

The Thesis Committee for Kacie Noelle Rowlette
certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

Blurred Lines

Effects of the Soviet Nationality Policy on Ethnic Conflicts in the South

Caucasus

APPROVED BY

SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Thomas Garza, Supervisor

Mary Neuburger

Blurred Lines

Effects of the Soviet Nationality Policy on Ethnic Conflicts in the South

Caucasus

by

Kacie Noelle Rowlette, B.A.

Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of the University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2016

Blurred Lines
Effects of the Soviet Nationality Policy on Ethnic Conflicts in the South
Caucasus

by

Kacie Noelle Rowlette, MA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2016

SUPERVISOR: Thomas Garza

This thesis will examine the ethnic conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Adjara, and how the Soviet nationality policy affected each of these conflicts in the following ways. First, the policy placed all of the ethnic groups in the Soviet Union into a strict hierarchy, creating power differentials between ethnic groups that had previously been on an equal footing under Imperial Russian rule. Second, some ethnic groups were divided across multiple union republics in order to weaken their political power, hindering their ability to advocate for themselves when conflicts arose. Third, because the autonomy level of each ethnic group was laid out in the Soviet constitution, any change in status could be seen as depriving an ethnic group of something that it was constitutionally guaranteed. Finally, the top-down power

structure created by the policy made the Soviet Union the only arbitrator of conflicts and guarantor of autonomy. As such, when the Soviet Union collapsed and their continued autonomy was no longer guaranteed, some smaller ethnic groups in the region resorted to armed conflict in order to ensure that their autonomy would be respected.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Origins and Implementation of the Soviet Nationality Policy.....	5
Chapter Two: Nagorno-Karabakh.....	22
Chapter Three: South Ossetia.....	39
Chapter Four: Abkhazia.....	50
Chapter Five: Adjara.....	61
Conclusion: Current Status of Conflicts and Prospects for Resolution.....	73
Bibliography.....	79

Glossary of Abbreviations

AO: Autonomous Oblast

ASSR: Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (autonomous republic)

CCCP: Central Committee of the Communist Party (Central Committee)

CIS: Commonwealth of Independent States

CPSU: Communist Party of the Soviet Union

DRG: Democratic Republic of Georgia

Narkompros: People's Commissariat for Education

RSFSR: Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (Russian SFSR)

SSR: Soviet Socialist Republic (union republic)

TSFSR: Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (Transcaucasian SFSR)

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union)

Note: Many of the place-names used in this thesis are transliterated from languages that do not use the Latin alphabet, such as Russian, Georgian, and Armenian. As such, numerous possible spellings exist for each of these places. Any Russian words and place-names will be transliterated using the USG official transliteration system.¹ For all non-Russian words and place-names, I have opted to use the most commonly seen English

¹ "USG Transliteration System," Embassy of the United States in Moscow, accessed April 24, 2016, http://http://moscow.usembassy.gov/transliteration_e.html.

spelling (e.g. Azerbaijan, Tbilisi, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia). If a source referenced in this thesis uses a different transliteration for the name of a place or individual, the transliteration will not be changed in the footnotes or bibliography.

Introduction

Following the implosion of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union took control of a vast swath of territory, within which lived dozens of different ethnic groups. After defeating the remnants of the previous regime in the Russian Civil War, the Bolsheviks went on to retake some of the former territories of the Russian Empire that had since declared independence, and with the reconquest of these territories, the Bolsheviks incorporated dozens more ethnic groups into the fold. The fledgling Soviet Union was now faced with a crucially important task: it had to come up with a system of policies that would ensure the protection of ethnic minorities against the “chauvinism” of larger or better-developed ethnic groups, ensure the preservation and development of all of its languages and cultures, prevent conflicts, and encourage cooperation. The end goal of this set of policies was the introduction of socialism and the replacement of narrowly-focused nationalism with a spirit of cooperation and internationalism. As such, Soviet authorities quickly set about creating a truly unique and complex set of policies, which was specifically designed to answer this question. While this innovative policy, hereafter referred to as “the Soviet nationality policy,” seemed to speed the cultural development of several ethnic groups, prevented internal ethnic conflicts from escalating to armed hostilities, and limited cultural assimilation, its effectiveness vanished along with the Soviet Union in 1991, and several regions rapidly fell into conflict.

In the 1990s and early 200s, perhaps the most conflict-ridden region of the former Soviet Union was the South Caucasus – Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan – where conflicts raged in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Adjara. All of these conflicts, save for the one in Adjara, have devolved into “frozen conflicts” and have not yet been resolved. While much has been written on the South Caucasus and on the Soviet nationality policy, there is still a gap between the two in discussions of the ethnic conflicts in this region. When present-day ethnic conflicts are discussed, they are often addressed as part of a broader history of the region, as in Thomas de Waal’s *The Caucasus and Black Garden*, or examined along with other post-Soviet ethnic conflicts as part of a more general look at the experiences of ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union, as in Jeremy Smith’s *Red Nations*. Literature on the Soviet nationality policy tends to focus on its creation, development, and implementation, as is the case with Francine Hirsch’s *Empire of Nations*, Ronald Suny’s *The Soviet Experiment*, and Yuri Slezkine’s “The USSR as a Communal Apartment,” or on a certain aspect of the policy, such as affirmative action and language policy in Terry Martin’s *The Affirmative Action Empire*. This thesis seeks to bridge the gap between the Soviet nationality policy and the ethnic conflicts in the South Caucasus by examining the following effects of the nationality policy.

First, the policy created new power differentials between ethnic groups which had been on a more or less equal footing under Imperial Russian rule. Second, the policy divided ethnic groups across multiple territories, reducing the political power of the

divided groups and thus hindering their ability to advocate for themselves. Third, the territorial holdings and autonomy level of every ethnic group were set out in the Soviet constitution. As such, any decision to alter the status quo could be viewed as depriving one ethnic group of something that it had been constitutionally guaranteed. Moreover, due to the strict hierarchy created by the policy, changes to the status quo could be seen as favoring a less-developed ethnic group over a better-developed one (if the decision was in favor of the smaller ethnic group) or as perpetuating ethnic chauvinism and imperialist oppression (if the decision favored the larger group). Finally, the policy created a strictly hierarchical system of governance that was ruled from the top down. While the Soviet Union still existed, this hierarchy prevented conflicts from being resolved without the intervention of a high-level mediator. As a result, the central government was often the only guarantor of autonomy for ethnic groups located lower in the hierarchy, and when the Soviet Union collapsed, there was no one left to ensure that the rights of these groups would be respected. Therefore, smaller ethnic groups like the Karabakh Armenians, South Ossetians, and Abkhaz found themselves in newly independent states to which they had no ethnolinguistic ties, with their prospects for autonomy uncertain at best, and with no central arbitrator to resolve the dispute, making armed conflict seem like the only hope for a favorable resolution.

Chapter 1 will examine the creation and initial implementation of the Soviet nationality policy, as well as the reasoning behind this policy. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 will use the regions of Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia as case studies,

examining each of these conflicts in order to show how they were worsened by the Soviet nationality policy. The chapter on Nagorno-Karabakh will have a special focus on the difficulties of resolving conflict between two union republics, as opposed to a union republic and a lower-level autonomous territory. The discussions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia will examine how the top-down power structure could allow a union republic to impose its will on its minority groups. The chapter on Abkhazia will also examine how the Soviet nationality policy could have even more of an impact on ethnic groups that did not have a strong presence outside of their territory. Finally, the conflict in Adjara will be used as a contrasting case study, examining why it was successfully resolved without ever escalating to armed warfare. The concluding chapter will examine the status of the three unresolved conflicts today, assess the odds of resolving these conflicts, and discuss the factors that help or hinder resolution of these conflicts.

Chapter One: Origins and Implementation of the Soviet Nationality Policy

From the moment the Russian Civil War ended and the Soviet Union was formed in 1922, the newly-created Soviet Union controlled an enormous stretch of the territory of the former Russian Empire, in which dwelt scores of different ethnic groups. Still more land and peoples fell under Soviet control during the Second World War and in its immediate aftermath. In order to maintain control of its territories, the Soviet Union had to find a way to keep these diverse ethnic groups subordinated to centralized power. However, so as not to follow the model of the imperial and colonialist powers it condemned, it also claimed to be seriously interested in protecting the rights of each of these groups. As such, Soviet ethnographers and top politicians almost immediately set about implementing a policy for governing the country's many ethnic groups, which they had begun formulating even before the Russian Revolution as an alternative to existing Imperial Russian policy.

Beginning in the 1700s and ending with the annexation of Kars and Batumi in 1878, the Russian Empire began to incorporate the South Caucasus into the Russian Empire.¹ As new areas were conquered or annexed, they were divided into several administrative units, which only loosely corresponded to ethnic boundaries. These administrative units were governed by Russian officials and subject to the same laws

¹ Arsène Saparov, *From Conflict to Autonomy in the Caucasus: The Soviet Union and the Making of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 34.

and imperial decrees as the rest of the Russian Empire, without any differences in autonomy for the various ethnic groups living in the conquered territories. At the time of the Russian Revolution, modern Georgia was divided between the Tbilisi and Kutaisi Governorates, Batumi Oblast (which roughly corresponded to modern Adjara), and Sukhumi Okrug (which is now Abkhazia).² The Yerevan Governorate and Kars Oblast were inhabited mainly by Armenians; modern Armenia was largely contained within the former, while the latter was ceded to Turkey as part of the Treaty of Kars.^{3 4} Finally, modern Azerbaijan was divided between the Elizavetpol and Baku Governorates and the Zaqatala Okrug.⁵ When the Russian Empire collapsed in 1917, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan all declared independence. However, this independence was largely by default, as no government controlled the South Caucasus at that point, and the short-lived Transcaucasian Commissariat was temporary by design, intending to govern only until a new constitutional assembly convened in Russia.⁶

Shortly thereafter, in April 1918, the Transcaucasian parliament in Tbilisi announced the formation of the Transcaucasian Federation and its separation from Russia, but this new state was riven by internal conflicts between Georgia, Armenia, and

² Ibid., 37.

³ Ibid.

⁴ “Договор о дружбе между АССР, ССРА и ССРГ с одной стороны и Турцией с другой, заключенный при участии РСФСР в Карсе (Карский договор), Статья 5,” Khronos, accessed April 29, 2016, http://hrono.ru/dokum/192_dok/19211013kars.php.

⁵ Saparov, *From Conflict to Autonomy in the Caucasus*, 37.

⁶ Thomas de Waal, *The Caucasus: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 61.

Azerbaijan, and lasted only a month.⁷ Backed by Germany and the Ottoman Empire and led by the Georgian Mensheviks, Georgia seceded from the Transcaucasian Federation and proclaimed the independence of the Democratic Republic of Georgia on May 26, 1918.⁸ Azerbaijan, led by the Musavat Party, also declared independence on May 28.⁹ Armenia was the last to secede; led by the Dashnak movement, the First Armenian Republic was proclaimed on May 30.¹⁰ This was the first time in history at which the Georgians, Armenians, and Azeris had all controlled separate states named for their respective majority ethnic groups. These ethnic groups almost immediately set about asserting their control over ethnic minorities within their territories and disputing the borders of the new states.¹¹ The Georgian Mensheviks waged military campaigns to bring South Ossetia and Abkhazia under Georgian control and instituted Georgian-language instruction in Adjarian schools, and engaged in armed conflict with Armenia over the border regions of Lori and Borchalo; meanwhile, the Armenian general Andranik Toros Ozanian expelled tens of thousands of Azeris from Armenian-held Zangezur.¹² These disputes would soon be overshadowed by the Bolshevik takeover, though. Spurred by Joseph Stalin, Sergo Ordzhonikidze, and Anastas Mikoyan, the Soviet

⁷ Ibid., 62.

⁸ Revaz Gachechiladze, "Geopolitics and foreign powers in the modern history of Georgia: Comparing 1918-21 and 1991-2010," in *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and its Successors*, ed. Stephen F. Jones (New York: Routledge, 2014), 19-20.

⁹ Anar Isgenderli, *Realities of Azerbaijan 1917-1920*, trans. Yusif Axundov (Bloomington: Xlibris Corporation, 2011), 137.

¹⁰ Simon Payaslian, *The History of Armenia: From Origins to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 151.

¹¹ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 64.

¹² Ibid., 65-66.

reconquest of the South Caucasus began in April 1920 with the invasion of Azerbaijan, and ended with the fall of Batumi and the flight of the Georgian Mensheviks in March of the following year, aided by the pro-Bolshevik South Ossetians and Abkhaz.¹³ The South Caucasus was officially part of the Soviet Union – now, the Bolsheviks had to create a policy that would guarantee the rights of all the ethnic groups in the South Caucasus and keep ethnic conflicts in check.

The Bolsheviks felt that it was important to distinguish between ethnic groups for three main reasons. First, in Vladimir Lenin’s interpretation of the Marxist theory of historical determinism, the development of national movements and the establishment of nation-states were universal characteristics of early capitalism, and mature capitalism progressing towards socialism would be marked by interaction between nations to the point that national boundaries began to fade away.¹⁴ Second, according to Lenin, it would be easiest and most effective to inculcate the people of the Soviet Union with socialist, anti-bourgeois, and anti-nationalist ideals if the people were taught in their native languages.¹⁵ As such, every ethnic group and every language had to be identified to ensure that every last citizen could be taught in their native tongue. Finally, in dealing with ethnic groups that already had national movements, it was important to distinguish between “oppressor-nation nationalism” and “oppressed-nation nationalism.”

¹³ Ibid., 67-70.

¹⁴ Joseph Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism* (New York: Prism Key Press, 2012), 72.

¹⁵ Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53:2 (Summer 1994): 417-418.

The idea that some nationalist movements should be supported and other should not was articulated by Lenin as early as July 1916, but it was Joseph Stalin who fully fleshed out the idea.¹⁶ Stalin asserted that national movements which were not directed primarily or solely against absolutism, and thus not part of the international proletarian revolution, should not be supported, giving the Polish and Hungarian national movements of the 1840s as examples of national movements that did deserve the support of the proletariat, but stating that the Czech and South Slavic national movements that flared up at the same time should not be supported due to their reactionary nature.¹⁷ Moreover, ethnic groups that displayed what Soviet authorities called “oppressor-nation nationalism” or “great-power chauvinism” were to be overthrown by the proletariat revolution and subsequently subjected to self-discipline and ideological retraining.¹⁸ In the South Caucasus, this ideology was manifested by the Red Army’s invasion of newly-independent Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan and the subsequent appointment of Bolshevik leaders in these territories. On the other hand, Lenin and Stalin believed that it was important to recognize less-developed groups as distinct and preserve their language in order to assuage what they termed “oppressed-nation nationalism,” since national movements among “oppressed” peoples were part of the “stubborn, continuous, and determined struggle against the dominant-nation

¹⁶ Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism*, 68.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁸ Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment,” 419.

chauvinism of the 'Socialists' of the ruling nations."¹⁹²⁰ However, before the national movements in the Soviet Union could be categorized and the socialist education of the peoples of the Soviet Union could begin, the Bolsheviks had to determine what constituted a distinct ethnic group in the first place.

