws on several meetings and interviews with former Georgian government officials.

In late summer of 2001, several hundred Chechen rebels, cooperating with Georgian partisan groups, entered Kodori Valley, leading to violent clashes with the Abkhaz armed forces, who were most likely supported by the Russian military.[200] The Chechen armed group, led by Ruslan Gelayev, are believed to have been sheltering in Pankisi Gorge, an area in north east Georgia bordering Chechnya where large numbers of Chechens fleeing the fighting had taken refuge. Pankisi Gorge was largely outside of Tbilisi's control and – according to Russia – a base for Chechen fighters. The Chechen presence on Georgian territory was a major source of tension between Georgia and Russia, and the latter was threatening to attack the gorge.[201] According to one version of events at least, this prompted the Georgian Interior Ministry to facilitate the movement of the Chechen fighters to Abkhazia,[202] where they linked up with Georgian partisans.

By August 2001, the Abkhaz authorities were claiming irregular armed groups were preparing to invade, and UN reporting confirmed the armed groups "were on Georgian-controlled territory and had assembled without interference by the authorities."[203] Talks between Shevardnadze and Abkhaz de facto Prime Minister Jergenia in September tried to prevent violence but fighting had broken out by October. Over several days of fighting, the Chechen and Georgian armed groups attacked Abkhaz checkpoints in Abkhaz-controlled villages in lower Kodori Valley, but were driven back by an Abkhaz counterattack supported by "two unidentified fighter aircraft" attacking the Chechen and Georgian fighters. Abkhaz forces subsequently drove the armed groups out of lower Kodori Valley, reportedly using "helicopters and planes … against retreating irregulars." The use of airpower, as the Georgians noted at the time, means that Russia almost certainly intervened on the side of the Abkhaz who did not have this capacity. By 18 October, the Abkhaz Defence Ministry claimed that their forces had regained control of lower

[200] Some have noted the irony of the Georgian-Chechen alliance given that many Chechens had fought with the Abkhaz against Georgia eight years earlier. Tarkhan-Mouravi and Sumbadze 2006, 284.
[201] The second Chechen war was an important factor contributing to declining Russian-Georgian relations. Shevardnadze refused Russia's request to deploy troops to Chechnya via Georgia due to his fear of spillover sparking a Caucasus-wide war, adding to the hostility caused by Georgia's western orientation.
[202] Matveeva 2002, 13.
[203] Quotations from this paragraph are from UN Document S/2001/1008 (24 October 2001), para 14-22, unless stated otherwise.

Kodori Valley,[204] more or less restoring the balance of control to the pre-clash status quo, but Georgian troops were subsequently deployed to Upper Kodori Valley. UNOMIG deemed this was a violation of the 1994 Moscow Agreement, and it became a major point of contention between the parties. Tbilisi insisted that its personnel in upper Kodori Valley were border guards and local reservists, and so not in violation of the Agreement.[205]

Accounts differ as to what extent the operation was supported by the Georgian government, and as to what the true objectives were.[206] The Chechen incursions may have been part of Georgia's coercive strategy towards Abkhazia and ongoing attempts to destabilise and undermine the de facto authorities. Contemporaneous reports are more or less consistent with this perspective: one possibility reported by Liz Fuller was that the Chechen fighters "had been co-opted by the Georgian authorities and that its limited objective was to restore Georgian control over at least part of Abkhazia."[207] She also cites Abkhaz intelligence sources who believed Gelayev's aim was "to capture the strategic bridge across the Kodori River that effectively divides Abkhazia into two parts … thus depriving the Abkhaz of access to, and control over, the southern half of [Abkhazia]."[208]

Given the ambiguity over which actions were officially authorised, it seems plausible to conclude that the actions of the Georgian armed groups are consistent with the aims of undermining Abkhaz control and of ensuring continued access to Georgian-controlled parts of Kodori Valley, while the deployment of Georgian military and police personnel to upper Kodori Valley in response to the violence is better understood as a continuation of the Georgian government's objective of retaining links. An UNOMIG report from December 2001, reflecting on the implications for the peace process and the possibility of

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[204] Fuller 2001a.
[205] UN Document S/2003/1019 (17 October 2003), para 18
[206] Liz Fuller reported that "Dato Shengelia, the leader of the Forest Brothers Georgian guerrilla formation, said in late September that the Georgian guerrillas and the Chechen fighters had held talks for two months on joining forces. But they finally failed to reach an agreement, media reported, because the Chechens wanted to open a second front by attacking the Russian military base at Gudauta, while the Georgian guerrillas were interested only in overthrowing the present Abkhaz leadership." Fuller 2001b; See also Shakirov 2001.
[207] Fuller 2001a.
[208] Ibid.

Georgian recourse to force if the political process did not progress to their satisfaction, shows the ongoing importance for Georgia of retaining a presence in Kodori Valley: "having very few levers over the Abkhaz, some Georgians may regard the presence of their troops in the Kodori Valley as a very convenient instrument for influencing Sukhumi and complementing diplomacy with a certain military pressure."[209]

Base state objectives and strategies, 2004-2006

> *"We decided at the start of 2004 that it does not make any sense to maintain support for partisan groups […] Shengelia and his guys wanted to transfer their loyalty to the new government but the new government decided there is not much use"*[210]

Reclaiming Lost Ground

Amidst the whirlwind of reforms introduced by Saakashvili's government after the Rose Revolution, a renewed commitment to restoring Georgia's territorial integrity was central to the new president's agenda.[211] The first year of Saakashvili's presidency, 2004, saw the successful and relatively peaceful removal of the warlord Aslan Abashidze in Ajaria (a region in Western Georgia that had been run essentially as Abashidze's private fiefdom) and the serious mishandling of the situation in South Ossetia in 2004 that resulted in a brief but deadly escalation of the conflict in Georgia's other breakaway region. This was a highly revisionist president who set about completely overhauling a deeply corrupt and dysfunctional state and instituting far-reaching reforms across society, and a change in constrained objectives with regard to Abkhazia was a core part of these wider developments. Abkhazia was always the Saakashvili administration's priority.[212] The shift in Tbilisi's objectives to reclaiming ground – the most

[209] UNOMIG Monthly Situation Report, December 2001 (on file with author)
[210] Interview with Shota Utiashvili, Tbilisi, April 2017. Shota Utiashvili was Director of the Department of Information and Analysis in the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs (2004-2012)
[211] George 2009, 178.
[212] Interviews with current and former Georgian government officials, Tbilisi.

ambitious attempt since the end of the war to reverse Georgia's territorial losses – focused on Kodori Valley as the necessary link by which the objective would be translated into control strategies.

In a prior, related development, in February 2004, Georgian law enforcement conducted a major anti-crime operation in Zugdidi and Tsalendzhika districts in western Georgia,[213] cracking down on the remaining Georgian partisan groups – by now largely criminal enterprises,[214] as likely to cooperate with Abkhaz criminals in smuggling as to fight the Abkhaz authorities. Tellingly, by this stage the Forest Brothers were taking refuge from the Georgian state in Gali; that is, they were able to stay out of the reach of Georgian law enforcement by using Abkhazia as a rear base in areas beyond the control of either Sukhumi or Tbilisi. News portal Civil Georgia quotes the arrested Forest Brothers commander Davit Shengelia as saying, after he had agreed to give up arms, "We transported ammunition and weapons from the territories controlled by the Abkhaz separatists and handed them over to police." The 30 detained individuals were "charged with kidnapping, smuggling and other crimes that were committed under the pretext of guerrilla operations in breakaway Abkhazia."[215] This consolidation of power by the central authorities was a clear departure from the Shevardnadze era, and part of the broader centralisation and strengthening of the Georgian state instituted by Saakashvili.

Despite the turbulence that came with Saakashvili's more belligerent approach towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia, 2006 – the final year of the post-war phase – started well in terms of the peace process: in March, direct bilateral talks between the Georgians and the Abkhaz resumed after a five year gap, and there were hope that a resolution to the conflict was possible.[216] Developments in Kodori Valley would unravel that progress, as the next section shows.[217]

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[213] See UN Document S/2004/315 (20 April 2004), para 26
[214] "those groups degenerated into purely criminals". Interview, David Darchiashvili, Tbilisi, November 2016
[215] Civil Georgia 2004a.
[216] RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty 2006; Fuller 2006.
[217] Some are sceptical that the peace talks were going anywhere. According to Shota Utiashvili, "the peace process was never really going forward at this time. Remember these are times, 2004-2007 that Russia is consolidating its power, increasing its prestige in the North Caucasus, almost complete pacification of Chechnya. … Putin is very popular in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.… They are enjoying the fresh flow of funds from Russia.… [in 2006 it was] more the process for the sake of the process than a genuine chance for moving forward." Interview, Shota

Kodori Valley (2006)

> *"Kvitsiani – that's another story…. He was not so illegitimate as Dato Shengelia but quite similar to Shengelia in habits. He simply had some official status, as representative of the government in Kodori valley. But in reality Kodori valley was given to him as a fiefdom."*[218]

How was the new objective translated into control strategies? Following the successful crackdown on the Zugdidi-based militias, the next step in Saakashvili's centralisation of power in April 2005 was to disband the 'Monadire' ('Hunter') militia in Kodori Valley – the local defence forces, formally part of Georgian military structures, commanded by Tbilisi's representative in the area, Emzar Kvitsiani.[219] The move was unpopular locally, and the Monadire refused to disarm, so in 2006 Saakashvili launched a large scale police operation that "eradicated the Monadire" and thereby "reasserted control over the upper Kodori Gorge".[220]

Kvitsiani's disobedience demanded a response but also provided an opportunity: "Saakashvili's government was forced to act somehow but also used it to establish proper control over this part of Abkhazia with a political purpose to create another Abkhazia".[221] Tbilisi's next move was to install Georgian police and the Abkhazian Government-in-Exile in Upper Kodori Valley, controlling about 17% of the territory of Abkhazia.[222] This was also accompanied by development projects, such as building new schools and renovating the hospital.[223] In a move Crisis Group described as "part of an effort to undermine the legitimacy of de facto President Bagapsh's government", Saakashvili explicitly linked these developments to the restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity when he announced that the

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Utiashvili, Tbilisi, April 2017. Others are critical of Saakashvili's mishandling of the talks and of his removal of the respected Georgian negotiator, Irakli Alasania.

[218] Interview, David Darchiashvili, Tbilisi, November 2016

[219] In the past, Kvitsiani and the Monadire were used to both provoke and contain the Abkhaz and their Russian backers, "a tool of state efforts to maintain … Georgia's international legal sovereignty, protecting and attempting to help re-extend Georgian borders to their previous location." Marten 2012, 91.

[220] International Crisis Group 2006a, 19–20.

[221] Interview, David Darchiashvili, Tbilisi, November 2016.

[222] Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2008, 489.

[223] Schwirtz 2006.

Government in Exile would be relocated to Upper Kodori: "This is Zemo [Upper] Abkhazia … which is more than one third of Abkhazia's entire territory and where Georgian sovereignty is enforced….we will come back to our homes very soon, we will come back from every direction"[224] This was a far more ambitious revision of the status quo than just undermining the Abkhaz president. Removing recalcitrant local proxies, installing armed personnel on the ground and establishing administrative control was an explicit statement of who rules where and over whom. Tbilisi renamed the area Upper Abkhazia with a newly created electoral district for an area which had "previously not had any official representation in Tbilisi beyond the deals with Kvitsiani".[225]

In response, the Abkhaz withdrew from all Georgian-Abkhaz negotiations and peace mechanisms.[226] For some Georgian political figures, the Abkhaz used events in Kodori as a 'pretext' to end the negotiations, a move which had more to do with domestic Abkhaz politics than any claim on Kodori Valley,[227] whereas several of my Abkhaz respondents cited these developments as a major turning point in their attitude towards Georgia.[228] Apart from withdrawal from the peace process, there was no attempt at the time by the Abkhaz authorities to respond more forcefully. While some lauded this restraint as a wise response to prevent escalation and further bloodshed, it was seen by many former Abkhaz fighters at the time as too passive: as Shesterinina finds in her research,

> Many Abkhaz fighters did not approve of this passive reaction on the part of the Abkhaz leaders. "When they entered the Kodor Valley in 2006," an Abkhaz commander says, "we fighters were upset – our government was passive about it"… The strengthening of the Georgian armed forces in the area was generally concerning for the Abkhaz. Abkhaz fighters and civilians alike say:

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[224] As quoted in International Crisis Group 2007a, 17.
[225] Marten 2012, 95.
[226] A decision for which they were criticised: "it does not seem that the presence of the alternative administration and the Georgian security forces in the upper Kodori Valley really warranted the suspension by the Abkhaz side of its participation in most of the peace mechanisms. They seemed to serve more as a convenient excuse than a valid reason for Sukhumi's decision to considerably limit its participation in the peace process." *The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia: Volume Two* 2009, 90; See also International Crisis Group 2007a.
[227] "I don't think [the] Abkhaz … had much claims on Kodori. In 2006 they just used it as a pretext to breakdown the negotiations. At that time Bagapsh was already strong, he had consolidated his power base, he did not need Georgians that much. And therefore he decided that Kodori would be a very good pretext on which to breakdown the negotiations and stop this dance with the Georgians." Interview, Shota Utiashvili, Tbilisi, April 2017
[228] The events were variously described as, for example, a 'major provocation', 'destabilising', and 'threatening'. Interviews in Sukhumi, May/June 2017

> "Georgia's forces crossed the border, captured the area" … "They created a foothold there, it was a buffer".[229]

But, as Shesterinina notes, the Abkhaz lacked the military means to overcome the massively increased Georgian presence in Kodori that came with substantial armaments and defensive fortifications.[230]

While Saakashvili's actions in Kodori Valley were clearly in pursuit of reclaiming territory that had not been fully under the de facto control of the Georgian government, they do not exactly fit in my framework – Upper Kodori Valley was not controlled by the Abkhaz authorities. Nonetheless, extending effective government control to this area of Abkhazia and establishing the presence of central state political and security personnel is related to the post-war cleavage of reincorporation versus full separation given the explicit links made by Saakashvili between taking control of Upper Kodori Valley – a crucial link and a lever since the end of war and part of Tbilisi's strategy for retaining a foothold in Abkhazia – and the eventual reincorporation of all lost territory. The post-war environment was starting to overlap with distinct but related attempts to extend state authority and remove competing sources of power, and this involved multiple projects in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Ajaria and the transformation of the Georgian state more generally.

Given what happened in the next two years, it is impossible to know if taking control of Upper Kodori Valley would have been the precursor for further efforts to reclaim ground from Abkhaz control, although this would fit the direction being taken by the Saakashvili government and is consistent with the assertion of state control over western Georgia discussed above. However, in 2008 Georgia would lose a short but disastrous war with Russia, and lose all control of Abkhazia, whose independence Russia would recognise soon after.[231] Those developments fall outside the scope of this case study – they are discussed in Chapter 6 – so the reconstruction of the post-war phases concludes here.

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[229] Shesterinina 2014, 299.

[230] Ibid.

[231] According to Marten's analysis, by "loudly declaring that the Upper Kodori buffer zone was now under Georgian state control" Saakashvili provoked Russia and "brought Georgia ever closer to the August 2008 war." Marten 2012, 101.

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter has reconstructed post-war efforts to secure de facto control through the lens of the strategies used by the Georgian and Abkhaz sides to control people and territory in the aftermath of a short but bloody secessionist war. I have shown how a post-war cleavage of reincorporation versus full separation shaped the actors objectives after the most violent phase of the conflict had ended, and by reconstructing the control strategies the actors used – what Tbilisi and Sukhumi and their allies and proxies *did* to establish the facts of effective control on the ground in Gali and Kodori Valley and along the boundary line that divides them – I have shown the process by which the post-war order was formed, contested and changed.

Neither side was satisfied with their situation at the end of the war and the deadlock in the political negotiations that tried to reach a settlement typified a so-called 'frozen conflict'. Contrary to this misleading metaphor, I have shown how the two sides, unable to see a way to realising their aims of full separation from the base state or full reintegration of the breakaway region, formulated constrained objectives that reflected their relative losses and gains and preferences for changing or preserving the distribution of control at the end of the war. In pursuit of those aims, they then leveraged and exploited features of the post-war environment to translate objectives in control strategies, making the territory and populations of Gali and Kodori and the Georgian IDPs the key areas of activity in the post-war struggle for control. The transitions from war to the initial post-war period, and then a further transition wrought by changes in the domestic and regional context led to changes in the actors' objectives and corresponding changes in the control strategies they used.

In Chapter 6, I will return to the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict and consider how the post-war environment of 1994 to 2006 continued to shape later developments but in a context radically changed by the Georgian-Russian war of 2008. That chapter will also compare the Georgia-Abkhazia and Serbia-Kosovo cases, and it is to the latter than I now turn.

Chapter 5: Serbia and Kosovo

5.1. Introduction[1]

"… many Kosovars successfully convinced many Westerners that the question of Kosovo was really one of human rights. In fact it was not. At the heart of the matter was a fundamental struggle between two peoples for control of the same piece of land."[2]

The struggle between Serbs and Albanians for control of Kosovo escalated to a violent armed conflict in 1998 that culminated in a Serb counterinsurgency campaign that forcible displaced hundreds of thousands of the Albanian population, a military intervention by NATO that coerced Serbia into withdrawing from Kosovo and an unprecedented international administration of the territory that would eventually see Kosovo unilaterally declare independence in 2008. Serbia has not renounced its claim over Kosovo, and the latter's international recognition is widespread but not universal – Kosovo is not a member of the United Nations and questions of legal sovereignty remain unresolved.[3] In parallel to the deadlocked battles over Kosovo's status, the struggle for control of the same piece of land and over who gets to live there has continued.

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[1] I am deeply grateful to the many people in Belgrade, Priština and Mitrovica who took the time to meet with me to discuss my research and offer their insights. As with the previous case study, I do not directly quote them all here but I am thankful for their assistance. In particular, I want to thank Garentina Kraja, Leonora Kryeziu, Naim Rashiti, Labinot Greicevci, Lulzim Peci, Furtuna Sheremeti, Michael Warren and Mark Baskin in Priština, and to the many civil society activists and NGO workers in Mitrovica who met with me. The analysis – and the errors – are my own.

[2] Judah 2002, 84.

[3] Over 100 states have recognised Kosovo



Figure 5.1. UN map of Serbia from 2007. Source: United Nations Department of Field Support, Cartographic Section

War Termination: June 1999 – December 1999

The NATO bombing campaign lasted from March until June 1999 when Milošević capitulated and agreed to the terms imposed by the Alliance.[4] The Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the Yugoslav and Serbian governments was signed on 9 June, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 was passed the next day.[5] These authorised NATO's military deployment to Kosovo (KFOR) and established the United Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the international civilian administration that would have de jure authority in Kosovo. The UN resolution required that all

[4] UCDP codes the date of termination as 03 June 1999. <https://www.ucdp.uu.se/additionalinfo/412/1>
[5] For the MTA (also referred to as the Kumanovo Agreement after the town in Macedonia where it was signed), see: <https://www.nato.int/kosovo/docu/a990609a.htm>; for Resolution 1244, see <>https://peacemaker.un.org/kosovo-resolution1244>

Yugoslav and Serb military, paramilitary and polices forces withdraw as KFOR was being deployed, and mandated the international administration to facilitate a political process to determine Kosovo's future status.

The NATO campaign was, in the words of the Independent International Commission on Kosovo, neither a success nor a failure, but both:

> It forced the Serbian government to withdraw its army and police from Kosovo and to sign an agreement closely modeled on the aborted Rambouillet accord. It stopped the systematic oppression of the Kosovar Albanians. However, the intervention failed to achieve its avowed aim of preventing massive ethnic cleansing. Milosevic remained in power. The Serbian people were the main losers. Kosovo was lost. Many Serbs fled or were expelled from the province.[6]

This mixed record captures many of the issues that would define the post-war environment. The international community assumed human rights abuses against the Kosovo Albanians would end with the defeat the Serb security forces, but, as King and Mason argue, it failed to understand that the war "was only the latest chapter in a long-running competition between two peoples for control of territory."[7] This competition entered a new phase in the aftermath of NATO's air war.[8]

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While June 1999 marked the end of major hostilities and Kosovo Albanian refugees rapidly returned in their tens of thousands, the following months were chaotic and violent. As with the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, there was a war termination phase that marks the transition from the war to a post-war environment when the principle actors started to form constrained objectives and translate them into post-war control strategies. During this phase, rival Kosovo Albanian factions competed to fill the vacuum in authority created by the collapse of Serb control, non-Albanian minorities – Serbs especially[9] –

[6] Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000, 5.
[7] King and Mason 2006, 243.
[8] I use the term 'international community' as short-hand for the actors who administered post-war Kosovo: UNMIK, NATO, the OSCE and the EU.
[9] I mostly focus on the Serb and Albanian communities because they mirror the main conflict cleavage. Other minority groups in Kosovo – Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in particular – were also violently targeted and blocked from returning, but this is not the focus of the case study.

were targeted with violence and harassment, and UNMIK and KFOR deployed and tried to match their de jure authority with effective control on the ground.

In June and July 1999, "every form of administration and authority [in Kosovo] had become suddenly absent."[10] The local Serb administration had either collapsed or was relocating to the remaining Serb-held areas of Kosovo, especially in the north, or to Serbia proper, while "in the first weeks after the end of the war the KLA attempted to seize local power and to fill the vacuum."[11] There were two main competing Kosovo Albanian de facto sources of authority in this early stage, with different claims to legitimacy:[12] the 'Government of the Republic of Kosova' led by Ibrahim Rugova, and the 'Provisional Government of Kosova' under KLA commander Hashim Thaci. The 'Provisional Government' was "effectively the political wing of the KLA."[13] By far the most ruthlessly efficient actor on the ground, "the unauthorized KLA-backed provisional government had assumed control over much of the territory and set up provisional government structures" in almost all of Kosovo's municipalities by the end of the summer.[14] The disarmament and demobilisation of the KLA was officially completed by September 1999,[15] but the structures and networks of the armed group remained influential, "just beneath the surface."[16]

The widespread violence against Serb and other non-Albanian minorities was the most consequential development after the NATO air war.[17] Of the approximately 200,000 Serbs who lived in Kosovo before the war, only half remained by summer 1999.[18] Those who sought refuge in Serbia proper were not treated well.[19] The violence can partly be explained in terms of revenge and a response to the previous

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[10] International Crisis Group 1999a, 1.
[11] Judah 2008, 93.
[12] Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000, 104.
[13] Boyle 2014, 180.
[14] Ibid., 180. Boyle adds: 'The KLA was more aggressive than the LDK in attempting to win control.... KFOR forces found KLA "commanders" in each city and province, and the KLA was already providing basic social services, including security, by the time KFOR arrived'.
[15] UN Document S/1999/1250 (23 December 1999)
[16] Sell 2001, 7.
[17] Many Kosovo Albanians accused of collaborating with the Serb authorities were also killed
[18] Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000, 108.
[19] According to one account on the road to Belgrade from Kosovo with fleeing Serbs, "we saw groups of farmers who had been prevented from going further north.... Belgrade had decided it didn't want the embarrassing spectacle of angry Serb refugees clogging up the capital and protesting that Milošević had betrayed them. Some who did make

decade of repression, but a full explanation must also include how attacks on the Serb population were about shaping a future political order: International Crisis Group reported in August 1999 on speculation that attacks on minorities were part of "an organised campaign aimed at creating an ethnically pure Albanian Kosovo."[20] By November, their reporting was more declarative: "Systematic attacks upon the Serb population … suggest that at least some elements of the ethnic Albanian majority are determined to rid the province of all non-Albanians,"[21] while Human Rights Watch concluded that their research 'suggests' the motivation behind the violence was "the removal from Kosovo of non-ethnic Albanians in order to better justify an independent state."[22] In Prizren, for example, which had not seen much fighting during the war, the houses of Kosovo Serbs were being burned "with the obvious intention of preventing any returns, but [also] to signal to the international community and the moderate part of the Kosovo Albanian population who is in control."[23] The OSCE also noted that, by entrenching separation and making returns unlikely, the violence and displacement was "making ever more elusive the *international community's envisioned goal* of ethnic co-existence."[24]

There is no conclusive evidence that there was a systematic effort directed by Kosovo Albanian political leaders to forcibly remove all non-Albanians from Kosovo. The relevant issue for this case study is the consequences of the violence during this phase on Kosovo's demographics and the environment in which political actors would form and pursue their post-war objectives. The immediate consequence of the repeated attacks was the "exodus of Kosovo Serbs … and an inevitable internal displacement towards mono-ethnic enclaves."[25] Enclaves developed in majority-Serb villages and settlements in the south and

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it as far as the outskirts of Belgrade were stopped by the police and led to a hillside a few miles away." Marshall 2019, 209.

[20] The report continues: 'The only organisation among the Albanians capable of co-ordinating such a campaign is the UCK, which has denied responsibility at command level for the killings.' Crisis Group concluded that the denial was 'credible'. International Crisis Group 1999a, 3.

[21] International Crisis Group 1999b, 1.

[22] The report goes on to say there was "no evidence ... of a coordinated policy to this end of the political or military leadership of the former KLA, which has made public statements condemning attacks against minorities." Human Rights Watch 2001, 454–455.

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[24] OSCE 1999, xii. My emphasis.

[25] Ibid., xi.

the centre, and in the majority-Serb northern municipalities bordering Serbia proper with the northern half of the divided city of Mitrovica as its 'capital'.[26] With KFOR protection, they provided some security but only within the enclaves' confines.[27]

KFOR was slow to adapt to its post-war role of protecting Serbs and other non-Albanian minorities and was not prepared for the law enforcement roles it was forced to take on until the international civilian police under UNMIK were fully deployed.[28] In Mitrovica, KFOR, and the French contingent in particular, were criticised for the 'major mistake' of failing "to insist on an undivided city" but rather separating "Serbs and Albanians in the belief that this was the best way to maintain security" in a strategy that was difficult to reverse.[29] The emphasis on security and stability above all else in the early post-war stages is crucial for understanding how the environment subsequently developed.[30] King and Mason pithily summed up the consequences of dividing Mitrovica: "The *cordon sanitaire* had become a *frontière permanente*."[31] KFOR's actions during the war termination phase therefore shaped the constraints and opportunities for political actors in the post-war environment in ways I will return to throughout the case study, notably by protecting the remaining Serb population in Kosovo from further attacks and by entrenching a territorial division that would help that community separate itself from the international civilian authority and, later, Kosovar governing institutions.

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Neither the war nor UNMIK's de jure sovereignty backed up by NATO's coercive power resolved the fundamental incompatibility between mutually exclusive Serb and Albanian claims to Kosovo. The UN civilian administration and KFOR's monopoly over security put in place the structures that would govern

[26] 'North Kosovo' refers to the municipalities of Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zvečan/Zveçan, Zubin Potok and the area of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë north of the Ibar River. Note that, per my definitions, north Kosovo is not an enclave but a border region.
[27] OSCE Mission in Kosovo/UNHCR 1999, 2.
[28] Serb security forces had withdrawn from Kosovo, and KFOR had uncontested control of the territory. Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000, 104–105.
[29] Ibid., 109.
[30] The international community's prioritisation of stability was frequently commented on in my interviews and meetings in Priština (Interviews, Priština, autumn/winter 2017)
[31] King and Mason 2006, 169.

Kosovo and its population and tightly constrained what Kosovo Albanians and Serbs could do – Resolution 1244 gave the UN's Special Representative in Kosovo sweeping executive powers as the head of UNMIK.[32] However, the intentional 'constructive ambiguity' of Resolution 1244 meant that both sides could interpret the text as supporting their cause, with "the Serbs reading the references to Yugoslav sovereignty as binding, the Albanians seeing the references to a political process to define Kosovo's status as eventually guaranteeing independence."[33] Commentators at the time saw the UN mandate as designed to "maintain the region under Belgrade's jurisdiction" until such time as a "peaceful reintegration of the territory" was possible,[34] and critics lamented the failings on both sides for the lack of progress. "The lack of leadership in Belgrade has contributed to the plight of the Kosovo Serbs," argued an international commission in 2005, "and the Serbian community in Kosovo has to a large degree become hostage to the political struggles in the Serbian capital. The Albanian leadership in Kosovo [has failed] to show any real willingness to engage in a process of reconciliation and the development of multi-ethnic institutions and structures."[35]

Such assessments are true but miss an important part of the principal political actors' objectives. Despite the international community's ambitious peacebuilding and statebuilding agenda, the political process to resolve Kosovo's future status was going nowhere. Nonetheless, there were important developments on the ground as the principal political actors pursued their post-war agendas. To reconstruct these developments, I start with the transition from an armed conflict to a post-war cleavage: restoring the pre-war territorial integrity of Yugoslavia by reincorporating Kosovo into Serbia versus full separation and an independent Kosovo.[36] By the time of this transition, both sides had motives and (limited) opportunities

[32] Several Kosovar interlocutors in Priština remarked that the various Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG) had king-like or monarchical powers. (Interviews, Priština, autumn/winter 2017)
[33] Crampton 2012, 163.
[34] Bugajski 2000, 182.
[35] International Commission on the Balkans 2005, 19.
[36] There is a wider regional dynamic affecting this conflict cleavage. The aspiration of at least some factions on each side to redraw the borders of the Balkans to create a Greater Serbia or a Greater Albania is important for understanding the actors' objectives in the Serbia-Kosovo conflict and the regional context in which the conflict takes place. While this context will be given due consideration, for the purpose of this case study I focus mainly on Kosovo's separation from Serbia.

to change the post-war status quo, and both had de facto control of populated territory they wanted to retain. The environment had been transformed by the war and the manner of its termination, but the struggle for control over people and territory continued.

5.2 First Post-War Phase: Winter 1999 – Spring 2004

> *"After NATO took control of Kosovo in June 1999, it provided a security overlay that theoretically terminated the struggle for Kosovo's territory. However, the war is unfinished business at the Ibar, which has served as a rough demarcation of the internal boundary between victory and defeat."*[37]

UNMIK's de jure sovereignty meant questions about Kosovo's status were deferred, but the situation on the ground in the early 2000s is better understood in terms of de facto control. There was, according to the Kosovo Report, "physical, political, and economic separation between Kosovo and the rest of the country", exposing the fiction of Yugoslavia's territory integrity but leaving unresolved the question of who actually was sovereign.[38] By the start of the first post-war phase, levels of violence and forced displacement had declined but not completely stopped, and the process of enclave formation started during the war termination phase was mostly complete. Displacement and separation were consequential for later developments: by the end of 1999, Petersen argues, "the physical separation of Serbs and Albanians [had] probably [done] more to change the situation than international security forces."[39] By Boyle's analysis, the "ethnic population transfer" was complete by mid-2002, with most Serbs living apart from Kosovo Albanians, either in the north or in heavily guarded enclaves south of the Ibar.[40]

KFOR had established some stability and the international community was undertaking an ambitious and wide-ranging programme in reconstruction and statebuilding that would create the political,

[37] International Crisis Group 2005a, 21.
[38] Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000, 100.
[39] Petersen 2011, 166. Note, however, that this separation was itself facilitated by the actions of KFOR in a number of cases, especially in Mitrovica.
[40] Boyle 2014, 203.

administrative and economic institutions governing life in Kosovo.[41] At the same time, conditions on the ground continued to shape the actors' post-war constrained objectives and control strategies. Enclavization, argues Kostovicova, "aggravated Serbian–Albanian relations in post-intervention Kosovo, especially in Mitrovica. Albanians saw enclaves as a blueprint for the unacceptable partition of Kosovo."[42] Mitrovica – an area where control was contested and the aims of the two sides clashed – has both intrinsic and instrumental value for the actors, and became a target of their control strategies and a flashpoint for further violence and displacement.[43] The situation in Mitrovica encapsulated the territorial and demographic fears (and ambitions) of both sides, described in a Crisis Group report as "the Serb fear of expulsion and the Albanian fear of partition."[44] Mitrovica became "a chip in a larger political game, caught between two sides equally determined not to yield an inch of territory to the other".[45] Belgrade and the Kosovo Serb population needed to prevent the complete loss of their remaining territorial and demographic presence in Kosovo, and reverse their losses where possible. The Kosovo Albanian authorities and population needed to not only preserve their wartime gains but complete the victory and take control of the whole territory of Kosovo as a step towards statehood. The international community wanted reconciliation, but Belgrade worked hard to prevent Kosovo Serbs from taking part in any UNMIK-authorised political institutions in Pristina, and the Kosovo Albanians "did little to welcome them."[46]

For both sides, demographic strategies – determining who gets to live where – would be central to securing de facto control in the post-war environment. A media report in April 2002 captures some of the strategies that shaped the first post-war in particular: "Kosovar Albanians have repeatedly interfered with attempts by UN agencies to allow displaced Serbs to return to their homes in Kosovo while Serbs in the

[41] Muharremi et al. 2005.
[42] Kostovicova 2008, 638.
[43] In February 2000, for example, a UNHCR bus transporting Serbs was attacked with rocket-propelled grenades, killing three, and the next day approximately 1,700 Albanians, Muslim Slavs and Turks were forced out of their homes in the north. International Crisis Group 2000a, 1-2. See also UN Document S/2000/177 (03 March 2000) para. 20.
[44] International Crisis Group 2002c, 19.
[45] European Stability Initiative 2004a, 9.
[46] Perritt 2010, 74.

province have been equally hostile toward Albanian attempts to reside in Serb-dominated areas."[47] Both sides made the possibility of minority returns conditional on progress towards meeting their own territorial and demographic objectives: Kosovo Albanians objected to Serb returns until Albanians could return to north Mitrovica, and Kosovo Serbs objected to Albanian returns while Serbs could not safely return to Albanian majority areas.[48]

Secessionist objectives and strategies

Preserve control

The prevailing constrained objective for the secessionist side in this phase was to preserve control. While the ultimate aim was independence and recognition – something Albanians expected would come in 3 to 4 years – preserving de facto control better captures the secessionists' objectives at this early post-war stage. The withdrawal of Serb forces, the rapid and forceful assertion of the authority of the KLA on the ground, and the presence of UNMIK and KFOR meant two things. First, many of the secessionists' wartime goals had been partially accomplished and while there was no immediate threat of being coercively reincorporated into Serbia, these gains were reversible and the maximalist aim of full separation and independence had not been met, but the conditions were not conducive to achieving them. Second, a space opened up for an intra-Albanian fight over control of Kosovo.

