Recognising politics in unrecognised states: 
20 years of enquiry into the de facto states 
of the South Caucasus

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De facto states in the South Caucasus have presented a range of theoretical and empirical challenges for both scholars and policy-makers for some 20 years. This article charts the trajectories of different concepts, theories and paradigms deployed over this period to understand de facto states in this region, and in particular their internal dynamics. It is argued that while external factors are central to the sustainability of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorny Karabakh, scholarship on these entities has increasingly over time asserted the relevance of their internal politics. The article discusses how over the last decade this analysis has increasingly conflicted with the revival of the region’s central state authorities, whose conceptual reading and policy repertoires vis-à-vis de facto states remain focused on their external support structures. The article finishes by discussing some of the implications of this disjunction for policies enacted towards to de facto states of the region by both central state authorities and the international community.

Keywords: de facto state; Georgia, Azerbaijan; Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorny Karabakh; internal politics of unrecognised states.

Introduction
From violent beginnings in the late 1980s and early 1990s post-Soviet de facto states have sustained a challenge not only to the international state-political and legal order, but also numerous political and social science theories regarding ethnic mobilization, violence, relationships between recognition and democratisation, and between internal and external sovereignty. By their nature de facto states present an existential paradox in their simultaneously transgressive and mimetic qualities: they both challenge the international state order by violating de jure borders, and replicate it by seeking to exhibit the normal appearance of a state.

This paradox underpins a sense of elusiveness attaching to post-Soviet de facto states as a topic of study. Particularly through the 1990s they were most often seen as an epiphenomenon or outcome of other processes, which were the main focus of explanation. They have rarely been the subject of 360° enquiry across the same spectrum of hypotheses on key political science questions that researchers have applied to de jure states in the region. This is undoubtedly in large part due to the simultaneous relevance of de facto states to both scholarly and policy spheres. They not only present a range of theoretical challenges, but are also both urgent and deeply politicized items high up on policy agendas. A key tension, therefore, is the extent to which scholarship is able to navigate this tension and secure space for debate free from the imperatives emanating from key policy communities. Inevitably, there is also much politicized academic work both for and against particular de facto states. The elusiveness of de facto states is also due, however, to the fact that at different points in the 20 years of their existence, different questions have seemed primary; as their existence has continued, new questions have become possible and relevant. De facto states are a constantly moving target for enquiry.

The South Caucasus has a special place in the study of post-Soviet de facto states, as it is home to three of the four that have survived to the present day (Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorny Karabakh), the other being Transnistria. While the Transnistria/Moldova conflict is certainly not resolved, it appears to have reached a point of relative normality and predictability, with no threat of
resumed violence (Wolff 2012). In the South Caucasus, by contrast, the existence of de facto states remains to this day a dominant feature of the political landscape in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagornoy Karabakh (NK) are at the same time all similar in some respects to other de facto states, and all different from each other. Nonetheless, they share a specific regional context for long-term secessionism differentiating them as a subgroup within a wider set of Eurasian de facto states past and present.

This article reviews 20 years of enquiry into the three de facto states of the South Caucasus. The focus is the different paradigms through which de facto states in this region have been approached and understood, how and why different questions have been asked in different periods, and, specifically, the evolving importance attributed to the internal politics of the region’s de facto states. Their internal politics, i.e. their governance, institutions and domestic legitimacy, is a particularly sensitive line of enquiry in an already-charged field. Post-Soviet de facto states have for most of their life-spans been approached as “strategic objects” (O’Loughlin, Kolossov and Toal 2011, 4), i.e. in terms of their relationships with a significant external other: usually the central state from which they seceded; often their patron-state, the one supporting them to do so; or the international community and the question of their external legitimacy (Markedonov 2012). Only with time and longevity have their internal logic, drivers and legitimacy, to varying extents, become subjects of enquiry in their own right.

Acknowledging the internal drivers of de facto states challenges central state narratives explaining secessionism as the result of external interference. Outsider enquiry into the dynamics and mechanisms of their internal legitimacy is easily misconstrued as acceptance of that legitimacy, and often invites controversy. Yet there is a long-standing contradiction in these controversies. All models for resolving the conflicts, whether these reflect a re-integration agenda (i.e. models of renewed autonomy, self-government or some other formulation within a single state) or a legalised secession agenda (i.e. international recognition of de facto states depending on their willingness and ability to protect minorities and returning displaced communities) assume a quantum leap in internal governance capacities. There is a fine line, and as will be argued below a necessary one, in the assertion that in an overall context of non-recognition, the governance and institutions of de facto states matter and need to be engaged with.

De facto states in the South Caucasus

De facto states across the world cope to varying extents with a wide range of vulnerabilities deriving from existence in the margins of the international state system (Pegg 1998). These include association with armed conflict and violence; frequent association with more extreme varieties of exclusive nationalism; exclusion from international organisations, markets and financial systems; limitations on the extent of outward travel by their inhabitants and sometimes by outsiders to their territory, and a generalised sense of isolation (Caspersen 2012, 26-49). In the South Caucasus, local inflections of these wider characteristics, combined with more sui generis features, have amounted not only to practical vulnerabilities in the internal governance of de facto states but also significant rhetorical barriers to talking about it.

Like virtually all de facto states, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and NK were born through war, all winning wars in the 1990s fought mostly on their own territories. While secessionist victories in Abkhazia and NK were clear-cut, in South Ossetia a more ambiguous pattern of intermingled territories (some administered from Tbilisi, others from Tskhinvali) ensued, at least until 2008. The scale and intensity of fighting in the South Caucasus wars was generally much more severe than in Transnistria (though less so than in Chechnya). Legacies of the South Caucasus wars included the material destruction of landscapes and livelihoods, the prominence of military figures/strong men (doubling up in some cases as racketeers), the opacity of political partnerships forged in war and carried over into the civil sphere, lingering states of emergency, and cults of the military and security, all of which have contributed to a difficult governance environment. The South Caucasus also exhibits a sustained militarisation distinct from Transnistria. Abkhazia (in May 1998) and South Ossetia (in 2008 and, arguably, 2004) have seen large-scale resumptions of violence and, since 2008, increases in the number of Russian troops deployed on their territory. For 19 years Armenian and Azerbaijani armies have continued to face each other along a heavily fortified line of contact, with monthly casualties.
These heavily militarised contexts, where the threat of renewed war is real, constrain democratisation and reform processes within de facto states, and provide a constant foil strengthening the hand of hardliners over reformers.

