

GEORGIA

Abkhaz

Activity: 1991-2020

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- The Abkhaz movement has been active since 1988 when Georgia still belonged to the USSR (see Abkhaz under Russia). We code the movement in Georgia as of 1991 (when Georgia became independent). We indicate that activity immediately prior to independence was non-violent.
- In 1992 Abkhaz leaders declared Abkhazia independent. From 1993 onwards Abkhazia enjoyed de facto independence from Georgia and urged Georgia to recognize the territory as a formally independent state (Gurr 2000; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000; Hewitt et al. 2008; International Crisis Group 2018, 2020; Marshall & Gurr 2003, 2005; Minahan 2002; MAR 2009). [start date: 1988; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- In 1991 Gamsakhurdia negotiated a power-sharing arrangement with the Abkhaz, and it appears as if the Abkhaz were content with autonomy at the time. The Abkhaz' claim radicalized with the incursion of Georgian troops into Abkhazia in 1992. In July 1992, the Abkhaz parliament reinstated the 1925 constitution and declared Abkhazia a sovereign state (Jones 1997: 539; Minahan 2002: 11). There were repeated declarations of independence and insistence on independence in negotiations with Tbilisi in subsequent years.
 - o Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl code the onset of the Abkhaz war coinciding with the independence declaration in July 1992. UCDP, on the other hand, codes the onset of the war in August. We researched the case and found that Georgia launched its military offensive in August 1992 and, therefore, after the independence reflection. While the January 1st rule would lead us to code an independence claim from 1993 onwards, coding the independence claim from 1992 onwards better reflects case history. [1991: autonomy claim; 1992-2020: independence claim]

Independence claims

- See above. [start date: 1992; end date: ongoing]

Irredentist claims

- We found no evidence for irredentist claims among Abkhaz leaders or parties. According to Sergey Shamba, a senior politician in Abkhazia, that there is “no political force in Abkhazia, no parties, no social movements that would proceed from such a possibility [of irredentism], namely the renunciation of independence. No such political forces exist” (Abkhaz World 2022). [no irredentist claims]

Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by the Abkhaz is the Abkhazia ASSR located on the coast of the Black Sea in northwestern Georgia (Minahan 2002: 7). We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database (GADM 2019).

Sovereignty declarations

- In July 1992, the Abkhaz parliament reinstated the 1925 constitution and declared Abkhazia a sovereign state (Jones 1997: 539; Minahan 2002: 11; George 2009: 116). Note that Abkhazia, according to the 1925 constitution had Union Republic status within the Soviet Union, which of course no longer existed. Hence, the formal meaning of the re-instatement is somewhat ambiguous, but it can be interpreted as a declaration of independence from Georgia. [1992: independence declaration]
- In February 1994, the Abkhaz parliament declared Abkhazia independent from Georgia. Independence is confirmed with the adoption of a constitution in November, which reaffirms Abkhaz independence (Jones 1997: 543). [1994: independence declaration]
- In 1999, the Abkhaz organized a referendum on independence, and subsequently declared independence (Coppieters 2004). [1999: independence declaration]

Separatist armed conflict

- The HVIOLSD coding for 1992-93 follows Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl (2019). Note: SSW code the civil war as ongoing until 1994, but as explained in their coding notes, the extension is due to a different war in which some Abkhaz were involved (but more Georgians) and whose goal critically was not secession but the toppling of the central government. [1991: NVIOLSD; 1992-1993: HVIOLSD]
- The MAR rebellion score remains at three in 1994-1996, pointing to a “local rebellion”. Yet, we were unable to find any casualties (see e.g. UCDP/PRIO). MAR sometimes assigns a code of 3 due to declarations of sovereignty; it is possible that this was done here due to Abkhazia’s de facto independence. [1994-1996: NVIOLSD]
- In 1997 and 1998 Georgian partisans (White Legion, Forest Brotherhood) who had remained in Abkhazia after the retreat of Georgia’s regular army were involved in skirmishes with the Abkhaz de-facto government, which led to more than 25 deaths in both years (UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia). Consistent with this, the MAR rebellion score is three in 1997 and seven in 1998. Marshall & Gurr (2003) also suggest that there was an armed rebellion in 1998. UCDP also includes the 1997-1998 episode, but considers it a non-state conflict. We nonetheless code 1997-1998 as LVIOLSD because, according to the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia, both the White Legion and the Forest Brotherhood had indirect support from the Georgian government: “The militant groups White Legion and Forest Brothers were formed in Abkhazia after fighting between the Abkhaz forces and the Georgian government officially ended in 1993 with the defeat of the Georgian army. The groups consisted of ethnic Georgians with their major base for recruitment being the community of ethnically Georgian internally displaced persons. They were supported by the Executive Council of the Abkhaz Government in Exile, which was subsidized by the Georgian government. In line with the objective of the Georgian government and the exile government to regain control over Abkhazia, the primary goal of the Forest Brothers and the White Legion was to destabilize Abkhazia and to disturb the efforts by Abkhaz authorities to consolidate a de facto regime. However, the Georgian government soon lost control over the White Legion and the Forest Brothers. Increasingly, the groups shifted their focus on organized crime and smuggling across the ceasefire line, profiting from the thriving parallel economy in the region. The groups broke up soon after the Rose Revolution and the Abkhaz Government in Exile stopped the financial support. The groups were mainly active in the Kodori Valley and the region around the town of Gali, infiltrating Abkhazia by crossing the porous ceasefire line. The leader of the White Legion was Zurab Samushia while Dato Shengelia headed the Forest Brothers. Each

