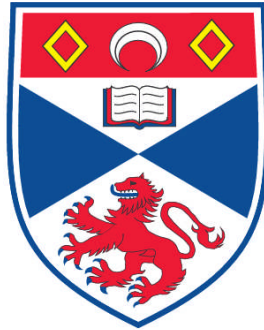# ANTI-DEVELOPMENTALISM AND CONFLICT: 'MATERIALIST' THEORY OF ETHNOPOLITICAL CONFLICT: THE CASE OF GEORGIA

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Anti-Developmentalism and Conflict: 'Materialist' Theory of
Ethnopolitical Conflict: the case of Georgia

M.Phil. Dissertation

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to provide a theoretical reasoning through which the political economic background of the post-Soviet transformation could be observed. The argument commences with a critique of the perspectives derived from modernization theory and draws on ideas educed from the approaches of historical sociology, which essentially stress the role of the state breakdown in social transformation. The crucial analytical bridge between the historically-oriented knowledge of state formation and break up and the empirical reality of the Soviet state is provided by the theoretical insights originating from the world-system analysis distinguishing a particular class of developmentalist states that attempted to overcome underdevelopment and catch up with the Western core while applying revolutionary and often totalitarian strategies. These strategies, responding to the large structural processes and apparently diverging from the prevailing systemic 'capitalist' ideas, brought about fundamental social changes that later contributed to the fall of the Soviet developmentalist regime. The empirical part of the thesis follows the trajectories of these social changes in Georgia and illustrates how these transformations, expressed in class perspective, accounted for the violent transition of the Caucasian country in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

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1.   Introduction

Two decades have passed since the violent break up of the communist federations but the Georgian 'frozen conflicts' are again stirring the world. Indeed, the overall conditions and conflictual issues have changed substantially. However, the current situation also reflects an unsuccessful and painful transformation that has obviously shaped several determinants of the recent instability. Although it would be appealing to analyse current developments, this thesis attempts to offer a trajectory flowing only up to the specific period of transformation of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Hence, the thesis will focus on the long-term processes leading to and the political economy of the violent transition in Georgia roughly until the beginning of the war in Abkhazia in 1992.

I would rather tend to avoid mentioning the disciplinary cliché that ethnic (ethnopolitical) conflicts are complex multi-causal situations that can safely introduce any theme to social science. Nevertheless, many theoretical approaches in conflict studies that observe the processes leading to the violent collapse of communist federations have focused primarily on nationalism and ethnic identity, understood in their broadest senses. In addition, they have often combined them with various agents ranging from institutional settings to elites' skills, or employed various conceptualizations of totalitarianism prevalent since the Cold War. The literature addressing the late Soviet period and post-Soviet transitions suggests that the stories were 'incomplete' due to attributing too much influence as well as analytical power to the nationalist or identity features of the violent mobilizations. Although various theoretically well-informed studies provided generally convincing explanations, they often appeared to deprecate or even neglect the role of the notion of 'material conditions'. Two clarifying or even definitional notes are necessary. Firstly, the word 'materialist' in the sub-title should not be treated as having an absolute meaning. Quite obviously, if ethno-political conflict is apparently connected with the notion of 'ethnicity' broadly construed, it is inevitable that we should permit a broader analysis than a purely materialist one. Despite the significant role played by what has been recently labelled as nationalism and identity politics, the 'materialist' factors should be seen as necessary for mobilizations. Secondly, the

'materialist' factors are understood in this thesis as referring to particular issues of the Soviet political economy. More specifically I use the label 'materialist' for covering the socio-political conditions of Soviet classes and political economic issues such as corruption, organized crime, or institutionalized cleptocracy.

The crucial challenge of this thesis is theoretical and, indeed, the thesis seeks to address theory in detail. In other words, how could we conceptualize in a theorized fashion the political economic background of the post-Soviet transformation? The emphasis put on a broader theoretical background should be underlined as the thesis should on no account provide a 'focused', nearly ethnographic study of a specific spot hidden somewhere between the Black and Caspian Seas and covered by the shadows of the Caucasian range. Quite on the contrary, although the thesis does not endeavour to offer any precise comparative insights, the general idea, extremely ambitious from the disciplinary point of view but, indeed, taken with reasonable humbleness on my side, is to illustrate a theoretical reasoning that could virtually be applicable in all cases of the post-developmentalist transition. Hence this thesis aims at elucidating the causes of the violent transition in Georgia while setting them into a broader theoretical perspective that essentially outreached the regional perspective. My intention is not to challenge the approaches that strongly build on dynamics coming from national or ethnic mobilization. Rather, I would like to show under what conditions and through what processes, defined in political economic terms, might these mobilizations lead to violent transformations and ethnopolitical conflicts (as transpired in the early 1990s in Georgia).

The first chapter of the thesis briefly maps the most important groups of approaches that explain the collapse of the Soviet Union. Further attention will be given to the problem of a particular development of the 'national question' in the Soviet Union as national mobilization apparently reached extreme dimensions in Georgia. The second part provides a theoretical discussion that is to provide a framework for an empirical analysis. The main theoretical inspiration comes from historical sociology and, more specifically, from the subfields of analysis of social transformations and state breakdowns and from the ideas derived from world-system analysis. However, the discussion will also certainly be enriched by other approaches, most notably by that of developmentalist literature. The core idea will rest in distinguishing the particular class of the developmentalist states of the Communist world that introduced revolutionary and often totalitarian strategies to

overcome underdevelopment and catch up with the Western core. These strategies resulted in 'strong' states that functioned in direct contradiction to the prevailing systemic 'capitalist' ideas. It is in fact the anti-systemic developmentalism that I shortened to 'anti-developmentalism' in the title of this thesis.

The following empirical part contains two chapters that reflect the principal argument. The violent transition in Georgia was connected with two major types of conflicts – internal civil war and ethnopolitical conflicts in the autonomies. Hence, the first empirical chapter seeks to show how the processes occurring within the anti-systemic developmentalist state could be connected with the violent social transformation that reached the stage of a civil war. The second empirical chapter will then deal with ethnopolitical conflict, which will be generally understood as a result of ethnopolitical mobilizations, which should not be observed separately from the conditions viewed as the results of the larger processes mentioned above. I will specifically deal with the contrasting cases of Abkhazia and Ajaria. The connection between the two types of conflicts (internal civil war and ethnopolitical conflicts) will be conceptualized through the approach developed by Eyal, Szeleneyi, and Townsley stressing the roles and dynamics of particular classes in post-Communist transformation.[1]

There are several good reasons for why it is appropriate to use Georgia as a case study. Most obviously, the civil war and related conflicts in the autonomies were extremely violent, brought about thousands of causalities and left burdens that have not been overcome in more than a dozen years after the relative stabilization. However, besides the widely discussed issues of her ethnic and cultural heterogeneity or her particular institutional design, inherited from the Bolshevik period, Georgia has been an extremely interesting subject for students of the specific Soviet political economy. For instance, Georgian society ranked as the most corrupt and kleptocratic society in the Soviet Union. This issue becomes even more interesting when connected with the specific informal cultural rules working in Georgian society, ranging from clan structures to the phenomenon of the thieves-in-law.

The thesis builds mostly on data and information provided by secondary sources, as the observed period is relatively distant and well elaborated. The crucial

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[1] Eyal, Gil, Szelenyi, Ivan, and Eleanor Townsley (1998): *Making Capitalism Without Capitalists: Class Formation and Elite Struggles in Post-Communist Central Europe*, New York and London: Verso

issue, and my major aim, is generally to put this inquiry into a different theoretical perspective and provide an alternative interpretation. There is also a rich and rapidly expanding body of literature on the specifically Georgian features of the corruption and patronage, developed mostly by Georgian researchers. However, the research basically started only after the Rose Revolution and has predominantly focused on the period closely before and the period after the revolution when assessing the impact of the reforms.

2.   Studying the collapse of the Soviet Union

The rapid fall of Communism in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s was accompanied by the rise of several violent conflicts. Virtually all of them were connected with the break ups of the former Communist federations of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Particularly the conflicts in the Balkans attracted a wide attention in both political and research communities. From the perspective of the former, this could be hardly surprising given the de-stabilizing role the Balkans played several times in European history. However, both the conflicts in the Balkans and those in the post-Soviet area have also meant a serious challenge for conflict studies.

Many scholars have tried to understand and explain the conflicts in the post-Soviet area by referring to a wide range of factors. We could generally divide them into two major categories. The first group includes factors emergent from the transitional processes. The theoretical frameworks belonging to this group dominantly work with the variables connected to the problems of democratization or permanent political crises. The other group, which perhaps constitutes the dominant strand within this area, consists of theories that build on the long-term legacies of the Soviet rule. The issue of the Soviet legacies essentially implies the problems of national and identity differences that were bolstered by the character of the Soviet political and institutional system. This group will be recalled later when addressing the issue of violent mobilizations in Georgia. However, the logic of mentioning of both groups of approaches lies in their modernization perspective, whose essential critique provides a way out for my alternative approach.

2.1.   Transitological Perspective

Transitologists have often been sceptical about the prospects of the democratizing process in multi-national states. Hughes and Sasse mention that already the founding father of modern liberal theory, John Stuart Mill, claimed that

democracy in an ethnically diverse state is 'next to impossible'.[2] The issue becomes even more difficult when ethnic differences are delimitated by a territorial arrangement. Additionally there is a strong first-hand claim that the most successful, easiest and fastest transitions in Central and Eastern Europe occurred in the ethnically homogenous countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia).

The scepticism has also been driven by the Latin American experience. As various scholars have shown, a rapid decomposition of a strong state may fundamentally affect the regime as well as oppositional structures or the roots of civil societies.[3] Several scholars have proposed that the cases of the Latin American and East European transitions allow for comparisons.[4] However, this position has been highly criticized from the methodological perspective stressing, on the contrary, the essential distinctiveness of these cases.[5]

Traditional transitology has naturally rejected any long-term perspective. The process of transition should not be viewed as an inexorable and cumulative trajectory of protests and social unrests that started already in the 1950s. Moreover, these events should not be considered as parts of the wider historical process. Ekiert has clearly stated that 'despite many similarities, the instances of mass protest and social unrest which have occurred in different state-socialist countries do not necessarily form a single historical pattern or trend.'[6] However, it should be noted already here that this thesis theoretically rests on a clearly contradictory assumption invoking the determined patterns of the world system trajectories.

The transitological paradigm also shifted quite essentially. The first views considered the distinctive systems of totalitarianism and democracy and Soviet ideology and the ideology of nationalism in a purely Manichean fashion (Brzezinski).

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[2] Hughes, James, and Sasse, Gwendolyn (2002): 'Comparing Regional and Ethnic Conflicts in Post-Soviet Transition States', in Hughes, James, and Sasse (eds): *Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union: Regions in Conflict*, London: Frank Cass, p. 9, quoting Mill's Considerations on Representative Government.
[3] The relevancy of comparisons is recommended, for example, in Schmitter, Philippe C. and Karl, Terry L. (1994): 'The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists: How Far to the East Should they Attempt to Go?', *Slavic Review*, 53,1. The argument concerning a civil society development is developed in Stepan, Alfred (1985): 'State Power and the Strengths of Civil Society in the Southern Cone of Latin America', in Evans, Peter B., Rueschmeyer, Dietrich, and Skocpol, Theda (eds.): *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 192-227.
[4] Schmitter, Philippe C. and Karl, Terry L. (1994): 'The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists: How Far to the East Should they Attempt to Go?', *Slavic Review*, 53,1, pp. 173-176.
[5] Bunce, Valery (1995): 'Should Transitologists Be Grounded?', *Slavic Review*, 54/1, pp. 11-127, Bunce, Valery (1995): "Comparing East and South", *Journal of Democracy*, 6,3, pp. 87-100, Terry, Sarah M. (1993): 'Thinking about Post-Communist Transitions: How Different Are They?', *Slavic Review*, 52,2, pp. 333-337.
[6] Ekiert, Grzegor (1991): 'Democratization Processes in East Central Europe: A Theoretical Reconsideration', *British Journal of Political Science*, 21,3, p. 286.

This position was challenged and to a certain extent substituted by the modernization approach, which emphasized the interconnected roles of political and economic modernization While stressing not the form but the degree of government, Huntington argued that a dynamics of economic modernization had not often been accompanied by a relevant development of political institutions. The inadequateness of these institutions does not appear to be important in stable societies or peaceful periods; however, it becomes the essential problem in situations of social conflicts.[7] Indeed, the turn from ideology towards institutions and their control over political processes successfully left aside the very nature of state-socialist states.

According to the adherents of the modernization theory, democratization resembles a progressive and inevitable process leading to regimes' and states' transformations. The functioning of this linear logic is assured through the economic development and subsequent adaptation of political institutions. As noted that modernists strongly perceived a possible conflictual nature in these transitions. Indeed, a need to emphasize the role of a functional institutional setting for appeasing arising conflicts often provided, in fact, the point of departure for this stream of thinking.

The most recognized approach directly connecting conflicts with democratic transitional periods has recently been developed by Snyder and Mansfield.[8] While attacking the dominant political belief based on the democratic peace theory that the export of democracy is the best prescription for stabilizing former autocratic or totalitarian states and regions, they have argued that, on the contrary, transitional periods are prone to violence and both intra- as well as inter-state wars. Their analyses further suggest that the belligerent potential is mostly carried by both old and new elites, who mobilize the masses to fulfil their own goals and interests. In other words, 'elites exploit their power in the imperfect institutions of partial democracies to create *faits accomplish*, control political agendas, and shape the content of information media in ways that promote belligerent pressure-group lobbies

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[7] Huntington, Samuel P. (1968): *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
[8] Snyder, Jack (2000): *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*. New York: Norton, Mansfield, Edward D., and Snyder, Jack (2002): 'Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength, and War', *International Organization*, 56, 2, Mansfield, Edward D. and Snyder, Jack (1995a): 'Democratization and the Danger of War', *International Security*, 20, 1, Mansfield, Edward D. and Snyder, Jack (1995b): 'Democratization and War', *Foreign Affairs*, 74 (3).

or upwelling of militancy in the populace as a whole.'[9] The apparent tools for the elite's strategies are provided by nationalism and populism.

Snyder and Mansfield thus emphasize the same categories as the adherents of the second group – nationalism and leadership. However, they approach their agency only under the particular circumstances of the transformation period, which implies a natural general uncertainty and a weak institutional structure. Their statistical analysis, although criticized[10], offered a methodologically strong theoretical claim, which, in the case of Georgia, had been preceded as well as followed by many empirical observations.[11] It should also be noted that Snyder's theory is prescriptive. It is not just that he essentially attacks the democratic peace theory, but he also tackles possible scenarios of conflict resolution, including power-sharing agreements and asymmetric federative arrangements.[12]

2.2.   Identity and Nationalism

Various attempts to theorize about and conceptualize nationalism have accompanied modern interest in the rise of ethnic and national identities. Despite the intellectual struggles, most of the scholars have agreed on the deprecation of the primordialist perspective. For example, according to Wimmer, 'national and ethnic identities are in no way remnants of tradition, which have failed to melt away under the sun of modern republicanism'[13], and Brubaker has even referred to primordialism as to a 'long-dead horse that writers on ethnicity and nationalism continue to flog. No serious scholar today holds the view that is routinely attributed to primordialists in

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[9] Mansfield and Snyder (1995a): *Democratization and the Danger of War*, p. 7.

[10] See Wolf, Reinhard, Weede, Erich and Enterline, Andrew, J., (1996) in 'Correspondence'. *International Security*, 20, 4, or Thompson, William R. and Tucker, Richard (1997): 'A Tale of Two Democratic Peace Critiques', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 41, 3.

[11] I am aware of the following studies that offer strong insights (not necessarily only) based on the development in the last years before the break up of violence in Georgia: Aves, Jonathan (1996): 'The Post-Soviet Transcaucasia', in Allison, Roy (1996): *Challenges for the Former Soviet South*, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, Aves, Jonathan (1992): 'The Rise and Fall of the Georgian Nationalist Movement, 1987-1991', in Hosking, Geoffrey A. (et al., eds.): *The Road to Post-Communism: Independent Political Movement in the Soviet Union 1985-1991*. London: Pinter, Jones, Stephen (1994): 'Georgia: A Failed Democratic Transition', in Bremmer, Ian and Ray, Taras (eds.): *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Nodia, Ghia (1996): 'Political Turmoil in Georgia and the Ethnic Policies of Zviad Gamsakhurdia', in Coopieters, Bruno (ed.): *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*: Bruxelles: VUP Press.

[12] Snyder (2000): *From Voting to Violence*, p. 40.

[13] Wimmer, Andreas (2002). *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 42.

straw-man setups, namely that nations or ethnic groups are primordial, unchanging entities.'[14]

Many scholars have espoused the position of rational choice instrumentalism. For them, the politization of ethnicity is envisaged as an optional strategy that, under certain 'incentive structures', may prove to be prosperous. To put it differently, the group's identity is considered relevant and mainly politically meaningful only in relation to the particular political or economic intentions or goals.[15] Anthony Smith has taken a position in between primordialism and instrumentalism. He has rejected both of the extreme positions: the given objectivity of primordialists and the situational subjectivity of instrumentalists.[16]

Finally, for both functionalists and constructivists, nationalism constitutes an integral part of modern society. They, in general, attribute the success of nationalism to the functional needs of a modernizing society. While Smith has seen modern nations as recent expression of their long-term characteristics (*ethnie*), according to the functionalist Gellner, modern nations have lost and abandoned most of their ties to past traditions.[17] Anderson has famously defined 'nation' as 'an imagined political community – imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.'[18] By using the term *imagined community* for a nation, Anderson sought to express the qualitative difference between old communities that were formed around palpable familiar or tribal ties and modern communities (nations) of fellow-members, who never meet or even hear about each other, yet still they share the image of their joint communion. Gellner was, according to Anderson, correct when claiming that nationalism did not awaken the nations to self-consciousness but invented the nations where they never existed. However, Gellner's invention implies, in Anderson's eyes, fabrication and falsity rather than imagination or creation.[19]

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[14] Brubaker, Rogers (1996): *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p.15. Some primordialist views are shared by Neo-romantics. The name apparently implies the inspiration coming from the political romanticism of the 19th century, particularly from the German ideals of humanistic nationalism (Herder) or educating the nation (Fichte). The common grounds can be found in the assumption that ethnicity constitutes a fundamental and eternal component of social life. In general, neo-romanticism covers a long process of developing national awareness, from the medieval to the rise of the nation state.

[15] See, Hechter, Michael (2000), *Containing Nationalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press

[16] Smith, Anthony D. (1991), *National Identity*, London: Penguin Books, p. 20.

[17] Cf. Gellner, Ernst (1983), *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

[18] Anderson, Benedict (2003). *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London: Verso 2003 (third edition), p. 5.

[19] Anderson's Imagined Communities were first published in 1983 (1st edition, Verso, London), in the same year as the most recognized work by Gellner on the topic: Nations and Nationalism (1st edition, Ithaca, Cornell

2.2.1.   *Nationalism and Conflict in the Soviet Union*

No matter what theoretical lenses one prefers, nationalism remains fundamental to the end of the Soviet Union and to the post-Soviet transformation. This is supposedly even more so the case as the reflection has included confusing views resulting from the ambivalent relation between theories and practises of nationalism and Marxism and consequent feelings about the 'solution' of the national question. I will explain this later in detail, along with why and how the issue of the national question fits into my theoretical background. The following concise introduction is, however, necessary for further understandings.

The Soviet Union was an unprecedented case of a state that incorporated more than a hundred diverse nations, most of which regarded the Soviet territory as their homeland. Moreover, more than 20 of these nationalities each numbered over one million people. Considering the history of the area, saturated with the painful Tsarist Russian expansions, the post-revolutionary Bolshevik formation of the Soviet Union and Stalin's repression that many times challenged the cultural, language, or religious identity of nations, one would assume that those were national movements which later challenged and fundamentally destabilized the whole empire. However, before they became clearly relevant in the 1980s and started to dominate the view of the Soviet Union after its break up, Soviet nationality issues were not a research concern until the 1960s. Cold War-era sovietology largely omitted the nationality question.[20]

The Soviet system appeared to abolish the Tsarist imperial legacy of the "prison of nations". Soviet elites presented a "solution" of the national question based on the creation of the *homo sovieticus* as a great political victory of Soviet socialism that 'had brought equality, prosperity, and harmony to the ethnically diverse population of the USSR.'[21] Later Soviet realism also shows that Western confusion was not driven primarily by Soviet propaganda. 'Soviet successes in solving the nationalities

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University Press). Anderson thus refers to Gellner's previous work Thought and Change (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London 1994), p. 6.

[20] The critics have found several reasons for this fact, including a state-centric view of the Soviet society reflecting the framework of the totalitarian model, exaggeration of the ideological factor, or a prevailing orientation on Russia and Russians. The limits of sovietology were also naturally given by a close connection to the political agenda of the Western foreign policy. See Gleason, Gregory (1992): 'The "National Factor" and the Logic of Sovietology', in: Motyl, A. J. (ed.), *The Post-Soviet Nations – Perspective on the Demise of the USSR*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 2-25.

[21] Warshofsky-Lapidus, Gail (1984): 'Ethnonationalism and Political Stability: The Soviet Case', *World Politics*, Vol.36, No.4, (Jul., 1984), p.555.

question certainly do not mean that all problems…have disappeared. This is hardly possible as long as nations exist, as long as there are national distinctions. And they will exist for a long time, much longer than class distinctions.'[22]

2.2.1.1.   *Leninist strategy*

Soviet history could be viewed as a constant conflict between the pragmatism of the communist policies and the theoretical expectations of Marxist ideology.[23] This dichotomy reflects the incompatibility of nationalism and Marxism.[24] Lenin rightly recognized the strategic potential of nationalism and decided to harness it for the power mounting. His dialectical explanation should disguise the incompatible characters. He grasped nationalism as a reaction to past oppression and understood the strong national sentiments of the nations that were burdensomely treated during the tsarist times.[25]

Lenin's strategic plan included the combined concepts of territorial and cultural autonomy with the system of democratic centralism. The main goal of his national policy in the first years was thus to make peoples differentiate the current sovietization from the former Russian imperial rule. This is the perspective of the strategy of nativization (*korenizatsiia*), which should encourage the national feelings of all minorities. The system of democratic centralism created a hierarchical axis, where nation was subordinated to class, which was further subordinated to the Party, 'which represented the working class by virtue of the self-legitimizing nature given it by ideology.'[26] This provision gave the Party crucial decision power. Regarding the strategic goals, it could, in a political struggle, employ national or class forces, eventually their combination. Nations thus lost their natural real dimension,

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[22] Andropov's words in Pravda, quoted in: Warshofsky-Lapidus (1984), *Ethnonationalism and Political Stability*, p.556

[23] The so-called 'national Marxists' to a certain extent tried to define a conciliatory relation between both. See, for example, Bauer, Otto (2003): 'Národnostní otázka a sociální demokracie' [The National Question and Social Democracy], in: Hroch, Miroslav (ed.), *Pohledy na národ a nacionlismus*, Slon: Praha 2003, p. 38.

[24] For a theoretical discussion, see Connor, Walker (1984): *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory*, Princeton University Press.

[25] Walker, Lee (1996): 'Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Post-Soviet Transition', in: Drobizheva, Leokadia, Gottemoeller, Rose, Kelleher-Mac Ardle, Catherin, Walker, Lee (eds.), *Ethnic Conflict in the Post Soviet World: Case Studies and Analyses*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, pp. 6-7. Indeed, the connection of the colonial and national questions was one of Lenin's major contributions to Marxist thought. Connor (1984), *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory*, p. 32.

[26] Besançon, Alain (1986): 'Nationalism and Bolshevism', in Conquest, Robert (1986): *The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future*, Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, p. 3.

expressed in the capacity to organize themselves, and instead became abstract notions surviving only in theory and its ideological wooden language.[27]

However, the reconciliation with the nations was only the first step. The main Bolshevik goal was to penetrate the minority societies and transform them into active participants in the regime. In particular it was necessary to "create" national leaders and representatives who would not lose authenticity while having ideologically "correct" beliefs. After the civil war, Bolsheviks were quite numerous among minority nations. However, it was a group of highly russified and people, estranged from their own nation, who consequently could secure limited credibility from the masses.[28] Seeing this effort from the holistic union perspective, this part of Lenin's national policy was less successful because new cadres could hardly abandon their national identity under the conditions of ongoing national encouragement.

2.2.1.2. *Stalinism*

Stalin opposed some features of Lenin's national policy from the very beginning and radically changed the policy towards minorities after his death. Stalin did not distinguish the relations between nations from the relations between classes; both were, in his eyes, determined by force rather than by understanding.[29] On the background of general collectivization and industrialization that destroyed the conditions of NEP, he addressed first the Party itself while organizing recurrent massive purges. Hand in hand with the disappearance of various leaders of minority nationalism, ethnic Russians started to dominate the administrative institutions that were responsible for implementing Stalin's policies.