To varying extents the South Caucasus de facto states are also associated with an ethnic, as opposed to civic, discourse of identity. While this distinction may be overplayed, in the sense that clearly discriminatory de jure states in the post-Soviet space (for example Estonia and Latvia in the 1990s) have been accepted into the international community, practices of ethnocracy, discrimination and exclusion are real. It is in Abkhazia where accusations of ethnocracy have resonated loudest (Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2012), where ethnonationalist Abkhazian claims and agendas must be negotiated not only vis-à-vis Georgia and the outside world, but in relation to its own multiethnic population (see below).

These are not, however, especially unique features among de facto states. Two features more significant in shaping the South Caucasus subset of de facto states are their association with Russia and the legacies of forced displacement. Outsider perceptions of the South Caucasus de facto states are dominated by Russia, as main patron, active player (in the form of ‘peacekeeping operations’ or security guarantor on the ground in Abkhazia and South Ossetia), and manipulator of conflict. They have rarely been able to shake off the aura of imperial residue or worse, instruments of neo-imperialism, tainted by association with unhappy traditions of dysfunctional Soviet governance; evident assimilation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia into a Russian-speaking identity; popular consent in the 1990s to the continuation of the Soviet Union; military victory owing to Russian support; and, in some cases, association with emblematic moments from the Soviet past (such as the ‘Red Riviera’). As the outside world has over the last 20 years increasingly bought into a master-narrative of Soviet colonialism, it is the former union republics that have been able to claim the mantle of the post-colony (together with everything that that implies in terms of the legitimacy of secession and new international borders). Counter-narratives of what some in the de facto states have portrayed as imperial treatment at the hands of majority nations (Lak’uoba 1995, 1999; Sagariya, Achugba and Pachuliya 1992) have generally not been compelling for international audiences.

Particularly in the case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, rather than being the subjects of their own historical narratives, these entities have often been allocated walk-on parts in a master-narrative of Russian expansionism, and indeed revivalist productions of Russian neo-imperialism, a trend especially salient post-2008 but present long before then (Chervonnaya 1994; Cornell and Starr 2009; Asmus 2010). Local enthusiasm for Russian passports, currency, pensions, social funds and so on, and in South Ossetia acceptance of Russian appointees in political office, has reinforced stereotypes of the willing satellite rather than romantic freedom-fighters. Paradoxically, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in particular seem to have transgressed international expectations that de facto states should indeed be resolutely ‘self-determinist’; self-determination as a ‘choice for a different master’ is not accepted. For NK the context is a little different: it is Armenia that takes the rap for excessive dependence on Russia, and the Armenian diaspora also provides a second source of support for NK. Yet if Karabakh is seen to all intents and purposes as a de facto province of Armenia (Panossian 2002), on which it is dependent for most of its revenue and military capability, Russia’s significance is clear.

Russia is therefore the key to the ‘sustainability triangle’ for the region’s de facto states, playing the role of patron-state where there is none or supporting the patron-state where it is weak. Without Russia, it is difficult to see scenarios where de facto states would not by now have succumbed to re-integration (this seems especially true for Abkhazia and South Ossetia). It is understandable why Russia dominates as the prism through which many, probably most, in the international community approach the de facto states of the South Caucasus. One consequence is that international attitudes towards the de facto states are prone to vicissitudes in different states’ own respective relationships with Russia. For example, Venezuelan or Nicaraguan recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, or Baltic/Polish opposition to it, has little to do with processual considerations about the recognition of new states, and more to do with each actor’s relationship, whether historical or contemporary, with Russia. Sovereignty lies, in these cases, in the eye of the beholder. Russia currently introduces a polarity into debates about de facto states that distorts, even obviates, many other questions, including those concerning the real qualities of governance in the unrecognised entities.

Yet while association with Russia is real and justified, it is also a veil that is often drawn across
more nuanced dynamics in *de facto* states than many would like to see. One does not have to look very far to see vivid examples of situations where societies in *de facto* states of the South Caucasus have defied the compliance expected of them by Russian patrons. These examples have generally coincided with moments of decreased perceived military threat, in Abkhazia in 2004 (when Georgia was regrouping internally following the Rose Revolution), and in South Ossetia in 2011 (when a perceived security threat from Georgia was now absent). Echoing developments in Abkhazia in 2004, the Kremlin-backed candidate in South Ossetia’s November 2011 presidential election was defeated by opposition candidate Alla Dzhioyeva (who nonetheless also drew support from patrons in Moscow). The result was annulled by the Supreme Court and Dzhioyeva later hospitalised after an intervention by security personnel (RFE/RL 2011, 2012); Moscow brokered an eventual solution. This episode nevertheless demonstrated that even the smallest of the region’s societies, and the one assumed to be most under Russia’s thumb, is willing to express desires for genuine political transition when the immediate security threat (in this case, a re-integrationist Georgia with military capability) is removed. A more subtle picture emerges, that as Russia has removed the previous existential (military) threat to the existence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it has transmogrified into a new kind of threat: less than existential, but malignant nonetheless.

A second barrier to discussions of governance in the South Caucasus *de facto* states is the fact that they are all missing large parts of their pre-war populations: representatives of the majority nation, generally forced out under duress. In the eyes of the wider world this transgression of *jus cogens*, norms of international law that can never be derogated, has been a separate, though mutually reinforcing, justification for isolation of these *de facto* states beyond their primary transgression of violating *de jure* borders. This factor distinguishes Abkhazia\(^\text{11}\), South Ossetia and NK\(^\text{12}\) from Kosovo (Weller 2008, 84); it is a legacy willfully elided by those choosing to recognise Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008.

This critique has been especially salient for Abkhazia and NK. In Abkhazia the proportions of the displaced and non-displaced communities were such that different outcomes could have been expected of inclusive ballots on different issues. In the case of NK, Armenian occupation of several districts beyond the original disputed territory resulted in the displacement of their Azerbaijani populations as well as some 40,000 Azeris from NK itself, creating a population of some 586,000 long-term internally displaced persons (Huseynov 2011). This has been a key factor behind the ritual condemnation of presidential and parliamentary elections in *de facto* states, by international organisations as well as Tbilisi and Baku.