To deal briefly with the second point first before returning to the constrained objective,[49] competing Albanian groups – including those loyal to Rugova's parallel government of the 1990s, Thaçi's provisional government, and rival factions of the KLA[50] – were fighting for control of Kosovo through much of the first post-war phase, concurrent with the still unresolved base state-secessionist conflict. Despite the coercive power of the KLA and its successor organisations on the ground (including the PDK, the party

[47] Naegele 2002.
[48] OSCE Mission in Kosovo/UNHCR 2002, 55.
[49] While these developments are crucial for understanding post-war Kosovo, they are not the main focus of this case study which is concerned with the Serbia-Kosovo conflict cleavage.
[50] Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000, 104.

established from the political wing of the KLA),[51] in local elections in October 2000 it was the LDK[52] – the party of Rugova and the nonviolent resistance of the 1990s – that emerged politically dominant.[53] Kosovo Albanian political institutions were being established under UNMIK's supervision:[54] elections in November 2001 – which started the process of establishing the Provisional Institutions of Self-Governance (PISG)[55] – were won by the LDK with Rugova elected as president, and Kosovo was moving towards a greater degree of self-governance as UNMIK gradually transferred responsibilities to the PISG.[56] But, as Boyle argues, there was a 'shadow structure beneath the state' and multiple Albanian armed groups, some of which were "attempting to carry on the KLA's struggle against the Serbs" but many were "engaged in factional violence that [was] disconnected from or only marginally related to Kosovo's ethnic fault line."[57] This was not an ideological struggle, and the Albanian community was united in its ambition for independence. Rather, this was a fight mostly between factions that emerged from the fragmentation of the armed resistance over who gets what and who would lead Kosovo.

Regarding the Serbia-Kosovo cleavage, the priority for the secessionist side was to secure their wartime gains in de facto control of populated territory and ensure there would be no return to Serb rule. Conditions after the war meant that independence was not a viable short-term objective – UNMIK was sovereign and had the support of the international community,[58] and there was little support for Kosovan statehood or even for talks on status. UNMIK's policy, with the backing of the Security Council, was

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[51] Partia Demokratike e Kosovës (Democratic Party of Kosovo)
[52] Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës (Democratic League of Kosovo)
[53] Confirmation, in Serwer's analysis, "that politics, including local service delivery, rather than force would be dominant in the postwar period." Serwer 2019, 80.
[54] The demobilisation of the KLA was completed by September 1999 – see UN Document S/1999/1250 (23 December 1999); in January 2000, all parallel Kosovo Albanian parallel bodies declared they have ceased to exist – see UN Document S/2000/177 (03 March 2000)
[55] International Crisis Group 2001c.
[56] Only the PISG was regarded as legitimate by Kosovo Albanians - that UNMIK had de jure authority was 'irrelevant'. International Crisis Group 2004a, 2.
[57] Boyle 2014, 196; By 2002 most political assassinations were linked to factional competition between the PDK and the LDK, with LDK and AAK officials bearing the brunt of the targeted killings. Ibid., 212.
[58] International developments from 2001 onwards would weaken this commitment, including a new US administration that was less supportive of the Kosovan cause, and the redirection of attention and resources after 9/11. Splits between western powers and Russia over Kosovo would become more salient in the second post-war phase as the status question came to a head.

'standards before status': Kosovo would have to meet certain benchmarks before its future status would be addressed.[59] Furthermore, the secessionists' de facto control did not extend throughout Kosovo (arguably, neither did UNMIK's or KFOR's). The international security presence meant that the displacement of non-Albanians from Kosovan territory had by now slowed to a halt, and the remaining Serb population was now entrenched in enclaves and in north Kosovo where Belgrade was re-establishing de facto control (see ~~next section of~~ later in this chapter).

These conditions shaped the environment in which the secessionist side had to operate and the options available to them. Preserving control entailed preventing Belgrade from regaining jurisdiction over the population and territory of Kosovo and the permanent removal of any official Serbian government presence, at least from those areas under Albanian control since the end of war. As Sell put it in 2002, "Albanians must have the trappings and the reality of complete self-rule. They will not allow Belgrade's representatives any role in Pristina."[60] A similar analysis from Petersen argues that the goal was "to make a complete break with all things Serbian" and "completely avoid and isolate" the Serbs, rather than eliminate them.[61] The emerging de facto territorial partition along the River Ibar that left strategically important areas out of Kosovar control – including the Trepča mining complex – was a problem for the secessionist side.[62] However, extending territorial control all the way to border was not a viable objective in the first post-war phase because of the international constraints: the combined authority and power of UNMIK and KFOR required the secessionists to scale back their objectives to reflect post-war realities. The resulting lack of real political power and autonomy would increasingly become a source of frustration for the Kosovars as their expectations of a swift move to independence diverged from the approach taken by the international community.

The remaining territorially-concentrated Kosovo Serb population and the displaced population wanting to return were seen as a threat to the secessionists' goal of an independent Kosovo Albanian state,

[59] Weller 2009, chap. 11.
[60] Sell 2002, 15.
[61] Petersen 2011, 167.
[62] International Crisis Group 2002a, 10.

especially because of the possibility of partition. This was particularly the case with Mitrovica, where Priština feared the creation of a separate North Mitrovica municipality would increases the chances of Kosovo being partitioned along the Ibar,[63] or lead to the creation of a Republika Srpska-like entity within Kosovo that would undermine the integrity of a Kosovan state in the same way that Bosnia-Hercegovina is undermined by its Serb-majority entity.

As noted, the decline in violence meant that there was little further forced displacement, but there were tens of thousands of Kosovo Serbs still displaced and the international community were committed to facilitating their return and ensuring a multiethnic Kosovo.[64] The Provisional Institutions publicly supported this aim, but, as Petersen argues, "the [Kosovo] Albanian political leadership, connected remnants of the KLA and other violent groups, and the general population all understood that the return of Serbs would be highly negative for the consolidation of Albanian rule in Kosovo."[65]

Demographic sorting

From early 2000 to spring 2004, the secessionist side used a profile of control strategies broadly consistent with an objective of preserving control, and this section provides the supporting evidence. The objective of preserving control entailed strategies focused on maintaining the demographic and territorial separation between Serbs and Albanians and between Serb-controlled territory and Kosovo south of the Ibar. This included efforts to sustain the relative demographic advantage of the Albanian population and prevent or limit the return of displaced Serbs and to contain those territories and populations not under Kosovo Albanian control so they would not threaten wartime gains or future prospects for independence.

At their core, these strategies were about moving the 'right' people to the right place, making them stay there, and keeping the 'wrong' people out; that is, targeting the composition and location of populations. In a post-war context following massive forced displacement, control strategies were used to influence

[63] International Crisis Group 2002c, 14.
[64] The numbers are contested, but a UNHCR-supported study in 2000 estimated a figure of 210,000 persons displaced from Kosovo to Serbia and Montenegro, based on people who had presented themselves to be registered OSCE Mission in Kosovo/UNHCR 2000, 31.
[65] Petersen 2011, 183.

who gets to return and to where. The hundreds of thousands of forcibly displaced Kosovo Albanians returned rapidly,[66] mostly to their pre-war homes. The biggest challenge in post-war Kosovo has been minority returns – that is, the return of displaced Serbs to Albanian-majority areas and of Albanians to Serb-majority areas, and this section focuses on the former as it related to secessionist control strategies.

Violence against Kosovo Serbs had decreased, but attacks continued and were believed to be organised and strategic.[67] In spite of the difficulties in attributing intention, contemporary reporting points to deliberate efforts to prevent displaced Serbs from returning to Kosovo or, failing that, to confine them to existing Serb-majority enclaves. Sometimes the violence was direct, resulting in fatalities: an OSCE report, written after an attack in February 2001 on a KFOR-escorted bus carrying Kosovo Serbs from Niš in Serbia proper to the Serb-majority enclave of Gračanica that killed eleven, noted that attacks against minorities were becoming "more highly organised, co-ordinated and carefully targeted."[68] In a less targeted way, there were persistent "semi-spontaneous riots … whenever refugee returns of minority groups were attempted."[69] Sometimes attacks were violent but indirect: Serb-owned properties were targeted for attacks and illegal occupation, described by the OSCE as "a means to drive out remaining minority communities or to preclude their return."[70] Serb religious leaders reported ongoing damage to Serbian Orthodox churches in Kosovo, something that would escalate to new levels of targeted destruction in the March 2004 riots (see later in this chapter).[71]

Poor security conditions generated by such attacks on minorities, especially outside KFOR-protected enclaves, meant that freedom of movement became a major problem for Kosovo Serbs, in effect

[66] There were concerns at the rate at which post-war Kosovo could absorb their return, with the UN requesting a halt to forced repatriation: "uncontrolled large-scale returns could have a potentially destabilizing effect…. There is particular concern that the already precarious situation of minority populations could deteriorate still further in the event of large-scale returns of Kosovo..." UN Document S/2000/538 (June 2000), para 72
[67] For example, in June 2000 the UN reported that violent attacks against Kosovo Serbs "appear to be orchestrated". UN Document S/2000/538 (June 2000), para 21
[68] OSCE Mission in Kosovo/UNHCR 2001b, 3.
[69] Boyle 2014, 214.
[70] OSCE Mission in Kosovo/UNHCR 2001b, 2. See also pp16-18.
[71] International Crisis Group 2004a, 10.

confining them to the enclaves.[72] As the OSCE reported in 2002, "freedom of movement remains the fundamental issue affecting the ability of minorities to live a normal life [and] remains highly restricted."[73] Some restrictions were imposed by KFOR to protect minorities[74] and were reduced or modified as the security situation improved,[75] but the enclaves and territorial separation of populations endured and the Serb population's freedom of movement within Kosovo remained severely limited.

KFOR protection meant a shift to more indirect methods of 'encouraging' non-Albanians to leave Kosovo. One method was so-called 'strategic purchases' in some of the smaller enclaves in central Kosovo. Serb residents would be offered an inflated price for their property, and possibly threatened if they refused to sell. "It [was] only necessary to acquire a few such houses to make the Serb population feel insecure", according to an NGO report, as mixed areas were harder for KFOR to protect, causing more Serbs to leave. "As a result," the report concludes, "the Serb population gradually exits, without for the most part having been directly forced to do so."[76]

The fear generated by persistent low-level violence "effectively cleared Serbs out of every urban area south of the Ibar."[77] Spontaneous returns in 2000 were mostly to well-defended enclaves,[78] and the overall number of Serbs returning to Kosovo declined in 2001 (from around 1,800 people in 2000 to around 500 in 2001, even though organised returns were underway by this stage) because of a large

[72] Freedom of movement consistently feature in the reports of the UN and OSCE. See also Amnesty International 2003.
[73] This was attributed to both objective conditions and perceptions. OSCE Mission in Kosovo/UNHCR 2002, 1. Freedom of movement is defined in the report as "when any minority can travel to any location, including urban centres, without special escort arrangements and without fear of harassment or violence".
[74] Ibid., 16.
[75] Between February 2002 to January 2003, the number of KFOR fixed checkpoints had been reduced by 66 per cent. In early 2003, "KFOR assessed that the security situation had improved to the extent that the environment was safe enough for Kosovo Serbs to move around without escort." UN Document S/2003/113 (29 January 2003) para. 34
[76] Matveeva and Paes 2003, 24. The authors cite the UNHCR/OSCE Ninth Assessment, p 36 as their source. See also the example at pp37-38 of the UNHCR/OSCE report.
[77] Petersen 2011, 183.
[78] "over half of those spontaneous returns of Kosovo Serbs in 2000 were to fortified enclaves (such as Gracanica, Upper Rahovec/Orahovac, Gorazdevac, etc.) by IDPs who, after a brief period of refuge outside of Kosovo, returned to the largest enclaves." OSCE Mission in Kosovo/UNHCR 2002, 45.

reduction in spontaneous returns. In general, the situation outside of the enclaves was "prohibitive of return for the vast majority of displaced persons,"[79] and most believed they had no future in Kosovo.[80]

As a later section of this chapter describes in more detail, enclavisation started as means for Kosovo Serbs – with KFOR help – to protect themselves. Subsequently, the enclaves and north Kosovo became the means through which Belgrade could influence and interfere with Kosovo and ensure partition was a viable option. It is less clear – that is, there is less supporting evidence – whether enclavisation was also part of a secessionist strategy to contain and isolate the remaining Kosovo Serb population that could not be removed, which would be consistent with an objective of preserving control. In the first post-war phase, in the absence of a plan to integrate Kosovo Serbs, enclavisation and the restricted freedom of movement caused by high levels of insecurity made containment possible – almost by default – as an interim secessionist strategy that allowed Albanian rule over most of Kosovo to take hold.

The control this gave Kosovo Serbs and Belgrade over north Kosovo and the risk of partition this created would ultimately hurt Kosovo Albanian interests, as later sections will discuss. However, it is at least an open question whether the lack of integration of the north in the early post-war years was part of a strategy to contain the remaining Kosovo Serb community or is better explained by a lack of effort, resources and will on the part of the nascent Kosovo Albanian institutions or UNMIK. One Kosovar civil society and peacebuilding expert I interviewed expressed the view that the government in Priština "hasn't done enough to integrate the north", and while there was financial support, there was "no dialogue": "At the end of the day it was a statebuilding process, a nation building process, institution building process, and there should have been a closer dialogue process that involves people in that process … Integration requires a positive approach from both sides."[81] The overriding objective of the international community to preserve stability is likely a key factor as well, even if the division believed

[79] Ibid.
[80] 'the situation in 2001 increasingly consolidated the reasoned perception amongst IDPs and refugees that … the overall situation did not warrant the belief that, upon return, their families would enjoy any positive long-term perspective or future in Kosovo.' Ibid., 45. This was increasingly an economic issue as much as a security concern.
[81] Interview, Astrit Istrefi, Priština, December 2017. Astrit Istrefi is a civil society expert in the field of peacebuilding and executive director of The Balkan Forum.

necessary to stop the violence was in the long-term at odds with the objective of preserving a multiethnic Kosovo. Nonetheless, entrenched territorial divisions between Serb and Albanian communities has been one of the defining features of post-war Kosovo.

Preševo Valley

"The fate of Preshevo Valley, Kosova Lindore (Eastern Kosova) in Albanian, was essentially unfinished business from the Kosova war."[82]

This section briefly considers the conflict in Preševo Valley in southern Serbia in 2000-2001 and how it relates to the Serbia-Kosovo post-war environment.[83] While not directly part of the main wartime cleavage, this conflict was part of the wider regional context that was affected by spillover from the Kosovo war. After the war, Preševo Valley "became a contested border, part of the longstanding wider problem of the instability of Serbia's southern borders",[84] and so became crucial for both the base state and the secessionists in their efforts to establish the extent of their effective control and which populations would reside within that control.

'Preševo Valley' is shorthand for three municipalities – Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedja – in a strategically important area of southern Serbia with a large ethnic Albanian population (two of the three districts are majority Albanian) which were previously part of Kosovo and attached to Serbia in 1946.[85] As NATO deployed to Kosovo in June 1999, a demilitarised buffer zone (the Ground Safety Zone, or GSZ) was established along the Kosovo border extending five kilometres into Serbia so as to avoid accidental clashes between NATO and the Yugoslav armed forces. Only lightly armed police were

[82] Pettifer and Vickers 2009, 242.
[83] In a closely related development, beyond the scope of this chapter, the conflict in Preševo would 'evolve seamlessly' into the armed conflict in Macedonia in 2001. Pettifer 2013, 234; The military operation against the Albanian insurgency was over by March, and the Ohrid Agreement was reached in August with intense international involvement. The linkages between the conflict in Macedonia the Serbia-Kosovo conflict are important but cannot be addressed here. See International Crisis Group 2001e; Krcmaric 2014; Bara 2018.
[84] Pettifer 2013, 231.
[85] See also International Crisis Group 2001d; International Crisis Group 2003; International Crisis Group 2004c; International Crisis Group 2006b; International Crisis Group 2007c; Pettifer and Vickers 2009, chap. 17; Bacevic et al. 2011.

permitted in the GSZ and KFOR had not adequately secured the border which allowed the flow of arms and personnel. This left a security vacuum that was used by an ethnic Albanian armed group – the "Liberation Army of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja" (UCPMB in Albanian), a group around 1,000 in strength and believed to have connections to the now officially disbanded KLA – to attack Serbian police "with virtual impunity",[86] with multiple violent border incidences occurring through 2000 and 2001.[87]

In response to the escalating insurgency, and with Milošević no longer in power, NATO backed Belgrade and supported their plan to integrate Albanians in southern Serbia. Between March and May 2001, Serbia's Deputy Prime Minister, Nebojsa Čović, negotiated with NATO, and reached an agreement on the so-called 'Čović plan' for southern Serbia. There would be no border changes and no further autonomy granted to the three municipalities, but a package of reform programmes would be implemented to end discrimination and integrate the population, covering education, policing, and human rights,[88] and there was a general offer of amnesty to demobilised UCPBM fighters, whose commander surrender to KFOR.[89] NATO then negotiated with the Yugoslav armed forces to enable a phased reoccupation of the GSZ, bringing Preševo Valley back under Belgrade's control by 31 May 2001.[90] This did not mark the complete end of violence or unrest,[91] and there were still security issues during the second post-war phase,[92] but the settlement reached in Preševo is generally regarded as a (fragile) success and a 'rare conflict resolution success story' in the former Yugoslavia.[93]

Why do these developments in southern Serbia matter? The Preševo Valley conflict and its resolution are important for understanding post-war developments in the Serbia-Kosovo conflict and wider regional

[86] International Crisis Group 2001d, ii.
[87] Boyle 2014, 215.
[88] International Crisis Group 2001d; International Crisis Group 2003.
[89] BBC News 2001a; BBC News 2001b.
[90] International Crisis Group 2001d, ii.
[91] There were several incidents in summer 2003, for example. International Crisis Group 2003, 4–5.
[92] "the insecurity in areas near the administrative boundary line was underscored by two serious shooting incidents in the … Preševo Valley area … in early August [2007]," UN Document S/2007/ 582 (28 September 2007), para. 10
[93] International Crisis Group 2007c; Appraisals of the situation in southern Serbia can be lukewarm at best: "Presevo Valley is often considered a Western success. Perhaps it is." Petersen 2011, 221.

dynamics.[94] Events in Preševo Valley were linked to struggles for control over Kosovo and political discussions of Kosovo's future status, and both Priština and Belgrade could gain or lose de facto control of populations and territory as a result of these developments, feeding into their objectives and associated strategies. The stakes were high for Belgrade: having been forced out of Kosovo and facing the prospect of the de facto separation being recognised, the threat of adjustments to the Kosovo-Serbia boundary in the south now had "connotations of changing international boundaries" and further territorial losses.[95] Albanians in Preševo Valley feared they would be overlooked in discussions on Kosovo's final status and wanted to link their fate to that of any final settlement, which made Preševo Valley "a bargaining chip aimed at counterbalancing Serbian efforts at partitioning Kosovo"[96] and potentially linked the future of the three municipalities in southern Serbia to the Serb-majority municipalities in north Kosovo.

By 2006, Preševo Valley was talked about in terms of being "a still incomplete Balkan success story" and was generating nervous commentary, linked to the status talks and options for partitioning Kosovo.[97] As I discuss in Chapter 6, these issues returned to prominence in 2018 as proposals for 'border adjustments' or a land swap were revived.

Base state objectives and strategies

> *"despite Serbian forces bring ejected from Kosovo in 1999 and Slobodan Milošević being ejected from the Serbian presidency in 2000, Serbia's elites (and much of its public) have not abandoned their territorial aspirations…. Vojislav Koštunica, and later Boris Tadić, showed during their terms in*

[94] According to Judah, there is an argument that "the Kosovo Albanians wanted to set the table for a future territorial deal with the Serbs by which they would gain [Presevo] valley and lose the Serbs and their districts, which [after World War Two] had been annexed to northern Kosovo at the same time as the three southern districts were excluded." Judah 2001, 11.
[95] International Crisis Group 2004c, 23.
[96] Ibid.; The possible role of Preševo Valley in reaching a settlement via a 'border adjustment' was being discussed as early as 2001: "a peacefully agreed adjustment of Kosovo's border (possibly involving both northern Kosovo and the Presevo valley) should not be ruled out as part of such a [final political] settlement [on Kosovo's future status]." International Crisis Group 2001a, xvi.
[97] International Crisis Group 2006b.

office that Serbia has continued to pursue Milošević's policy by other means and that it has for the most part succeeded in this (Bosnia and Kosovo are still ethnically divided)."[98]

"…the issue for partition was all the time in the air, in Belgrade all the time… It was like a parallel narrative: 'no it wasn't lost, we were the victors, 1244, it's part of Serbia, we are all looking for substantial autonomy for Kosovo' … But at the same time, covertly, the real policy agenda was let's see if we can agree on partition."[99]

Retain links

The prevailing constrained objective for Belgrade in the first post-war phase was to retain links to Kosovo. Serbia endured a bruising loss militarily but did not go through the turmoil experienced by Georgia in the 1990s and remained a relatively strong state. Despite rapid and dramatic changes – from the overthrow of Milošević in October 2000 to the ascendancy of the reforming, internationally-favoured Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic and his assassination in March 2003 – Belgrade was consistently committed to reversing, at least partially, its wartime territorial losses. Belgrade never relinquished its claim to sovereignty over Kosovo – and had well-established international legal norms of territorial integrity on its side – and Kosovo Serbs still looked to Belgrade as their legitimate government. However, just as the secessionist side were constrained by the legal authority and coercive power of UNMIK and KFOR, Belgrade could do nothing in the short term to reincorporate Kosovo, and the international community were determined that there would be no return to the pre-war status quo. This meant that reclaiming ground, despite Belgrade's 'territorial aspirations', was not a viable objective, but retaining a foothold was necessary if future attempts to retake Kosovo in whole or in part were to be possible.

The priorities, therefore, were to not lose more de facto control and to deny the secessionist side a complete victory (i.e. statehood and recognition). This meant keeping control of Serb-majority areas,

[98] Biserko 2012, 18-19. Koštunica was Serbian President from 2000-2003, Tadić was President from 2004-2012.
[99] Interview, Nenad Djurdjevic, October 2017, Belgrade. Nenad Djurdjevic is Coordinator of the Forum for Ethnic Relations (Belgrade) and a former Director of the Coordination Body of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the Municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja.

north Kosovo in particular: Belgrade would never "allow the north of Kosovo to return to unrestricted rule by an ethnic Albanian government" and would, at minimum, "insist on autonomous status for the north", including north Mitrovica,[100] with a demand for cantonisation and political autonomy for Serb-majority areas a core part of Belgrade's objectives. This 'territorial solution' also required denying both UNMIK and KFOR effective control in the north.[101] To make partition possible, Belgrade needed to "keep UNMIK and KFOR out of northern Mitrovica, lest the international community establish effective administrative organs and create a stable security environment".[102] Belgrade's focus on north Kosovo and Mitrovica reflected post-war geographic rather than demographic realities: the northern municipalities are on the border with Serbia proper but two thirds of the Kosovo Serb population lived in rural areas south of the Ibar, and were never displaced during the conflict (most Kosovo Serbs had been displaced from urban centres in south and central Kosovo).[103] This focus on retaining links into north Kosovo was crucial as it kept alive the possibility of partitioning Kosovo along the Ibar.

Partition could not be Belgrade's official negotiating position as that would imply recognition of an independent, albeit territorially reduced, Kosovo, so the prospect of partition in Belgrade's objectives needs some further consideration. For multiple experts, preparing for partition was a core part of Belgrade's plans from the start,[104] but there is an important difference between laying the groundwork for partition and actually trying to bring it about – in my framework, the former is consistent with a 'retaining links' objective, and the latter with 'reclaiming control'. This is why the 'facts on the ground' matter (who has de facto control over north Kosovo and who lives there), and often precede politics (such as negotiations over a land swap, or whether de facto control will be made de jure or vice versa). Another

[100] Sell 2002, 16.
[101] The term 'territorial solution' is from an International Crisis Group report that argues Belgrade's efforts since 1999 were directed towards "creating a division on the ground" and structures outside of UNMIK's jurisdiction. International Crisis Group 2004a, 4.
[102] International Crisis Group 2002c, 7.
[103] These estimates are from research by the European Stability Initiative in 2004. European Stability Initiative 2004b.
[104] "After the NATO intervention, Belgrade systematically widened the gap between the Serbian and Albanian communities in Kosovo. The strategy of the Belgrade regime [under both Milošević and Koštunica] proceeded along two tracks: negating and undermining the international mission and preparing to partition Kosovo." Biserko 2012, 25.

view is that Belgrade wants to partition Kosovo not because of any intrinsic value of the territory or concern for the Kosovo Serb population, but because it would set a precedent that would make it easier for Republika Srpska in Bosnia-Hercegovina to join Serbia, which is Belgrade's priority. Another view also sees north Kosovo as having only instrumental value for Belgrade, but for the purpose of undermining and destabilising Kosovo. These aren't exclusive objectives, but retaining links to Kosovo is necessary for all of them and as international constraints have, at least so far, made partition impossible in practice, it is a more plausible way of thinking about Belgrade's post-war objectives.

The post-war status quo was tolerable for Belgrade in the short-term as long as international support for Kosovan statehood remained lukewarm and the international legal sovereignty of Yugoslavia was upheld, and neither UNMIK nor the Provisional Institutions were able to establish de facto control over Serb-controlled areas. This would allow Belgrade to maintain an exclusive controlling presence in some parts of Kosovo and prevent further reductions in the Kosovo Serb population.[105] The latter aim was partly about obligations towards threatened citizens and coethnics,[106] and partly about facilitating the right to return of displaced Kosovo Serbs, but also about the strategic importance of keeping parts of Kosovan territory populated by Serbs in order to sustain Belgrade's sovereignty claim and weaken Albanian claims for Kosovan statehood if Kosovo became monoethnic.

North Kosovo, Enclaves and Parallel Institutions

From 2000 to spring 2004, Belgrade used a profile of demographic and territorial control strategies broadly consistent with a constrained objective of retaining links. To translate this objective into strategies, Belgrade focused on the enclaves south of the River Ibar and the northern border region, especially Mitrovica.[107] The Serbian government created, sustained and leveraged a system of parallel

[105] Demographic decline was seen as an existential threat to Serb nationalism. A fundamental aspect of Serb strategy towards Kosovo, starting decades prior to the war, has been to keep Serbs living there. International Crisis Group 1999b, 10; The ICG report cites Vickers 1998.
[106] As the BBC reported in 2001, Kosovo Serbs were "living in fear" of a campaign to drive them out. Anderson 2001.
[107] Mitrovica became the last remaining urban centre for Kosovo Serbs and is the only area in Kosovo where the Serb population grew after 1999, owing to the arrival of displaced persons from other areas in Kosovo. Kostovicova 2008, 638.

institutions throughout Serb-populated areas of Kosovo,[108] made possible by pre-war Serb political structures that never really went away, a mostly loyal and supportive population, and UNMIK's unwillingness to risk undermining peace and stability by challenging their operations. Such was the level of de facto power and influence wielded over Serb-majority areas, that a report in 2002 by the Office of the Commissioner For Human Rights at the Council of Europe argued that, even while UNMIK had ultimately legal responsibility, Belgrade could still be held responsible for the human rights situation in parts of Kosovo.[109]

Belgrade's Kosovo policy was run through the Coordination Centre for Kosovo and Metohija (CCK), led by Nebojsa Čović, the Serbian Deputy Prime Minister who was also responsible for Belgrade's policy in southern Serbia until he was sacked in August 2005. The CCK had no "formal association with any of the political institutions established by UNMIK", but was the means by which Belgrade channelled funding to Kosovo and was "an essential part of the informal power structures and patronage system that developed in the Serb municipalities in Kosovo."[110] The most important local Kosovo Serb party in this phase was the Democratic Party of Serbia (Demokratska stranka Srbije, DSS) which 'dominated' north Kosovo until mid-2008. According to Crisis Group, their "rule was often based on fear" – "They controlled many aspects of day-to-day life, such as construction, the buyouts of Albanian houses and property in the North, employment, local businesses and IDP aid allocation."[111]

In order to make partition a possibility, "Belgrade … implemented policies designed to integrate the north into Serbia and sever all connections with the Albanian majority areas."[112] This meant Serbian ministries exercising authority over north Mitrovica and the three northern Serb-majority municipalities and developing infrastructure such as telephones lines and public utilities that integrated these areas into

[108] These Serb-majority areas partly reflected pre-existing settlement patterns, but were also shaped by the displacement that occurred during the war termination phase.
[109] Gil-Robles 2002, paras 32–33.
[110] Zaum 2012, 240.
[111] International Crisis Group 2011b, 3–4.
[112] International Crisis Group 2005a, 7–8.

Serb rather than Kosovo structures and institutions.[113] From the very beginning of the post-war phase, Belgrade "tried to encourage the Kosovo Serb elite to stay by offering double salaries" to those employed in state institutions such as the health service and schools.[114]

Enclavisation – what Dahlman and Williams describe as "an attempt to create localised majority territories that invert Kosovar Albanian rule"[115] – was, at first, a defensive strategy in response to the actual and perceived insecurity caused by Albanian attacks,[116] with north Kosovo becoming a "well-defended fortress" that Serbs needed to hold on to as long as they could not live safely elsewhere in Kosovo.[117] Serbs in central Kosovo had "very limited" communication outside their communities: "at that time people were afraid to move, to travel, they needed [to] travel by bus accompanied by UN, by KFOR", while "the north was completely sealed off and they were completely turned to Serbia with all the system that was in Serbia was in place there."[118]

Enclaves were a way to create a secure environment that would protect the remaining Serbs and enable returns (many displaced Kosovo Serbs relocated to enclaves rather than returning to their homes), thereby keeping a Serb population in Kosovo. As discussed in the previous section, the international community were committed to returns, as were the Provisional Institutions officially, but obstructive behaviour and a hostile environment made this very difficult. Belgrade participated in the formal process established to "discuss the practical realities of Serb return",[119] but there is also evidence that some Kosovo Serbs were choosing to return in spite of the uncertain security situation in Kosovo because this was preferable to "remain[ing] as IDPs in difficult conditions in Serbia."[120] Displaced Kosovo Serbs were also useful politically for Milošević in the earliest stages of the first post-war phase: "They were victims of

[113] Ibid.
[114] International Crisis Group 2009, 3.
[115] Dahlman and Williams 2010, 407–408.
[116] Kostovicova 2008, 638.
[117] International Crisis Group 2000a, 5.
[118] Interview, Nenad Djurdjevic, Belgrade, October 2017
[119] OSCE Mission in Kosovo/UNHCR 2001b, 33.
[120] OSCE Mission in Kosovo/UNHCR 2000, 38.

the intervention and conflict, but those victims from the Serbian community were used by Milošević to show that there are evil people who came there and expelled us from Kosovo."[121]

Obstructing returns was a two-way process that continued the 'demographic sorting' begun during the war and its termination phase. Mirroring the obstacles to Serb returns to Albanian-majority areas discussed in the previous section, displaced Kosovo Albanians were unable to return to their homes in majority-Serb municipalities such as Štrpce/Shtërpcë.[122] In Mitrovica, the process of reciprocal demographic sorting continued into late 2000: renewed violence caused more of the few remaining Albanian families in the north of the city to leave,[123] and even with security improvements by the end of that year, the UN reported "little or no progress … in returns of displaced Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians to their homes on respective sides of the Ibar River".[124] In 2002 an OSCE/UNHCR report concluded that Kosovo Albanian minority returns, especially to the north, had been "given insufficient attention, largely due to a prohibitive political and security environment in Serb-majority areas".[125]

Enclavisation, combined with parallel structures – discussed below – made it possible for Belgrade to retain de facto control over the north by excluding UNMIK and the Provisional Institutions. This sustained Belgrade's authority over the Kosovo Serb population, and provided leverage over any future settlement of Kosovo's status.[126] The enclaves became increasingly politically useful, strengthening demands to decentralise governance to Serb-majority areas through 'cantonisation', or the 'territorialisation of Serb rights',[127] and further undermined the authority of UNMIK and the Provisional Institutions.[128] KFOR, whose presence was initially required to guarantee the enclaves' survival,[129] were

[121] Interview, Nenad Djurdjevic, Belgrade, 20 October 2017
[122] OSCE Mission in Kosovo/UNHCR 2002, 49. More details at page 63.
[123] UN Document S/2000/878 (18 September 2000), para 34
[124] UN Document S/2000/1196 (15 December 2000), para 20
[125] OSCE Mission in Kosovo/UNHCR 2002, 51.
[126] As a Crisis Group report put it in 2005, "Serbia has retained north Mitrovica as a brake on UNMIK and Albanian control of Kosovo and a card to play on final status." International Crisis Group 2005a, 2.
[127] Kostovicova 2008, 639.
[128] As Dahlman and Williams put it, enclavisation was "the means by which Serbia extends its claims to Serbs in Kosovo". Dahlman and Williams 2010, 415.
[129] Especially in central and southern Kosovo: "There is … little doubt that without KFOR protection, minority enclaves in Orahovac, Gracanica, and Prizren would no longer exist." Human Rights Watch 2001, 466.

trying to dismantle the enclaves and the ethnic segregation they were sustaining by the end of 2001 in the hope of preserving a multiethnic society,[130] but the territorial separation of the Albanian and Serb communities and divided de facto control remained firmly entrenched. While this was most pronounced in the hardening division along the River Ibar, Serb enclaves further south were also managing to exclude Albanian authorities from local political structures.[131] What Boyle calls the "Serb rejectionism" of UNMIK and Albanian authority was made possible by "parallel Serb nationalist structures", the most important of which were the courts and judiciary, and the parallel security functions provided by an informal Serbian militia in Mitrovica.[132]

The OSCE defined parallel structures as "bodies that have been or still are operational in Kosovo after 10 June 1999 and that are not mandated for under UN Security Council Resolution 1244. In the majority of cases, these institutions operate under the de facto authority of the Serbian government and assume jurisdiction over Kosovo from Serbia proper, or operate in the territory of Kosovo."[133] In 2003, officers from the Serbian Interior Ministry were "well organised and continue to maintain offices" in several locations in Kosovo, but kept a 'low profile', mostly doing administrative tasks.[134] Parallel courts were crucial for the objective of retaining links, connecting the territorial and demographic aspects of the base state's control strategies and gave a tangible expression to Belgrade's ongoing claim to have de facto jurisdiction over (some of) the population of (some of) Kosovo.[135] In spite of the challenge the parallel courts posed to their authority, UNMIK had not, by spring 2002 at least, "taken any action to end their activities."[136] By October 2003, there were Serbian courts "covering every municipality and district of

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[130] "The enclave of upper Rahovec/Orahovac town [southwest of Pristina], a quarter inhabited by Serbs, Roma and Egyptian populations, has three entrances, all of which were previously guarded by KFOR. The three checkpoints were first abandoned, and then removed, in October 2001. KFOR increased patrols in their place. In this particular location, the objective of minimising psychological barriers caused by the visible separation of the enclave was seen as particularly important." OSCE Mission in Kosovo/UNHCR 2002, 14.
[131] Ibid., 49 More details p63.
[132] Boyle 2014, 182.
[133] OSCE Mission in Kosovo 2003, 5.
[134] Ibid., 14.
[135] Parallel institutions were also "characterised by corruption and patronage", predominantly benefitting the northern municipalities "where many of the CCK's more influential members have originated from" Zaum 2012, 240.
[136] OSCE Mission in Kosovo/UNHCR 2002, 17.