By the late 1920s, a new term, "socialist nation", appeared as the leading idea of the Soviet national policy. Stalin had a clear notion about what the result of a merging of nations should be: one nation sharing the Russian culture and language. This idea was institutionalized later in 1961 by Khrushchev at the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU. The motto "flowering, rapprochement, merging" (*rastsvet,*

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[27] Besançon (1986), *Nationalism and Bolshevism*, p.3.
[28] Dzyuba, Ivan (1968), *Internationalism or Russification?*, New York: Pathfinder Press, p. 178, cited in: Connor, Walker (1992): 'Soviet Policies Toward the Non-Russian Peoples in Theoretic and Historic Perspective: What Gorbachev Inherited', in: Motyl, Alexandr (1992): *The Post-Soviet Nations: Pespectives on the Demise of the USSR*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 197.
[29] Simon, Gerhard (1991): *Nations and Politics toward Nationalities in the Soviet Union*, Boulder, Westview, p. 22.

sblizhenie, sliianie) symbolized the process that had begun with the blossom of nations during the first decades of the Soviet Union, followed by their advance and finally merging under the mature socialism.[30] Although the critical times of the Second World War brought some national and religious concessions, the process of punishment of the quislings of the Soviet nation fundamentally affected future relations between the minorities and the centre.[31]

2.2.1.3.   *De-Stalinization, Khrushchev and Brezhnev*

The events of the Second World War obviously proved that the creation of the "unified" Soviet nation was a clearly unrealistic idea. Stalin's successors again started to realize that non-Russian minorities, in fact constituting the majority of the Soviet Union's people, might pose a credible threat to the state. New contenders in power struggles like Beria, Khrushchev or Brezhnev not only recognized the political power of non-Russians but also tried to benefit from their origin by using national institutions and elites as a power base. The new political approach also took the shape of decentralization, which touched the administration as well as the economic sector. The immediate period after Stalin's death also brought about an expected detachment on the field of national cultural expressions. The victims of Stalinist processes were partially rehabilitated, and the non-Russian cultural heritage was promoted while national art, literature or film emerged again. Indeed, as Suny has noted, 'in the atmosphere of increased freedom the border between the forbidden and the acceptable was constantly crossed by emboldened writers and principled dissidents.'[32]

Some minority rights established in the 1950s even exceeded those from the 1920s. However, Khrushchev very soon turned again to a purely ideologically based doctrine. At the XXII Congress of the CPSU, he proclaimed that the nations of the Soviet Union definitely lost their national consciousness and fastened themselves in the socialist one. Although he must have been perfectly aware that his statements

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[30] Rakowska-Harmstone, Teresa (1986): 'Minority Nationalism Today: An Overview', in Conquest, Robert (ed.), *The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future.* Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, p. 237.
[31] Most visibly peoples like the Balkars, Karachais, Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingush, Meskhetian Turks, Volga Germans, or Crimean Tatars were evicted from their homelands and removed to Central Asia.
[32] Suny, Ronald, G., (1992): 'State, civil society, and ethnic cultural consolidation in the USSR', in: Goldman, Lapidus, and Zaslavsky (eds.), *From Union to Commonwealth: Nationalism and Speratism in the Soviet Republics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 30

strongly opposed the reality, he declared that the situation, after flowering and rapprochement, moved to the last stage of merging. The new fused nation needed again a single language to promote the single culture that came to be termed "the Soviet culture". It meant, in fact, the returning domination of the Russian language and culture, since the conception of Soviet culture as such was extremely vague, if there was any conception of it at all.[33]

No matter how honest and convinced Khrushchev's attitudes were, since the late 1950s, his national policy was rooted in the revolutionary Marxist idealism, according to which economic development will cause a rapid erosion of distinct ethnic identities and subsequently a creation of a Soviet nation. The conservative Brezhnev did not share and follow this idealism. The leading idea of his national policy was that 'an overall Soviet culture and values had come into being and were living harmoniously alongside the pride that ethnic groups legitimately possessed in their own cultures, languages and histories.'[34] Hence, Brezhnev's strategy rested on the trust he imbedded in bureaucratic cadres and republic leaders. In practice, the republic elites were given considerable freedom to run the republics as long as they kept nationalism under control and at least pretended to fight an enormous corruption that crippled even the rest of the economy's performance and deepened the recent fall. Brezhnev thus founded his power base on the new coming autonomy's leaders. At one time during Brezhnev's tenure, his Politburo included as many as six first secretaries of non-Russian Republican Party organizations.[35]

Friedgut finds two contradictory tendencies that characterized Brezhnev's period. First, the demands for modernization necessitated freer communication and social mobility, which would naturally weaken national boundaries and consequently bring interculturation. Second, such a fluid social structure strongly 'contradicts a centrally instituted determination of resource allocation and use, let alone ideological

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[33] Cornell, Svante E. (2001), *Autonomy and Conflict*, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, p. 80.

[34] Lieven, Dominic, McGarry, John (1997): 'Ethnic Conflict in the Soviet Union', in: McGarry, John, O'Leary, Brendan (eds.), *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation: Case Studies of Prottracted Ethnic Conflict*, New York: Routledge, p. 69. Maybe surprisingly it was Brezhnev who encouraged the great development of the ethnographic and ethnologic research. During the Brezhnev era the Institute of Ethnography in Moscow gained a great prominence. Similarly, in 1969, the All-Union Council for the Study of Nationality Problems was established. These institutions provided a natural framework for joining scholarship to policy formation. Cf. Warshofsky-Lapidus, Gail (1984): 'Ethnonationalism and Political Stability: The Soviet Case', *World Politics*, Vol.36, No.4, p.557.

[35] Burg, Steven L. (1990): 'Nationality Elites and Political Change in the Soviet Union', in: Hajda, Lubomyr and Beissinger, Mark (eds.), *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Security*, Boulder: Westview, p. 25.

content.'[36] This ambivalence perfectly describes the social, political, and economic deadlock which the Soviet society had reached.

2.2.1.4. *Perestroika*

Western observers often doubted Gorbachev's sincerity about and the prospect of the upcoming reforms in the first years of his rule. The rather conservative Gorbachev had been expected to become another Brezhnev, and his limited social reforms were perceived as a means to create conditions for an implementation of Western technologies and borrowings. The other reason for their pessimism was the conviction that the Soviet political culture and its mainly ubiquitous omnipotent bureaucracy would systematically disable any reform.[37]

Gorbachev's whole career was connected with the power centre, and his politburo was, after many years since Stalin's death, also almost exclusively Slavic and overwhelmingly Russian.[38] Consequently, this fact might explain the early suspicion on the side of the republics and their opposing attitudes towards his reforms. Gorbachev naturally needed to gain the republican leaderships on his own side to constitute an efficient power base for the realization of his reform program. He became caught, as Suny has noted, 'between nationality leadership that opposed his reforms, and intellectual and popular forces, most of which, once they overcame their suspicion of the Kremlin, were interested in the general liberalizing thrust of Moscow's new policies.'[39]

The introduction of the new thinking on the national question in some ways challenged traditional views. Most importantly, it revised the ideological assumption

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[36] Friedegut, Theodore H. (1992), 'Nations of the USSR: From Mobilized Participation to Autonomous Diversity', in: Motyl, Alexander J. (ed.), *The Post-Soviet Nations – Perspective on the Demise of the USSR,* New York, Columbia University Press, pp. 200-201.

[37] Suny, Ronald G. (1993): *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 131-2. In a similar vein, Bunce has argued that major reforms from above are historically very rare since they involve at least two factors that should be coming together. First, there must be a crisis that is perceived by elites as threatening the very survival of the regime or even the state. Second, there must be a change in political leadership that produces a new leader who would be encouraged and strong enough to enforce a reform consisting in fundamental interest and elite change. Furthermore, these factors could be to some extent contradictory, since the crisis-proneness of a regime is usually a function of rigidity and inability to introduce political and institutional changes. Cf. Bunce, Valerie (1993): 'Domestic Reform and International Change: The Gorbachev Reforms in Historical Perspective', *International Organization*, Vol. 47, No. 1, Winter 1993, pp. 109-110.

[38] Lieven, Dominic, McGarry, John (1997): 'Ethnic Conflict in the Soviet Union', in: McGarry, John, O'Leary, Brendan (eds.), *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation*, pp. 69-70.

[39] Suny, Ronald G. (1993): *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, Stanford University Press, pp. 127-8.

of the possible internationalization. The traditional view that the national question should be "solved" was substituted with the more realistic conviction that it would be enough to manage it. This conclusion was very much based on the growing recognition that the present Soviet policy was not only unsuccessful but also, while exacerbating conflicts, contraproductive. As a result, on the ideological level, Gorbachev basically recalled Lenin's national policy promoting national identities and restoring violated rights. On the other hand, he consistently rejected the changes of administrative boundaries, allegedly saying that *perestroika* is not *perekroika* (cutting).[40]

The situation in the Soviet Union gradually reached the stages of political mobilization. This process also culminated in the creation of socio-political movements that were crucially built on the national foundations. Gorbachev had to change his early disdainful view of the national question and place it to the top of his political agenda. In fact, the real politization of this issue changed its very nature. The national question became a fundamental part of the Soviet political struggle over the future and form of the Soviet federal system. As Lapidus explains, the intentions of this political struggle transformed the national rights into states' rights and hence increasingly engaged republic elites as major political protagonists. Within this power framework, republic leaders sought to gain absolute political and economic control over the republics, which progressively led to the proclamations of sovereignty.[41]

Gorbachev critically overestimated the homogeneous character of the Soviet society. A certain level of common sense naturally existed among educated people of the urban areas, but the situation differed dramatically elsewhere. Moreover, often-privileged minorities strengthened their ties to their autonomous territories and managed to institutionalize them through, to a certain extent, independent local leadership. Hand in hand with the increase of national self-assertion grew also the threat perception in both cultural and political terms. Particularly, the nationalists began to identify the Soviet experiment as a threat to natural national aspirations. 'No

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[40] Lapidus, Gail (1992): 'The impact of perestroika on the national question', in: Goldman, Lapidus, and Zaslavsky (eds.), *From Union to Commonwealth: Nationalism and Speratism in the Soviet Republics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
[41] Lapidus, Gail (1992): 'The impact of perestroika on the national question', in: Goldman, Lapidus, and Zaslavsky (eds.), *From Commonwealth to Union*, pp. 45-46.

concession to the formative influence of the Soviet experience in the making of nations entered the new discourse of separatism.'[42]

Indeed, the substantial effect of Gorbachev's reform program was the openness and democratization of the overall conditions. Gorbachev already inherited a state consisting of dozens of national groups that had been experiencing certain levels of national awakening. This process had been visible in various types of demonstrations all over the Soviet Union; however, the expressions had still been heavily complicated by the censorship and repression. As Lieven and McGarry put it, 'for those interested in maintaining control over the nationalities, perestroika and glasnost came to represent a nightmare.'[43] The implementation of glasnost and the following democratization fundamentally altered the relationship of state and society. The sphere of political activism significantly branched out and opened space for new resources and forms of expressions. 'In effect, by curtailing the activities of the repressive apparatus of the state and thereby transforming the structure of political opportunities, the reforms were the critical catalyst in mobilizing a variety of grievances and providing them with new forms of expression.'[44]

2.3.   Institutions and Conflict

The emphasis put on institutional setting is apparent already in the above-mentioned group of transitological literature. Scholars studying transitions inevitably focus on the role the institutions play in the critical period of the regime change. A specific performance of institutional factors during transitions is, however, apparently time-limited. The analysis of the functioning of an institutional framework can reflect a longer perspective. The crucial questions may be how varied institutional contexts shape and constrain the actions of actors, who aim at either preserving or challenging the current state. As Bunce, in a classical work of this stream, has noted, '[t]he irony of the collapse of socialism, then, was that the very

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[42] Suny, Ronald G. (1993): *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, Stanford University Press, p. 140.

[43] Lieven, Dominic, McGarry, John (1997): 'Ethnic Conflict in the Soviet Union', in: McGarry, John, O'Leary, Brendan (eds.), *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation*, pp. 70-71.

[44] Lapidus, Gail (1992): 'The impact of perestroika on the national question', in: Goldman, Lapidus, and Zaslavsky (eds.), *From Commonwealth to Union*, p.47.

institutions that had defined these systems and that were, presumably, to defend them as well, ended up functioning over time to subvert both the regime and the state.'[45]

Given the multinational and ethnofederalist character of the Soviet state, the logic would suggest that the visible central organs should at least partially reflect the ethnic complexity of the entire population and the local power-structures should reflect the national situation in the surrounding area. In particular, one would expect that the raison d'être of the autonomous unit rested upon the fact that these units were administrated by the titular nationalities. However, the central organs, with the exception of Brezhnev's period, remained almost for the entire Soviet era dominantly reserved for Slavs, mostly Russians. The situation in the administrative units changed even if the Soviet leadership managed to maintain representatives in all of the republics. The most efficient strategy was hidden in what became termed 'the exchange of cadres', aiming at developing the inter-republican exchange of workers and cadres, but it proved to be 'an essentially one-way supply of key personnel from Moscow.'[46] The other strategy was based on appointing local representatives to positions of a great visibility but little power. Typically, for example, the position of the first secretary was assigned to indigenous cadres, but that of the more powerful second secretary, often responsible for the monitoring of the cadre policy in the unit, went to a non-indigene, usually Russian. To make the control process as effective as possible, the second secretaries were almost periodically changed so that they could not develop local ties and relations.

Moreover, Roeder has convincingly showed that both formal and informal political rules, the "constitution of Bolshevism", which at one point helped to stabilize the Soviet regime, later essentially contributed to its breakdown.[47] He has especially argued that the Soviet institutional setting disabled the needed reforms when paradoxically tying the hands of the reformers. Roeder's major focus was on the structures of leadership. After Stalin's and, as has been already mentioned, particularly during Brezhnev's period, the positions of ethnic minorities' leaders were strengthened. Nevertheless, the system of reciprocal accountability created a strong

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[45] Bunce, Valery (1999): *Subversive Institutions: The Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 2.

[46] Connor, Walker (1992), 'Soviet Policies Toward the Non-Russian Peoples in Theoretic and Historic Perspective: What Gorbachev Inherited', in: Motyl (1992), *The Post-Soviet Nations*, p. 3.

[47] Roeder, Phillip G. (1993), *Red Sunset: The Failure of the Soviet Union*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

dependency of the local leaders on the 'selectorate', party leaders and high profile democrats responsible for selecting leaders.

On the other hand Lenin's strategy already included a preferential treatment of representatives of local nationalities. The strategy developed a special quota system for local cadres with regard to access to higher education and placement into the top administrative posts. The number of locals in the units' administrations also increased after Stalin's death. Moreover, Brezhnev, while creating his obedient regional power base, promoted the indigenization of grateful local leaders. Although the real power-institutions were under the control of the centre, the encouragement of minority representatives to apply for executive positions led to the creation of the section of educated and experienced local elites that later became 'key actors in the playing of the ethnic card as part of their own power-accumulating or profit-maximizing agenda.'[48]

Quite similarly, when observing the regional separatism in Russia, Treisman has more explicitly concluded that local leaders within the Russian Federation often tended to stress the distinct local identities to increase their bargaining power with the centre, although this strategy was but a smokescreen for the real attempts to strengthen their control over political and mainly economic institutions.[49] A similar argument emphasizing rather a justification of the exceptional position within the bargaining process was developed by Solnick. [50]

The federal structure of the Soviet state apparently played a role in the retention and development of the minorities' national identities and demands. The Soviet system of "institutionalized multinationality"[51] established nationality as an essential social category which took a very different form from the categories of statehood and citizenship. The institutionalization rested on two modes. The first concerned the territorial and administrative division; the other was connected with the classification of persons. The former principle of ethnoterritorial federalism divided the state

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[48] Hughes, James, and Sasse, Gwendolyn (2001), *Comparing Regional and Ethnic Conflicts in Post-Soviet Transition States: An Institutional Approach*, paper presented at ECPR Joint Sessions, Grenoble, April 2001, p. 14.
[49] Treisman, Daniel (1996): 'The Politics of Intergovernmental Transfers in Post-Soviet Russia', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 26, No. 2 and Treisman, Daniel (1997), 'Russia's Ethnic Revival: The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order', *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 2.
[50] Solnick, Steven (1995): 'Federal Bargaining in Russia', *East European Constitutional Review*, Vol. 4, No. 4. For a critique of these views, see Gorenburg, Dmitry (1999), 'Regional Separatism in Russia: Ethnic Mobilisation or Power Grab?', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 2.
[51] Cf. Brubaker, Rogers (1996), *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

territory into a four-level set of units with various degrees of political autonomy. This division was guided by the constitution, even if in reality the most powerful tools remained in the hands of the Party apparatus. Nevertheless, the significance of this partition was not based on the fictional constitutional guarantees but rather on the provision of a durable institutional framework which could serve as a platform for the consolidation of the national elite and as a support for various political, cultural, language or educational concessions and protections. While the former principle created the system of national jurisdictions, the latter divided the peoples of the Soviet state into exhaustive and often exclusive national groups. They were hidden under the term "nationality" (*natsional'nost'*), which appeared as a statistical category providing Communists with important strategic information. Nationality was, on one hand, only ascriptive and de facto an obligatory legal aspect. However, it could, on the other hand, fundamentally influence one's life regarding the miscellaneous Soviet quota qualifying systems. As Brubaker concludes, 'it was thus through an irony of history…that nationalities became and remained a basic institutional building block of the avowedly internationalist, supra-nationalist, and anti-nationalist Soviet state, with the land partitioned into a set of bounded national territories…and citizenry divided into a set of legally codified nationalities.'[52] Hence, the Soviet system, through the institutionalization of nationality within the ethnofederal framework, created powerfully conflicting expectations of belonging,[53] which became both an incentive and a tool for the leaders of the emancipating processes.

Cornell has performed a detailed study to investigate whether territorial autonomy was a contributing factor to the violent conflicts which have broken out in the South Caucasus.[54] The three countries of this region – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia - harboured nine compactly settled minorities[55] but experienced only three major violent conflicts (Mountainous Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia). Besides autonomy, he proposed nine other conflictual factors derived from the theoretical literature (cultural differences, national conception, past conflict and

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[52] Brubaker, Rogers (1996), *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 32.
[53] Brubaker (1996), p. 54.
[54] Cornell, Svante (2001), *Autonomy and Conflict: Ethnoterritoriality and Separatism in the South Caucasus – Cases in Georgia*, PhD dissertation, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University.
[55] These were the Armenians in Mountainous Karabakh, the Lezgins and Talysh in Azerbaijan, the Azeris in Armenia, the Armenians from Javakhetia, the Azeris from Kvemo Kartli, and the Ajars, Abkhaz and Ossetians in Georgia.

myth, rough terrain, relative demography, existence of ethnic kin, economic viability, radical leadership, and external support) and contrasted them with the three violent and six peaceful cases. According to his results, the highest correlation appeared in the factor of territorial autonomy as the wars occurred in the former Soviet autonomies (the former Soviet Autonomous Republics of Karabakh and Abkhazia and the Soviet Autonomous Region South Ossetia). The only remaining autonomy in the South Caucasus, Ajaria, has stayed peaceful[56], just like all the remaining formerly non-autonomous minorities.[57]

It was even more ironical that it was exactly the structure that according to Bolshevik ideologues should have dissolved the effete national sentiments. The original formula 'nationalist in form, socialist in content' expressed its essential characteristic. It encompassed the notion of two divisions – national and political. The socialist content was totally in the hands of the Party. However, its structure was parallel to the state structure, and its organizational boundaries were drawn similarly to the territorial administrative division. As a result, the Party and the republic administration functionally blend while serving as a powerful platform for the articulation of the ethnic elites' demands. Consequentially, the situation, in which ethnic and political as well as economic structures converged, dramatically strengthened each group's perception of competitive power and similarly motivated self-promoting behaviour. In other words, 'the convergence of ethnic and administrative boundaries resulted in politization of ethnicity and in the emergence of nationalism.'[58] Moreover, the centralized structure of the Soviet Union did not create space for any alternative mechanisms that would provide a more functional aggregation of interests. In fact, this process began with the Stalinization of the Soviet political system, when the factual sovereignty of the national and autonomous republics was reduced to what Terry has called an 'affirmative action empire'.[59] It practically meant the offer of elite ranks for those who were willing to keep the rules of the game and cultural, educational and language concessions as long as the socialist content was not endangered.

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[56] For an explanation, see Cornell (2001), *Autonomy and Conflict*, pp. 214-224, or Cornell, Svante (2002): *Small Nations and Great Powers*, London: RoutledgeCurzon.
[57] The other factors found highly relevant, though not as much as autonomy, include national conception, past conflicts and myths, rough terrain, economic viability, radical leadership, and external support.
[58] Rakowska-Harmstone (1986), *Minority Nationalism Today*, p. 239.
[59] Cf. Terry, Martin (2001), *The Affirmative Action Empire- Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

3.   Theoretical Framework

The thesis argues that the wave of violence that blew over the Soviet southern periphery in the late 1980s and early 1990s was not directly caused by the awakening of the hidden, but deeply rooted, ethnic identities. Nor do I believe that the primary cause should be seen in the actions of the skilful entrepreneurs, who managed to mobilize the people on the grounds of identity politics in the conditions of democratization, however vaguely or precisely that term may be defined. Nevertheless, I am not claiming that these processes did not occur or that they were absolutely irrelevant. Rather, I argue that they should be viewed as responsive to conditions corresponding with larger structural processes. In other words, I would claim that the analyses focusing on ethnic and national mobilizations and their principal agents and on the unstable periods leading up to the end of the Soviet Union that I necessarily concisely overviewed in the first chapter have provided some relevant ideas. But I would at the same time assert that they have offered at best an incomplete picture. The crucial idea of this thesis is to illustrate in what situation determined by the structural conditions the identity politics worked.

3.1.   From Unilinear Modernization to Complex Historical Causalities

Deliberately or not, most of the approaches mentioned in the second chapter, apperceiving a larger context, have been building on the progressive reasoning implied in the notion of modernization. Deutsch has made an attempt to relate the modernization perspective to ethnic conflict. More specifically, he has mentioned the process of social mobilization that concerns large numbers of people in areas which undergo modernization.[60] Such social mobilization is not identical with the process of modernization, but it is its substantial consequence and as such, it circularly becomes its significant cause. His definition emphasizes the notion of change, since social mobilization is 'the process in which major clusters of old social, economic

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[60] Deutsch, Karl, 'Social Mobilization and Political Development', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. LV, No. 3, September 1961, pp. 493-514.

and psychological commitments are eroded and broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behaviour'[61].

The process of social mobilization brought about several changes and developments in the economic and political-administrative areas. It created new politically relevant strata of people that must have been taken into account in politics. These could typically have been trade union members or, for example, the new class of farmers. Furthermore, the new environment of the densely populated suburbs required more individualist or selfish behaviour, which might dramatically shift human needs and feelings. It also created new demands on the governmental administration, which was consequentially supposed to develop and increase. The increasing numbers of the mobilized population and the greater expression of their needs for political decisions and governmental services led to increased political participation.[62] Moreover, social mobilization often shifted the parochial or international orientations of the traditional cultures towards local national units.

As the above mentioned very brief exposition of approaches to the study of nationalism has drawn out, the entire process of the social mobilization and its effects is obviously connected with the formation of the modern national state. The increasing social mobility unavoidably caused clashes among culturally or ethnically different groups. The entire process gained further significance since, as Deutsch suggested, 'ethnic conflict is analogous to a race between rates of social mobilization and rates of assimilation.'[63] The hidden potential of the processes of modernization rests on the fact that social mobilization is much faster than cultural assimilation.

Accordingly, modernity has brought about several benefits that were not spread equally among ethnic groups. According to adherents of the modernization approach, conflicts or tensions often arise due to the uneven distribution of economic sources or various cultural and educational opportunities. The situation produces two divergent effects. The process of modernization makes for the homogenization of goals and values, while the elites of the groups endeavour to mobilize their members and stress the ethnic or cultural otherness. This trend has been observed by Melson and Wolpe, who have described two consequences of social mobilization. First, a new framework of modernized economy and polity requires a new system of rewards

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[61] Deutsch (1961), 'Social Mobilization and Political Development', p. 494.
[62] Ibid., pp. 489-499.
[63] Horowitz, Donald (1985), *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkley: University of California, p. 100.

and paths to rewards in all spheres of society. Consequentially, people's aspirations toward and expectations of goods, recognition or power grow rapidly. In effect, however, the just mentioned triad of rewards has a general relevance. Or, in other words, people's desires significantly converge. 'Men enter into conflict not because they are different but because they are essentially the same. It is by making men "more alike", in the sense of possessing the same wants, that modernization tends to promote conflict.'[64] Second, social mobilization generates also an increasing demand for scarce resources that cannot be covered by their supply. The reality of "modern scarcity" makes competitors perceive the conflicts as zero-sum games. No matter how accurate this perception actually is, it naturally leads to the increasing competitiveness. According to Melson and Wolpe, these two points define the backdrop of a conflict in modernized culturally plural societies.[65]

While thinking broadly about this perspective, Wallerstein has not hesitated to define a common ground of the liberal and Marxist paradigms, which were dominant and strictly diverging since the 19th century. Although both liberals and Marxists use different expressions and categories to capture the development, they both view it as a unilinear progressive process.[66] Indeed, having in mind the traditional graphic expressions, the unilinearity is apparent regardless of whether we follow a growing line (liberals) or cycles connected into a spiral (Marxists). While bringing up different labels, emphasizing different contexts, and determining different driving forces, both approaches obviously operate with developmental stages, being the noticeable steps in the process of a distinctly understood progression. Quite logically, as the evolutionary tracks are different, the ultimate aims of both paradigms constitute direct contra-positions – liberal society and Communism. Burawoy has concisely put it as follows: 'Marxism-Leninism and capitalism ideology are both expressions of modernization theory – they both assume that history's conclusion is already contained in its origin.'[67]

Indeed, considering the great variety of approaches that are generally based upon observations of the development of national identities and institutional

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[64] Melson, Robert, and Wolpe, Howard (1970), 'Modernization and the Politics of Communalism: A Theoretical Perspective', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4, Dec., p. 1114.
[65] Ibid, pp. 1114-1115.
[66] Cf. Wallerstein, Immanuel (1991), *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth Century Paradigms*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
[67] Burawoy, Michael (1992), 'The End of Sovietology and the Renaissance of Modernization Theory', *Comparative Sociology*, Vol. 21, No. 6, p. 784.

framework, we could still observe a common feature lying beyond their actual definition. From a more general perspective, all of these approaches build upon the notion of modernization and its recently recalled and emphasized dark prophesies.[68] The effects of the processes of modernization are, within this perspective, causally linked to the revolutions and, more specifically, to ethnic violence.

Rostow came in the 1950s with the idea that the development of the society from the traditional to the modern could be categorized into several stages, in which the political, economic, and social changes occur simultaneously.[69] One of the crucial moments within the modernization paradigm then became the debate between economists and political scientists as to whether the developing political systems are direct implications of economic and social changes or whether they tend to develop rather independently. For example, Shils has strongly defended the second thesis while claiming that the formation of a political system has its own dynamics and regularities.[70] Huntington arrived at a moderate view in between both positions after consistently analysing these views when reflecting the events of the 1950s and 1960s.[71] He has argued that the violence frequently occurring in this period 'was in large part the product of rapid social change [in fact meaning modernization, author's note] and the rapid mobilization of new groups into politics, coupled with the slow development of political institutions.'[72] It should be noted that Huntington has originally touched upon a larger structural level. His explanatory triad of rapid social change, mobilization, and political institutionalism has provided for an explanation of the prevalence of cases of collective violence or even revolutions in the poorer but not the poorest states. This is interesting, especially with regard to the idea that the stable and richer countries are eventually the faster changing ones. However, as Tilly has argued, the relation between structural change and political violence has disappeared from the theory on the background of the dominating relation between

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[68] The most recognized work could be considered to be Huntington, Samuel P. (1996): *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Schuster.

[69] Rostow, Walt (1971), *Politics and the Stages of Growth*, London: Cambridge University Press. It should be noted that his reasoning was influenced or at least informed by the Soviet case. Cf. Rostow, Walt (1953): *The Dynamics of Soviet Society*, New York: W.W. Norton.

[70] Shils, Edward (1982), *The Constitution of Society*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.