It is worth reflecting on the ethics of this position. Georgia (in the case of Ossetians outside of the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast), Armenia and Azerbaijan all saw harassment, mass demographic flight or deportation of whole communities in the late 1980s and early 1990s.\(^\text{13}\) This has not prevented outsiders from engagement with these recognised republics. What effectively transpired was that the internal ethnic contours of a society could be changed by force, yet not its external territorial borders. It is only when mass population displacement has occurred *with* territorial fragmentation that international censure has been activated. There is a moral deficit in this outcome that has long been overlooked by the international community and deployed by those living in *de facto* states as grounds not to engage with legacies of displacement.

Finally, related to the points above about Russia, the external supporters of *de facto* states in the South Caucasus rarely support *democratic* *de facto* states. Non-recognition constantly imposes on societies in *de facto* states a struggle to prevent the subordination of their state-building project to wider outsider goals, sometimes ideological, sometimes geopolitical, that are usually unfriendly to democratisation. Russian support to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and Armenian Diaspora support to NK are not oriented towards democratisation outcomes in those territories. Conversely, non-recognition has also meant the isolation of *de facto* states from those funding sources and resources in the international community interested in promoting democratisation.\(^\text{14}\)

In sum, the specific context for governance in *de facto* states in the South Caucasus shares a number of vulnerabilities with *de facto* states more widely, such as the material and psychological legacies of war and association with ethnocratic regimes. Their sources of external support do not generally support more effective or legitimate governance. Whereas challengers to incumbent regimes in *de jure* states, running for office on political reform platforms, have been able to draw on considerable (some would say decisive) support from outside, these external resources have not been
available to challengers in *de facto* states. Furthermore, the overwhelming role of Russia and legacies of mass displacement have been consistent obstacles to acceptance of the region’s *de facto* states as ‘real places’, rather than puppet states or pariah.

**De facto states in the South Caucasus: three phases of enquiry**

There have been distinct phases of enquiry into the post-Soviet *de facto* states. These relate first to the time elapsed since their initial emergence; as time has passed, new and different questions have become possible and relevant. Second, they have been driven by the opening up of a whole new range of questions relating to the demise of some *de facto* states and survival of others. Thirdly, they also relate to flux in *de facto* states’ own strategies for presenting and promoting themselves to the outside world, which “are continuously being refined and renegotiated in view of changes in the international norms and practice of recognition” (Caspersen 2012, 68). The phases charted below are not strictly consecutive; they could also be described as paradigms, or better, cohorts of thematic approaches, as scholarship rooted in one approach can emerge outside of ‘its’ respective phase.

**Phase 1: Explaining violent ethnic secessionism**

The South Caucasus *de facto* states first entered social scientific enquiry as scenarios of violent ethnic conflict, emerging at the nexus of democratisation, devolution and nationalist mobilization. The primary underlying question driving this phase was why these scenarios in particular had ended in violence, when overall the disintegration of the Soviet Union was a surprisingly peaceful process. This phase lasted approximately through to the beginning of the 2000s (although major works within this paradigm emerged after that time, and continue to do so). Governance issues were generally sublimated into a wider analysis of dysfunctional Soviet governance, although later studies did try to identify specificities conditioning mobilization and violence in each case.

The earliest works about the conflicts were produced by journalists documenting events as they unfolded (for example, Goldenberg 1994), scholars relying solely on media sources (Birch 1993), direct protagonists (Lakoba 1995) or Caucasus specialists from other disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology and geography (for example, Hewitt 1993; Colarusso 1995; Gachechiladze 1995). Much of this literature could also be described as ‘advocate literature’ more or less explicitly supporting one conflict party. It was not until the late 1990s, with some distance from the ceasefires, that more theoretically informed studies emerged, informed by the wider literature coming out on the national revivals in the Soviet Union and the Union’s collapse. Among outsider perspectives, a number of studies looked at the role of institutions: a dominant thread in this analysis was the role of Soviet ethno-federal institutions in territorializing identity, establishing parameters for intergroup comparison and choking possibilities for institutionalising conflict at the local level. Bruno Coppieters and others explored federalism as both a retrospective explanation of conflict and prospective possible solution to conflict (Coppieters, 2001; Coppieters, Darchiashvili and Akaba 2000). Svante Cornell, using examples from Georgia, critiqued ethno-federalism and some aspects of autonomy as empowering ethnic elites and facilitating nationalist mobilization (2002), although in later work he suggested renegotiated autonomy as a basis for resolving the NK conflict (2007).

Some important cross-conflict explorations of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict by Georgian and Abkhazian experts emerged in the late 1990s. These provided rich empirical detail in identifying long-term identity processes and the interactions of rival nationalisms (or ‘national projects’) (Coppieters, Nodia and Anchabadze 1998). Other studies emphasized the exclusive nature of South Caucasian nationalisms, incubated in Soviet schools of primordialism and elaborated by intellectuals (Shnirelman 1998; Suny 2001; Coppieters 2002). Subsequent work, informed by a post-colonial perspective, synthesised structural and identity-based arguments by linking historical patterns of elite incorporation among Georgians, Abkhazians and South Ossetians to mobilization patterns in the late 1980s (Broers 2011).

The *de facto* states which had by this time formed in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and NK appeared in most of this literature, if at all, in their historical aspect as frames for ethnonationalist identity narratives. The mid-1990s was still a time of flux, as Gerard Libaridian usefully reminds us, before the consolidation of regimes whether *de jure* or *de facto*, and resolution of the conflicts still seemed
possible (as reflected in the prominence of debates on federalism through to the early 2000s).\(^{16}\) It was during this period that the stereotype of \textit{de facto} states as ‘anarchical badlands’ (Caspersen 2012, 20-21) seemed justified to some extent, and with most inquiries historically framed, the still fluid internal conditions in the \textit{de facto} states were not yet on the agenda. Even when there was a forward-looking perspective, emerging governance trends and modalities in the \textit{de facto} states were not seen as significant.\(^{17}\)

Amid a plethora of competing priorities the international policy-making community remained resolute in ignoring the \textit{de facto} states of the region. Hence the predominant trend in this era was to view them as an inherently unstable result of prior violent conflict. Minority counter-narratives were to some extent presented to the outside world, but this remained largely a retrospective, historical exercise grounded in a nationalist discourse of identity and grievance claims.