The future leaders of the Soviet Union had set about finding an answer to this question even before the Russian Revolution had taken place. In 1913, in "Marxism and the National Question," Joseph Stalin defined an ethnic group as being "a historically evolved, stable community based on a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture." This was a standard definition of the term at the time, and the definition the Soviet Union had in mind when formulating and implementing the nationality policy.²¹ (Note: Because this is the definition that Soviet authorities used to decide what did or did not constitute a distinct ethnic group, all uses of the term "ethnic group" in this thesis will refer to this definition of the term unless stated otherwise.) However, according to Marxist theory, only those ethnic groups that had reached a certain point in their economic development could be considered "nations," and very few of the ethnic groups in the Soviet Union met this qualification.²²

¹⁹ Ibid., 417-419.

²⁰ Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism*, 72-73.

²¹ Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment," 415-416.

²² Ibid., 420.

The Georgians, Armenians, and Azeris were considered “nations,” as all three had well-developed national movements and had declared their own independent states in 1918.²³ However, the Azeri national movement was not quite as well-developed as the other two, and as a result, the Azeris were not initially seen as a distinct ethnic group. They appear to have been consolidated into the Turks on the list of nationalities for the 1920 census, and did not appear as a distinct ethnic group on census forms until 1926.²⁴ Like the Georgians and Armenians, most of the minority ethnic groups in the South Caucasus were recognized in the 1920 census. These groups included the Talysh and Lezgins of Azerbaijan and several ethnic groups in Georgia, among them the Ossetians, Abkhaz, Imeretians, Mingrelians, Gurians, and Svan, though the Adjarians were not listed.²⁵ All of these ethnic groups were also listed in the 1926 census, with the addition of the Adjarians and the Laz (another small ethnic group living in Georgia).²⁶ However, the only ethnic groups in Georgia that were listed on the 1939 census were the Georgians, Ossetians, and Abkhaz, with the rest consolidated into “Georgians” once again.²⁷ These distinctions were critical in the implementation of the nationality policy. With few exceptions, ethnic groups that were not considered distinct as of the 1939 census were not granted autonomy, and only those that were considered “nations” would be given their own union republic.

²³ Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 66.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 327-333.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 327 and 328.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 329-333.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 333-334.

One of the key goals of the Soviet nationality policy was to hasten the development of all of the ethnic groups in the Soviet Union through nationalism and into socialism. However, there were vast disparities in the development levels of the various ethnic groups in the Soviet Union, which dictated that some groups receive more autonomy than others. Those that were less developed, and thus received less autonomy, were subordinated to better-developed groups that could guide them towards socialism and help them catch up in terms of development. This concept was most clearly articulated by M.B. Mitin, M.D. Kammari, and G.F. Aleksandrov in “The Contribution of J.V. Stalin to Marxism-Leninism,” which was published in 1950 in honor of Stalin’s 70th birthday. In this text, Kammari asserts that the nationality policy represented a further development “of Lenin’s statement on the possibility of the transition of backward countries to socialism, skipping capitalism under the conditions of the support from proletarian revolutions in the developed countries.”²⁸ Kammari then quotes Stalin, saying that “the actual (and not merely juridical) equalisation of nations (help and co-operation for the backward nations in raising themselves to the cultural and economic level of the more advanced nations) [is] one of the conditions necessary for securing fraternal co-operation between the labouring masses of the various nations.”²⁹ Finally, Kammari explains that the Soviet nationality policy is distinct from imperialism because, where the Soviet policy encourages every ethnic group to

²⁸ M.B. Mitin, M.D. Kammari, and G.F. Aleksandrov, “The Contribution of J.V. Stalin to Marxism-Leninism,” *Izvestia Akademii Nauk SSSR* 7 (1950).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

develop and maintain a unique culture that is “nationalist in form, but socialist in content,” traditional imperialist nations simply swallow up other cultures and force them to assimilate to the culture of the ruling power.³⁰ In short, the Soviet nationality policy required that nationalities be identified, delineated, and aided in creating a unique culture – a process referred to as *korenizatsiya*, or root-building – and that less-developed nationalities be subordinated to better-developed ethnic groups in order to guide them along the path to socialism and, eventually, to Communism. While the concept of *korenizatsiya* did at least nominally prevent cultures from being completely assimilated, it also created strict delineations between ethnic groups that had co-existed without such demarcations for centuries.

Once these ethnic groups were defined, the concept of equalization of nations caused some of these newly-defined ethnic groups to be placed under the administration of other groups which previously had not exerted any political control over them. According to Stalin, the various ethnic groups of the Soviet Union, especially the less-developed groups, could not be permitted to determine their own level of autonomy because, rather than granting ethnic groups real freedom and equality, the idea of national self-determination manipulated less-developed ethnic groups into allowing imperialist nations to rule them as colonies in exchange for allowing them cultural autonomy.³¹ Once the territorial boundaries and autonomy levels of all of the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism*, 65-66.

ethnic groups had been determined, they could not be changed unless the central government thought it was appropriate to do so. In particular, smaller ethnic groups' requests for increased autonomy or transfer to a different union republic were almost always ignored, since the ideology behind the nationality policy implied that any ethnic group that was subordinated to another had been put in that situation because it was sufficiently under-developed as to require the guidance of a higher authority.³²

However, the central government did make some adjustments to the autonomy levels of certain ethnic groups before the ethnoterritorial structure of the Soviet Union was finalized, not all of which were based on official Bolshevik ideology.

After delineating the boundaries between different ethnic groups and determining their various levels of development, the Bolsheviks had to create a hierarchy of ethnoterritorial units and place each ethnic group within this hierarchy. At the top of this hierarchy were the fifteen union republics, each headed by a so-called "titular nationality" whose name the republic bore.³³ Initially, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan together constituted a single union republic, which was called the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (TSFSR). Despite the dissolution of the independent Transcaucasian Federation in 1918 due to internal tensions, Stalin and Ordzhonikidze favored a federation in order to curb Georgian nationalism. Both considered the Georgian nationalist movement the primary impediment to maintaining

³² Jeremy Smith, "Stalin as Commissar for Nationality Affairs, 1918-1922," in *Stalin: A New History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), ed. Sarah Davies and James Harris, 47.

³³ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 97.

peace and Soviet hegemony in the region, as Stalin believed that the Georgian treatment of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was marked by great-power chauvinism and exploitation.³⁴ For the same reason, Abkhazia was originally a union republic on par with the TSFSR, though it was associated with Georgia by treaty.³⁵ With the drafting of the Soviet Constitution of 1936, however, Abkhazia was downgraded to an autonomous republic within Georgia, and the TSFSR was dissolved, making Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan separate union republics, or SSRs.^{36 37} Status as a union republic was, in the end, largely determined by the concept of “cultural backwardness.” When the People’s Commissariat for Education compiled its official list of “culturally backward” nationalities in 1932, the Georgians and Armenians were declared “cultured” nationalities, whereas the Azeris and all of the South Caucasian ethnic groups that did not have a union republic were listed as “culturally backward.”³⁸ In addition, while the Azeris were listed as backward, they were more or less on par with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, both of which also had their own union republics despite being considered “culturally backward,” in terms of literacy, economic development, and use of the local language in local government.³⁹

³⁴ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 7-8.

³⁵ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 74.

³⁶ “Конституция Союза Советских Социалистических Республик 1936-ого года, Глава II, Статья 25,” Garant, accessed May 1, 2016, http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/1936/red_1936/3958676/.

³⁷ “Конституция СССР 1936-ого года, Глава II, Статья 13.”

³⁸ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 166.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 134.

Just below the union republics were the autonomous national republics, or ASSRs. These included the Adjara region of coastal Georgia, the Nakhchivan exclave of Azerbaijan, the Crimean Peninsula (initially under Russian control, later transferred to the Ukrainian SSR), and numerous territorial units located within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), particularly in the North Caucasus, the Volga River basin, the Russian Far North, and eastern Siberia. The ASSRs enjoyed a great deal of political autonomy, but were still subordinate to the union republic in which they were located.⁴⁰ Abkhazia was an unusual case, as it had been a union republic associated with the TSFSR from 1922 to 1931, at which point it was downgraded to an ASSR controlled by the Georgian SSR; its status as such was finalized by the Soviet Constitution of 1936.⁴¹

⁴² The subordination of the Abkhaz to the Georgians appears nonsensical at first glance, since all of the close ethnolinguistic relatives of the Abkhaz were placed under the control of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist republic (RSFSR).⁴³ Closer examination reveals a much more pragmatic reason for placing the Abkhaz under the jurisdiction of the TSFSR and later the Georgian SSR, though. Since the Abkhaz were relatively well-developed and had aided the Bolsheviks in the Red Army takeover of the independent

⁴⁰ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 43.

⁴¹ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 150.

⁴² "Конституция СССР 1936-ого года, Глава II, Статья 35."

⁴³ "Abkhaz-Adyghe Family," Glottolog, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/abkh1242>.

Democratic Republic of Georgia, the more Bolshevik-friendly Abkhaz could act as an internal counterweight to the Georgians within the government of the Georgian SSR.⁴⁴

In general, only ethnic groups that were considered distinct from the titular nationality of the union republic in which they resided could receive any level of autonomy. However, the Adjara and Nakhchivan ASSRs were both exceptions to the rule. The Adjarians had been consolidated into the Georgian ethnic group on the list of nationalities for the 1939 census, but despite the relatively minor cultural distinctions, they retained a designated territory under their control and a certain degree of autonomy, both of which were required under Article VI of the 1923 Treaty of Kars.^{45 46} Similarly, Article V of the same treaty stipulated that the Nakhchivan exclave would be an autonomous territory within Azerbaijan, even though its inhabitants were predominantly Azeri and therefore part of the same ethnic group as the majority of the residents of the union republic to which they belonged.⁴⁷

Lower still in the power structure were the autonomous oblasts, or AOs, which included the Jewish Autonomous Oblast in the far east of the RSFSR, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. While both ASSRs and AOs were under the direct control of the union republic in which they were located, AOs had less political autonomy.⁴⁸ Both of the ethnic groups that were granted autonomy in the South Caucasus were spread

⁴⁴ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 74.

⁴⁵ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 333-334.

⁴⁶ “Карский договор.”

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 43.

across two union republics – the Armenians, who constituted the majority of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh had their own autonomous republic, while the Ossetians were split between the TSFSR (specifically Georgia) and the Russian SFSR.

Control of Nagorno-Karabakh, a majority-Armenian territory surrounded by majority-Azeri territory, was hotly contested between the Armenian and Azerbaijani SSRs. The Soviet authorities declared the territory part of the Azerbaijani SSR in 1923, as placating the then-weak Armenian SSR was considered less of a priority than ensuring that the Azerbaijani SSR was a single territorial and economic unit, which would allow local herdsmen to move their livestock between the highlands of Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding lowlands without crossing between SSRs.⁴⁹ As a concession to Armenia for not receiving control of Nagorno-Karabakh, the region was granted the status of an AO, and its borders were drawn so that 94 percent of its population was ethnically Armenian.⁵⁰

As mentioned above, the Democratic Republic of Georgia had asserted control of South Ossetia, but not North Ossetia, during its short independence; as such, Georgia (under the auspices of the TSFSR) retained control of South Ossetia.⁵¹ Anastas Mikoyan proposed uniting North Ossetia (then an AO within the RSFSR) and South Ossetia as an ASSR within Georgia in 1925. However, his suggestion was shot down by Stalin, who believed that uniting Ossetia within Georgia would cause Chechnya, Dagestan, and

⁴⁹ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 105.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

Ingushetia to attempt to join the TSFSR, which would in turn spark an independence movement among the Don, Kuban, and Terek Cossacks and would thus inflame Russian nationalism.⁵² Moreover, like Abkhazia, South Ossetia had been strongly pro-Bolshevik during the Soviet conquest of the South Caucasus, staging three uprisings against Georgia with Bolshevik assistance. It also commanded a strategic location, straddling the Georgian Military Highway and commanding the critically important pass through the Daryal Gorge on the Russia-Georgia border.⁵³ Placing South Ossetia within the Georgian SSR, but granting it a certain degree of autonomy, would ensure that the Ossetians remained friendly to the Bolsheviks, and therefore helped to guarantee that the central government would be able to use the Georgian Military Highway to intervene if Georgia attempted to re-assert its independence.

Of all the types of ethno-territorial unit, autonomous okrugs, all of which were located in the far north of the Russian SFSR, had the least autonomy. Until 1990, all ten autonomous okrugs were directly administrated by an oblast or krai (neither of which were designated for specific ethnicities, and were usually inhabited mainly by the titular nationality of their union republic) rather than being on par with an oblast or krai as the AOs were.⁵⁴ After the revision of the Russian constitution in 1990, autonomous okrugs

⁵² Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 397-398.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 136-137.

⁵⁴ “Конституция Союза Советских Социалистических Республик 1977-ого года, § III, Глава 11, Статья 88,” Garant, accessed May 1, 2016, http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/1977/red_1977/5478732/.

were no longer required to be subject to an oblast or krai.⁵⁵ However, only three autonomous okrugs (Agin-Buryat, Komi-Permyak, and Chukotka) were ever subject only to the RSFSR or the Russian Federation, and three of the four remaining autonomous okrugs (Nenets, Yamal-Nenets, and Khanty-Mansi) are currently administered by an oblast (the former by Arkhangelsk Oblast, the latter two by Tyumen Oblast), with Chukotka as the lone exception. Since all of the autonomous okrugs in the Soviet Union were located in the Russian SFSR, as mentioned above, they will not be discussed any further in this thesis.

The boundaries of the ethnoterritorial units in the South Caucasus were finalized by the 1936 Constitution of the USSR, and would remain intact until the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia were the only union republics in the South Caucasus; all were independent of each other, and answered only to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.⁵⁶ The Azeri SSR controlled Nakhchivan and Nagorno-Karabakh, which had the status of an ASSR and an AO respectively.⁵⁷ The Georgian SSR was given control of the Abkhazian and Adjarian ASSRs, as well as the South Ossetian AO.⁵⁸ The Armenian SSR, which was more ethnically homogeneous than the Georgian or Azeri SSRs, did not have any autonomous territories under its control.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Nikolai Petrov, "Federalism," in *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian Post-Communist Political Reform*, ed. Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov, and Andrei Ryabov (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004), 215.