[71] Although his well-known *Clash of Civilization* generally confirms this reasoning, the crucial referential book in this context is Huntington, Samuel (1968), *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

[72] Huntington (1968), *Political Order in Changing Societies*, p. 4.

rapid mobilization and level of institutionalization.[73] In Huntington's theory, modernization has become a cause of mobilization (not immediately conflict), though this link has remained under-specified in terms of agents and/or processes. Tilly has further noted that this theoretical vagueness has contrasted with classical Marxism as 'Marx, by contrast, told us exactly what kind of groups we could expect to emerge as significant political actors out of the development of industrial capitalism.'[74]

Roughly at the same time as Huntington, Barrington Moore, from the position of historical sociology, examined three major historical routes bypassing the epochs of the pre-industrial and modern world. His account strongly suggested the complexity of the processes behind modernization. While building on the classical Marxist assertion that a class-conflict is the driving force of any social change (see below), Moore, instead of focusing on the property system of capitalist industry, attempted to explain the political roles played by the peasantry and the landed upper classes. The first route, covering the transformations in England, France and America, could be labelled as 'bourgeois revolution' as it was leading to the victorious combination of capitalism and democracy. According to Moore, all three of its fundamental social changes, the English and American Civil Wars and the French Revolution, included the development of an economically independent group which challenged the historical burdens to flourishing capitalism. Although it has widely been accepted that the dynamics of these revolutions was essentially driven by traders and manufacturers, both of the classes in focus played distinctly important roles in all three countries.[75]

While the first route successfully ended in a capitalist economy working within democratic political conditions, the second route also started with the capitalist transformation but resulted in the fascist totalitarian regimes of Germany and Japan. As the bourgeois class was substantially weaker in these countries, the revolution could only be imposed from above. Barrington Moore has shown that the interests of weak commercial and industrial classes aiming at creating conditions for modern industrial capitalism were for a certain period backed by the dominant traditional ruling classes, which were recruited mostly from the land. The support of the mighty

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[73] Cf. Tilly, Charles (1973), 'Does Modernization Breed Revolution', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 431-34.
[74] Ibid., p. 431.
[75] Moore, Barrington, Jr. (1966), *Social Origins of Dictatorships and Democracy: Lord and Peasants in the Making of the Modern World*, Boston: Beacon Press, pp. 3-158.

ruling classes essentially spurred the development; yet the short-time quasi-democratic regimes quickly shifted towards fascism with the growing reactionary abortive tendencies of the traditional gentry.[76]

Finally and most notably in the context of this thesis, the third route was paved by the Communist strategies exemplified in the Russian and Chinese cases. Contrary to the previous route, traditional agrarian bureaucracy never provided any support for modern industrialization. This situation unavoidably led to the marginalization of the urban classes that became the winners in the first case and were influential in the second one, as well as to the preservation of the huge peasantry. Essentially, this class provided the crucial revolutionary potential which converged with the Communist ideological promises and directed the countries away from both democracy and capitalism.[77]

Despite his underestimation of complexities, Huntington's previously mentioned perspective on modernization and collective violence has deserved credit for de-psychologizing the entire area.[78] Instead of focusing on the factors supporting and leading to peoples' discontent, Huntington has turned to the inherently political processes framing the acts of claims laid on the state and the state's response to them. This contention has created a fertile soil for further elaboration.

The theory of political conflict developed by Tilly has emphasized a condition of needful resources which can only be accessed through affiliation with an organized group. This process also essentially involves the issue of mobilization, which is necessary for providing resources and capacity to the contenders. The mobilization and acquisition of resources naturally determine any conceivable success. However, the stress put on the process of gaining the resources implies that the government and other contending groups possessing necessary resources may attempt to repress the developing collective action when increasing the costs. Indeed, Tilly has not endeavoured to observe violence specifically, as he has believed that violent actions are only by-products of a common competition over power following particular interests and goals. For Tilly, it is one of the forms of collective actions. Violence 'grows out of actions which are not intrinsically violent, and which are

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[76] Barrington Moore has deeply dealt only with Japan. See Barrington Moore (1966), pp. 228-313.

[77] Moore has again deeply investigated only the Chinese case. Cf. Moore (1966), pp. 162-227.

[78] The study of the aggregate psychological approach focusing directly on people's motivations to engage in any form of (political) violence should start with Gurr, Ted R. (1970): *Why Men Rebel*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. A more recent relevant study is Petersen,, Roger D. (2002): *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth Century Eastern Europe*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

basically similar to a much larger number of collective actions occurring without violence in the same periods and settings.'[79] Revolutions as well as collective violence hence tend to flow directly out of central political processes.

3.2. Hypothesizing the Alternative

Having in mind Burawoy's dark vision about the future of post-Communist transitions leading at best to a 'merchant' or 'feudal capitalism', which is informed by the modernization theory that 'conspires in obscuring the ever-widening gap between ideology and reality [and] fosters a false optimism about the future that could lead to a tragedy even greater than the one we associate with Marxism-Leninsm'[80], this thesis contradicts the ideas of the adherents of modernization that are more closely connected with ethnic violence.

I would like to show that the violent ethnic politics which broke out in the Caucasus should be seen as a desperate reaction to the decay of the Soviet developmental state. Indeed, the Soviet regime provided for a long time a relatively successful alternative to the development within the capitalist core, which to a great extent managed at least to draw out the impression that it was succeeding in progressing and improving the social and economic conditions and thus catching up with the Western core. Although a comparison with other parts of the world has not been the topic of this thesis and would certainly go too far beyond its scope, it should be noted that this perspective connects the (post-)Soviet conflicts with many other cases in the Balkans or Africa that erupted in the formerly developmental states, which began to suffer from the falling state structures within the newly capitalized conditions. As Derlugian has fittingly noted, '[m]ore specifically, these conflicts are fought over the gravely serious issues of who will profit, who will bear the costs, and who will support whom in the new system of capitalist property rights.'[81]

The Soviet developmental state created structural conditions for proletarian democratization that arguably surmounted those that formerly existed in the current

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[79] Tilly, Charles (1978), *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Addison Wesley Publishing Company, p. 177.
[80] Burawoy, Michael (1992): 'The End of Sovietology and the Renaissance of Modernization Theory', *Comparative Sociology*, Vol. 21, No. 6, p. 784.
[81] Derlugian, Giorgi, M., (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: A World-System Biography*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press

core capitalist states during their democratic transformations in the late 19th century. Quite similarly, analogous conditions were created in many other revolutionary industrializing states that were not necessarily governed by a Marxist ideology. 'Such states were prolific proletarianizers as they sought to reproduce rapidly the industries and attendant educational, managerial, and social institutions to be found in the core capitalist countries, albeit without a bourgeoisie and instead control of a state bureaucratic executive.'[82] This idea has been important, as it might suggest that a violent escalation was not the inevitable first choice as the society might have been ripe for a democratizing process.

Moreover, the dynamics of rapid industrialization that created an inevitable need for educational and social reforms, which brought up a fundamental class transformation that established a fertile soil for democratic tendencies, did not naturally reach its peak in the 1980s. The challenge for the totalitarian regime with its omnipotent bureaucratic elite arguably came also during the period of de-stabilization. In their extremely inspiring text, Giovanni Arrighi, Terence Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein have argued that the decay of the socialist and nationalist developmental states that became symbolized by the year "1989" was caused by their past successful efforts in generating a rich spectrum of educated specialists, whose activities were related to the modernized production processes, and who gradually became essential and dominant groups within the respective societies. Specifically in the Soviet Union, but, indeed, not only there, during the 1960s, the activities of these groups somewhat naturally began to move towards demands and claims for democratic reforms that clashed with totalitarian or autocratic bureaucratic ties. As the first revolts, again symbolized by the year "1968", became successfully and often drastically suppressed by the strong states' regimes, their power increased twenty years later. Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein try to explain through this logic why the responsible intellectual elites in these states so strongly turned to the neoliberal monetarist dogmas that offered radical and fast transformations, which became known as "shock therapies" and which very often brought "all shock and no therapy".[83] These strategies provided the 'solutions' that were clearly the most distant from the stiff socioeconomic systems of the socialist or otherwise revolutionary

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[82] Ibid., p. 74.
[83] Cf. Burawoy, Michael (1992): 'The End of Sovietology and the Renaissance of Modernization Theory', *Comparative Sociology*, Vol. 21, No. 6, p. 784. Cf. also Wallerstein, Immanuel (1997): *Geopolitics and Geoculture*, pp. 65-83.

states.[84] Pushing their major argumentation a bit further when directly thinking of the reality of post-Communist transformations, one could also easily observed how progressive technocratic, meaning less ideologically committed, leaders were very fast and smart in privatizing the formerly state assets and connecting them with the capitalist flows.

From a wider perspective, the trajectories of the democratic transformations in the formerly developmental states only rarely led to stable democratic regimes that managed to peacefully pacify the discontents that were almost inevitably brought by the painful social and economic transformations. More often the situation ended up in the formation of a quasi-democratic regime that formally embodied some fundamental democratic institutions such as electoral procedures but failed to meet the standards of a regime that would provide 'a broadly equitable access to the flow of power and goods, give equal voice to all, and ensure the self-management rights of work, residential, and cultural communities… [it means, historically,] a predominantly proletarian agenda of democratization in Western states.'[85]

In the most critical cases, which are the focus of this study, the situation ended up in the violent conflicts that came to be particularly in the areas that suffered from the state breakdowns that obviously did not provided even the smallest chance for any stable process of democratization whatsoever. Also importantly, the decay of the developmentalist state that originally promoted the evolvement and advancement of various social strata (proletarians ranging from manual workers to educated specialists) caused serious challenges and pressures on this dominant social class that included solely claim-makers oriented towards the state. The new situation became generally difficult for these people, but in many cases, it even reached the stage of a very existential threat. Moreover, as I have already mentioned several times, whereas only a few post-developmental states managed to take a track of successful democratization and state reconstruction guarded with the interest of the 'Western' capitalist investment, those that are the focus of this study experienced the dismantlement and disappearance of state structures and institutions, which fundamentally created an empty space in power execution and state management.

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[84] Cf. Arrighi, Giovanni, Hopkins, Terrence K., Wallerstein, Immanuel (2001): '1989: The Continuation of 1968', in Katsiaficas, George (ed.), *After the Fall: 1989 and the Future of Freedom*, New York: Routledge. For a similar argument, see Wallerstein, Immanuel (2002): 'New revolts against the system', *New Left Review*, No. 18, November/December.

[85] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 74.

This room was often quickly fulfilled by decentralized informal processes ranging, as in the case of the Caucasus, which is precisely in line with its 'darkest' tradition, from patronage networks and corruption to organized crime.[86] While studying these processes, Robert Hislope has fittingly labelled such situations as 'organized crime in disorganized states.'[87] To summarize and conclude the previous lines, I would claim that with the fall of the erstwhile developmental states and the breakdown of central governance, these, most typically peripheral, areas became extremely prone to 'lateral struggles among locally embedded contenders...commonly viewed as ethnic conflicts.'[88]

I would like to stress again that I do not deny the particular strengths and dynamics of the processes of ethnic mobilization. However, I would argue that the above mentioned circumstances provide crucial conditions for their specific post-Soviet Caucasian course. Former leaders and *nomenklatura* cadres faced interesting new opportunities in the processes of privatization of enterprises as well as political positions. Those, who for various reasons, ranging from a lack of understanding to simply bad luck, did not succeed in catching the right wing, could still resort to other means involving massive mobilization and violent strategies. The tradition of informal networks and ethnic solidarity strengthened during the uneasy history together with the tradition of the Caucasian violent ethos apparently served their purposes. Moreover, specifically in the peripheral areas like Caucasus, the breakdown of a developmental state providing economic, social and basic human securities caused great fears and discontent, particularly among the groups that could aptly be mobilized in a violent manner. While bringing in the world system perspective, Derlugian has argued that there are few alternatives to ethnic solidarities in situations where 'the possibilities for democratization are being massively eroded, state institutions collapse, state-created industrial assets and bureaucracies, which embedded the existence of proletarian groups, turned into a liability in the face of global markets and structural unemployment now verges on permanent lumpenization.'[89]

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[86] Although it deals with slightly different processes in the different context of the functioning state, Vadim Volkov's original work has been extremely inspiring for me. Cf. Volkov, Vadim (2002): *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism*, Cornell University Press.

[87] Hislope, Robert (2002): 'Organized Crime in a Disorganized State', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 49, No. 3.

[88] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 75.

[89] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 76.

3.3.   Factors of Developmental Trajectories

The crucial challenge of this chapter certainly lies in a way in which the hypothetical explanation can be addressed in a theorized fashion. The previous lines dealing with the critique of the perspective of modernization and suggesting some empirically-oriented explanation already shifted the attention on the broad literature of historical sociology. This literature appears to be inspiring in several regards. Firstly, several historical sociologists turned the attention towards the problem of the power of the state. Indeed, the extent of the impacts of collective violence is naturally dependent on the capacity, organization, and relative power that the governmental forces. I will try to emphasize that 'bringing the state back in'[90] was both a crucial step in the attempts to overcome the old-style Marxist domination within the field of revolutions and at the same time a practical move in terms of improving analytical capabilities.

Secondly, there is Goldstone's famous remark about 'states making wars making states making wars…' in reflection of Tilly's ideas about states' formation.[91] Indeed, this idea constitutes a powerful hypothesis for the study of the origins and development of the modern national state. However, another aspect of this idea appears to be important for my argument. The need to develop strong armed forces in situations of, often alleged, acute threat perception have often led to the growing internal integrity or less problematic subordination of potentially oppositional actors. I will try to show later in this thesis that the Soviet Union's rapid military industrialization had a tremendous impact on the functioning, organization and character of the Soviet society.

Thirdly, the world system analysis literature provides a useful structural perspective focusing on the essential group of the semi-peripheral Second World of communist states. These states used various totalitarian and/or revolutionary strategies to overcome underdevelopment and approximate to the Western core. However, these developmentalist regimes based on strong centralization and strict control over society differed fundamentally from the capitalist states of the system

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[90] This statement hints at this classical work: Evans, Peter B., Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol (eds.) (1985), *Bringing the States Back In*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
[91] Goldstone, Jack (1991), 'States Making Wars Making States Making Wars…', *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 20, No. 2, review of Tilly's Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1990. Cf. Tilly, Charles (1985): 'War Making and State Making as Organized Crime', in Evans, Peter B., Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 169-191.

core. The world system perspective will be also complemented by theoretical points derived from the literature focusing on other developmental states.

Finally, it will be necessary to introduce appropriate agents that would translate the structural constraints into processes observable on the empirical ground of the small Caucasian spot. Quite naturally for the general meta-theoretical grounds of this thesis the concept of class will be introduced to observe social processes and dynamics. Nevertheless, the role of the class perspective will be twofold. Besides the manifestation of structural constraints it will also provide a bridge between the historical sociology-inspired theories of larger process and transformations and direct expressions of ethnopolitical mobilization addressed by theories introduced in the second chapter.

3.3.1. *Power and Functioning of State in Social Transformations*

Until the mid-1960s, the study of revolution was dominated by the Marxist social-centred class-conflict paradigm developed already by Marx and Engels.[92] The clear logic of this paradigm has been based on the clash between the ruling privileged class and the restrained rising class inherently growing out of structural contradictions of the unfolding system. The situation remains relatively stable until the latter class is able to burst in and assume control over the structures aiming at preserving the current power settings. The revolutionary transfer of power then anticipates a period of fundamental social change understood in terms of alteration of the previous mode of production and the transfer of the leading role as well as power to the formerly revolutionary class, which sets up new conditions for the development of society.

This originally Marxist scheme got beyond traditional Marxist explanations. Classical Marxist theory clearly defined all major actors that entered into the eventually revolutionary process. The crucial peaks of the triangle have been attributed to the owners of the means of production, the exploited proletarian labour force, and the challenging owners of the means of production. However, the

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[92] Marx's thought on revolutions later developed into various strands ranging from the technological determinists (Bukharin) and political strategists (Lenin) to Western neo-Marxists (Horkheimer, Lukacs, Gramsci) or even structuralists (Althusser). Cf. Skocpol, Theda (1979), *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 6-9.

centrality of the class view has also been apparent in various non-Marxist approaches. Indeed, modern Western revolutions have often been associated with the rise of the bourgeoisie or the gentry and their results were often labelled as 'bourgeois' or 'middle-class' democracies.[93]

It was quite striking how the Marxism-inspired stream of thinking about social transformation left out the problem of and the role attributed to the 'state', given the amount of attention it devoted to the formation and development of the modern national states. The belated discussion between the neo-Marxists started in the mid-1960s, essentially dealing with the capitalist state. The debates were focusing on the role of states in the transitions from feudalism to capitalism, on the means of their socioeconomic engagement in both the advanced capitalist economies and dependent countries within the world capitalist system.[94] Other discussions concerned the understanding of the socioeconomic functions wielded by the capitalist state. 'Some see it as an instrument of class rule, others as an objective guarantor of production relations or economic accumulation, and still others as an arena for political class struggles.'[95]

Nevertheless, as Skocpol has noted, at the theoretical level, virtually all neo-Marxist accounts were not able to overcome the society-centred anchoring of their major assumptions. Indeed, in the end, for most of the approaches, states remained fundamentally shaped by classes or class struggles and their crucial function was understood in terms of preserving and expanding modes of production. Indeed, Poulantzas has, for example, concluded that 'the relations of production delimit the given field of the State, it has a role of its own in the formation of these same relations. The way in which the state is bound up with the relations of productions constitutes its primary relation with social classes and the class struggle.'[96]

The analytical concept of 'state autonomy' has usually been perceived in clearly 'Weberian' terms. The state has been understood as an organization projecting control over a certain territory and people, which may promote and assert goals that do not have to necessarily follow from the demands and concerns of groups, classes or

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[93] Cf. Collins, Randall (1999), *Macrohistory: Essays in Sociology of the Long Run*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 19-21.

[94] Cf. Jessop, Bob (1982): *The Capitalist State: Marxist Theories and Methods*, New York: New York University Press; Miliband, Ralph (1983): 'State Power and Class Interests', *New Left Review*, no. 138.

[95] Skocpol, Theda (1985): 'Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research', in Evans, Peter B., Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 5.

[96] Poulantzas, Nicos (2000): *State, Power, Socialism*, new edition, London: Verso, p. 25.

society. Hence, states become important actors which deserve deeper attention only when they are formulating or promoting those independent goals.[97] This perspective has certainly been analytically promising, though rather only scratching the surface. When developing or deepening Weber's conception, Stepan has been right to argue that the state is much more than only 'the government'. 'It is the continuous administrative, legal, bureaucratic and coercive systems that attempt not only to structure the relationship between civil society and public authority in a polity but also to structure many crucial relationships within civil society a well.'[98]

In a similar vein, Skocpol has asserted that states also 'give rise to various conceptions of the meaning and methods of "politics" itself, conceptions that influence the behaviour of all groups and classes in national societies.'[99] Moreover, recalling the above-mentioned ideas of Tilly, structures and activities of states essentially shape collective actions, which aim at promoting groups' political interests or demands or mobilize the support sought by political leaders.[100] It is then apparent that the relation between the 'classness' of politics and state structures is strongly determining. The process of the development of class demands and interests, as well as their overlap with national politics, also depends strongly on features like political culture, forms of collective action, or possibilities for raising and resolving collective societal or class issues. Therefore even if we accept the inevitability of class tensions, the political expression of their interests and conflicts can reasonably be analysed only on the background of their capacities to achieve organization, representation, and, indeed, consciousness. All these capacities are naturally dependent on the structure and activities of states.[101]

This thesis has argued that the events accompanying the fall of Communism and the Soviet Union in particular should not be viewed in isolation. The historical processes of the 'Great Transformation' have brought numerous smaller or greater socioeconomic changes. However, in the period nearly approaching the end of the last century, the Soviet Union (and the Communist block) has (have) experienced an extraordinarily significant change. The situation has purely resembled what Skocpol called 'social revolution', defined as 'rapid, basic transformations of a society's state

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[97] Cf. Skocpol (1985), *Bringing the State Back In*, p. 9.
[98] As quoted in Skocpol (1985), *Bringing the State Back In*, p. 7.
[99] Ibid., p. 22.
[100] Ibid., p. 22.
[101] Ibid., p. 25.

and class structure; ...accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below.'[102]

The distinctiveness of social revolutions with regard to other conflicts or transformative processes lies in a combination of two coincidences – the coincidence of societal structural change with class upheaval and the coincidence of political and social transformation.[103] Indeed, other, possibly violent, conflicts or processes either do not bring about structural changes on a political and social level (rebellions) or affect usually only one of these spheres (political revolutions or larger gradual processes such as industrialization). 'What is unique to social revolutions is that basic changes in social structure and in political structure occur together in a mutually reinforcing fashion. And these changes occur through intense sociopolitical conflicts in which class struggles play a key role.'[104]

Skocpol's well-elaborated analysis of social revolutions in France, Russia and China has been based on three main general analytical strategies. I have found them very inspiring, and they substantially brace up my argument. Most importantly, as this part of this thesis should clarify, Skocpol has argued that state organizations, and particularly their crucial administrative and coercive capacities, should receive a front rank when analysing and explaining social revolutions. The very outset of social revolutions is conditioned by a breakdown of the state's administrative and coercive powers. Consequentially, the transformation process is to a large extent realized through conflicts over the re-establishing of and control over these administrative and coercive capabilities.[105]

Secondly, Skocpol has suggested focusing also on the international or geopolitical context. Apart from the rather obvious assertion that geopolitical conditions or international tensions to a certain extent determine the intra-state situation, this analytical strategy also interestingly considers the relevance of transnational cultural influence.[106] Although Skocpol has mainly stressed the timing within the phases of world history as well as the ideological influence stemming from an understanding of current revolutionary movements, I will try to argue later

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[102] Skocpol, Theda (1979): *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 4.
[103] Ibid., p. 4.
[104] Skocpol (1979), p. 5.
[105] Skocpol, Theda (1997): 'Explaining Social Revolutions: First and Further Thoughts', in: Skocpol, Theda (ed.): *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 7-8.
[106] Skocpol (1997), *Explaining Social Revolutions*, p. 8.

that a particular grasping of notions such as 'liberalization' or 'westernization' played a significant role during the Soviet transformation.

Finally, Skocpol has offered a truly structural and 'non-voluntarist' approach to revolutions. She has accepted the view of the 'voluntarists' to the extent that individuals or groups affiliate with the revolutionary process and willingly and purposively join the revolutionary contestation. Nevertheless, she has, at the same time, asserted that 'no single group, or organization, or individual creates a revolutionary crisis, or shapes revolutionary outcomes, through purposive action.'[107] Therefore psychological approaches focusing on people's behaviour within massive social movements, purely rationalist accounts concentrating on intentions and interests of individuals, groups, or, indeed, classes, or propositions referring to the ideologically driven activities and effects of vanguard revolutionary leadership may provide only a partial picture. Or, putting it differently, they may provide an adventurous and entertaining movie that is, however, lacking the very beginning and the very end.

The theoretical discussion has shown that the state breakdowns have been both essentially connected with violent transformation (revolutions in Tilly's sense) and virulent for any democratizing efforts. When describing the late-Soviet Georgian state, I will not only focus on institutions and the effectiveness and autonomy of their functioning, but also on structures, which often substituted the 'state' structure in the South Caucasus. Indeed, the Georgian state was 'famously' synonymous with corruption, which was unacceptable even for a Soviet leadership that several times, and always virtually unsuccessfully, tried to challenge it. Also, importantly, Georgian society was arguably one of the most traditional in the former Soviet Union. Although the central governments controlled the entire administration, the historically settled indigenous structures and rules of patronage and kinships apparently survived below the surface. Moreover these indigenous practices and patterns obviously influenced the implementation and effectiveness of central policies, and similarly, these practices and patterns to a certain extent mitigated and shadowed the changes and twists in the policies of Moscow. Indeed, any deep study of the central policies and concepts does not, in fact, say much about their impacts on social developments in the peripheries. In other words, a focused ethnographic

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[107] Ibid., p. 8.

knowledge cannot be considered as self-salvable, but it provides valuable insights when grounded in a wider theoretical framework. Last but not least, a weak and non-effective state is always fertile soil for organized crime. Precisely the observation of these structures and processes connects both categories and might present a plastic framework, through which I intend to illustrate whose interests prevailed, who became mobilized, and who lost in the difficult transformation. In other words, I believe that these categories should illustrate why and how Georgia ended up in a violent mess of fratricidal warfare.

3.3.2. *Anti-systemic Developmentalist Strategies as Structural Effects*

As noted, this thesis also seeks to mention the effects of the construction and re-construction of the long-term patterns observed from the macro-structural world-system perspective. The leading theorists have suggested six principal vectors covering the complexes of processes within the evolving structures of the modern world system since 1500. At the very beginning, there was the interstate system, occasionally experiencing short-time hegemony and being able to shape the systemic structures. The interstate system set up the framework for the world production system, which was realized according to the rules of the capitalist world-economy, which determined the successful owners of the means of production and the endless accumulation of capital. This process led to the creation of a production structure based on a network of commodity chains which have linked production activities across the borders of states and hence have hampered the states' ability to control them in absolute terms. Consequentially the interstate relations governing the link have fundamentally influenced the profitability of production, which, therefore, should not be viewed only as a function of the liberal mantra of competitiveness. Quite similarly, the profitability of great enterprises has been affected by their tendency to seek the support of states to create conditions of relative monopolization of factors of production.[108]

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[108] Hopkins, Terence K. and Wallerstein, Immanuel (1996): 'The World System: Is There a Crisis?', in Hopkins, Terence K. and Immanuel Wallerstein et al., *The Age of Transitions: Trajectory of the World System 1945-2025*, London: Zed Books.

These introductory notes are inevitable if we are to understand the connections to other vectors that are more relevant for my argument. The process of accumulating capital has naturally required the continual development of the forces and means of production. By its very nature, this process has been very unequal and gradually deepened the difference between the core and the periphery. The core zones of the system have been successful in monopolizing high-profit activities, whereas the periphery has been entirely dependent on low-profit activities, unevenly seeking success in true market conditions. This has been the logic lying behind the political tensions within and among the states of the system.[109]

Accordingly, the labour force, its remuneration, and its bargaining power were organized along the same structures of inequality. However, the role of the employers and states has also been structured by the workers themselves - for example, through organization of mutual solidarities or migration. The most notable results of these endeavours have been the new demands put on state structures that have taken the shape of 'social wages'. Only if we consider all these complexities can we assess the vector of human welfare that has reflected, or indeed even exaggerated, the discrepancies in world productive activity.

All these factors have accounted for interstate conflicts that together with 'worldwide competition for profits, plus the constant attempts to mould a world labour force that would be available, efficient but not too costly, plus the increasing attentiveness to the diverging quality of world welfare have added up to a tumultuous world-system, riven by constant violence and rebelliousness.'[110] The challenged world-system has been held together by the processes of strengthening the state structures and the elaboration of structures of knowledge that have served to legitimate the system.

