

Guns, roses and democratization: Huntington's secret admirer in the Caucasus

David S. Siroky^{a*} and David Aprasidze^b

^a*School of Politics and Global Studies, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, USA;*

^b*The Graduate School, Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia*

(Received ■; final version received ■)

Georgia is the most democratic country in the Caucasus, but arguably its democratization has also been riddled by Huntingtonian developmental crises, resulting in ethnic conflicts and civil wars. We argue that variation in the type of political instability is best understood by focusing on the interaction between nationalism and political institutionalization rather than on their independent effects. We show that Gamsakhurdia's "state-breaking nationalism", coupled with political deinstitutionalization, produced separatist and centrist civil wars. When Saakashvili's "state-making nationalism" enhanced state capacity, it marginalized the opposition and rekindled frozen separatist conflicts, but stronger administrative institutions enabled the government to avert another revolutionary regime change.

Keywords: Democratization; nationalism; institutions; violence; state formation; nation building; Caucasus

The war between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia in August 2008 elevated interest in this small Caucasian democracy onto the world stage, but more than two years later, many of the most fundamental issues remain poorly understood, including why conflicts from the early 1990s erupted into high-level violent conflicts after having simmered at a low intensity for more than a decade and how these conflicts are linked to Georgia's democratization since the Rose Revolution in 2004.

This article focuses on the link between democratization and political instability and directs special attention to the interaction between nationalism and institutions. Our argument draws inspiration from Huntington's analysis of political order in changing societies and extends it to political developments in the South Caucasus. Huntington's original analysis (1968) focused on the factors that shape a stable political order, and his main thesis was that "political order depends in part on the relation between the development of political institutions

*Corresponding author. Email: david.siroky@asu.edu

and the mobilization of new social forces into politics".¹ Political order is obtained, then, when institutional development is compatible with the rate of social mobilization and political participation. In the limit, he argued, when the rate of mobilization outpaces institutional development, there is revolutionary war – the “extreme case of the explosion of political participation”.² While this theoretical model has been criticized for its inability to explain cases in which social mobilization proceeds only haltingly, if at all, it has proven particularly useful in understanding those cases where social mobilization explodes and institutions are ill-equipped to deal.³ As our analysis of the Georgian case illustrates, Huntington’s framework is a particularly suitable starting point, for it focuses our attention on the crux of the problem – political instability as a function of the interaction between institutions and mobilization.

We take this one step further and show how heterogeneous *configurations* of political institutions and nationalist mobilization engendered disparate *types* of political instability, including the revolutionary centre-seeking wars that Huntington analysed as well as the all-too-common separatist, peripheral civil wars, both of which have befallen Georgia since its independence. We exploit temporal variation in these features of Georgia’s political landscape to show that in the first transition of the early 1990s, exclusionary “state-breaking” nationalism, together with fragmented representative institutions, increased the salience of ethnic divisions and resulted in two separatist civil wars. Combined with weak administrative institutions, these conditions also generated a clan-based, centre-seeking civil war, which overthrew the first non-communist government in 1991. In the second transition, which began with the Rose Revolution in 2003, we show that “state-making” nationalism interacted with fractured representative institutions to spawn policies aimed at ethnic coercion, which reproduced the separatist conflicts from the early 1990s. As a result of strengthened administrative institutions, however, we argue that Georgia managed to avert a centre-seeking civil war and a subsequent regime change.

The state’s increased administrative capacity has been a clear result of the Rose Revolution, but this has not been balanced by an equal amount of effort to increase the state’s representative institutions and participatory capacity.⁴ Already in 2007, the International Crisis Group faulted the current Georgian regime with “sliding toward authoritarianism”.⁵ We argue that the imbalance between the developments of these two dimensions of state capacity has significantly contributed to political instability in Georgia, as it has in other democratizing states.⁶ We unpack this claim theoretically in the next section, arguing that the explosion of political emancipation without the concomitant political institutionalization is a key cause of instability and then examine it empirically by exploiting variation within Georgia over the past 20 years. The available evidence is supportive of this thesis.

The remainder of the article outlines our main claims about the sources of political instability and then traces the argument longitudinally through the periods associated with Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili. We find that Georgia’s ethnic nationalism in the early 1990s served as a substitute for the scarcity of

political institutions. During the second transition period, which we date beginning in 2003, the state's superior administrative institutions prevented ethnic nationalism and internal factions from destabilizing Georgia again. The persistent fragility of its participatory institutions, and the repeated failure of efforts to build such representative institutions, has left it vulnerable to coercive state-making nationalism, however, which ultimately pushed Georgia towards renewed confrontation with its peripheral ethnic groups and internal political opposition. Our results highlight patterns of instability during Georgia's transition that can be linked to its uneven democratization and that reinforce Huntington's analysis of embryonic institutional environments and transformational instability.