**Phase 2: Living with \textit{de facto} states**

A second phase began, loosely speaking, in the early 2000s and lasted until the second half of the decade. This period was marked by growing interest and research into the internal, as well as external, drivers of \textit{de facto} statehood in the South Caucasus. A number of factors are important here.

Firstly, after a decade of existence it had become clear that the \textit{de facto} states in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and NK were not just ephemeral phenomena. They had not collapsed on their own, naturally inviting a series of new questions reaching into the afterlife of unresolved conflict. This led to a number of studies in the early 2000s posing a new set of questions explicitly unpacking the status quo sustaining the \textit{de facto} states, interrogating their internal logic and positing the possibility – even necessity – of engaging them.\(^{18}\) What were, in Charles King’s formulation (King 2001), the “benefits of ethnic war”? What was the relationship between the formal institutions of the \textit{de facto} states and the informal politics sustaining them? (Panossian 2002) And how did \textit{de facto} states survive? Dov Lynch’s 2004 path-breaking study \textit{Engaging Eurasia’s Separatist States}, explicitly rejected the notion that external factors were all-determining, and identified a number of internal drivers of \textit{de facto} statehood, such as belief in ‘absolute sovereignty’, fear and insecurity, and what Lynch described as ‘subsistence syndromes’: “a combination of firm political determination, deep economic weakness, and extensive criminalization” (Lynch 2004, 64).

Second, Chechnya’s military reintegration in 1999 opened up a new axis of comparison that led naturally to questions about the internal politics of \textit{de facto} states. Rather than comparison between a positive case, where violent conflict had led to the formation of a \textit{de facto} state, and a counterfactual, where these outcomes were absent, comparison was now possible between positive cases with different outcomes. This was the basis for Christoph Zürcher’s 2007 comparative study, \textit{The Post-Soviet Wars}, which emphasized cleavage structures between rival elites (primarily in the central state, but also in the \textit{de facto} states) and the degree of internal fragmentation among new nationalist elites in the success or failure of secessionist bids (Zürcher 2007, 228). Zürcher’s study foregrounded internal dynamics in a way that naturally invited the same questions to be asked of elites and mobilization dynamics in central state and peripheral rebellion contexts.

Third, by the mid-2000s a number of international NGOs with a conflict prevention or peacebuilding remit had generated a substantial literature that explicitly engaged with on-the-ground realities in the \textit{de facto} states. From the mid-2000s the International Crisis Group (ICG) began to include reports exclusively devoted to conditions in NK, South Ossetia and Abkhazia within its repertoire (International Crisis Group 2005, 2006). Peacebuilding NGOs such as Conciliation Resources (CR) and International Alert worked with local partners on different sides of conflicts, and local perspectives from \textit{de facto} states on a range of key conflict-related themes reached international audiences through publications such as CR’s \textit{Accord} series (Conciliation Resources 1999, 2005). This literature asserted the policy-relevance of developments within \textit{de facto} states for eventual resolution of conflicts about them.

Fourth, the mid-2000s was also an era in which \textit{de facto} states to varying extents experienced surprising political outcomes in their domestic politics. In August 2004 an opposition candidate from the Movement-88 party won in local elections to become mayor of Stepanakert, the capital of NK (referred to as Khankendi in Azerbaijani sources). The 2004 presidential election in Abkhazia saw the clearly
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Kremlin-backed candidate Raul Khajimba defeated by Sergey Bagapsh, and attempts to force through Russia’s favoured outcome were offset by mass protests in favour of Bagapsh. These outcomes testified to some inner dynamics that casual stereotyping about “anarchical badlands” was clearly missing.

This was the era of the colour revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, and possibly the apotheosis of Western receptivity to the discourse and outward signs of transition. Reflecting both a process of their own deepening institutionalisation and outsider receptivity to certain kinds of framing, some de facto states increasingly deployed the language of governance to further their claims. They began to present themselves in interviews with outsiders as compliant with formal ‘markers’ of democracy (regular elections, procedural correctness) to project a democratic image to the outside world. A dynamic of ‘competitive democratisation’ emerged: “the attempt to demonstrate indicators of democracy superficially recognizable to Western observers in advance of a significant other...the metropolitan state” (Broers 2005, 71). This signaled the opening of a new front in the quest for international engagement and perhaps recognition: de facto states could claim an empirical statehood, backed up with democratisation indicators that compared favourably with the states seeking to re-absorb them. The simplifying categories of outsider assessments, such as the annual Freedom House ratings, assumed an almost totemic quality in legitimating the existence of, in particular, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic vis-à-vis Azerbaijan.

This widening space for investigation of local circumstance in the de facto states was reflected in a quietly growing margin for international engagement. Territorial integrity remained the lodestar of the international community, yet within that framework new forms of engagement became possible beyond established mandates to monitor ceasefires. From the late 1990s international peacebuilding NGOs began to operate across the conflicts especially in the Georgian-Abkhaz and (from the early 2000s) NK contexts. These initiatives generated a varied set of ongoing types of dialogue, exchange and cooperation among a wide range of actors. By the mid-2000s a kind of qualified acknowledgement of the de facto states in the South Caucasus had emerged. This was, emphatically, not an acceptance of their claims to secession and self-determination as independent states, but an acceptance on the one hand that any conflict has multiple interpretations, and on the other that resolution of the conflicts without somehow incorporating the views of those living in de facto states was not realistic.

**Phase 3: Renewed fragmentation**

If the previous phase had held out the possibility of a certain convergence between academic debates and policy orientations, this was not realised. The dominant feature of a third phase, emerging through the latter half of the 2000s, and crystallised in 2008, was a new fragmentation in approaches to the de facto states in the South Caucasus, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in particular. Structured primarily by different analyses of the August 2008 war, it owes also to the recognition of Kosovo in February 2008. This delivered a double blow to debates about de facto states. First, it weakened a putative incentive structure suggesting that good governance might be rewarded with recognition. This shift from ‘earned’ sovereignty to ‘remedial’ sovereignty profoundly changed assumptions and expectations of agency in achieving sovereignty. Second, it highlighted a polarity between Russia and Western powers in international responses to the act of recognition of new states. This had far-reaching implications for the South Caucasus, a region straddling rival Russian-Western geopolitical agendas and home to three cases of unrecognised states.