⁵⁶ "Конституция СССР 1936-ого года, Глава II, Статья 13."

⁵⁷ "Конституция СССР 1936-ого года, Глава II, Статья 24."

⁵⁸ "Конституция СССР 1936-ого года, Глава II, Статья 25."

⁵⁹ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 74.

During the Soviet era, the nationality policy, combined with the presence of a strong central government to arbitrate disputes, prevented the outbreak of any armed conflict. However, the strict hierarchy of ethnic groups that the policy had created still allowed more powerful ethnic groups to oppress the groups that were subordinate to them, but prevented the subordinate groups from taking effective countermeasures against such oppression. As a result, tensions simmered throughout the Soviet era. Once the Soviet Union collapsed, the powerful central government that had arbitrated conflicts and guaranteed a certain degree of political and cultural autonomy to the smaller ethnic groups was gone, and so the smaller groups took up arms in the hopes that they could force the more powerful ethnic groups to respect their autonomy. These ethnic conflicts were most heavily concentrated in the South Caucasus (modern Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan), where disagreements over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Adjara would erupt after the Soviet Union dissolved. Chapters 2-4 will examine the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia – the three territories which remain embroiled in “frozen conflicts” to the present day. Chapter 5 will also act as a case study, assessing the conflict over Adjara and exploring the reasons why armed conflict did not take place and why the conflict was eventually resolved, in contrast to the other three conflicts in the region.

Chapter Two: Nagorno-Karabakh

While one of the goals of the Soviet nationality policy was to prevent ethnic conflicts, in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, the first of the four conflicts used as a case study for this thesis, the policy actually helped to engender conflict rather than prevent it. First, by declaring the Karabakh Armenians subordinate to the Azeris, it created a power differential between the two groups that had not existed previously. Second, it intentionally divided ethnic Armenians (who had one of the stronger nationalist movements within the Soviet Union) across territories in order to weaken their political power. Third, the fact that the status of Nagorno-Karabakh was set out in the Constitution of the Soviet Union meant that any changes to the status quo would be perceived as depriving either the Azeris or the Armenians something they had been constitutionally guaranteed, and the two groups' different economic and cultural status ensured that any changes would also be seen as favoritism towards one group or the other. Finally, the power structure it created allowed higher levels of government to force their decisions on lower levels while preventing local issues from being handled at the local level and made the central government of the Soviet Union the only real guarantor of Nagorno-Karabakh's autonomous status. As such, tensions simmered under the surface until the collapse of the Soviet Union, and with no central authority to mediate the conflict and Nagorno-Karabakh's autonomy in jeopardy, armed conflict seemed to be the only way to settle the question.

Nagorno-Karabakh is a small, mountainous region of southwestern Azerbaijan, located along Armenia's southeastern border. It is part of the larger Karabakh region, located entirely within Azerbaijan, which comprises both the highlands of Nagorno-Karabakh and the lowlands of the Karabakh Steppe.¹ Nagorno-Karabakh itself is inhabited largely by ethnic Armenians, who outnumber Azeris in the territory by a wide margin.^{2 3} However, the majority of the population of lowland Karabakh is ethnically Azeri, to the point that the population of the Karabakh region as a whole is roughly half-Armenian and half-Azeri, with a slight Azeri majority.⁴ Both Armenia and Azerbaijan lay claim to the Karabakh region by virtue of their historical presence in the area and cultural legacy. The Armenian claim dates back at least 1500 years, with the mountainous and remote highlands of Nagorno-Karabakh historically serving as a stronghold of Armenian culture and an area in which Armenian princes held local power when Armenia as a whole was subjected to foreign conquest and occupation.⁵ By the mid-1700s, however, some twenty-three khanates had been formed on the territory of modern-day Azerbaijan, with the Karabakh khanate being one of the oldest and largest, and it is on this cultural and historical basis that Azerbaijan claims the territory of

¹ Bahruz Balayev, *The Right to Self-Determination in the South Caucasus: Nagorno-Karabakh in Context* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 16-17.

² Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience In and After the USSR* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 337.

³ Balayev, *The Right to Self-Determination in the South Caucasus*, 20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵ Levon Chorbaian, Patrick Monabedian, and Claude Mutafian, *The Caucasian Knot: The History and Geopolitics of Nagorno-Karabakh* (Atlantic Highlands: Zed Books, 1994), 4.

Nagorno-Karabakh.⁶ As such, the Karabakh region, particularly Nagorno-Karabakh, presented a complicated issue to those in charge of applying the Soviet Union's nationality policy to the region.

The first goal of the Soviet nationality policy in Nagorno-Karabakh was to simply define the various ethnic groups living in Azerbaijan. Once these ethnic groups had been defined, one of them had to be named the titular nationality. While the Azerbaijani SSR included Azeris, Russians, Armenians, Tatars, Talysh, and Lezgins, the Azeris constituted a majority of the population and were politically dominant in the territory, and were therefore declared its titular nationality. Finally, the Soviet authorities had to determine which of the minority ethnic groups in Azerbaijan were sufficiently populous, concentrated, and economically and politically developed to merit autonomous status. In light of the fact that the Karabakh Armenians were tightly concentrated and belonged to a nationality that was sufficiently well-developed to merit its own titular republic elsewhere, Nagorno-Karabakh was granted autonomy, but was only given the status of an AO. As such, despite its substantial Armenian majority, Nagorno-Karabakh had less political autonomy than the Adjara ASSR, whose dominant ethnic group (along with the Mingrelians, Svans, and Laz) had at one point been consolidated into the Georgian nationality on the basis of their shared language, culture, and history.⁷ Nagorno-Karabakh was also therefore granted less autonomy than the Crimean ASSR, none of

⁶ Balayev, *The Right to Self-Determination in the South Caucasus*, 17.

⁷ Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 97.

whose resident nationalities had as dominant a majority as the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh did. Most galling of all to the Karabakh Armenians was the fact that the Azeris of the Nakhchivan exclave were granted an ASSR within Azerbaijan, a provision which had been required by the Treaty of Kars, despite being part of the republic's titular nationality and no more populous or concentrated than the Karabakh Armenians.⁸

This political subordination to the Azerbaijani SSR created a power imbalance in favor of the Azeris that had not existed before, as Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia had together constituted the Transcaucasian SFSR from 1924 to 1936.⁹ Even earlier, prior to the Russian Civil War, Nagorno-Karabakh had, in a sense, been part of Azerbaijan, as it was located within the Elizavetpol Governorate.¹⁰ However, under imperial rule, the Elizavetpol Governorate and all of the ethnic groups within that territory were directly governed by imperial officials, and as such, there were no real power differentials between the local ethnic groups. Additionally, within the union republics, the titular nationalities enjoyed an elevated level of privilege, including increased access to professional jobs and higher education, compared to smaller nationalities living in subordinate ethnoterritorial units.¹¹ As a result, the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh was less privileged than both the Azeris who dominated the SSR in which they

⁸ “Договор о дружбе между АССР, ССРА и ССРГ с одной стороны и Турцией с другой, заключенный при участии РСФСР в Карсе (Карский договор), Статья 5,” Khronos, accessed April 29, 2016, http://hrono.ru/dokum/192_dok/19211013kars.php.

⁹ Charlotte Hille, *State Building and Conflict Resolution in the Caucasus* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2010), 6.

¹⁰ Arsène Saparov, *From Conflict to Autonomy in the Caucasus: The Soviet Union and the Making of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 37.

¹¹ Ohannes Geukjian, *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Conflict in the South Caucasus: Nagorno-Karabakh and the Legacy of Soviet Nationalities Policy* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 80-81.

dwelt and their fellow Armenians who lived across the border in the territory of the Armenian SSR. The Karabakh Armenians therefore felt that they had been denied rights that the Soviet Union had promised them – they had not been allowed national self-determination, as they had not been allowed to decide which union republic they were placed in or given any effective means of contesting the decision after the fact. Moreover, they felt that they had been denied the privileges enjoyed by other members of their own ethnic group simply because they had been placed in a different union republic and made subordinate to another nationality against their will.

This new social hierarchy further compounded the issues inherent with the different levels of political power held by various nationalities within the Azerbaijani SSR, as the leadership of the union republics was selected by the central government. In combination with the increased access to professional jobs and education, this selection system tended to mean that titular nationalities were over-represented in the governments of the union republics, whereas minorities such as the Karabakh Armenians were under-represented, which helped to fuel the resentment of the Armenian minority in the Azerbaijani SSR towards its Azeri majority.¹² As with the political power imbalance, this social hierarchy had not existed before due to the imperial and early Soviet administration of the South Caucasus as a single territory.

¹² A.N. Yamskov, "Ethnic Conflict in the Transcaucasus: The Case of Nagorno-Karabakh," *Theory and Society* 20:5 (1991), 642.

On the other hand, the Azeris felt that the Karabakh Armenians had been unfairly elevated to a position of privilege above them. In 1932, the People's Commissariat for Education had declared the Armenians a "cultured" nationality. However, the Azeris were listed among the "culturally backward" nationalities due to their lower literacy rates, stronger tribal ties, and less-developed national identity.¹³ As a result, while Karabakh Armenians could be placed in high-level roles within the administration of the Azerbaijani SSR, Azeris could not achieve the same success or wield the same level of political power in the Armenian SSR.¹⁴ Both groups therefore felt that they had lost social or political clout based on their status as culturally developed or backwards and their placement within the hierarchy of ethnoterritorial units. However, the loss of political power was even more upsetting to the Armenian SSR and the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh in light of other territorial and political changes made by the Soviet Union at roughly the same time.

In the years between the establishment of the Soviet Union and the outbreak of the Second World War, both the Armenian and Azerbaijani SSRs were subjected to a series of territorial and political changes that were imposed by the central government and created lasting resentment between the two SSRs. Due to the belief among Soviet authorities that it was more important to ensure that the Azerbaijani SSR was a single territorial unit, which would help it to catch up to its neighbors in terms of economic

¹³ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 166 and 167.

¹⁴ Thomas de Waal, *The Caucasus: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 80 and 81.

and political development, than to appease the weaker Armenian SSR, the desires of the Karabakh Armenian population were not taken into consideration when the borders between the union republics were established.¹⁵ Moreover, because the Soviet constitutions stipulated that changing the boundaries of a union republic required the consent of that republic, future demands for a change in the status of the Karabakh Armenians as an ethnic minority would likewise be ignored.^{16 17} Both the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh and the equally-substantial Azeri population of Armenia were placed in union republics other than the republic in which they were a titular nationality and ended up with a reduced level of autonomy as a result, though the Karabakh Armenians were not the only Azerbaijani ethnic group to be divided across multiple territorial units.

Two other minority ethnic groups in the Azerbaijani SSR were considered trans-territorial nationalities, or ethnic groups living in multiple states. To the north, the Lezgin population was divided between the Dagestan ASSR (part of the Russian SFSR) and the Azerbaijani SSR. Those within the Azerbaijani SSR had fewer rights as a minority group within that territory than those in Dagestan enjoyed as one of the autonomous

¹⁵ Ibid., 105.

¹⁶ “Конституция Союза Советских Социалистических Республик 1936-ого года, Глава II, Статья 18,” Garant, accessed May 3, 2016, http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/1936/red_1936/3958676/.

¹⁷ “Конституция Союза Советских Социалистических Республик 1977-ого года, § III, Глава 9, Статья 78,” Garant, accessed May 3, 2016, http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/1977/red_1977/5478732/.

republic's multiple constituent nationalities.¹⁸ Similarly, the Talysh ethnic group was divided between the southern part of the Azerbaijani SSR and northeastern Iran, which hindered its ability to assert its status and rights as a distinct nationality.¹⁹ Both of these cases mirror those of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh in that their distribution across multiple ethnoterritorial units had a negative impact on their rights as ethnic minorities in the Azerbaijani SSR. The territorial changes that caused this division began almost immediately after the founding of the Soviet Union. Imposed by the Soviet government, not only did these changes divide the Armenians and Azeris across both SSRs, they were perceived by both SSRs as favoring the other.

The first of these impositions was the Treaty of Kars, which put an end to lingering conflict in the region after the end of the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires. Written in 1921 and signed in 1922 by representatives of the Soviet Union and the Turkish provisional government, the treaty included numerous cessions of territory. First, the port city of Batumi and the surrounding region of Adjara, which had been the northern half of the Kars Oblast of the Russian Empire, were ceded to the Georgian SSR on the condition that Turkey would have guaranteed access to the port and would not be required to pay import or export duties there. Second, the territory of Nakhchivan was declared an autonomous territory

¹⁸ Krista Goff, "Kin Minorities, Republican Borders, and National Rights in the Soviet Union" (paper presented at the 46th Annual Convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, San Antonio, Texas, November 20-23, 2014).

¹⁹ Ibid.

under the control of the Azerbaijani SSR, with Turkey acting as a guarantor of its status.²⁰ However, the Armenian SSR also had claims on the territory of Nakhchivan, none of which were granted in the treaty.²¹ These claims, as well as the claims of the Armenian SSR to Nagorno-Karabakh, were based on the fact that the Bolsheviks had promised both territories to Armenia in 1920, a promise which the Treaty of Kars did not acknowledge.²² The most irksome provision of the treaty in the eyes of the Armenian SSR was the cession of the southern half of the former Kars Oblast to Turkey. This territory had been part of northwestern Armenia and included two culturally and historically important sites: Mount Ararat, which was displayed in the emblem of the Armenian SSR and later the Armenian coat of arms, and the ruins of the ancient Armenian capital of Ani.²³ These stipulations of the treaty were provocative partly because the Armenian SSR was the only signatory of the treaty that lost territory rather than gained it, and partly because some of its most culturally important lands were ceded to a country which had been openly hostile to Armenia in recent years.

The Azerbaijani SSR had grievances of its own against the Armenian SSR stemming from political changes imposed by the Soviet government. In July of 1923, the Soviet government issued a decree establishing Nagorno-Karabakh as an autonomous oblast within Azerbaijan. However, the equally sizable and concentrated Azeri

²⁰ “Карский договор, Статьи 5-9.”

²¹ Balayev, *The Right to Self-Determination in the South Caucasus*, 19-20.