Democratization, deinstitutionalization and nationalism

Many scholars have pointed to the negative correlation between democratic dyads and interstate war—commonly known as the “democratic peace”.⁷ An equally large number of literatures have raised objections to this line of inquiry.⁸ One type of criticism has come from scholars focusing on democratization, who see internal and external conflicts as likely outcomes of democratic transitions, particularly protracted transformations.⁹ In this article, our objective is to characterize the causal mechanisms that link protracted and partial transitions to various forms of conflicts and to illustrate this relationship using evidence from post-Soviet Georgia, which has democratized in fits and starts, and then only with respect to some of its institutions.¹⁰

We argue that the key to understanding the relationship between democratization and political instability in general—and in Georgia in particular—is the interaction between the rapid political emancipation of the masses, a sparse institutional environment and varieties of nationalisms. We see this argument as enriching Huntington's core thesis by analysing how different types of institutions and forms of nationalisms interact to create varieties of political instability. System changes both require and cause an explosion of mass participation. At the same time, institutions are in flux, because old institutions may have become obsolete and new institutions may still be subject to significant revision. As Huntington argued, when institutions are fragile and participation is abundant, political instability is likely to follow.¹¹ By bringing in two analytically distinct forms of nationalisms – state-making and state-breaking – we show that this framework can be usefully extended to account for two important types of political instability in the modern world – revolutions and secessions.

More specifically, we argue that the *type* of institutions that may exist, or may cease to exist, are crucial to explaining the form of political instability that is likely to ensue. In particular, it is important to know not only the strength of such institutions, but also whether they are *administrative* or *representative* in nature.¹² The former provides tools for regulating, administering and generating policy outcomes. This function is essential for the stability of any political system, regardless of its regime type. The latter is typically associated only with democratic systems

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of governance, but exists—in different forms, such as institutions for accommodating ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia—in non-democratic settings as well.¹³ Soviet institutions, for example, were strong in an administrative (and coercive) sense, but strictly controlled the character of participation, and so were generally sufficient to ensure political stability. Towards the end of the Soviet Union, however, the legitimacy of the old system's institutions was frequently under attack, generating moderate tremors of instability from within. The more promptly the administrative institutions recover from such challenges, the greater the chance to halt the momentum and to re-establish stability is. The longer the recovery takes, however, the sooner the symptoms may take on a life of their own and the more likely it is for instability to ensue.

Participatory institutions are typically weak (and sometimes non-existent) in post-authoritarian settings. Political parties and interest groups, for example, often need to be re-organized and sometimes even built from scratch in a newly democratizing state in the former socialist world.¹⁴ Formally, there is often a significant increase in the *number* of political organizations, but these organizations represent the fluid character of the transitional political landscape and are frequently divided along factional lines that often overlap with pre-existing cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic divisions within a society.¹⁵ Given the dearth of trust in society during such transitions, the membership of most political organizations often does not extend far beyond narrow social groups, resulting in a *fractured* political landscape that cannot sustain sufficiently broad and coherent political coalitions and civic organizations.¹⁶

Such settings are conducive to the fusion of political and social actors, for social institutions can assume political functions such as mediation and regulation, consistent with Huntington's characterization: "political systems [praetorian polities] with low levels of institutionalization and high levels of participation are systems where social forces using their own methods act directly in the political sphere".¹⁷ A good example of this was the new Georgia media, which could have served as a forum for crossing ideological and parochial lines, but it was instead factionalized, captured by sundry small groups, and produced a "divided marketplace of ideas".¹⁸

The key to understanding whether, and if so how, this configuration of emancipation and institutionalization results in political instability lies in the role of nationalism, which can substitute for many of the functions that political institutions typically assume.¹⁹ Nationalism may also complement democratization efforts, of course, since both nationalism and democracy rely on masses: "in the name of the people" and "rule by majority" are transcendental principles for both.²⁰ Democracy needs nationalism to delineate borders of the polity: "modern nations and modern democracies alike are too large to do without this 'imagined' quality" [of nationalism].²¹ Like democracy, however, nationalism comes in many flavours, not all of which are conducive to democracy.²² In this article, we draw attention to two types of nationalisms – *state-breaking* and

state-making—discussed more fully in the next section, two types of institutions – *administrative* and *participatory* – and two kinds of instability – *centre-seeking civil wars* and *peripheral separatist wars*. Our argument is that the key to understanding the type of political instability—whether centre-seeking or peripheral—lies in the particular blend of mass participation, institutional strength and nationalism. In the previous sections, we have discussed the role of participation and institutions, and now we proceed to outline the part of our argument that pertains specifically to nationalism.