In the academic sphere there was no major rupture with the previous phase. De facto states continued their progress from the margins of area studies specialization to the mainstream of political science, becoming the subject of a number of diverse and empirically rich studies. Drawing amply on South Caucasus examples within a wider set of cases, Nina Caspersen’s landmark study *Unrecognised States* offered a grand synthesis of different literatures and approaches to the phenomenon in the post-Cold War era (Caspersen 2012). In addressing the question of how de facto states survive Caspersen devoted as much attention to internal sources of state-building as external support, suggesting that “Unrecognised states cannot be reduced to their external dimension… and the success or failure of their state-building efforts also owes a lot to internal dynamics” (76). One of Caspersen’s key findings was that internal sovereignty can exist without external sovereignty, yet non-recognition imposes certain constraints on the forms that internal sovereignty can take. Caspersen’s argument comes full
circle by demonstrating how these constraints feed back into the stalemates sustaining de facto states (particularly true in the South Caucasus). Caspersen’s triangular dialectic between internal dynamics, external support and international norms carries a clear message for policy makers. The internal politics of de facto states matter not only in exploring novel and theoretically challenging forms of sovereignty, but for effective policies to resolve conflicts.

The dialectics of nation- and state-building in the region’s de facto states emerged as a topic of self-contained enquiry (Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2008; Matsuzato 2008; Markedonov 2012). It was Abkhazia that emerged as perhaps the most thoroughly researched of the three, for a number of reasons but perhaps mostly because a high degree of multiethnicity survived in post-war Abkhazia. This makes Abkhazia an important test case in terms of democratisation and transition from an ethnonationalist idiom of self-determination to a putatively more civic and inclusive idiom of state-building. Rachel Clogg described the resulting dynamics as less a case of majority-minority relations as “multiple minority relations” (Clogg 2008, 306), and highlighted numerous tensions between Abkhazian ethnonationalism and pressures for a more inclusive state-building project.21 This theme was later taken up in a monograph-length study by Tom Trier, Hedwig Lohm and David Szakonyi (2010). Yet perhaps most surprisingly, Abkhazia has emerged as a post-Soviet space where electoral politics has assumed an unprecedented importance for domestic political outcomes. As Donnacha O’Beachain observes, it has witnessed “successive peaceful elections in which the outcome was uncertain and the result was respected by the defeated candidates. Moreover it has been possible to have power transferred between government and opposition” (O’Beachain 2012, 166). O’Beachain’s account provides a welcome, detailed analysis of electoral dynamics in Abkhazia, even if the ‘why’ explaining electoral outcomes in the territory remains elusive. Nonetheless, Abkhazia’s democratisation narrative is still marred by its record on the territory’s remaining Georgians. For as long as treatment of Abkhazia’s remaining Georgian population is cast from the same mould as the conflict with Georgia, unresolved conflict will result in a democracy deficit.

Perceptions of current realities in the post-Soviet de facto states have perhaps found their fullest empirical substantiation to date in a series of surveys conducted by political geographers John O’Loughlin, Vladimir Kolossov and Gerard Toal (Gearóid Ó Tuathail). Publication of their findings across all cases is still a work in progress as of this writing, yet from initial articles it is clear that these surveys make available a rich (if at times, as the authors concede, problematic from the point of view of ideal methodology) set of data about attitudes on key issues including security, economic well-being, ethnic identity and discrimination, and trust in the institutions and political system of the de facto state in question (O’Loughlin, Kolossov and Toal 2011; Toal and O’Loughlin 2013).22 Writing about Abkhazia, O’Loughlin, Kolossov and Toal suggest that their findings reveal nuances in contrasting perceptions of local governance and legitimacy that have no place in caricatures of Abkhazia as a puppet regime.23 They note that the

“diminishment of the internal life and complexity of de facto states is partly a function of geopolitical discourse preoccupied with great-power competition. This, in turn, has connections to the symbolic character that certain de facto states acquire in the domestic politics of the great powers” (O’Loughlin, Kolossov and Toal 2011, 3).

Furthermore, they also point to how their data contradicts various assumptions about life in the de facto states popular in policy-making communities. Again on Abkhazia, for example, survey data contradicts a number of popular scripts, including prospects for Georgia’s economic attractiveness to the population in Abkhazia (19), alienation of Abkhazia’s Armenian and Russian populations from the Abkhaz state-building project (25) and possibilities for the detachment of Abkhazia’s southernmost Gali district as a means to resolve conflict (34). On South Ossetia, the authors point to the inadequacy of conceptions of the territory as “occupied”, in the light of how residents of the territory actually view the Russian presence there (Toal and O’Loughlin 2013, 29-30).

Overall, a far more detailed picture of the inner workings of the region’s de facto states was on the table at the onset of the 2010s. However, beginning in the latter half of the 2000s the theoretical and empirical elaboration of de facto states in academic debates increasingly came into conflict with another salient dynamic in the region. This was the consolidation of the central state authority after a
prolonged period of weakness dating from the total collapse of the early 1990s. Paths to consolidation were different: in Georgia civil society captured a corrupt and enfeebled state, while in Azerbaijan a dynastic succession was forced through against mass protest. In both contexts, however, profound dissatisfaction with the state of the peace processes remained prominent. After an initial period of ‘bedding down’, this dissatisfaction, combined with the rising capacities of the central state authority, began to manifest in new policies towards the unresolved conflicts.

The full implications and cause and effect arguments around these dynamics and, in the case of Georgia, their denouement in 2008 are beyond the scope of this discussion. What needs to be highlighted here is that from the mid-2000s and, emphatically, from 2008, the policy environment surrounding Abkhazia and South Ossetia moved sharply away from possibilities for engaging in a public way with their internal governance structures and domestic politics more generally. This was a multifaceted process manifesting in different ways. Most obviously a number of direct interfaces between outsiders and local realities were shut down: following the August war the United Nations observer mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) that operated in Abkhazia and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) office in South Ossetia closed. The European Union’s presence in Georgia was strengthened in the form of a Monitoring Mission (EUMM), whose mandate includes Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but whose operational access is limited to territory under Georgian control. Physical access to the seceded territories was severely curtailed; the likelihood of a travel ban to Georgia for anyone passing into Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Russia increased.