²² Mary Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies in Armenia* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962), 30.

²³ “Карский договор, Статья 4.”

population in Armenia was not granted its own autonomous ethnoterritorial unit, a discrepancy that did not go unnoticed by the Azeri SSR. The issue was worsened by the fact that the Azeri population in Armenia, which had been 575,000 strong in 1918, decreased every year.²⁴ As such, the government of the Azerbaijani SSR believed that it was being forced to accommodate the demands of its Armenian minority, while the Armenian SSR was not required to make any such concessions to its Azeri minority in turn.

Further decisions and decrees on the status of various Armenian and Azeri territories came down from on high following the Treaty of Kars and the decree on the establishment of Nagorno-Karabakh. The Constitution of the USSR of 1936 stipulated the status of Nagorno-Karabakh as an autonomous oblast within the Azerbaijani SSR.²⁵ This was in keeping with the precedent set by the 1923 treaty establishing Nagorno-Karabakh and its status. There was also a slightly earlier precedent to be found in the 1922 constitution of the soon-to-be dissolved Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.²⁶ This constitution declared that the status of autonomous republics and oblasts within the three federative republics of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan was unchangeable, which effectively eliminated the chance of Nagorno-Karabakh gaining any increased level of autonomy. In addition to the stipulation of the 1936 Constitution of the USSR that Nagorno-Karabakh would remain an autonomous territory within the

²⁴ Balayev, *The Right to Self-Determination in the South Caucasus*, 20.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

Azerbaijani SSR, the borders between the Armenian and Azerbaijani SSRs were redrawn slightly in the early 1930s. This redrawing moved the Armenian border slightly to the west and granted a small strip of territory called the Lachin Corridor to the Azerbaijani SSR, an addition which meant that Nagorno-Karabakh was now fully enclosed within the Azerbaijani SSR and no longer bordered the Armenian SSR.²⁷

During and after the Second World War, the borders of the ethnoterritorial units of the Caucasus were once again redrawn, prompted by the internal deportations of several Caucasian nationalities.²⁸ In the midst of this reestablishment of the internal borders of the Soviet Union, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia submitted a request in November 1945 that the Soviet government reconsider the status of Nagorno-Karabakh as subordinate to the Azerbaijani SSR. However, discussion of the matter halted abruptly when the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan demanded that, in exchange for the cession of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, Armenia would have to cede three of its territories that bordered Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan.²⁹

This failure of negotiations illustrates that no decision could be made that one party would not view as favoring the other: the Armenian SSR would not accept anything other than the unconditional cession of Nagorno-Karabakh, while the Azerbaijani SSR demanded that it receive some territory from the Armenian SSR as

²⁷ Hille, *State Building and Conflict Resolution in the Caucasus*, 169.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁹ Balayev, *The Right to Self-Determination in the South Caucasus*, 20-21.

compensation for its loss of Nagorno-Karabakh. This perception that one SSR was favored over the other is reinforced by the fact that Armenian suspicions of favoritism towards the Azerbaijani SSR may not have been without justification. Baku, the capital of the Azerbaijani SSR, was a center of oil production and one of the main shipping hubs on the Caspian Sea, which made it the most economically valuable city in the South Caucasus for the Soviet Union and foreign powers, whereas the land-locked Armenian SSR had little mineral wealth by comparison and did not control any major shipping routes.³⁰ As such, it was in the best economic interests of the Soviet Union to favor the Azerbaijani SSR over the Armenian SSR in territorial disputes between the two. Whether real or imagined, this perception of favoritism prevented the two sides from coming to a mutual agreement on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh and added additional fuel to the tensions growing between them.

Between the end of the Second World War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the repeated failure of previous attempts to change the status quo discouraged any further attempts to grant Nagorno-Karabakh greater autonomy or transfer control of the territory to the Armenian SSR. In fact, the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh was officially addressed only three times in this period. First, in 1966, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union created and assigned a task to write a report on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, which was to be presented to the CCCPs of the

³⁰ Hille, *State Building and Conflict Resolution in the Caucasus*, 169.

Azerbaijani and Armenian ASSRs, but this never came to fruition.³¹ Second, the 1977 iteration of the Constitution of the USSR upheld the precedent set by the 1936 constitution and 1923 decree on Nagorno-Karabakh, stipulating that the region would remain an autonomous oblast under the jurisdiction of the Azerbaijani SSR.³² Lastly, in June of 1981, the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijani SSR adopted a new law, “On the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast,” which likewise reaffirmed the status quo.³³

This status quo would remain largely unchallenged until the 1980s. Gorbachev’s policy of *glasnost* and his reforms towards democratization renewed the belief of the Karabakh Armenians that their territory might be granted increased autonomy or transferred to the control of the Armenian SSR, as they felt that the central government would be more willing to hear their grievances and allow them some freedom to decide their own status. Emboldened by the idea of *glasnost*, many began to publicly protest in favor of reunification with the Armenian SSR for the first time in decades.³⁴ However, since the Armenian and Azerbaijani SSRs had grown increasingly unwilling to compromise following the repeated failed attempts to reach an agreement on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, the central government of the Soviet Union had become the only authority that could arbitrate the conflict, and its power was rapidly

³¹ Balayev, *The Right to Self-Determination in the South Caucasus*, 21.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ P.L. Dash, “Nationalities Problem in USSR: Discord over Nagorno-Karabakh,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 24:2 (1989), 72.

weakening.³⁵ Tensions increased further in June of 1988, when the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR consented to merge with Nagorno-Karabakh in response to a request by the government of the autonomous oblast. It then requested that the Supreme Soviet of the USSR consider the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh to the Armenian SSR without consulting the Azerbaijani SSR, a violation of the provision of national sovereignty in the 1977 constitution. The Supreme Soviet of the USSR declared a few days after receiving this request that it would not transfer control of Nagorno-Karabakh without the consent of the Azerbaijani SSR, and by July, it was decided that no transfers of territory would occur.³⁶ This abortive attempt at a transfer of territory further proved that the two hostile union republics would not be able to sort out the conflict on their own, but the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 left them with no choice but to fight it out.

Almost immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh erupted into full-scale conflict, as the Soviet government was no longer able to arbitrate the dispute, and Armenia and Azerbaijan had to decide the fate of Nagorno-Karabakh themselves. Armenia initially had the advantage, as it had been making preparations for independence for three years, and was therefore much more prepared to deal with the power vacuum than Azerbaijan.³⁷ Additionally, Azerbaijani actions in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict had largely been directed by Viktor Polyanchko, the

³⁵ Smith, *Red Nations*, 338.

³⁶ Dash, "Nationalities Problem in USSR," 74.

³⁷ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 114.

deputy of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, since January of 1990.³⁸ After the failure of the August 1991 coup d'état attempt, however, Polyanichko was found to have been close to the plotters of the coup, and was forced to leave Azerbaijan as a result.³⁹ This advantage proved to be of little consequence, though, as Armenia could not act decisively. First, Armenia did not want to be perceived as an aggressor against another newly independent state.⁴⁰ Second, more Soviet military units had been located in Azerbaijan than in Armenia. As such, when Soviet military equipment was divided among the formerly-Soviet states, Armenia initially received less weaponry than Azerbaijan, and Armenian president Levon Ter-Petrosyan could only convince the Russian government enough military hardware to put Armenia on equal footing with Azerbaijan, effectively creating a military stalemate.⁴¹

Only three months after Armenia and Azerbaijan declared their independence from the Soviet Union, the parliament of newly-independent Azerbaijan abolished the autonomy of Nagorno-Karabakh, sparking what would come to be known as the Nagorno-Karabakh War.⁴² Not even war, however, provided a conclusive decision on the fate of Nagorno-Karabakh; the conflict devolved into a stalemate, in which no agreement could be reached due to the perception of all the proposed solutions as excessively favoring one side of the conflict or the other. Control of the Lachin Corridor,

³⁸ Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 108-111.

³⁹ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 114.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴² Smith, *Red Nations*, 339.

a thin strip of mainly Azeri-inhabited territory that separates Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia, was and remains an especially thorny question. Azerbaijan argues that the Lachin Corridor is indisputably part of Azerbaijan, given its majority-Azeri population, whereas Armenia believes that Nagorno-Karabakh would be suffocated by Azerbaijan if the Lachin Corridor could not be used to send in Armenian and other foreign aid.⁴³ Nagorno-Karabakh remains an unrecognized state with *de facto* independence, but under the nominal control of Azerbaijan, to this day.⁴⁴

This history of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict demonstrates that the Soviet policy towards the constituent nationalities of the Soviet Union created and aggravated the conflict in four key ways. First, by granting increased rights and privileges to titular nationalities within their own SSRs, it created a power imbalance between ethnic minorities and majorities in the South Caucasus that had not previously existed there due to its earlier administration as a single territorial unit, without differentiation between the ethnic groups dwelling there. Second, the policy divided ethnic groups across the boundaries of ethnoterritorial units, partly due to the intermingling of ethnic groups along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and partly because of the central government's belief that the Azerbaijani SSR had to be consolidated as much as possible in order to help it catch up to its neighbors in terms of national development. This weakened the political clout of ethnic minorities and, in combination with the increased

⁴³ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 120.

⁴⁴ "Statement of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group," issued March 17, 2008, <http://www.osce.org/mg/49564>.

privileges afforded to the titular nationalities, created an Armenian minority within the Azeri SSR that could see a clear difference between the treatment of Armenians in the Armenian SSR, that of Azeris within the Azerbaijani SSR, and its own treatment by the government of the Azerbaijani SSR. Third, economic concerns and the privilege afforded to titular nationalities caused the central government to make decisions that each side viewed as favoring the other, a perception that continued to prove problematic until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Finally, the hierarchy of power the Soviet Union created for its ethnoterritorial units meant that, due once again to the higher status of titular nationalities, the Karabakh Armenians could not obtain proportional representation in the government of the Azeri SSR. More importantly, though, it made the central government the only authority that could arbitrate disputes between SSRs and the only guarantor of Nagorno-Karabakh's autonomy. As a result, when the Soviet Union collapsed, tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan had built up to the point that they were unable to come to an agreement, and with no central authority to resolve the dispute and Nagorno-Karabakh in danger of losing its autonomy, armed conflict was the only remaining means of resolving the dispute. These factors in the conflict have caused long-standing resentment between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh, and will need to be addressed if the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is to end.

Chapter Three: South Ossetia

The second case study will examine the conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia. Much like the Armenians in the Armenian SSR and Nagorno-Karabakh, the Ossetians found themselves divided between two union republics and subordinated to an ethnic group with which they had previously been on equal footing. While Ossetia had been divided for close to 150 years by the time the Red Army retook the Caucasus, the Soviet nationality policy created new problems by failing to unite North and South Ossetia despite espousing national self-determination, creating a power differential between the Ossetians and the Georgians, and prohibiting lower-level authorities from attempting to resolve the conflict.

Ossetia spans the central Caucasus Mountains, commanding a strategic location along the Georgian Military Highway.¹ Its people, the Ossetians, speak an Iranian language unrelated to Russian or Georgian, and the geographic divide created by the Caucasus Mountains has led to the development of slightly different dialects in North and South Ossetia.² The region has been both geographically and politically divided since 1774, when modern-day North Ossetia was conquered by the Russian Empire; South Ossetia was absorbed into the Russian Empire along with Georgia in 1801.³ North

¹ Thomas de Waal, *The Caucasus: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 136.

² James S. Olson, Lee Brigance Pappas, and Nicholas C.J. Pappas, eds., *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 522.

³ *Ibid.*, 523.

Ossetia was made part of the Terek Oblast, while South Ossetia was placed in the Governorate of Tbilisi.⁴ As such, while the Ossetians were divided, they were on equal footing with neighboring ethnic groups, as all were directly governed by Imperial Russian authorities.

Tensions between the South Ossetians and the Georgians flared up seemingly overnight during the Russian Civil War, largely because the Ossetians would rather have been under the control of a Bolshevik-governed Russian state than Menshevik-led Georgia. South Ossetian Bolsheviks declared Ossetia loyal to Russia in May 1920, which prompted the Bolshevik Party's commissar for foreign affairs, Giorgy Chicherin, to criticize the Georgian Mensheviks for attacking the Soviet Republic of South Ossetia, stating that "there is no South Ossetia within Georgia."⁵ In response, Valiko Jugeli, commander of the Georgian Menshevik People's Guard, attacked South Ossetia when Ossetian forces opted to halt an offensive instead of driving further into Georgia, declaring that the Ossetians were "[Georgia's] worst and most relentless enemies."⁶ When the Soviet Union finally reestablished control of the Caucasus in 1921 and 1922, North and South Ossetia remained divided, this time between two union republics rather than imperial provinces. North Ossetia was initially incorporated into the short-lived Mountain ASSR in the North Caucasus, subordinate to the Russian SFSR; when the

⁴ Arsène Saparov, *From Conflict to Autonomy in the Caucasus: The Soviet Union and the Making of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 34.

⁵ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 137.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Mountain ASSR was dissolved in 1924, North Ossetia became an autonomous oblast within the RSFSR.^{7 8} South Ossetia, meanwhile, remained under Georgian control, as it was made an autonomous oblast within the Georgian portion of the Transcaucasian SFSR.⁹ Ossetia thus remained divided as of 1924, but North and South Ossetia enjoyed equal levels of autonomy within their respective union republics.

While granting South Ossetia autonomy in recognition of its support of the Bolsheviks and in order to ensure respect for Ossetians' rights as an ethnic minority was a logical decision, the inclusion of South Ossetia within the Transcaucasian SFSR, and later the Georgian SSR, is less straightforward. The initial decision to subordinate South Ossetia to Georgia was based largely on the fact that the Democratic Republic of Georgia had successfully established control of South Ossetia during its brief independence.¹⁰ There were later attempts to reunite North and South Ossetia, most notably a proposal made by Anastas Mikoyan in 1925, which would have created a single Ossetian autonomous republic within the Georgian SSR. However, Stalin denied this proposal out of concern that removing North Ossetia from the RSFSR would spark separatist movements in Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetia; if these territories successfully left the RSFSR for the TSFSR, separatist movements would appear among

⁷ "Статья № 41: Декрет Всероссийского Центрального Исполнительного Комитета Советов 'Об Автономной Горской Социалистической Советской Республике,'" *Istoricheskie Materialy*, accessed April 29, 2016, <http://istmat.info/node/45779>.

⁸ Bahruz Balayev, *The Right to Self-Determination in the South Caucasus: Nagorno-Karabakh in Context* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 117.