Kosovo" which, although mostly located in Serbia proper, "still claim[ed] jurisdictional competence over the territory of Kosovo."[137] That said, only the courts in the northern municipalities could deal with criminal issues – the rest had "no actual power of enforcement."[138]

Parallel courts were most active up until January 2003 when UNMIK courts were officially established in the north,[139] but in the same year Crisis Group reported an expansion of parallel structures south of the Ibar with the CCK increasing its activities when UNMIK did nothing in response to the takeover of health centres in Serb enclaves.[140] By mid-2003 it had not only opened new offices in the Priština and Gjilan/Gnjilane regions, but the office in Gračanica had "become a hub of embryonic parallel government in the Pristina region."[141]

There were instrumental and coercive aspects to Belgrade's strategies, especially in the north, but parallel institutions provided important services and public goods to a population that would otherwise not have access to justice, education, or healthcare due to security concerns, and being able to provide these was closely linked to the possibility of Serb returns and enabling the continued presence of the Serb population in Kosovo. The effect, though, was to make Kosovo Serbs dependent on Belgrade and "vulnerable to political pressure from Belgrade", guaranteeing their political loyalty.[142] This locked in Belgrade's territorial control, excluding UNMIK and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government: the CCK "deliberately conditioned use of these services by Kosovo Serbs on rejection of the jurisdiction of UNMIK and the PISG."[143] Another component of this strategy in north Kosovo was to make it as

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[137] OSCE Mission in Kosovo 2003, 17.
[138] OSCE Mission in Kosovo/UNHCR 2002, 17.
[139] OSCE Mission in Kosovo 2007, 23.
[140] International Crisis Group 2004a, 7.
[141] "The CCK 'poached' Serb UNMIK employees and elected municipal assembly members, offering a carrot of higher salaries and a stick of rescinding Serbian pension rights if they opted for Kosovo institutions." International Crisis Group, 7. Gračanica is a Serb enclave near Priština.
[142] For example: "the medical centre in Mitrovica is a key employer of Kosovo Serbs. Jobs at this hospital have provided material security for the employees, but also ensured political loyalty to Belgrade" Kostovicova 2008, 642.
[143] Pond suggests that this conditionality "could have been seen as preparation for the kind of decentralization that Belgrade was asking for as part of its vision of final status." As an example of how this lever was used: 'This conditionality was a powerful tool in enforcing the boycott of the 2004 Kosovo elections demanded by Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica' Pond 2006, 119.

difficult as possible for UNMIK and the PISG to exercise control. This was seen on the ground through non-cooperation[144] and more confrontational behaviour such as protesting against UNMIK and damaging UNMIK vehicles,[145] which at times required UNMIK police activities to be suspended and thereby created "a growing impression of their lack of authority".[146]

The existence of parallel security structures in north Mitrovica was perhaps the most brazen challenge to UNMIK and KFOR's authority. The so-called 'Bridgewatchers' – "young men … who patrol the northern end of the bridge [across the River Ibar] for the Serbs and who also exercise a kind of quasi-police power over the local Serb population"[147] – were the sharp end of Belgrade's de facto control over north Kosovo, providing cover for the Serbian security services and the Interior Ministry to operate in Kosovo.[148] From their vantage point in the notorious Dolce Vita café looking south towards the bridge, one of their functions was to enforce the de facto boundary along the Ibar and prevent Kosovo Albanians from entering the north of the city,[149] and they were ready "to use violence to preserve the separation of the city."[150] During the first post-war phase, this informal group developed into an "effective self-defence force, closely linked to political parties both in Northern Kosovo and in Serbia proper" with an estimated 'hard-core' of about 200 militants, most likely funded (at least indirectly) by Belgrade.[151] That said, the group did act independently of and sometimes "against the expressed will of its backers in Serbia" such as during the Kosovo assembly elections in November 2001 when "the Bridge

[144] Boyle 2014, 182.
[145] "The series of incidents [demands to release Kosovo Serbs detained by UNMIK, damage to police vehicles] seemed to be an orchestrated effort to drive the UNMIK presence from northern Mitrovica." UN Document S/2001/565 (7 June 2001), para 8.
[146] OSCE Mission in Kosovo/UNHCR 2001a, 5.
[147] International Crisis Group 2000a, 4.
[148] "Members of the international community and Kosovo Albanian officials contend that many of the 'bridge watchers' … are actually plainclothes employees of the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs [MUP] or of other Serbian agencies." Ibid.; See also Pond 2006, 119.
[149] OSCE Mission in Kosovo 2003, 12; See also Petersen 2011, 167.
[150] O'Neill 2002, 68.
[151] Matveeva and Paes 2003, 29–30.

Watchers urged local Serbs not to participate, in direct opposition to Covic's statements encouraging Kosovo Serbs to vote."[152]

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The entrenchment of Serb control over north Kosovo and the threat of partition it posed was one of many factors contributing to increasing tension between Serb and Albanian communities during the first phase, adding to the huge frustration felt by a young and often jobless population that would reach a crisis point in March 2004.

March 2004 Riots

In early March, an already tense situation deteriorated after the shooting of a Kosovo Serb teenager in Caglavica/Çagllavicë, a Serb village to the south of Priština, and Serbs responded by blockading major highways in protest, including the key route connecting Kosovo to Macedonia. Then, on 16 March, Kosovo Albanian television reported that three young Albanian boys had drowned in the River Ibar after having been chased by Serbian youths with a dog.[153] These events – when added to multiple social and economic problems besetting all communities and rising frustration among Kosovo Albanians at the lack of progress towards independence – sparked 33 major riots with an estimated 51,000 participants over two days as UNMIK and KFOR struggled to contain the violence.[154] There were nineteen fatalities (eleven Albanian and eight Serbs), hundreds were injured and twenty nine Serbian churches and monasteries were burned or otherwise damaged. More than four thousand people were displaced, the vast majority of whom were Serbs.[155] Entire villages were evacuated: "Properties were demolished, public facilities such as schools and health clinics were destroyed, communities were surrounded and threatened

[152] Ibid., 32.
[153] The accuracy of the reporting, and the role of the media at the time in inflaming ethnic tension more generally, were severely criticised in the aftermath of the riots. OSCE 2004.
[154] For detailed assessments of the causes and consequences of the riots, see Bouckaert 2004; International Crisis Group 2004a.
[155] Judah 2008, 110."The majority of those who fled were in the Pristina and southern Mitrovica regions (42% and 40%, respectively)." UN Document S/2004/348 (30 April 2004) para 22.

and residents were forced to leave their homes"; after leaving, their homes were often burned down.[156] The riots made clear the extent to which UNMIK and KFOR, and the international community in general, were failing in Kosovo.[157]

The UN called the attacks perpetrated by 'Kosovo Albanian extremists' "an organized, widespread, and targeted campaign" against minority communities,[158] while Human Rights Watch described the "ferocious efficiency" of Albanian rioters trying to "rid their areas of all remaining vestiges of a Serb presence."[159] The extent to which the violence was spontaneous or orchestrated is still debated,[160] but Crisis Group assessed the riots to be "more spontaneous than organised, with extremist and criminal gangs taking advantage",[161] and others have noted the organising role of veterans' associations.[162]

The riots were significant both as the violent culmination of rising tensions that had been accumulating throughout the first post-war phase and a critical juncture marking a transition to the second. While the riots had multiple proximate and longer-term causes, they fit the general trajectory of the post-war struggle for control of people and territory and of how the two sides were trying to shape the post-war order. The riots exposed the extent to which the post-war cleavage was being sustained and driving behaviour, with the secessionist side trying to cement their favourable demographic position and remove

[156] UN Document S/2004/348 (30 April 2004), para 2
[157] For an excoriating critique written by a KFOR officer who served in Kosovo, see Daltveit 2007.
[158] UN Document S/2004/348 (30 April 2004), para 2
[159] Bouckaert 2004, 1.
[160] A Kosovar expert I interviewed summarised several of the factors at play: "my opinion, even then, is that it was spontaneous, it was not a matter of if but when something like that would happen. We were not talking about reconciliation then. Orchestration could have happened but only after the escalation took place. After the first incidents took place, it was easy to exploit that frustration and direct it in a way that some would benefit more and others less. But the frustration was there, easy to exploit." Interview, Astrit Istrefi, Pristina, December 2017
[161] International Crisis Group 2004a, i.
[162] According to Boyle, the riots were "partially organized by KLA veterans' associations and hard-line Albanian nationalist groups." Boyle 2014, 183; See also Bouckaert 2004, 17.

what was left of the base state's presence.[163] As the Eide report concluded,[164] the riots were evidence that Kosovo Albanian extremists were trying to reduce the Serb population in Kosovo.[165]

According to UN reporting at the time, the attacks on Kosovo Serbs were targeted at "established communities that had remained in Kosovo in 1999, as well as a small number of sites of recent returns."[166] Moreover, targeting minority areas sent "a message that minorities and returnees were not welcome in Kosovo. In less than 48 hours, 4,100 minority community members were newly displaced, more than the total of 3,664 that had returned throughout 2003."[167] Unsurprisingly, the riots had a 'profound' negative impact on the returns process.[168] For Petersen, the riots were the culmination of a successful strategy intended to "prevent Serbian returns and a significant Serbian presence" in Kosovo.[169] The consequences of the riots were uneven, though, in ways that would have implications for the distribution of effective control in the second post-war phase. A Crisis Group report written eighteen months after the riots argued that the Kosovar Albanians emerged from the riots with their "local dominance re-asserted" south of the Ibar, but "Mitrovica's Albanians … were losers. They sustained hundreds of casualties and lost on the ground, while the Serbs gained in militancy and numbers, as more IDPs flowed in from the south."[170] The further entrenchment of Serb control over north Kosovo would remain a major obstacle to Priština's objectives in the second post-war phase while assisting Belgrade's efforts to retain links into Kosovan territory.

The riots were a key turning point in post-war Kosovo, especially for the international community who were forced to refocus their attention back on their neglected project. "The UN years [in Kosovo] can be

[163] Another view on the causes of the violence from a Serb expert and former government official is that the violence was "not only … ethnically motivated, but also by control of land." Interview, Nenad Djurdjevic, Belgrade, October 2017.
[164] Kai Eide is a Norwegian diplomat who served as Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General in Kosovo in 2005 and was tasked with writing a report on the riots.
[165] Eide 2004, para. 5.
[166] UN Document S/2004/348 (30 April 2004) para 2
[167] UN Document S/2004/348 (30 April 2004) para 22
[168] UN Document S/2004/613 (30 July 2004) para. 34
[169] Petersen 2011, 185.
[170] International Crisis Group 2005a, 21.

divided neatly in two", argues Judah: "before March 17, 2004, and after."[171] Events after March 2004 were about "responding to the wake-up call" of the riots,[172] and as the next half of the case study discusses, international developments would shape the trajectory of the post-war environment to an even greater extent than before. Nonetheless, I will argue that even as the international context changed substantially and overtook developments on the ground as Kosovo moved closer to independence, the use of demographic and territorial control strategies, especially by Belgrade and Kosovo Serbs in north Kosovo, remained crucial in shaping the post-war environment as the principal actors adapted their constrained objectives and control strategies to the changing context.

5.3 Second Post-War Phase: Summer 2004 – Spring 2008

The March 2004 riots prompted more serious efforts by the international community to settle Kosovo's future status, with the Eide report on the riots and then the Ahtisaari plan on Kosovo's future status forming the basis of international policy during the second phase.[173] The UN Security Council approved the start of status talks in October 2005, and the 'Troika' of the US, the EU and Russia convened talks in Vienna in February 2006. The first direct talks between Serb and Kosovar leaders since 1999 began the following July. These internationally-mediated efforts did nothing to shift Belgrade or Priština from their negotiating positions and mutually exclusive claims over Kosovo, leaving the talks deadlocked.[174] Nonetheless, major western powers were becoming more supportive of the idea of supervised independence.[175]

After Ahtisaari published his recommendations in February 2007, there was a consensus that the international community would have to take responsibility for guiding Kosovo's future status "because both the Serbian government and the elected Kosovar Albanian institutions were too weak … to impose

[171] Judah 2008, 108.
[172] Perritt 2010, chap. 7.
[173] Martti Ahtisaari, a Finnish politician, was appointed as UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the future status process in November 2005. His recommendations were published in March 2007. See 'Report of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Kosovo's future status' (UN Document S/2007/168)
[174] Weller 2009, chap. 12; Ker-Lindsay 2012a, chap. 2.
[175] Russia and China, and some EU member states, remained opposed.

their wills on one another."[176] The guiding principles of the international community continued to shape and constrain Belgrade's and Priština's options: no return to the pre-war status quo (i.e. no return to Serb rule), no union of Kosovo with Albania, no partition and no concessions to other territorial claims that would involve changing Kosovo's borders. The determination to make Kosovo a multiethnic liberal democracy was driven by what has been called the "anti-Lausanne consensus" in international policy; that is, a rejection of the idea that stability can be achieved through the exchange of populations.[177]

Even as the riots had exposed the status quo as unsustainable, the base state and secessionist sides were left with little room for manoeuvre. Renewed interest from the international community in reaching a settlement meant that independence started to look more likely but also, as the Eide report concluded, that there needed to be a framework guaranteeing the continued presence of the Serb minority in Kosovo, which suited Belgrade's objectives in north Kosovo and their demands for political autonomy for Kosovo Serbs. The international community, in the blunt words of a Crisis Group report, "exacted the principle of territorial decentralisation for ethnic minorities as penance for the riots",[178] but Eide also acknowledged Priština's fears that decentralisation in the north would lead to partition.[179]

The struggle for control of people and territory in the second post-war phase revolved around these competing demands. Priština's concern was with the territorial integrity of a future Kosovan state, while UNMIK's was with preserving the multiethnic character of Kosovo's society. Priština had to bring the north under its control to meet its objectives, while Belgrade had to hold on to it to meet Serb aims, and UNMIK and the international community had to facilitate the creation of Kosovo-wide institutions that served all of Kosovo's communities. North Kosovo, Mitrovica in particular, remained the most intractable problem and was the focus of the political process as well as efforts on the ground to shape de facto control. As a report from the European Stability Initiative posed the challenge in 2004, "The

[176] Perritt 2010, 95.
[177] This refers to the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 that required compulsory population transfers between Turkey and Greece. European Stability Initiative 2004b, 17. The consensus emerged in response to genocide and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia.
[178] International Crisis Group 2005a, 21.
[179] Eide 2004, para. 23.

fundamental question for all those attempting to resolve the Mitrovica conundrum is: what matters more – the people or the territory?"[180] UNMIK and KFOR continued to espouse a commitment to multiethnicity and to the return of the displaced but were nonetheless preparing for a separate north Mitrovica municipality that reflected current demographic realities rather than the pre-war population.[181]

As the second post-war phase developed, the international diplomatic process overtook developments on the ground and movement towards Kosovo's declaration of independence gathered momentum. Notwithstanding the riots of March 2004, Kosovo as a whole was tense but relatively stable with no serious prospect of a return to war – the number of troops deployed in KFOR was down from an initial deployment of 50,000 to 17,500 by the end of 2003.[182] I show in the next section how the opportunity opened up by greater international support for independence meant that Priština and the secessionist side used control strategies less and rather followed a political and diplomatic strategy in pursuit of de jure recognition. While in some ways Priština's objectives in the second phase were similar to a 'consolidate and extend' constrained objective, I have found little evidence that the control strategies associated with this objective in my framework were actually used.

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Developments after the 2004 riots would take Kosovo and Serbia out of a 'post-war' environment, albeit with no resolution to the underlying conflict incompatibility. Events were increasingly being driven by the international talks and by the time Priština declared independence in February 2008, a very different set of political dynamics had taken over, which is where the second post-war phase, and the case study, concludes.

[180] European Stability Initiative 2004a, 9.
[181] International Crisis Group 2005a, 7.
[182] <https://jfcnaples.nato.int/kfor/about-us/history>

Secessionist objectives and strategies

Pursuing Recognition

The status quo was unacceptable for Kosovar Albanians, and Priština's objectives became more revisionist. During the second phase, Kosovo Albanians were also still facing internal intra-Kosovar issues as they dealt with the indictment of serving prime minister Ramush Haradinaj and his decision to step down and deliver himself to the Hague (March 2005) and the murder of his brother the following month, the death of President Rugova (January 2006) and the ongoing factionalism and rivalry that had characterised Kosovo in the immediate aftermath of the war. Nonetheless, when talking about the main post-war cleavage, it is still possible to talk plausibly about a more or less coherent 'secessionist side' – increasingly institutionalised in Kosovo's Provisional Institutions – and their objectives.

The priority now was resolving the status question and securing recognition as an independent state. This was essentially an issue of international politics, so demographic and territorial control strategies took a secondary role relative to a political and diplomatic strategy.[183] Fatal violence in Kosovo dropped substantially during the second phase, partly, argues Judah, because of the physical separation between Albanians and Serbs but also because Kosovo "Albanians understood that violence risked putting their national cause in jeopardy".[184] A political route towards recognition was by no means certain in 2004 in the aftermath of the riots, with UNMIK expressing concern that "radical forces" in Kosovo might regain political prominence and jeopardise the more moderate political actors in the Provisional Institutions who were commitment to a multiethnic, minority rights respecting Kosovo.[185] While in retrospect Kosovo's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in February 2008 seems the inevitable outcome of events since 1999,[186] there was always a strong international presumption against secession and in favour of territorial integrity, combined with the fact that Priština still did not effectively control parts of Kosovan

[183] On the strategies of secessionists pursuing international recognition, see Caspersen 2015b.
[184] Judah 2008, 98.
[185] UN Document S/2004/613 (30 July 2004), para. 11.
[186] According to one authority on the matter, Kosovo's independence was 'virtually inevitable' after Serbia's defeat and the subsequent UN administration. Weller 2009, 178.

territory. On questions of international recognition, however, Great Power support often matters more than effective control of populated territory.[187]

By shifting from the 'preserve control' objective of the first phase further up the spectrum towards the maximalist aim of full and permanent separation through independence, my framework would expect the secessionists to form the constrained objective of consolidating and extending control and use a corresponding profile of control strategies. However, the international presence and the Ahtisaari process took Kosovo in a different direction during the second phase. I have found little evidence that Priština prioritised extending control throughout Kosovo during this phase by, for example, dismantling the parallel institutions in north Kosovo and the Serb enclaves south of the Ibar or establishing integrated national governing structures across all Kosovan territory. De jure recognition was the overriding objective and this would have to be pursued with a different set of political and diplomatic tools, and would be accomplished (at least partially) even in the absence of effective control over the north. This means that my theory has limited relevance for explaining the strategies of the secessionist side in the second phase. Rather, the changing international circumstances meant that Priština was able to pursue the ultimate objective of independence via other means.

That said, unresolved issues of de facto territorial and demographic control related to the post-war cleavage still matter in the second phase. Belgrade and the Kosovo Serbs entrenched their effective control over north Kosovo, continuing to exclude the Provisional Institutions and UNMIK from exercising their de jure authority, and thereby kept alive the possibility of partition that threatened Kosovan statehood. While there was acceptance of the need to decentralise political power to Serb-majority areas, the de facto control still exercised by Belgrade and the Kosovo Serbs was beyond that envisaged by any plans for political autonomy within Kosovo, and Priština was unable or unwilling to fully integrate Serbs in a Kosovan state-building project.[188]

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[187] Coggins 2015a.
[188] Arguably, Kosovo Serbs in the north were not interested in being part of such a project, but Serbs in enclaves south of the Ibar have become more integrated into Kosovan politics and institutions since 2008.

A Failure to Extend Control to North Kosovo

> *"everybody wanted to have institutions established that can assert control over the whole territory of Kosovo, not only part of it, with the risk that if you have a de facto division then you may end up not being able to, one, provide services to the people there, two, have that part integrated into … whatever processes are taking place."*[189]

Rather than the strategies expected by a consolidate and extend objective, what we do observe in this phase on the secessionist side is a political and diplomatic strategy being played out in the status talks in Vienna and being given more prominence than demographic and territorial control strategies. The Provisional Institutions were now focused on 'standards and status' (the successor policy to 'standards before status'). Another change, consistent with the overall aim and with the shift to a political and diplomatic strategy, was the extent to which by 2004 UNMIK had become, as the UN itself reported, "the focus of political efforts in Kosovo since it is seen as a hindrance to the fulfilment of the ambitions of the Kosovo Albanian majority."[190] To attain de jure independence, Priština was expected to get its own house in order to the satisfaction of the international community, especially in terms of governance, democratic institutions and a market economy. These developments are covered well by other scholars and will not be discussed here.[191]

The Provisional Institutions and the international community recognised the need to extend effective control to north Kosovo and integrate both the territory and population into national structures, but the efforts made between 2004 and early 2008 were not particularly successful. There was no permanent presence of official institutions and rival sources of authority from Belgrade could not be excluded. Nor was there much of a hard security presence: a Crisis Group report in 2005 noted that "KFOR has few troops north of the Ibar, a factor not unnoticed locally or in Belgrade."[192] To extend control to the north,

[189] Interview, Astrit Istrefi, Priština, December 2017
[190] UN Document S/2004/613 (30 July 2004), para. 11.
[191] Weller 2009; Ker-Lindsay 2012a.
[192] International Crisis Group 2005a, 21.

Priština and the international community needed to roll back the deeply embedded Serb parallel institutions which continued to be run and financed by Belgrade. As the OSCE recognised, however, they could not be simply dismantled. Even putting aside Serb resistance, the parallel institutions were meeting the demands of Kosovo Serbs for public goods – especially health and education – that they would not otherwise have access to as long as their freedom of movement was limited and they did not trust Albanian institutions. The proposed solution was to integrate existing parallel structures into Kosovan institutions and public services: "The final aim should be the comprehensive inclusion of the existing parallel public services into a unified system".[193] Initiatives to this end did not have much of an impact "due to a lack of political will from, and a comprehensive strategy developed by, the main parties concerned."[194]

Priština still needed to preserve control, that is, not lose any ground, and some of the control strategies from the previous phase continued in this period. For example, there is evidence that some elements within Kosovan political structures were still working through bureaucratic means to prevent Serbs returning. In November 2004, UNMIK reported the need for an action plan to deal "directly with those obstructing returns at all levels".[195] The UN noted visible support from 'some' leaders and the Provisional Institutions for the returns and reconstruction process, but this support was irregular and "a limited number of projects continue to encounter resistance at the municipal level."[196] The Provisional Institutions were doing little to actively facilitate returns or integrate Kosovo Serbs and, according to a UN report in 2005, "have yet to go beyond declarations, pledges and funding to actively demonstrate their willingness and readiness to assume responsibility, and to be accountable, for the security of Kosovo Serb and other communities."[197]

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[193] OSCE Mission in Kosovo 2007, 8.
[194] Ibid., 6.
[195] UN Document S/2004/907 (17 November 2004), para. 13.
[196] UN Document S/2004/907 (17 November 2004), Annex 1 para. 32. For further examples see also UN Document S/2005/88 (14 February 2005), para. 12: "Some municipalities have severely delayed the drafting of return strategies, the appointment of returns officers and other measures of support."
[197] UN Document S/2005/88 (14 February 2005), para. 12.

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There are plausible reasons for thinking there would be similarities between pursuing independence and recognition and an objective to consolidate and extend control: both imply a need for a state- and nation-building project and to establish and maintain the attributes of statehood. However, there is not much evidence to suggest the secessionist side were using control strategies consistent with the consolidate and extend objective between 2004 and early 2008, and what they were doing in terms of control strategies was largely a continuation of the preserve objective of the first phase. After discussing Belgrade's objectives and strategies in the second post-war phase in the next section, I will return the international status negotiations and the process that would eventually lead to Kosovo declaring independence on 17 February 2008.

Base state objectives and strategies

Retain links

At the start of the second post-war phase, the prevailing constrained objective for Belgrade was still to retain links to Kosovo. In the next section I will provide evidence that between summer 2004 and spring 2008, Belgrade used a profile of control strategies broadly consistent with my expectations for this objective, with some exceptions which are also discussed.

While the March 2004 riots had strengthened the case for decentralising political authority to Serb-majority areas, the renewed international efforts to settle the status question and the growing likelihood of Kosovo declaring independence meant that Belgrade was increasingly on the backfoot in the second phase while the same constraints from the first phase continued to rule out Belgrade adopting a more ambitious constrained objective to reclaim ground. Politically, Belgrade needed to match Priština's campaign for independence: diplomatically, Koštunica's administration sought Russian support to block moves towards international recognition; in domestic politics, the Serbian parliament passed resolutions

affirming Serbia's sovereignty claim and adopted a constitution in November 2006 reasserting Kosovo's status as a province of Serbia.[198]

During the fifteen rounds of negotiations in Vienna in 2006, the Serbian government was focused on territorial control, rather than guarantees of minority and political representation, as a way to protect the Kosovo Serbs, "arguing that ethnic Serbs would be safe only in areas under ethnic Serb control."[199] In talks on decentralisation in August 2006, Kosovo Serbs made the case for greater self-governance in areas such as education, health care and security which "Pristina saw … as an attempt to promote ethnic separation", and their fears seemed vindicated when the head of the CCK, Sanda Rašković-Ivić, "suggested that some form of partition might be a win-win option if an agreement was not possible."[200] However, Belgrade and Priština both rejected territorial partition when idea was floated by the Troika in 2006 and the matter was not pursued as it was "deemed unacceptable by both of the parties."[201]

In terms of de facto control of populations and territory, the objective of retaining links in north Kosovo was a necessary part of Belgrade's plan to block Kosovo's path towards recognition and protect Serb interests in Kosovo, including the protection of Serb religious sites. Belgrade needed to at least sustain the level of effective control that had been established over north Kosovo during the first phase and not lose any further ground to Priština or UNMIK. This meant isolating the Serb population from the influence of Kosovan institutions and keeping them integrated into Serbian structures, and formalising the separation as much as possible through decentralisation. Retaining control through the accessible link into Kosovo provided by the northern municipalities, and north Mitrovica in particular, was a continuation of the post-1999 approach of using Serb-controlled areas as leverage to undermine Kosovo's claims to

[198] International Crisis Group 2009, 5. The second post-war phase overlaps almost completely with Vojislav Kostunica's two terms as Prime Minister with his Democratic Party of Serbia (Demokratska stranka Srbije, or DSS) the largest party in a coalition government.
[199] Weller 2009, 204–206.
[200] Ker-Lindsay 2012a, 42–43.
[201] Weller 2009, 223. See also UN Document S/2007/723 para. 10. .

statehood and keep alive the possibility of partition, even if international conditions still made such a scenario unlikely.

As noted by Crisis Group in 2004, this has consistently been Belgrade's policy since the end of the war: "The post-Milosevic Serbian governments have continued to pursue his policy of creating parallel structures and working towards territorial division of the province so that if Kosovo ever gains independence, those de facto divisions could be the basis of a partition."[202] North Mitrovica in particular was "retained [by Serbia] … as a brake on UNMIK and Albanian control of Kosovo and a card to play on final status."[203] The fear that following a declaration of independence there might be a violent backlash from Kosovo Serbs 'extremists' – and a counter-response from the Albanian side – still featured in UN assessments in 2007.[204] As the Ahtisaari talks approached their conclusion in 2007, analysts had concluded that Belgrade knew "its primary objective of maintaining Serbian sovereignty over all of Kosovo" was unattainable, and had adopted a "fallback position [of] delay and ambiguity" while preparing to "retain de facto control of that portion of the territory on which Kosovo Serbs live and on which Serb monuments and religious sites are located."[205]

Proposals from Koštunica and the Serb parliament in spring of 2004 pushed for the 'cantonisation' of Kosovo, creating autonomous Serb-majority municipalities based on territories in which Serbs were the pre-war majority and which could be made defensible and then settled by returnees. These calls for the "territorial organisation of Kosovo" were criticised in a report by the European Stability Initiative. The report, which argued that the proposals ignored Kosovo's demographic reality, is helpful for understanding the geographic and demographic context in which Serb objectives were being formed and control strategies were being used in the second post-war phase. As of 2004, the majority of Kosovo's Serbs – about two-thirds – lived in rural areas scattered across south Kosovo in Albanian-majority areas, with north Mitrovica the only remaining urban population centre for Kosovo Serbs, making plans for

[202] International Crisis Group 2004a, 3.
[203] International Crisis Group 2005a, 2.
[204] UN Document S/2007/134 (9 March 2007) para 9.
[205] Serwer, Bajraktari, and Parajon 2007.

partitioning Kosovo along the Ibar of little help for the majority Kosovo's Serb population.[206] Reflecting on the report, Judah notes that their conclusions show "not just the difficulty – and in many cases the impossibility – of drawing neat boundaries within which to implement territorial autonomy for Serbs, but also debunks a key part of Belgrade's plan, which foresees the influx of large numbers of displaced Serbs to yet to-be-built urban centers."[207] Both Belgrade and Priština have been accused of valuing the territory of north Kosovo more than the people – whatever the merits of this charge,[208] the territory and the population of north Kosovo were the links and levers through which Belgrade pursued its objective to retain links into Kosovo, as the next section shows.

Holding onto the north

Given the continuity in the constrained objective being pursued, there is also continuity in the control strategies used in the second post-war phase, but with a greater emphasis on maintaining control over north Kosovo (in anticipation of a possible partition in the event of independence) and a diminishing emphasis on the enclaves south of the Ibar (where the population was becoming increasingly integrated into Kosovar structures and participating in politics). There was a continued effort to counter attempts by the Provisional Institutions and the international community to extend their authority to north Kosovo. This was seen in non-cooperation with Kosovar and UNMIK institutions and political processes; the sustained active presence of Serbian parallel institutions and security services in Kosovo; and the use of material incentives and sanctions (mostly relating to employment) towards the Serb population to prevent their cooperation with Provisional Institutions and UNMIK.