These developments reflected on the one hand the massive rise in multiple forms of Russian presence and influence generally unfriendly to other outside influence (International Crisis Group 2010). On the other, they were also the logical conclusion of the new discursive parameters surrounding Abkhazia and South Ossetia set out by the Georgian authorities. These have been described by Georgian analyst Archil Gegeshidze as “a complex transformation of public awareness about the [Georgian-Abkhaz] conflict, the main thrust of which was the proposition that there had never been any ethno-political conflicts between Georgians and Abkhaz or South Ossetians. Rather, the only conflict Georgia had ever had was with Russia” (Gegeshidze 2011, 25). This transformation was vigorously enacted through legislation focused on Abkhazia and South Ossetia as occupied territories, reification of Russia as the key source of multiple problems in Georgia and an international advocacy campaign showcasing Georgia as the victim of Russian aggression.

While it was not new to blame Russia for the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the portrayal of Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-South Ossetian relations as not only irrelevant but politically incorrect (and anti-Georgian) in discussions of the conflict(s) was new. Strong pressures to adhere to a view of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as occupied territories, or, in a variation of this view, to the view that secessionist elites were not representative of the broad mass of the population, effectively closed off the discussion about internal legitimacy. The two de facto states could now only be legitimately discussed (if the discussion was about their elites) as instruments of Russian expansionism, or (if the discussion was about ordinary people) as victims, as Georgians were, of Russian policy. Vehement debate over the appropriate Georgian and international policy options towards them ensued, across a broad spectrum from deepened isolation, engagement with/through Georgia only, or wider forms of ‘engagement without recognition’ by the international community. As these debates unfolded, Abkhazian and South Ossetian engagement with/through Russia only and further isolation from the rest of the outside world (including Georgian society), was the reality.

With international governmental organisations out of the picture on the ground, non-governmental organisations also came under attack, becoming the subject of criticism, lobbying campaigns and newly introduced systems of review (the ‘modalities’) by the Georgian authorities. Combined with a sense of donor fatigue and refocus on other global flashpoints, as well as both increased reluctance among (especially) Abkhazian civic activists to engage with a peacebuilding agenda and reduced space for them to do so, multiple windows for the policy community to directly observe and interpret the reality in Abkhazia and South Ossetia closed. As a result, in the post-2008 era there is more than ever a politics of ‘smoke and mirrors’ surrounding policy towards the de facto states in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

In this context it is not surprising that contradictions between the formal assumptions and rhetorical scripts attached to the conflicts by policy communities on the one hand, and the conclusions reached by empirical research conducted in the seceded territories on the other, are an increasingly
salient feature of the debate. A number of research articles, reports and policy briefings have taken issue with key concepts and assumptions structuring policy debates, such as the value of ‘strategic patience’ (Mitchell and Cooley 2010, 26-27)\textsuperscript{29}, the usefulness of isolation (International Alert 2011a), the policy of non-recognition (International Alert 2011b), or the viability of “re-recruiting” local populations in secessionist entities away from their elites (Gegeshidze 2011, 38). As of this writing, this multifaceted critique of different strategies aimed at ‘containment’ of de facto states and fixed-goal engagement is still being consolidated. More forward-looking, practical visions as to how Abkhazia and South Ossetia can be most usefully engaged under current conditions are still the preserve of NGO and academics’ recommendations (see, for examples, Byman and King 2011; Conciliation Resources and Saferworld 2012) and await practical elaboration as policy.

In the case of NK there has been no single cataclysmic event around which the conflict’s discursive parameters have been ‘reset’. In any case Azerbaijan has always held to an irredentist interpretation of the conflict that prioritizes Armenia, rather than Karabakh Armenians, as the key adversary. This parsing of the conflict is built into the structure of the peace process to resolve it, in which NK as a separate entity has no formal presence. There has never been an OSCE or EU presence in NK; the only representatives of the international policy community (with the exception of the Minsk Group co-Chairs) visiting the territory are non-governmental.

While the consolidation of the central state authority in Baku was a dominant trend in the mid-2000s, the elite calculus vis-à-vis unresolved territorial conflict was (and remains) different to that in Georgia pre-2008. First, the domestic legitimacy of the Aliyev regime, while probably considerable, is an unknown quantity; President Ilham Aliyev has never possessed the kind of unambiguous mandate given to Mikheil Saakashvili in January 2004. The extent of this mandate has arguably been one factor allowing Saakashvili to survive in post-2008 Georgia. Second, Azerbaijan has entered the international community as a resource exporter; the key economic relationships and networks securing the largesse underpinning the Aliyev regime are predicated on stability in the republic. Thirdly, and more ambiguously, there is not the same ethos of key, perhaps personality-driven, time-bound alliances with Western powers that may have characterized strategic thinking in Georgia prior to 2008. There is more of a long game logic to Azerbaijan’s approach, perhaps founded on the idea that economic prowess will eventually win out but will take time to do so. The Azerbaijani foreign policy establishment also prides itself on balancing different external orientations. Finally, the Line of Contact (LOC) between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces is a much starker and more militarised context than in Abkhazia or South Ossetia. There are no Azerbaijanis still settled on the Armenian side of the LOC, and therefore fewer opportunities to use the existence of such a population as a pretext to influence the situation there.

Nonetheless the rising capacity of the central state authority is evident in significantly more visible lobbying and advocacy of Azerbaijan’s position in international forums and the activities of government-funded lobby groups such as the European Azerbaijani Society; the production of a lavishly produced new historiography that questions an indigenous presence of Armenians in the Caucasus (Heydarov 2011); a rise in the scale, time-sensitivity and domestic attention given to ceasefire violations; and a policy making anyone travelling to NK without explicit permission persona non grata deprived of the right of entry to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan has not, however, directly impeded the work of international NGOs working across the conflict. It might be argued that paradoxically, a rising sense of Azerbaijani confidence may also result in increased tolerance of cross-conflict peacebuilding initiatives.