From state-breaking to state-making nationalism

We distinguish between two ideal types of ethnic nationalisms—state-breaking and state-making—both of which have numerous empirical referents in the modern world.²³ The former aims to deconstruct the existing political entity by subtracting from an existing governance unit, while the latter tries to establish a new polity by adding or incorporating previously autonomous or peripheral territories and people. The former seeks to break away from a pre-existing state identity (in this case, the Soviet identity) and relies on social identities rather than on the pre-existing political institutions, while the latter aims to build or “construct” new political institutions and new political identities.²⁴ In short, state-breaking nationalism is about exclusion, and state-making nationalism is about inclusion.²⁵

The former type of nationalism is often more characteristic of new and weak states.²⁶ Here, state institutions—participatory and administrative—are likely to be rudimentary. The political leadership often lacks institutional levers to attach people to politics. By contrast, state-making nationalism is more characteristic of societies where administrative and coercive institutions are either preserved or have been re-established, but participatory institutions are not sufficiently developed to enable the accommodation of minorities, outsiders and dissenters.

We argue that these two types of nationalisms reasonably characterize the two periods of Georgia’s transformation, but that the precise effect of nationalism on political instability depends on its interaction with the institutional setting. Specifically, we show that state-breaking nationalism interacted with weak administrative and participatory institutions, which characterized the first period of transition in the early 1990s. Although administrative institutions were strengthened during the second period, participatory institutions remained weak, and both interacted with state-making nationalism. To adopt Huntington’s apt characterization: “groups become mobilized into politics without becoming socialized by politics”.²⁷ More developed administrative institutions enabled the new elite to quickly re-establish its operational capacities, mobilize the public, protect itself from internal factions and coerce minorities towards integration using state-making nationalism. However, when administrative institutions are weak, social divisions may become political divisions, not only creating conflict on the periphery but also potentially rupturing the very centre of the state.

On the basis of this logic, which we see as building directly on Huntington's work about political order in changing societies, we propose to examine four main claims concerning the interaction of nationalism and institutions. First, we suggest that rapid political emancipation without supportive institutionalization will contribute to political instability. Second, when participatory institutions in multicultural societies are weak, social actors will apply exclusionary state-breaking nationalism. Third, when administrative institutions are weak, the ruling elite will not be able to suppress social opponents, which will lead to centripetal confrontation. And lastly, when administrative institutions are relatively strong (but participatory institutions are still weak), the ruling elite will attempt to suppress opponents and re-establish the state by relying upon state-making nationalism. These four claims are the empirical implications of Huntington's core thesis about the causes of political order and instability, modified to incorporate the important role of nationalism in conditioning and mediating between political instability and political development.

Establishing the validity of these claims in general and in Georgia, in particular, is important from the viewpoint of theories of state formation, for debates about democratization focused on the role of democratic institutions in multinational societies and for discussions about the nature of political order and disorder in changing societies within the Caucasus and beyond. We now examine these claims empirically, drawing upon temporal variation within Georgia.

State-breaking nationalism and civil war in Georgia

The first wave of transformation in Georgia commenced in the late 1980s, when Georgia was the frontrunner in political emancipation within the Soviet Union after the Baltic republics. Georgia witnessed an eruption of mass participation. Exclusionary "state-breaking" nationalism, together with fragmented representative institutions, increased the salience of ethnic divisions and resulted in two separatist civil wars. Combined with weak administrative institutions, these conditions also generated a centre-seeking civil war in 1991.

During *Perestroika*, various social movements and groups emerged in Georgia. A few dissidents from the Soviet period, mostly unknown to the broad masses, became heroes overnight after *Glasnost* opened the media and the first nationalist ideas reached ordinary people. Georgia's state-owned newspapers changed their names: "Young Komsomol" became "Young Ivereli" (Iveria being one of Georgia's ancient names) and "People's Education" became "National Education". Independence was soon on the tongue of public intellectuals and newly established political parties, including the Georgian branch of Communist party.²⁸ A parallel process of political emancipation erupted in Georgia's autonomous regions—especially in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Local newspapers, intelligentsia in universities and colleges and even local party structures developed nationalistic programmes. While Georgia's emerging nationalism was aimed at breaking away

from the Soviet Union, parallel movements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia supported the preservation of the Soviet Union.²⁹

The intensity of political emancipation across the country was tremendous and entirely deinstitutionalized. The first opportunity to establish a robust representative institution to counterbalance the high rate of emancipation failed to materialize in 1990, which was both the first and the last time that all of Georgia, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia, participated in elections to form the first non-communist parliament. An election rule that prohibited regionally based parties and groups from running in the national elections and effectively excluded (the already mobilized) minority representatives from parliament was passed, further fostering a sense of alienation among ethnic minorities, particularly among Abkhaz and Ossetian groups.³⁰