⁹ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 137.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

the Don, Terek, and Kuban Cossacks, thus planting the seeds of Great Russian nationalism.¹¹ The status of North and South Ossetia was effectively finalized by the Constitution of 1936, which upgraded North Ossetia to an autonomous republic within the RSFSR, but left South Ossetia's status as an autonomous republic within Georgia unchanged.¹² At this point, it became clear that Ossetia would remain divided for the foreseeable future despite the Soviet nominal belief in national self-determination, and the power differentials that drove the conflict were fully established.

As noted above, the South Ossetians had been on equal footing with the Georgians until the Russian Civil War, and enjoyed the same level of autonomy as the Ossetians living in the North Caucasus until 1936. However, once the 1936 constitution was enacted, the South Ossetians found themselves in much the same situation as the Karabakh Armenians: they were now subordinate to an ethnic group with which they had been on equal footing until the Russian Civil War broke out, and they enjoyed less autonomy than members of their own ethnic group in a different union republic. In some ways, though, the South Ossetians were even worse off than the Karabakh Armenians. In 1932, the People's Commissariat for Education declared the Ossetians "culturally backwards," as it had with the Azeris.¹³ This designation effectively marked the Ossetians as culturally inferior to the titular nationalities of both union republics in

¹¹ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 397-398.

¹² "Конституция Союза Советских Социалистических Республик 1936-ого года, Глава II, Статья 25," Garant, accessed May 1, 2016, http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/1936/red_1936/3958676/.

¹³ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 127.

which they resided, thus creating a cultural power differential in addition to a political one.

The Ossetians' relative lack of cultural development became especially problematic in 1937, when Georgia began a "Georgianization" campaign in South Ossetia. Schools in South Ossetia were no longer allowed to use Ossetian as a language of instruction, using Georgian or Russian instead.¹⁴ Moreover, the Ossetian language had been almost exclusively a spoken language until the early 1900s, and North and South Ossetia lacked a common script for their shared language until 1954.¹⁵ As part of the Georgianization campaign of the late 1930s, an alphabet based on the Georgian script was imposed on the Ossetian language within South Ossetia, while Stalin's ideology of the "friendship of peoples" prompted the creation and implementation of an Ossetian Cyrillic alphabet in North Ossetia, which had been adapting to a Latin script until that point.¹⁶ The elimination of Ossetian-language schooling in the Georgian SSR and the constant changes to the Ossetian alphabet not only hindered the Ossetians' further cultural development, but also stifled Ossetian nationalism. As the Georgian alphabet is not used outside of Georgia, its imposition on the Ossetian language in South Ossetia hampered South Ossetians' ability to communicate with anyone outside of the Georgian SSR, including their fellow Ossetians. This lack of a common script between North and South Ossetia effectively prevented the two territories from

¹⁴ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 84.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

communicating with each other, let alone advocating together for the reunion of Ossetia.

Many aspects of the conflict between South Ossetia and Georgia, such as the political and cultural power differentials, stem from the fact that the Ossetians were divided between two union republics and lacked any ethnic or linguistic relationship to the titular nationality of either republic. As noted in the previous chapter, the Ossetians are not the only South Caucasian ethnic group in this situation, since the Armenians and the Lezgins are also divided across two union republics. The Ossetians' situation is much closer to that of the Karabakh Armenians than the Lezgins, though. The Lezgins bear no ethnolinguistic relation to the Azeris, but are closely related to certain other ethnic groups with which they shared the Dagestan ASSR, particularly the Avars, Dargins, and Tsez.¹⁷ Ossetian, on the other hand, is not closely related to any other language in the Caucasus. It is one of only five Eastern Iranian languages spoken in the former Soviet Union; the other four, including its closest relative, Yaghnobi, are only spoken in Tajikistan.¹⁸ As such, both the North and South Ossetians were entirely unrelated to the titular nationality of the republic in which they resided, and the Ossetians had been split up and placed under the control of totally unrelated ethnic groups with little input on

¹⁷ "Nakh-Daghestanian Family," Glottolog, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/nakh1245>.

¹⁸ "Eastern Iranian Subfamily," Glottolog, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/east2704>.

their part and little justification save for Stalin's fears that reunifying Ossetia would spark separatist movements elsewhere in the North Caucasus.

Ossetians on both sides of the Caucasus Mountains found this separation and subordination galling in light of the Soviet Union's espousal of national self-determination, but the South Ossetians were especially incensed. During the Russian Civil War, between 1918 and 1920, the South Ossetians had staged three major uprisings against the Democratic Republic of Georgia with the support of the Bolsheviks.¹⁹ However, when the Red Army retook the South Caucasus, Georgia was placed in control of South Ossetia in recognition of the fact that Georgia had maintained control over South Ossetia, even though South Ossetia had supported the Bolsheviks and Georgia had opposed them.²⁰ As might be expected, many South Ossetians believed that Soviet authorities showed favoritism to the Georgians when conflicts arose. This perception was heightened by the extremely high rank of Joseph Stalin, Sergo Ordzhonikidze, and Lavrenty Beria, all ethnic Georgians, within the government of the Soviet Union. Georgians were disproportionately overrepresented at the highest levels of Soviet government, whereas Ossetians faced far greater difficulty reaching high-level government posts due to their status as "culturally backwards."²¹ The overrepresentation of Georgians and underrepresentation of Ossetians at the All-Union

¹⁹ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 137.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

level of government was particularly problematic in light of the power structure the Soviet Union had created.

As noted in the preceding chapter, the 1936 and 1977 constitutions of the Soviet Union stated that any alterations to the boundaries of union republics, the creation of any new lower-level territorial units, and any changes to the status of any lower-level territorial units had to be approved at the All-Union level of government.^{22 23} The 1977 constitution additionally stipulated that the territory of a union republic could not be altered without the consent of the republic-level government, and stated that union republics were to determine their own internal subdivisions.²⁴ These provisions in the Soviet constitutions effectively allowed the Georgian SSR to unilaterally impose its will on South Ossetia and prevented North and South Ossetia from working together towards reunion. Since territorial changes had to be approved by any union republics they affected and approved again at the All-Union level of government in order to be implemented, the RSFSR and the Georgian SSR would have had to separately agree to North and South Ossetian proposals, and any changes that those union republics agreed to would then have to be confirmed by the government of the Soviet Union as a whole. Even if North and South Ossetia did not attempt to reunite, South Ossetia was subject to whatever conditions the Georgian SSR imposed on it, since the boundaries and

²² “Конституция СССР 1936-ого года, Глава II, Статья 14.”

²³ “Конституция Союза Советских Социалистических Республик 1977-ого года, § III, Глава 8, Статья 73,” Garant, accessed May 1, 2016, http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/1977/red_1977/5478732/.

²⁴ “Конституция СССР 1977-ого года, § III, Статья 9.”

autonomy level of South Ossetia were determined by the government of the Georgian SSR with the approval of the overarching Soviet government. Once the Soviet Union collapsed, however, Georgia no longer had the backing of the All-Union government, and the internal power structure that prevented North and South Ossetia from working together was gone.

In November 1989, as the Soviet Union was crumbling, the Supreme Soviet of South Ossetia attempted to take advantage of the weakening power structure by unilaterally upgraded South Ossetia's status to that of an autonomous republic within Georgia and taking steps towards union with North Ossetia.²⁵ Just over a year later, in December 1990, the government of the Georgian SSR, led by Zviad Gamsakhurdia, responded by declaring that South Ossetia was no longer autonomous, at which point armed conflict broke out between the two parties.²⁶ Georgia continued to grow increasingly unstable throughout 1991, as the country descended into poverty, no economic reforms were made, Gamsakhurdia was criticized for his failure to condemn the coup attempt against Gorbachev, and the leader of the National Guard that Gamsakhurdia had created began an armed rebellion against him.²⁷ Gamsakhurdia was ousted in the autumn of 1991, but the Military Council of Georgia, which had overthrown him, refused to restore South Ossetia's autonomy.²⁸ The following spring,

²⁵ Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 341.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 342.

²⁷ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 134-135.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 142.

the leaders of the coup that had deposed Gamsakhurdia invited Eduard Shevardnadze, the former head of the Communist Party of the Georgian SSR, to become Prime Minister, and Shevardnadze attempted to negotiate an end to the armed conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia. However, his attempts were stymied by the Georgian military restarting artillery bombardment of South Ossetia, which prompted Russian military intervention on behalf of the South Ossetians, and only direct negotiation between Shevardnadze and Boris Yeltsin managed to bring about a ceasefire.²⁹ Armed conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia broke out twice more, first after the Rose Revolution in 2003, then in the lead-up to the 2008 Russia-Georgia War.³⁰ South Ossetia has been under *de facto* Russian control since the 2008 conflict, and remains as such at present.³¹

The conflict between South Ossetia and Georgia did not begin until the Russian Civil War, and was initially based on ideological differences, with the South Ossetians supporting the Mensheviks and Georgia supporting the Bolsheviks. Further conflict could have been prevented by allowing both South and North Ossetians to determine which union republic they would belong to, which would have allowed some degree of national self-determination. Creating a power structure that did not allow decisions to be unilaterally imposed on South Ossetia from above, or at least creating an alternative

²⁹ Smith, *Red Nations*, 342.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Maria Otashvili, "Russia's Quiet Annexation of South Ossetia," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, February 2015.

means for South Ossetia to request that its grievances be addressed when the Georgian SSR would not compromise, would have also gone a long way towards preventing the conflict from escalating. However, the Soviet nationality policy worsened the conflict and removed any means of relieving ethnic tensions. As such, when the Soviet Union finally collapsed and the governments of its successor states were still weak, South Ossetia saw a chance to force Georgia to address its grievances, which still have yet to be resolved.

Chapter Four: Abkhazia

At first glance, the conflict in Abkhazia appears extremely similar to the South Ossetia conflict. A smaller ethnic group with ethnic and linguistic ties to the North Caucasus was placed under Georgian control, despite the fact that the Georgians and the subordinate ethnic group have minimal ethnolinguistic connections. A “Georgianization” campaign created resentment, which was then fueled by the smaller group’s lack of political power. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, without a powerful central authority holding everything in check, the smaller ethnic group lashed out, and Russian intervention in the conflict led to a stalemate, which then devolved into a frozen conflict. However, there are some key differences between the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia – namely a longer history of cultural suppression, a higher initial level of autonomy within the Soviet power structure, and the lack of any closely-related ethnic groups in other union republics who could lobby on behalf of the Abkhaz – which exacerbated the effects of the Soviet nationality policy in the latter conflict.

Abkhazia occupies the northwestern part of Georgia, wedged between the Black Sea and the western end of the Caucasus Mountains. The ethnic group for which it is named, the Abkhaz, speak a language that is related to the Circassian languages of the northwestern Caucasus (Adyghe, Cherkess, and Kabardin).¹ As such, like the Ossetians,

¹ “Abkhaz-Adyghe Family,” Glottolog, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/abkh1242>.

the Abkhaz have ethnolinguistic ties to the Russian North Caucasus. However, the Abkhaz were substantially worse off than either the Ossetians or the Georgians under imperial rule. Abkhazia was a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire between 1578 and 1801, during which time many of its inhabitants converted to Sunni Islam.² After the Russian Empire annexed eastern Georgia in 1801, Abkhazia was subjected to 63 years of war between the Ottoman and Russian Empires and various regional ethnic groups.³ The Russian Empire conquered Abkhazia in 1864, at which point it became the Sukhumi Okrug, and Abkhazia was separate from – but not equal to – the rest of Georgia until the Russian Revolution.⁴

As soon as the Russian Empire established control of the area, Russian authorities ordered the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Abkhaz, Adyghe, Cherkess, and Kabardins to the Ottoman Empire via the Black Sea, and continued rebellion in Abkhazia resulted in more Abkhaz being deported in August 1866.⁵ The now-depopulated territory was settled by Russians, Greeks, Ukrainians, Armenians, and Mingrelians (a sub-group of the Georgians), all of which followed Eastern Orthodox Christianity.⁶ The Muslim Abkhaz, on the other hand, were subjected to intense

² James S. Olson, Lee Brigance Pappas, and Nicholas C.J. Pappas, eds., *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 7.

³ Timothy K. Blauvelt, “‘From words to action!’: Nationality policy in Soviet Abkhazia, 1921-38,” in *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and its Successors*, ed. Stephen F. Jones (New York: Routledge, 2014), 233.

⁴ Arsène Saparov, *From Conflict to Autonomy in the Caucasus: The Soviet Union and the Making of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 34.

⁵ Thomas de Waal, *The Caucasus: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 149.

⁶ Olson, Pappas, and Pappas, *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*, 9.

Russification, and following a third rebellion during the Russo-Turkish War in 1877, the Abkhaz were declared second-class citizens and prohibited from living in the major coastal towns.⁷ Due to Russification, the poor treatment of the Abkhaz at the hands of the Russian Empire, and Georgian collaboration with the Russian Empire during the conquest of the Caucasus, the Abkhaz grew resentful of the relative freedom the Georgians enjoyed. This resentment would soon prove problematic.

Abkhazia, like South Ossetia, was supportive of the Bolsheviks, who lent their support to the Kharaz resistance movement. Led by Nestor Lakoba, a future leader of Soviet Abkhazia, and backed by the Bolsheviks, Kharaz attempted to seize Sukhumi and set up a government there in April 1918, but was dislodged two months later by forces from the newly-created Democratic Republic of Georgia.⁸ Abkhazia was offered autonomous status within the DRG, but despite frequent Bolshevik insurgent activity and opposition from members of the Georgian Constituent Assembly, the government of the DRG attempted to make Georgian the official language for the entire country (including Abkhazia) and set up a regional government composed mainly of ethnic Georgians.⁹ Especially considering the lower status of the Abkhaz than the Georgians under Imperial Russian rule, these impositions only worsened Abkhazian resentment of the Georgians, and insurgent activity continued until Georgia was conquered by the Red Army in 1921.

⁷ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 150.