Given that the context remains thoroughly militarised it is not surprising that NK has registered a lower profile in terms of democratisation than Abkhazia, despite its post-war mono-ethnicity. Elections in NK are regular and have endorsed handovers from one president to the next, but there has been no handover from government to opposition as there has in Abkhazia. Opposition candidates can secure a significant share of the vote, as Vitalii Balasanyan did in the July 2012 election (with 32.5%), but incumbents are harder to dislodge in NK than in Abkhazia. This is connected with the different overarching structure for electoral politics in NK: Armenia is a kin-state rather than just patron-state, and the underlying ethos of Karabakh Armenian secessionism is unification, not independence. There are therefore fewer electoral gains to be made in positioning vis-à-vis outside forces for domestic legitimacy. These fairly impressionistic comments point to further possibilities for empirical research differentiating the specific dynamics and legitimacy formulae of secessionist elites in the region’s de facto states.
Conclusions

The de facto states of the South Caucasus have survived for 20 years in an inhospitable environment and look set to endure. For scholarly debates, longevity has given them conceptual depth as a distinct sub-category for the elaboration of key questions such as sovereignty, democratisation and legitimacy in transitional contexts. While fully cognizant of the external factors sustaining de facto states, scholarship has increasingly over time asserted the relevance of their internal politics. Over the last seven years or so this analysis has increasingly conflicted with the revival of central state authorities in the region, whose conceptual reading and policy repertoires vis-à-vis de facto states remain resolutely focused on their external support structures.

The possibility of internal legitimacy for secessionist elites remains an omission from Georgian and Azerbaijani conflict narratives and policy thinking. Recognising this possibility involves both acknowledgement of the minority counter-narratives that go to the heart of the conflicts, and of the new realities created after life without Georgian or Azerbaijani sovereignty for 20 years (and after the mass displacement of Georgians and Azeris). Combined with the undeniably crucial role of external actors, it is perhaps understandable why no such acknowledgement is forthcoming.

Yet several scholars have concluded that only more sophisticated central state policy towards the internal politics of de facto states can reduce the scope for other outsiders to manipulate them (Lynch 2004, 122; Caspersen 2012, 153-155). Eventually addressing this omission – with well-informed and pragmatic policy – is a Rubicon that Tbilisi and Baku may yet opt to cross one day. But for now, there are opportunity costs involved in the active denial of the internal politics of the de facto states. Slogans, strategies and expectations crafted around demonstrably false but comforting assumptions about the situation in the seceded territories have to date served central state authorities poorly, other than serving their interests in the parallel game of buttressing incumbent regimes. Bridges are needed in order to attenuate the insecurities in de facto states driving their outward vectors of dependency. Reconsidered central state policies, together with qualified forms of international engagement, are key to this process.

Unfortunately, at least two specific features of the regional context of the South Caucasus stand in the way of better-calibrated policy thinking and tool-kits towards its de facto states. First, the region has become more, not less, militarised over time. The ever-present threat of renewed violence is a constant impediment to the normalisation of the region’s conflicts and possibilities for their transformation into the realm of more predictable institutional, economic and cultural exchange. Given this context the degree of internal competition, movement away from strongman politics and even (in Abkhazia and arguably South Ossetia) inter-elite handover of power in the region’s de facto states is at times surprising. A number of scholars have explored this puzzle, underlining its relevance not only for more informed understandings of de facto sovereignty but also for prospects it suggests for future relations with central state authorities.

Second, geopolitical rivalry has become the pre- eminent organising metaphor for understanding conflict in the South Caucasus. The willingness of both insider and outsider actors to geo-politicise these conflicts has resulted in a vibrant symbolic politics around de facto states in this region, as they are configured as symbols of outsiders’ geopolitical influence, intent and ‘projectionism’ (O’Loughlin, Kolossov and Toal 2011). This means that they are often understood in terms of what they symbolize, rather than what they are. This distinction has been crystallised to some extent in the academic/policy division, where some of the academic studies identified above have increasingly focused on empirical elucidation of the reality of de facto states, while policy debates (as well as some academic studies resolutely focused on geopolitical frameworks) are to a considerable extent structured by symbolic readings of them.

This distinction may serve to articulate a forward-looking research agenda. Continued research is needed to deepen our understanding of how the different de facto states in the South Caucasus, and their societies, function. At the same time more systematic investigation of the symbolic meanings attached to them in the wider play of geopolitical cultures and foreign policy discourses of key state actors invested in the South Caucasus is an important topic for further research. Understanding the nature of this gap between image and reality is central to more effective policies of the future. Systematic comparison of Georgian and Azerbaijani state strategies vis-à-vis unresolved territorial conflict (and with those of other central state authorities facing secessionist bids) and their respective
impacts would also be a welcome addition to the literature.

This agenda should help to inform a wider range of policy options encouraging more multilateral interfaces between communities living in de facto states and both their neighbours and the wider international community. Policies rooted in negative conditionality, isolation of de facto states and various kinds of coercive external pressure have been thoroughly tested and found sorely wanting through the events of 2004-2008. More open-ended policies are needed, which recognise the importance of internal dynamics, engage with them in a principled way and encourage exposure of the people living in de facto states to a range of outside influences.

Notes
1 Scott Pegg defines the de facto state as “a secessionist entity that receives popular support and has achieved sufficient capacity to provide governmental services to a given population in a defined territorial area, over which it maintains effective control for an extended period of time” (Pegg 1998, 1). How to refer to de facto states embroils any writer in a dangerous game of linguistic choices that tend to be profoundly ‘win-lose’. A wide range of terms and qualifiers has been used to describe them, including ‘unrecognised’, ‘self-proclaimed’, ‘so-called’, ‘entities’, ‘quasi-states’, ‘pseudo-states’ and ‘para-states’; sometimes plain inverted commas are deployed to denote a lack of legitimacy: ‘republic’, ‘president’, and so on. Conversely, use of these terms without a qualifier is seen as an endorsement of secessionism. I have opted for ‘de facto state’ as the term that is simultaneously the least inaccurate and least offensive.

2 It is worth recalling that some South Caucasus examples contradict certain macro-models developed to explain broader Soviet/post-Soviet dynamics. Mark Beissinger’s model of nationalist mobilization in the Soviet Union, for example, would not predict Abkhazian mobilization, since it suggests that smaller, lower-status and heavily assimilated groups were less likely to mobilize. See the discussion in Beissinger (2002, 223-225).

3 This simultaneously transgressive and mimetic quality is captured in the adjective “shadow”, sometimes applied to the sovereignty of de facto states.