The strengthening of the state structures has included the internal monopolization of means of violence, the ability to command resources (taxation), or the capacity to provide services (security, infrastructure, human welfare). The crucial issue for all governments has been social cohesion, which has mostly been purposively driven by nationalism. Nationalism has essentially implied a problem of

[109] Cf. Wallerstein, Immanuel (1997): *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World-System*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, or Wallerstein, Immanuel (2005) *World System Analysis: An Introduction*. New York: Duke University.
[110] Hopkins, Terence K. and Wallerstein, Immanuel (1996): 'The World System: Is There a Crisis?', in Hopkins, Terence K. and Immanuel Wallerstein et al., *The Age of Transitions: Trajectory of the World System 1945-2025*, London: Zed Books, p. 6.

inclusiveness, as the instrumentalists mentioned above have also suggested. Indeed, 'to the degree that the requirements of the structuring of the world labour force have led to widely differing modes of labour remuneration *within* states boundaries, there has always been pressure to define the 'nation' as including only one part of the workforce, commonly defined by racial or ethnic criteria. And to the degree that these requirements have led to widely differing modes of labour remuneration *among* states, this pattern has commonly needed the justification of racism.'[111] Although nationalism was often utilized by anti-systemic movements, from the wider and longer perspective, it has rather played a stabilizing role in the modern world-system.

The structure of knowledge has been defined by the victory of Newtonian science universalism, which has been reflected in the dominant liberal ideology constituting the world-system geo-culture.[112] The major element rested in the belief in the teleology of progress expressed in inevitable convergence in human welfare and the virtual elimination of violence resulting from the spreading of liberal reformism. This ideology of progress has managed to hide intensive structural tensions but, indeed, looking around the world or opening the newspaper every morning, one can hardly believe it has solved them.

The world-systemic analysis has outlined some crucial processes which have provided a useful bridge for my focus on the most visible and important representative of the specific class of the semi-peripheral Second World of communist states. The crucial notion rests in the fact that this class of states has constituted strong cases of the developmentalist regimes that tried to overcome underdevelopment and catch up with the Western core while applying the revolutionary and often totalitarian strategies of building and control of the strong states, whose functioning and management were clearly at odds with the prevailing systemic ideas.

It is interesting that this way of reasoning has gained only very low attention from the students of development and the developmentalist state in particular. However, recalling again the debate raised a few pages ago, it can be argued that it has by no means been the case that the literature focusing on economic and social development and transformation would be omitting the issue of the state itself. Precisely on the contrary, precisely in line with his previously mentioned works,

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[111] Ibid., p. 7.
[112] Wallerstein, Immanuel (1997): *Geopolitics and Geoculture*, pp. 158-198.

Dietrich Rueschemeyer, together with Matthew Lange, has emphasized the crucial position of the state in social and economic transformation. They have specifically stressed three major functions. The first one has followed the Smith-Weberian tradition, according to which the state provides institutions necessary for the smooth functioning of economic activities. 'The institutional infrastructure around contract, property, tort law and incorporation allows the exchange of goods and services as well as the accumulation, lending, and investing of capital to proceed with a reasonable degree of ease, security, and predictability.'[113] The second function is that states essentially serve the socioeconomic development in two seemingly contradictory ways. On one hand, they allow for breaking down the obstacles to the market, as already Weber clearly recognized and described. On the other hand, however, the state structures at some point are enabled to moderate the negative impact of market operations on social life. Last but not least, and touching directly on my argumentation, the third function is that states, particularly in the cases of capitalist development latecomers, acted as crucial stimulators of economic growth. Although the circumstances around this issue have remained one of the main disciplinary controversies, it is, according to Rueschemeyer and Lange, apparent that 'states have intervened in the mobilization of capital when individual firms were not able to meet the capital needs of advanced technology, and they have developed a variety of other proactive policies seeking to advance economic growth that departed from a pure market model of development.'[114]

Although cautiously mentioning Russia, the analysis of their volume has remained locked in the evaluating of the function of the state in (quasi-)capitalist, as I say here, systemic, development or transformations. In a similar vein, Atul Kohli has done a comparative analysis of the state-directed development in the global periphery. Although his approach has evidently been promising and often, indeed, inspiring, he has not overcome a limited perspective when bringing forth precise empirical observations for the originally Huntingtonian idea that 'the creation of effective states within the developing world has generally preceded the emergence of

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[113] Lange, Matthew and Rueschemeyer, Dietrich (2005): 'States and Development', in Lange, Mathew and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds.): *States and Development: Historical Antecedents of Stagnation and Advance*, New York: Palgrave: Macmillan, p. 3.

[114] Ibid., p. 4. It is, indeed, interesting that just a line above this quote the authors mention Russia (!) in this regard apart from the cases of Germany and South Korea. I will argue later that the context is correct, though the cited explanation obviously does not apply.

industrializing economies'.[115] Nevertheless, what is clearly inspiring about Kohli's book with regard to my argument is his well-established focus on the role of the state in promoting rapid industrialization in the case of Korea and somewhat arguably in Brazilian and Indian cases.

The literature focusing on the issue of the developmental state has also been inspiring in other regards. Several students of development have recognized and stressed the notion of nationalism. Albert Hirschman has already in the 1950s held that development is essentially connected with the determination and organization of a nation. 'If we were to think in terms of a "binding agent" for development are we simply not saying that development depends on the ability and determination of a nation and its citizens to organize themselves for development?'[116] Indeed, as the tradition of historical sociology has taught us, there are apparently good reasons for why we should not view the dynamics of nationalism independently from the larger processes of social and economic transformations.

The developmentalist literature has strongly focused on the region of East Asia. Particularly the cases of Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and, from a slightly different view, also of China, have naturally been considered as strong cases of successful transformations guided by rapid industrialization and economic development. Taking this perspective and comparing the Japanese transformation with the Korean or, indeed, Chinese one, Chalmers Johnson has observed that these states saw economic development as the means to combat Western imperialism and ensure national survival when overcoming war preparations, war fighting, or painful post-war reconstruction.[117] Nevertheless, according to Johnson, it was a different type of imperialism, diverging from the colonial or neocolonial one. 'It was a new system of empire begun with Wilson and consummated by Roosevelt and Acheson. Its very breadth – its nonterritoriality, its universalism, and its open systems,...- made for a style of hegemony that was more open than previous imperialisms to competition

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[115] Kohli, Atul (2004): *State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 2.

[116] Hirschman, Albert O. (1958): *The Strategy of Economic Development*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 8, quoted in Woo-Cumings, Meredith (1999): 'Chalmers Johnson and the Politics of Nationalism and Development', in Woo-Cumings, Meredith *The Developmental State*, Cornell University Press, pp. 6-7.

[117] See, Woo-Cumings (1999): 'Chalmers Johnson and the Politics of Nationalism and Development', in Woo-Cumings, Meredith, *The Developmental State*, p. 6.

from below. Indeed, we may eventually conclude that this was its undoing.'[118] In the words of world system analysis, while taking into consideration the above-mentioned product cycles determining the upward and downward mobility, 'the core power pursues an imperialism of free trade, and rising powers use strong states, protectionist barriers, or a period of withdrawal of self-reliant development (the Stalinist or socialist option) as means to compete within the world system'.[119]

The combination of the former colonial experience, difficult war times, and a new imperial pressure created specific conditions for different versions of revolutionary nationalism that became manifested in East Asia[120] in totalitarian communist regimes in China and North Korea as well as in capitalist developmental states in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Precisely, it was the detailed analysis of the peasant nationalism and its role in the communist overthrow in China that led Johnson to recognize the role of ideology in the revolutionary capitalist transformations that occurred in Japan, South Korea, or Taiwan. Similarly to Skocpol's conclusions, which resulted from an analysis guided by the tradition of historical sociology, he found that the victory of the Chinese communists should be perceived in terms of a great nationalist mobilization of a unified and politicized class of peasants that, under the supervision of the Communist Party, followed the Japanese invasion of the northern and eastern parts of China.

It is quite interesting how the Soviet Union, as obviously the most 'successful' anti-systemic developmental state, has become overlooked by similar analyses. This thesis by no means wants to search for the reasons of this avoidance, although I would dare to make a seemingly strong hypothesis that the reason might be connected with the discourse of the totalitarian state, which avowedly dominated the field of Soviet studies.

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[118] Cumings, Bruce (1984): 'The Origins and Development of the Northeast Asian Political Economy: The Industrial Sectors, Product Cycles and Political Consequences', *International Organization*, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 6-7.
[119] Cumings, Bruce (1984): 'The Origins and Development of the Northeast Asian Political Economy: The Industrial Sectors, Product Cycles and Political Consequences', *International Organization*, Vol. 38, No. 1, p. 5.
[120] The security context brings East Asia close to late-developing European states and differentiates this region from other often studied cases in Latin America. Quite obviously, this is not the only difference (again, we may recall some similarities with the transitological literature). See, for example, Ben Ross Schneider's chapter dealing with bureaucracy in the context of a developmental state: Schneider, Ross, Ben (1999): 'The *Dessarollista* State in Brazil and Mexico' in: Woo-Cumings, Meredith, *The Developmental State*, pp. 276-306.

3.3.3.   *Class Development and Dynamics*

The major idea here is that the class perspective offers a possibility to observe and illustrate the effects of the larger processes. Indeed, I would like to show that the study of the social structure that resulted from the rapid industrialization and reflected particular policies of the Soviet leadership cannot be omitted when analysing the deep social violent crises of the late Soviet and post-Soviet period. The structure of the Georgian society expressed in class terms should shed some light on the trajectories of the development of collective interests, social cleavages and political projects that were originally oriented toward and pushed forward by certain social groups. The clear differentiation among the classes and particular groups within these classes should provide some answers to why the radical political projects prevailed over the endeavours to develop civil society and create conditions for 'democratization'. Last but not least, this perspective provides some room for illustration of how the spheres of political economy could enter the analysis.

The issue of class development and dynamics needs some further theoretical clarification. Despite the noteworthy debates between the proponents of Marxist ideas and the followers and continuators of Weber about the nature, functioning and dynamics of classes,[121] my understanding of a class determined by the need to encompass basic stratification of the Soviet society will be simpler while reflecting two criteria. The first is the obvious economic criteria of the household income, which reflects a certain 'structural position regarding the flow of power and goods, which translate into sets of social strategies and dispositions typical to each class.'[122] The second criterion, generally corresponding with the notion of 'social capital', is fundamental as opening room for various factions in a class and thus prevents us from assuming an automatic formation of class interests. Derlugian mentions an 'unofficial' definition of social capital made by Wallerstein that appears to be extremely useful and should be quoted as a whole: 'capital describes the ways in which people store accumulated successes. These could be a matter of economic gains, which are the 'capitalist capital' proper, political positions and support bases;

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[121] Cf. Wright, Erik Olin (1997): *Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 28-32; and Burris, Val (1987): 'The Neo-Marxist Synthesis of Marx and Weber on Class', in Wiley, Norbert (ed.): *The Marx-Weber Debate*, Newbury Park: Sage Publications, pp. 67-90, available at http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~vburris/marxweb.pdf
[122] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 130.

administrative capital vested in office promotions and special kinds of bureaucratic insider knowledge; symbolic intellectual prestige, diplomas, access to high culture practices, and professional positions; the traditional symbolic notions of family honour, kinship, patronage connections, the workers' occupational capital, expressed through their work skills, shopfloor rights, and solidarity; or the social capital of marginal groups populations vested in their resilience, resourcefulness, the possession of valuable friends, and the skills they use to avoid brushes with law.'[123]

Building further on Derlugian's ideas[124], I will structure the issue of class dynamics along the lines of three classes – the *nomenklatura*, the proletarians, and the sub-proletarians – which represent the crucial processes of the Soviet socieconomic development. Nevertheless, before continuing with further explanations of these categories, it is necessary to introduce the theoretical reasoning upon which Derlugian's framework is based. Ivan and Szonja Szelenyi have done a substantial research of the post-Communist transformations, focusing particularly on elites and how their destiny was connected with the transformation. While delivering the first results of their comparative research, they have shown that neither the elite reproduction theory, which suggests that the old *nomenklatura* managed to transform its former capital into a new form and survived the transition at the top of the class structure, nor the elite circulation theory, which claims that the top of the class hierarchy has changed on the basis of new principles, provides definite and exhaustive answers on the positions of elites during and after the transformation.[125] This conclusion apparently created a need for a more comprehensive theoretical approach, and one such approach has been offered by Ivan Szelenyi, Eyal, and Townsley.[126]

Eyal, Szeleneyi, and Townsley have tried to develop a conceptual framework which would be appropriate for studying the dynamics of social structure in rapidly changing societies. More specifically they have focused on transformations of Central European societies, claiming that they provide specific cases of transition to 'capitalism without capitalists'. Recalling the open answers regarding the role and

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[123] Wallerstein's informal oral definition, mentioned in Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 130-131.
[124] Cf. Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, pp. 137-160.
[125] Szelenyi, Ivan and Szelenyi Szonja (1995): 'Circulation or Reproduction of Elites during the Postcommunist Transformation of Eastern Europe: Introduction', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 24, No. 5, pp. 615-638.
[126] Eyal, Gil, Szelenyi, Ivan, and Eleanor Townsley (1998): *Making Capitalism Without Capitalists: Class Formation and Elite Struggles in Post-Communist Central Europe*, New York and London: Verso.

destiny of the former Communist elite, they have endeavoured to show how principal agents 'tried to stay "on course" in the face of massive changes' and 'reoriented their world-views to make sense of, and conform to, rapidly changing social logic.'[127]

Their conceptualization has been based on Bourdieu's notions of social space, capital and habitus. Observing the long trajectories of societies' development in Central Europe, they have distinguished among three different spaces – pre-Communist, Communist, and post-Communist – in which different forms of capital played different roles in shaping social structures. Whereas the top spheres of a traditional capitalist society are dominantly determined by economic capital, in state-socialist societies the crucial role was attributed to political capital, which is defined as social capital 'institutionalized through the practises of the Communist Party'.[128] However, the changing trajectories of social development, which also go beyond the three phases mentioned above, have suggested that a success understood as survival in a position was conditioned by the possession of more than one capital and by the ability to convert resources when the logic of the system changed. According to Eyal, Szelenyi, and Townsley, the dominant form of capital in post-Communist societies in Central Europe has been cultural capital, as the political was devalued and the economic could not exist. From a more empirical perspective, the cultural capital was possessed especially by technocrats and managers, who often held senior positions in Communist administrations, and by former intellectual dissidents.[129]

The empirical part will illustrate that this theoretical conceptualization stressing the role of cultural capital for the period of transformation is extremely useful for the Georgian post-Soviet transition as well. However, the third Bourdieu-inspired notion, that of habitus, is also crucially analytically important for my argument. Eyal, Szelenyi, and Townsley have correctly pointed out that Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus fits into the structuralist perspective as it overcomes the objectivism of rational choice theories but also considers structural interventions that limit a purely subjective interpretation of behaviour.[130] More specifically, inspired by Bourdieu, they have offered their own definition of habitus, which is understood as 'knowledge of the "rules of the game" which allows diverse actors in different sorts

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[127] Ibid., p. 17.
[128] Ibid., Table 1.1, p. 23.
[129] See, Ibid., pp. 17-40.
[130] Ibid., pp. 41-43.

of relationships to navigate the rapidly changing social spaces they confront.'[131] I will try to use the concepts of cultural capital and habitus and connect them with the strategies of mobilization along national/ethnopolitical lines. According to Eyal, Szelenyi, and Townsley, '[i]n the post-communist transitions...those who are well endowed with cultural capital may be able to convert their former political capital into informal social networks, which can then be usefully deployed to take advantage of new market opportunities.'[132] This could be highly relevant for the space of Central European transitions studied by the authors. My point related to my argument would be that in the post-Soviet area, the capital converted into informal social networks could also be used for the mobilizations (of easily mobilized groups) led by either extremely ambitious or unsuccessful elites. The following lines will suggest a framework for the study of the social structure of Soviet society.

3.3.3.1. *Soviet Classes*

The *nomenklatura* cadres were the top administrators occupying key positions, ranging from the political representatives through the top managers to the top bureaucrats and heads of security forces, whose appointment was fully under the control of the Party's Central Committee. Although a certain hierarchy was established among the cadres, the highest political background generally made the positions of *nomenklatura* particularly powerful within the Soviet system. However, I will try to show below that the dependent but powerful position led to the gradual encapsulation and rejection of any needful changes and reforms. Moreover, at least since Brezhnev's period, the regional *nomenklatura* strengthened its positions and began to knit with local industries and enterprises.

Even more important than the internal hierarchy among *nomenklatura* cadres was the territorial and sectoral division. Precisely from this perspective, the role of the *nomenklatura* in the collapse of the Soviet Union could be hypothesized. As Derlugian has maintained, '[t]he collapse of the Soviet Union was primarily the unintended result of bureaucratic fragmentation caused by the defensive and opportunistic actions of various bureaucratic executives who began to appropriate

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[131] Ibid., p. 17.
[132] Ibid., p. 8.

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state assets.'[133] Naturally, those involved in the territorial sector tried to 'privatize' their political or administrative positions, whereas top managers focused on enterprises. To put it very briefly, the late and post-Soviet privatization was an unprecedented process of radical marketization in conditions dominantly defined in terms of a legal vacuum, corruption, bribery, patronage, and even violent coercion.[134] These conditions apparently caused the process of liberalization to degenerate to a brutal power grab. Stark has interestingly described post-Communist transitions transitions as going from 'plan' to 'clan'.[135] If the situation was generally bad in the Soviet Union, it was, from this perspective, catastrophic in the Caucasus. Moreover, although the position within the *nomenklatura* was clearly advantageous, it did not automatically provide success. No matter whether it was the lack of intelligence, forethought or even bad luck, the above-mentioned processes also created a group of 'discontented' but still potentially powerful figures that might, while using various means, strive for reshuffling the outcomes. Indeed, one of the strategies would be to destabilize the situation and thus create conditions for other revolutionary takeovers.

The proletarians were by far the most numerous class, whose members were wage-dependent on the state. Indeed, the notion of a dependency on the state, which united many different people, ranging from university-educated specialists to manual workers with only an elementary education, overcomes the ideologically-informed view that identifies only workers with the proletarian. I will try to show below that the proletarian class was the main product of the developmentalist industrialization that naturally involved manual workers as well as educated specialists. Moreover, it should be noted that the omnipresent functioning of the Soviet state accounted for a great homogenization that was not only manifested in relatively comparable wages but entered virtually all spheres of life, including accommodation, entertainment, and further education.[136]

Although the dependence on the state and the effects of the policies of homogenization established a delusion of sameness, the needs and ambitions of workers and educated specialists obviously differed. The 'lower' proletariat constituted a conservative status group that could be relatively satisfied with its

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[133] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 139.
[134] For bitterly fascinating stories see, Volkov (2002): *Violent Entrepreneurs*.
[135] David Stark observed primarily Central European transitions but his metaphor would indeed get other dimension in post-Soviet world (and Georgia in particular). See, Stark, David (1990): 'Privatization in Hungary: From Plan to Market of from Plan to Clan?', *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 351-92
[136] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 142.

socioeconomic conditions. Most of the benefits they were provided with were bonded with their particular working place. Indeed, the 'lower' proletarians generally constituted a conservative anti-reformist group which often genuinely supported the authoritarian tendencies.[137] On the other hand, as I will try to show below, the proletarian intelligentsia was obviously more ambitious in pursuing its careers towards achieving a higher class status, which became specifically important during the Khrushchev era and then in a different way during perestroika. It should also be noted that the Soviet system commonly awarded mainly engineers and technical specialists, as they were in reality the leading figures of industrialization.[138] Furthermore, the proletarian intelligentsia was certainly receptive to all cultural and social attempts that shaped the shadows of the 'civic society' that briefly stated generated tendencies towards bourgeois nationalism.[139] Finally, particularly after the ideological apprehension, some of the specialists could become frustrated because of their homogenized social status. At this point, Derlugian interestingly notes that it was particularly corruption in a wider sense that served not only as the way to acquire further sources of income but also to fulfill one's need for social stature.[140] 'The university-educated proletarian specialists did not merely seek an opportunity to earn extra money and gain access to scarce goods. They sought to translate certain kinds of occupational capital into the consumption and symbolic display associated with the prestigious imagery of Western middle classes.'[141] The previous part dealing with *nomenklatura* suggested that the collapse of the Soviet state was principally caused by the activities of opportunistic *nomenklatura* cadres. This crucial hypothesis connected with the proletarians should start with their dependency on the state. As the above-mentioned process of privatizations was distant to most of the educated specialists and virtually to all 'lower' proletarians, the entire class generally remained the one most affected by the retreat (collapse) of the state, which had so far been a principal social security provider. The state of threat could fundamentally buttress the tendencies to bourgeois nationalism as well as consequently radicalizing the entire class.

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[137] For example, the popularity of Stalin in Georgia has been based in this social group as the intelligentsia, as my numberless discussions at the Tbilisi State University revealed, has at least been dubious in its judgments.

[138] Cf. Hoffmann, Erik P. and Laird, Robin F. (1985): *Technocratic Socialism: The Soviet Union in the Advanced Industrial Era*, Durham: Duke University Press.

[139] The message of the analysis of revolutions from the perspective of historical sociology should obviously be recalled here.

[140] I will mention below that corruption was nearly a synonym for the functioning of everyday life in Georgia.

[141] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 147.

The class category of the sub-proletariat has originally been developed by Derlugian.[142] He has drawn the distinction between proletarians and sub-proletarians on the basis of the source of the household income. Whereas the above-mentioned proletarians were fully dependent on the provisions of the state, sub-proletarians, though they might irregularly work or receive some rents, gained their resources through unofficial work ranging from backyard agriculture and moonlighting at odd jobs to various criminal activities. It could be argued that most of these people were victims of the rapid industrialization and the crushing of traditional peasantry.

A large group of Georgian sub-proletarians typically functioned as 'smugglers' of subtropical agricultural products. It should be noted that this common merchant activity received the shape of smuggling only due to the Soviet state restrictions on travel. These restrictions made the interregional 'unofficial' trade a risky but relatively lucrative business that might imply additional costs connected with bribes and corruption. However, as I have already mentioned, many sub-proletarians also had a criminal background generally resulting from their voluntary sponging. It is relatively easily conceivable that a worker's career in a distant factory or building construction was not necessarily attractive for an ordinary Caucasian.

Indeed, the distinction between proletarians and sub-proletarians lying in a notion of state-dependency appears to be crucial. The diverse class of proletarians was solidified by their relation to a state. Although the state bureaucratic structures were often obstructing and complicating their lives, the state still remained a crucial source of their economic resources and often also an important non-working life organizer. On the contrary, many of the sub-proletarians lived on sharply or relatively independently of the state. In other words, the state structures often represented an enemy or chaser, or in other instances, a subject of extortion. The sub-proletarians could hardly rebel against a strong state. However, they could be relatively easily mobilized in the chaotic conditions of collapsing states. As Derlugian has put it, '[i]n times of state breakdown, the sub-proletarian masses can raise their collective voice and become the "street crowd".'[143]

After illuminating the functioning and dynamic processes that were under way within the late-Soviet society, it will be possible to push the argument further and

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[142] I am not aware of any study using this term that would use it as having particularly Soviet connotations, though the term is quite similar to 'lumpenproletariat' or 'underclass'. Cf. Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 150.

[143] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 154.

show how these determining preconditions were reflected in the process of ethnic and national mobilization, which directly escalated into violent conflicts. I am repeating again that I am not in any case denying the power and implications of the national and ethnic mobilizations. Yet, I would like to show that these mobilizations did not occur as the results of the newly discovered hatreds released during the perestroika period that were skilfully transformed by ambitious agents. I argue that post-Soviet mobilizations should be understood more from the broad image of a materialist perspective stressing the conditions of the decay of the erstwhile developmentalist state, whose fall left several social groups in an essentially insecure situation. Moreover, I would like to emphasize that the road to violence, although it appeared to be really short, had in fact several crossroads theoretically offering different directions. Hence, the mobilization and warfare should not be viewed as an automatic reaction to past oppression that became available due to a specific historical situation but rather as a desperate reaction to the lack of securities defined in terms of political economy.

4. Georgia: From Sovietization to Civil War

The empirical part of the thesis will be structured along the lines provided in the previous chapter. The aim of this part is to illustrate social processes and dynamics that had been developing during the Soviet period and resulted in the political and security instability of the late Soviet and post-Soviet Georgia that reached a stage of civil war.

4.1. Anti-systemic Developmentalist Strategies as Structural Effects

Virtually all Soviet societies were afflicted by the effects of industrialization and urbanization that resulted from the structural pressures of the world economic system. In the majority of cases, these processes were accompanied by the state-directed attack on the peasantry, which became the most natural source of labourers for the desperately needed and rapidly growing urban working class. Consequentially, the share of the agricultural sector in the economic performance of various Soviet regions declined. Georgian agricultural sector was restored and modernized after the instability and resistant consciousness following the Russian conquest had passed. The strong agricultural orientation of Georgian territory was evidently natural as this mostly Pontic country enjoyed a mild subtropical climate that supports agricultural production.

Before World War I, the industrialization of Georgia was marginal. Yet, the massive mostly military oriented industrialization happening under Stalin's leadership fundamentally affected this country. Between 1928 and 1940, the Georgian industrial performance grew almost seven times (670 percent). From the perspective of the entire USSR, this indicator was clearly above-average. Moreover, although this industrial dynamics obviously had to slow down, it still kept a growing tendency while reaching 240 percent between 1940 and 1958 and 157 percent in the period of 1958 – 1965. According to different measures before World War I, the industrial production accounted for roughly 13 percent of the entire economic

production, whereas in 1970, only construction, transportation, and communication segments reached a 53 percent share.[144]

The figures showing the level of urbanization also had ascending tendencies. Whereas before the First World War, roughly 666,000 lived in towns and cities, the number of urbanites reached 2,241,000 six decades later. Expressed in different figures, the share of the citizens living in towns and cities increased from one quarter before the Revolution to more than half in the late 1970s. However, it should be noted that both the dynamics and the absolute numbers rested far behind the Soviet average. In 1979, the all-Soviet level of urbanization reached about 62 percent - roughly 10 percent more than the level in Georgia. Quite interestingly, Armenia went through a faster and deeper urbanization as only about one third of all Armenians stayed in the country. The situation with Azerbaijan was comparable with the Georgian one. Moreover, it should also be noted that virtually all members of the Armenian minority in Georgia, with the exception of Armenians living in rural border areas, stayed in Georgian cities, which was the case with the Russian minority as well.[145]

The above-mentioned figures have apparently implied a steady shift from agriculture to industry. In terms of the relative shares among the working populations, the trend is again more than clear. On the eve of the Second World War, roughly 19.4 percent of the Georgian working population was engaged in industry, building, and transportation, while 61.9 percent of all Georgians worked in the agricultural sector. Till the end of the sixth decade, the number of Georgian labourers working in the industrial sector rose up to one quarter, and the number of people working on collective farms dropped to roughly half of the working population. Following these statistics, we could observe even greater dynamics in the next two decades. Around 1970, the shares of industrial labourers and farmers became almost the same, reaching 34 and 38 percent respectively. Ten years later, the industry already definitely prevailed over agriculture with 53.5 percent, when agriculture held only 16 percent.[146] Both of the neighbouring Transcaucasian countries, Armenia and Azerbaijan, were exposed to similar processes and went through approximately such like dynamics.