⁸ Blauvelt, "From words to action!," 233.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Following the Soviet conquest of the South Caucasus, Abkhazia existed as a *de facto* independent Bolshevik republic for just under a year. In February of 1922, the status of Abkhazia was decided: Abkhazia would be part of the Transcaucasian SFSR, on equal footing with Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, but associated by treaty with Georgia.¹⁰ As is the case with South Ossetia, the inclusion of Abkhazia in the TSFSR initially seems like an illogical choice, as the Abkhaz were far more closely related to the Adyghe, Cherkess, and Kabardins of the Russian SFSR than to the Georgians in terms of language and ethnicity.¹¹ Abkhazia was intentionally placed within Georgia for much the same reason that South Ossetia was: to provide an internal counterweight to the far less pro-Bolshevik Georgians.¹² For this reason, even though less than 30 percent of Abkhazia's residents were ethnically Abkhaz as of 1926, Abkhazia retained its status as an equal of Georgia until 1931, and flourished in the 1920s and early 1930s under the leadership of Lakoba and the patronage of Joseph Stalin.¹³ However, Abkhazia's happiness was not to last. The first sign of trouble was the downgrading of Abkhazia to an autonomous republic within Georgia (then still part of the TSFSR) in 1931, which once again made the Abkhaz subordinate to the Georgians.¹⁴ The following year, the People's Commissariat for Education declared the Abkhaz a "culturally backwards" nationality,

¹⁰ Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 343.

¹¹ "Abkhaz-Adyghe Family," Glottolog.

¹² Smith, *Red Nations*, 343.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 150.

while the Georgians, as noted in previous chapters, were declared “cultured.”¹⁵ While this power differential was not new for the Abkhazians, as it was for the Karabakh Armenians and the South Ossetians, the Abkhaz considered it reminiscent of harsh Imperial Russian treatment, renewing resentments of the Georgians and the Russians that dated back to the tsarist era.

Additional fuel was added to the fire in 1936, when Nestor Lakoba was invited by Lavrenty Beria, a Mingrelian hailing from the Abkhazian capital of Sukhumi, to spend an evening with him and Stalin in Tbilisi; during the evening, Lakoba was poisoned and died.^{16 17} That same year, the TSFSR was dissolved, and the new Soviet constitution effectively ensured that Abkhazia would remain an ASSR under the control of the Georgian SSR by declaring that union republics had to consent to any changes in their boundaries and that those changes then had to be approved at the All-Union level.^{18 19} An intense Georgianization campaign, directed by Beria, ensued after the death of Lakoba and the dissolution of the TSFSR, further reinforcing the idea that the Abkhaz were culturally and politically inferior to the Georgians. Lakoba was posthumously declared an enemy of the people, most of his family members were arrested and executed, and many Mingrelians and Svans (another subgroup of the Georgians) were

¹⁵ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 127.

¹⁶ Olson, Pappas, and Pappas, *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*, 9.

¹⁷ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 150.

¹⁸ Smith, *Red Nations*, 343.

¹⁹ “Конституция Союза Советских Социалистических Республик 1936-ого года, Глава II, Статьи 14, 18, и 25,” Garant, accessed May 1, 2016, http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/1936/red_1936/3958676/.

given houses in Abkhazia, bringing the proportion of ethnic Abkhaz in the territory down to just 18 percent of its population by 1939.²⁰ The Abkhaz language was also converted from a Latin script to a Georgian one and place-names were given Georgian grammatical endings, both of which were seen as further attempts to reduce Abkhaz influence with their own territory.²¹ Abkhaz intellectuals were repressed, further threatening the survival of the Abkhaz language and culture, and many high-ranking Abkhaz party officials were replaced by Georgians, cementing the dominance of the Georgians over the Abkhaz and reducing the number of officials who might speak out against the treatment of the Abkhaz.^{22 23} The cultural repression of the Abkhaz continued even after Stalin died, as the Abkhaz language was switched from a Georgian to a Cyrillic script, the sixth alphabet the language had used in a century, in 1954.²⁴ Thus, the power differential between the Abkhaz and the Russians and Georgians was at least as great as it had been under tsarist rule, but it was all the more galling in light of the Soviet Union's advocacy for national self-determination and protection of minority rights.

Though the Abkhaz and the Ossetians had been more or less equally culturally developed by the beginning of the Georgianization campaign, the Abkhaz were hit substantially harder. This is partly due to the aforementioned repopulation of Abkhazia with non-Abkhaz and replacement of Abkhaz officials, but unlike South Ossetia (and the

²⁰ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 150-151.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 151.

²² Smith, *Red Nations*, 344.

²³ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 151.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Karabakh Armenians), the Abkhaz lacked any close ethnic relatives who could lobby on their behalf. Though there is a small diaspora community of Abkhaz and Circassian peoples in Turkey as a result of the deportations in the mid-19th century, its ability to intervene on behalf of Abkhazia was curtailed by the establishment of NATO and Turkey's inclusion therein. Within the Soviet Union, the closest relatives of the Abkhaz were likewise powerless to advocate for Abkhaz rights. The three Circassian ethnic groups – the Adyghe, the Cherkess, and the Kabardins – were divided across three separate autonomous republics within the RSFSR following the dissolution of the Mountain ASSR, and all three of them had less autonomy than the Abkhaz for at least part of their existence within the USSR.

The Adyghe had only an autonomous oblast, which was entirely surrounded by majority-Russian Krasnodar Krai.²⁵ The Cherkess were likewise granted an autonomous oblast, which they shared with the Karachai, a Turkish ethnic group to which they were not related, from 1922-1926.²⁶ Though the Cherkess had an autonomous oblast to themselves from 1926 to 1957, they were once again placed in the same AO as the Karachai when the latter was returned from internal deportation.²⁷ The Kabardins, like the Cherkess, shared an AO with a Turkish ethnic group, in this case the Balkars,

²⁵ Olson, Pappas, and Pappas, *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*, 17.

²⁶ "Karachayev-Cherkesiya," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Karachayev-Cherkesiya>.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

beginning in 1922.²⁸ This territory was upgraded to an ASSR in 1936, then exclusively designated for the Kabardins following the deportation of the Balkars in 1943, and finally reconstituted as the Kabardin-Balkar ASSR with the return of the Balkars in 1957.²⁹ This division of the Abkhaz and the Circassian ethnic groups, as well as the frequent changes in administrative status of the territories in which the Circassian groups resided, prevented them from uniting or from effectively advocating for each other. As such, unlike the Ossetians and the Karabakh Armenians, there were no groups outside of Abkhazia who could effectively lobby on behalf of the Abkhaz. Combined with the way in which the power structure of the Soviet Union essentially gave the Georgian SSR and All-Union-level authorities complete control over the fate of the Abkhaz ASSR without allowing the Abkhaz a means to appeal their status, the Abkhaz felt that they had no choice but to accept the cultural and political dominance of the Georgians. Without a means of solving the conflict between the Georgians and the Abkhaz, it could only continue festering until, as the Soviet Union collapsed, it finally ruptured into armed hostilities.

There was a brief glimmer of hope for peaceful relations between the Abkhaz and the Georgians between 1977 and 1985, as Eduard Shevardnadze, leader of the Georgian Communist Party, agreed to make a number of concessions to the Abkhaz and publicly declared that earlier Georgian policies towards the Abkhaz had been

²⁸ "Kabardino-Balkariya," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Kabardino-Balkariya>.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

“chauvinistic.”³⁰ However, a number of ethnic Georgians complained that these concessions denied them their privileges as the titular nationality of the Georgian SSR, which did nothing to improve Abkhaz-Georgian relations.³¹ The *perestroika* movement only increased Abkhaz suspicion towards the Georgians, as the Abkhaz feared that a renewed Georgian nationalist movement and demands for greater linguistic and cultural rights would bring about another wave of Georgianization.³²

During the collapse of the Soviet Union, Zviad Gamsakhuria, the newly-elected leader of the Georgian SSR, did little to allay the fears of the Abkhaz. Between 1985 and 1991, the Abkhaz rallied in favor of remaining within the Soviet Union, afraid of what an independent Georgia might mean for them, while the Georgians clamored for independence, and tensions only escalated when multiple protests devolved into violence in mid-1990.³³ Though Gamsakhurdia initially urged the Abkhaz to unite with the Georgians, saying that both were captives of Russia, the Abkhaz distrusted him due to his earlier unwillingness to recognize Abkhazia as separate from Georgia and rebuffed his offer, declaring Abkhazia’s loyalty to the Soviet Union instead.³⁴ Gamsakhurdia then enacted new Georgianization policies, which seemed to confirm Abkhaz fears of

³⁰ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 152.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Smith, *Red Nations*, 346.

³³ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 152-153.

³⁴ Ibid., 153.

assimilation, but the conflict only came to a head with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the winter of the same year.³⁵

The final dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 and the subsequent ousting of Gamsakhurdia left both the Georgians and the Abkhaz on uncertain ground. The power-sharing deal that the two sides had agreed to in August 1991 broke down in the spring of 1992, and the Georgian military inherited the armor and artillery of the Soviet Transcaucasian Military District in July of 1992, allowing Georgia to impose its will on Abkhazia by force.³⁶ Georgian troops appeared in Abkhazia the following month, and though the Georgian forces were better-established and managed to take Sukhumi, Abkhaz forces pushed some Georgian troops north into Russia, forcing Russia to intervene.³⁷ There were several attempts at a ceasefire, but none held until 1994, when Russian troops were stationed indefinitely along the Russia-Georgia border, ostensibly because Georgia (by now a member of the Russian-led Commonwealth of Independent States) requested military assistance from the CIS in order to defeat pro-Gamsakhurdia forces.³⁸ Armed hostilities ceased, but no peace deal was reached, and the dispute between Abkhazia and Georgia devolved into a frozen conflict. The conflict remained frozen until the 2008 Russia-Georgia War, at which point Russian troops began

³⁵ Smith, *Red Nations*, 346.

³⁶ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 153.

³⁷ Smith, *Red Nations*, 346-347.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 347.

occupying Abkhazia, and the territory has been under *de facto* Russian governance ever since.³⁹

Of the three frozen conflicts in the South Caucasus, the conflict in Abkhazia was perhaps the most severely affected by the Soviet nationality policy. The top-down system of decision-making allowed the Abkhaz to be subordinated to an unrelated ethnic group in order to counter anti-Soviet sentiment among the latter, and allowed them to be separated from their closest ethnolinguistic relatives. Favoritism towards the Georgians by Stalin and Beria, as well as the designation of the Abkhaz as “culturally backwards,” allowed the Georgian SSR to effectively disregard Soviet cultural protection policies with regards to the Abkhaz. Between the vast political and cultural power differential, the lack of any allied ethnic groups in the Soviet Union who could lobby on their behalf, and the way the power structure allowed policies that favored the Georgians to be imposed on Abkhazia, the conflict had no outlet until the Soviet Union collapsed. At that point, after years of the conflict brewing beneath the surface and without a central authority to maintain the status quo, armed conflict seemed to be the only solution in sight for the Abkhaz.

³⁹ Sergei Markedonov and Thomas de Waal, “Новый договор не является водоразделом в российско-абхазских отношениях,” *Caucasus Times*, December 17, 2014.

Chapter Five: Adjara

While Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia all descended into armed conflict after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was one autonomous territory in the South Caucasus that managed to avoid conflict. The dispute over Adjara, a coastal region in southern Georgia, never escalated to armed hostilities as disputes in the other three autonomous territories did. This is largely because unique circumstances in Adjara helped to mitigate some of the negative side effects of the policy. Unlike the Karabakh Armenians, Ossetians, and Abkhaz, the Adjarians had close ethnic and linguistic ties to the union republic in which they were located, which helped to lessen the impact of newly-created power differentials and favoritism in cultural policy. As a result, the attempts at Georgianization that were so detested by the Ossetians and the Abkhaz had not had much effect on Adjara, and had therefore provoked much less resentment towards the Georgians. When the Soviet Union collapsed, though there was conflict over the status of Adjara in the newly-independent Georgia, this relative lack of bad blood between the two parties allowed the conflict to be peacefully resolved without major armed hostilities or foreign intervention.

Adjara occupies a small, rectangular patch of territory in southern Georgia, bounded by the Black Sea in the west and Turkey in the south. The region was brought under Imperial Russian control in 1878, when the Congress of Berlin awarded the

territory to the Russian Empire at the close of the Russo-Turkish War.¹ Like Abkhazia, Adjara was ruled separately from the rest of modern-day Georgia, as it was made a separate territory, which was named Batumi Oblast after its administrative center and main port.² By the time the Russian Empire collapsed, Batumi Oblast had become one of the most economically valuable regions of the South Caucasus, as the port of Batumi had become a shipping and transport hub for the railways and oil pipelines leading out of Tbilisi and Baku.³ Once the Imperial Russian government was removed from power and Georgia declared its independence, Adjara rapidly became a bone of contention among its neighbors.

Adjara had been under Ottoman control longer than any other part of present-day Georgia, and thus had very close ties, especially religious ties, to Turkey. As such, the Adjarians fought alongside the Turkish military against forces from the Democratic Republic of Georgia between 1918 and 1921, and were supportive of the Turkish troops who moved in to occupy the region in 1921.⁴ The leadership of the DRG, on the other hand, viewed Adjara (as well as neighboring territories like Kars and Hopa), as Georgian, and so refused to allow Turkey to establish control of the territory without a fight.⁵ The

¹ James S. Olson, Lee Brigance Pappas, and Nicholas C.J. Pappas, eds., *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 14.

² Arsène Saparov, *From Conflict to Autonomy in the Caucasus: The Soviet Union and the Making of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 34.

³ Olson, Pappas, and Pappas, *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*, 14.

⁴ Thomas de Waal, *The Caucasus: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 146.

⁵ Alexandre Kukhianidze, "Georgia's military and civil security challenges," in *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and its Successors*, ed. Stephen F. Jones (New York: Routledge, 2014), 96.

Bolsheviks, meanwhile, moved Red Army troops into Adjara during their conquest of Georgia in 1921, claiming that the Adjarians had been oppressed in the same way the Ossetians and Abkhaz had and that the Soviet Union sought to protect such oppressed nationalities, though Soviet authorities likely realized the strategic importance and economic value of the territory and thus had more pragmatic motivations as well.⁶ Control of Adjara, along with Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhchivan, would only be determined by the Treaty of Kars in 1922.

The Treaty of Kars established that Adjara, like the Nakhchivan exclave of Azerbaijan, would be controlled by the Soviet Union and granted the status of an autonomous republic, with Turkey acting as an external guarantor of its status.⁷ In exchange for the cession of Adjara, Turkey received special trading and customs privileges along its land border with the Georgian SSR and at the port of Batumi.⁸ Because of the terms of the Treaty of Kars, Adjara was perhaps the only autonomous ethnoterritorial unit in the South Caucasus whose union republic membership and level of autonomy made sense for reasons other than political strategizing or logistical importance.

Unlike the Karabakh Armenians, South Ossetians, and Abkhazians, the Adjarians have very close ethnolinguistic ties to the Georgians, the titular nationality of the union

⁶ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 146.