Non-participation in Kosovo political institutions was a means to isolate north Kosovo from the political influence of Priština and UNMIK while also providing Belgrade with the space to influence events themselves on the ground through their own representatives and local allies (and thereby undermine Priština's credibility as a functioning state). The UN reported that during the second half of 2005, there

[206] European Stability Initiative 2004b.
[207] Judah 2004.
[208] Off-the-record conversations in north Mitrovica in autumn 2017 support to this view.

was "a decline in the participation of Kosovo Serb leaders in the political process", adding that the appointment of Sanda Raskovic-Ivic as the new head of the CCK "was seen as an expression of the intention of the Belgrade authorities to take a more assertive role in political decisions relating to Kosovo and in promoting their implementation through the Centre's coordinators on the ground."[209] In 2006, the UN noted that while there was "virtually no Kosovo Serb participation in Kosovo's political institutions at the central level", Kosovo Serb political organisations in the northern municipalities such as the Serb National Council "continue to operate a separate sphere of local governance, closely linked with the institutions of Serbia".[210] And in March 2007, with less than a year before Kosovo would declare independence, the UN acknowledged that the reaction of Kosovo Serbs to Ahtisaari's status proposals "depends on the reaction of Belgrade", with the political leadership in north Kosovo "fully dependant on Serbian state financial support".[211]

Belgrade would also exert its influence over Kosovan politics through the Serb population during elections in Kosovo, but the strategy here is harder to identify and was bound up with intra-Serb politics, so does not fit neatly into my argument. While directions from Belgrade to boycott elections can clearly be seen as effort to delegitimise Kosovo and it's claims to statehood while also keeping the Kosovo Serb population tied to Serb politics, the messages were often mixed or even contradictory (as in the elections in 2004),[212] and had a polarising effect on Kosovo Serb politics as parties disagreed over the extent to which they could or should work with Provisional Institutions and the international community (as in the elections in 2007).[213]

Election participation also revealed the growing gap between Serbs in north Kosovo and those south of the Ibar: of those Serbs who did vote in the November 2007 elections, most lived in the south. This, the UN concluded, "underscores the differences between the population of northern Kosovo … who, to a

[209] UN Document S/2006/45 (25 January 2006), para. 2
[210] UN Document S/2006/906 (20 November 2006) para. 9
[211] UN Document S/2007/134 (9 March 2007) para 7.
[212] UN Document S/2004/907 Annex 1 (17 November 2004), para. 7
[213] UN Document S/2007/582 (28 September 2007), para. 7

large extent reject being administered by Pristina, and Kosovo Serbs in the rest of Kosovo, who recognize the need for practical ties with the Kosovo Albanian majority."[214] The demographic and geographic reality of the Serb population in post-war Kosovo always meant that the choices facing Serbs south of the Ibar were very different: "They were in a completely different position. Their position is different because they are [living] in a different reality…. They had to institutionally integrate. They had to go to the municipalities, to vote, they had to travel, they had different interactions with Kosovo Albanians."[215]

The parallel structures established in the first post-war phase continued to be the principal means through which Belgrade retained links into Kosovo in the second phase.[216] Parallel courts had almost stopped functioning prior to March 2004, but after the riots, "resumed their work" not only in north Kosovo but also in Lipljan, south of Pristina.[217] Parallel health and education structures remained active and contributed to blocking Kosovo Serb participation in Kosovo institutions.[218] In 2006, parallel structures were still operating in areas with a significant Kosovo Serb population,[219] and "Serbia was still extending its institutions – power, telephony and administrative offices – into the North as late as 2007."[220] A report produced by peacebuilding NGOs in December 2007 found that "Belgrade-financed institutions operate in Serbian communities throughout Kosovo, providing public services and separating Kosovo Serb politics and social services from those of the rest of Kosovo." The report noted that these institutions provided a "a cultural and political lifeline" to Kosovo Serbs who wanted to stay connected with Serbia proper, but also that their very existence was a possible conflict driver.[221]

The parallel structures served another purpose for Belgrade insofar as they secured the loyalty – or at least compliance – of the Kosovo Serb population. The CCK effectively forced Kosovo Serbs to chose

[214] UN Document S/2007/768 (3 January 2008) para 6
[215] Interview, Nenad Djurdjevic, Belgrade, October 2017
[216] OSCE Mission in Kosovo 2007.
[217] UN Document S/2004/613 (30 July 2004), para. 27
[218] UN Document S/2005/88 (14 February 2005), para. 18
[219] UN Document S/2006/361 Annex 1 (5 June 2006) para. 8
[220] International Crisis Group 2011b, 1. Crisis Group source: 'Development of new parallel structures in Kosovo Serbian inhabited areas', UN code cable made available to Crisis Group, 15 October 2007.
[221] Forum for Civic Initiatives and Saferworld 2007, ii.

between employment with UNMIK-recognised Provisional Institutions or with the Belgrade-run parallel institutions. Kosovo Serbs offered work with the Provisional Institutions report being forbidden by Belgrade to sign employment contracts[222] and the UN reported in June 2006 that every Kosovo Serb working in education had resigned from their position in the Provisional Institutions but continued to work and receive payment from Belgrade. If they had continued to work for the Provisional Institutions, the teachers and health-care workers would have risked losing the pensions to which they had contributed for many years.[223] As many as 70% of Kosovo Serbs may have withdrawn from the Provisional Institution payroll by June 2006.[224]

Belgrade continued to ensure that its security personnel could operate in Serb-majority areas of Kosovo in the second post-war phase. To some extent, as the OSCE reported, the security situation in north Kosovo had 'normalised': "Former MUP [Serbian Interior Ministry] officers, now serving as KPS [Kosovo Police Service] officers, were working well in the police stations and under the KPS chain of command and there were fewer MUP officers sent from Serbia proper. Although Bridge-watchers were still present they kept a low profile."[225] A Crisis Group report further identified how the presence of Serbian security structures could be maintained, noting the links between the security services and the control exercised in Kosovo during this period by the DSS (the majority party in Kostunica's administration) and Kosovo Serb political leaders. Crisis Group reported estimates that there were around 400 Serbian police on the payroll of the MUP in Kosovo (in violation of Security Council Resolution 1244, and denied by Belgrade): "They do not wear police uniforms or perform usual police functions. In some cases, especially in the south, it seems Belgrade has simply carried on paying salaries, while the officers mainly report what is going on in their areas, who is meeting whom and the like."[226] By this stage,

[222] UN Document S/2006/45 (25 January 2006) para. 14
[223] UN Document S/2006/361 (5 June 2006) para. 9
[224] The UN report adds: "The policy of the Provisional Institutions … has been to keep those Kosovo Serb employees on the payroll." UN Document S/2006/361 Annex 1 (5 June 2006) para. 8. See also UN Document S/2007/395, para. 8.
[225] OSCE Mission in Kosovo 2007, 26.
[226] International Crisis Group 2009, 5.

with inter-ethnic violence far lower that in the first post-war phase, the strategy seems limited to ensuring that the base state continued to have a security presence it could call on if necessary.

Lastly, the return of war displaced populations continued to be relevant for Belgrade's control strategies but the importance of the issue had changed by the second post-war phase. As the previous section on secessionist strategies showed, Serb returns to Albanian-majority areas were no longer being actively – and violently – blocked as they were in the first post-war phase (but nor were they being supported), and low levels of returns can also be attributed to the poor economic conditions in Kosovo. Almost all the Serbs who returned did so to "all-Serb communities and minority areas with minimal interaction with Kosovo Albanians."[227] Encouraging Serbs to return to Kosovo was a core part of Belgrade's demographic strategy for retaining links, but one that was largely not successful.[228] However, the issue continued to have political utility for Belgrade: according to Sonja Biserko, founder and president of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, the issue of Serb returns to Kosovo is "manipulation … we have worked with refugees for 10 years, and we had one research project in Kosovo, especially in enclaves and what we realised is really that nobody wants to return. The returns [issue] is only used vis-à-vis the international community". A large amount of money was provided, but "houses that were built for Serbs are empty".[229]

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If Belgrade's objective of retaining links to Kosovo was intended to block or at least delay Kosovo's path towards independence, it was clear by late 2007 that Belgrade would not succeed. However, the demographic and territorial control strategies used in north Kosovo had put in place a deeply entrenched system of parallel structures and kept in place a population that was loyal to and dependent on Belgrade.

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[227] UN Document S/2006/361 (5 June 2006) para. 20

[228] Belgrade continued to do little to integrate those Serbs from Kosovo living in Serbia. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2005.

[229] Interview, Sonja Biserko, Belgrade, October 2017. Several off-the-record conversations in Priština in autumn 2017 support this analysis, suggesting that it was and is politically inconvenient for Belgrade and Kosovo Serb politicians that there are displaced Kosovo Serbs who don't want to return.

As Chapter 6 will show, the consequences and implications of these control strategies would continue to shape politics in the region for the next decade.

February 2008: Kosovo Declares Independence

By 2007 there was still no progress in the internationally-mediated status talks and the Ahtisaari process could not bring the parties to an agreement. The failure of the negotiations created an opportunity for Priština to act unilaterally but in coordination with the US and some key states in the EU,[230] culminating in Kosovo's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) on 17 February 2008. Recognition from several allies quickly followed. The legal and political arguments for and against the UDI and recognition continue to be debated, as do the regional and international repercussions (including for developments in my other case study, the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict).

Events after the UDI were often a continuation of the struggles over demographic and territorial control that had taken place over the previous eight years. While the initial protests and incidences of violence, mostly in Mitrovica, subsided after a few months, "in the months that followed Belgrade and the Kosovo Serbs consolidated their control over the north. As a result, many observers believed that the foundations for some form of eventual partition of Kosovo were being laid."[231] Tansey and Zaum argue that a lack of leadership and authority from international actors, including the newly deployed EU rule of law mission, EULEX, meant that "de facto partition between the territories inhabited by Kosovo Serbs and the rest of Kosovo" became more entrenched and could not be reversed,[232] while Petersen identifies multiple 'provocations' by Serbs after independence that consolidated the parallel structures and "helped to freeze Kosovo's conflict to an even further degree," including attacks on border posts, the occupation of a court house in Mitrovica and clashes with UNMIK police, and the participation of Kosovo Serbs in Serbian

[230] Weller 2009, 238.
[231] Ker-Lindsay 2012a, 6; Weller makes a similar argument that in the immediate aftermath of the UDI "Serbia appeared to lay the groundwork for the de facto division of Kosovo, severing contacts between the Serbian authorities in the north of the territory and the UN administration. Local Serbian elections were also conducted in northern Kosovo, where a new regional assembly formed itself beyond the control and new constitutional order of Prishtina." Weller 2009, 238.
[232] Tansey and Zaum 2009, 16.

local elections in May 2008.[233] After the elections, Kosovo Serbs established parallel municipalities which went beyond the previous parallel structures by establishing political bodies that operated "in direct competition with official Kosovo municipal structures", with a purpose familiar to the previous eight years of parallel institutions: "to isolate Serbs from the institutions of independent Kosovo to the greatest degree possible".[234]

There is a great deal of continuity in relation to the focus on control of people and territory, and no clean break in actors' strategies from before UDI to after it. However, Kosovo's declaration of independence radically changed the international and domestic political context in which Priština, Belgrade, the UN and other international actors were operating. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, it is difficult to provide exact criteria for when a post-war environment ends – it is an uneven process, not an event – but the UDI provides an obvious stopping point for a case study of post-war control strategies. The underlying conflict was not resolved, and mutually exclusive claims over control of the same piece of populated territory remained, but nine years after the NATO air war and with a new set of dynamics set in play by the UDI, the 'post-war' lens is no longer so useful. Subsequent developments fall outside the scope of this case study but are discussed in the next chapter – so the reconstruction of the post-war phases concludes here.

5.3. Conclusion

Following the same structure as the case study in Chapter 4, this chapter has reconstructed the post-war efforts of the Serbian base state and the Kosova Albanian sides to secure de facto control of people and territory in the aftermath of a secessionist war that saw massive civilian displacement and an extensive NATO intervention and international administration. As with the Georgia-Abkhazia case, a post-war cleavage of reincorporation versus full separation shaped the actors' objectives when faced by a set of constraints that meant they could not fulfil these maximalist aims and still had something still to gain or

[233] Petersen 2011, 190; RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty 2008.
[234] International Crisis Group 2009, 7; BBC News 2008.

something left to lose in terms of de facto control of populated territory. By reconstructing their control strategies to establish the facts of effective control on the ground, in particular in north Kosovo through the use of parallel institutions and enclavisation, I have shown the process by which the post-war environment was formed, contested and changed within the context of the UNMIK administration.

An unsustainable status quo and changes in international policy towards the region started to take the actors out of a post-war environment and towards Kosovo's declaration of independence – my framework loses some of its relevance here as de jure recognition overtook de facto control in Kosovo's priorities, but for Belgrade, effective control over north Kosovo remained the top priority. After the UDI, subsequent developments would continue to be shaped by the post-war environment that was formed between 1999 and 2008, and I discuss this more recent period in the next chapter. Chapter 6 also returns to the Georgia-Abkhazia case and compares the two theory building studies, drawing out some of the implications from these parallel investigations into post-war control strategies.

Chapter 6: Consequences and Comparisons

6.1. Introduction

Chapter 6 compares the two case studies and contrasts the control strategies used by the principal political actors. Before this, I discuss what has happened since the periods covered in the case studies of Chapters 4 and 5, focusing on the consequences and implications of post-war demographic and territorial control strategies and how my argument can help us understand more recent developments.

6.2. Developments since 2008

Between 2006 and 2008, developments in the Balkans and the Caucasus became more deeply entwined, and 2008 marked a key turning point for both Kosovo and Abkhazia with long-lasting repercussions for international peace and security.[1] In 2006, Russian President Vladimir Putin explicitly linked the prospect of Kosovo's independence with a threat that Russia would recognise Abkhazia and South Ossetia.[2] Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008 was followed by a further increase in tension between Russia and western powers after the NATO Bucharest summit in April when the Alliance declared that Georgia and Ukraine will join NATO (albeit at some unspecified time in the future, with no offer of a Membership Action Plan), and Russia recognised the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia after the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008.

There are competing views as to whether Kosovo and Abkhazia (and South Ossetia) have equivalent legal or moral claims to recognition and ongoing arguments about the lasting implications of the so-called

[1] Suny and Cheterian 2012.

[2] When the mandate for the UN Observer Mission in Georgia needed renewing in 2006, which had been renewed routinely since 1993, Russia raised "objections to the inclusion in the traditional resolution of standard UN language reaffirming the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and supporting a political solution that reflects the inclusion of Abkhazia within the boundaries of the state of Georgia", in a departure from standard practice linked to the situation in Kosovo. Security Council Report 2006; It has been argued that part of the reason for Georgia establishing its authority in Abkhazia (in Kodori Valley) and in South Ossetia in 2006 was as a preventive measure to make it more difficult for Russia to recognise the secessionist territories. *The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia: Volume One* 2009, 30–31.

'Kosovo precedent' for international politics,[3] but these questions are outside the scope of this study. Rather, I have two aims in this section. One is to consider what developments since 2008 tell us about the consequences of the post-war control strategies used in the case study periods and about the trajectories of post-war environments over time. The other is to show how the case studies in the previous chapters and the argument of Chapter 2 can be useful in making sense of the situation today.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, judgements about when a post-war environment ends are somewhat arbitrary, especially if the conflict incompatibility is not resolved. Many of the events and developments discussed in this section are closely linked to the processes that began with the initial armed conflicts and the transitions to post-war environments, as well as being important for the contemporary peace and security of the Caucasus and the Balkans, so it is valuable to identify continuity and change in what the base states and secessionists have done to control people and territory. However, the changes in the domestic and international contexts after 2008 were such that – for the purposes of this study – developments since then are better treated separately as a new, distinct stage. So rather than extending the case studies further along the same lines as Chapters 4 and 5 (which were bounded and structured in a particular way for a theory building research strategy), the next two sections summarise general developments since 2008. I focus in particular on the territories and populations of Gali region and north Kosovo which have continued to be among the most important and contentious factors in relations between Georgia and Abkhazia and between Serbia and Kosovo.

Georgia-Abkhazia

> *"Russia was not the reason for the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict, it was a confluence of events. It used it somehow, but it was not the reason. Even if now Russian troops are withdrawn from Abkhazia, we will still have the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, it will never disappear."*[4]

[3] Phillips 2008; Weller 2009, 239.
[4] Interview, Viacheslav Chirikba, Sukhumi, May 2017

"I think the Russian factor always played the decisive role in the dynamics of Georgian-Abkhaz conflict until this day."[5]

The August 2008 War and its Aftermath

I ended the Georgia-Abkhazia case study with the events in 2006 in Kodori Valley. By the end of 2008, the post-war environment described in Chapter 4 no longer existed. Relations between Georgia and Russia were increasingly hostile, as were relations between Georgia and Abkhazia and with Georgia's other secessionist region, South Ossetia. In August 2008, violence broke out in South Ossetia between the Georgian armed forces and Ossetian militias, escalating further to an extensive and decisive Russian military intervention that comprehensively defeated the Georgian armed forces.[6] While most of the fighting occurred in and around South Ossetia, in the final stages of the war, "Abkhaz units supported by Russian forces attacked the Georgian positions in the upper Kodori Valley and seized this territory, which had been vacated by the Georgian forces and most of the local Georgian population by 12 August 2008 [the day a ceasefire was agreed]."[7] The Abkhaz leadership described its military operation in Kodori Valley as a 'liberation' that was necessary to protect civilians and pre-empt an imminent attack from Georgia, and in order to open a second front in support of South Ossetia.[8]

Immediately after the war, the Russian government recognised Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states.[9] This completely changed both the international politics of the conflict and the situation on the ground with an increasing Russian military and security presence, removing what little presence or influence Tbilisi still had in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. A peace process of sorts continues

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[5] Interview, Archil Gegeshidze, Tbilisi, July 2017

[6] Events between 2006-2008 that led to the August War are beyond the scope of this chapter and should be treated separately. For a comprehensive account that includes the arguments and positions of the conflict parties, see the 3-volume report of the EU-commissioned fact-finding mission, 'The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia' (IIFFMCG). See also Cornell and Starr 2009.

[7] *The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia: Volume One* 2009, 22.

[8] The IIFFMCG concluded that 'none of these explanations can be considered as substantiated in fact or as legally valid. Hence the use of force by Abkhazia was not justified under international law. The same applies for the Russian support of these actions.' Ibid., 25; See also Owen 2008.

[9] As of 2020, the only other states that recognise Abkhazia are Nicaragua, Venezuela, Nauru, and Syria. Tuvalu withdrew its recognition in 2014.

through the 'Geneva International Discussions' but with no movement towards a settlement. An EU mission has been mandated to monitor compliance with the ceasefire and plays an important crisis management role, but has been denied access to the territories of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia.[10]

In domestic Georgian politics, Saakashvili and his United National Movement (UNM) were voted out of office and by 2013 Georgia had a new president and governing party, Georgian Dream (GD). Over time Georgian domestic political and economic issues have taken precedence over the territorial conflicts, and externally, Tbilisi is focused on integration with Euro-Atlantic structures, seeking EU and NATO membership. The GD administration have generally adopted a position towards Russia that is less antagonistic than the Saakashvili years – critics condemn it as too conciliatory, and describe the leading political figure in GD (and the dominant figure in Georgian politics for the last decade) Bidzina Ivanishvili as pro-Russian[11] – but cooperation with the EU and NATO continues to deepen. In Abkhazia, Sergei Bagapsh was re-elected as president in 2009 but died in office two years later. His successor, Aleksandr Ankvab was forced out of office in 2014 by opposition-led protests and was replaced by Raul Khajimba after snap elections. Khajimba was then voted out of office and replaced by Aslan Bzhania in 2020.[12] Sukhumi has continued to undertake a nation- and state-building project under the protection (or control) of Moscow.[13] Externally, Sukhumi's priority has been to gain further international recognition and reduce Abkhazia's international economic and political isolation.

Russia's dominance in the region has increased. Moscow and Sukhumi signed a Treaty 'on alliance and strategic partnership' in November 2014, which included coordination of foreign, defence, economic and social policy (and came with financial aid), and was condemned by Tbilisi and its allies as a move towards annexation and Abkhazia's integration into Russia.[14] As of May 2017, about 70% of the Abkhaz

[10] <www.eumm.eu>
[11] McGuiness 2013.
[12] Khajimba refused to step down after losing the election in 2019, which sparked protests and Russian diplomatic intervention, leading to a rerun of the election in March 2020. RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty 2020a.
[13] A common view is that, after the 2008 war, Russia effectively turned Abkhazia and South Ossetia 'into Russian protectorates.' Gerrits and Bader 2016.
[14] Farchy 2014; Baczynska et al. 2014.

population had Russian passports.[15] Moscow continues to leverage the unresolved territorial conflicts as a way to prevent Georgia from joining the EU and NATO, while also seeking to maintain control over a strategically important area on Russia's southern border. Sukhumi is dependent on Moscow for security, but fears that a rapprochement between Georgia and Russia would be at the expense of their independence should a future deal include the reincorporation of Abkhazia in Georgia.[16]

Gali Region

> *"But it's real, it's a real border. The Georgians cannot go freely across the border, it means it's real. It exists."*[17]

The territory and the population of Gali have continued to be a core focus for both Sukhumi and Tbilisi since 2008.[18] Some of the reasons (and strategies) are the same as 1994-2006, with a great deal of continuity in the demographic control strategies being used to influence the compliance and loyalty of the population in particular. Much is different, though, reflecting the changed environment and especially changes to the security infrastructure now that the UN observer mission has gone and the Russian military controls the border/ABL between Abkhazia and Georgia.[19] As I will show in this section, Gali continues to have a crucial but contested role in Abkhaz nation- and state-building; domestic political reasons have meant the Georgian population in Gali has become increasingly controversial within

[15] According to Artur Gaguliya, from the Abkhaz Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "the majority [of Abkhazians] treat these foreign passports only as a means of travel, not any national or identity sign … because there is no other choice for us to travel." The 70% figure (from Gaguliya) is only part of the story, though. There are two kinds of Russian passport available to the Abkhaz, one issued by the Russian embassy in Sukhumi, the other issued in Russia itself. Only the former are accepted outside of Russia and the few states to recognise Abkhazia, meaning they cannot be used to travel to, for example, the EU or the US: "only if your passport is issued in Russia do you have the opportunity to get the visa […] maybe 10%, maybe 15% have their passport issued in Russia, the rest from the Sukhum embassy". Interview, Artur Gaguliya, Sukhumi, May 2017

[16] This prospect, and the likelihood of further armed conflict should it happen, was raised in several interviews and conversations, on and off-the-record, in both Tbilisi and Sukhumi with Georgians, Abkhazians and internationals.

[17] Interview, Viacheslav Chirikba, Sukhumi, May 2017

[18] I decided not to do formal interviews in Gali – sensitive and controversial topics such as passports and documentation, civil and political rights, and ethnicity and citizenship have been researched by people more qualified than me to do so. For recent research that provides insights from all sides of the conflict into the situation in Gali since 2008, see International Alert 2011; Saferworld and Institute for Democracy 2011; Saferworld and Institute for Democracy 2012; Saferworld and Institute for Democracy 2013; Conciliation Resources 2015; Clogg, Elbakidze, and Inal-Ipa 2016.

[19] UNOMIG was discontinued in June 2009 when Russia vetoed an extension of the mission.

Abkhaz electoral politics; and the territory is linked to Russia's security interests in the Caucasus, with Gali region a strategically important buffer zone for the Russian military.

Chapter 4 discussed efforts that began in the early 2000s intended to integrate the population and territory of Gali into an Abkhaz national project, pursuing a 'consolidate and extend' objective. This accelerated after 2008. O'Loughlin et al report that, while before 2008 insecurity and the hostility of much of the population meant the authorities were reluctant to invest in Gali, Abkhaz officials interviewed in 2009 (during the Bagapsh administration) "indicated that development in Gal(i) was now a state priority".[20] Trier et al, writing in 2010, note that the de facto authorities were now "trying to incorporate the Gal/i district into Abkhazian political structures." These "statebuilding efforts" included "increased attention to judicial procedures, wider integration of the region's schools in the central education system and stronger attempts to stamp out corruption", and commitments to improve transport infrastructure.[21] Prelz Oltramonti's interviews in Sukhumi in 2012 (when Ankvab was president) also reveal a post-2008 concern with economic links to Gali, "reflecting a process of gradual territorial integration of the Gali district within Abkhazia, which was non-existent before the Georgia–Russia war".[22]

The most controversial issues relating to attempts to assimilate the Gali population concern legal status (i.e. citizenship or permanent residency), voting rights, and documentation, particularly passports. Changes in Abkhazia's citizenship laws and reforms starting in the early 2000s saw an increase in the number of passports being issued to Gali Georgians, and this became an increasingly divisive issue in electoral politics and contributed to the political crisis of 2014. Khajimba and the opposition were able to mobilise the protestors who would remove Ankvab from office in part by playing on fears that Gali Georgians were a threat to Abkhaz statehood, rather than citizens to be integrated.[23] After Khajimba

[20] O'Loughlin, Kolossov, and Toal 2011, 18–19.
[21] Trier, Lohm, and Szakonyi 2010, 48.
[22] Prelz Oltramonti 2016, 253.
[23] Ó Beacháin 2014.

came to power, the passports issued to Gali Georgians during the Bagapsh and Ankvab administrations were annulled, effectively disenfranchising them. A former senior Georgian government official explains:

> what happened after Ankvab was overthrown and Khajimba came to power, one of the first things Khajimba did was taking away the voting rights from the Gali Georgians so in the next elections, if earlier we would have 25-30,000 Georgians eligible to vote in elections, I think number of eligible voters was less than 700. Khajimba is a guy who knows that he would never get any votes from Georgians so therefore he wanted to neutralise this problem so he accused Ankvab of selling out to Georgians by distributing illegally passports, said that anyone who got passport under Ankvab is disqualified and that meant that … they would still have civil rights, they could live there, own property, but have no political rights.[24]

Figures in Abkhaz civil society have also been critical of Khajimba's policy:

> what the current [2017] government did, because of elections, because they knew they will not have the votes of the Gal population, because of their rhetoric, because they take a more nationalistic stance, so they decided at one point that we want to exclude them from the election.… they were only interested in the political side of the matter, to exclude them from the elections, they annulled 17,000 passports, which I think is outrageous.[25]

The shift from the relatively integrationist policies of the Bagapsh and Ankvab administrations to the exclusionary policies of the Khajimba administration reflect what one Georgian expert describes as two competing national projects in Abkhazia that are being played out in Gali:

> One says … the nation is not just Abkhaz but all, and we have to integrate these people [Gali Georgians], we have to work with these people, we are not so many.… Another school is saying that Gali district and Gali people are loyal to Georgia, nothing will change in their heads, they will always be hostile to the Abkhazian state so if we incorporate them in the state structures, they will destroy the state from inside. The policies which are changing from time to time are changing because of these two visions.[26]

There is still a public commitment to integration from the Abkhaz government. Commenting that Gali district was an "arena of two [Abkhaz and Georgian] soft powers", an Abkhaz Foreign Ministry official told me that "in my opinion we are doing a little better in order to reintegrate people of Gal district to the

[24] Interview, Shota Utiashvili, Tbilisi, April 2017. Shota Utiashvili was Director of the Department of Information and Analysis in the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs (2004-2012)
[25] Interview, Liana Kvarchelia, Sukhumi, May 2017
[26] Annulling the passports was thus part of the latter vision: "[Khajimba] took these passports back … these people are living in Abkhazia having no Abkhazian passport, but de facto they are living there, have ownership of the houses, land, what to do with these people? They understand they cannot just expel these people from this territory, so what to do? And finally, for the moment it seems that they will give them permanent residence, which gives them the possibility to work, live, have houses, and freedom of movement but not have possibility to live a political life, to participate in elections." Interview, Giorgi Kanashvili, Tbilisi, November 2016. At the time of the interview, Giorgi Kanashvili was Executive Director of Caucasian House, a Georgian thinktank specialising in peacebuilding issues.

rest of Abkhazia. And we need that, we need that because it's our people, it's our territory and really they need all the rights."[27] This is reflected in the continuing 'Abkhazisation' process that sees ethnic Georgians being encouraged to 'remember' their Abkhaz roots (see Chapter 4). To quote a prominent figure in Abkhaz politics and civil society:

> If people want to integrate to Abkhaz society, I'm sure that they have such a right. It's very important to know that there are many people who consider themselves as Abkhaz, people with Abkhaz roots because their grandfathers, grandmothers, were Abkhazian but during the Stalin and Beria times all these people were transformed into Georgians. And they remember that they were Abkhazian and now they are ready to change their nationality and surnames.[28]

The view from Georgia is not surprisingly at odds with this perspective. A former official from the Abkhazian Government in Exile explains the dilemma faced by Gali Georgians:

> The Abkhazian side tried to ensure people in Gali district are Abkhazians, not Georgians. They insisted that they are Mingrelians or Abkhazians and requested to sign in their passports that they are Abkhazians or Mingrelians. And some of them of course because of security issues, because of many other things, they sign it, but when they come to the rest of Georgia, they say we had to do it, please, do not take it seriously, and of course we understand that they are in a poor situation. We do not blame them if they do it.[29]

Some see this as a policy intended to push the Gali Georgian population into a choice between either full assimilation or migration to Georgia proper.[30] Certainly, life for this population 'in limbo' is a struggle.[31] As a civil society expert from the region expressed the difficult conditions for Georgians living in Gali:

> For the Gali population, it's not the most important, as they see it, that they cannot to take part in the election process, but they feel they are a second priority or something like that; unfortunately, they could not integrate into society, in Abkhazian society. Now the political status of these people is very difficult. They want to be with Georgia, but they can't be with them. They are feeling that they are foreign for Abkhaz, and sometimes maybe for Georgians.[32]

One of the biggest problems – and causes of hardship for the Gali population – is the lack of freedom of movement between Abkhazia and Georgia proper. A report on human rights in Abkhazia from 2017

[27] Interview, Kan Taniya, Sukhumi, June 2017. Kan Taniya was Deputy Foreign Minister in the MFA at the time of the interview.
[28] Interview, Natella Akaba, Sukhumi, May 2017. Natella Akaba is Secretary of the Public Chamber of Abkhazia, an advisory body to Abkhaz President, and head of the civil society organisation, Women of Abkhazia.
[29] Interview, former official from the Abkhazian Government in Exile, Tbilisi, November 2016
[30] Menabde 2019 This view was expressed to me (off the record) in a number of conversations.
[31] Frichova Grono 2011; Human Rights Watch 2011.
[32] Interview, Eliko Bendeliani, Tbilisi, April 2017

reported that, over several years, "the conflict divide has become much less permeable given Abkhaz and Russian efforts to build and reinforce what they see as a border. This has imposed restrictions on the Gali residents' freedom of movement."[33] The importance of control over borders and boundaries as a means to demarcate the extent of effective territorial and demographic control has deepened since 2008.[34] Border control is crucial for the Abkhaz, and defended by Abkhaz officials in terms of public safety and security: "today there is going to be only one single checkpoint which is on the Ingur river, on the Ingur bridge. It will mean that the rest of the points where people could cross and could have some … illegal trade, today all these points will be closed and it will be more safe, more secure, to use only one but which is totally secure, which is safe to cross."[35] The border is now controlled by the Russian military and keeping the border area along the Inguri secure and quiet is in Russia's interests as Gali becomes increasingly militarised with new Russian bases and military installations.[36]

Tbilisi's options for responding in ways that affect the situation on the ground are very limited and the Georgian government has had to find ways to deal with the post-2008 environment that has left them locked out of Abkhaz territory and with few links if any to the population. "We don't have direct tools to influence the situation in Gali", explained a current representative of the Abkhazian Government in Exile, so "primarily we are working on reports. We are reporting every problematic issue in Gali and Sukhumi and other places on the other side of the [Administrative Boundary Line]."[37] Former Georgian government figures from the Saakashvili administration emphasise the problems faced more generally since 2008 in terms of the constraints on action: as Shota Utiashvili put it, "From 2008 there has been

[33] Hammarberg and Grono 2017, 58.
[34] So-called 'borderisation' - the process of establishing de facto state 'borders' between Georgian-controlled territory and Abkhazia, for example by adding physical infrastructure such as barbed wire fences - is ongoing. Civil Georgia 2020.
[35] Interview, Artur Gaguliya (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Sukhumi, May 2017
[36] Based on comments in multiple off-the-record conversations and interviews in Sukhumi and Tbilisi which are consistent with publicly available media reporting and commentary. The Inguri border crossing on the Abkhaz side has both Abkhaz and Russian checkpoints. When crossing from the Georgian side, you must first go through the Abkhaz checkpoint after a brief passport check, and then through the Russian checkpoint, which involves a thorough interview with Russian military personnel. Personal observations, May 2017 (the experience of ethnic Georgians resident in Gali is of course very different to that of a UK citizen).
[37] Interview, Jemal Gamakharia (via translator), Tbilisi, December 2016. I am grateful to Giorgi Jangiani for his translation services.

very little that the Georgian government could do because the policy from both Abkhaz and especially South Ossetia was to completely seal off. All of these territories became inaccessible for us in this sense, but also their population was not coming."[38]

Making healthcare freely available to the whole Abkhaz population has been a prominent part of Tbilisi's 'soft power' approach to Abkhazia, which included building a new hospital in western Georgia, close to the Administrative Boundary Line. The Abkhaz are critical of these efforts, and generally see Georgian 'soft power' initiatives as continued attempts to reincorporate Abkhazia into Georgia, rather than as a way to promote reconciliation.[39] As Liana Kvarchelia explains:

> if we are talking about confidence building, not only with Georgia but also with the international community, why don't you help us to have a hospital here? Why do you force our people who've found themselves in an extremely difficult situation, why do you make them make a moral choice? They go to Georgia, they can't say it openly, they prefer to hide this fact. If they hide this fact and then they want to participate politically, somebody would use this against them. So why do you create a situation where people go there, yes maybe they are thankful to a particular doctor who saved his life, but in general they will hate Georgia because you made them make such a choice.[40]

Nonetheless, there are some optimistic voices – while there is now very little person-to-person contact or interaction between Georgians and Abkhaz, Gali is one of the few places where this kind of communication can take place, leading some to see the Gali population as "a really very important resource for peace".[41]

Conclusion

> *"Abkhazia of its own will, will not go back to Georgia. And I don't see that anyone would be able to force Abkhazia to go back to Georgia. They will have to exterminate us […] You know, we*

[38] Interview, Shota Utiashvili, Tbilisi, April 2017. Similar views were expressed in several other meetings and interviews in Tbilisi.
[39] Clogg, Elbakidze, and Inal-Ipa 2016, 17.
[40] Interview, Liana Kvarchelia, Sukhumi, May 2017
[41] Interview, Eliko Bendeliani, Tbilisi, April 2017

have paid a very heavy price, and to have our state that's been a dream of many generations, so we will not want to give up this dream."[42]

Russia's recognition of Abkhazia, combined with the large military presence, has meant Sukhumi has a protective shield behind which to develop internally, preventing any attempt by Tbilisi to change the facts on the ground, but it has not reduced Abkhazia's international isolation. In this context, the politics of recognition and counter-recognition have become a central part of Sukhumi's and Tbilisi's strategies. Tbilisi has a proactive counter-recognition strategy which aims to keep Abkhazia internationally isolated by preventing further recognitions and limiting the possibilities of outside engagement with the de facto authorities.[43] Tbilisi is zealous in blocking any international activity by the Abkhaz that would look, even implicitly, like recognition. To quote two officials from the Abkhaz Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA):

> [Georgia is] good at blocking us – block dance groups, [a] painter going to [an] exhibition. Georgians are saying that we are brothers, you are occupied, let us reintegrate, you should study abroad and see other places, not just Russia. But when we try to, they block us.[44]

> We see that some doors are opening, but there is always Georgia which is appearing the very next day. They have their embassies there, we don't. If we meet someone from Italy, or some province, some mayor and try to establish some contacts, the very next day they receive complaints from the Georgian embassy.[45]

For Sukhumi, there is a tension between pursuit of recognition and other domestic and nation-building priorities. Artur Gaguliya, from the Abkhaz MFA, explained Sukhumi's international priorities: "It remains the same – getting broader recognition. This is what actually we do every day, we try to knock every single door. We try to reach not only international governments but also international organisations. We try to find out whether there are possibilities for us to join various organisations. But it is always a big problem, because we are not Kosovo."[46] Kan Taniya, also from the MFA, argues that, with Russian recognition now attained, there are other priorities – "In the short term we need economic development

[42] Interview, Liana Kvarchelia, Sukhumi, May 2017
[43] Ker-Lindsay 2012b; Caspersen 2015b; Ó Beacháin, Comai, and Tsurtsumia-Zurabashvili 2016; Ó Beacháin 2019; Berg and Pegg 2020.
[44] Interview, Kan Taniya, Sukhumi, June 2017
[45] Interview, Artur Gaguliya, Sukhumi, May 2017
[46] Interview, Artur Gaguliya, Sukhumi, May 2017

more than recognition" – but further recognitions will follow: "We will prove that we are a real state, a real country."[47]

Tbilisi's counter-recognition policy remains effective while Georgia still enjoys widespread international support for its territorial integrity. However, this cannot compensate for a lack of presence or influence on the ground, which Russia now has in abundance. Georgia cannot match this without material international support and this is not forthcoming: "the international community is now seen as not wanting to have any involvement. What's the total sum that the international community is spending in Abkhazia? Probably a few million dollars. While Russians are spending hundreds of millions.… the international community doesn't really know what it can offer the Abkhaz to match the Russians"[48]

And so a stalemate continues. With no prospect of a political settlement any time soon, the Georgian government – at least the post-Saakashvili administrations – has focused on other domestic priorities and on moving closer to EU. As Kanashvili explains: "the conflicts for quite a long time were stopping us or making serious problems, but for the moment the [Georgian] government … have the understanding that those problems can't be solved for quite a long period. Their strategical view is first to develop the rest of the country economically, socially and then to return to these conflicts." The problem is, "they are totally neglecting those conflicts now" – Saakashvili pushed too far in 2008 but "now [the government] are totally forgetting about Abkhazia and South Ossetia".[49] In Abkhazia, this neglect is probably welcomed: while recognising the precarity of depending on Russia, political elites would rather see the issue as settled – Abkhazia has independence and recognition and protection from the dominant regional power – and not as a conflict with Georgia that still needs to be resolved, and would also prefer to focus on internal matters.[50]

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[47] Interview, Kan Taniya, Sukhumi, June 2017
[48] Interview, Shota Utiashvili, Tbilisi, April 2017,
[49] Interview, Giorgi Kanashvili, Tbilisi, November 2016
[50] This is also true with regard to public opinion: economic issues are a greater concern than renewed war with Georgia. Kolossov and O'Loughlin 2011, 632; Demographics in particular remain a major issue for Abkhazia, even to the point of a ban on abortion, reportedly linked to attempts to increase the population of ethnic Abkhaz. Balmforth 2016; Kotova 2017.