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[144] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 296.
[145] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 297.
[146] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 297.

It has been anticipated in theoretical part that the rapid industrialization accompanied by the necessary urbanization created a great demand for educated specialists and semi-specialists. Indeed, educational reforms aiming at promoting elementary as well as higher education became important components of Soviet developmentalist strategy. Most importantly, the educational reform enabled Georgians to receive education in their native language to a much larger extent than in Tsarist times. During the 'korenizatsiia', schooling and publishing in Georgian were greatly promoted. Georgians also became overwhelmingly involved in the Soviet institutions. As Cornell has put it, 'it helped the Georgians to "Georgianize" Tbilisi, but also the Ossetians to "Ossetianize", which had not been a primarily Ossetian settlement before.'[147]

The 'korenizatsiia' had a significant impact also on minorities. When the primary education was made compulsory in 1930, it was already possible to study in Armenian, Azerbaijani, Abkhaz, Ossetian, and, naturally, Russian in Georgia. Consequentially, the literacy rate increased significantly, and in the early 1930s, nearly the entire population was literate. However, this process was slightly more complicated in autonomies; the case of Ossetians is particularly illustrative. The Ossetians are descendants of the Alans, hence having an Iranian origin. They speak the Iranian language, which is related to though not fully mutually comprehensible with the Farsi language. In fact, the Ossetian language is, together with Armenian, the only Indo-European language spoken in Georgia. Its difference from the other Iranian languages is also expressed in its use of a Cyrillic-based alphabet with some modifications.[148] Yet, the alphabet changed several times in South Ossetia. Georgian missionary priests in the middle of the 18th century wrote the first book in Ossetian by using the Georgian alphabet. A few decades later, at the beginning of the 19th century, an Ossetian alphabet was created on the basis of the Georgian script, but this attempt was almost immediately followed by an alphabet developed on a Russian Cyrillic basis. After the fall of the First Georgian Republic, the Latin script had prevailed in Ossetia until World War II, when the Georgian alphabet came to be used

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[147] Cornell (2002), *Autonomy and Conflict*, p. 144.
[148] Tsikhelashvili, Ketevan (2001): *The Case Studies of Abkhazia and South Ossetia*, Carnegie Project on Complex Power-Sharing and Self-Determination, European Centre for Minority Issues, pp. 38-39.

again. The final turn to Cyrillic occurred in 1954.[149] Indeed, circumstances that are so specific should not be underestimated when dealing with educational changes.

The dynamics of educational promotion that started with the process of 'korenizatsiia' and which was fundamentally accelerated by the need for a skilful and educated work force that would be compatible with the requirements of a growing urban environment can also be traced from the figures. The strategies of the developmentalist state based on industrialization and the consequent professionalization of management as well as administration created structural conditions that worked well as incentives for competent people, as education became almost a direct lift to better jobs. The number of people with secondary or higher education clearly confirms this trend as it increased dramatically between 1939 and 1970. Whereas in 1939, only 16.5 percent of people had secondary or higher education, till 1970, this figure grew to 55.4. It is interesting that in both of the border years, Georgia was the country with the most educated people, or to put it more realistically, it had the most efficient educational system, apparently taking advantage of the geographical preconditions. With regard to this statistic, it was only beaten by Latvia in 1939 (17.6 percent) but was ranked first in 1970. The neighbouring and comparatively very similar Armenia was only slightly behind with 12.8 and 51.6 percent while the leading republic of Russia showed 10.9 and 48.9 percent.[150]

In the era of de-Stalinization, the educational reform also transformed to the creation of the stable system of bureaucratic careers, which led to the consolidation on the highest level. Following this process, *nomenklatura* became a new dominant class. It should be emphasized that a professional and mainly competent administration is important for economic development and its translation into the welfare rates. Although the importance of this statement may be a source of controversial debates among economists in the case of capitalist states, it appears to be clear that the quality and competency of the bureaucratic personnel in a developing socialist state is a crucial factor given the role the administration performs.

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[149] Kobaidze, Manana Kock (1999): 'Minority Identity and Minority Maintenance in Georgia', *Working Paper 47*, Department of Linguistics, Lund University, p.10.
[150] Hahn, Jeffrey W. (1978): 'Stability and Change in the Soviet Union', *Polity*, Vol. 10, No. 4, p. 551.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, the Soviet economy 'flourished' and went through its best period. Although the relevancy of the data provided by the Soviet institutions and the estimates made by various institutions are subjects of immense debates among economists, there has still been a consensus on the exceptionality of this period. These economic 'successes' were also transferred to the increasing level of living standards and consumption and evidently became projected to the overall level of satisfaction of the Soviet citizens.[151]

Nevertheless, it became gradually clear that the economic condition of the state did not allow for saturating the welfare regime, which was a result of the post-Stalinist endeavour to keep social stability. Moreover, the Soviet economy was not able to catch the recent wave of technological modernization introducing the information revolution. The economic performance fell down substantially. The growth rate at the beginning of the 1980s reached only 1.5 percent, and the income per capita did not grow at all, which was also openly conceded by the Soviet elites.[152] This low economic performance also fundamentally affected budgetary policy. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Georgia was among the countries that experienced virtually no investment growth or even decline.[153] The situation of economic crisis defined in terms of inability to create enough resources to saturate the rising expectations opened an unlimited space for severe conflicts over allocations of resources that became the dominant feature of the late Soviet economy and increased the costs of securing the positions.[154] Accordingly, the only meaningful reaction of the Soviet leadership was to find the missing resources abroad.

This analysis has so far focused on the internal processes within the Soviet society and economy in a wider logic of the developmentalist states provided by the world system analysis. However, the structural context of the Cold War apparently should not be overlooked. At this point, certainly, a tendentious but correct remark or argument about the Soviet exhaustion from the superpower rivalry could be made without any further theoretical context. Nevertheless I would like to show that these

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[151] A well commented recent review of the economic performance of the Soviet Union in this period as well as its implication, which is comprehensible even for a non-economist, is provided in Khanin, G. I. (2003): 'The 1950s: The Triumph of the Soviet Economy', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 8; for further sources on the Soviet economy, see Ofer, Gur (1987): 'Soviet Economic Growth: 1928 – 1985', *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. 25, No. 4.

[152] Cf. Bunce (1983), *The Political Economy of the Brezhnev Era*, p. 130.

[153] Bahry, Donna (1987): *Outside Moscow: Power, Politics, and Budgetary Policy in the Soviet Republics*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 104.

[154] Bunce (1983), *The Political Economy of the Brezhnev Era*, p. 145.

characteristics can be approached through my theoretical lenses.[155] The rapid military industrialization and consequent proletarianization of Stalin's period, conducted by the terrorist structures, approached the stage of wartime economy even before the Second World War. However, the heavy and military industries became major subjects of the post-war developmentalist strategy as there was, in fact, no clear alternative. Having mainly this socioeconomic mission, I would argue that this track was rather independent from the ideological proclamations about the preparations for a future conflict. I do not even want to touch the immense discussions about the relative power of both poles of the Cold War in the respective decades of Khrushchev's thaw or, say, détente. For my argument, it appears to be enough to mention the rather generally accepted view that the socioeconomic crisis, at least from the 1970s, fundamentally affected Soviet abilities to keep abreast with the USSR's major enemy.

As an at least partial return to the processes of the 'golden age' of the Soviet developmentalism secured by the Stalinist terrorist state was not possible, the only viable strategy was grounded in the opposite direction. Recalling the argument from the world system perspective made by Giovanni Arrighi, Terence Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein[156], I would maintain that the social and economic potential of the Soviet developmentalist project became exhausted, and the Soviet Union had to seek its reintegration to the world capitalist economy. Indeed, although this might not have been his primary intention, it was at least the context that determined Gorbachev's 'Westpolitik' and democratization from above. Likewise, Andropov Gorbachev clearly recognized the causes of the economic fall and 'felt that the bureaucratic apparatus must be purged and brought to heel before it could be recast in more rational and responsive organizational forms. His perestroika was essentially a 'velvet' purge...[and] glasnost served the dual purpose of providing propagandistic support in the struggle against the party conservatives and generating a range of policy advice through open competition among bureaucratically connected

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[155] For the convergence geopolitical theory and historical sociology, see Collins, Randall (1999): *Macrohistory: Essays of Sociology of the Long Run*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, particularly chapters I-III.
[156] Cf. Arrighi, Giovanni, Hopkins, Terrence K., Wallerstein, Immanuel (2001): '1989: The Continuation of 1968', in Katsiaficas, George (ed.), *After the Fall: 1989 and the Future of Freedom*, New York: Routledge.

intellectuals.'[157] Further dynamics of the Soviet developmentalist state will be illuminated by other two factors guarding the structure of the empirical part.

4.2. Class Development and Dynamics

4.2.1. Soviet Period

It has been already suggested that newly promoted national and cultural elites were essentially products of the affirmative action policies that had begun in the 1920s and were restored after the break of the Stalinist terrorist regime. I have also tried to suggest that much more than the defenders of the disappearing national identity attacked by the invisible processes of modernization, they constituted representatives of the awakened, active and even relatively satisfied society. The past traditions, historical myths or folklore were not discovered and evoked because of the fear that they would disappear and dissolve, at least to a greater extent than is usual in whatever times in whatever societies, but mostly because they became the manifestation of a developing civil society that was both interested and receptive to such issues. In other words, the relieving of the Stalinist terrorist state bonds and all the subsequent processes mentioned above did not finally create room for a demonstration of the discontent with the process of modernization affecting the national identities, but rather started a process of social changes (revolution in Tilly's sense) that was similar to the social movements that preceded major Western capitalist revolutions.

As noted Khrushchev's era offered unique conditions for fast moving careers and created relevant opportunities for educated specialists that were not fundamentally burdened by ideological preconditions. Moreover, I have already claimed that the Soviet Union during the late 1950s and 1960s went through the 'most gratified' period of its existence, expressed in the relative satisfaction of the Soviet society with the deliveries of the socialist developmentalist state. From the world system perspective we should perhaps bear in mind that the 1960s experienced

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[157] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 126. Also, for the role of intellectuals in perestroika, see Shalin, Dmitri N. (1990): 'Sociology for the Glasnost Era: Institutional and Substantive Changes in Recent Soviet Sociology', *Social Forces*, Vol. 68, No. 4; Weinberg, Elizabeth A. (1992): 'Perestroika and Soviet Sociology', *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 43, No. 1.

arguably the first crisis of capitalism, symbolized by the movement against the War in Vietnam and particularly in Europe by the year '1968'. Indeed, the social changes raised by Khrushchev's thaw ideas of democratization could reach the developing civic society but could not overcome the fundaments of the Communists' political and economic machinery.

The relative success of Krushchev's reforms definitely confirmed the victory of the pragmatist stance over the Stalinist ideological conviction that the way ahead and ahead of the capitalist West led through the permanent revolutionary transformation.[158] However, at some point, the experimental attempts of Khrushchev and Kosygin's government went perhaps too far. The possibility of a large degree of self-management in the economic sphere, the introduction of electoral processes for the mid-ranking bureaucracy and the almost neglected nationalist mobilization had to create a conservative response. Precisely as if they knew the Western debates in the field of historical sociology, conservative forces perhaps rightly foresaw that the situation might have ended up in a revolutionary movement. And in fact the situation in Central Europe in the late 1960s would be another confirmation.

Although the newly established *nomenklatura* by no means believed anymore in the Marxist-Leninst dogmas about the society, it certainly remained fully receptive of its own class interest. The situation of the national *nomenklatura* became dubious. 'In the mid-sixties the *nomenklatura* sought to incorporate themselves into a privileged caste, to protect themselves both from the popular pressures below and from the central government above.'[159] Obviously, in this situation, the social coherency of Khrushchev's society was lost as the reform-oriented interests of the proletarian civic society encompassing workers as well as educated specialists diverged from the orientation of the top class, which began to strive for more control to secure its own position. Moreover, the strategy of the new leadership even worsened the problems.

All these factors evidently signalized and caused a deep socioeconomic crisis that became even more serious as a competent, capable and functioning leadership was either virtually missing or engaged in corporatist struggles. Hence Brezhnev's conservative regime was not challenged by reformist attempts but by 'responses to

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[158] Suny, Ronald (1992): 'State, civil society, and ethnic cultural consolidation in the USSR – roots of the national question', in: Goldman, Philip, Gail Lapidus, and Victor Zaslavsky (eds.), *From Union to Commonwealth*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 28-30.
[159] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 108.

the mounting frustrations involved in establishing the corporatist decision processes and implementing policy priorities in keeping with a corporatist system.'[160] In other words, 'the blindness and sclerosis of Soviet bureaucracy was actually the achievement of the *nomenklatura*, and a major condition of Brezhnev era comfort and security.'[161]

The change overturning the socioeconomic situation could hardly come, as both major classes, proletarians and *nomenklatura*, were locked in the rigid processes of the everyday functioning of the Soviet system. Most notably, contrary to Khrushchev's period, which had opened up room for new educated cadres, who had taken the opportunity to create a relatively efficient structure, the amendment coming from above, from the post-Brezhnev *nomenklatura*, was virtually non-realistic. The late Soviet *nomenklatura* was very different from the threatened leaders of the totalitarian Stalinist state as well as from the capable bureaucrats and managers of Khrushchev's period. Derlugian has correctly stressed that an ideological component was crucial for all developmentalist transformation, and hence 'transformational dictatorships had to inspire no less than terrorize…In the late 1960s the USSR no longer met either of these two conditions. The soviet ideology had been gutted, embalmed, and mummified. Moscow was transformed from the commanding centre into the principal nexus of corporatist lobbying and intrabureaucratic bargaining.'[162]

If the *nomenklatura* was locked in clientelist structures and intrabureaucratic struggles, the Soviet proletarians appeared in the mid 1980s to be in a historically unprecedented situation. At least the 'core' industrial areas of the Soviet Union began to suffer from a lack of labour, and the shortage of recruits also bothered the Red Army. This structural condition would normally enhance the power of the entire class, promising an improvement of wages and working conditions. Nevertheless, as noted above, the socioeconomic processes went in quite a different way. Moreover, although the political control and repression were by no means reaching the dimensions of the peak of the totalitarian state, the usual means of protest, such as strikes, were still considered dangerous. When recognizing the low profile of the organized institutional negotiation and bargaining, the only remaining meaningful 'strategy' that survived in the hands of proletarians was lowering the quality and

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[160] Bunce (1983), *The Political Economy of the Brezhnev Era*, p. 132.
[161] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 108.
[162] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 122.

productivity of labour. This often almost anecdotic aspect of the Soviet economy and the conditions of life of the state-dependent proletarians are fittingly expressed by a typical Soviet period joke: *They pretend to pay and we pretend to work.* Indeed, as Derlugian has nicely put it, '[t]he notoriously shoddy quality of Soviet-made goods was in fact the perverted triumph of class struggle under state socialism.'[163]

I have already several times mentioned a well-known fact that corruption in its widest sense became a systemic feature of the Soviet economy. A good example that illustrates the extent is the system of the so-called *tolkach* connected with the fulfilment of major economic goals. In the Soviet economy, the goal of the *nomenklatura* red managers was not to create profit but to fulfil the target defined by the *gosplan* (State Planning Committee). Although basically all Soviet economic figures were virtual, it was still either comfortable or sometimes almost inevitable for the red managers to adjust the targets so that they could be accomplished. This could be done, first, through bribes provided to the relevant members of the *gosplan*, who could reduce the targets and, second, through negotiation, led by *tolkach*, with the companies that could increase the input of needed parts or raw materials. Quite naturally, all these processes were observed by the Party officials, who could not forfeit their shares for covering them up.[164] In the southern states, this system very often operated along ethnic structures or other patronage structures.[165] Generally speaking, it has been estimated that in the 1980s, approximately 20 million Soviet citizens were fully operating in the second economy and were producing and trading goods creating a turnover reaching between 200 and 400 billion rubles each year. At the same time, over 80 percent of the Soviet population was dependent on the second economy to satisfy their basic everyday needs and wants.[166]

The first attack on the steady and corrupt administration came with the accession of Andropov. Andropov was very well aware of the roots of the current crisis, which rested mainly in the incapable, corrupt and ineffective administration. Although it is hard to make an analytically complete picture from the very short period when he was in power, his program, reacting to the deep crisis of corruption,

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[163] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 119.
[164] Stefes, Christoph H. (2006): *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions: Corruption, Collusion and Clientelism*, p. 71.
[165] Simis, Konstantin (1982): *USSR – The Corrupt Society: The Secret World of Soviet Capitalism*, New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 80.
[166] Stefes, Christoph H. (2006): *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions: Corruption, Collusion and Clientelism*, p. 72.

had neo-Stalinist overlaps. No matter how realistic it might have appeared, Andropov intended to organize a massive purge directed at the corrupt officials and to renew the strong central control. Despite the lack of time, it became obvious that Soviet bureaucracy was already securely embedded in the industrial base and hence collectively effectively defended against the central endeavour. Moreover, the return of the despotic decision-making was unacceptable for the proletarians, who, though often annoyed by the bureaucrats, would not exchange the bureaucratic hassling for a 'totalitarianization' of the overall condition. It should also be noted that even Andropov had to recognize some aspects of the corrupt nature of the system. Steffes has shown that his endeavour was not in fact targeted at corruption per se but rather at officials who did not follow the informal rules of the game. 'When an official was charged with corruption, it was often said the real reason he got arrested was that he "stole out of proportion to his official position."'[167]

Particular policies of Gorbachev's democratization took the shape of the reform experiments of Khrushchev's era. Most importantly, the mechanisms of competitive elections enhanced by the possibility of open public critique created needful pressure on and an exchange of the *nomenklatura* cadres. And again, as was the case with Khrushchev's era, these processes created opportunities for many educated specialists to reach the enticing positions of the *nomenklatura*. Nevertheless, Gorbachev's reforms did not provide the newly established elites with any tools which could be used to follow the flourishing corruption of the lower rank officials, who certainly skilfully managed to take advantage of this situation and pursued their own material interests. Solnick came up with the close metaphor of a 'bank run' for this topic, as a bank run also results in a complete collapse.[168]

Goodwin has suggested four political conditions that enabled a generally peaceful capitulation of the late-Soviet elite. Apart from the recognition of the absence of a physical threat coming from the opponents and the often discussed 'Gorbachev's factor', it was mainly the 'embourgeoisement' of the late-Soviet *nomenklatura* and the understanding among the enlightened *nomenklatura* that their

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[167] Stefes, Christoph H. (2006): *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions: Corruption, Collusion and Clientelism*, p. 69.
[168] Steven Solnick as quoted in Stefes, Christoph H. (2006): *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions: Corruption, Collusion and Clientelism*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 74.

defeat in a competitive election would be a temporary loss.[169] Indeed, as Derlugian has further noted, 'Goodwin's four factors add up to the strategy of negotiating for the elite the least disruptive and collectively profitable transition from one developmentalist project to another, from a state-bound and isolationist economy to market-driven and externally conjugated economic growth.'[170]

Georgian society fully resembled the general Soviet trends mentioned above. Many young educated specialists quite soon abandoned their ideals and became accommodated with the prevailing patterns of social stagnation that became typical for the Brezhnev period. The only dissident alternative remained the unorthodox nationalist groups led by a few elite figures. These nationalist organizations took their contours during the 1956 riots. The most visible group was called Gorgasliani. The name referred to the East Georgian king Vakhtang Gorgasali, who founded Tbilisi in 5th century AD. Two leading exponents of the Georgian Soviet period nationalism, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, then lecturer on American literature and the English Language at the Tbilisi State University, and Merab Kostava, were already members of this group. After the intervention of the KGB, the group was dispersed, but the movement soon became reorganized around the students of Tbilisi Technical University, who opposed the barbaric destruction of some religious architectonical monuments.[171] Moreover, the situation became complicated when Gamsakhurdia learnt about the theft of medieval religious treasures from the patriarchate in Tbilisi. The investigation led to the wife of First Secretary Mzhavanadze, but the leaving potentate still managed to break the process. In the mid-1970s, the nationalist movement transformed into a human rights protection group which gained the status of a Helsinki Watch Group after the 1975 Helsinki Accords.[172] Gamsakhurdia, together with his associates Kostava and Tsikolia, wrote numerous articles that shed light on the deportations of Georgian Muslims (Meskhetian Turks) to Central Asia and defended the already arrested followers. These activities could not be settled by Zviad's respected father, and Gamsakhurdia, together with Kostava, got sentenced. It should be stressed that the Georgian nationalist movement was at least until this

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[169] Goodwin, Jeff (2001): *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, mentioned in Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 127.
[170] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 127.
[171] Cornell (2002), *Autonomy and Conflict*, p. 149.
[172] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 309.

point an elitist group of young men who often came from 'good' families, and it was almost absolutely geographically limited to Central Tbilisi.

This situation changed for a moment during Brezhnev's constitutional process, held in 1978, when the Soviet government released the plan to remove the paragraph establishing Georgian as the sole state language and substitute it with a clause giving equal status to Russian and other languages in the republic. This idea provoked a huge demonstration of university students that took place on April 14, after which Shevardnadze's government retreated from the public pressure and decided to reject any such changes of the constitution. The circumstances of this ill-advised idea of the central government substantially helped to make the so far dissident movement public in Georgia, though it still did not disperse away from Tbilisi or, in fact, from academic circles.[173]

By this time, both of the main Georgian nationalist figures, Kostava and Gamsakhurdia, were in jail. Their journeys split up in 1979, when Zviad Gamsakhurdia, publicly on TV, 'abjured his past errors' and was pardoned, whereas Kostava refused to do so and remained imprisoned until 1987.[174] Being an icon of the 'true Georgian dissidents' and a possible challenger to Gamsakhurdia's rise to power as the head of the newly established nationalist organization Society of St. Ilia the Righteous, he died under mysterious circumstances in a car accident in 1989.

4.2.2. *Social Transition Period*

In the mid-1980s, a spontaneous wave of resistance was raised against the typically Soviet megalomaniacal plans to build a railroad link over the Caucasian range. Especially young students and some of their teachers began to criticize the ecological and cultural costs that were ignored by the plan. Indeed, such a huge project would devastate wide parts of the beautiful Georgian mountains, and moreover, it was considered to be a demolition of a few sacral and archaeological monuments.[175] The project was later shelved, although the influence of the social

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[173] Ibid., p. 309.
[174] The official sentence was originally about three years.
[175] Quite a few politicians were involved in the protests as students - among others, for example, Zurab Zhvania, who served as a Speaker of the Parliament at the end of Shevardnadze's second era and became, together with

protests on this decision is debatable, as perhaps even the proponents could perhaps eventually recognize its unrealistic proportions. Nevertheless, the protestors remained unpunished, which could have, in effect, been generally legitimizing for later displays of discontent and critique.

From another perspective, during the last years within the Soviet state, Georgian society went through a cathartic social and cultural process when opening some contentious historical topics. These debates were to a large extent evoked by the famous Georgian film directed by Tengiz Abuladze *Monanieba* (Repentance) that allegorically pictured the repressions of the Stalin era. The film was finished in 1984 and could only be released when Gorbachev's *glasnost'* was fully established, but it still came to be forbidden again after a few screenings.[176] On the other hand, it was enthusiastically welcomed outside the Soviet bloc and was given an award in Cannes in 1987. The artistic reflection was accompanied by performances of professional historians. In 1988, Vakhtang Gurgenidze, the director of the Georgian State Archive of Literature and Art, publicly stated that the Georgian poet and father of the modern Georgian nation Ilia Chavchavadze was killed in 1907 in a complot organized by the Old Bolshevik Pilipe Makharadze. Gurgenidze was fired immediately, although other Georgian intellectuals protested and Kostava, together with Gamsakhurdia, even sent a letter to Gorbachev asking for his re-appointment.[177]

The topic of the Menshevik era was officially overlooked. Yet, there was a group of progressive historians like Avtandil Menteshashvili, Akaki Surguladze or Ushangi Sidamonidze, who publicly discovered these forbidden topics.[178] The government was reacting by counter-campaigns projecting the societal leaders in a typically Soviet style as intruders, caterpillars or asocial elements. The critical movement gradually displayed tendencies to institutionalize, but this process also discovered essential differences between various oppositional streams. The moderate intellectuals formed the Shota Rustaveli[179] society that officially supported the policies of *glasnost'* and *perestroika*. More nationalist-oriented figures led by

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Mikheil Saakashvili and Nino Burdjanadze, a part of the triumvirate leading the Rose Revolution, after which he served as a Prime Minister until his mysterious death in February 2005.

[176] The story surrounding the movie is interesting as it was originally prepared for Georgian national television, which had weaker censorship mechanisms. It should be also noted that Repentance is the third part of an open historical trilogy, with The Prayer (1968) and The Tree of Desire (1977) coming before it.

[177] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 320.

[178] Ibid., p. 320.

[179] Shota Rustaveli was a Georgian poet in the 12th and perhaps also the 13th century and the author of The Knight in the Panther's Skin, the greatest classic Georgian national epic secular poem.

Gamsakhurdia and Kostava and followed, for example, by the historians Giorgi Chanturia and Erekle Shengelaia established the Ilia Chavchavadze Society, which operated and unofficially fought against the growing Russification and enhancement of Georgian political and cultural sovereignty. This much more radical group was naturally less coherent. After a few months, Gamsakhurdia was expelled from the Society and, followed by Kostava and Chanturia, he created the Fourth Group. Nevertheless, even their alliance did not last for a long time as Chanturia, supposedly due to personal disputes with Gamsakhurdia[180], left the group and founded the radical National Democratic Party. Suny has concluded that religious, political, and even ecological issues connected with a potent nationalist discourse that exceeded the extended free area of *glasnost'*. 'Yet the intelligentsia, while overwhelmingly nationalist in a broad sense, remained deeply divided in its attitudes toward the existing order and in its commitment to a radical move toward independence.' Indeed, I will attempt to show below what factors became fundamental in the societal shift towards independence and violent mobilization or, in other words, what conditions might have determined these shifts.