⁷ “Договор о дружбе между АССР, ССРА и ССРГ с одной стороны и Турцией с другой, заключенный при участии РСФСР в Карсе (Карский договор), Статья 6,” Khronos, accessed April 29, 2016, http://hrono.ru/dokum/192_dok/19211013kars.php.

⁸ “Карский договор, Статья 6-8.”

republic to which Adjara belongs.⁹ In contrast, Nagorno-Karabakh had been placed in the Azerbaijani SSR because the Bolsheviks viewed the consolidation of the ethnically-diverse Azerbaijani SSR as more of a priority than satisfying the demands of the weak and conflict-ravaged Armenian SSR.¹⁰ Likewise, pro-Bolshevik Abkhazia had been placed in the Georgian SSR in order to act as an internal counterweight to the less Bolshevik-friendly Georgians.¹¹ South Ossetia was included in the Georgian SSR because the Soviet authorities hoped that the pro-Bolshevik South Ossetians would keep the Georgian Military Highway, which connected Russia to Georgia by way of Ossetia, open in order to accommodate troop movements if needed.¹² Adjara was also given a level of autonomy that matched the relationship of the Adjarians to the Georgians. Though the Adjarians were very closely related to the Georgians ethnically and linguistically, the additional time the Adjarians had spent under Ottoman control had made their culture markedly different from that of the rest of Georgia. Most importantly, the Adjarians and Georgians were mainly distinguished by their different religions, as many Adjarians had converted to Sunni Islam in the 16th and 17th centuries, whereas the majority of Georgians had continued to follow Eastern Orthodox Christianity.¹³ The fact that the Adjarians and Georgians followed different religions, but were close ethnolinguistic

⁹ "Modern Georgian," Glottolog, accessed April 29, 2016, <http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/nucl1302>.

¹⁰ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 105.

¹¹ Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 344.

¹² de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 136-137.

¹³ Olson, Pappas, and Pappas, *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*, 14.

relatives, would prove to be critical in preventing conflict by lessening the effects of the Soviet cultural policies that had provoked so much resentment in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

As was the case with the Azeris, Ossetians, and Abkhaz, the Adjarians were declared a “culturally backwards” nationality by the People’s Commissariat for Education in 1932.¹⁴ However, this declaration did not have nearly as much impact on the Adjarians as it did on the other three ethnic groups for two key reasons. First, the Adjarians used Georgian as a literary language, and the only major difference between the Adjarian and Georgian languages was a greater number of Turkish loanwords in the former.¹⁵ Second, while the Adjarians, as well as the Svans and Mingrelians, were listed as a separate ethnic group from the Georgians on the 1926 census, all three smaller groups were consolidated with the Georgians for the 1939 census.¹⁶ As such, unlike the South Ossetians and the Abkhaz, there was little if any cultural power differential between the Adjarians and the Georgians. Moreover, as most Georgians were Eastern Orthodox Christians and most Adjarians were Sunni Muslims, one of the only major cultural distinctions between the two groups was their religion.¹⁷ This distinction was

¹⁴ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 127.

¹⁵ Olson, Pappas, and Pappas, *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*, 14.

¹⁶ Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 329-333.

¹⁷ Smith, *Red Nations*, 353.

largely irrelevant, though, since the Soviet Union was officially atheist and generally secular.¹⁸

Because of the irrelevance of their religious differences and their use of a common literary language, it was much more difficult for the Georgians to effectively implement Georgianization policies in Adjara than it was to target unrelated ethnic groups like the Ossetians and the Abkhaz. Moreover, the classification of the Adjarians as a subgroup of the Georgians from 1939 onward implied that they were already essentially Georgian, and that any attempt to Georgianize them would therefore be pointless. As such, the close relationship of the Adjarians to the Georgians effectively spared them from the intense Georgianization campaigns that had created so much resentment among the South Ossetians and the Abkhaz. Relations between Adjara and the Georgian SSR remained relatively peaceful, in large part due to the relative lack of cultural repression, until the late 1980s. However, as in South Ossetian and Abkhazia, the election of Zviad Gamsakhurdia as president of the Georgian SSR in 1990 would provoke conflict.

Of all the leaders of the Georgian SSR, Gamsakhurdia was perhaps the most openly hostile towards the Adjarians. He declared that, as Muslims, the Adjarians were not true Georgians, called for an entirely Christian Georgia, and openly advocated for the abolition of Adjara's autonomous status.^{19 20} Adjara, meanwhile, found a figurehead

¹⁸ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 146.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

for its nationalist movement in Aslan Abashidze. A descendant of Adjarian nobility, Abashidze served as the deputy head of communal services for the Georgian SSR, managing state-owned local enterprises across the republic, and he developed a network of political and economic connections and enriched himself by way of kickbacks and bribes in the process.²¹ Additionally, when the Soviet Union opened its borders for trade and travel, Adjara's control of Sarpi, the main port of entry on the Turkish-Georgian border, made it a strategically and economically valuable area and therefore gave Adjara a certain amount of leverage.²² The drastic increase in commerce between Turkey and Georgia also created circumstances in which bribery and protection rackets were common, and Abashidze managed to use his connections to profit off of the racketeering.²³ ²⁴ While Abashidze was consolidating his power, Gamsakhurdia's supporters in Adjara, all of whom were Christian Georgians, were taking advantage of their victory in the 1990 parliamentary elections by forcing the remaining Communist officials in Adjara to quit their posts.²⁵ The tensions between Abashidze and the Adjarian nationalists on the one hand, and Gamsakhurdia and his supporters on the other, seemingly came to a head in April of 1990.

²⁰ Smith, *Red Nations*, 353.

²¹ Georgi M. Derluguian, "How Adjara Did Not Become Another Bosnia: A Study in the Interplay of Historical Determination, Human Agency, and Accident in the Chaotic Transition," in *After the Fall: 1989 and the Future of Freedom*, ed. George Katsiaficas (New York: Routledge, 2001), 115.

²² *Ibid.*, 116.

²³ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 146.

²⁴ Derluguian, "How Adjara Did Not Become Another Bosnia," 116.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 115-116.

On April 20, 1990, a massive rally took place in the regional capital of Batumi, its participants apparently brought in by buses that Abashidze had commissioned from the garages and factories that he managed.²⁶ Brass bands performed the Soviet national anthem while elderly villagers recited Muslim prayers in defiance of Gamsakhurdia's anti-Soviet and anti-Islamic policies, and protestors demanded the preservation of Adjara's autonomous status.²⁷ Gamsakhurdia's followers in Adjara resigned in response to the pressure, allowing Abashidze to take control of the region, and Gamsakhurdia himself was deposed in a coup and expelled from Georgia the following year.^{28 29} Abashidze strengthened his grip on Adjara and his popularity by recruiting almost a tenth of the male population of Adjara into the region's police and customs services, which he then used to prevent warlords from entering the territory during the conflicts of 1991-1994, allowing Adjara to enjoy relative peace.^{30 31} Despite the lull, however, the conflict between Georgia and Adjara was not yet over.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the resultant loss of state subsidies brought severe economic hardship to Adjara, just as it did in the rest of Georgia and elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, but corruption within his personal regime ensured that

²⁶ Ibid., 116.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ de Waal, *The Caucasus*, 134-135.

³⁰ Derluguian, "How Adjara Did Not Become Another Bosnia," 117.

³¹ Ghia Nodia, "A New Cycle of Instability in Georgia: New Troubles and Old Problems," in *Crossroads and Conflict: Security and Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, ed. Gary K. Bertsch et al. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 193.

Abashidze was unaffected by the economic troubles.³² Additionally, the new leader of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, was preoccupied with the much more severe conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and as such was largely willing to give Adjara free rein.³³ By 1997, however, the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia had devolved into stalemates, and conflict again broke out between Adjara and the Georgian central government. In late 1997, Shevardnadze's party refused to allow Abashidze to declare Adjara a free economic zone, and Abashidze's party boycotted the meetings of the Georgian parliament the following spring in response.³⁴ This political stalemate, in which Abashidze held the central government at arm's length while running Adjara as a personal fiefdom of sorts, would continue until 2003.

Widespread electoral fraud during the 2003 parliamentary election, which was at its worst in Adjara, provoked massive protests among supporters of the opposition parties.³⁵ In response, Shevardnadze requested help from Abashidze, who sent several busloads of paid protestors to Tbilisi, but the demonstrators were unenthusiastic and vastly outnumbered by the supporters of opposition leader Mikheil Saakashvili.³⁶ The protestors Abashidze had sent were soon brought back to Adjara, and Abashidze was ousted and replaced by Saakashvili a few days later in what would come to be called the

³² Derlugian, "How Adjara Did Not Become Another Bosnia," 117-118.

³³ Smith, *Red Nations*, 353.

³⁴ Nodia, "A New Cycle of Instability in Georgia," 193.

³⁵ Lincoln A. Mitchell, *The Color Revolutions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 48.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

Rose Revolution.³⁷ Like his predecessors Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze, Saakashvili soon attempted to weaken Abashidze's hold on Adjara and bring the territory back under control of the central Georgian government, bringing Adjara and Georgia into conflict one last time.

Adjara, led by Abashidze, and Georgia, now led by Saakashvili, reached the brink of conflict a third time in the winter of 2003. Saakashvili's promises to root out governmental corruption had made him popular across Georgia, but resonated especially strongly in Adjara. Due to Abashidze's firm grip on power, trade deals with Turkey, and corruption, Adjarians were hoping for political change and still suffering from economic hardship, while Abashidze continued to amass wealth from kickbacks and remained in power despite having supported the ousted Shevardnadze.³⁸ As Adjara had almost entirely been spared from the excesses of Soviet-era Georgianization policies, the Adjarians were neither enthusiastic about separating from Georgia nor particularly resentful of the central government, and as a result of Abashidze's behavior, they now preferred Saakashvili and the Georgian government that he represented over Abashidze. In the spring of 2004, demonstrations against Abashidze began to take place across Adjara, and tensions finally came to a head in May.³⁹ In response to mounting pressure to resign, the bridges leading into Adjara from the rest of Georgia were

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Lincoln A. Mitchell, *Uncertain Democracy: U.S. Foreign Policy and Georgia's Rose Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 85.

³⁹ Ibid.

destroyed on Abashidze's orders, but the protests in Adjara only intensified and Georgian troops massed on the internal border between Georgia and Adjara, and on May 6, Abashidze fled for Russia.⁴⁰ Despite Abashidze's abdication, Saakashvili allowed Adjara to retain its autonomy, and there has not been conflict between Georgia and Adjara since.⁴¹

In contrast to Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia, the conflict in Adjara never escalated to the point of armed hostilities, largely because the close ethnolinguistic relationship between Adjara and Georgia mitigated the negative side effects of the Soviet nationality policy. Because the Adjarians were closely related to the titular nationality of the union republic to which they belonged, irredentism was not an issue as it was in Nagorno-Karabakh and South Ossetia. Additionally, the close ties between the two ethnic groups defeated the purpose of Georgianization policies, so Adjara did not experience the cultural repression that the Ossetians and the Abkhaz did. As a result, the Adjarians generally did not feel that they had experienced cultural repression or been denied national self-determination, and thus had very little, if any, resentment for the Georgian central government. Finally, the presence of a reformist leader in Saakashvili following the Rose Revolution gave Adjarians an alternative to Abashidze. This combination of good relations between Adjarians and Georgians in general, personal corruption within the Abashidze regime, and a viable alternative in

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Smith, *Red Nations*, 353.

Saakashvili made closer cooperation with the central government more appealing to Adjarians than continued *de facto* independence under Abashidze, allowing Georgia to bring Adjara back under its control without a fight.

Conclusion: Current Status of Conflicts and Prospects for Resolution

As detailed in previous chapters, the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia began with the creation of new power differentials between those ethnic groups and the titular nationalities of the union republics in which they were located. The ability of these minority groups to advocate for their desires was further hindered by their administrative separation from fellow members of their own ethnic group, or other closely-related groups, that could speak up on their behalf. Additionally, change was made nearly impossible because the autonomy level of each ethnic group was laid out in the Soviet Constitutions of 1936 and 1977, meaning that any changes in status could be seen as an attempt to deprive one of the ethnic groups involved of something that it had been constitutionally guaranteed. Finally, the top-down power structure of the Soviet Union meant that the central government was the only authority that could arbitrate conflicts and guarantee the autonomy of the smaller ethnic groups. When the Soviet Union collapsed, with tensions building over unresolved conflicts, no central authority to mediate the disputes, and the autonomy of the smaller ethnic groups in jeopardy, armed hostilities broke out in an attempt to settle the various disputes. This final chapter will discuss the current status of the three unresolved frozen conflicts (Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia), and whether they might be resolved in the foreseeable future. This chapter will also examine various factors that complicate the resolution of these conflicts.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is perhaps the most complicated of the three to resolve. Numerous ceasefires have been declared only to fall through, with the most recent failure occurring on April 2, 2016.¹ The most recent ceasefire was announced on April 5, and has held as of May 3.² As noted in Chapter 2, Nagorno-Karabakh is currently an unrecognized state with *de facto* independence, but is still nominally under Azerbaijani control.³ Further resolution of the conflict appears unlikely at this point, however, given the extremely tense relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the complex web of alliances surrounding the conflict. Armenia is primarily allied with Russia, which is the only country allied with Armenia that wields any substantial power in the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, is allied with Turkey due to their close ethnic and linguistic ties. Turkey has called on Armenia to give up its claims on Nagorno-Karabakh since at least 2003, and current President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan promised that he would fight shoulder-to-shoulder with Azerbaijan against the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh after his election as Prime Minister in 2011.^{4 5} As

¹ “Нагорный Карабах: Азербайджан объявил об одностороннем прекращении огня, но бои опять возобновились,” Kavkaz Center, last modified April 3, 2016, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2016/04/03/111906/nagornyj-karabakh--azerbajdzhan-obyavil-ob-odnostoronnem-prekraschenii-ognya--no-boi-opyat-vozobnovilis.shtml>.

² “Нагорный Карабах: Алиев снова объявил о прекращении огня,” Kavkaz Center, last modified April 5, 2016, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2016/04/05/111937/nagornyj-karabakh--aliev-snova-obyavil-o-prekraschenii-ognya.shtml>.

³ “Statement of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group,” issued March 17, 2008, <http://www.osce.org/mg/49564>.

⁴ “Турция требует от Армении освободить Карабах,” Kavkaz Center, last modified January 18, 2003, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2003/01/18/3364/turtsiya-trebuat-ot-armenii-osvobodit-karabakh.shtml>.