Serbia-Kosovo

"Serbs are willing to sacrifice their lives for Kosovo, but few of them would be willing to live there."

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic[51]

"In 2017 Serbia still lives in the clouds and thinks something in international relations will change and history will go back. This is impossible. Kosovo is independent now. It could be a new war but not Kosovo going back to being governed by Serbia. It's very simple."

Former Kosovo Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Valon Murtezaj[52]

After Independence

The Serbia-Kosovo case study ended with Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008, and a political process to normalise relations between Belgrade and Priština has proceeded in a relatively stable but often tense environment. However, the following decade did not see a lasting settlement and, with some parallels to the situation in Abkhazia, the north of Kosovo remained the site of an unresolved struggle for effective control, exposing the tensions between what the International Crisis Group called "Pristina's push to control the whole territory of the young state, especially its borders with Serbia, and northern Kosovo Serbs' determination to resist".[53]

In 2010, the International Court of Justice ruled that Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence was not contrary to international law,[54] which increased Kosovo's confidence in asserting its independence.[55] It also opened up the way for further recognitions, and Belgrade's moves to counter or reverse those recognitions.[56] There was some violence in the summer and autumn of 2011 (discussed below) but in general the security situation has remained stable, with KFOR numbers further reduced to 10,200 in early

[51] B92 2019.
[52] Interview, Priština, November 2017
[53] International Crisis Group 2012a, i.
[54] <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/141>
[55] International Crisis Group 2012a, i.
[56] Ker-Lindsay 2012b.

2010 and responsibility for protecting Serb religious sites was mostly transferred to the Kosovo Police by the end of 2011.[57] EU-mediated talks between Belgrade and Priština began in March 2011, with interventions by German Chancellor Angela Merkel crucial in agreements being reached on technical issues and progress towards integrating Serb-majority areas and creating an association of Serb municipalities as anticipated by the Ahtisaari Plan, but still not implemented.[58]

The major post-2008 breakthrough was the Brussels Agreement in April 2013. According to one analyst at the time, "the Serbian government has given up on keeping northern Kosovo in its system and has ceded its authority to Pristina [and] has implicitly recognised that Kosovo is a state."[59] The Agreement was meant to 'normalise' relations between Serbia and Kosovo and put both on the path to EU membership (Serbia got EU candidacy status, Kosovo got a Stabilisation and Association Agreement, and each side agreed not to block the other's path to EU membership), and end de facto ethnic partition by unifying police and security structures and integrating the north into Kosovo's legal system. Implementation has been patchy,[60] but the 2013 Agreement was in some ways a more significant shift away from a post-war environment and towards a new political order than the declaration of independence in 2008. Since the 2013 Agreement, the institutional framework governing Belgrade-Priština relations has developed to the point where the 'post-war' label no longer seems analytically useful or empirically relevant. While 2008 was an obvious cut-off point for my case study given the major change in the international context, the end of the post-war phase can perhaps be better thought of as an extended transition from February 2008 to April 2013.

Domestic politics for both Kosovo and Serbia have often been turbulent since then. As Kosovo has begun to emerge from its status as a international protectorate it has faced an 'internal legitimation challenge'[61] as the majority and minority communities have searched for a political settlement that not

[57] <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_48818.htm>
[58] Serwer 2019, 83.
[59] Prelec 2013.
[60] Phillips 2017.
[61] Landau 2017.

only meets the demands of the international community for a multiethnic state but also an internal way of doing politics that will meet the needs of Kosovo's population and overcome a multitude of social and economic challenges. In Serbia, a commitment to EU membership remains a powerful factor in politics, but the centralisation of power by Aleksandar Vučić (Prime Minster between 2014 and 2017, and President since then) has resulted in democratic backsliding,[62] and anti-government protests have been a regular occurrence since 2018.[63] Multiple issues in recent years have helped sustain tensions between Kosovo and Serbia: provocations and sabre-rattling, rows over cross-border trade, unresolved issues of transitional justice and the ongoing investigations and further indictments of Kosovo's wartime leaders (and current political leaders) for war crimes,[64] and speculation about Russian interference have all contributed to the tension and have at times prompted fears of renewed conflict.[65] However, none have escalated to the point of seriously threatening further violence and with 3,500 NATO soldiers still based in Kosovo escalation is unlikely.[66]

There are signs of continuity in some of the demographic and territorial control strategies described in Chapter 5, and the return of the wartime displaced in particular remains an important issue for both Serb and Albanian communities. The OSCE reported in 2014 that there had been "some progress" but noted that there was insufficient capacity to implement a returns policy and that a "significant number" of security incidents occur every month, including "arson and damage to religious heritage sites", affecting perceptions of security and the returns process and contributing to ongoing tensions.[67] The problems

[62] Freedom House downgraded Serbia's status from 'free' to 'partly free' in 2018 due to a "deterioration in the conduct of elections, continued attempts by the government and allied media outlets to undermine independent journalists through legal harassment and smear campaigns, and … Vučić's de facto accumulation of executive powers that conflict with his constitutional role", also noting that "the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) has steadily eroded political rights and civil liberties." <https://freedomhouse.org/country/serbia>
[63] BBC News 2019.
[64] Kosovo's president, Hashim Thaci, was indicted for war crimes in June 2020, along with other leading Kosovar political figures. RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty 2020b.
[65] Muharremi 2017; Morina 2017c; Knezevic 2017; Petrovskaya 2017; BBC News 2018.
[66] <https://jfcnaples.nato.int/kfor/about-us/history> 3,500 troops is the most current figure according to NATO, as of August 2020.
[67] OSCE Mission in Kosovo 2014, 4. Minority returns is an issue affecting all communities and includes, for example, difficulties with Albanians returning to north Mitrovica and Serbs returning to south Mitrovica, and displaced Roma and other minorities.

persist, with some local councils openly declaring that Serbs should not return,[68] and attacks on the homes of those who do.[69] Homes being built for Serb returnees in places like Prizren remain empty.[70]

The main issue since 2008 is still north Kosovo and the divided city of Mitrovica, which I address in more detail next. The post-2008 contrast between north Kosovo and Serb-majority areas south of the Ibar – with the latter home to the majority of Kosovo's Serb population – remains deep: "southern Serbs are cut off from Serbia by Kosovo government-controlled, Albanian-populated territory and understand viscerally they have no choice but to reach an accommodation with their stronger, more numerous neighbours. Further, Belgrade has been committed to retain sovereignty over the North, while it has largely written off the rest of Kosovo."[71] Belgrade's prioritisation of north Kosovo has led to accusations that the Serbian government is more interested in territory than the Serb population of Kosovo. The geographic realities matter, of course – Serbs south of the Ibar are scattered throughout rural Kosovo, while the north borders Serbia proper – but as Chapter 5 showed, the prospect of partition has always been an important part of Belgrade's strategy and the territory and the population of north Kosovo are central to that strategy. This has continued to be the case after Kosovo declared independence: in 2010, Serbian President Tadic's foreign policy advisor Jovan Ratkovic told EU Director-General for Foreign Affairs Robert Cooper "that while Belgrade would need to accept that it would not govern Kosovo again, Kosovo would have to come to the realization that it would not effectively be able to extend its governance north of the Ibar river."[72]

[68] Isufi and Hasanaj 2016.
[69] Nikci 2017.
[70] This is about the lack of economic opportunities in Kosovo and not just about inter-ethnic relations. Petrick 2020.
[71] International Crisis Group 2012a, 4. The report is from 2012.
[72] US embassy cables: Belgrade lays out Kosovo partition scenario to EU 2010.

North Kosovo

Thaci: Unification of Mitrovica, unstoppable (media)

President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci said that unification of the city of Mitrovica is an "unstoppable process." In a Facebook post following his meeting with Mitrovica Mayor Agim Bahtiri, Thaci wrote that the two agreed that the citizens of Mitrovica have had their say with regards to the petition calling for unification of two Mitrovica municipalities. "It is now up to institutions to act: Government, Assembly, and Presidency," Thaci said.

Rakic: We will not allow unification of Mitrovica (RTK)

Goran Rakic, leader of the Serbian List and resigning mayor of Mitrovica North, said on Tuesday that he will not allow unification of Mitrovica North with Mitrovica South. According to him, unification of this city, mentioned by Kosovo President Hashim Thaci, is only a cover-up for the ethnic cleansing of Serbs. "Over 1,000 attacks carried out by some of Thaci's friends against Serbs at the main bridge from 1999 until now, were aimed at removing all Serbs from the north, just as there are no Serbs in the south of Mitrovica." Rakic said. "Peace does not have an alternative, but the right to live and the right to freedom also do not have an alternative, and we will safeguard it with the help of the Serbian state and its President, Aleksandar Vucic," Rakic added.

Figure 6.1 Screenshot from the UNMIK Media Observer, 23 January 2019

Ever since the Eide and Ahtisaari reports, there has been widespread recognition of the need to decentralise political authority to the Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, but this has been a major source of concern for Priština and a divisive issue within Kosovan politics because of fears that it will create an entity that would undermine Kosovo's sovereignty from within. More serious was the ongoing possibility of partition – something not only contrary to Kosovo's objective of preserving the integrity and sovereignty of its now partially recognised state,[73] but also feared in western capitals for the precedent it would set for Republika Srpska and the possible partition of Bosnia-Hercegovina and the dangers of reopening the question of borders in the Balkans with knock-on effects in North Macedonia and Albania as well.[74]

Much stayed the same in north Kosovo after 2008 – neither the new EU rule of law mission, EULEX, nor the International Civilian Office initially had much presence there, something which "underlined the

[73] Kostovicova 2008, 639.
[74] Serwer 2019, 84.

effective division of Kosovo's territory."[75] At least between 2008 and 2013, there was very little loosening of Belgrade's grip on the Serbian municipalities in north Kosovo, which were able to "operate pretty much as if in Serbia".[76] Kosovo Serbs in the north were not merely instruments of Belgrade, though: the population mobilised and resisted attempts from Priština and UNMIK to extend control,[77] including organising their own referendum in 2012 rejecting Priština's authority in a move that was criticised by Belgrade.[78]

Belgrade continues to try and sustain (and increase) the Serb population in Kosovo, without which its claims to sovereignty will diminish. Belgrade has tried, not very successfully, especially south of the Ibar, to "stem the Serb exodus" by providing for the needs of the Kosovo Serbs,[79] including through the remaining parallel structures in healthcare and security.[80] Large-scale housing development projects in the north such as the Sunny Valley project in Zvecan are supposed to provide homes for returning Serbs and have been criticised by Priština as an effort to alter the demographics of Kosovo and consolidate control of north Kosovo.[81] On the question of whether Priština has done enough to dismantle parallel institutions and move forward with efforts to integrate Serb areas, Kosovo Albanian political figures acknowledge that there has been "insufficient progress, and not only just after the war, but even now we are dealing with the same or similar people there."[82]

The changed context after UDI did bring some changes in Priština's territorial control strategies which sparked a violent response from Kosovo Serbs. In 2011, as part of an effort to extend the authority of the

[75] Zaum 2012, 235.
[76] International Crisis Group 2011b, 2.
[77] Aliu 2011.
[78] 'President Tadic said the referendum was harmful to Serbia's interests.' BBC News 2012.
[79] International Crisis Group 2009, i.
[80] Gashi 2019; According to joint research by Serbian and Kosovar think tanks in 2015: "Civil Protection units in North Kosovo operate outside Kosovo's legal framework, despite the fact that the Brussels Agreement implicitly envisages the dissolution of all parallel Serbian security structures existing in Kosovo." For the Serb community, the units were considered a purely civilian organisation, but for Priština and the IOs in Kosovo, they were "an illegal paramilitary structure that must be dissolved." Stakić and Bjeloš 2015.
[81] See various local press reports as translated by UNMIK Media Observer in early June 2016. http://media.unmikonline.org . Krstic 2016; Radonjic 2017.
[82] Interview, Valon Murtezaj, Priština, November 2017

Priština government to Kosovo's northern border,[83] Priština despatched special police units to take control of two customs gates on the border with Serbia which had been mostly staffed by Kosovo Serbs. Priština was criticised by the US and the EU for not notifying or coordinating with international partners.[84] The ensuing backlash saw an increase in violence between July and November and stand-offs between KFOR troops and Kosovo Serbs who had blockaded roads to prevent Kosovar and EULEX officials reaching the customs gates, requiring NATO to deploy an additional 600 troops to stabilise the situation.[85] The decision by Priština to ensure that Kosovar officials were in control of the border and of customs gates was a clear assertion of the empirical attributes of sovereignty and the intention to extend that sovereignty throughout Kosovo, just as the response of the Kosovo Serb population was a clear rejection of that sovereignty.

The division between North and South Mitrovica remains starkly apparent today.[86] In the south, your taxi will have Kosovo licence plates, you will pay in Euros, and you'll see Albanian flags on display (almost never the official Kosovo flag). On crossing to the north, the cars have Serbian licence plates, you pay in Serbian dinars, and Serbian flags adorn the streets. Street murals not only declare Kosovo to be part of Serbia, but also that Crimea is part of Russia. The divisions are keenly felt by both communities: "For the Albanians, the North municipality is led by 'the extremists' who are 'above the law' and for the Serbs, south of Ibar River is the administration that 'wants the territory [of North Kosovo] but not the population [of Kosovo Serbs].'"[87]

The long-running controversy over the construction of a wall on the Serb side of Mitrovica's main bridge – replacing a barricade that was demolished in 2014 – and ongoing efforts to reopen the bridge to traffic

[83] As a Crisis Group report explains, since the ICJ ruling of 2010, Priština believed it needed "to demonstrate … that it controls its borders, lest partition take root." International Crisis Group 2012a, i.
[84] BBC News 2011.
[85] <https://jfcnaples.nato.int/kfor/about-us/history>
[86] I decided not to conduct on-the-record interviews in Mitrovica. This section includes reflections based on off-the-record conversations and meetings in north and south Mitrovica and Priština with Serbs, Kosovars and internationals between October and December 2017.
[87] These are the conclusions of public opinion polling and focus group research conducted by one of the few NGOs in Mitrovica that does cross-community projects. Alternative Dispute Resolution Center 2017, 32.

encapsulates the physical and symbolic divisions.[88] Security – perhaps better to say public safety at this stage – is still a factor, with a sense among Mitrovica's Serbs that they are last remaining line of defence against the Albanian takeover of their territory, but the symbolism matters at least as much now: there is another bridge open to vehicles not much further up the river, but 'the bridge' in Mitrovica has taken on a symbolic importance far beyond its material functions.[89]

The physical separation of the two halves of Mitrovica and between the Serb and Albanian communities means there are huge information problems and a basic lack of knowledge – or perhaps wilful ignorance – about the problems affecting people's day to day lives, reinforcing the belief that the people matter less than the territory to political elites on both sides. Kosovo Serbs in north Mitrovica, for example, face many bureaucratic and administration obstacles, especially regarding freedom of movement and documentation, that disrupt and undermine their quality of life.[90]

There are few independent political actors in north Kosovo. Belgrade has a very tight grip on Serb politicians, and selects its preferred local allies – people who are not well-known political or social figures but who are loyal. Oliver Ivanovic – a trusted and respected Serb political figure in north Kosovo – was assassinated in January 2018.[91] The health and education sectors are the biggest employers in the north and are still a way for Belgrade to exert influence (during elections, for example, either to enforce a boycott or to ensure people vote for the right candidate) by threatening job losses, and civil society in north Mitrovica is generally not willing or able to criticise local politicians.

Conclusion

In August 2018, Serbian President Alexander Vučić, who had been Milošević's information minister during the war in Kosovo, and Kosovan President Hashim Thaçi, who had been political leader of the KLA, shared a platform at the European Forum Alpbach and publicly raised the possibility of a land

[88] Morina 2016b; Morina 2016a; Morina 2017a; Morina 2017b.
[89] Personal observations and conversations in Kosovo in 2017. See also Judah 2011.
[90] Andric and Bailey 2017.
[91] Rujevic 2018; RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty 2018a; Milivojevic 2019.

swap, or 'border correction', as part of a peace settlement.[92] They did not discuss specific details, but such a deal would likely involve north Kosovo becoming part of Serbia in exchange for Belgrade recognising Kosovo's independence, and perhaps the Albanian-majority areas of Preševo Valley in southern Serbia joining Kosovo as part of a land swap.

Even as Kosovo's then Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj, swiftly rejected the idea of border changes,[93] the proposals received support from many quarters, including the US government[94] and foreign policy establishment commentators[95] and from thinktank experts.[96] Any talk of border changes was firmly rejected by Germany's Angela Merkel,[97] and the plans were condemned as 'ethnic cleansing by another name' by the editor of the largest daily newspaper in Kosovo[98] and as a "recipe for geopolitical instability" by Carl Bildt.[99] There was widespread opposition from civil society organisations in Serbia and Kosovo,[100] while many emphasised the risk of the proposals for Bosnia-Hercegovina should a precedent be set for reopening the question of borders.[101]

For all the controversy at the time, talk of border corrections and land swaps have since diminished and little has actually changed. However, the question of partition, and sustaining the conditions that make partition thinkable and possible, continue to inform a segment of elite thinking that remains wedded to the nationalist principle that like should rule over like and that the only way to achieve peace and justice is to align nationalities and territory.[102] In this sense, there remains a clear line of continuity from the post-war control strategies described in Chapter 5. Belgrade must retain links to north Kosovo and does so through establishing facts on the ground: sustaining an official presence or by putting proxies and allies in

[92] Gray and Heath 2018.
[93] Delauney 2018.
[94] Gray 2018b; RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty 2018b.
[95] Kupchan 2018.
[96] Prelec 2018.
[97] Gray 2018a.
[98] Bajrami 2018.
[99] Bildt 2018.
[100] RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty 2018b.
[101] Mujanović 2018a.
[102] European Stability Initiative 2019.

place and keeping a loyal resident population in the territory. Without this level of de facto control, talk of partition would be meaningless, and as long as it remains, Kosovo's state- and nation-building project remains incomplete.

6.3. Comparing the Georgia-Abkhazia and the Serbia-Kosovo Conflicts

> *"Serbia, which lost wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, ended up absorbing hundreds of thousands of Serb refugees. Thus was the nationalist goal partly realized, with an ironic twist: they came to Serbia without the lands they had once called home in neighboring countries."*[103]

> *"They wanted Georgia for Georgians, now they've got it without Abkhazians. They got what they wanted."*[104]

The war in Abkhazia was a local conflict in a part of the world that did not attract much interest outside the region, but by 2008 had become entwined with major international and geopolitical events.[105] In Kosovo, the trajectory has almost been the reverse: the NATO intervention, coming at the end of the decade of wars following the collapse of Yugoslavia, was a defining moment in world politics, as was the UN international administration that followed, but within a few years the world's attention had moved on. It was revived in 2004 and the move to independence returned Kosovo to centre stage in 2008, but as the normalisation process crawls on, Kosovo and the Western Balkans in general have struggled to stay on the EU's agenda.[106] In this section, I focus on comparing and contrasting the demographic and territorial control strategies used in the aftermaths of the wars in Abkhazia and Kosovo. Can comparing these post-war environments tell us anything about the causes of territorial and demographic control

[103] Serwer 2019, 16.
[104] Interview, Viacheslav Chirikba, Sukhumi, May 2017
[105] This has been said of the conflicts in the Caucasus and post-Soviet Eurasia more generally. Broers 2016a; Kazantsev et al. 2020.
[106] The term Western Balkans is generally used to refer to the countries of the Former Yugoslavia (except Slovenia) and Albania that have not joined the EU.

strategies more generally? What implications do these comparisons have for my argument that objectives explain control strategies, mediated by the constraints and opportunities of the environment?

Three points stand out when contrasting the two post-war environments which will help to frame a comparison of the control strategies used. First, differences in the international security structures and conflict regulation mechanisms affected the stability of the post-war environment and created different opportunities and constraints for the principal political actors. Second, differences in the type and extent of international involvement in the conflicts also meant differences in the political and legal status of the secessionist entities which again meant different opportunities and constraints. Third, and related to the first two points, in both cases there has been a divergence between de facto control of people and territory on the one hand, and international recognition and status on the other, but this has played out in different ways and with important consequences for the base states and the secessionists.

Stabilisation: International security structures and conflict regulation mechanisms

In both cases, the armed forces of the base states were defeated militarily and forced to withdraw from the secessionist territory amidst extensive displacement and destruction of property in the war termination phases. The security situation in Kosovo – even with the violence of the war termination phase and the intra-Albanian conflict – stabilised much sooner than in Abkhazia where Gali was wracked by a low-level insurgency and criminality throughout the 1990s and violence spiked in Kodori Valley in the early 2000s. This is because stabilisation was the priority – and within the capability – of the NATO powers that intervened in Kosovo and because of the resources of the UN, the EU and the OSCE that went into stabilisation and reconstruction. Serbia was also relatively more stable – even with the upheaval of overthrowing Milošević, the state remained cohesive and did not retain its pariah status for long,[107] while Georgia went through a period of near state collapse between 1992 and 1995 and did not begin serious domestic reform until after the Rose Revolution of 2003.

[107] By 2003 Serbian soldiers were serving with NATO in Afghanistan. Sciolino 2003.

In this context, the security structures and conflict regulation mechanisms put in place by international actors – KFOR and UNMIK under the authorisation of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 in the case of Kosovo, and the Russian-dominated CIS peacekeeping force (CIS-PKF) and the small UN observer mission (UNOMIG), mandated by the Moscow Agreement, in Abkhazia – were important in shaping what demographic and territorial control strategies were possible and in creating the links and levers that would be used to translate objectives in strategies. The ceasefire line and Security Zone managed by the CIS-PKF allowed the de facto authorities in Abkhazia to survive and develop, at least to some extent, and limited the ability of the Georgian side to project influence into Abkhazia and retain links there. It also left Gali as a border region not fully under the control of either side and without the conditions conducive to IDP returns that the CIS-PKF was supposed to help establish. By contrast, the KFOR deployment that removed any chance of Kosovo being forcibly reincorporated into Serbia also became the protector of the Serb population in Kosovo (including returnees) and facilitated the de facto separation of north Kosovo and the entrenchment of the Serb-majority enclaves south of the Ibar river, contributing to the conditions that allowed Belgrade to retain effective control over parts of Kosovo.[108]

Political and legal status

Differences in international interest and involvement in the conflicts meant differences in Kosovo and Abkhazia's political and legal status which imposed different opportunities and constraints. In both cases, external powers wanted an end to the fighting but were not necessarily willing or able to bring about a resolution to the underlying conflict, especially concerning questions of status. Resolution 1244 removed Kosovo from Serbia's authority and made Kosovo an international protectorate, but there was also a commitment to Yugoslavia's territorial integrity and, for a while at least, a presumption that Kosovo

[108] There are interesting counterfactuals here. If a peacekeeping force had deployed to Abkhazia in September 1993 after the fall of Sukhumi and established a ceasefire line that had left Gali region under the control of Tbilisi (and prevented Abkhaz forces advancing to the Inguri), the post-war environment would have looked very different, perhaps with Gali now being in a position similar to north Kosovo. Such a scenario may also have made partition of Abkhazia a more likely outcome. In Kosovo, if KFOR had limited its role to guarding the border with Serbia and not protecting minorities against attacks from Kosovo Albanians, the post-war environment would also have turned out very differently.

would remain part of Serbia. This meant that between 1999 and 2008 Kosovo existed in something of a limbo status as a protectorate of the international community, a situation which became unsustainable. During the case study period of 1994 to 2006, Abkhazia was never anything other than part of Georgia under international law, and in the early 1990s at least, Russia did not support Abkhaz independence – which is not to say it was supporting the restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity either. With no recognition from any states during this period, Abkhazia became a mostly neglected de facto state with ambivalent Russian assistance and little international interest in changing the status quo, until increased Russian involvement in the 2000s led to more dramatic changes. In both cases, international changes would alter the context in which the secessionists and base states formed objectives and the control strategies they would subsequently use.

De facto control versus international recognition

De facto control of populated territory and international recognition of claims to statehood and sovereignty are both fundamental aspects of secessionist conflict and their importance for international order. The two case studies show how complicated the relationship between them can be, and reinforces the importance of explaining how actors shape de facto control. Serbia 'lost' Kosovo more fully than Georgia 'lost' Abkhazia in terms of international recognition for the secessionists' claim to statehood, but Belgrade retained more de facto control over the population and territory of north Kosovo (and to a lesser extent the Serb-majority enclaves south of the Ibar) than Tbilisi did over Gali or any other part of Abkhazia (except for Upper Kodori Valley from 2006-2008). As a consequence, Belgrade has had far more influence over what happens in Kosovan politics. This has not necessarily translated into a stronger Serbian claim for continued sovereignty over Kosovo – in contrast to the near universal international support for Georgia's territorial integrity – but it matters for the ongoing process of decentralising political autonomy to Serb-majority communities and enables Belgrade to act as a spoiler in Kosovan politics.

So while Priština has received widespread international support for independence and massive investments in state- and institution-building, during the case study period the effective control of Kosovan political institutions did not extend throughout the territory or encompass the whole

population. Contrast this to the situation in Abkhazia – Sukhumi has received almost no international recognition of its claims to statehood and has next to no support other than from Moscow, but there is no Georgian state influence over Abkhazian politics today (except perhaps in being able to prevent further recognitions), and there was very little throughout the case study period. Those areas where Tbilisi was able to retain a presence and influence events are now under Sukhumi's (and Moscow's) control, while the breadth and depth of Moscow's political influence over Sukhumi has steadily increased since the 2000s, and especially since 2008, guaranteeing, for now, Abkhazia's de facto full separation from Georgia.

With these three observations in mind, I now compare and contrast the control strategies of the base states and secessionists from the two case studies.

Secessionists: First Post-war Phase

In the first post-war phase of both cases, both secessionist sides had the constrained objective to preserve control. Neither had been able to secure a complete de facto or de jure victory: the military defeats of the base states' armed forces were not matched with effective control over the entire territory claimed by the secessionists. Border regions and enclaves were still partially controlled by the base states and populated by people who recognised the base state as the legitimate authority. Neither secessionist side faced an immediate threat of reincorporation, but neither side had international support for full independence either. Both were committed to defending their wartime gains, which meant removing or preventing the return of any base state presence or influence, but were ambivalent about extending demographic control over the communities in the secessionist territories who are coethnics with the base state majority, that is, Georgians in Abkhazia and Serbs in Kosovo.[109] They also had limited capability to do so, partly due to a lack of resources, and partly due to the efforts of the base states to retain links to their coethnics residing in those territories and prevent them from coming under the control or influence of the secessionists.

[109] To keep the focus on the base state-secessionist cleavage, I will not discuss relations with other minority groups in Kosovo (such as Roma or Bosniaks) and Abkhazia (such as Armenians and Russians).

Territorially, both secessionist sides demarcated and regulated boundaries in order to deny access to base state actors and their proxies. In Abkhazia this meant internal boundaries between Gali region and Kodori Valley and the rest of Abkhazia, and at the Abkhazia-Georgia boundary and the border region of Gali which in effect became a buffer zone between Abkhazia and Georgia. In Kosovo, internal boundaries were formed through enclavisation and the north-south division of Mitrovica. These processes were largely because of defensive measures taken by Serb communities under KFOR protection and the divisions became entrenched by the restrictions on freedom of movement for Serbs outside the enclaves and north Kosovo and a failure to integrate all of Kosovo under common institutions. So in both cases, the areas not controlled by the secessionist authorities, and the populations living there, become isolated and cut-off.

Strategies to contain and isolate areas not under secessionist control were clearer in Abkhazia than in Kosovo: for Sukhumi, Gali region in the first post-war phase was a buffer zone and a battleground between Georgian armed groups and the Abkhaz militia that posed a security threat to the rest of Abkhazia that needed to be cleared – even if it could not be brought fully under Abkhaz control, Sukhumi needed to deny control to Tbilisi and the Government in Exile. Gerrymandering in Gali region helped isolate the population and confined it to a controllable area, while the defeat of the armed groups in Gali in 1998 reduced both the effectiveness of attempts by the base state side to undermine Abkhazia and the possibility of partition. The Georgian-controlled section of Kodori Valley was also a threat to Abkhaz security that Sukhumi needed to contain, but in the first phase this was done, at least in part, by negotiating a relatively peaceful coexistence with the local population.

Priština, with KFOR security guarantees, was not threatened by Serb control over north Kosovo or Serb-majority enclaves in the same way: the enclaves had a defensive function, and there was no equivalent of the Georgian armed groups launching attacks on Kosovan authorities. North Kosovo is perhaps better thought of in terms of an unfinished Kosovar statebuilding project and a challenge to Kosovan territorial integrity – the threats for Priština were rather the possibility of Kosovo being partitioned and the undermining of Kosovan politics. As noted at the start of this section, the international security structures made the key difference in terms of constraints and opportunities. In Abkhazia, the Security Zone and ceasefire line along the Inguri river controlled by the CIS-PKF reduced the access of the Georgian side to

Abkhazia. In Kosovo, KFOR helped create the de facto division in the north which facilitated Belgrade's continued control. Moreover, the CIS-PKF, despite having a (unfulfilled) mandate to create a secure environment for the return of IDPs, and to Gali in particular, never had a role similar to that which KFOR played in protecting the Kosovo Serbs.

Large numbers of Serbs and Georgians were forced from their homes, especially during the war termination phases, and the issue of returns was central to the post-war control strategies used by the base states and secessionists in both cases, but especially the secessionist sides. Control over the possibility of return – being able to affect who gets to live where – became one of the means by which the secessionist sides would try to preserve their wartime gains by retaining a favourable demographic balance within their claimed territories. As the case studies showed, obstructing the return of displaced ethnic Georgians and ethnic Serbs, and confining those who did return to limited areas, was an important demographic strategy in both cases for meeting a preserve control objective and for managing the perceived threat of a potentially hostile or subversive population on the 'wrong side' of new post-war divides.