President Gamsakhurdia subsequently attempted to accommodate the Abkhaz and even achieved an electoral arrangement with the Abkhaz leadership that would guarantee their representation in the regional parliament. Abkhaz constituted 17% of the population of the autonomous republic, but would be assured of 28 seats, whereas Georgians constituted 45% of the region, but would receive only 26 seats. This ensured a veto minority for both the Abkhaz, who feared the elimination of their regional autonomy, and the Georgians, who feared Abkhaz separatism.³¹ This representative arrangement, fragile as it was, nevertheless prevented the outbreak of a centrifugal civil war as long as Gamsakhurdia remained in power until 1992. The newly elected Georgian parliament failed to accommodate even the exclusively Georgian factions and missed an opportunity to reform participatory institutions and local governance. Several factions even refused to recognize the government's legitimacy and instead created their own institution, the National Congress, which paved the way for the centripetal civil war in Georgia.³²

The new government in Tbilisi saw local representative bodies less as a means of participation and representation and more as levers for control associated with certain administrative functions. As a result, elected local councils had only limited functions, but the heads of the local municipalities—prefects—were still appointed directly by the centre and were the real power brokers in the local municipalities. They effectively replaced the old Rayon Party secretaries.³³ The Abkhaz and South Ossetian bureaucracies, however, ignored directives from the centre, obeying their own leaders and depriving the central government of genuine control.³⁴

At this point, representative institutions in Georgia existed in little more than name. Political parties flourished and were plentiful in number, but remained small in membership, often not exceeding a few hundred individuals and frequently divided along ethnic lines. Few parties and individuals tried to cross the ethnic lines and established contacts with other community leaders. A very rudimentary and internally divided civil society could hardly substitute for the absence of political institutions.³⁵

Once nationalist programmes gained momentum in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, however, Georgia's state-breaking pro-independence nationalism

morphed into a garden-variety ethnic nationalism. This state-breaking nationalism exhibited itself in a variety of ways, including the abolition of the autonomous status that South Ossetia enjoyed under the Soviet Union, which produced some of the earliest ethnic violence.³⁶ Abkhazia was still under the centre's formal control, because of ethnic Georgian's demographic advantage in the region, but also because of the affirmative action bargain that Gamsakhurdia reached with the Abkhaz leadership.³⁷ When Gamsakhurdia was ousted from power, however, the conflict in Abkhazia erupted in August 1992, and it only ended in 1993 with the defeat of the government's armed forces, the insurgents' military victory and the mass exodus of ethnic Georgians from the region.

In the background of the centrifugal ethnic conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia was a centripetal civil war brewing between Georgian political factions.³⁸ In the 1990s, the basic cleavage was that Gamsakhurdia supporters pitted against the Gamsakhurdia opposition. Because Gamsakhurdia failed to provide institutional mechanisms to deal with the opposition, political groups paved their own paths to political participation—most opposition parties joined the National Congress and organized military wings. Although Gamsakhurdia initially took advantage of the remnants of the Soviet administrative machinery, he could not rely on the support of the Soviet and Soviet–Georgian security forces after late 1991, for he had already alienated most of the former high-ranking Georgian bureaucrats, along with some of his own followers, and because the Soviet coercive machinery had ceased to exist as such, following the failed August coup in the Kremlin. In the September of 1991, the bulk of the newly founded National Guard joined the opposition. Together with the resurgent *Mkhedrioni*, they ousted Gamsakhurdia in January 1992. The civil war continued in the western part of Georgia, parallel to the war in Abkhazia.³⁹

This first phase of Georgia's transformation, then, started with the eruption of mass participation. Masses were mobilized around the nationalist idea of creating an independent Georgia. State-breaking nationalism was rejected and opposed in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, however, which combined home-grown nationalist projects with the idea of *preserving* the Soviet state. The absence of political and civil institutions made the task of inter-ethnic and inter-factional cooperation and the formation of credible commitments daunting. The first parliament not only neglected to accommodate different ethnic communities but also failed to satisfy ethnic Georgian factions. Eventually, Gamsakhurdia's state-breaking nationalism became indistinguishable from exclusionary ethnic nationalism. Gamsakhurdia's government lacked the administrative capacities to suppress competing ethnic and ideological groups, which is one of the primary reasons for his presidency lasting only one year.