The social and political role and power of the nationalist movement should not be overrated, which might be the impression coming from the literature focusing on the national question and nationalism in the Soviet Union. Although stories focusing on leaders and publicly visible figures of the Georgian late 1980s social movements have tended to draw a much different picture while stressing the strengths and gravity of the entire society's national mobilization, a closer look might provide a different perception. I have already mentioned above that a combination of the national awakening and the latitude of the conditions under the reform stream of *perestroika* and *glasnost'* brought about certain dynamic processes that could generally be labelled as the evolution of the civil society. Nevertheless, most of the activities within this development could not attempt in any way to organize a wide and fundamental national mobilization. The main reason of this incapacity rested in the fact that virtually none of the classes or groups within the Georgian society had an incentive to turn against the state, which was still providing social and economic security. This was very much the case of all proletarians, encompassing organized

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[180] Much of my knowledge about Gamsakhurdia comes from my personal debates with Ramaz Kurdadze and Tamar Kiknadze, professors of the Tbilisi State University, which were occurring during my stay at the TSU between January and June 2004.

peasants, manual workers and educated specialists dependent on the state's payrolls. Especially the last subclass of educated specialists became increasingly critical to and frustrated from the steady state bureaucracy and ineffectiveness of basically all economic and social sectors, but it became appeased at the same time by its successes in influencing some of the decisions and by a growing room for political but mainly cultural expressions. The dependency of the *nomenklatura* was somehow natural, though especially the mid-rank *nomeklatura* cadres were also anxious about reforming the processes that opened up room for removals after a public critique or through a competitive election. However, it should be recalled that particularly in the South Caucasus, their positions were empowered by various regionally-based patronage and corruption structures. Finally, the subproletarians were not interfered with by the changes and, even more importantly, were not mobilized under the condition of a still relatively functioning state.

Observing the events occurring foremost in Tbilisi from this perspective, we could conclude that all protests and demonstrations were in fact led by a marginal group of national radicals, who were mostly recruited from the families of Georgian prominents or noblemen.[181] Derlugian has described the typical participants of the nationalist demonstrations as sub-intellectuals (teachers, librarians) from the small towns and unshaven men who left their market places, farms or small trucks.[182] Many of them also had a rustic accent, most often Mengrelian.[183] Indeed, such a perception of the events has also been confirmed by my own experience in Georgia. Virtually all of the people I had a chance to interview in Tbilisi, generally academicians from the universities and research centers, also mentioned that they did not feel comfortable with these events and did not follow them, as they perceived the leading Georgian nationalists as too radical and extremist. Some of them explicitly pointed out that most of the rallies followed various Georgian fests and holidays and the major

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[181] Georgian society has retained a spectacular system preserving a 'notion of nobility' that can be distinguished mainly through the family names. In the Soviet period, some of the families managed to translate their old gentry's capital into an influential position in the *nomenklatura* or they were simply respected without a particular position in the apparatus. Aslan Abashidze, who will be mentioned later, could serve as an example of the first group, and Zviad Gamsakhurdia and his father Konstantin (a rightly respected writer) could serve as examples of the second. However, since the 1990s, the relevancy of these 'good families' has been decreasing.
[182] Derlugian has interviewed several distinguished scholars and public figures, including Ghia Nodia and Ketevan Rostiashvili. Cf. Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 198, f. 41.
[183] Mengrelia is a region in Western Georgia lying by the border with Abkhazia. Most of the 'Georgians' living in Abkhazia have also been ethnic Mengrelians. It should also be noted that Gamsakhurdia was a Mengrelian as well. His ethnic affiliation became important after he had been removed from the presidential position.

motivation for the crowd was to avoid work or make a trip to Tbilisi.[184] It should also be mentioned in this regard that the number of occasions commemorating 'nationally important days' in the Georgian calendar exceeded a few times the average number of festivals celebrated in, say, an average European democratic society.

4.3.   Power and Functioning of State

4.3.1.   Soviet Period

The sovietization of Transcaucasia mirrored many contradictions and discrepancies between the possible applications of Marxist principles and their cynical strategic and purpose-built abandonment. More particularly, as Suny has argued, 'it was the product of conflict between the strategic requirements of Soviet Russia and the aims of local Communists.'[185] Interestingly, local Bolsheviks were also divided between Stalinist hardliners (Orjonikidze serves as a good example) and Leninist moderates, who actually prevailed among Georgian Bolsheviks.

In March 1922, the Federal Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of Transcaucasia was created, although many regional Communists opposed it. In the following months, Stalin created pressures so that all three South Caucasian Republics would join the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic as Autonomous Republics. Georgians were at the time the only South Caucasians opposing this intention. Yet, Stalin's strategy was also opposed by Lenin, and in the controversial atmosphere, the Transcaucasian Federated Soviet Socialist Republic was formed and joined the Soviet Union in December 1922. This institutional design was working until 1936, when the Federation was dismantled and Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia became individual members of the Soviet Union.

Still during the Federal Union, three autonomous units were created on Georgian territory. Abkhazia gained the status of a formally independent Soviet Republic, which was in federation with Georgia, in May 1921. This status was also confirmed by the constitution of 1925, which has often been recalled by Abkhaz nationalists. The constitution of 1931 then incorporated Abkhazia into the Georgian

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[184] I am indebted mainly to professors Tamar Kiknadze and Ramaz Kurdadze as well as to David Darchiashvili for their kind willingness to share their time with me.
[185] Suny (1988): *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, pp. 209-210.

Republic as an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Ajaria, under the particular circumstances, became the ASSR already in June 1921. South Ossetia received the lower status of Autonomous Oblast in April 1922. After the last change of the Abkhaz status in 1931, the administrative arrangement did not change until the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

From the perspective of political economy Stalin's regime was based on the growing heavy industry and military-industrial complex organized and enforced by the centralized terrorist state structure. However, Stalin's chauvinistic terror was incompatible with most of the national minorities' rights developed during 'korenizatsiia'. As a result, the Stalinist educational system produced in particular one sort of educated specialist – engineers competent for the military industry.

In 1931, Lavrentii Beria became the leader of the Communist Party of Georgia, and one year later, he began to head also the Central Party Committee. His career, which reached its peak when Beria attained the post of the head of NKVD in 1938, was very closely connected with the formation of Stalin's personal cult.[186] The veneration of Stalin, who, like Beria, came from Georgia[187], reached an unimaginable level in Georgia. Even after the post-Stalinist and post-Communist processes, Stalin has been still present to an unbelievable degree in today's Georgia, either in the stony form of numerous monuments and statues or in the minds of many Georgians. Interestingly, according to my experience, the opinions of Georgian intelligentsia on Stalin are also seriously ambiguous.

Beria's supervision over the Caucasus lasted until 1951, when Stalin's ire captured him as well. The fall of Beria in 1951 also denoted the fall of his protégés, who were very often not surprisingly Mingrelian. He survived the processes of 1937, but his power assertion was redeemed by the liquidation of thousands Party representatives working on various levels. The leading old figures among Georgian Communists were physically liquidated. The Stalinist strategy completely reversed the policies of the 1920s that were sensitive towards minorities and centralized the power control. Most importantly, many political autonomous rights were rendered and the politics as well as culture became greatly Georgianized and Russified. The

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[186] for a detailed study on Beria's political career, see, for example, Knight, Amy W. (1993): *Beria: Stalin's First Lieutnant*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

[187] It is not well-known, though it may not be so surprising due to his physical appearance, that Iosip Dzhughashvili was a child of a Georgian father and an ethnic Ossetian mother. The town of Gori, the place of his birth that became sadly 'famous' again recently due to the Russo-Georgian war, lies close to the border with Southern Ossetia. Beria was a Mingrelian.

suppression of minorities' rights and culture was strongly expressed, when all native language schools were closed.[188]

The period of de-Stalinization announced by Khrushchev's famous speech at the 20th Party Congress in 1956 created room for changes in virtually all areas. The most visible and also the most commonly mentioned changes were connected with the termination of the terror directed on minorities and especially on 'Caucasian quislings'.[189] However, the deconstruction of the terrorist state in fact meant an opportunity for deeper changes in the Soviet system.

The dismantling of Stalin's cult brought about harder times for his protégés but also for local bureaucratic cadres that got promoted under Stalin's rule. These people were often demoted or forced to leave their position in the administration. They also became quite typically ostracized and made to move to the rural areas. This process was essentially accelerated by the fact that the Stalinist local elites were frequently terribly undereducated and in fact incapable of standing the reform wind. They usually had only an elementary education and then became trained in the so-called 'Sovtpartshkolas' (local Party schools).

The disintegration of the former terror structures and the riddance of Stalin's cadres followed by the growth of the civil administration that would substitute the former buttress of the absolutely totalitarian state marked a need for new career-oriented educated cadres. Particularly during Khrushchev's period, the careers could develop quite fast, and junior rank administrators had a chance to reach the position of *nomenklatura* in a reasonable amount of time. The acceptance for the civil service and the system of promotion were based on educational credentials and overall abilities. As Derlugian has noted, '[t]he end of terroristic centralization marked the collective victory of Soviet bureaucracy over the arbitrary terror of the previous regime. The post-Stalinist *nomenklatura* was not only significantly larger and better educated, it was also more durable.'[190]

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[188] Jones, Stephen (1994): 'Georgia: A Failed Democratic Transition', in Bremmer, Ian, and Ray, Taras, *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994, p. 292.
[189] Some views of the Stalinist policies in the Caucasus can be found in Knight, Amy W. (1993): *Beria: Stalin's First Lieutnant*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; Further see, for example, Connor, Walker (1992): 'Soviet Policies Toward the Non-Russian Peoples in Theoretic and Historic Perspective: What Gorbachev Inherited' in: Motyl, Alexander J. (ed.), *The Post-Soviet Nations -Perspectives on the Demise of the USSR*, New York: Columbia University Press or Suny, Ronald (1992): 'State, civil society, and ethnic cultural consolidation in the USSR – roots of the national question', in Goldman, Philip, Gail Warshofsky Lapidus and Victor Zaslavsky (eds.), *From Union to Commonwealth*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 27-30.
[190] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 87.

Moreover, the control over the regional companies was transferred from the ministries in Moscow to the institutions in Tbilisi. This move retrieved one of the most painful signs of the Stalinist total control. By 1958, virtually all Georgian enterprises (98 percent) were under the control of the local management. This move essentially enhanced the economic performance of Georgia and enabled it to accumulate some savings and reserves, but according to some figures, Georgian development was still comparatively quite low. In the seventh decade of the 20th century, the Georgian national income grew by 102 percent, which was the third lowest improvement within the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the average Georgian savings account almost twice exceeded the Soviet average.[191] These indications should be considered also in regard to the data about the educational system that were mentioned above. Indeed, it is interesting how many Georgian educated specialists managed to live without a permanent state-sponsored job. Regarding this, I will later mention that the 'second economy' was one of the distinctive features of Georgia.

The relatively positive atmosphere of Khrushchev's thaw became reflected in various demographic data that should be, like other trends, observed from the future perspective. In Georgia, the number of citizens grew very rapidly after Stalin's death. Between 1959 and 1979, the number of inhabitants increased roughly by one fourth from 4,044,000 to 5,016,000. It should also be noted that this wave of natality reversed the previous trend, according to which the number of ethnic Georgians had relatively declined. It is, indeed, interesting, as for the Georgians, a relatively modest natality rate was typical, particularly in comparison to Muslim people (e.g. Azerbaijanis in Kvemo (Lower) Kartli). Correspondingly, the relative numbers of Armenians and Russians were declining as well. While mentioning the demographic data, particularly one figure made the Georgians really exceptional. The Georgians were by far the most patriotic nation of the Soviet Union. It is not exaggerating to say that almost all Georgians living in the Soviet Union stayed in Georgia. The data of 1970 show that 97 percent of Georgians lived in their homeland (with most of the remaining Georgians living in Russia - 2 percent), and these figures did not change dramatically throughout the Soviet era. The Georgians could not be compared to any other titular nation of the Soviet Union in this respect. Even the number of the

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[191] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, pp. 303-304.

relatively recently established Azerbaijanis remained lower when reaching about 85 percent in the 1970s, and the situation with the Armenians was very different, though not so surprising, as only about 60 percent of the Armenians in the Soviet Union stayed in Armenia.[192]

The combination of the social and economic satisfaction with the possibility of political involvement and the promotion of the national language and culture carried out by native educational institutions again renewed in the late 1950s essentially augmented national awareness. It could be argued within the conditions described above that the Georgian society stepped forward to the development of a civil society. The flourishing of the national culture, theatre, or opera was not only enabled by the improvement of the national cultural condition but was also essentially driven by the demand coming from the educated and 'proletarianized' society. Especially in towns and cities, social life became a relevant counterpart of the working endeavour. But the growing national awareness in a reformed society had deeper implications.

Khrushchev's fast reforms and changes triggered some effects that might have challenged the entire nature of the Soviet system. Georgia very soon experienced perhaps the greatest crises of Khrushchev's period. A few weeks after the First Secretary's notorious speech at the 20th Party Congress denouncing the cult of personality of the most 'famous' Georgian countryman, an unofficial demonstration took place to commemorate the three year anniversary of his death. The meeting symbolically gathered at the place where Stalin's monument had formerly stood. The growing daily gatherings started a few days before the official anniversary. The Georgian Party leadership, led by Vasili Mzhavanadze, who had served in the Ukrainian Party apparatus before and was thus clearly Khrushchev's man, decided to permit the official meeting on March 9, 1956. However, this event, led by students and radical intellectuals (one of the protestors was Zviad Gamsakhurdia, then the first president of the independent Georgia), changed into a nationalist manifestation and spread through the streets of Tbilisi. The reaction of the police and army was very heartless, as they killed dozens and wounded hundreds of people.

The Georgian leadership, supported by the respected rector of the Tbilisi State University Viktor Kupradze, managed to pacify the situation quite quickly and

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[192] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 299.

withstood the critique from the bottom as well as from above. The latter critique, coming from the central organs in Moscow, quickly passed away with the smooth down of the situation in Tbilisi. Vasili Mzhavanadze was even awarded for his proven abilities a candidacy into the Central Committee of the CPSU in June 1957.[193] However, what is even more interesting from my perspective is the interpretation of the events. While emphasizing the symbolic role of Stalin for the Georgian national awareness, Suny has claimed that '[b]y 1956 the growing national awareness, coupled with anxiety about the loss of unique ethnicity in the face of modernization, had led to a strong resurgence among young people of a commitment to Georgian identity.'[194] Such an explanation, which has been generally accepted, however, fails to consider the social and economic dynamics that occurred in the entire country. Derlugian has, indeed, been correct in noting that '[n]ationalism enters the Khrushchevian scene almost as an afterthought. Who would seriously contemplate secession from such a strong and dynamic state that had finally begun to deliver on its promises of a better life? Indeed, probably only a few old reactionaries miraculously still surviving from the pre-communist times, and especially daring Bohemians whose dissidence was more an aesthetic stance than politics in any real sense.'[195]

I have already mentioned in the overview of the national question and its conflict potential in the Soviet Union that Brezhnev decided to build its central power position on the ground of the support coming from the regional leaders. The area of the South Caucasus may serve as a good example of this 'unite and conquer' strategy. The former KGB officer Heidar Aliev came to power in Azerbaijan in 1969, three years later, Eduard Shevardnadze became the head of the Georgian Communist Party, and in 1974, Karen Demirjian became the leader of Armenia.[196] Similarly, the Party heads of Ukraine, Moldova, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan belonged to the supporters of the Brezhnev leadership.[197] Indeed, it seems to be apparent that this stronger dependency between the national cadres and the Moscow leadership helped to deepen the disunion between the leaders and the nationally awakened society.

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[193] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, pp. 302-303.
[194] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 303.
[195] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 97.
[196] Suny (1992), *State, civil society, and ethnic cultural consolidation in the USSR – roots of the national question*, p. 30.
[197] Agursky, Mikhail (1986): 'The Prospects of National Bolshevism', in: Conquest, *The Last Empire*, p. 99.

Brezhnev's period is often considered mainly in terms of the situation in the international system. Nevertheless, Bunce has pointed out that under Brezhnev, and likewise during Khrushchev's and Stalin's eras, the policy process was heavily shaped by the fusion between the political and economic realms. Brezhnev inherited a more complex economy, a more demanding society, and an awakened society experiencing unfolding struggles. These factors pushed the Soviet state in a corporativist direction 'towards a mode of interest intermediation that sought to minimize conflict and maximize productivity by incorporating dominant economic and political interests directly into the policy process, while cultivating the support of the mass public through an expanding welfare state.'[198]

In the conditions of corporativist state *nomenklatura* quickly degenerated. The streams of reforms and healthy competitiveness were substituted by the new blossom of *nomenklatura* corporativism, clientelism and corruption, and the circle closed with the growing censorship and massive propaganda, which did not aim at spreading ideological clichés that no one would believe in anymore but rather fully focused on hiding the problems and fudging the reality. Brezhnev's period could be viewed as the golden age of corruption that turned the originally totalitarian state into a kleptocratic state. His strategy based on 'stability of cadres' included the reduction of penalties for official crimes, which was a direct signal for officials that corruption would be to a large extent tolerated.[199] With the advancement of Brezhnev's policies, Soviet society got to the stage of the so-called *zastoi* (stagnation).

Although Mzhavanadze gained credit for 'solving' and relatively quickly pacifying the nationalist riots in 1956, his merits were quickly forgotten in the early 1970s when Georgia constantly failed to meet economic targets and became 'famously' known for notorious corruption. In 1972, Georgian industrial production grew only by 0.2 percent, although the plan was for it to grow by 6 percent, and the economic stagnation also struck private incomes. The income of the state-dependent workers even decreased between 1971 and 1972. Moreover, the corruption or simple cheating reached immense dimensions and consequentially undermined both general economic performance and official statistical figures. For example, it has been estimated that in the early 1970s, farmers received three times as much income from

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[198] Bunce, Valerie (1983): 'The Political Economy of the Brezhnev Era: The Rise and Fall of Corporatism', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 131.
[199] Simis, Konstantin (1977): 'The Machinery of Corruption in the Soviet Union', *Survey*, 22, p. 55.

their private plots as from the collective farms. Other figures then show that only an incredible two thirds of typical Georgian agricultural products, i.e. subtropical fruits and vegetables, reached the official market. A similar figure for Armenia reached almost 90 percent.[200] Another common practise was selling public offices to those who offered the highest bid. It has been reported that in late 1970s Georgia, the office of a district public prosecutor could cost about 15,000 rubles, the position of a chief of the district militia was worth 50,000 rubles, and the future first secretary of the party's district committee had to pay roughly 200,000 rubles. These figures are tremendous, given the fact that an average month salary in this position was around 300 rubles. What can easily be derived from these statistics is that, first, in most of the cases, only formerly well-corrupted people could make enough money to get promoted and, second, that these positions assured additional gains that several times surmounted official salaries.[201] Indeed, many Georgians lived directly through the second economy, which encompassed black marketeering, corruption, omnipresent bribes and cheating.[202] This aspect of Georgian life will be also analysed later.

Mzhavanadze's follower Eduard Shevardnadze received the almost unrealizable task of fighting these problems. Suny has also stressed the power of 'the Caucasian reliance on close familial and personal ties in all aspects of life and the reluctance to betray one's relatives and comrades, [which] led to the impenetrable system of mutual aid, protection, and disregard for those who were not part of the spoils system.'[203] To at least partially accomplish this mission, Shevardnadze obviously needed and gained a substantial back up from Moscow. How difficult this task was could be illustrated on one of the first victims of his endeavour. The corruption heavily entered educational institutions as well. At the very beginning, Shevardnadze's determination impinged upon the rector of the Tbilisi Medical Institute Gelbakhiani, who was bribed in connection with the entering procedures to such an extent that Georgia had the highest number of doctors per ten thousand people of any country in the world.[204]

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[200] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 306.

[201] Stefes, Christoph H. (2006): *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions: Corruption, Collusion and Clientelism*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 68.

[202] Mars, Gerald and Altman, Yochanan (1983): 'The Cultural Bases of Soviet Georgia's Second Economy', *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4.

[203] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 306.

[204] Ibid., p. 307.

With the growing nationalist awareness and regionally-based control, it became impossible to unite the opposition against the old Soviet order. As Suny has noted, '...the policies and rhetoric of [Georgian] leaders, the choices and use of potent symbols, would either work to ameliorate these [ethnonational] divisions in a unified struggle for independence and democracy or reinforce and exacerbate the interethnic divisions within the republic.'[205] I will show later that the second possibility became a reality, though it happened under the particular circumstances determining the role of the leaders on all sides. Indeed, as the above-developed theoretical framework has suggested, national mobilization could not be treated separately from the wider socioeconomic conditions.

4.3.2.   *Social Transition Period*

Although I have so far tried to contest the role of the developing nationalist movement, I would like to show now that it quickly gained significance after one particular event that happened at the beginning of April 1989. I am, indeed, not saying that one particular event changed the history of Georgia and plunged a relatively stable country into a civil war. Rather, I intend to show that the processes surrounding and following the crucial 'revolutionary' demonstration of 9 April 1989 fully discovered the reality of weakness and lack of interest of the centre of the Soviet Union and consequentially the absolute impotence of Georgian institutions, which were paralyzed by the corruption, crime, and patronage networks. Indeed, the events of the spring of 1989 did not cause a collapse of the state but displayed it in its terrible nature. The entire society was confronted with a new reality that determined its future choices. Certainly, it was especially some *nomenklatura* members who could have been better prepared and who maybe even expected the reaction of the centre. Nevertheless, hardly anyone predicted such a rapid collapse, national and ethnic mobilization, and, followingly, the fall of a relatively economically, socially, and even politically developed country.

The tensions gradually intensified in Abkhazia after huge demonstrations in Lykhny, where roughly 30,000 Abkhazians declared the separation of Abkhazia from Georgia. The Supreme Soviet of Georgia, unsurprisingly, condemned the declaration,

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[205] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 318.

but the events in Abkhazia provided renewed impetus for nationalists to organize demonstrations again, mobilizing the aforementioned particular groups. These demonstrations, which gradually also gained an anti-Soviet character, reached their peak on the 9th of April, 1989. At the time, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze were on an official visit to the United Kingdom. Under the circumstances of the ongoing war in Nagorno Karabakh and given the fact that the crowd occupied central Tbilisi while also yelling anti-Russian and anti-Soviet phrases, the Georgian leadership asked the central Moscow authorities for help in suppressing the demonstration. In fact, it still remains unknown on whose direct command the special forces of the Red Army, then recently withdrawn from Afghanistan, were deployed. However, Red Army paratroopers attacked the crowds with sharpened shovels and toxic gas. At least nineteen protestors were killed, and hundreds were injured. Reports indicated that most victims were women.[206] The April 1989 events in Georgia had a strong impact in the entire Soviet Union. In Georgia herself, the party leader Jumbar Patiashvili, who succeeded Shevardnadze after he had been appointed to the all-Soviet government, was substituted by the more efficient former Georgian KGB head Givi Gumbaridze.

However, Gumbaridze was one of those who quickly recognized that Gorbachev and the central leadership in general were not willing to intervene further into the Georgian affairs. The leading Georgian nationalists Gamsakhurdia, Kostava, and Chanturia, who had been arrested in April, were quickly released, and no further repressions were organized against any other nationalists. Georgian official newspapers, though still under the control of the Party, were openly publishing demands for the persecution of the perpetrators of the offences against the Georgian nation who ordered the 9 April massacre and were calling for an independent Georgian government. At the same time, the Georgian political *nomenklatura* went only through some cosmetic changes, and no one was held responsible for the tragedy. Indeed, it became obvious that Gorbachev's leadership left the country to its own fate. In September 1989, at the plenum of the Central Committee in Moscow, Gumbaridze openly demanded the right to deal independently with all internal affairs, though this notion had perhaps already been a reality. In November, the Georgian Supreme Soviet recalled the constitutionally assured right of a Soviet

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[206] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 322.

Socialist Republic to secede from the USSR and approved the right to veto all-Union laws that would go against the interest of the country. Finally, in March 1990, the Supreme Soviet declared the independence of Georgia.[207]

The period from the suppressed demonstration to the independence was only a little bit more than a year. The key question is certainly why the *nomenklatura* did not manage to attain the advantageous status quo or at least to prolong the road to independence, if we do not tend to believe that it above all became 'nationally awakened'. As I have already suggested above, Georgian cadres were taken by an uncomfortable surprise by Gorbachev's unwillingness to back their positions. In such a difficult situation of dismantling the rigid framework and the cut of the external resources supply, the only viable option would be a quick re-establishment of the political, administrative, and economic control. However, the Georgian *nomeklatura* was by no means capable of managing this situation as it functioned during the last decades only through corruption, bribes, patronage networks or even criminal activities. The only possible reaction was to prepare the soil for a 'privatiziation' of posts and assets. Indeed, considering this an immediate collapse of the state was, in fact, unavoidable. A closer look on the developments in Georgia after its independence should confirm this statement.

The collapse of the Georgian state could be nicely illustrated on the inextricable but, indeed, blind roads of the Georgian democratization. The illustration could start with the death of the widely popular Merab Kostava in a car accident. The popularity of Kostava resulted mainly from the fact that he, unlike Gamsakhurdia, did not abjure his creed and remained in prison in the 1980s. Indeed, many Georgians viewed, perhaps correctly, Gamsakhurdia as an opportunist and Kostava as the true dissident. Indeed, these people still believe that Gamsakhurdia was involved in his killing, as Kostava's popularity would be in the way of his political ambitions. Nevertheless, the illustration should follow this up with something more tangible than speculations.