There is an important difference in the two cases, though – before the war, the Abkhaz had been a minority within Abkhazia, whereas Kosovo Albanians were the majority in Kosovo. This meant that the demographic 'threat' of returns – and of becoming a minority again – was felt more acutely by the Abkhaz. It should also be noted that the Kosovo Albanian leadership in the Provisional Institutions were openly in support of returns and the international actors in Kosovo were determined that Kosovo would be a multiethnic state, even though local action, including in local government, was often obstructing returns on the ground.

Many Georgian IDPs from Gali region have returned,[110] beginning in the first post-war phase, but remain insecure and, notwithstanding efforts at assimilation beginning in the second phase, are largely separate

[110] Recall that the Abkhaz authorities have not allowed Georgians who were displaced from other parts of Abkhazia to return.

from the rest of Abkhazia. Gali Georgians rarely travel to any other parts of Abkhazia and Abkhaz rarely enter Gali region. Serbs who have returned have done so mostly to north Kosovo and the enclaves south of the Ibar – that is, to Serb-majority areas, not to areas where Serbs would be a minority, such as Priština where much of the pre-war population lived. During the first post-war phase at least, Serbs had very limited freedom of movement outside of these areas.

Base States: First Post-war Phase

Both base states had the objective to retain links in the first post-war phase. In both cases, the battlefield victories of the secessionist side were incomplete, and the base states did not lose complete control over the secessionist territory and population. This meant that they could feasibly retain links, albeit in different ways and to different extents. Both base states used enclaves and border regions to sustain access to secessionist territory and were able to leverage coethnic populations still residing in secessionist territory, working to sustain an official or semi-official presence (or do so indirectly via proxies) and to keep that population in place. In both cases there is evidence that the base states took measures to prevent their coethnics cooperating with secessionist authorities. International constraints on the secessionists, especially the initial presumption against recognising their secession, helped the base states, but an international security presence left them unable to forcibly reincorporate lost territory.

Belgrade used control strategies to sustain access to and near-exclusive control over north Kosovo and the Serb-majority enclaves and avoid the loss of any more de facto control, at least in north Kosovo as the enclaves south of the Ibar became more integrated into Kosovan national structures. This was done by establishing and sustaining public goods provision and jurisdiction via parallel institutions, especially the healthcare system, the university in north Mitrovica, and the courts, to keep the loyalty and compliance of the Kosovo Serb population, and by sustaining the presence of Serbian state agents in these areas. Counter-efforts by Kosovar institutions and international actors to extend control to Serb-controlled areas were limited, which helped to entrench de facto Serb control over these areas, as did the already mentioned role of KFOR in allowing these divisions to take hold.

By contrast, Tbilisi was not able to establish parallel institutions in Abkhazia in the same way. Retaining links was possible in Kodori Valley where a Georgian police presence was sustained and as shown in

Chapter 4 it was possible for Tbilisi to avoid further territorial loss and keep access to this strategically important bridgehead, albeit mostly through local proxies. Gali region, however, was largely inaccessible – payment of Georgian teachers continued, but there was no possibility of anything similar to the healthcare, education and judicial structures run by Belgrade.[111] The Abkhazian Government in Exile did function as a sort of parallel authority in Gali, but without territorial access or a sustained presence in Abkhazia their strategies were mostly confined to pursuing the more constrained objective of undermining Abkhaz control, which was done, at least to some extent, independently of the Georgian government (another important contrast with Serbia where the base state side did not have actors other than the central government acting with this level of autonomy). With Tbilisi turning a blind eye or unable to establish a monopoly over armed actors, and with a ready pool of recruits from the IDP population, the armed groups were able to conduct a low-level insurgency against the Abkhaz authorities (and the CIS-PKF) in Gali and contribute to denying the secessionists control of the region, but could not establish a lasting presence there. The defeat of the armed groups in May 1998 strengthened the Abkhaz position and left the base state with a further diminished capacity to retain links to Abkhaz territory.

As these brief comparisons of the base state and secessionist control strategies in the first post-war phase show, a lot depended on the interaction and overlap of interests of the two sides in the two key border regions of Gali and north Kosovo, and their respective populations. The control strategies of the Georgian side required access to the territory and populations of Gali and Kodori Valley in order to retain links. To preserve control, the Abkhaz had to use control strategies to deny the Georgian side access; by 1998 this had been more or less achieved in Gali while the Georgian foothold in Kodori Valley remained. Likewise, for Belgrade to retain links into Kosovo, it was necessary to sustain access to north Kosovo and the Serb-majority enclaves. Priština and the international actors in Kosovo were not able or

[111] Closely related to the differences in international security structures and level of post-war stability already noted, the high levels of violence and criminality in Gali in the first post-war phase are also important in explaining why any form of institution building or governance would have been difficult.

willing to remove this sustained presence, but it was more or less confined to these areas and did not hinder the development of the Kosovo Provisional Institutions under the supervision of UNMIK.

Second Post-War Phase

The cases diverge in the second post-war phase and there are fewer clear points of comparison between them, but the divergence has a common origin. In both cases, international factors were important in changing the opportunities and constraints for the principal political actors: changes in the level and type of external support for the secessionist sides enabled changes in Sukhumi and Priština's objectives and strategies, to which the base states then had to respond.

Secessionists: Second Post-war Phase

After the renewal of international interest in settling Kosovo's status after the riots of March 2004, Priština's focus in the second post-war phase was on attaining de jure recognition, ultimately declaring independence in 2008. As I discussed in Chapter 5, this was not accompanied by territorial and demographic control strategies to consolidate and extend de facto control over those areas of Kosovo that were still under the control and influence of Belgrade. While there was some continuation of those strategies used to preserve control in the first phase, Priština shifted to a political and diplomatic strategy, with international support, and it was only after the declaration of independence that more concerted (but still incomplete) efforts were made to remove the parallel institutions.

By contrast, in Abkhazia, the increase in Russian involvement, coming on the heels of the defeat of the armed groups in Gali in 1998, meant that Sukhumi shifted towards a consolidate and extend objective. There was no attempt in this period to extend territorial control to Kodori Valley – after the spike in violence in the early 2000s, there was a return to the status quo until Tbilisi's extension of control into Upper Kodori Valley in 2006 – but the consolidate and extend objective was pursued using demographic strategies to integrate and assimilate Gali region and the ethnic Georgian population. Under the Bagapsh administration, Gali was viewed less as a buffer zone and security threat but as this chapter's discussion of post-2008 developments shows, there is still significant ambivalence and disagreement amongst Abkhaz political elites over the extent to which the people of Gali can and should be integrated into an Abkhaz national project. The integration that has taken place has not been accompanied by an increase in political

autonomy, and here there is another clear contrast with Kosovo – decentralisation to Serb-majority areas, as anticipated in the Ahtisaari report, may have not been fully realised yet but there has been a political process to establish and formalise the constitutionally guaranteed rights of Serbs (and other minorities) in Kosovo.

In both cases these changes and differences can be attributed to the external support on which both secessionist sides were and are highly dependent. In Abkhazia's case, this meant an increasingly assertive Russia taking more interest in pulling the breakaway region further into its orbit in order to destabilise Georgia, and came with material support and Russian citizenship for a substantial proportion of the Abkhaz population. In Kosovo's case, it meant widespread but not universal international acceptance that (supervised) independence was the only option when a return to Serb rule was unacceptable and the international administration was unsustainable, and came with an expectation that Kosovo must be a multiethnic and minority rights respecting society. For both secessionist sides, these developments moved them closer to full and permanent separation from the base state but has not lessened their dependence on external actors.

Base states: Second Post-war Phase

The control strategies of the base states in the second phase were often reactive, shaped by what the secessionist authorities and their international supporters were doing, and were also affected by domestic developments that were not always directly related to the post-war cleavage. Belgrade, facing an increasingly likely declaration of independence by Priština, maintained the same objective and strategies – sustaining de facto control over north Kosovo to hinder if not block Kosovo's path to independence and keeping open the possibility of partition, and this was done using measures such as sustaining the parallel institutions and using various incentives and sanctions towards the Kosovo Serb population to prevent cooperation with the internationally-recognised authorities. With the domestic changes taking place in Georgia during the second post-war phase, as the dying days of the Shevardnadze era gave way to Saakashvili's reforms after the Rose revolution in 2003, the cases diverge even further. The brief episodes of violence in Kodori Valley in the early 2000s were a continuation of the disruptive efforts of Georgian armed groups – this time working with Chechen militias – to undermine Abkhaz control, and were even

less effective than the militia activity in Gali in the 1990s. Saakashvili's consolidation of power across Georgia unsurprisingly included a major escalation in efforts to reclaim control of territory in Abkhazia, starting with the removal of local proxy forces and the installation of a civilian authority in Kodori Valley in 2006. By this stage, though, and in marked contrast to the Serbia-Kosovo case where an international framework of talks and negotiations kept relations between Belgrade and Priština within an institutional process, Tbilisi's relationship with Sukhumi's backers in Moscow worsened and ultimately led to war.

End of the post-war phases and post-2008 developments

The divergence that started in the second phase widened after 2008 and developments since the end of the main case study periods have followed very different trajectories, even though neither conflict has been resolved. Serbia and Kosovo made a transition out of the post-war phase into a more institutionalised political process, while the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict has been caught up in a bigger geopolitical contest between Russia and the West. As this chapter has discussed, there have been instances of both continuity and change in the control strategies the principal actors have used since the end of the periods covered in my case studies, and the lasting consequences can still be seen in both cases even as new developments have taken over. As the changes start to outweigh the continuities, the 'post-war' label becomes less helpful, but the ongoing relevance of de facto control reinforces the analytical value of identifying where, when and why the actors use territorial and demographic control strategies, while also investigating what other strategies the actors use.

Abkhazia and Kosovo have both sought further recognition and membership of international society, while both base states, as their other options have diminished, have devoted their efforts to preventing or reversing recognition. After 2008, Belgrade continued to exert some de facto control in north Kosovo, even as the number of states recognising Kosovo increased and Priština undertook a more deliberate effort to extend its authority to its northern border and to dismantle the remaining parallel institutions. Tbilisi lost all control and influence in Abkhazia, while Sukhumi continues to consolidate and extend control over Gali region – sometimes ambivalently with regard to the population, and with an increasing territorial focus on border control – as part of an ongoing national project that is now tied up to an even greater extent with Russia's interests and security priorities in the region. While both secessionist sides

were opposed to territorial partition and would not countenance the loss of Gali or north Kosovo, neither have they been fully committed (or able) to integrate the areas not under their control, and in particular have remained ambivalent about the populations (including both those who were displaced and then returned, and those who never left), while able to exert a fair degree of control over who could or could not live there.

Even today, the question of 'who rules' in north Kosovo is at best ambiguous. In Gali, there may be different views as to whether Moscow or Sukhumi are really in control, but it is definitely not Tbilisi. Why was Belgrade able to retain links to the population and the territory in north Kosovo in a way that Tbilisi never could in Gali? In addition to the consequences of different international security structures already discussed, this was also about base state priorities. Belgrade made keeping the possibility of partition open central to its post-1999 plans, so north Kosovo has been the most important part of Belgrade's Kosovo strategy. Gali was not as central to the Georgian government's strategies (although Tbilisi did propose joint international administration and has tried at various times to extend jurisdiction over territory). So while Belgrade was active in north Kosovo via parallel structures throughout the case study period and after, Tbilisi has not been able to act in such a way as to affect facts on the ground in Gali at all, except to undermine Abkhaz control indirectly through the armed groups in the 1990s. Another factor is differences in the pushback from the secessionist side when faced with border regions within the territory they claim but do not fully control. Priština and the international actors in Kosovo did little to challenge Belgrade in north Kosovo until 2011, while Sukhumi has always been trying to deal with Gali, whether through violent confrontations between Abkhaz militia and Georgian armed groups, or through the later 'Abkhazisation' efforts. All these factors have meant that throughout the case study periods and since 2008, Gali and north Kosovo have been useful levers, often of greater instrumental value than intrinsic value to the principal political actors. In both cases, this has provided opportunities to use the territories and the populations to hurt or undermine the other side, and in both cases, it has been the local populations who have suffered most, stuck between two worlds and getting the worst of both.

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This concludes the presentation and comparison of the theory building case studies and the discussion of more recent developments. The last three chapters were the empirical core of this study and, in combination with the theoretical framework in Chapter 2, are the output of a theory building effort intended to provide an explanation of the causes of state and secessionist post-war control strategies. Through the investigation of two cases, I have reconstructed the process by which the actors form post-war objectives which are then translated into territorial and demographic control strategies and shown how this process shapes a post-war environment after secessionist war. In the next and final chapter, I extend the analysis beyond these two cases and then evaluate the framework.

- Expectations (C2)
    - The cases showed that this is what happened …

Chapter 7: Extensions

7.1 Introduction

This chapter extends the analysis to the other secessionist wars of the 1990s in the Caucasus and the Balkans, using brief 'shadow cases' to examine whether the argument developed over the previous six chapters is also relevant for the termination and aftermath of a larger number of secessionist wars. The shadow cases are not tests of the theoretical framework, but are illustrative of how it can help make sense of other cases. They also show where the framework needs to be improved or can be extended, and I use the shadow cases as the basis for (1) an evaluation of the overall argument and framework and (2) suggestions for further research in section 7.3. My aim in this chapter is to clarify, refine and extend my explanation of causes of post-war control strategies and the project's contribution more generally.

7.2 Shadow Cases

My aim with the shadow cases is to take each of the secessionist wars in the Balkans and the Caucasus and, on the basis of evidence available from secondary sources and using the framework of Chapter 2, see if it is possible to identify the demographic and territorial strategies being used by the base state and the secessionists, if any, and make judgements about their constrained objectives. The relevant evidence can then be integrated into brief historical narratives of the main post-war developments. With shadow cases it is only possible to make approximate claims about the actors' objectives and the strategies they used, but reconstructing some of the core post-war developments through the lens of my theoretical framework is useful for showing the relevance of the argument beyond the Georgia-Abkhazia and Serbia-Kosovo cases. For each of the cases discussed in this section, it is possible to provide at least some evidence that the principal political actors were using demographic and/or territorial control strategies consistent with a post-war constrained objective, and that these strategies were substantively important in shaping the post-war environment.

Georgia and South Ossetia, 1992-2008

In June 1992, talks between the Georgian and Russian heads of state, Eduard Shevardnadze and Boris Yeltsin, resulted in a ceasefire – the Sochi Agreement – that brought an end to the violence in South

Ossetia.[1] While relatively small compared to the other post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav wars, there were about 1,000 fatalities and the "results of eighteen months of chaos and urban warfare were devastating."[2] The conflict displaced around 10,000 ethnic Georgians from South Ossetia, and around 60,000 Ossetians (mostly to North Ossetia in Russia),[3] including 20-30,000 Ossetians living in Georgia proper who left because of the pressure on non-Georgian minorities during the hostile nationalism of the Gamsakhurdia presidency.[4] In a war fought largely between militias and armed groups, the Georgian authorities could not generate sufficient military capacity to take full control of South Ossetia, including the capital, Tskhinvali, and South Ossetian forces also lacked the capacity to take control of the whole territory.[5] The ceasefire agreement established a Joint Control Commission (JCC) and Joint Peacekeeping Force (JPKF) with Georgian, Russian and Ossetian units.[6] The OSCE was mandated to monitor the ceasefire and tasked with facilitating a resolution to the conflict.[7]

I divide the post-war period into two phases lasting from the ceasefire until the Georgian-Russian war in 2008:[8] 1992 to 2003 and 2004 to 2008.

First Post-War Phase: 1992 – 2003

The ceasefire arrangements and the JPKF sustained the status quo which suited both sides in the first post-war phase: the peacekeepers kept Georgians and Ossetians separated, and there was little interaction between the two sides.[9] Tbilisi was preoccupied with the war in Abkhazia which broke out soon after the Sochi agreement was signed, and while the secessionists had effectively broken away from the sovereignty of the base state, their de facto control only extended to about 80-85% of villages in South Ossetia and

[1] <https://www.peaceagreements.org/view/1699>
[2] International Crisis Group 2005b, 3; See also Human Rights Watch 1992.
[3] International Crisis Group 2005b, 4; OCHA Georgia 2004.
[4] Baev puts the figure at 20,000. Baev 2003, 135; Zürcher puts the figure at 30,000. Zürcher 2007, 142.
[5] Sammut and Dvetkovski 1996; Zürcher 2007; Baev 2003.
[6] https://www.peaceagreements.org/view/1699
[7] Ghebali 2004.
[8] As I argued was the case in the Abkhazia conflict, the wider context had changed so much by the 2008 war that it should be treated separately (Chapter 6).
[9] *The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia: Volume Two* 2009, 98.

they did not control the border/ABL.[10] The self-declared republic lacked many of the empirical attributes of statehood – even as it adopted many of the trappings of statehood, including a presidency, parliament, and ministry of defence[11] – but the political aspirations for separation from Georgia and unification with the Russian region of North Ossetia remained, so the most plausible constrained objective at this stage was to preserve control over what was gained during the war, and prevent the Georgian government from regaining control.

The Georgian government never fully lost effective control over the Georgian-populated parts of South Ossetian territory. Georgian-majority villages disregarded the de facto authorities and remained under the control of the base state, in effect forming Georgian enclaves that administratively and financially continued to be part of Georgian political structures.[12] The Georgian government has always been committed to fully restoring territorial integrity, but also neglected the situation in South Ossetia, preoccupied with the higher priority of Abkhazia, and by the process of stabilisation taking place throughout Georgia. In this phase, Tbilisi could tolerate the status quo in South Ossetia as long as no further control was lost and so the objective was to the retain links to Georgian-controlled villages and prevent further secessionist gains.

By 1996 the security situation was improving, the peacekeepers' checkpoints were removed, trade increased, and people could move freely between South Ossetia and Georgia proper, allowing improvements in inter-ethnic relations.[13] Those researching the conflict at the time were optimistic that a peaceful settlement was within reach.[14] However, the lack of basic services and economic opportunities combined with legal and administrative problems that neither side were willing to solve meant that very few of the displaced returned.[15] Nor was there much change in de facto control of populated territory,

[10] Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2008.
[11] Mackinlay and Sharov 2003, 78.
[12] Baev 2003; Mackinlay and Sharov 2003; International Crisis Group 2004b.
[13] *The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia: Volume Two* 2009, 98–103; Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2008, 492; Herzig 1999, 65.
[14] Sammut and Dvetkovski 1996, 3; In his study published in 2001, Cornell wrote: "The conflict in South Ossetia … is clearly moving toward a reconciliation and a negotiated solution" Cornell 2001, 183.
[15] OCHA Georgia 2004; International Crisis Group 2005b, 6–8.

and neither side was trying to alter the facts on the ground that had held since the end of the war. The territory of South Ossetia was a "patchwork of de facto South Ossetian and de jure Georgian jurisdictions", including some Georgian-controlled villages deep in South Ossetian territory to the north of Tskhinvali.[16] There was a political process with talks between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali,[17] but both sides were benefiting, especially economically, from the status quo which kept relations cordial.[18] An illicit economy was burgeoning in and around South Ossetia and the de facto authorities were able to survive by controlling illicit trade, taking advantage of their geographic position which gave them control over trade routes to Russia. The Ergneti market, sited on the boundary line between South Ossetia and Georgia proper and which operated as a vast regional smuggling hub, was at the heart of illicit economic activity and helped sustain inter-ethnic cooperation.[19]

By 2001 South Ossetia had a new political leader, and with Eduard Kokoity as president, South Ossetia's objectives regarding political status had hardened, at least rhetorically, "into a zero-sum desire to secede from Georgia in order to join North Ossetia."[20] I could not find evidence to suggest a change in constrained objectives to consolidate and extend or control strategies to match – the secessionists lacked the capacity to change the situation on the ground – but, parallel to developments in Abkhazia, large numbers of South Ossetians acquired Russian citizenship from 2002 onwards,[21] and key positions in the administration were staffed by Russians.

Second Post-War Phase: 2004 – 2008

As discussed in Chapter 4, Saakashvili's post-Rose Revolution government was determined to restore Georgia's territorial integrity, and this meant a change in constrained objective to reclaiming control of lost territory, including in South Ossetia.[22] This is when we see the first major changes in the use of

[16] Broers 2015b, 278–279; Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2008.
[17] Shevardnadze and South Ossetian leader Lyudvig Chibirov had a good personal relationship. George 2009, 127.
[18] King 2001, 546.
[19] King 2001; See also Closson 2010; Nilsson 2014.
[20] George 2009, 127.
[21] *The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia: Volume Two* 2009, 147.
[22] Civil Georgia 2004b.

control strategies after twelve years of relative inactivity, and in summer 2004 the conflict escalated to a level of violence not seen since 1992. The Georgian government justified its actions in terms of restoring law and order and challenging a criminal leadership in South Ossetia which they (wrongly) believed lacked support from an Ossetian population whose loyalty could be brought over to the Georgian side, and took several measures to change facts on the ground.[23] The first major development was closing the Ergneti market (denying many Ossetians their primary source of income), which was part of a wider anti-smuggling operation that included destroying roads used by smugglers and increasing the presence of Georgian Interior Ministry personnel in South Ossetia. This was combined with demographic strategies, targeting economic incentives and the provision of services at Ossetians in a 'hearts and minds' campaign attempting to shift their loyalty to Tbilisi.[24] The response of the de facto authorities – who in fact retained high levels of support – was defensive, seeing Tbilisi's actions as an existential threat. Ossetians were prevented from complying with Georgian officials, and those who worked with or accepted aid from Tbilisi were reportedly arrested or beaten by the South Ossetian police.[25] The security situation deteriorated and dozens were killed in violence through July and August until a ceasefire was agreed on 19 August 2004.

After such a major miscalculation and failure, Tbilisi had to scale back to an objective of retaining links and tried to sustain its limited control over parts of South Ossetia by deploying military police to Georgian controlled areas and increasing the number of Georgian peacekeepers above the level permitted by the ceasefire agreement.[26] The secessionist position hardened further (and dependence on Russia increased), and the de facto authorities held a referendum in 2006 where most of the Ossetian population expressed their support for independence.[27] Divisions between de facto and de jure control became increasingly blurred when parallel elections were held in November 2006. Kokoity was re-elected in the

[23] International Crisis Group 2004b.
[24] Ibid.; Freese 2005; Welt 2010.
[25] George 2009, 180; Freese 2005, 113-114. Freese also reports that "One official with a reputation of being 'close' to Georgians was fired. Another minister was found dead".
[26] International Crisis Group 2007b, 15.
[27] The Guardian 2006.

elections run by the Tskhinvali-based de facto authorities, while a group of South Ossetian political figures (associated with the previous de facto president of South Ossetia, Chibirov) held a separate election in mostly Georgian-controlled areas resulting in the election of Dmitri Sanakoev as an alternative de facto president, running on a pro-Georgian platform.[28] Sanakoev, with a powerbase in the Georgian-controlled village of Kurta (5 kilometres from Tskhinvali), lacked popular legitimacy amongst his coethnic Ossetians, but was seen by Tbilisi as a "genuine Ossetian interlocutor with whom it can negotiate a settlement which would keep South Ossetia in [Georgia]."[29] Tbilisi had to change strategies after the setbacks in 2004 but was edging back towards more ambitious efforts for reincorporating South Ossetia, and Sanakoev was a conduit to continue by proxy the base state's efforts to gain the support of the Ossetian population by demonstrating the benefits of siding with Georgia. Tbilisi invested heavily in economic development, with Georgian-administered areas – including Kurta – receiving millions of dollars of financial assistance and infrastructure projects (much as was happening in Upper Kodori Valley at the same time).[30]

The Georgian-Russian conflict would subsequently subsume local developments in South Ossetia and are beyond the scope of this chapter.[31] That conflict and what followed the August 2008 war should be treated separately, but the post-war environment formed in South Ossetia between 1992 and 2008 created the context for subsequent developments, including Russia's recognition of South Ossetia's independence, and the further isolation of South Ossetia as it became politically and physically sealed off from Georgia with the construction of a border along the Administrative Boundary Line.[32]

[28] International Crisis Group 2007b, 2.
[29] Ibid., 4.
[30] Ibid., 22. The Georgian population of Kurta were evacuated during the 2008 war and the village is now abandoned and most of the houses destroyed.
[31] See also Chapter 6. South Ossetia and Abkhazia are different in many ways, but some developments overlap. For a South Ossetian perspective on the 2008 war, see Sotieva 2014.
[32] Toal and O'Loughlin 2013a; Amnesty International 2019.

Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh, 1994-2020[33]

It is noteworthy that the Russian-brokered ceasefire in the spring of 1994 that brought an end to the most violent phase of a conflict that began in the late 1980s was signed by three people: the defence ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the head of the Karabakh Armenian armed forces. This was – and is – both a secessionist conflict fought by the Karabakh Armenians to secede from Azerbaijan *and* an interstate conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the secessionist territory.[34] Tens of thousands died during the war and 1.5 million Azerbaijanis and Armenians were displaced, "fundamentally transforming the demography of the South Caucasus and converting Azerbaijan and Armenia … into largely mono-ethnic states."[35] International involvement has been limited, with an important but largely unsuccessful mediating role for the OSCE Minsk group of Russia, France and the USA. There are no international peacekeepers.

The parties may have agreed to a ceasefire, but the Karabakh Armenians had won a clear military victory, starting with an offensive in June 1993 that made sweeping territorial gains and displaced huge numbers of Azerbaijanis.[36] By the end of the war, Nagorno-Karabakh's armed forces controlled almost the entire territory of the Soviet-era Oblast and a substantial amount of adjacent territory from which the Azerbaijani population had been forcibly expelled. Little has changed since. Azerbaijan lost effective control of about 13% of its territory and 12-15% of its population were displaced.[37] The secessionists fought their way to establish the Nagorno Karabakh Republic (NKR) according to a military logic that would end their status as an enclave by seizing control of the so-called 'Lachin Corridor' – a stretch of

[33] This section was completed in August 2020 before the renewal of the conflict later that year and does not address those events.
[34] Cornell 2001, 47–48; See also especially Broers 2019.
[35] International Crisis Group 2012d, 2.
[36] Cornell 2001, 92–93.
[37] "Nagorno-Karabakh forces, reinforced by many conscripts and contracted soldiers from Armenia, occupy some 13.4 per cent of Azerbaijan's land (11,722 sq. km.). This includes some 92.5 per cent of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO), five districts outside Nagorno-Karabakh, and significant segments of two others. The occupied territory outside the former NKAO amounts to 7,409 sq. km., close to double the territory of the former Soviet oblast." International Crisis Group 2005d, 1.; Cornell 2001, 47.

land to the west of the NKR that connects it to Armenia.[38] It was assumed that while control of Lachin district was non-negotiable and an existential necessity for Karabakh Armenians, the other adjacent occupied territories were a bargaining chip to be traded back to Azerbaijan in exchange for recognition. The ceasefire, which established a 260-kilometre long 'Line of Contact' (LOC) lined by tens of thousands of soldiers sometimes barely 100 metres apart, is frequently violated with regular exchanges of fire and dozens of fatalities every year.[39]

I divide the post-war period into two phases. The first is from 1994 to around 2006, with the early 2000s a transitional period from the first to the second phase, which is ongoing.

First Post-War Phase: 1994 – early 2000s/2006

The parties' maximalist positions have not shifted since the war. Baku demands that Azerbaijan's territorial integrity is restored, which means the return of all territories controlled by the Karabakh Armenians. The Karabakh Armenians, with Yerevan's backing, want independence and international recognition for their self-declared republic, the borders of which would contain Lachin.[40] The frequent ceasefire violations claimed many lives but did nothing to change the amount of territory each side controlled, leaving the unresolved conflict in a suspended status of 'no war, no peace' with the NKR de facto independent while Armenia and Azerbaijan endured years of domestic turmoil.[41]

In these conditions, the options of the base state and the secessionists were limited, but the latter had more room for manoeuvre and could aim to not just preserve their wartime territorial gains but also consolidate and extend their control. The NKR could not expect international recognition, but Azerbaijan's parlous domestic situation combined with material support from Armenia meant that their wartime territorial gains were unlikely to be reversed. The secessionists' priority was to preserve control

[38] The consequences were devastating: "In this process large swaths of the human settlement geography of western Azerbaijan were laid to waste." Toal and O'Loughlin 2013b, 167.
[39] De Waal writes that "An average of three dozen soldiers were killed each year." De Waal 2013, 294; Cornell cites OSCE figures estimating that an average of one person a day was being killed between 1994 and 1999. Cornell 2001, 93.
[40] Cornell 2001, 108.
[41] Walker 1998; De Waal 2013, chap. 17.

over the territory claimed for the republic, but also to ensure that control over the Lachin Corridor was secure so that Nagorno-Karabakh would never be an enclave again.[42] The adjacent occupied territories, including Lachin, were never part of the Soviet-era Oblast, nor home to a significant Armenian population, so Karabakh Armenians have essentially no legitimate claim over them. This meant that establishing irreversible facts on the ground was central to their post-war strategy. In the first post-war phase, the NKR authorities focused their demographic and territorial control strategies on the Lachin Corridor and in effect worked towards de facto integration with Armenia.[43] In addition to defensive fortifications and a highly militarised population, the de facto authorities worked with Yerevan on infrastructure projects to connect the NKR and Armenia, and Armenians were encouraged to settle in the Lachin Corridor as a way to strengthen territorial control.[44] The highly militarised LOC that seals off the NKR from Azerbaijan made the return of IDPs impossible and preserved the population of the secessionist territory as almost exclusively Armenian.

With international opinion favouring territorial integrity, the Azerbaijani government did not face the prospect of the secessionists' military victory being recognised and could work through the OSCE-mediated talks to pursue a favourable resolution. But Baku had few options for changing facts on the ground. The extent of the wartime losses meant there were no available links or levers – there was essentially no base state presence left on the secessionist territory, and no loyal population. The base state was only in a position to undermine the secessionists' control indirectly by hurting Armenia. Armenia is landlocked, bordering Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkey and Georgia, so Baku, working with Ankara, closed its borders with Armenia, thereby "crippling Armenia's economic prospects" in what de Waal called a "slow suicide pact in which each country hurt the other, while suffering itself, hoping to achieve a better position at the negotiating table."[45]

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[42] On this the NKR was explicit. Cornell quotes a Karabakh official: 'We will never be an enclave again.' Cornell 2001, 110.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2008.
[45] De Waal 2013, 3–4.