4 Central state authorities in Tbilisi and Baku use terms denoting de facto states as regions or provinces of their wider state. While the term ‘Abkhazia’ has a wider historical resonance and is less controversial, ‘South Ossetia’ was not a widely accepted term prior to Soviet rule and is more divisive. Official Georgian sources refer to ‘Tskhinvali region’, while some more nationally inclined sources refer to ‘Samachablo’ (‘fief of the Machabeli clan’), firmly locating the territory in the context of its Georgian feudal past. Many Azerbaijani sources refer to Nagorny Karabakh as “the Azerbaijani region of Nagorny Karabakh”; and tie it to a corresponding category of ‘lowland Karabakh’ surrounding it. Armenian sources refer to the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR), increasingly held to encompass not only the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO), but also the surrounding territories occupied as a result as armed conflict in 1993-94. The term ‘Artsakh’, a mediaeval name used in the territory, is sometimes preferred especially by sources in NK itself.

5 During the 1990s, the point at which central state authority across post-Soviet Eurasia was at its lowest, the phenomenon had its widest geographical reach. If a range of prototypes and variations on the ‘model’ of a de facto state are included, other examples could be found in the North Caucasus (Chechnya), Georgia (Achara), Azerbaijan (the Talysh-Mughal Republic); there were other cases where the tendency was averted (for example, Crimea). For a discussion of the differences between the South Caucasian and Transnistria see Lynch (2004, 84-90).

6 There is also a range of terms used to describe the state unit from which secessions have taken place: ‘parent-state’, ‘metropolitan state’. I have opted for ‘central state authorities’ here.

7 See Fairbanks (1995, 2002) on the nature of post-Communist wars, the private armies that fought them and comparison with their analogues in sub-Saharan Africa.

8 For a discussion of how the frame of post-colonial legitimacy is deployed in Georgian-Abkhaz debates, see Broers (forthcoming).

9 This would not exclude, however, the less often imagined scenario of long-term low intensity insurgencies in areas where de facto states exist today.

10 Ó Beachlain (2012, 168) in fact suggests that Abkhazia’s 2004 election was its own ‘colour revolution’.

11 For a theoretically-informed, Foucauldian reading of displacement from Abkhazia, see Dale (2001). For an opinion survey carried out on Georgian IDP attitudes on conflict-related issues and an overview of IDP activism since displacement see Conciliation Resources (2009, 2011).

12 For discussion of the situation of Azerbaijani IDPs in Azerbaijan, see Huseynov (2011) and Huseynov and Gureyeva-Aliyev (2011).

13 For data on the displacement of Armenians from Azerbaijan, see, for example, Ayunts (2011).

14 International funding has been more available for peacebuilding activities, yet there is a chicken and egg dilemma in conducting peacebuilding activities where communities have divergent political cultures. Accepting a degree of “democratization assistance” as a component of peacebuilding work is rarely a persuasive case in Tbilisi or Baku.

15 This may not seem to be the case from a Caucasus, Lithuanian or Tajik/Uzbek/Kyrgyz point of view, yet when the broader picture is taken into consideration much worse violence could have been expected across the former Soviet Union as it collapsed.

16 Libaridian sees 1995 as “the year when the opportunities for regional cooperation were at their highest and were, by and large, lost” (Libaridian 2012, 241).

17 For example there is no discussion of conditions in Nagorny Karabakh itself in Michael Croissant’s discussion of prospects in his 1998 study of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict (Croissant 1998).
19 One concept that appeared to deny the possibility for new questions, yet which became very widely used until and even after 2008 was ‘frozen conflict’. The notion of frozen conflict, apart from conveying the dangerous and demonstratively inaccurate notion that these conflicts were somehow contained and not dangerous, also froze a generalised understanding of the conflicts’ main actors and configurations as if they had originally emerged in the 1990s. ‘Frozen conflict’ maintained the categories, leitmotifs and scripts of the 1990s, priming outsiders to be receptive to readings of the situation according to already outmoded scripts and switching them off from possibilities for change in other, perhaps unexpected, domains. Far from the conflicts being frozen, it was in fact the peace processes that became increasingly frozen over time.

20 International NGOs’ involvement in supporting Georgian-South Ossetian dialogue was more limited, perhaps due to the perception that this conflict was the one least characterized by ethnic animosity and hence the most easily resolved. There is considerable anecdotal evidence, in addition to late Soviet data on settlement patterns, intermarriage and language repertoires that would, on the surface, support this notion. Yet perhaps it was precisely these characteristics that also made this conflict the most vulnerable to external manipulation.

21 For a detailed overview of many of these initiatives, see International Alert (2012).

22 Kimitaka MatsuZuto (2008) goes further to suggest that the multiethnic character of the population in Abkhazia (and Transnistria) has been decisive in stimulating pluralist political frameworks more generally, as compared to mono-ethnic Karabakh. This finding is interesting to compare with, for example, Kolsto and Blakkisrud’s observations (2012) on the exclusion of a key group in Abkhazia, the Armenians.

23 These are not the first opinion surveys carried out in these territories, but they are perhaps unique in terms of the scope of the information gathered across all four de facto states within a short period.

24 For a study cross-referencing survey findings from 2010 among both current residents of Abkhazia and those displaced from Abkhazia in 1992-3, see Toal and Frichova Grono (2011).

25 The possibility of a travel ban was already the case much before 2008. The difference post-2008 was that access to South Ossetia is much more tightly controlled by Russia and the South Ossetian authorities; non-Russian passport-holders cannot access the territory at all, with very few exceptions. It has become also more difficult for international NGOs to enter Abkhazia, since travel support previously provided through UNOMIG no longer exists. There are concerns that over time access to Abkhazia via Georgia may move in the direction of that to South Ossetia.

26 The notion that Georgia bears any responsibility for conflict on its territory is often portrayed in Georgia as implying that it bears all the responsibility, and is received as an anti-Georgian stance. For example, President Mikheil Saakashvili, speaking to supporters in Karaleti on 6 August 2012 declared that “When you say that it was Georgia that launched the war, you do not love Georgia”. Reported in Civil Georgia (2012).

27 O’Loughlin, Kolossov and Toal found broad empirical confirmation of Cooley and Mitchell’s argument in their survey results from Abkhazia (2011, 19).

References