Turkey is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Azerbaijan is thus loosely allied with NATO.⁶ Considering the conflict that erupted in Ukraine after the removal of Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich in 2014 and the country's subsequent shift away from Russia and towards NATO and the European Union, as well as the failure to negotiate a solution to the Ukrainian crisis in the ensuing two years, the Russia-NATO polarization of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict means that this conflict is unlikely to be resolved until tensions between Russia and NATO are relaxed.

The Armenian diaspora is an additional complicating factor in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Some of the more powerful and/or populous members of NATO, especially France and the United States, are home to large diaspora-Armenian communities.⁷ As such, NATO member states with a substantial Armenian community face an impasse. Siding with Armenia in the conflict could provoke outrage in Turkey on behalf of Azerbaijan. Turkey's crucial position on the Black Sea, especially considering the threat of ISIS in the Middle East and Russian actions in Crimea, means that keeping Turkey in NATO is strategically critical for the organization. As such, offending the Turkish government by siding with Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict could prove disastrous for NATO. On the other hand, if NATO or its individual members were

⁵ "Турция: Эрдоган обещает плечом к плечу с Азербайджаном бороться за Карабах," Kavkaz Center, last modified October 26, 2011, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2011/10/26/86123/turtsiya-erdogan-obeschaet-plechom-k-plechu-s-azerbajdzhanom-borotsya-za-karabakh.shtml>.

⁶ Alexander Murinson, *Turkey's Entente with Israel and Azerbaijan: State Identity and Security in the Middle East and Caucasus* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 4-5.

⁷ Lionel Beehner, "Nagorno-Karabakh: The Crisis in the Caucasus," *The Council on Foreign Relations*, November 3, 2005.

to side with Azerbaijan, this could cause an outcry from the substantial Armenian diaspora communities in the United States and France. As such, even if Russian interests in the conflict are not taken into account, it is in the best interests of NATO member states with large Armenian diaspora communities to not take a side in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, further hindering its resolution.

Tensions between NATO and Russia are also in play in the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Georgia, like Azerbaijan, is loosely allied with NATO, though it is not a member.⁸ Additionally, Georgia is actively cooperating with and seeking accession into NATO.⁹ However, Abkhazia and South Ossetia maintain close diplomatic ties with Russia. South Ossetia has been under *de facto* Russian control since 2007, when delegates at the Sixth Congress of the Ossetian People voted for the reunion of North and South Ossetia within Russia.¹⁰ Abkhazia, along with South Ossetia, rejected then-President of Georgia Eduard Saakashvili's offer of autonomy within Georgia in the spring of 2007.¹¹ Just over a year later, Abkhazia agreed to allow Russian troops to occupy the territory in exchange for guarantees of its security.¹² The Russia-Georgia War in 2008

⁸ Murinson, *Turkey's Entente with Israel and Azerbaijan*, 5.

⁹ Ashish Kumar Sen and Giorgi Kvirikashvili, "Keeping Georgia's NATO Dream Alive," *Atlantic Council*, January 20, 2016.

¹⁰ "Южная Осетия де-факто вошла в состав России," Kavkaz Center, last modified September 20, 2007, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2007/09/20/53128/yuzhnaya-osetiya-de-fakto-voshla-v-sostav-rossii.shtml>.

¹¹ "Южная Осетия и Абхазия отвергли предложение Грузии," Kavkaz Center, last modified March 16, 2007, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2007/03/16/50032/yuzhnaya-osetiya-i-abkhaziya-otvergli-predlozhenie-gruzii.shtml>.

¹² "Абхазия согласна на оккупацию," Kavkaz Center, last modified May 6, 2008, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2008/05/06/58099/abkhaziya-soglasna-na-okkupatsiyu.shtml>.

further reinforced Russia's de facto control of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.^{13 14}

Additionally, both territories signed "Treat[ies] of Alliance and Integration" with Russia in November 2014 and January 2015, respectively.^{15 16} Thus, as in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the NATO-Russia polarization is in play, and the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia are unlikely to be resolved until tensions between Russia and NATO are relaxed.

The unwillingness of the participants in these conflicts to compromise further reduces the odds that any of these conflicts will be resolved in the foreseeable future. Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Karabakh Armenians all refuse to offer concessions until at least one of the other parties makes concessions. Nagorno-Karabakh insists on legal recognition of independence before any final decision is made regarding its status; Armenia wants the question of Nagorno-Karabakh's status resolved before Armenian military forces are removed from the region, whereas Azerbaijan refuses to negotiate until Armenian forces are withdrawn.¹⁷ Elsewhere in the South Caucasus, South Ossetia and Abkhazia are unlikely to agree to reunification with Georgia as long as *de facto* control by Russia remains a viable alternative option, and Georgia is unlikely to

¹³ Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 342.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 349.

¹⁵ Sergei Markedonov and Thomas de Waal, "Новый договор не является водоразделом в российско-абхазских отношениях," *Caucasus Times*, December 17, 2014.

¹⁶ Maria Otarashvili, "Russia's Quiet Annexation of South Ossetia," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, February 2015.

¹⁷ Beehner, "Nagorno-Karabakh."

compromise if its leaders feel that Russia is pressuring them to do so.¹⁸ As such, even if these conflicts were not complicated by alliances and NATO-Russia tensions, the unwillingness of any involved parties to compromise would still preclude the resolution of these conflicts.

All three of the unresolved ethnic conflicts in the South Caucasus are thus extremely unlikely to be resolved in the foreseeable future, barring drastic changes in diplomatic relations between the parties involved. Each of these conflicts has been festering for eighty years, creating lasting resentments between the actors in these conflicts, and unwillingness to compromise and a complex web of alliances and tensions further preclude the possibility of resolution. Despite periodic efforts by various external actors to intervene and resolve the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia, it is unlikely that any substantial and lasting change in the status of these conflicts will be achieved anytime soon.

¹⁸ Cory Welt, "A Fateful Moment: Ethnic Autonomy and Revolutionary Violence in the Democratic Republic of Georgia, 1918-21," in *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and its Successors*, ed. Stephen F. Jones (New York: Routledge, 2014), 225.

Bibliography

- Balayev, Bahruz. *The Right to Self-Determination in the South Caucasus: Nagorno-Karabakh in Context*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013.
- Beehner, Lionel. "Nagorno-Karabakh: The Crisis in the Caucasus." *The Council on Foreign Relations*, November 3, 2005.
- Blauvelt, Timothy K. "'From words to action!': Nationality policy in Soviet Abkhazia, 1921-38." In *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and its Successors*, edited by Stephen F. Jones, 232-262. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Chorbaijan, Levon, Patrick Monabedian, and Claude Mutafian. *The Caucasian Knot: The History and Geopolitics of Nagorno-Karabakh*. Atlantic Highlands: Zed Books, 1994.
- Dash, P.L. "Nationalities Problem in USSR: Discord over Nagorno-Karabakh." *Economic and Political Weekly* 24:2 (1989): 72-74.
- Derluguian, Georgi M. "How Adjara Did Not Become Another Bosnia: A Study in the Interplay of Historical Determination, Human Agency, and Accident in the Chaotic Transition." In *After the Fall: 1989 and the Future of Freedom*, edited by George Katsiaficas, 103-122. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Embassy of the United States in Moscow. "USG Transliteration System." Accessed April 24, 2016. http://moscow.usembassy.gov/transliteration_e.html.

Encyclopedia Britannica. "Kabardino-Balkariya." Accessed April 28, 2016.

<http://www.britannica.com/place/Kabardino-Balkariya>.

Encyclopedia Britannica. "Karachayevo-Cherkesiya." Accessed April 28, 2016.

<http://www.britannica.com/place/Karachayevo-Cherkesiya>.

Gachechiladze, Revaz. "Geopolitics and foreign powers in the modern history of

Georgia: Comparing 1918-21 and 1991-2010." In *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and its Successors*, edited by Stephen F.

Jones, 17-34. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Garant. "Конституция Союза Советских Социалистических Республик 1936-ого года."

Accessed May 1, 2016. http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/1936/red_1936/3958676/.

Garant. "Конституция Союза Советских Социалистических Республик 1977-ого года."

Accessed May 1, 2016. http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/1977/red_1977/5478732/.

Geukjian, Ohannes. *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Conflict in the South Caucasus: Nagorno-Karabakh and the Legacy of Soviet Nationalities Policy*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2012.

Glottolog. "Abkhaz-Adyghe Family." Accessed April 28, 2016.

<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/abkh1242>.

Glottolog. "Eastern Iranian Subfamily." Accessed April 26, 2016.

<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/east2704>.

Glottolog. "Modern Georgian." Accessed April 29, 2016.

<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/nucl1302>.

Glottolog. "Nakh-Daghestanian Family." Accessed April 26, 2016.

<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/nakh1245>.

Goff, Krista. "Kin Minorities, Republican Borders, and National Rights in the Soviet Union." Paper presented at the 46th Annual Convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, San Antonio, Texas, November 20-23, 2014.

Hille, Charlotte. *State Building and Conflict Resolution in the Caucasus*. Leiden:

Koninklijke Brill, 2010.

Hirsch, Francine. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Isgenderli, Anar. *Realities of Azerbaijan 1917-1920*. Translated by Yusif Axundov.

Bloomington: Xlibris Corporation, 2011.

Istoricheskie Materialy. "Статья № 41: Декрет Всероссийского Центрального

Исполнительного Комитета Советов 'Об Автономной Горской

Социалистической Советской Республике. '" Accessed April 29, 2016.

<http://istmat.info/node/45779>.

Kavkaz Center. "Абхазия согласна на оккупацию." Last modified May 6, 2008.

<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2008/05/06/58099/abkhaziya-soglasna-na-okkupatsiyu.shtml>.

Kavkaz Center. “Нагорный Карабах: Азербайджан объявил об одностороннем прекращении огня, но бои опять возобновились.” Last modified April 3, 2016.
<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2016/04/03/111906/nagornyj-karabakh--azerbajdzhan-obyavil-ob-odnostoronnem-prekraschenii-ognya--no-boi-opyat-vozobnovilis.shtml>.

Kavkaz Center. “Нагорный Карабах: Алиев снова объявил о прекращении огня.” Last modified April 5, 2016.
<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2016/04/05/111937/nagornyj-karabakh--aliev-snova-obyavil-o-prekraschenii-ognya.shtml>.

Kavkaz Center. “Турция требует от Армении освободить Карабах.” Last modified January 18, 2003.
<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2003/01/18/3364/turtsiya-trebuot-ot-armenii-osvobodit-karabakh.shtml>.

Kavkaz Center. “Турция: Эрдоган обещает плечом к плечу с Азербайджаном бороться за Карабах.” Last modified October 26, 2011.
<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2011/10/26/86123/turtsiya--erdogan-obeschaet-plechom-k-plechu-s-azerbajdzhanom-borotsya-za-karabakh.shtml>.

Kavkaz Center. “Южная Осетия де-факто вошла в состав России.” Last modified September 20, 2007.

<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2007/09/20/53128/yuzhnaya-oseiya-de-fakto-voshla-v-sostav-rossii.shtml>.

Kavkaz Center. “Южная Осетия и Абхазия отвергли предложение Грузии.” Last modified March 16, 2007.

<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2007/03/16/50032/yuzhnaya-oseiya-i-abkhaziya-otvergli-predlozhenie-gruzii.shtml>.

Khronos. “Договор о дружбе между АССР, ССРА и ССРГ с одной стороны и Турцией с другой, заключенный при участии РСФСР в Карсе (Карский договор).” Accessed April 29, 2016. http://hrono.ru/dokum/192_dok/19211013kars.php.

Kukhianidze, Alexandre. “Georgia’s military and civil security challenges.” In *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and its Successors*, edited by Stephen F. Jones, 94-117. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Markedonov, Sergei, and Thomas de Waal. “Новый договор не является водоразделом в российско-абхазских отношениях.” *Caucasus Times*, December 17, 2014.

Martin, Terry. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Matossian, Mary. *The Impact of Soviet Policies in Armenia*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962.

Mitchell, Lincoln A. *The Color Revolutions*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

- Mitchell, Lincoln A. *Uncertain Democracy: U.S. Foreign Policy and Georgia's Rose Revolution*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.
- Mitin, M.B., M.D. Kammari, and G.F. Aleksandrov. "The Contribution of J.V. Stalin to Marxism-Leninism." *Izvestia Akademii Nauk SSSR* 7 (1950): 3-30.
- Murinson, Alexander. *Turkey's Entente with Israel and Azerbaijan: State Identity and Security in the Middle East and Caucasus*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Nodia, Ghia. "A New Cycle of Instability in Georgia: New Troubles and Old Problems." In *Crossroads and Conflict: Security and Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, edited by Gary K. Bertsch, Cassidy Craft, Scott A. Jones, and Michael Beck, 188-206. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Olson, James S., Lee Brigance Pappas, and Nicholas C.J. Pappas, editors. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994.
- OSCE Minsk Group. "Statement of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group." Issued March 17, 2008. <http://www.osce.org/mg/49564>.
- Otarashvili, Maria. "Russia's Quiet Annexation of South Ossetia." *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, February 2015.
- Payaslian, Simon. *The History of Armenia: From Origins to the Present*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Petrov, Nikolai. "Federalism." In *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian Post-Communist Political Reform*, edited by Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov, and Andrei

Ryabov, 213-238. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004.

Saparov, Arsène. *From Conflict to Autonomy in the Caucasus: The Soviet Union and the Making of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Sen, Ashish Kumar, and Giorgi Kvirikashvili. "Keeping Georgia's NATO Dream Alive." *Atlantic Council*, January 20, 2016.

Slezkine, Yuri. "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism." *Slavic Review* 53:2 (Summer 1994): 414-452.

Smith, Jeremy. *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience In and After the USSR*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Smith, Jeremy. "Stalin as Commissar for Nationality Affairs, 1918-1922." In *Stalin: A New History*, edited by Sarah Davies and James Harris, 45-62. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Stalin, Joseph. *The Foundations of Leninism*. New York: Prism Key Press, 2012.

de Waal, Thomas. *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War*. New York: New York University Press, 2013.

de Waal, Thomas. *The Caucasus: An Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Welt, Cory. "A Fateful Moment: Ethnic Autonomy and Revolutionary Violence in the Democratic Republic of Georgia, 1918-21." In *The Making of Modern Georgia*,

1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and its Successors, edited by Stephen F.

Jones, 205-231. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Yamakov, A.N. "Ethnic Conflict in the Transcaucasus: The Case of Nagorno-Karabakh."

Theory and Society 20:5 (1991): 631-660.