Second Post-War Phase: early 2000s/2006 – July 2020

Greater international involvement in the peace process generated better prospects for a deal in the early 2000s but this came to nothing, partly due to domestic politics in Armenia and Azerbaijan which precluded compromise.[46] A Crisis Group report from 2005 captured the mutually exclusive aims, unchanged more than a decade after the ceasefire: "Azerbaijan does not accept any compromise of its territorial integrity… Armenia is not willing to support withdrawal from the seven occupied districts around Nagorno-Karabakh, or allow the return of Azerbaijan [IDPs] to Nagorno-Karabakh, until the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh is a reality."[47] However, an oil boom was vastly increasing Azerbaijan's wealth; by 2011 the $3 billion Baku was spending on its military was greater than the entire Armenian state budget.[48] To prevent another war, Russia maintains a strategic balance between the two sides by providing military support and security guarantees to Armenia.[49] The ceasefire remains extremely precarious with significant outbreaks of violence in 2016, which saw Azerbaijan retake control of small amounts of territory for the first time since 1994,[50] and an escalation in fatal exchanges of fire between Armenian and Azerbaijani troops across the LOC in 2020, far from Nagorno-Karabakh itself.[51]

While the peace process was deadlocked and the delicate strategic balance was maintained, the NKR authorities were shifting their objectives further up the spectrum to greater consolidation and extension of control. In addition to fairly successful internal statebuilding efforts,[52] the NKR authorities were targeting control strategies across the adjacent occupied territories, not just the Lachin Corridor. There was continuity from the first post-war phase – the NKR was busy, in De Waal's words, "erasing the last traces of war on its territory and becoming a fully Armenian entity"; even as it proclaimed itself to be an

[46] De Waal labels this period 'deadlock and estrangement'. Ibid., chap. 19.
[47] International Crisis Group 2005c, i.
[48] According to De Waal, "the declared aim was to force Armenia into an arms race it could not afford and therefore into concessions at the negotiating table." De Waal 2013, 293.
[49] Ibid., 293–294.
[50] Broers 2016b.
[51] Heil 2020.
[52] Caspersen 2012, 80–81.

independent republic, it had "de facto … become a province of Armenia."[53] There was a rhetorical change – "Most Armenians now refer to the seven territories outside Nagorny Karabakh, which had virtually no Armenian population before the conflict, not as 'occupied' but as 'liberated' territories"[54] – but there were also changes taking place on ground: "starting in the early 2000s, the Nagorno-Karabakh authorities began to establish police and other government offices in the [adjacent occupied] territories, including Kelbajar [a district to the north of Lachin, close to border with Armenia]."[55]

By 2004, the four districts between the NKR and Armenia – Lachin, Kelbajar, Kubatly and Zangelan – were home to about 13,500 residents in "dozens of new villages."[56] These developments were initially locally-driven on the initiative of veterans, diaspora groups and activists, but in 2006 the de facto authorities "took full control" over the settlements and adopted a constitution asserting jurisdiction over the territory.[57] Analysts of the conflict argue that settling these territories with an Armenian population has been a "clear policy" of the NKR leadership since 2007: "Roads were built, many problems with electricity resolved, new schools built, houses repaired…. All was done to support the existing population in the territories."[58] A 2018 report quotes an official from a diaspora group involved in these developments: "Our task now is to create facts on the ground – resettlement, economic development – that will consolidate our hard-won victories on the battlefield."[59]

This consolidation of territorial and demographic control over the adjacent occupied territories continues. Large infrastructure projects are underway such as a new road connecting Armenia and the NKR which cuts through the territories, and settlement of the territories by ethnic Armenians continues.[60] Departing from the earlier assumption that the territories were a bargaining chip to be traded in negotiations, "increasing construction and Armenian settlement … have created facts on the ground that

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[53] De Waal 2013, 289.
[54] Ibid., 289–290.
[55] Kucera 2018.
[56] International Crisis Group 2019, 5.
[57] Ibid., 5–7.
[58] Quoting Crisis Group analyst, Olesya Vartanyan. Kucera 2018.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Eurasianet 2013.

will complicate any potential return to Azerbaijan. (To many of those supporting these projects, that is precisely the point.)"[61] By 2019 there were about 17,000 ethnic Armenians living in the territories between the NKR and Armenia.[62]

Russia and Chechnya, 1996-2007

Chechnya declared independence from Russia in 1991. In the following three years of de facto statehood and failed negotiations between Grozny and Moscow, most of the ethnic Russian population left Chechnya; many were coerced into leaving after being left vulnerable by the virtual absence of any Russian state presence.[63] The Russian government blockaded the territory and undermined the efforts of Chechnya's president, Dzhokhar Dudayev, to build a state and made several attempts to force him out of power.[64] By the summer of 1994, Chechnya was beset by violence and on the point of civil war.[65] In November, Yeltsin launched what was expected to be a short military campaign to 'restore constitutional order', but after two years of a notoriously brutal war that left Chechnya devastated and displaced hundreds of thousands, the Russian military suffered a humiliating defeat and were forced to withdraw.[66]

The agreement that terminated the fighting in August 1996, the Khasavyurt Accords,[67] deferred decisions about Chechnya's status for five years and left both sides still committed to their maximalist goals without resolving the underlying issues. Chechnya remained de facto independent and demanded recognition as a sovereign state, something to which Russia would not concede.[68] The secessionists' battlefield success gave them a strong bargaining position and they achieved their priority of the withdrawal of Russian

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[61] Kucera 2019.
[62] International Crisis Group 2019, 8.
[63] According to Hughes, 'Ethnic cleansing was not conducted under an official policy, but as relations between Russia and Chechnya broke down in late 1991, anti-Russian sentiment spilled out into uncontrolled violent attacks, routine humiliations and robbery of Russian residents by armed gangs of Chechens.' Hughes 2007, 64; See also Zürcher 2007, 71–72.
[64] Hughes 2007, 63; Bakke 2015, 83.
[65] Cornell 2001, 205.
[66] Gall and De Waal 1998; Politkovskaya 2003; Tishkov 2004; Gilligan 2010.
[67] <https://www.peaceagreements.org/view/434>
[68] German 2003, 147; Hughes quotes a Swiss negotiator present at the Khasavyurt talks: "There was no Russian intention to allow for independence. They wanted a limbo." Hughes 2007, 91.

forces, believing that their secession would be formalised and international recognition would follow negotiations with Moscow.[69]

Post-War/Inter-War Period: 1996-1999

Although war would soon break out again, the years between the first and second Chechen wars provide some useful insights into a range of post-war strategies. The secessionists won the war but then lost the peace and could not preserve or consolidate their wartime gains due to factional infighting and failed statebuilding under sustained pressure from Moscow. The Russian government's objective, informed by enduring security interests in the Caucasus and the threat posed by instability in Chechnya, was to undermine secessionist control and ensure the breakaway region did not achieve independence. This escalated to reclaiming control and a return to war to forcibly reincorporate Chechnya in 1999.

With a battlefield victory secured and an expectation of recognition, the secessionist priority was to preserve those gains and prevent a return to Moscow's rule – Chechnya's president, Aslan Maskhadov "never retracted one step from the goal of full independence"[70] – but a power struggle within the Chechen leadership was underway, with a "major political schism" apparent when elections were held in January 1997.[71] While the secessionists had managed to remove the base state from Chechnya, no single actor was able to replace it and consolidate the military victory into effective control. Multiple armed groups and field commanders, including an increasingly prominent Islamist armed movement, could not be brought together into centralised national institutions. Maskhadov was unable to establish stable and authoritative governance, and at no point in the interwar period did he establish territorial control over Chechnya.[72] This is the context in which the secessionist movement began to be supplanted by an Islamist insurgency that extended beyond the borders of Chechnya and across the north Caucasus.[73]

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[69] Hughes 2007, 91.
[70] Cornell 2001, 232. Dudayev was killed in 1996.
[71] Hughes 2007, 95.
[72] Cornell 2001, 237; Hughes 2007, 97.
[73] This development and its origins are beyond what I can cover here, but see Sokirianskai 2010, chap. 6.

Moscow initially used economic pressure, including a blockade, to undermine the secessionists statebuilding efforts and keep them internationally isolated.[74] The Chechens were in dire need of economic assistance, and therefore vulnerable in ongoing talks with Moscow that were focused on Chechnya's reconstruction and sustaining economic links. Grozny wanted to keep status talks separate from economic assistance, but Moscow made this support conditional on "cementing the breakaway republic's subordinate standing"[75] within the Russian Federation, and tried, unsuccessfully, to make the secessionists back down from their aim of independence in return for aid.[76]

Return to War and a New Post-War Environment: 1999 – 2007

In 1999, incursions by Islamist fighters into Dagestan and multiple bombings in Russian cities that the Russian government attributed to Chechen terrorists were among the proximate causes of the second Chechen war.[77] The invasion began in October, and the secessionists were defeated in a brutal campaign. Grozny fell to the Russian military by Christmas 1999 and Maskhadov's government collapsed by the New Year, marking the onset of a guerrilla war.[78] Military operations were mostly over by spring 2001 but a new phase of guerrilla warfare began.[79] Ongoing violence and instability in the north Caucasus make it hard to precisely date the end of the secessionist war, but by 2007 Russia's military victory was more or less complete, and the 'counter-terrorist operation' in Chechnya was declared over in 2009, although this was largely symbolic rather than an indication of a peaceful north Caucasus.[80]

Developments during and after the second war provide important examples of state strategies not seen in the other cases. Moscow's strategy emphasised 'Chechenisation': delegating responsibilities to local ethnic Chechen proxies was a policy intended to enable a settlement while ensuring that Chechnya remains

[74] Hughes 2007, 93.
[75] Aliyev and Souleimanov 2019, 168.
[76] Cornell 2001, 231–232.
[77] Zürcher 2007, 92.
[78] Hughes 2007, 111. Maskhadov was killed in 2005.
[79] Zürcher 2007, 97.
[80] Dannreuther and March 2008, 99; Goble 2010.

under Russian sovereignty.[81] During the war, Moscow exploited divisions between Chechen groups and flipped some of the secessionists to the Russian side so as to more effectively fight the insurgents,[82] but Chechenisation was about more than counterinsurgency. As the secessionists were defeated, Moscow reclaimed control over Chechnya by delegating control of the republic to Chechen proxies. Akhmad Kadyrov, who had fought against Russia in the first Chechen war, switched to the Russian side at the start of the second war and was appointed head of the Chechen administration by Moscow in 2000. He was President of Chechnya from October 2003 until his assassination in May 2004 and was eventually succeeded in 2007 by his son, Ramzan, who had been head of his father's militia. As Chechnya's leader, Ramzan Kadyrov, has extensive autonomy.[83] The Russian government, argues Kimberly Marten, "effectively outsourced Chechnya to a private contractor because they no longer wished to expend the state resources and political capital that would be required for direct control over Chechen territory."[84] Kadyrov has successfully, and brutally, suppressed any remaining secessionist activity in Chechnya and has remained loyal to Putin while enjoying substantial free rein to rule over Chechnya.[85]

Croatia and Republika Srpska Krajina, 1995-2000

Post-war conditions in Croatia were unlike most of the other cases considered here: "One of the two parties that fought the war in Croatia – namely, the Serbian side – was for practical purposes no longer present in the country when the war ended."[86] Republika Srpska Krajina (RSK), the territory carved out by Croatian Serb forces who ethnically cleansed non-Serbs from their self-declared state in a war causing thousands of deaths and several hundred thousand refugees, did not survive long.[87] The secessionist

[81] Hughes 2007, 118.
[82] Lyall 2010; On the shift from the secessionist to the Islamist conflict and the differences between them, see Bakke 2013; Toft and Zhukov 2015.
[83] George 2009, 157.
[84] Marten 2012, 105.
[85] In recent years, there have been numerous warnings that this arrangement is not only deeply authoritarian and repressive but inherently unstable and could lead to further violence. Sokirianskaia 2017; Hille 2018; Souleimanov, Abbasov, and Siroky 2019.
[86] Paris 2004, 109.
[87] The RSK was made up of three non-contiguous areas of Serb-majority territory – Krajina, Eastern Slavonia, and Western Slavonia – seized by Serb nationalists. Bose 2007, 122. See also <https://www.icty.org/en/about/what-former-yugoslavia/conflicts> .

entity failed to establish viable institutions and was riven by in-fighting and disorder and an increasingly acrimonious relationship with Belgrade. Without the support of their patron and kin-state, the RSK had no chance of survival.[88] A UN-brokered ceasefire between Zagreb and the Croatian Serbs in early 1992 lasted until the summer of 1995 when the Croatian army launched an offensive that routed the RSK armed forces and retook the majority of secessionist-held territory, which had covered more than a quarter of Croatia. About 200,000 Serbs were displaced as a consequence.

By the end of 1995, one area of territory which had been part of the RSK, Eastern Slavonia,[89] remained under local Serb control and was yet to be reincorporated back into Croatia. The United States and the United Nations brokered an agreement that would see the reintegration of the territory after a temporary international administration that lasted until January 1998.[90] The following year the Croatian nationalist leader, Franjo Tudjman, died and in 2000 his party, the HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union) which had dominated Croatian politics since 1990 and whose "overriding priority … was to restore the country's territorial integrity",[91] were voted out of government. While some of the post-war issues I discuss in this section lasted into the 2000s, this marks a logical endpoint for a relatively short post-war environment.

The Post-War Environment: 1995-2000

In January 1996, the UN Security Council authorised the international transitional administration for Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES) that would implement the agreement between the Croatian Government and local Serb authorities.[92] The mission was authorised under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, effectively giving it a monopoly of the use of force within its area of responsibility. Its purpose was to enable the territory to be peacefully reintegrated into Croatia,[93] demilitarise the RSK, and allay the fears of the

[88] Caspersen 2008a; Kolstø and Paukovic 2014.
[89] Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium, to give the region its full name.
[90] The Erdut Agreement, named after the Croatian town where it was signed. <https://peacemaker.un.org/croatia-erdutagreement95>
[91] International Crisis Group 1998b, 2.
[92] <https://peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/untaes_b.htm>
[93] There were fears that further military action from Zagreb to forcibly reincorporate the territory would threaten the peace settlement in neighbouring Bosnia.

remaining Serb minority as Croatian state authority returned.[94] The "virtual elimination of the Serbian community as a serious political force"[95] meant that there was no organised secessionist actor in the post-war environment, although there were some remaining Serb militias engaged in lingering efforts to defend what little control they had left. In one instance, the so-called Scorpion militia took control of an oil field but were compelled to withdraw to Serbia after being issued with an ultimatum and confronted with a show of force from UNTAES.[96]

In these conditions, the base state aimed to complete the process started during the final stages of the war to reclaim control over secessionist territory and move towards full reincorporation, and it did so using demographic control strategies. Throughout the post-war period, the governing HDZ obstructed the return and reintegration of displaced Serbs, and many Serbs continued to leave Croatia due to "widespread intimidation, violence and discrimination."[97] The government-led obstruction of returns has been described as "the continuation of the counterinsurgency policy by the Croatian government."[98] Tudjman was even reported as saying, when pressed by US and UN negotiators to do more to facilitate Serb returns, that "no reasonable person in the international community can expect the Croats to accept the Serbs back."[99]

In 1997, the head of UNTAES downplayed indications of an exodus of Serbs, even as thousands were leaving for Serbia or Republika Srpska in Bosnia, and urged Croatian Serbs to accept the cultural and educational autonomy on offer from Zagreb and not demand territorial integrity.[100] However, by 1999 Human Rights Watch were reporting a 'silent exodus', with tens of thousands of Serbs leaving Eastern Slavonia since 1996 and argued that "the continued flight of Serbs from the region illustrates one of

[94] Boothby 2004; See also Tanner 2001, 305.
[95] Paris 2004, 110.
[96] Boothby 2004, 45–46.
[97] International Crisis Group 1998a, i–ii.
[98] Ashbrook and Bakich 2010, 546.
[99] Hedges 1997.
[100] Daria Sito Sucic in Caskie 1997.

Croatia's most pressing human rights problems: the poor treatment of its Serb minority." The report noted this was especially so for Serbs living in areas that had been part of the RSK.[101]

The HDZ would gain politically through these efforts to shape Croatia's post-war demographics in terms of the consequences for holding up the HDZ vote share and limiting Serb representation in the Croatian parliament,[102] and while the situation improved after 2000 when HDZ lost power, the problems of low levels of returns and discrimination against Croatian Serbs continued.[103] In 2003, Human Rights Watch reported that "the Croatian government has been unwilling and unable to solve this problem [of returns] for the vast majority of displaced Serbs", a problem the report attributes to anti-Serb discrimination by Zagreb.[104] Even in 2006, Human Rights Watch found that Serbs returnees "continue to face significant obstacles in Croatia to the full enjoyment of their human rights."[105]

Bosnia-Herzegovina,[106] 1995-2005

The war in Bosnia was not a dyadic state-secessionist conflict but "a bloody three-sided fight for territories."[107] Triggered by a referendum on independence from Yugoslavia in March 1992 that was supported by Bosnian Muslims but boycotted by Bosnian Serbs, nationalist parties representing Bosnia's three communities – the Serb Democratic Party (SDS), the Party of Democratic Action (SDA – Muslims/Bosniaks),[108] and the Croatian Democratic Union-BiH (HDZ-BiH) – formed 'militarized statelets', with the leadership commanding the respective armies.[109] Bosnian Serb nationalists took control of areas with ethnic Serb majorities or pluralities and soon controlled over 60% of the country, and established a Serb Republic (Republika Srpska) via a vicious campaign of ethnic cleansing; Bosnian Croats also declared their own republic (Herzeg-Bosna) and followed a similar course in establishing territorial

[101] Human Rights Watch 1999, 4; See also Ramet 2002, 291.
[102] Gagnon 2004, 169–170.
[103] Ashbrook and Bakich 2010, 546; International Crisis Group 2001b.
[104] Human Rights Watch 2003.
[105] Human Rights Watch 2006, 1.
[106] Hereafter, Bosnia, or BiH
[107] <https://www.icty.org/en/about/what-former-yugoslavia/conflicts>
[108] The term 'Bosniak' to denote Bosnian Muslims came into use after the war; I use the terms interchangeably.
[109] Bose 2007, 128.

control over Croat-populated areas.[110] By the end of the war, "Bosnia's ethnic map had undergone a brutal, tectonic shift", where the belligerents had established 'facts on the ground' and created monoethnic territories through ethnic cleansing, and while efforts to reach a peace settlement had to acknowledge this new reality, the international community would not endorse the newly-recognised country's partition or allow parts of it to be annexed to Serbia or Croatia.[111]

In the war's final stages, the combined Bosnian Muslim and Croat forces, now allied against the Bosnian Serbs and with the assistance of NATO airstrikes against the Bosnian Serb Army, took control of over two-thirds of Bosnia's territory.[112] At the US-brokered peace talks in Dayton, Ohio, the wartime territorial gains and losses would be the basis for negotiations, which made possible a settlement of a 51-49 split between a Bosnian-Croat Federation and Republika Srpska that was formalised into the two entities of the post-war Bosnian state. When the war ended in late 1995, none of the belligerents had fully achieved their war aims or been fully defeated militarily. Moreover, they still believed their war aims were attainable through further hostilities: the Bosnian Muslim government wanted to take advantage of military gains against the Bosnian Serb Army, the Bosnian Serbs were holding out for independence or unification with Serbia, while the Bosnian Croats wanted their own state-like entity.[113]

If the Dayton Agreement[114] was necessary to end the war, it was also seen as "morally wrong and politically impracticable,"[115] an arrangement that "froze the various conflicts so that gains won through force would … not need to be abandoned through negotiation."[116] What followed was an unprecedented project of "internationally sponsored political engineering" that poured vast resources into making Bosnia a viable state that could hold together three deeply divided communities and not succumb to repeated calls – from inside and outside Bosnia – to partition the country.[117] I distinguish between two post-war

[110] Ibid., 123. <https://www.icty.org/en/about/what-former-yugoslavia/conflicts >.
[111] Ibid., 129.
[112] Serwer 2019, 34.
[113] Weller and Wolff 2006, 3.
[114] <https://peacemaker.un.org/bosniadaytonagreement95>
[115] Weller and Wolff 2006, 1.
[116] Mujanović 2018b, 85.
[117] Bose 2002, 3; For a review of debates on Bosnia and partition see Ramet 2005, chap. 8.

phases – one from the Dayton Agreement in 1995 until 2000 and a second phase beginning when the international community intensified its efforts to implement the Agreement, which lasted until around 2005 by which time the primary focus was 'normal' issues of constitutional and political reform.

First Post-War Phase: 1995 – 2000

The wartime nationalist parties dominated elections in 1996, which "strengthened the very separatists who had started the war."[118] An assessment by the United States Institute of Peace notes the continuity in the actions of the nationalist parties: during the war, the SDA, SDS, and HDZ had control over their respective ethnic groups and separate governing institutions; post-war, the parties "continued to propagate ethnic insecurity and separatism in order to maintain control over [Bosnia's] political, military, and economic resources."[119] The consequence was a large gap between the juridical sovereignty of the Bosnian state and "the three de facto sovereignties that operate on the ground."[120] A NATO peacekeeping force guaranteed security and meant that post-war violence was rare, and there were no serious attempts to overturn the Dayton settlement – it was subverted and exploited for political and economic gain, and the nationalists resisted threats to their control, but there were no "attempts to change the territorial balance between the parties."[121]

Just as the Bosnian war was not a dyadic conflict, the post-war cleavage does not easily map onto a base state-secessionist divide over reincorporation and full separation, not least because the power-sharing arrangements created a joint presidency shared between a Bosniak, a Serb and a Croat. In practice, however, and given the weakness of the central state, the Bosniaks, as the majority group and the group most invested in preserving the Bosnian state and its territorial integrity, more or less fit the role of the base state. The Bosnian Serbs and Croats – who to a great extent have not accepted the legitimacy of the

[118] Holbrooke 1999, 344.
[119] Western and Serwer 2000, 2.
[120] Bose 2002, 25.
[121] Boyle 2014, 101.

Bosnian state and retained aspirations for union with their kin-states – arguably fit the role of secessionists.

The Bosniak's main objective has been to maintain Bosnia's territorial integrity and, as Bose argues, of Bosnia's three communities, only the Bosniaks "associate their collective identity and interests – indeed, their very future as a people – with the development of a functional Bosnian state."[122] Within the Dayton framework, the notion of a base state that could aim to reincorporate territory lost during the war makes no sense, but the Bosniak side, at least compared to the nationalist Serb and Croat parties, favours greater integration of the Bosnian state rather than further partition. Moreover, according to Serwer, it was a Bosniak post-war objective to "return … displaced Muslims into strategically sensitive areas in Republika Srpska and Herzeg-Bosna", while also resisting the return of Serbs and Croat to Sarajevo.[123]

The Bosnian Serbs had secured formal status for their wartime Republika Srpska (RS) as one of the two constituent entities of the Bosnian state (the other is the Federation of Bosnia & Herzegovina, or FBiH, the post-war successor of the Muslim-Croat alliance). The post-war objective of the RS authorities was to preserve control over their wartime gains and prevent the central government in Sarajevo from gaining any authority over the 49% of Bosnian territory under their control.[124] The internal territorial boundary agreed at Dayton – the Inter-~~Ethnic~~ Entity Boundary Line (IEBL) that divides the two entities – was not challenged, so preserving control was crucially about demographics and preserving the Serbs' majority status within RS (by the end of the war, there were virtually no non-Serbs living in RS territory).[125]

The Bosnian Croats' objective was also to preserve their wartime gains and maintain "their separate wartime "Herzeg-Bosna" institutions".[126] The FBiH is highly decentralised, and while there was no separate Croat-majority entity equivalent to RS, Croat-majority areas de facto remained completely separate from the central Bosnian government and were sustained through "a vast, well-financed network

[122] Bose 2002, 27.
[123] Serwer 2019, 39–40.
[124] Ibid., 39; See also Kostovicova 2004.
[125] Bose 2002, 33.
[126] Serwer 2019, 39.

of parallel Herceg-Bosna institutions in the Croat-controlled areas that make up 20% of [BiH]".[127] These areas were oriented towards Croatia and have ethnically homogenous police and security forces.[128] As with RS, preserving control has meant preserving the demographic composition of Bosnian Croat areas.

The first post-war phase saw continued demographic engineering as nationalist leaders used control strategies to affect the composition and location of the population and thereby preserve control – in effect, the strategies were about getting the 'right' people in the right place and keeping them there, and keeping the 'wrong' people out. In March 1996, tens of thousands of Serbs fled the Sarajevo suburbs as Bosniaks retook full control of the city. The displaced Serbs moved into the homes of ethnically cleansed Bosnian Muslims in areas under Serb control, and Bosniak refugees took over the homes of the Serbs who fled Sarajevo; in a few weeks "Bosnia's ethnic engineers accomplished a virtually seamless shift of two populations totaling over 200,000 people".[129] In the early post-war years, 'ethnic separation' was pursued by hard-line Serb and Croat nationalists coercing their coethnics into leaving areas that were not controlled by 'their' side, and with incentives for settling in strategically important areas that were under their control.[130] 'Ethnic consolidation' was pursued through relocation, that is, when the displaced do not return to their pre-war homes where they would be in the minority but rather relocate to areas where they would be in the majority, often taking up residence in the property of people who had been displaced. This was "the preferred solution of Bosnia's nationalist parties", according to Crisis Group.[131] The HDZ even encouraged Croat refugees in Germany to relocate to Herzegovina,[132] while in Republika Srpska, the "Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons devotes the overwhelming bulk of its resources to assisting (and pressuring) Serbs to remain in 'their' entity."[133]

[127] Bose 2002, 28.
[128] Petersen 2002, 235; Bose 2007, 139.
[129] Sell 1999, 180.
[130] International Crisis Group 1998c, 2.
[131] The terms 'ethnic separation and consolidation' are Crisis Group's. Ibid., ii.
[132] Ibid., 10.
[133] International Crisis Group 2001f, 3.

Given the scale of wartime displacement and ethnic cleansing, the most important and difficult issue relating to demographic control in post-war Bosnia was minority returns, that is, the return of the displaced to their pre-war homes to areas where they would be a minority (for example, Bosnian Muslims returning to RS). Minority returns were a priority for the international community and a crucial part of its commitment to a multiethnic Bosnia, and obstructing minority returns was a core demographic strategy for preserving control.[134] This was most prominent in RS, which would not continue to be a Serb-majority area if all those displaced during the war were to return.[135] Armed attacks on Bosniak returnees and their property by paramilitaries were widespread, "systematic" and intended to prevent returns.[136] In 2001, Crisis Group reported that attacks on minority returnees to RS were "both more common and far more serious" than in the Federation, adding that the RS authorities, including the police, were "usually indifferent and often complicit," and the RS refugee ministry opposed reintegration so as to protect "the wartime achievements of ethnic cleansing."[137]

Second Post-War Phase: 2000 – 2005

A lack of progress in areas such as minority returns led the international actors involved in Bosnia's reconstruction to accelerate their efforts at implementing the Dayton Agreement, and from the late 1990s, the international community "arrogated to itself more and more powers of direct intervention in Bosnia's public life", in particular through the head of the international efforts, the High Representative.[138] This including more direct confrontations with the Serbian Democratic Party and the Croatian Democratic Union in Bosnia that were intended to undermine the nationalists' influence,[139] and efforts to reduce interference from Zagreb and Belgrade in Bosnian politics (more successfully in the former than the latter).[140] It was in minority returns that the biggest changes occurred, and by 2000 the

[134] The issue of minority returns has been well-covered by other scholars. See for example, Jenne 2010; Toal and Dahlman 2011.
[135] Serwer 2019, 37.
[136] International Crisis Group 2000c, ii.
[137] International Crisis Group 2001f, ii See also p3.
[138] Bose 2002, 7.
[139] Ibid., 8.
[140] Serwer 2019, 40.

lack of progress since 1995 was being 'reversed'.[141] Minority returns rapidly increased throughout Bosnia between 2000 and 2002, thanks in part to an improved security situation, before tapering off again by around 2003/4.[142] By 2011, about one million people had returned – almost three quarters to the Federation, the rest to Republika Srpska, with returns to the latter happening mostly after 2000. Of the total returnees, about 470,000 were minority returns, "who [by 2011] rarely face security threats."[143] The increased success in enabling minority returns would not have happened, Bose argues, without the efforts of the international community.[144] The improvement in minority returns happened at the same time as greater freedom of movement, and by 2000 Bosnians could freely travel across the IEBL between the Federation and Republika Srpska, which was "just a line on maps", and not the "hard frontier of segregation between monoethnic zones" desired by the ethnonationalists.[145] More generally by the start of the second post-war phase "there were … signs of progress in terms of stabilizing peaceful relations among Bosnia's peoples"[146]

Even as Bosnia continued to deal with the legacies of the war – I have not even touched on issues of the prosecution of war crimes or transitional justice – the post-war label is less empirically accurate and analytically useful by 2005. This transition was illustrated by a report of the Council of Europe's Venice Commission that criticised Bosnia's constitution – the settlement reached at Dayton that entrenched ethnic power-sharing – as a barrier to progress, and in particular to EU accession.[147] As Serwer remarks, "what had been done at Dayton to end the war was inadequate to build a functioning European state."[148] Even though issues with minority returns to RS were still not fully resolved – in 2011 Crisis Group reported that "renewed political tensions and politicians' nationalist rhetoric are causing some returnees

[141] International Crisis Group 2002b, i.
[142] Bose 2002, 34–35.
[143] "The breakdown of the 469,594 total minority returns is: FBiH, 275,247; RS, 172,252; and Brčko District, 22,095." International Crisis Group 2011a, 24.
[144] Bose 2005, 332.
[145] Bose 2007, 145.
[146] Ramet 2002, 279.
[147] Hays and Crosby 2006.
[148] Serwer 2019, 41.

to consider leaving again"[149] – and Bosnian Serb leaders continue to raise the spectre of separation, calling for a referendum on independence,[150] by this point the main issues confronting Bosnia were within the realm of 'normal' politics.

7.3 Discussion, Evaluation, and Future Research

In this section I identify some of the areas where the argument and theoretical framework can be refined and improved for further research, partly based on insights from the case studies, and partly by returning to some considerations that were bracketed in earlier stages to make theory building possible.

Starting Points

In Chapter 2 I argued that constrained objectives reflect the actors' relative positions at the end of the war, that is, the balance of losses and gains of control, or how far they are from their maximalist objective, and their preferences for revising or preserving de facto control. One insight to emerge from the shadow cases is the extent to which post-war environments have different starting points when constrained objectives are first formed and which then shape control strategies. In particular, there are important differences across the cases in (1) the extent of territorial control gained by the secessionists during the war and in (2) which populations were displaced and to where. Identifying the origins and implications of these different starting points is important for a more comprehensive understanding of the causes of control strategies and post-war environments more generally.

The two theory building cases share a number of characteristics that mean the post-war phases had similar starting points, but these characteristics do not always appear in other cases. Prior to the onset of their secessionist wars, Abkhazia and Kosovo were both administrative units with known boundaries within a state, and the secessionists fought for control of a fairly clearly defined territory. The borders of Abkhazia were never really in question, only its status, and while there has been some ambiguity with

[149] International Crisis Group 2011a, 24.
[150] Al Jazeera 2020.

Kosovo due to the Albanian population in Preševo Valley, in general the Kosovo Albanians were fighting to take control of a clearly defined area that was to be claimed as an independent state. In neither case did the secessionists have full de facto control over the territory they claimed during the post-war phases: there were border regions and enclaves that remained at least to some extent under the control of the base state, and were populated with people who did not recognise the authority of the secessionists. In both cases there was a displaced population which to varying degrees wanted to return to their homes and, again to varying degrees, were obstructed from doing so by the secessionists. So in both cases by the start of the post-war phase, there was a particular context of de facto control that diverged in various ways from what the base state and secessionists wanted, which then shaped their constrained objectives and the links and levers that were available to translate objectives into strategies.

The shadow cases show that post-war phases can begin from very different starting points and so the context in which constrained objectives are formed – and the control strategies used in pursuit of those objectives – also differ. Consider the cases of Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazia. Cornell's juxtaposition of the post-war aims of the Karabakh Armenians and the Abkhaz is revealing: "just like the Karabakh Armenians vow never to become an enclave again, the Abkhaz aim at never becoming a minority in their native land again."[151] The Abkhaz fight for separation from Georgia never sought to revise the borders of Abkhazia, which is considered their historical homeland, but their advantageous post-war demographic status following the displacement of ethnic Georgians then shaped their post-war strategies: prevent or limit the return of the displaced, confine and isolate the remaining Georgian population and, over time, assimilate that population. The Karabakh Armenians fought their secessionist war according to a very different logic, taking control of territory beyond the boundaries of the Soviet-era oblast, and did so for strategic reasons rather than because the territories were claimed as a homeland. In fact, scholars of the conflict have emphasised that "the term 'Nagorno-Karabakh' does not have a stable territorial referent".[152] Unlike the Abkhaz authorities, for whom preserving and then consolidating and extending

[151] Cornell 2001, 179.
[152] Toal and O'Loughlin 2013b, 159; See also Broers 2019, 48.

control meant working within known territorial boundaries (and with a diminished but important ethnic Georgian population), the post-war strategies of the NKR authorities (who had no Azeri population to govern) meant creating those boundaries on the ground and making them permanent through settling the adjacent occupied territories with an ethnic Armenian population.

The dynamics of the Bosnian war also created different starting points for the post-war environment. The wartime secessionist entities – the self-declared republics of Republika Srpska and Herzeg-Bosna – were not based solely on pre-existing administrative units that declared independence. Rather, they were carved out from Serb- and Croat-majority areas during the war through military conquest, with the nationalist armies and irregular militias seizing and ethnically cleansing territory. The extent of territorial control fluctuated with the military success of the belligerents and was frozen in place at the end of the war in a manner that would make a settlement possible, not in accordance with pre-war internal boundaries or a territorial referent based on a claim other than battlefield gains and a balance of control the sides could be convinced to accept. Since Dayton, the new internal boundaries demarcating Bosnia's entities have not been challenged so, unlike the NKR, post-war strategies have not required consolidating boundaries and making them permanent. Rather, and with some similarities to Abkhazia (although without any equivalent to the Gali Georgian population), the post-war priorities for the Serb and Croat nationalists in Bosnia have been demographic: the war created monoethnic territories and huge numbers of IDPs and refugees, and preserving wartime gains meant focusing on questions of return and resettlement, and the implications for the majority/minority status of each community at a local level.

The case of South Ossetia aligns slightly better with the theory building cases. There was a known territorial referent for a Republic of South Ossetia based on the Soviet-era oblast which by the end of the war was only partially controlled by the secessionists and in which a Georgian population loyal to the base state remained, and these Georgian-controlled enclaves were links that Tbilisi could use to retain links to secessionist territory. The case of Chechnya is more complicated but illustrates how some of the points I have raised about the importance of territorial referents for secessionist claims can also become salient at later stages. Chechen secessionists initially succeeding in removing the presence of the base state but did not establish control over their self-declared republic from 1991 to 1994 or in the interwar period – the military defeat of the Russian forces was not accompanied by taking control of territory, in the manner

carried out by the Karabakh Armenians, for example. This lack of control was exacerbated by the problem of contested borders in the north Caucasus,[153] and the subsequent Islamisation of the conflict extended the conflict far beyond Chechnya: the Islamist rebels, argues Hughes, "did not feel constrained by territorial boundaries" and intended to "take the war beyond Chechnya into the neighboring Caucasian republics" and create an Islamic caliphate.[154]

Based on these reflections, future research and theory development should give greater consideration to these sources of variation: (1) the extent of territory the secessionists want to take control of, that is, the territorial referent of their secessionist claim (which may or may not correspond to a pre-war administrative unit with known boundaries, and may change over time); (2) actual wartime losses and gains in territorial control through military conquest, occupation of territory and so on; (3) who gets displaced during the war and to where. These factors will then shape constrained objectives, that is, the territory and populations the secessionists want to defend, preserve control of, or consolidate and extend control over, and the territory and populations the base state wants to reclaim, what they can retain links to, or the secessionist control they want to undermine.

Control Strategies: Concepts and Theory Development

I said in Chapter 1 that concept development and capturing the full range of 'what is important' about control strategies were important parts of this study. The theory building case studies helped make progress towards achieving this aim and the shadow cases went some of the way to validating the relevance and importance of control strategies as a focus of research in a larger number of cases. However, more work needs to be done to develop the core concepts and progress from theory building, where the point is to generate new insights in under-theorised areas, to theory testing, where being able to make causal inferences becomes more important. This will require sharpening the conceptual clarity of the dependent variable. Doing so will make it possible to develop better empirical indicators of

[153] The lack of a clear border with Ingushetia was a contributing factor to the onset of the second war. George 2009, 81.
[154] Hughes 2007, 102.

demographic and territorial control strategies and improve measurement. More precise criteria to discriminate between what is and is not a control strategy will help avoid conceptual stretching.