The struggle for power in Georgia almost immediately reached incredible dimensions. The moderate streams, including the Rustaveli Society, the Popular Front or the Social Democratic Party, decided to follow a strategy of a gradual switch of the system, which was rationalized in their decision to participate in the

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[207] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 323; Jones, Stephen (1994): 'Georgia: A Failed Democratic Transition', p. 294.

elections to the National Supreme Soviet scheduled for March 1990. The idea was that a novel multiparty competition would provide the first step to transforming the old style legislative body. Nevertheless, particularly the radical parts of the Popular Front came against any association with the delegitimized Communist regime and urged a solution based on a creation of a new system. The unstable organization of the Popular Front that under the vaguely defined notion of nationalism had served as an umbrella for very diverse groups having different interests and ambitions disintegrated into dozens of organizations and self-styled parties. On the part of the radicals, the strongest parties became the Society for National Justice led by Erekle Shengelaia, the Georgian National Democratic Party led by Chanturia, the Society of St. Ilia the Righteous, and the Republican-Federative Party.[208]

It soon became obvious that the idea of the gradual transformation was not attainable, as a substantial part of the opposing stream opposed it and would boycott virtually all moves in this direction. Facing this reality, the moderate forces decided to postpone the election until the fall. However, in the meantime, the radicals organized the first assembly of the National Forum, where roughly 6000 adherents agreed to hold the first founding of the newly established independent Georgian National Congress in September. Although belonging clearly among the radicals, Gamsakhurdia decided to follow the moderates and take part in the Supreme Soviet election. His move appears to be logical in light of the crucial power struggle (and personal hostility) between him and Chanturia, who after the death of Kostava strove for the crucial position in the future leadership. Suny has described the situation before the fall election as 'highly personalized, with many of the more than one hundred distinguished primarily by allegiance to a particular leader. Assassinations and arsons were used as tactics in the increasingly violent rivalry between Gamsakhurdia and Chanturia.'[209]

As a result, Georgia was the first Soviet Republic to introduce free parliamentary election to the Supreme Soviet on a multi-party basis in October 1990. The elections were discriminating in that they allowed only parties operating on the whole territory to participate. Apparently, this regulation essentially excluded virtually all parties representing minorities. The victory went to the Round Table

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[208] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 324. Cf. Slider, Darrell (1997): 'Democratization in Georgia', in Parrott, Bruce and Dawisha, Karen (eds.), *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 161.
[209] Ibid., p. 324.

bloc of the National Liberation Movement (sometimes translated as Free Georgia) led by Gamsakhurdia. His bloc beset 155 of the 250 seats available in the Supreme Soviet, whereas the second Communist Party of Georgia received 64 seats.[210] Although Gamsakhurdia formerly supported the moderates in their strategy to transform the Supreme Soviet, he could quickly abandon this alliance as the moderate groups gained only 11 seats. The moderates formed the Democratic Center and became in fact the only opposition, since 'communists would not abandon their habit of voting with the majority' and furthermore 'many of the communist deputies soon left their party and joined the ruling coalition.'[211] It was clearly confusing for Georgian voters (as well as for the future analysts) that almost at the same time, on September 30, the radicals organized the elections to the above mentioned Georgian National Congress. These elections were dominated by the National Independence Party led by Erekle Tsereteli (who came in first) and Chanturia's National Democrats (who came in second).[212] These elections did not take place in South Ossetia, Abkhazia and even Mingrelia.[213]

Gamsakhurdia gradually began to dominate the political decision-making and focused predominantly on the agenda of the minority regions. He was elected chairman of the Soviet government and formed the first post-Communist government, led by Tengiz Singua. The new leadership quickly managed to eliminate any minorities' access to economic and political power. The only minority representation in the new Supreme Soviet was in fact through the Communist party.[214] Abkhazians also retained some posts in the Georgian Council of Ministers, the Supreme Soviet Presidium and the Committee for the Supervision of the Constitution, but their factual power was disputable.[215] Also, other provisions called for special treatment of minorities on the basis of prior settlement and history. For example, one of the proposals during the discussion of the new citizenship law suggested by Gamsakhurdia connected eligibility with one's ancestors having lived in

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[210] Jones (1994): *Georgia: A Failed Democratic Transition*, p. 297.

[211] Nodia (1996): 'Political Turmoil in Georgia and the Ethnic Policies of Zviad Gamsakhurdia', in Coppieters, Bruno (ed.): *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, VUB Press, Vrije University, 1996, p. 6.

[212] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 324.

[213] Aves, Jonathan (1996): 'Post-Soviet Transcaucasia', in Allison, Roy (ed.): *Challenges for the Former Soviet South*, London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, p. 169.

[214] Aves, Jonathan (1992): 'The Rise and Fall of the Georgian Nationalist Movement, 1987-1991', in Hosking, Geoffrey A., Aves, Jonathan, and Duncan, Peter J.S. (eds.), *The Road to Post-Communism: Independent Political Movement in the Soviet Union 1985-1991*, London: Pinter Publishers, pp. 170-172.

[215] Jones (1994): *Georgia: A Failed Democratic Transition*, p. 295.

Georgia before the annexation in 1801. At the end, it was enough to prove legal permanent residency to get a citizenship. Generally, any ethnic minority's attempt to promote its sovereignty was regarded as a challenge of the majority sovereignty and an attack on the social and spatial homogeneity. 'The government elaborated a theory of minority rights based on the assumption that members of minorities with a relatively recent history of settlement in Georgia…qualified neither for an inalienable right to residence in the republic nor to equal status with the dominant ethnic group.'[216]

The Georgian political situation became more and more dependent on violent practises, in which particularly former Soviet sub-proletarians had a chance to be used. Gamsakhurdia decided to create his violent power base from the former troops of the Ministry of Interior Affairs that came to be called the National Guard and was led by a former dissident and artist by profession, Tengiz Kitovani. The opposition to Gamsakhurdia formed a paramilitary organization called *Mkhedrioni* (horsemen). The first commander of *Mkhedrioni*, Jaba Ioseliani, a professor but also a convicted bank robber, was arrested by Gamsakhurdia. Indeed, Gamsakhurdia's political style gradually developed from a radical rhetoric to authoritative practises, pursuing everyone opposing him or even disagreeing with him.[217] Under various violent circumstances, Gamsakhurdia was elected the first president of the independent Georgia on May 1991, but at this point, his career was close to its end. The number of his opponents was increasing dramatically. This group arguably consisted mostly of higher proletarians who could not stand his mystical nationalism as well as his authoritarian style heavily, his pressure on the media and his evading of parliament through directly appointed prefects.[218] Nevertheless, most visibly, it came to be led by Gamsakhurdia's power contenders like Chanturia or Tsereteli. Gamsakhurdia probably made a crucial mistake when he lost the support of his former allies Sigua and Kitovani.[219] Moreover, as Suny has noted in the case of the resignation of Sigua and foreign minister Khoshtaria, 'they were replaced by men whom many believe to have been close to the Georgian "mafia", the complex networks of entrepreneurs,

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[216] Jones (1994): *Georgia: A Failed Democratic Transition*, p. 295.

[217] The Gamsakhurdia factor should also include his personal uncertainties and even paranoias. Cf., for example, Nodia (1996): *Political Turmoil in Georgia and the Ethnic Policies of Zviad Gamsakhurdia*.

[218] Interviews with professors Ramaz Kurdadze and Tamar Kiknadze.

[219] Sigua reportedly was not able to cooperate with the erratic leader, and Kitovani opposed Gamsakhurdia's decision to disband the National Guard, which followed the demands of the Soviet military commander after the August coup against Gorbachev. It is quite interesting that Gamsakhurdia never condemned the 'August putsch'. Cf. Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 324.

politicians, and criminals that ran much of the "second economy" under the Soviets.'[220]

The situation clearly reached the stage of a civil war between the camps of the popular but authoritative president, who rather naively relied on the support of the 'mafia', and relatively strong public figures, which to a large extent controlled the armed guards. Nodia has described Gamsakhurdia's opposition as 'an extremely diverse coalition of ex-allies who hated him personally, paramilitary formations driven by clan interests, nationalists angered by his bumblings, former communists who lost their positions, certain criminal elites, and pro-Western democratic intellectuals.'[221] Crucially, it was the triumvirate Sigua – Kitovani – Ioseliani who founded the Military Council and, in December 1991, organized an armed attack on the parliamentary buildings, where Gamsakhurdia hid himself in an underground bunker.[222] During Christmas, the civil war in Georgia left a few dozen victims. Gamsakhurdia escaped to Mingrelia and perhaps also to Chechnya[223] and tried to prolong the civil war through raids by his paramilitary supporters called "Zviadists". On the eve of the war in Abkhazia, Georgian politicians from the anti-Gamsakhurdia coalition invited Shevardnadze to pacify the situation in Georgia. Generally speaking, the political turmoil in Georgia described above might serve as an illustration of the idea hypothesized above that unsuccessful and defeated leaders viewed violent mobilization and ethnic radicalization as the elementary means to shift the power distribution. The riots of Gamsakhurdia's "Zviadists", recruited predominantly from Mengrelians, were but another example.

The previous lines should illustrate the political processes that strongly suggest that the institutions and structures that should have managed the difficult times of the post-Soviet transitions did not develop after the Soviet ones disappeared. I have suggested that it was primarily not a strong nationalist feeling carefully managed by ethnic entrepreneurs that precluded carrying out the transformation in a more stable fashion, but rather the effect of a collapsed state that did not manage to substitute the relatively comfortable conditions of the former developmentalist state. The failure in the attempt to create alternative institutions and structures should be attributed to the inherited system of clientelism, patronage, corruption and criminal

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[220] Suny (1988), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 324.
[221] Nodia, Ghia (1995): 'Georgia's Identity Crises', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 111.
[222] Slider (1997), *Democratization in Georgia*, p. 166.
[223] He had built an alliance with Jokhar Dudayev before.

practises, which paralysed the post-Brezhnev economy in the Soviet south and, as I will show now, crippled also any constructive attempts at transformation in the crucial period of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The following part should offer a view on the above mentioned events from a different perspective.

4.4. Conclusion: Political Economy of the period of the Georgian Civil War

The privatization of the coercive forces had a great impact on the political development in Georgia. Jaba Ioseliani, the first commander of *Mkhedrioni*, one of the crucial challengers to Gamsakhurdia, and Shevardnadze's close ally and friend, had been a powerful clan leader and a figure heavily involved in the Georgian black market activities during the Soviet Union. His close and friendly relations with Shevardnadze came from the period when Shervardnadze headed the Georgian Communist Party. Ioseliani was indeed a distinguished, though not exceptional, example of a Georgian thief-in-law influencing Georgian politics both during and after the Soviet period. He served a seventeen-year long sentence for a bank robbery in Leningrad before being released in the mid-1960s. He gained a doctorate in philology in Tbilisi, became a poet, playwright and critic, and returned to prison for manslaughter. His *Mkhedrioni*, predominantly people with a criminal background recruited from allied clans (subproletarians), were reportedly extremely violent and inhumane gunmen with particular internal orders which understood abdication as betrayal.[224] As a vice-president of the Council for Safety and Defence and a deputy of the Parliament, he put through an amnesty for roughly 5000 criminals in 1993 and divided the spheres of influence and tributes with Kitovani's National Guards.[225] [226]

The leading figures of Georgian politics did not only lose control over the coercive forces, but, in the condition of the collapsed state, also over most of the political economic processes that were governed by corruption and patronage

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[224] Cf. Corley, Felix (2003): 'Jaba Ioseliani: Violent Warlord in post-Communist Georgia', *The Independent on Sunday*, 25 March 2003, available at, for instance, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/jaba-ioseliani-730149.html; Slider (1997), *Democratization in Georgia*, p. 165.

[225] Nordin, Virginia Davis, and Glonti, Georgi (2006): 'Thieves of the Law and the Rule of Law in Georgia', *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, undated, available at http://cria-online.org/Journal/1/Thieves%20of%20the%20Law%20and%20the%20Rule%20of%20Law%20in%20Georgia.pdf

[226] Jaba Ioseliani died in 2003 at the age of 77 and is buried in the Didubisk pantheon, the cemetery for the most distinguished Georgian public figures.

networks built around the former *nomenklatura*. The illustrations could start with the most important Georgian bank during the transformation, the United Georgian Bank. This bank was founded by the relatives of the former directors of the Soviet's Georgia National Bank, who allegedly defrauded millions of rubels during the 1980s.[227] More precisely, the United Georgian Bank was established through a connection of three smaller banks. The new bank bosses Tamaz Chkhartishvili, Zaza Sioridze, and Ivane Maglakelidze had already created their own patronage network as *Komsomol* members and as students of engineering at the Tbilisi State University.[228] Nevertheless, it should also be noted that the bank sector generally served more for money laundering as most of the Georgia capital circulated in the shadow economy and there were virtually no savings among people.[229]

In the case of the United Georgian Bank, the former *nomenklatura* bosses provided needful capital but remained more or less outside the business. Nevertheless, as was also the case elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, some of the former *nomenklatura* managers were up to recognizing the tackles of the transformation and skillfully managed to privatize large industrial or agricultural assets. Stefes has interestingly mentioned how Soviet managers in the final era of the Soviet Union managed to create capital by overstating production rates and numbers of employees. It should be noted that this was a 'smarter' way of making capital before the uncertain transition period as other stories sound almost incredible. Some of the factories, particularly in regions, were exempted from privatization, so the former local *nomenklatura* had a chance to steal and sell the equipment as scrap to Turkey, and the local official in the Georgian town Ninotsminda even ripped out the telephone cables and similarly sold them as scrap.[230]

When disposing of this extra capital, potential oligarchs were very well prepared on the voucher privatization as they could create groups of their followers and voucher-providers from their employees through extra salaries and other staffing

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[227] Stefes (2006), *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions*, p. 187, fn. 33.
[228] Chiaberashvili, Zurab, and Tevzadze, Gigi (2005): 'Power Elites in Georgia: Old and New', in Fluri, Philipp H. and Coloe, Eden, *From Revolution to Reform: Georgia's Struggle with Democratic Institution Building and Security Sector Reform*, Vienna: National Defence Academy, pp. 192-193, available at http://www.bmlv.gv.at/wissen-forschung/publikationen/publikation.php?id=238
[229] Cf. Shelley, Louise (2006): 'Introduction', in Shelley, Louise, Erik R. Scott, and Anthony Latta (eds.): *Organized Crime and Corruption in Georgia*, London: Routledge and a chapter by Shalva Machavariani in the same volume.
[230] Stefes (2006), *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions*, p. 94.

advantages.[231] The most distinguished Georgian tycoon has been Gogi Topadze, who had worked as scientist before he started his career in Soviet business. As the former director of the socialist company keeping the world-famous Borjomi mineral water, Topadze managed to establish a beverage empire called Qazbegi[232], which was comparable with similar Russian enterprises. Topadze, together, for example, with the wine tycoon Zurab Tqmeladze, was also one of the founders of the Union of Industrialists[233] that came into being as early as June 1990 to promote the interests of the new/old economic elite.[234] It could be mentioned here that Industrialists since the mid-1990s changed their strategy, and instead of trying to influence leading politicians, they sought direct positions in central organs.

Virtually all of the names mentioned above have been members of 'clan' structures that had dominated the Georgian economy and politics for decades before the fall of the Soviet Union. So far, I have mentioned some of the 'clans' whose leaders were in top managerial positions. Other typical structures were 'clans' which were governed from the top political positions. The most famous case of this type has certainly been Shevardnadze's family, though its golden age came mainly later after Shevardnadze's return on the political scene.[235] Several former high-ranking members of the Communist Party became, through the 'clan' structures, powerful entrepreneurs and later again achieved high political posts.[236] A very specific case that deserves attention is that of Aslan Abashidze, a holder of a well-known noble (royal) family name. However, his case will mentioned later in a chapter dealing with situation in Ajaria.

The dysfunction of elementary political as well as economic structures went naturally hand in hand with the drastic deterioration of living conditions for most of the Georgians - mostly those formerly dependent on the Soviet state (proletarians). For instance, the prices rose overwhelmingly and caused a massive hyperinflation that became visible after the introduction of a provisional coupon currency in April 1993. While the exchange rate started at roughly 650 coupons for one dollar, it

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[231] Stefes (2006), *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions*, p. 92 and p. 187, fn. 33.
[232] The highest mountain in Georgia, which is also considered to be mythical.
[233] The Union associated many former red directors.
[234] Jones, Stephen F. (2000): 'Democracy from Below: The Interest Groups in Georgian Society', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 59, No. 1, p. 55.
[235] A detailed description can be found in Chiaberashvili and Tevzadze (2005): *Power Elites in Georgia*, pp. 190-192 and Stefes (2006), *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions*, pp. 99-100.
[236] For instance, one of the Georgia PMs during the second Shervardnadze era, Niko Lekishvili, or the minister of the same period Teimuraz Gorgadze. Cf. Stefes (2006), *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions*, p. 94.

reached the rate of almost 2,000,000 after five months.[237] The shift in the priorities is also 'nicely' visible from the expenditures of the average household on foodstuff. Whereas in 1985, these costs amounted to about 36 percent of the family budget, the share became 19 percent in 1991, 62 percent in 1992, and 79 percent in 1993.[238]

I have tried to illustrate above that Georgia had to suffer from a large social discontent and instability, as virtually no segment of the state operated plausibly. Generally, the overall social radicalization naturally touched a fertile soil as violent bandits and criminals found their use in paramilitary organizations backing political interests and guarding economic assets, lower proletarians found their expression in demonstrations and violent provocations, higher proletarians became frustrated from not finding any support or means for a true democratic transition, and the former *nomenklatura*, undisturbed, continued in its Soviet business. It was not a lack of ethnic homogeneity that caused the waves of violence and wars in Georgia but, essentially, the state breakdown in the centre that resulted from the impossible transformation.

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[237] Gachechiladze, Revaz (1995): *The New Georgia: Space, Society, Politics*, London: University College Press, p. 112.
[238] Ibid., p. 117.

5.   Ethnopolitical Conflicts

This thesis has tried to show that the violent transition resulted from specific social, political and economic developments which reflected larger structural processes. It has also argued that nationalist campaigns and mobilizations should not be understood in isolation from these developments. In fact, I have already suggested that nationalism originally appeared as an afterthought and that most of its expressions until the larger escalation were connected with relatively narrowly defined social groups within the proletarians and sub-proletarians. Hence, the national mobilization was not a reaction on a release from rules and institutions that had for a long time suppressed national and ethnic identities, but it reflected various political economic processes connected with the period of social transformation and change. In other words this thesis tends to see ethnopolitical conflicts in Georgia as conditioned by the situation analysed in previous chapters. The fifth chapter will try to observe the ways in which 'materialist' (political economic) processes shaped national identities and subsequent policies.

I have already mentioned that the argument developed by Eyal, Szelenyi, and Townsley[239] in a context of Central European transformations provides a useful analytical bridge between both of the topics of the empirical part. These authors have observed the particular role played by individuals endowed with cultural capital, as cultural capital enabled them to convert other capital disposals into various social networks, through which they managed to profit in a difficult transition period. Indeed, I have already shown that most of the leading figures of the period of transition were endowed with cultural capital and skilfully managed to use nationalism to organize a backup from various social groups to challenge other power contenders or to secure their political positions. Also, recalling some of the theories mentioned in the first chapter, the situations in Abkhazia and Ajaria will be now observed from a similar perspective. These two cases offer two different trajectories of the late/post-Soviet peripheries that are determined by specific political economic processes.

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[239] Cf. Eyal, Gil, Szelenyi, Ivan, and Eleanor Townsley (1998): *Making Capitalism Without Capitalists: Class Formation and Elite Struggles in Post-Communist Central Europe*, New York and London: Verso

5.1.   Abkhazia

Abkhazia was part of the Soviet Riviera and has been often regarded by numerous individuals as the most beautiful place of the Caucasian region. Yet, it was Abkhazia which experienced the most violent conflict in Georgia. The conflict situation in Abkhazia could be viewed as particularly surprising regarding the factual number of Abkhazians and their relative proportion in Abkhazia. In 1989 Abkhazians made up about 17.7 percent of the inhabitants of Abkhazia (almost as much as the Russians or Armenians).[240] Abkhazia hence provides one of the most critical cases of post-Soviet transformation.

5.1.1. Political Economy of the Abkhaz National Project

Abkhaz is a member of the same family of Caucasian languages that Georgian belongs to. However, Abkhaz is a part of the North West Caucasian group of languages and the languages are not mutually understandable.[241] Abkhaz also does not use the Georgian alphabet and, as Derlugian mentions, winning back the Cyrillic-based alphabet after Stalin's death was considered as a great symbolic victory for Abkhazians.[242] The autonomous republic was also to a high extent divided along ethnic lines. Nearly all Abkhazians (as well as Armenians and Greeks) spoke Russian but only two thirds of Georgians did. Furthermore, only 2 % of Abkhazians spoke Georgian, which was a language of the republic, whereas 0.4 % Georgians spoke Abkhaz, which was a titular language in the autonomy.[243] The Abkhaz religious identity was not strong as 'the majority of Abkhazians remained essentially pagan believers under the thin veneer of mixed up Christianity and Islam.'[244] The small

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[240] It should be also noted that the proportion of Georgians was growing during Soviet times. For a detailed commented survey, cf. Müller, Daniel (1999): 'Demography', in: Hewitt, George, *The Abkhazians*, Routlege Curzon, pp. 218-241.

[241] Cf. Hewitt, George (1999): 'Abkhazia, Georgia and the Circassians (NW Caucasus)', *Central Asian Survey*, 18, 4, p. 465; for an analysis of the North Caucasian languages, see Chirikba, Vjacheslav (1999): 'The Origin of Abkhazian People', in Hewitt (ed.), *The Abkhazians*, pp. 37-48.

[242] Derlugian, Giorgi M., 'The Tale of Two Resorts: Abkhazia and Ajaria before and since the Soviet Collapse', in: Crawford, Beverly, and Lipschutz, Ronnie D. (eds.), *The Myth of Ethnic Conflict*, Berkeley: University of California, p. 269.

[243] Tishkov, Valery (1997): *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union*, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, London, p. 92.

[244] Derlugian, Giorgi M. (2001): *The Forgotten Abkhazia*, Northwestern University, January, p. 7. For a detailed study on the religious situation in Abkhazia, see Clogg, Rachel (1999): 'Religion', in: Hewitt (ed.), *The Abkhazians*, pp. 205-218.

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number of Abkhazians also corresponds with the role of kinships and village communities, through which Abkhazians establish their identity.

These characteristics also imply Abkhaz ties with other North Caucasian nations. A description of the particular ethnography of the Northern Caucasus would go beyond the possibilities of this thesis.[245] Nevertheless, the cooperation of the North Caucasian nations was institutionalized already in the Republic of Mountain People, which existed shortly before the sovietization, and in the Confederation of Mountain Peoples, which was created in 1989.[246] Many Circassians, most notably Chechens led by Shamil Basayev, fought on the Abkhaz side in the war.

When explaining the conflict in Abkhazia, Nodia has referred to the divergent national projects of Abkhazians and Georgians. The Georgian national project was historically inclusive in relation to the Abkhaz bourgeoisie that spoke Georgian but excluded Abkhaz popular culture.[247] The situation in Abkhazia during the First Georgian Republic was highly unstable and violent.[248] Georgians perfectly understood that the greatest challenge to their independent statehood was Bolshevik expansionism. Abkhazia, as well as other similar Caucasian regions, suffered from the influence of nationalist forces that exacerbated local conflicts. The Abkhaz village militias *Kiaraz* did not hesitate to turn to Bolsheviks to gain an alternative source of weapons, and the Bolsheviks naturally bestowed them with the perspective of gradual penetration.[249] The Georgian perception was that ungrateful elements among the Abkhazians manipulated by Russia tried to undermine the Georgian endeavour to create a democratic state, in which minorities would be granted autonomy. Consequentially, the Georgian interventions were explained as necessary to restore the territorial integrity of Georgia, which was violated by Bolshevik encroachments and hence driven by existential incentives.[250] As Nodia notes, the consequences of this situation are still actual. Georgia filled the slot for an enemy in

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[245] See, for example, Goldenberg Susan (1994): *Pride of Small Nations: The Caucasus and Post-Soviet Disorder*, Atlantic Highlands: Zed Books.

[246] Cornell (2001) *Autonomy and Conflict*, p. 178.

[247] Nodia, Ghia (1997-8): 'Causes and Visions of Conflict in Abkhazia', Berkeley Program of Soviet and post-Soviet Studies, *Working Paper Series*, Winter 1997-1998, at http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~bsp/publications/1997_02-nodi.pdf; also cf. Nodia, Ghia, *The Conflict in Abkhazia: National Projects and Political Circumstances*, at http://www.abkhazia-georgia.parliament.ge/Publications/Georgian/ghia_nodia_1.htm.

[248] Cf. Menteshashvili, Avtandil (1992): *Some National and Ethnic Problems in Georgia 1918-1921*, Tbilisi 1992.

[249] Derlugian (2001): *The Forgotten Abkhazia*, p. 10.

[250] Menteshashvili (1992): *Some National and Ethnic Problems in Georgia 1918-1921*, or Cornell (2001): *Autonomy and Conflict*, p. 175.

the Abkhaz national project and moreover Russia gained the role of the protector against Georgian imperialism.[251]

Under the Soviet patronage, the hugely popular leader Nestor Lakoba led Abkhazia until 1936. Derlugian describes Lakoba as a 'semi educated former honorable bandit of the 1905 generation, who by 1917 had spent years underground or in tsarist prison and became a Bolshevik convert with strong personal ties to Stalin.'[252] He was responsible for the collectivization of the traditional Abkhaz peasantry. After his sudden death in 1936[253], many autonomous rights were rendered under Beria's supervision. Most visibly, the Abkhaz language, provided with an alphabet during the korenizatsiia policies, was replaced by Georgian in official usage and all native language schools were closed.[254] The Stalinist measures decimated the Abkhaz intelligentsia.

With the strengthening of the Soviet developmental state, the Abkhaz economy gained significance as Abkhazia exported its affordable and highly demanded exotic fruits. Similarly, the Black Sea beaches came to be visited by more than 2 million people annually. The ethnic divisions could also be observed in the various economic sectors. Whereas urban Abkhazians controlled the crucial *nomenklatura* positions and formed an influential *intelligentsia*, the tourist business was left to the Greeks and Armenians and the mining industry to the Russians and Ukrainians.[255] The only problematic element in this overall framework of satisfaction remained the danger of the growing Georgian presence. The number of Georgians increased from roughly 158.000 (39 percent) in 1956 to almost 239.000 (46 percent) in 1989.[256]

Hence, the post-Stalinist period was characterized by the returning protests of Abkhazians. The most visible demonstrations were organized in 1956 and 1968 but the strongest act of resistance came during Brezhnev's constitutional process in 1977, when 130 Abkhazian intellectuals signed a letter sent to the Kremlin complaining about the subordination to Tbilisi and asking for direct subordination to Moscow. Their request was rejected but the situation in Abkhazia changed.[257] The native language schools in Abkhazia were re-opened, and broadcasting and and a

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[251] Nodia, *The Conflict in Abkhazia: National Projects and Political Circumstances*, p. 7.

[252] Derlugian (2001), *The Forgotten Abkhazia*, p. 11.

[253] According to some sources, Lakoba was poisoned on Beria's command.

[254] Jones, Stephen (1994): 'Georgia: A Failed Democratic Transition', in Bremmer, Ian, and Ray, Taras (eds.): *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*, Cambridge University Press, p. 291.

[255] Derlugian, *The Tale of Two Resorts: Abkhazia and Ajaria before and since the Soviet Collapse*, pp. 269-270.