The other reason is external—Russian military support—which ensured Georgia's ultimate defeat in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.⁴⁰ Although Russian detachments were leaderless, disorganized and often willing to sell arms to the highest bidder, the supply of heavy weaponry was a key force multiplier that contributed to the crisis that Gamsakhurdia was facing and served to shorten his tenure

in office.⁴¹ Ironically, this guaranteed a decade of stability, if not democracy, in exchange for appending Georgia to the new Commonwealth of Independent States under the next government of Shevardnadze—former Georgian party boss and Soviet foreign minister, who returned to Georgia in 1992 as the head of state and became the new president in 1995.⁴²

State-making nationalism and the August war, 2003–2008

The second wave of transformation, which came to be known as the Rose Revolution, officially commenced when tens of thousands of Georgians demonstrated in front of the parliament in Tbilisi for the second time in modern history in 2003. The cause for mass mobilization was the failed Georgian state. Although it was triggered by election falsifications, Georgia's citizens demonstrated broadly against the failure of the first transition, which gave birth to a corrupt, inefficient and semi-autocratic state.⁴³ The opposition aimed to consummate the frozen transition, promising “unification, security and well-being”.⁴⁴ The problems that the opposition was facing were similar, but the national awakening was different—aimed not at breaking away, but at consolidating and building Georgia's (*not* Georgian) state institutions.⁴⁵

To achieve this new objective, Saakashvili's government focused on strengthening state administrative capacities. It paid less attention to developing fledgling participatory institutions, however. As a result, the state became stronger in one sense, both in the capital and in the regions, but it remained weak in the second sense of state capacity. Saakashvili succeeded in overcoming his main competitors by relying on the state's enhanced administrative capacities. In doing so, however, he altered the status quo in the existing conflicts and neglected to strengthen the state's participatory institutions, thereby contributing to their escalation.

We characterize the second transition under Saakashvili as a configuration of strong administrative institutions and weak participatory institutions and an emphasis on state-making nationalism, which was evident in both Saakashvili's discourse and policy towards the minority regions. Consider the name of the ruling party, the ‘United National Movement’ (ერთიანი ნაციონალური მოძრაობა, *Ertiani Natsionaluri Modzraoba*, ENM). Saakashvili deliberately selected this name to reflect his emphasis on state-making and to distinguish himself from his predecessors. He chose the foreign loan word “*Natsionaluri*” to indicate “national” rather than “*Erovnuli*”, which is the most direct Georgian equivalent, because the latter has an ethnic connotation and is associated with Gamsakhurdia's state-breaking nationalism.⁴⁶

Saakashvili's first actions in office provided further evidence and followed a classic pattern of state-making: he sought to increase the state's reach, solidifying its monopoly on the use of force and bolstering its ability to collect taxes. Budget revenues grew from US\$432 million in 2003 to almost US\$3 billion in 2008.⁴⁷ The state's service provision to its citizens (e.g. internal security and energy supply)

improved dramatically and new infrastructural projects (e.g. roads and bridges, pipelines and urban renewal) flourished.

Saakashvili's administration quickly succeeded in building state capacity, especially in the security sector, and then relied on the relative strength of these institutions to implement further programmes.⁴⁸ Drawing on the state's increased capabilities and the government's popular support, Saakashvili broadened governmental control over the regions of Georgia. In 2004, the local revolution in Adjara pushed the *de facto* local ruler, Aslan Abashidze, to flee the country.⁴⁹ Saakashvili also significantly increased the state's presence in Javakheti, a region populated by ethnic Armenians, where the central government's control under Shevardnadze was almost a formality.⁵⁰ In budgetary terms, the government has allocated considerably more funds to infrastructural projects in ethnic minority regions than any previous administrations, including road and railroad constructions, water supply and gas pipelines. Although considerable challenges to minority integration remain, Saakashvili's government has deliberately pursued a strategy of active engagement in minority regions, strengthening state administrative institutions and providing better services to minority residents. Moreover, Saakashvili regularly addresses ethnic minorities in his official speeches and travels frequently to minority regions. In this sense, Saakashvili's strategy has been inclusive, but it is built upon an unstable foundation – weak participatory institutions. While the state has become stronger, society in minority regions remains weak.⁵¹ As Huntington noted, and Georgia's first and second transitions illustrate, this configuration is a frequent recipe for instability. When participatory institutions are unable to deal with the "explosion of political participation", political development is impeded and the administrative institutions tend to bear the burden of maintaining political order and containing political instability.

Saakashvili's nationalism has sought to unify Georgia's polity, but fear of a fractured political landscape impelled his government to tighten its control. According to one student of Georgian politics, Saakashvili's government made a "false dichotomy" between state-making and democracy, seeking to prioritize the former over the latter.⁵² Ethnic and regional parties continue to be banned. Georgia's central parties remain reluctant and poorly prepared to act in ethnic minority regions.⁵³ The ruling party continued the practice of co-opting influential local individuals in ethnic minority regions, inducing many local followers of Shevardnadze to become supporters of Saakashvili. The weakness of Georgia's participatory institutions, however, continued to constrain its democratization efforts. In 2007, the antagonism between the ruling party and the opposition reached a tipping point, causing a new wave of demonstrations in front of the parliament, which the police dispersed.⁵⁴ This police action clearly demonstrated the state's new capabilities, which stood in stark contrast to the weakness of Gamsakhurdia's government, but it also revealed the state's weakness in relying upon force to deal with the opposition. Indeed, Saakashvili's administration suffered considerable internal and international criticism for its use of force to contain the opposition, from