The shadow cases fleshed out what control strategies look like in practice and helped to confirm the usefulness of the core characteristics of access/denial of access to a territory, presence and absence within a territory, and the composition, location, loyalty and compliance of populations, while also making it possible to identify a wider range of control strategies and dimensions of variation. Looking at a larger number of cases reveals more of the full repertoire of actions that base states and secessionists use to control people and territory, so further research can continue to refine my categories and definitions in an empirically grounded way, and close the gaps between concepts and empirics. For example, the use by base states of indirect control strategies through local proxies of the same identity group as the secessionists, as seen by Russia's 'Chechenisation' policy and Georgia's support for Sanakoev in South Ossetia, is an important area to explore further, as is Georgia's use of economic incentives in South Ossetia to influence the loyalty and compliance of the Ossetian population. Different strategies for creating demographic 'facts on the ground' and getting the 'right' people in the right place and keeping the 'wrong' people out is another area that needs more work – the theory building case studies mostly focused on secessionist efforts to obstruct returns, but the Bosnia and Nagorno-Karabakh case studies, especially the latter, show the importance of resettlement and providing incentives for people to remain in particular areas as a way to extend or consolidate control.

In addition to better classification and codification of a wider range of post-war strategies, it will be useful for future research to focus on a narrower set of strategies or take them in isolation – such as blocking returns, or border control – and develop indicators to measure the frequency, intensity and extent of their use. This will allow more targeted comparisons across cases and over time. 'Strategy profiles', while helpful for theory building, has limitations for cross-case comparisons – for example, the Georgian and Serbian governments both used control strategies to retain links to Abkhazia and Kosovo, respectively, but the extensive parallel institutions developed by Belgrade were very different to the more limited foothold Tbilisi kept in Kodori Valley (although the similarities in terms of use of local proxies are also instructive).

A more comprehensive theory for explaining control strategies also needs to be able to explain their absence in post-war environments. My case studies support the claim that control strategies, as I define them, are used in many post-war environments, but political actors do not use control strategies everywhere all the time – the first post-war phase in the Georgia-South Ossetia conflict, for example, was more characterised by neglect than any concerted effort to shape the post-war environment (another reason why it is important to develop measures of frequency, intensity and extent of use). My framework makes an argument for the use of control strategies, but not their non-use – for a theory building aim, this required looking for positive evidence of control strategies being used, but it means the argument cannot discriminate between the many possible reasons why an actor may not be using control strategies, such as a lack of material capabilities, other overriding objectives, successful countermoves by a rival or constraints imposed by peacekeepers, and so on.

Relatedly, my framework needs to be extended to say more about implementation and what explains the success or failure of control strategies (without access to the right evidence, it may be difficult to distinguish between the unsuccessful implementation of a strategy and the non-use of a strategy for a different reason).[155] Research on strategy implementation would need to look at factors such as material capabilities, organisational skill and cohesion, and overcoming principal-agent problems when control strategies are delegated.

Objectives

Throughout this study, I have kept a relatively narrow focus on the main conflict cleavage and a post-war cleavage of reincorporation versus full separation from which to theorise constrained objectives about de facto control of populated territory. This helped for building a framework to explain demographic and territorial control strategies, but there is scope for wider and deeper theorising of preference formation in post-war environments. I focused on objectives relating to de facto control of populated territory, but

[155] This is important in explaining variation in (non)return of the displaced: what is deliberate obstruction, what is incompetence or indifference in facilitating return, and what is just the displaced not wanting to return.

there are many other post-war objectives that motivate the actions of base states and secessionists that are more concerned with, for example, political status and recognition. Research on de facto states, for example, has shown how secessionists pursue different forms of sovereignty and statehood and their political and diplomatic strategies reflect these different objectives.[156] My case study of Kosovo showed how the objective of international recognition can take precedence when circumstances allow, and further research could investigate the relationship between objectives that are primarily about de facto control and objectives that are more to do with political status.

Another useful extension of my framework would be to develop a theory of how objectives change and what this means for explaining control strategies. From the cases considered in this study, there are many reasons, both exogenous and endogenous, why objectives change – changes in external support or a more intrusive intervention, a change in government, changes in response to a rival's new strategy, or changes in response to successful or failed implementation of control strategies – so this is an area that needs more systematic exploration. Within-case change could be particularly important for the trajectory of post-war environments as objectives formed in the immediate aftermath of a war are then adapted according to changes in international involvement, for example, or changes in the actors' willingness to accept the status quo.

Multiparty Conflicts and Kin-States

My focus on the base state-secessionist cleavage also means that the framework may not properly capture the different objectives of actors in multiparty conflicts, for example when kin states are involved (such as Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, or Serbia in Bosnia's wars), or when there are multiple secessionist conflicts within a single polity (as in Georgia). State-secessionist conflicts are not necessarily *just* state-secessionist conflicts, especially in regions like the Balkans and the Caucasus with complex ethnic geography and demography, and the post-war cleavages and objectives are likely to reflect this. In

[156] Caspersen 2015b.

particular, the role of kin-states, known to be an important factor in exacerbating conflict,[157] should be a focus of future research on post-war control strategies, and the cases considered in this study suggest their role may be complicated. In the aftermath of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict the NKR authorities were dependent on support from Yerevan, but over time the "periphery took over the centre", as Caspersen puts it, with the political leadership in the NKR gaining outsized influence over Armenian politics.[158] More recently, though, in 2015 the European Court on Human Rights ruled that Armenia exercises effective control over the territory of the NKR and surrounding occupied territories.[159] Belgrade's influence over Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia was crucial in both the onset and the termination of the wars in the former Yugoslavia, but the relations were often fractious and hostile, with Belgrade in effect abandoning their ethnic kin at the end of the war. In post-war developments, though, links between Belgrade and Republika Srpska in particular have remained important. Understanding how these relationships shape post-war objectives and what that means for the actors' control strategies is another important line of inquiry.

Criminality

The points I have raised so far all stay within my original framing of secessionist wars and their aftermaths as essentially *political* conflicts over sovereignty. A number of studies of conflict in the Caucasus and the Balkans have placed greater emphasis on criminality and the importance of the illicit political economy in driving the interests and behaviour of the principal actors. Charles King, in his study of the so-called 'frozen conflicts' in Eurasia argues that conflict persists and settlements are elusive because neither the base states nor secessionists want to resolve the conflict but rather benefit financially from sustaining it.[160] Similarly, in her study of separatism in Russia and Georgia, Julie George argues that the profits of criminal activity affected how secessionists and base states interacted: "It diminished

[157] Brubaker 1995; Brubaker 1996.
[158] Caspersen 2008a. For example, Robert Kocharian, the first president of the NKR, went on to be Prime Minister and then President of Armenia.
[159] <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-155353%22]}>
[160] King 2001.

incentives to formulate permanent political solutions to the military conflict, yet established a fragile stability amid the fractured territories."[161] Does this mean that the maximalist objectives (about political status and sovereignty) and constrained objectives (about de facto control of populated territory) in my framework do not in fact reflect what the principal political actors are trying to do and their reasons for doing so?

While there were financial benefits to not resolving several of the conflicts included in this study, arguments like King's and George's can still be consistent with and complement the idea of constrained objectives: elites do not or cannot meet their publicly stated political objectives of resolving the conflict, either peacefully or by force, so they pursue constrained objectives which also allows the private pursuit of profit. This scenario probably works best for the objectives of preserving control and retaining links, as these objectives are about sustaining the status quo, which can certainly be profitable in the context of perpetuating a war economy. My argument about the importance of aligning control of people and territory need not just be about nationalism and statehood – it also fits with those seeking private economic gain. Such actors need particular distributions of territorial control that are favourable to their economic interests, and their market is affected by who lives where and in which jurisdiction; post-war, these distributions may or may not align with the main conflict cleavage (which brings political status back in). Base state actors may then use strategies to retain links to secessionist territory that both keeps open smuggling routes *and* serves the political aim of sustaining a sovereignty claim; secessionist actors may use strategies to preserve control over territory that both monopolises access to unregulated illicit markets *and* serves the secessionist pursuit of statehood; and so on.

More generally, future research on post-war control strategies should build on and integrate the extensive work by scholars on criminality in post-war contexts and the crime-conflict nexus, especially in the Balkans and the Caucasus.[162] There are likely to be many interesting and important overlaps in where de

[161] George 2009, 5.
[162] Andreas 2004a; Andreas 2004b; Kukhianidze 2009; Shelley, Scott, and Latta 2007; Cornell and Jonsson 2014.

facto control of populated territory matters for both politics and profits, such as border regimes regulating movement of goods and people, the legacies of wartime markets, and the need for secessionists to finance their political ambitions without the rights and privileges of sovereign states.

Bottom-up Perspectives

My framework should also be extended to address the lack of bottom-up perspectives – it is, by design, focused on elite actors at the level of the national governments, de facto authorities and secessionist movements, but given the importance I place on the populations in post-war environments, the relative neglect of the agency of those populations is problematic. To address this, research could, for example, look at how public attitudes shape and constrain state and secessionist objectives or make certain control strategies more or less feasible, building on research on public opinion in and after secessionist conflicts.[163] Another line of inquiry could be the mobilisation and politicisation of displaced populations and their role in the aftermath of secessionist conflicts that goes beyond my focus on how they feature in the control strategies of elites. Research could, for example, look at why Georgians displaced from Abkhazia have been far more militant than Serbs displaced from Kosovo and Azeris displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh, or the causes of variation in the integration of displaced populations into their base states if they have not been able to return to their pre-war homes.

Beyond the Caucasus and the Balkans, Beyond Secessionist Wars

Future research should investigate if the framework is relevant for secessionist conflicts outside of the Balkans and the Caucasus and for non-secessionist conflicts. Further case studies of secessionist conflicts in Eurasia – such as the Moldova-Transnistria conflict and the wars in Ukraine's Donbas region – would be a logical next step. There is already extensive commentary and analysis on the extent to which the conflicts in the Caucasus and the Balkans are similar to Ukraine's conflicts with the Russian-backed self-

[163] Velidze 2005; Bakke et al. 2009; Grono 2011; O'Loughlin, Kolossov, and Toal 2011; Dyrstad 2013; O'Loughlin, Kolossov, and Toal 2014; Dyrstad, Ellingsen, and Rød 2015; Mironova and Whitt 2017; Stakić 2016; Bakke et al. 2018; Fort 2018; Zellman 2018; Sichinava 2020.

declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, so this should be a priority for future research.[164] Applying the framework to secessionist conflicts outside of Eurasia will also be an important test of the generalisability of the framework. As noted in Chapter 3, my argument does not appeal to factors specific to post-communist societies – the core of the argument should apply to any terminated secessionist war – but the validity of this argument requires will depend on how well the framework works when applied to different regions with different political histories.

More speculatively, my framework may be relevant for investigating the termination and aftermaths of some conflicts over government. The wartime cleavage of such conflicts is very different – the belligerents are fighting for control of the whole state – but in many conflicts over government, from Colombia to Lebanon to Angola, rebel groups and other armed actors control and govern areas of populated territory. While these rebels have no aspirations to secede from the base state, the rebel-governed territories in effect become 'states-within-states'.[165] Post-war, they may try to preserve or consolidate whatever is left of their wartime control, or the base state may deploy territorial and demographic strategies to reclaim lost territory and extend the authority of the central government to the periphery.

The post-war cleavage and maximalist objectives would likely be very different, reflecting the different political objectives of the belligerents, but such post-war environments may still see a transition period where political actors attempt to shape the emerging political order and need to secure de facto control of people and territory to do so. Demographic and territorial control strategies would be a useful analytical and empirical anchor for investigating such post-war war contexts: securing access to territory or denying a rival access, establishing a permanent and exclusive presence in an area, securing the loyalty and compliance of a population, creating demographic facts on the ground – these are not just the concerns of base states and their secessionist challengers, and could usefully feature in studies of any post-war

[164] Bose 2014; Caspersen 2015a; Cecire 2015; Fischer 2016; Goble 2016; Heletiy 2017; Troncotă 2017; Gadzo 2018; Popescu 2018; De Waal 2018; Serwer 2019.
[165] Kingston and Spears 2004; On rebel governance of people and territory more generally, see Mampilly 2011; Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015b.

environment. It is not hard to find examples of demographic and territorial control strategies similar to those that I have studied in this project currently being used in multiple conflicts around the world.[166] A wide-ranging research agenda focused on the causes of these strategies in post-war environments will not only help inform scholarship on peace and armed conflict and on the foundations of political orders, but can also inform a much-need policy response to conflicts that continue to cause immense human suffering.

The Consequences of Control Strategies

As noted in Chapter 1, a subsidiary concern of this project was the consequences of control strategies. While some of these consequences were considered in the case study chapters and in Chapter 6, a proper study of the consequences and implications of territorial and demographic control strategies on post-war political orders should be an aim for future research. This would be a way to further address some of the criticisms I levelled in Chapter 1 at existing research on civil war recurrence, war to peace transitions and post-war peacebuilding and the limitations of the most commonly used ways of conceptualising outcomes in that literature (war or no war, negative or positive peace, recognition or non-recognition, and so on), and build on the growing body of scholarship that explores the formation and trajectory of post-war environments. An investigation of the effects of control strategies would make it possible to connect the narrow but important focus on de facto territorial and demographic control to bigger questions of how post-war environments vary over space and time and how war to peace transitions shape relations between states, secessionist movements and societies and local, national and regional political orders more generally.

Alternative Explanations

In addition to identifying possible lines of inquiry for further research, a theory building project must ultimately be tested against alternative explanations and with new data and evidence that was not used to

[166] Chulov 2017; Al Jazeera 2019; Kathimerini 2019; BBC News 2020; On the contemporary importance of demographic control strategies in particular, see Schwartz 2019b; Lichtenheld 2020b.

build the framework. This can involve proposing alternatives to the framework as a whole or competing explanations for specific control strategies or strategy profiles. As I justified a theory building approach on the grounds that knowledge of post-war environments could be advanced by rethinking the post-war outcomes under study, there is not a readily available set of alternative explanations to put in 'competition' with each other, in the way that there are multiple competing explanations of peace failure or post-war violence, for example. Nonetheless, other researchers may chose to adapt and modify arguments from related fields and make them applicable to post-secessionist war contexts so as to develop alternative explanations for the control strategies I have identified and tried to explain, and there are multiple possible routes to develop, challenge and improve the framework presented in this study. Scholars who focus on the domestic and international legitimation strategies of secessionist movements may formulate explanations of post-war strategies that focus on the audience costs of a given control strategy and the need to gain the support of key constituencies.[167] Theories of population displacement and political cleansing may be helpful in developing alternative theories of how and why states and secessionists try to get the 'right' people in the 'right' place based on their perceived political loyalties and affiliations,[168] and the countervailing effect of non-ethnic cross-cutting cleavages on forced displacement may continue to exert an effect on territorial and demographic strategies post-war.[169] Emotions-based explanations of ethnic violence may also be valuable in post-war contexts when inter-ethnic animosity and fear, perhaps endogenous to the violence of the preceding war, could have an affect on state and secessionists strategies,[170] and explanations that appeal to symbolic politics to explain the onset of violence may also be well placed to explain some post-war strategies.[171]

[167] Caspersen 2009; Huang 2016a; Griffiths 2020.
[168] Steele 2017; Lichtenheld 2020a.
[169] Bulutgil 2016.
[170] Petersen 2002.
[171] Kaufman 2001; Kaufman 2006.

7.4 Summing-Up

My aim in this project was to explain the causes of state and secessionist post-war strategies for controlling people and territory. The objective was to improve our understanding of how secessionist wars end and what happens next by providing specific insights into two important cases and use these cases to build a more general framework, and to contribute to a growing research agenda on war to peace transitions and post-war environments. This required a theory building research strategy involving two in-depth case studies to develop an empirically-grounded conceptual and theoretical framework that had the potential to travel to other contexts. Building on Staniland's claim that we lack the concepts to "identify and systematize variation in who governs and how this governance is shared, negotiated, and contested across wars, and across space and time within wars",[172] I have addressed a similar absence of valid concepts to guide research and build theories about post-war environments. To ground this conceptual work, getting the empirical story right in the theory building case studies mattered a lot – it is the evidentiary foundation on which the theory was built and developed, and this wore through a lot of shoe leather. Combining theory building with empirical work including field research and archival work was central to the execution of this study.

The resulting framework does four things. First, it conceptualises strategies in terms of the constitutive features of territorial and demographic control. This is valuable because it provides a conceptual vocabulary and theoretical foundation that expands the scope of repertoires of action that scholars of peace and conflict can study within and across cases of terminated wars. This conceptualisation is empirically-grounded in case study research: actors use these strategies to establish facts on the ground and they are substantively important for how states and secessionists shape post-war environments.

Second, it theorises states' and secessionists' post-war objectives in terms of a cleavage of reincorporation versus full separation which is broken down into objectives about de facto control and which reflect the

[172] Staniland 2012, 246.

constraints of a post-war environment. Theorising objectives this way, and not only in terms of the macro-level political cleavage or individual attitudes and preferences, is valuable because it better captures the post-war challenge confronted by base states and secessionists. Constrained objectives help us think about how the actors want to align people and territory – and *which* territory and *which* people (the '*where'* and the '*whom'* of who rules where over whom) – in the particular context of post-war constraints.

Third, the framework identifies instrumentally and/or intrinsically valuable territorial and demographic features of post-war environments – links and levers – that actors use to translate constrained objectives into control strategies. This is also a useful analytical tool for making sense of post-war environments, helping to identify how actors will turn their objectives into concrete courses of action and for identifying sources of variation – secessionist wars generate different patterns of de facto control, creating enclaves and boundaries and displaced populations that political actors then use in pursuit of their post-war objectives.

Fourth, the framework provides expectations about which strategy profiles are associated with particular constrained objectives. This sets out the observable implications of the framework which are necessary for further theory development and testing. With the theory building case studies and shadow cases, I have provided evidence from seven post-war environments in support of my argument, drawing on extensive empirical research from multiple sources, while also identifying the limitations of the argument and where the framework needs to be refined, improved and extended by further research. Other scholars can now test the argument on other cases using the expected strategies outlined in Chapter 2 (Tables 2.3 and 2.4) or provide alternative explanations that better explain post-war control strategies. Do states and secessionists use the control strategies to shape post-war environments in the way expected by the framework? Do they try to align the 'facts on the ground' of de facto control with their constrained objectives using demographic and territorial control strategies in the expectation that these strategies will revise de facto control or maintain the status quo? And do they target territorial and demographic features of the post-war environment that are accessible and can be leveraged to affect de facto control, and are these 'links and levers' as described in my framework? With a set of expectations about how objectives explain strategies, mediated by the constraints and opportunities of the post-war environment, the

theoretical framework built in this project can guide further empirical research on post-war environments and be refined and improved in light of the findings.

Constrained objectives and control strategies – working from the starting point that wars are contests for control of populated territory – are valuable analytical tools for studying the aftermaths of secessionist wars, empirically and theoretically, closing the gap between the empirics of post-war environments and the concepts we use to construct theories for making sense of them. By drawing our attention to how states and secessionists establish facts on the ground and why they care about de facto control of people and territory – what the principal political actors *do* and why it *matters* – the framework and argument can complement existing studies that have focused on status and recognition, post-war violence, and peacebuilding and provide rich insights into the formation and trajectories of post-war environments. Violent secessionist conflict isn't going anywhere.[173] All wars end eventually, but states and secessionists can and do continue to struggle for control of populated territory, which leaves us with the enduring importance of explaining how they settle the question, who rules where and over whom when the fighting stops?

[173] Fazal 2018a.

Methods Appendix

"Research, after all, is about discovery, not simply the verification or falsification of existing hypotheses."[1]



Figure A.2. Bridge over the River Ibar in Mitrovica. Photo taken by the author (2017).

A.1 Introduction

As I argued in Chapter 1, case studies are a way of doing research – a form of investigation – and not just a way of presenting research. It is also a profoundly messy way of doing research, especially when it involves fieldwork. Scholars such as Christine Cheng argue that it is valuable, albeit potentially risky, to directly address this messiness by providing a greater degree of analytical transparency and adopting more reflective approaches to research,[2] so in that spirit, this appendix provides some brief details on the research process of this study. As Cheng argues, research is an iterative process, not a linear progression from a research question to conclusions, and in a theory building project the sequencing of the research

[1] Gerring 2007, 148.
[2] Cheng 2018.

and the sequencing of its presentation are not the same. The table below represents an effort to roughly summarise the main stages of my research (in a rather stylised way – many of the stages overlapped). In the rest of this appendix I will focus primarily on the field research component, as this involved important issues relating to ethics and risk management that were not discussed in the preceding chapters, but I use that discussion to reflect more widely on other aspects of the research process.

Table A.4 Theory Building Research Process

<table>
<tr><th>Pre-Research</th><th colspan="5">Research</th><th>Future Research</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation.

Question formulation, preliminary hypotheses and 'hunches'.

Case selection.

Data collection plan and fieldwork planning (risk assessment, ethics approval).</td>
<td>Investigate the cases.

Data collection: Desk research. Multiple field trips. Visits to archives.

Start writing descriptive historical narratives.</td>
<td>Refine questions, concepts, and scope.

Generate and refine proto-theory.</td>
<td>Further investigation of the cases

More desk research; return to interview transcripts and field notes, archival documents and other sources.

Refine narratives.</td>
<td>Extract and distil the 'final' version of theoretical framework.</td>
<td>Write up the presentation of cases studies.

Convert historical narrative to causal reconstruction.

Shadow cases</td>
<td>Further theory development and testing on new cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">[Multiple iterations]</td></tr>
</table>

A.2 Field Research

It is difficult to say exactly how many countries I did field research in. I went to two UN member states (Serbia and Georgia) but four countries that are recognised by Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, although the three recognised by the UK, US and French governments (Serbia, Georgia, and Kosovo, and for which I have three different stamps in my passport) do not overlap with the three recognised by the Russian government (Serbia, Georgia, and Abkhazia, the last of which was the only time I needed a visa but for which there is no record in my passport). Doing research in partially recognised states raises all kinds of logistical and ethical issues, and fieldwork, more so than other forms of research, blurs any distinction between research design and methodology and the practical and ethical dimensions of doing research. In this section, I will discuss some of the issues relating to ethics and risk management, and the interviews I conducted, before concluding with some thoughts on the research process and field research more generally.

Ethics and Risk Management

My main concerns with regard to the ethical conduct of my research were, first, to avoid interviewing individuals who would be put at risk by agreeing to meet with me, and second, because eliminating all risk is impossible, to take all reasonable precautions to minimise any possibility of harm coming to those people I did interview.[3] I set a very high threshold and had a very low tolerance for risk. The use of purposive sampling meant I could incorporate a screening process and take all reasonable measures to exclude any at-risk individuals from my interviewees (as most of my respondents were public figures, this was not problematic). The advantage of doing extended in-country fieldwork and the local networks and contacts that follow was that it I could, first, identify the people who it would be helpful to interview to gather relevant data, and second, exclude anyone who might be put at risk by their participation.[4]

In most of the places I was doing interviews the risk was negligible, but Abkhazia, and in particular Gali, and north Mitrovica in Kosovo posed a greater risk. For reasons discussed throughout the case studies, Gali and north Mitrovica have been at the centre of some of the most sensitive issues in the conflicts, and while violence in these areas is now thankfully low, political tensions are at times relatively high. Moreover, the presence of international researchers is still quite uncommon, especially in Gali, and my presence as a UK citizen conducting interviews would have been noticeable. On the basis of discussions with other researchers and experts – local and international, within and outside of academia – I made a judgement that while the risks of serious harm or danger to either myself or to any respondents were low, on-the-record interviews in these places would not be justified for a doctoral thesis and the benefits to my research of interviewing anyone at risk were zero, so I did not conduct on-the-record interviews in Gali or north Mitrovica

More generally, for all on-the-record interviews, I requested consent to record the interview in the first instance via email (participants were provided with written information sheets providing some general

[3] My research was approved by the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC), Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford. Reference Number: SSH_DPIR_C1A_16_032 (20 June 2016).
[4] My previous experience working in Georgia were helpful in this regard.

background on the aims and purpose of my research), then obtained verbal consent in person at start of interview to record and offered the respondent three choices: I could quote them and attribute the quotations to them by name; use quotations but not attribute the quotation; or not quote anything from the interview at all and not use their name. I then re-sought and reaffirmed consent via email for any quotations used prior to submission of the thesis, so as to accommodate any requests for anonymisation or clarification. If this final stage was not possible, I did not use the material. While writing up, I decided that if I judged any information from the interviews to be potentially sensitive, in particular based on any changes since the interviews were conducted, I would err on the side of caution and not directly quote sources – even if the interview was done on-the-record – or omit the material entirely. In some cases I have aggregated comments from multiple sources that converged on a common point and were consistent with other sources, rather than making any direct attributions.

With regard to risk management more generally, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advises against all travel to Abkhazia and against all but essential travel to north Kosovo, including north Mitrovica.[5] In the case of Abkhazia this is less to do with any high probability of violence, but because Abkhazia is not recognised by the UK government, has no consular access and so no means to support UK citizens who travel there. To mitigate the risks of travelling to these areas, I consulted extensively prior to my trips, seeking advice and guidance from other researchers and experts, including the at the FCO, the British Embassy in Tbilisi, and several UK-based international peacebuilding NGOs who work with local partners in Gali.[6] This was helpful in making judgements about both any potential personal risks from travelling to these regions and the risks associated with doing interviews. These discussions led to a number of risk mitigation strategies. For example, I started my trip to Abkhazia after the local elections in April 2017 to avoid a time when there was a higher possibility of unrest. During my fieldwork

[5] See <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>. Each trip required a risk assessment and approval from the University's Social Science Division; a more extensive assessment was required for Abkhazia as a 'red flag' area.
[6] My particular thanks to Mira Sovakar, Doireann Cooney, Kristel Vits, Carter Johnson, Sebastian Relitz, Andrea Peinhopf, Natia Nadiradze, Furtuna Sheremeti, Ian Madison, Lara Olson, and Jessie Barton Hronešová for advice and assistance before, during and after my field trips.

in Georgia from October to December 2016 I met with NGO workers, government officials and staff of internationals organisations who suggested contacts in Abkhazia, so I had a network of contacts to work with and was able to arrange meetings before I arrived. There was also a risk that entering Abkhazia from Georgia proper (rather than from Russia) would generate suspicion about my reasons for travelling to Abkhazia;[7] based on my discussion with people with experience of working in the region, the best risk mitigation strategy was to be honest about why I was there, that is, as a student wanting to learn about the conflict and hear their perspectives, and to focus on historical issues rather than recent and current events and politics.

Interviews and Meetings

Over the course of multiple trips, I logged a total of over 100 interviews and meetings (some of which were repeat interviews). Some of these semi-structured interviews were on the record, many were not, and this number does not include the many other public meetings and events organised by local think tanks and NGOs I was able to attend during almost nine months of field research. All of these interactions were crucial in forming and reforming ideas and questions, providing new and unexpected sources of insight that I have tried to synthesise into a coherent argument (or have held onto for future projects).

All interviews were conducted in English or through translators. While not ideal, this was not as great an obstacle as it would be have been for ethnographic or interpretive research: the data I was trying to collect was less about understanding the motivations and personalities of individuals than about building an historical narrative of who was doing what where and when. Some interviews were also done by phone with respondents no longer living in the fieldwork sites (i.e. former international personnel), and in some cases I have had further communication with respondents via email.

[7] Entering Abkhazia from Russia is illegal under Georgian law. Had I done so, and then returned to Georgia, I would have faced criminal charges.

I did more expert informational interviews (usually off-the-record for background) than I had anticipated, mostly because it was relatively easier to obtain these kinds of interviews than it was to interview direct participants of events that took place decades ago. This also means that the interviews probably say more about how the past is being reinterpreted in the present, rather than providing a reliable historical account. In the Georgia-Abkhazia case in particular, my impression was that it is very hard not to view the 1990s and early 2000s other than through the lens of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 and Russia's annexation of Crimea and intervention in eastern Ukraine in 2014, which risks magnifying and distorting the role of Russia in earlier events. On the other hand, this meant that a lot of the interview material proved to be very useful for understanding more recent developments and contemporary issues including conflict legacies and continuity and change in post-war environments, which was my focus in Chapter 6.

The informational interviews were used to inform the analysis and often prompted further lines of inquiry. Information from off-the-record interviews could then be validated with on-the-record interviews or other sources. This was an important and necessary part of how the interviews and fieldwork contributed to the data generating process, often in circuitous and indirect ways to help identify and form judgements about 'what matters' rather than through directly appearing as empirical material in the text of the thesis. My interviews in Georgia, for example, were very useful for making judgements about what to focus on and use from the UNOMIG archives, which then provided a check on what I had been told in the interviews, and so on.

My interviews and meetings with international staff from IOs, INGOs and embassies were more likely to be off-the-record than interviews with national and local respondents. This was partly because international staff were less willing to talk on-the-record, and because off-the-record conversations were more useful for me anyway as a source of deep background information. It was also important to me to give Georgians, Abkhazians, Serbians and Kosovars the chance to speak on-the-record, although I acknowledge that the profile of people that I interviewed means that I only have a very narrow slice of elite perceptions and opinions. Researching and writing about ongoing conflicts in a balanced, fair, and empathetic way is difficult, and I was constantly having to navigate multiple concerns about personal bias, false equivalence, and being co-opted. Trying to get the views of at least some of the people directly involved in the conflicts I have been researching included in the text was one way I have tried to deal with

this, and I have tried to avoid giving the impression that I can speak on behalf of – or, worse, in the place of, or better than – anyone from those communities.[8]

As a final comment on the interviews and how they relate to wider issues of research in conflict-affected areas, there are obvious disadvantages to being an outsider when trying to do field research, but the big advantage is being able to talk people on both sides of the conflict. This is a vital source of insights for understanding the context and the drivers of the conflict and, in the case of Georgians and Abkhazians especially, something that they themselves are increasingly unable or unwilling to do. However, there are potential risks for the outsider who is known to be interviewing both sides of a conflict when levels of distrust, if not outright enmity, remain high: gaining credibility and the trust of one side may come at the expense of not being trusted by the other, either during the research itself, or after publication, which raises all kinds of questions about self-censorship, access and the nature of the relationship between researchers and their interview respondents. When a researcher intends to go back to do further research in the same places, it is hard not to be conscious of how your research will be received, and what repercussions there may be for the possibility of returning. While I don't know if or to what extent these considerations influenced the way I conducted my research or how I have written it up – I do intend to return to Georgia, Abkhazia, Serbia and Kosovo, and I have deliberately cultivated a network in these areas because I believe that good field research depends on long-term sustained engagement – these issues need to be part of how the academic community talks about scholarship in and on conflict-affected areas.

[8] Relatedly, I am aware that I do not cite enough local scholars and rely too heavily on English-language reports from IOs and from International Crisis Group in particular. ICG, while the reports are well-regarded and factually reliable, are also known to have a political agenda, such as advocacy for Kosovan independence and a more interventionist international community in Bosnia. Bose 2005, 326; Ker-Lindsay 2012a, 27.

A.3 Last Words

'You're sitting in an ethnically cleansed city'

Priština, autumn 2017

Field research, whatever its merits as a form of data collection, makes you think and feel differently about your research: what you are researching, why you are researching it, if and why it matters, and for whom. This shapes all stages of the research process, from planning to writing up and finishing. In my case at least, the large amount of time and effort that went into the field research was disproportionate to the quite small amount of data that directly appears in the text. However, it made an immense, invaluable contribution in terms of informing the substance of the argument, the judgments that had to be made when analysing and synthesising data and evidence, and in the overall framing and purpose of the project and why it matters.

Perhaps this makes fieldwork an inefficient way of doing research – after my first field trip, my overriding feeling was that I had a lot of answers to questions that I hadn't been asking, but over time the fieldwork contributed to reformulating my research question even if it was still not providing direct answers. Being open to new insights during fieldwork is probably the biggest advantage and the biggest risk of doing research this way, especially with a theory building project. "It's messy and complicated" is not a good conclusion, and the role of political science is to try and make sense of the messiness and complexity (the political and moral complexity, as well as the empirical and theoretical complexity), but I made a choice, a choice that was shaped by my fieldwork experience, to try not to write anything that would lead a reader to mistakenly think that any of the cases discussed here are less messy or complicated than they are.

Field research was also a way to try and reconcile social scientific expectations – to think in terms of analytical categories, of cases and units of analysis – with a personal commitment to not seeing a society affected by conflict as 'just a case' and to doing 'good research', in both an academic and an ethical sense. I decided the way I could contribute to what we – the scholarly community, and hopefully a wider community outside academia – know about what happens after violent secessionist conflicts was through a case-oriented approach that included field research. So the remark "you're sitting in an ethnically

cleansed city", made to me while drinking coffee in a restaurant in Priština that was once a Red Cross building and is now frequented by internationals and government officials, and somewhere that I interviewed diplomats and politicians and met with Serbs and Albanians, is one that has stuck in my mind. Not because it told me anything I did not already know or had read about, but as one of many incidents over the course of doing this research that brought home how much and how little can change after a war, and how hard and how important it is to reduce the disconnect that sometimes exists between academia and the world we try to make sense of.



Figure A.2 Bridge over the River Inguri, looking towards Abkhazia. Photo taken by the author (2017).

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