[256] Müller (1999), *Demography*, pp. 220-222.

[257] Ibid., p. 292.

newspaper in the titular language were established. In 1979 a sector for Abkhaz language and literature was founded in the Sukhumi Pedagogical Institute.[258] It should also be noted that despite their minority position after 1977, the Abkhaz chaired more than two thirds of the regional government and similarly overwhelmingly controlled local economic sources.[259]

Their position could have even increased following the plan for direct budgetary support coming from Moscow in the late 1980s, which aimed at a modulation of national moods and at securing agricultural supplies, and which was explained by the disproportionate budgetary flows coming from Tbilisi.[260] However, this unrealized plan was preceded by various provisions forcing Abkhazians to sell their agricultural products to northern Russian industrial centres for low prices that reflected the growing economic crisis. It is crucial in this regard that even though these pressures were coming from Moscow, they were executed by Georgian authorities.[261]

5.1.2.   Trajectory to War

Abkhaz history knows some remarkable leaders and not surprisingly, their descendants and relatives belong among the intellectual and political elites of recent times. In general, there were two streams that viewed the relations to Georgia differently. The group of moderates recruiting mainly from the former administrative *nomenklatura* argued for the avoidance of the conflict-related destruction that was at some point evident in South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh. The other group was formed by radicals, whom Derlugian describes as a 'rather motley crowd, ranging from former members of the ideological nomenklatura to professional gangsters, from socially unstable youth to newly made politicians of the perestroika period.'[262] The Abkhaz radical leadership that gradually prevailed was formed around the petitions and appeals of 1977. In June 1988, sixty leading Abkhaz figures signed a letter addressed to the 19th Party Conference in Moscow claiming the improvement

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[258] Suny (1998), *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 302.
[259] Cornell (2003): *Small Nations and Great Powers*, p. 156.
[260] Slider, Darrel (1985): 'Crisis and Response in Soviet National Policy: The Case of Abkhazia', *Central Asian Survey*, 4, 4, p. 63.
[261] Derlugian, *The Tale of Two Resorts: Abkhazia and Ajaria before and since the Soviet Collapse,* p. 271.
[262] Derlugian, *The Tale of Two Resorts: Abkhazia and Ajaria before and since the Soviet Collapse,* p. 273.

of the status of Abkhazia to a full union republic. A few months later, a popular forum, *Aidgylara* (Unity), was formed around the the Writers' Union of Abkhazia. This group initiated a huge demonstration of 30,000 Abkhaz that took place in Lykhny. The declaration explicitly calling for the recognition of Abkhazia as a union republic was approved there.[263] The Supreme Soviet of Georgia condemned the declaration in the atmosphere of growing national mobilization. I have already mentioned that the demonstrations that reached their peak on 9 April 1989 originally started with Abkhaz claims.

The leading Abkhaz separatists were to a great extent members or close associates of the Abkhaz *nomenklatura* and generally educated people enjoying respect in Abkhaz society. This was the case with Valerian Kobakhia, the head of the Abkhaz Party in 1977, and especially Boris Adleiba, the first deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and later the head of the Party, or Vladimir Khishba, a former Georgian deputy minister who replaced the first leader of *Aidgylara*, the writer Alexei Gogua.[264] The leading figure of Abkhaz nationalism became the historian Vladislav Ardzinba, who was elected as the chairman of the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet in December 1990. He very quickly managed to secure his position through becoming a visionary nationalist figure as well as through his ties with influential figures of central politics.[265] It could be argued that it was the combination of political and cultural capital that made leading Abkhaz politicians particularly successful in the mobilization of the Abkhaz minority, which was mostly made up of sub-proletarians.[266] This power could be illustrated by the unilateral declaration of independence approved by the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia on 25 August 1990 or by the participation of the non-Georgian population of Abkhazia in Gorbachev's referendum of March 1991 on the renewal of the Soviet federal framework, which was boycotted by Georgian authorities. Also, the Abkhazians did not participate in

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[263] OTYRBA, Gueorgui (1994): 'War in Abkhazia: The Regional Significance of the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict', in: Szporluk, Roman (ed.): *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Euroasia*, M.E. Sharpe, p. 285.

[264] Kholbaia, Vakhtang, *Labyrinth of Abkhazia*, at http://www.abkhazia-georgia.parliament.ge/Publications/Georgian/labyrinth_of_abkhazia.htm.

[265] When serving as a deputy in the Union's Supreme Soviet, he began a close relationship with Anatoly Lukyanov, a Russian hardliner and parliamentary chairman, who later became known as the ideologue of the August coup. His previous scientific career was also associated with the Institute of Oriental Studies, then chaired by Yevgeniy Primakov. Cf. Cornell (2001): *Autonomy and Conflict*, p. 182.

[266] Only 7 percent of the Abkhazians in Abkhazia lived in towns and cities.

the referendum on the question of Georgia's independence that took place two weeks later.[267]

In the difficult conditions of the coming civil war, even Gamsakhurdia tried to negotiate some power-sharing agreement. Although the negotiation was framed by a nationalist rhetoric, for example, in the summer of 1991, some agreement was reached about the electoral law for parliamentary election in Abkhazia. The design was clearly compromising, since the Abkhazians, despite their significant minority in Abkhazia, gained 28 seats, whereas the Georgians, who made up the majority in Abkhazia, received only 26 seats. The last 11 seats were allocated to other minorities, from which 5 supported the Abkhaz after the election and 6 the Georgian side. For constitutional changes, a two-third majority was required, but the Abkhazians found the two-seat majority sufficient enough to introduce substantial constitutional changes. Facing these efforts, the Georgian representation decided to boycott this assembly, and the project soon failed.[268] It is true perhaps that in the context of the ongoing war in South Ossetia, Gamsakhurdia rather sought to buy time.[269] On the other hand, any experience with successful negotiation could have been of a certain value. During the last days before the war, Shevardnadze clearly wanted to negotiate, but he lost his control over the activities of various militias[270] that supported the National Guard, which was led by Kitovani and associated with his close fellow Ioseliani.[271] Nodia has stated that 'the lion's share of blame is, however, apportioned to Tengiz Kitovani…His actions in Abkhazia allegedly defied the political authorities and forced Shevardnadze to accept the war as a fait accompli.'[272] Shervardnadze himself carefully admitted at the time that Kitovani, with his direct attack on Sukhumi, exceeded instruction.[273]

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[267] Coppieters, Bruno (2001): *Federalism and Conflict in the Caucasus*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, p. 21, also Nodia, Ghia (1996): 'Political Turmoil in Georgia and the Ethnic Policies of Zviad Gamsakhurdia', in: Coppieters, Bruno (ed.): *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, Vrije University Brussels, VUB Press, p. 12.

[268] Coppieters (2001): *Federalism and Conflict in the Caucasus*, pp. 21 - 24.

[269] Ibid., p. 21.

[270] One of the warlords that cooperated with Kitovani was Vakhtang Loti Kobalia, who formerly served as commander in the National Guards but joined the "Zviadists" after Gamsakhurdia's fall.

[271] Stefes, Christoph H. (2006): *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions: Corruption, Collusion and Clientelism*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 62.

[272] Nodia, Ghia (1999): Georgian Perspective, *Conciliation Resources*, available at http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/georgia-abkhazia/georgian-perspectives.php.

[273] See, for example, the interview published in Erlanger, Steven (1992): 'As Georgia Chief, Shevardnadze Rides Whirlwind', *The New York Times*, 25 August 1992, available at http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E0CEEDB103EF936A1575BC0A964958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all.

There are many dimensions of the war in Abkhazia that had to be omitted by this thesis. The issue of Russian involvement, for example, would be one of the crucial ones.[274] Nevertheless, the case of Abkhazia strongly appears to illustrate several notions. The Abkhaz-Georgian relations always deteriorated in the periods of political transitions in Russia and the USSR (the First Republic and the bolshevization of the South Caucasus, the creation of the Stalinist terrorist state in the 1930s, and all the major years of unrest in the post-Stalinist era – 1956, 1968, 1977-78, the late 1980s). This strongly suggests that the hidden Abkhaz ethnic identity was not awakened during the perestroika period. Rather, it seems to be the case that the Abkhaz elite managed to fully use its potential and seriously raised the issue of the separatist national project at a particular moment of diminishing structural constraints given by the decay of the Soviet Union and the absolute internal weakness of the Georgian center. Moreover, from the political economic perspective, with the crisis and the fall of the developmentalist state, the further dependence was disadvantageous. The elite could try to 'privatize' or even 'promote' their own positions through national mobilization against the obvious enemy. Moreover, they had an advantage in terms of the control over institutions they gained due to Soviet affirmative action policies.

5.2.   Ajaria

Ajaria is strategically located by the Turkish border and was also part of the former Soviet 'Côte d'Azur'. Despite a completely different evolution in the 1990s, Ajaria also shares many similarities with Abkhazia. As Derlugian notes, they are both resorts with Mafia-permeated societies, they both experienced a period of Islamization, and they both gained the status of autonomous republics during the era of the Soviet Union.[275] Ajaria was part of the Ottoman Empire until the end of the Turkish-Russian War in 1878, when it was incorporated into the Tsarist realm. Its strategic position, fundamentally strengthened by the railaway and pipeline connection to Baku, became clear after World War I, when all three of the newly established Transcaucasian republics lay claim to the control of this region. While

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[274] See, for example, Goltz, Thomas (1993): 'Letter from Euroasia: The Hidden Russian Hand', *Foreign Policy*, fall 93, Issue 92, or Cornell (2002): *Small Nations and Great Powers*, pp. 151-160.

[275] Derlugian (1998): *The Tale of Two Resorts: Abkhazia and Ajaria before and since the Soviet Collapse*, p. 261.

Britain considered free port status for Batumi, Armenia sought to gain access to the sea, and Azerbaijan urged for a corridor to the defeated Turkey. However, it was Menshevik Georgia that finally successfully demanded this part of its historic state and thus Ajaria later appeared as the ASSR.

5.2.1. Political Economy of Non-distinctive Identity

The Ajar language (written and spoken) is Georgian; more precisely Ajars speak the western Georgian Gurian dialect, which also includes many Turkish loanwords.[276] Indeed, Ajars, being ethnic Georgians, share many similarities with the Laz minority, which inhabits northeastern Turkey. The Laz people, who create the second largest minority in Turkey after the Kurds, are also linguistically related to another ethnic Georgian minority – Mingrelians.[277]

Since the census in 1926, when Ajars numbered 71.000 and thus formed 54 % of the population of the then Ajaria, Ajars have not been counted in the Soviet censuses as a distinct group but simply as Georgians.[278] This implies that Ajars were not considered as a titular nationality in Ajaria and consequently Ajaria did not have a titular language. In relation to Tbilisi, there was no reason for this, since the Ajar (Gurian) dialect is absolutely understandable for other Georgians. This fact was also reflected in the relatively low rate of knowledge of Russian. Tishkov found out that only 42 % of Georgians (including Ajars) in Ajaria spoke Russian in the late 1980s.[279]

The pre-Russian Turkish influence was significant in establishing the Muslim religion as the main determinant of social identity. Also, the administration system resembled the Turkish system of millets, i.e. state-sponsored religious communities. The cultural distinctions were particularly visible during the first Georgian republic after World War I. Later, 'Ajaria became the only autonomous entity in the Soviet Union that had enjoyed its status because of religious differences from the titular

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[276] Benningsen, Alexandre, Wimbush, Enders S. (1985): *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide*, Hurst, London, p. 207.
[277] Cornell (2001): *Autonomy and Conflict*, p. 215; for an encompassing overview of the ethnic divisions in the NW Caucasus, see Hewitt, George (1999): *Abkhazia, Georgia and the Circassians (NW Caucasus)*, pp. 463-499.
[278] The figures come from Fuller, Elizabeth (1991): 'Georgia's Adzhar Crisis', *Report on the USSR*, 9 August 1991, p. 8.
[279] Tishkov (1997): *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union*, p. 92.

nationality of the republic it belonged to.'[280] In general Ajars were ethnolinguistically Georgians before the Soviet Union and hence most of the fundamental distinctions were determined by the Muslim religion, which was heavily targeted by the Bolshevik atheistic campaigns.

Although the Bolsheviks considered language as a key ethnic indicator, they introduced in the late 1930s a new ethnonym – Azerbaijani – to simplify the ethnically complicated situation in the Caucasus. 'Anyone in Transcaucasia who persisted in considering himself Muslim became, by fiat, Azerbaijani, regardless of language.'[281] Moreover, Beria's practices of the 1930s, which were aimed at suppressing the religious identity of Muslims in this area, bordered on ethnocide. To choose to be identified as an 'Azerbaijani' soon became either to be Georgian or to be classified as one of the totally alien Meskheti Turks, who were later deported to Central Asia.[282] The processes of a culturally and physically violent homogenization (Georgianization) were proceeding already before World War II. As a consequence the new Ajars were still literate in Georgian just as their ancestors were, but they became secular and hence lost the only essential distinctive feature of their identity. Indeed, after the Soviet period, there has been an Ajaria but no Ajars.[283]

Ajars are ethnolinguistically Georgians, but moreover they themselves claim a strong Georgian identity.[284] Similarly, the Ajars are the only minority population to be viewed as Georgians in the predominant conceptions of the Georgian nation.[285] However, this only happened in the period of the hardest Georgian nationalism, when leading nationalist radicals tried to challenge the mutual inclusiveness of both identities. This interesting situation, where 'one group does not think of itself as an "other" but another group does' has been referred to by Toft as two-way mirror nationalism.[286] Indeed, the challenges came mainly from Tbilisi. Academics of the Batumi University, as a response to Gamsakhurdia's pan-Islamic threat rhetoric,

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[280] Cornell (2001): *Autonomy and Conflict*, p. 214.

[281] Derlugian (1998): *The Tale of Two Resorts: Abkhazia and Ajaria before and since the Soviet Collapse*, p. 277.

[282] Mesketi Turks are basically Sunny Muslims living in exile in Uzbekistan. They speak the Georgian dialect and in the meantime formed the only Muslim group of the area.

[283] Derlugian (1998), *The Tale of Two Resorts: Abkhazia and Ajaria before and since the Soviet Collapse*, p.279.

[284] Ramaz Kurdadze, a Georgian linguist and a professor at the Tbilisi State University, told me that he himself was surprised by the Ajar relation to the Georgian language. While he was carrying out a linguistic research on Ajar dialects, Ajars very often expressed their perceptions that they speak a major Georgian dialect. Personal conversation with Ramaz Kurdadze, Tbilisi, Spring 2004.

[285] Cornell (2001): *Autonomy and Conflict*, p. 216.

[286] Toft, D., Monica: *Two-Way Mirror Nationalism: The Case of Ajaria*, paper provided by Svante Cornell, p. 2

wrote that his charges, which caused significant distress, are neither historically nor politically justified. Moreover, for Ajars, 'nothing was more galling than aspersions on their Georgianness.'[287] Similarly Toft noticed the former chairman of the Ajar ASSR Council of Ministers Guram Chigogidze's speech in the Georgian Supreme Soviet, where he stated that the separatist organization of Ajaria consisted of six persons.[288]

In fact, it is extremely difficult to reconstruct anything from the political economic functioning of the Soviet Ajaria as there are hardly any analytical sources on this topic. This notion is logical given the virtually unproblematic relations of the autonomous republic with the center. For similar reasons, and contrary to Abkhazia, Moscow never intervened in Ajaria. It seems to be safe to argue that Ajaria functioned along the typical Soviet peripheral rules that are described above in detail. The benefits coming from the tourist and petroleum industries were distributed by the *nomenklatura*, who were strongly influenced by various social networks or even criminal groups. The predominantly rural and mostly subproletarian inhabitants were not challenged by central policies, as was the case with their Abkhaz counterparts. Nevertheless, the more irrelevant the political economy appears to be for the explanations related to the Soviet period, the more important was the role that it played in the process of the post-Soviet de-escalation.

5.2.2.   Trajectory to Peace

I have already mentioned that the nationalist challenge came unilaterally from Tbilisi during the transitional period. This nationalist discourse was accompanied by an elite change directed from Tbilisi. The new leaders were mostly Christians and had previously little or no ties with Ajaria. On the other hand, having a similar experience from different spots, they quickly managed to accommodate to Ajar structures. 'Immediately upon arrival, the new government set out to divide the spoils, awarding their friends and clients the most lucrative positions at the seaport, customs, licensing agencies, tourist hotels, and restaurants.'[289] The old Communist *nomenklatura* was (often violently) suppressed. Under the Georgian nationalist

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[287] Fuller (1991): *Georgia's Adzhar Crisis*, p. 10
[288] Toft, *Two-Way Mirror Nationalism: The Case of Ajaria*, p. 7
[289] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 231.

government, the situation deteriorated like the appearance of political Islam. Although Ajaria has been correctly understood as a case of peaceful transformation, the clashes between 'National Guards' and various Ajar groups left a few people dead.

The situation reversed almost miraculously after one of the phenomena of the post-Soviet Caucasus, Aslan Abashuidze, as a local deputy of the government, shot down the president of the Georgian nationalist government during a 'discussion' on the cabinet meeting.[290] During the Soviet period, Abashidze, after serving in lower *nomenklatura* positions, reached the post of the deputy minister of municipal affairs in Tbilisi and, as Derlugian notes, anyone at all familiar with Mafia-permeated societies would appreciate the kickback possibilities of such a position.[291] Abashidze was elected the chairman of the Supreme Soviet in April 1991, when Gamsakhurdia forced Tengiz Khakhva to resign. Symbolically, the vote was unconstitutional, since Abashidze had not been a member of the Soviet before. Abashidze's popularity in Ajaria quickly became enormous. It might be partly due to the fact that Abashidze belongs to one of the well-known noble family names in Georgia. This family ruled Ajaria several times before 1917 and its member Memed chaired the Ajarian parliament in 1918-1921.

It is necessary to exceptionally cross the time framework of this thesis to explain the nature of Abashidze's strategy. Since the period of unrest in April 1991 until his escape to Moscow after the electoral defeat in April 2004, Abashidze ruled Ajaria, in Derlugian's words, Fujimori-style, guarding the civil rest against 'parliamentary demagogues' and Georgian warlordism and gangsterism.[292] He also kept Ajaria's neutrality in the South Ossetian and Abkhaz conflicts and moreover managed to take advantage of this bargaining position. For example, he sued for a lower contribution to come from Ajar taxation to the central budget. More importantly, the central government did not disturb his control over the busy trading with neighboring Turkey. During the culminating negotiation about the transport of Azerbaijani oil through Georgia, Abashidze threatened to thwart the plans of the transport via Batumi unless the Ajarian status as a sovereign republic within Georgia

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[290] Derlugian (2003): *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, p. 232.
[291] Derlugian (1998): *The Tale of Two Resorts: Abkhazia and Ajaria before and since the Soviet Collapse*, p. 280.
[292] Ibid., p. 283.

would be formalized in the near future.[293] Abashidze's position was significantly improved by his well-cultivated relations with Russian military commanders in Batumi, especially with the chief commander General Gladyshev. His support for the Russian presence in Ajaria radically contrasted with Georgian moods as well as with the claims of the Georgian leaders. The benefits were, however, mutual as the Russians guarded the Ajar autonomy within Georgia and were in turn awarded with various benefits coming from the Ajar economy.[294]

Apart from the above mentioned industries and subtropical agriculture, the most important benefits came from Ajaria's strategic position on the border with Turkey. The cross-border trade was highly illegal and, as will be seen, even the legal profit stayed in Ajaria. Everybody who went to Georgia through Turkey before the Rose Revolution and crossed the Ajar-Turkish border could experience the curious conditions on the border and see buses overstuffed with various kinds of undeclared goods. To illustrate the extent of the trade exchange, Derlugian brings an example from the border passage at Sarpi, which is situated close to Batumi on the South, where he estimates the barter trade reached $60-70 million per month in the 1990s.[295]

In summary, Abashidze[296] never challenged the Georgian territorial cohesiveness. For the promise of repressing any separatist tendencies, he could rule Ajaria single-handed and enjoy and share the good profits coming from the subtropical agriculture, vacation capacities, and cross-border trade. During Shevarnadze's rule, his position seemed to be unshakable and his popularity in Ajaria was also stable. Although his regime was autocratic and violated several human rights, Ajaria, in contrast to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, still did not undergo any destructive warfare and experienced relative wealth. Ajaria is clearly a case where identity politics was suppressed by the local elite as the de-mobilization served its interest better in 'privatizing' power and economic positions. This was also possible

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[293] RFE/RL *The Caucasus Report*, 6 May 1996.

[294] Hin, Judith: *Ajaria: The Interest of the Local Potentate in Keeping Violent Conflict at Bay*, paper provided by Svante E., Cornell, p. 13.

[295] Ibid., p. 283.

[296] No matter how critical one can be towards Abashidze, his personality remains, to a certain extent, spectacular. Abashidze, for example, managed to prepare a business deal with Tony and Hugh Rodham (brothers of the former First Lady Hillary Clinton), according to which the Rodhams should have invested $118 into the export of hazelnuts from Ajaria. The relationship between Abashidze and the Rodhams went even further as Tony Rodham became the godfather of Abashidze's grandson. Abashidze did not hesitate then to claim that he was backed by the Clinton administration. After this the White House intervened and the project was stopped. Cf. Novak, Viveca and Branegan Jay, Are Hillary's Brothers Driving Off Course, *Time*, 1, November 2001; Ignatius, David, Rambling Rodhams, *The Washington Post*, 16 September 1999; Ignatius, David, The Rodhams: Back in Georgia, *The Washington Post*, 29 December 1999.

due to the fact that Georgian state structures fell into ruins and were substituted by structures that brought the country to the civil war.

6.   Conclusion

Although the internal political situation in Georgia became stabilized and the regional conflicts lost their violent intensity before the mid-1990s, the social, political and economic crisis essentially complicated the development of efficient and functioning state structures, as such structures should have guided the transformation leading towards a broader stability and prosperity. The Rose Revolution occurring in the fall of 2004 brought about several positive changes, even if Georgia is still quite far from becoming a stable democracy with a fair economic environment. Following the general reasoning of this thesis, I would assume that the change coming in 2004 had a substantially better prospect than the immediate post-Soviet transition, as Georgia stepped into radically different social and political conditions. Nevertheless, this thesis has focused on the situation in the late 1980s and early 1990s as it became a result of processes that bore upon the strategies reacting to the underdevelopment and reflecting the global political economic conditions. More specifically, the focal point of this work has been the way in which the political economy of the post-Soviet, and more broadly post-developmentalist, transformation could be theorized.

My theoretical explanatory attempt started with a critique of the linear understanding of development that is common to liberal as well as Marxist approaches, drawing mostly on a critique of perspectives derived from modernization theory. This critical discussion then turned my attention to the macro-sociological approaches of the discipline of historical sociology and the ideas developed by Charles Tilly, Theda Skocpol, Dietrich Rueschmeyer and others about the causal complexities of social revolutions. In brief, they offered various theoretical insights that essentially stress the role of the state breakdown in social transformation and provide strong analytical evidence for the relevancy of the class perspective. The crucial analytical bridge between the historically oriented knowledge of the state formations and break ups and the empirical reality of the Soviet state was provided by theoretical insights coming from the world-system analysis as it became elaborated in essays by Immanuel Wallerstein, Giovanni Arrighi, and Terrence Hopkins. Most importantly, their analyses allowed for distinguishing a particular

class of developmentalist states of the 'Second', 'semi-peripheral' or 'Communist' world that tried to overcome underdevelopment and catch up with the Western core while applying revolutionary and often totalitarian strategies, resulting in the building of the strong states, whose functioning and management was clearly at odds with the prevailing systemic 'capitalist' ideas. Moreover, they crucially extended their ideas when arguing that the fall of these states in the late 1980s was caused by their past successful 'proletarization' creating a strong class of educated specialists that became discomforted by the rigidity of the totalitarian state. Indeed, it was the agency provided by the class perspective that served as the bridge between the larger structural processes and the development in the small spot in South Caucasus.

As the world analysis specialists pointed directly to a particular class, it only remained to establish a hypothetical rationale for the connections of other Soviet classes and the violent transformation while tracing the process since Stalin's rapid military industrialization. More directly, the thesis has tried to show how the particular behaviour and strategies of the *nomenklatura* cadres contributed to the overall instability and de facto retreat of the state, how most of that part of the society which was formerly dependent on the state, whom I labelled *proletarians*, became existentially threatened by the new conditions and hence at least partly prone to radicalization, and finally how the *subproletarians* provided the element that was prepared to resort to violence. To summarize the argument, this thesis has asserted that the wave of violence that blew over the Soviet southern periphery in the late 1980s and early 1990s was not directly caused by a sudden arousal of deeply rooted ethnic and national identities, though it has not denied the impact of the national mobilizations. Rather, it has viewed these mobilizations as desperate reactions to the decay of the Soviet developmentalist state accompanied by the erosion and disappearance of state structures that left an open room in the areas of power execution and state management. The space within these structures was readily saturated with various informal processes and institutions which had traditionally functioned in Georgian society and which had become strengthened during the Soviet period. In other words, the disorganized state became governed by organized crime in the broadest sense, which was expressed in the crucial roles played by various patronage networks, clans or directly mafia-style criminals. According to this thesis, this was the specific political economy of the Georgian post-Soviet transformation,

which had terrible and deplorable effects, and which materialized in wars in the autonomies.

Although this thesis did not have any comparative ambitions, my intention was to elucidate a theoretical framework that would also be applicable to other cases of post-developmental transitions that still remain more than relevant topics. From this point of view, the Soviet Union was arguably the most successful anti-systemic alternative to the prevailing economic order. However, it has been one of the messages of this thesis that it should not be viewed separately from other anti-developmentalist attempts. Quite consequentially, any experience taken from the post-Soviet transformations appears to be valuable. It is perhaps even more so, as most of the post-developmentalist transitions went through very difficult and often dark realities.

Taking this perspective, Georgia was a particularly good theatre for observing the diverging tracks of a violent transformation. Once one of the reasonably developed countries of the Soviet Union with a great national tradition and a relatively educated society, it virtually collapsed in a few months and experienced a severe civil war as well as an extremely radical national mobilization that apparently killed any chances for stabilizing the complicated relations with the ethnic minorities. In addition, the Georgian society sustained many traditional social phenomena and institutions that happened to play an important role both during and after the era of the Soviet Union. Although when looked at closely, such features of the Georgian society that draw on the rich cultural traditions generally provide a unique category interestingly distinguishing the Georgian society from other societies, from a broader perspective, the functioning of many other developmentalist states is essentially formed by similar social attributes. Hence, an understanding of the Georgian experience, which obviously should not be limited only to the period observed in this study, may significantly exceed the post-Soviet world.

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