Human Rights Watch, the US State Department and the EU, but we argue that it survived domestically primarily, thanks to its increased coercive capabilities.⁵⁵

This situation can be contrasted with that in the early 1990s, when the political landscape included both a centre-seeking civil war among the Georgian factions and ethnic conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. At that time, the central government had limited administrative resources and skills to counteract factionalism at the centre and separatism on the periphery. As a result, President Gamsakhurdia was forced to abandon the country and cede power to Shevardnadze. He inherited a failed state with weak control mechanisms and a flourishing black market.⁵⁶ Saakashvili, in turn, invested in state administrative capacities, which were utilized to re-establish state control in the regions and, at the same time, promoted an inclusionary form of state-making nationalism. State-making nationalism reached its limits in the conflict zones, however, where the increased capabilities of the Georgian state altered the perceived status quo and convinced *de facto* regional governments, as well as their patrons in Moscow, to take decisive countermeasures. Moscow's appointees took over several high-ranking positions, mostly in the security sector of the breakaway regions. In spring 2008, Moscow also commenced the slow but certain recognition of the regimes in South Ossetia and Abkhazia by setting up direct institutional links between Russian agencies and the corresponding public agencies in both the regions. Moscow also increased its military presence and built military infrastructure in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, indicating a clear escalation in Russia's policy. Worsening relations between Tbilisi and Moscow, Russia's growing ambitions in the former Soviet space and the western-brokered independence of Kosovo all served to bolster Russia's justification for intervention and recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.⁵⁷

Georgia's internal development has also had an immense impact on the Russian internal politics, where administrative institutions under Putin have also been strengthened, but representative institutions likewise remain weak. Struggling to keep and consolidate power in a multiethnic country with an artificially unified political system, Russia's ruling elite during the 2008 Medvedev–Putin dual reign experiment could not tolerate a direct blow to its status as a fledgling great power.⁵⁸ Despite Russia's unwillingness to allow territorial integrity in Georgia to be restored on Tbilisi's terms, and arguably Tbilisi's awareness of this fact, the Georgian government eagerly tried to change the status quo in both the conflict zones—sending a mix of peace plans and threat messages to local *de facto* regimes, trying to gain supporters among their leaders, especially in South Ossetia, where several former high-ranking Ossetians defected to the Georgian side between 2005 and 2007.⁵⁹

Part of the reason for Georgia's actions arguably lies in the fact that the government had tied its hands in 2004 when President Saakashvili made unanimous public commitments to restore Georgia's territorial integrity. As Mansfield and Snyder argued, "political leaders may become entrapped in their own swaggering rhetoric, [with] their reputations mortgaged to their nationalistic commitments".⁶⁰ Saakashvili's strong promise on national unity in 2004 became his political fate in

2008, when Russia's creeping annexation of the two regions escalated into the Russian–Georgian war, ending with Russia's recognition of both breakaway regions as independent states, followed by the recognition of Venezuela, Nicaragua and Nauru along with a handful of non-UN member states, breakaway regions and organizations such as Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and Hamas.

Although Georgia succeeded in strengthening its state institutions, increasing their nationwide presence and projecting power outside the capital city, all preventing the political crisis from escalating to the degree that it did in the early 1990s, the second transformation significantly altered the status quo in the conflict zones, alienating local *de facto* regimes and much of the power vertical in Russia. Moscow's behaviour not only blocked Georgia's plans to reintegrate the regions, but also threatened to undo many of the state-making successes of the second transformation that earned Georgia its reputation as “a rose among thorns” in the Caucasus.

Conclusion

We have argued that fundamental to understanding the relationship between democratization and political instability in general—and in Georgia in particular—is the interaction between the rapid political emancipation of the masses, a sparse institutional environment and varieties of nationalisms. We see this argument as building on Huntington's core thesis and enriching it by focusing more directly on the interactive effect of different *types* of institutions and nationalisms on political instability. Our analysis reinforces Huntington's main point that when institutions are fragile and participation is abundant, political instability is likely to follow. In addition to the regions that Huntington examined in Latin America and Asia, the core thesis holds in the Caucasus as well. Moreover, we show that by distinguishing between two types of nationalisms – state-making and state-breaking – the framework can be extended to account for the two main types of political instability in the developing world – revolutions and secessions.

We have reasoned that when participatory institutions in multicultural societies are weak, social actors will tend to apply exclusionary state-breaking nationalism, and when administrative institutions are weak, the ruling elite will not be able to suppress social opponents, which will lead to centripetal confrontation. By contrast, when administrative institutions are relatively strong, but participatory institutions are still weak, the ruling elite will attempt to suppress opponents and re-establish the state by relying upon state-making nationalism, which will lead to peripheral confrontation.

The empirical evidence from Georgia largely supports these claims. The first transition in Georgia generated an explosion of political emancipation in the early 1990s, which drew its inspiration from state-breaking nationalism, but this occurred in the near total absence of viable political institutions. Georgians were mobilized around the idea of an independent Georgia, which induced both fear and resentment among Georgia's various ethnic minorities. In response, ethnic

minorities mobilized in support of their own nationalist projects, which focused most immediately on preserving the Soviet political order. These duelling nationalisms came to substitute for the absence of political and civil institutions. The failure of the first non-communist government to create these institutions made the task of inter-ethnic and inter-factional cooperation, and the formation of credible commitments, formidable. State-breaking nationalism developed into an exclusionary ethnic nationalism on both sides, which further fragmented Georgia's emergent political system. Since the first non-communist government also lacked the administrative capacities to suppress competing ethnic and ideological groups, two civil wars and one centre-seeking war erupted, ending the presidency of Gamsakhurdia within one year and bringing Georgia close to collapse.⁶¹

The second transition in Georgia commenced with the Rose Revolution in 2003 and was based on a new-fanged national awakening aimed at "state-making", rather than "state-breaking". The ruling elite succeeded in strengthening administrative institutions, but it failed to develop participatory institutions in parallel. The weakness of participatory institutions marginalized the political opposition, created internal fragmentation and revealed other shortcomings in Georgia's democracy. At the same time, the state's increased coercive capacity enabled the central government to prevent an internal crisis from reaching the level of a civil war, as it did in the early 1990s. The same increased capabilities also enabled the central government to have better control over the regions and to provide improved services to its citizens. At the same time, however, it changed the status quo in the conflict zones and transformed an internal dispute in the former Soviet space, for the first time, into an explicitly inter-state conflict between Russia and one of the former republics. The Rose Revolution set into motion issues that had remained largely latent throughout the 1990s, including two ethnic separatist conflicts. This points to an important modification in Huntington's original thesis – protracted and not only rapid transitions, when combined with uneven institutional development and state-making nationalism, can incite disquieting political instability.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Professor Gordon Crawford, along with the anonymous reviewers, and Mirjam Werner for their insightful and helpful comments, which have considerably improved the article. We are also grateful for comments, conversations and encouragement to Lenka Bustikova, Mark Dietzen, Michael Hechter, Donald Horowitz and Ghia Nodia, along with colleagues at Arizona State, Ilia State, Yale and Duke. All errors are our own.

Notes

1. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, vii.
2. Ibid.

3. Przeworski, 'Institutionalization of Voting Patterns'; Przeworski et al., 'What Makes Democracy Endure?' 41 ff.; Remmer, 'Theoretical Decay and Theoretical Development'. Organski, *Review of Political Order in Changing Societies*, 922.
4. King, 'A rose among thorns'; McFaul, 'Transitions from postcommunism'; Stewart 'Democracy Promotions before and after the 'Colour Revolutions'.
5. International Crisis Group, *Sliding Towards Authoritarianism?*
6. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*; Mann, 'The Autonomous Power of the State.'
7. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*; Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace*; Oneal and Russett, 'The Kantian Peace'; cf. Lipson, *Reliable Partners*.
8. Gowa, *Ballots and Bullets*; Rosato, 'The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory'; cf. Slantchev, Alexandrova and Gartzke, 'Probabilistic Causality, Selection Bias, and the Logic of the Democratic Peace'.
9. Däubler, 'War and Post-Communist Democratization'; Mansfield and Snyder, 'Democratization and the Danger of War'; Mansfield and Snyder, 'Democratization and War'; Mansfield and Snyder, 'Reply to Thompson and Tucker'; Mansfield and Snyder, 'Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength, and War'; Mansfield and Snyder, 'Incomplete Democratic Transitions and the Outbreak of Military Disputes'; Mansfield and Snyder, *Electing to Fight*; cf. Gleditsch and Ward, 'War and Peace in Space and Time'; Thompson and Tucker, 'A Tale of Two Democratic Peace Critiques'; Ward and Gleditsch, 'Democratizing for Peace'.
10. Fish, 'Russia's Fourth Transition'; Linz and Stephan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*; Nodia, 'How Different Are Postcommunist Transitions?'; Offe, *Varieties of Transition*. Some scholars argue that 'if [difficult] transitions succeed then the new democratic governments are more likely to consolidate', but also link rapid change to conflict. See Casper, 'The Benefits of Difficult Transitions'.
11. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 79, 41; Mansfield and Snyder, *Electing to Fight*.
12. Mansfield and Snyder, *Electing to Fight*, 59; cf. Mann, 'The Autonomous Power of the State'.
13. On federalism in such settings, see Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 601–80; Roeder, 'Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization'; Bunce, *Subversive Institutions*; Bakke and Wibbels, 'Regional Inequality, Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Federal States'; Hale, 'The Double-Edged Sword of Ethnofederalism'; Brancati, *Peace by Design*.
14. Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*; Elster, Offe and Preuss, *Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies*
15. Kitschelt et al., *Post-Communist Party Systems*; Bustikova and Kitschelt, 'The Radical Right in Post-Communist Europe'; Grzymala-Busse and Darden, 'The Great Divide'; Ishiyama, 'Historical Legacies'; Pop-Eleches, 'Historical Legacies and Post-Communist Regime Change'.
16. Rose, 'Postcommunism and the Problem of Trust' (see also Note 13).
17. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 80.
18. Snyder, *From Voting to Violence*; Snyder and Ballentine, 'Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas'.
19. Smith, *National Identity*
20. Nodia, 'Nationalism and Democracy'.
21. Nodia, 'Nationalism and Democracy,' 8; Shelef, *Evolving Nationalism*.
22. Auer, 'Nationalism in Central Europe'; Bunce, 'The National Idea'.
23. Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*.
24. Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*, 1–34.

25. Although this theoretical distinction appears clean, in practice, state-breaking nation-
alism can swiftly mutate into state-making nationalism, as it did in Georgia.
26. Mansfield and Snyder, *Electing to Fight*.
27. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 83.
28. The local Georgian Branch of Communist Party declared its independence from the
Soviet Communist Party and incorporated the notion on Georgia's National Independence
into its programme after the August 1991 coup attempt in Moscow. On the poli-
tics of the late 1980 and the first half of 1990, see Aves, *Path to National Independence
in Georgia*; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 317–35.
29. Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*; Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers*.
30. Cheterian, *War and Peace in the Caucasus*, 174.
31. Cheterian, *War and Peace in the Caucasus*, 189.
32. Hanf and Nodia, *Georgia Lurching to Democracy*, 27–9.
33. Losaberidze, Kandelaki and Orvelashvili, *Local Governance in Georgia*.
34. They even prevented Gamsakhurdia from appointing prefects. Wheatley, *From
National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 150.
35. Nodia, *Civil Society Development in Georgia*, 13; Hanf and Nodia, *Georgia Lurching
to Democracy*.
36. Hanf and Nodia, *Georgia Lurching to Democracy*, 13; Cheterian, *War and Peace in
the Caucasus*, 176.
37. Jenne, *Ethnic Bargaining*.
38. Sambanis, 'Do Ethnic and Non-ethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes?'
39. Cheterian, *War and Peace in the Caucasus*, 155–216.
40. Siroky, 'International Dimensions of Secessionist Insurgency'.
41. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers*
42. Hanf and Nodia, *Georgia Lurching to Democracy*, 37–40.
43. Wheatley, *From National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 103–142.
44. Saakashvili, 'Inaugural Speech'.
45. Marten, 'Warlordism, Sovereignty and State Failure'.
46. Gamsakhurdia made extensive use of the term 'erovnuli', which can be translated as
'ethnic Georgian'. Aprasidze, 'Georgia's New Nationalism', 185 ff.
47. Mitchell, 'Compromising Democracy', 175–6.
48. Darchiashvili, *Security Sector Reform in Georgia*
49. Marten, 'Warlordism, Sovereignty and State Failure'.
50. Siroky, 'International Dimensions of Secessionist Insurgency'.
51. Wheatley, 'The Integration of National Minorities'.
52. Mitchell, 'Compromising democracy', 178; Lanskoj and Arashidze, 'Georgia's Year
of Turmoil'; Shafir, 'What Comes After Communism?', 18; George, 'The Dangers of
Reform', 171.
53. Nodia and Scholtbach, *The Political Landscape of Georgia*.
54. Nodia, *Georgia*.
55. 'Tear gas used on Georgia protest'; Human Rights Watch, 'Georgia: Police Beat
Peaceful'; US Department of State, 'Georgia: Need for Restraint'.
56. Kukhianidze, 'Corruption and organized crime in Georgia'.
57. Illarionov, 'The Russian leadership Preparation'.
58. Filipov, 'Diversionary Role of the Georgia–Russia Conflict'.
59. Kalyvas, 'Ethnic Defection in Civil Wars'.
60. Mansfield and Snyder, *Electing to Fight*, 11.
61. Hanf and Nodia, *Georgia Lurching to Democracy*, 31–3.

Notes on contributors

David S. Siroky is Assistant Professor of Political Science in the School of Politics and Global Studies at Arizona State University. His research focuses on ethnic conflict and democratization.

David Aprasidze is Professor of Political Science in the Graduate School at Ilia State University. His research focuses on foreign policy and democratization.

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