group numbered about 150 to 200 men. In 1998, both groups fought together against Abkhaz forces.” [1997-1998: LVIOLSD]

- The conflict escalated again in October 2001 (2001 Kodori crisis), when fighting between Abkhazia and Georgian partisans in collaboration with a band of Chechens led to 40 casualties. According to Radio Free Europe (2001), the Georgian government’s involvement in the clashes is again not clear (and controversial). UCDP/PRIO does not include this episode, but 2001 is coded as armed conflict in Marshall & Gurr (2003). Marshall & Gurr (2005) and Hewitt et al. (2008) also code armed conflict in 1999-2000, though this appears based on their five-years rule (they code ongoing armed conflict if conflict recurs within five years) as we found no corroborating evidence for separatist violence crossing the LVIOLSD threshold. The Peace and Conflict reports suggest that LVIOLSD continued into 2002, but we found no corroborating evidence of casualties. Based on this, 1999-2000 and 2002 are coded with NVIOLSD and 2001 as LVIOLSD. [1999-2000: NVIOLSD; 2001: LVIOLSD; 2002: NVIOLSD]
- In 2002, Georgia and Abkhazia agreed on demilitarization of the Kodori area. When UN peacekeepers (the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) had been established in 1993 to observe the 1993 cease-fire agreement) left the area, Russian forces entered the Kodori region but left after four days. Subsequently Georgian troops moved into the area in violation of the demilitarization agreement, a step that was condemned by both Abkhazia and the UN. In 2006 tensions mounted again as Georgia again occupies the Kodori area and declares it the location of an Abkhaz government-in-exile (Hewitt et al. 2008). During the 2008 war over South Ossetia, Abkhaz forces re-took most of the Kodori area, which since has remained under Abkhaz control (UNOMIG). According to the CrisisWatch Database, from 2003 onward, there have been casualties almost every year but numbers do not reach the LVIOLSD threshold with 4 deaths in 2003, 8 in 2005, 2 in 2006, 5 in 2007, 5 in 2008, and 9 between December 2011 and mid-2012. Thus, 2003-2012 is coded NVIOLSD.
- We found no evidence for separatist violence above the threshold between 2013 and 2020. Since 2012 the pro-Russian Georgian Dream party have formed consecutive governments and followed the Strategic patience doctrine. The latter has contributed to military de-escalation as it puts a premium on stable relations with Russia by imposing an informal requirement that Georgia’s government takes no action without considering how Russia might respond (International Crisis Group 2020). [2003-2020: NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- When the Red Army invaded Georgia in 1921 Abkhazia was awarded with the status of a Socialist Soviet Republic (SSR). In 1931 its status was downgraded, and Abkhazia became an ASSR under Georgian administration (Jones 1997: 509). From the 1930s, there was a policy of Georgianization vis-à-vis the ethnic minorities. Most minority rights were restored after Stalin’s death in 1953, and there was a policy of affirmative action since the 1970s (Jones 2013: 44; Minority Rights Group International). In 1978, Moscow and Tbilisi made minimal autonomy concessions (Coppieters 2004; Jones 1997: 510). Gorbachev initiated decentralization reforms, with the introduction of multi-candidate elections throughout the Union in 1988 (Brown 1996: 166, 179; Suny 1993: 118, 141, 461; also see Linz & Stepan 1992) and limited devolution to Republics (including ASSRs) in 1989 (Solnick 1996: 224; Gorbachev 1999: 99). The same year, Tbilisi restricted the language rights of ethnic minorities (George 2009: 110; Jones 2013: 35, 45, 48-49). [1988, 1989: autonomy concession; 1989 cultural rights restriction]
- In June 1991, the first democratically elected president of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, negotiated a power-sharing agreement with the Abkhaz. This agreement guaranteed disproportionate Abkhaz representation in the regional government by way of ethnic quotas (at the time the Abkhaz made up only 17.9 per cent of Abkhazia). Furthermore, the agreement set out consent of both Georgian and Abkhazian factions within the regional parliament for major constitutional and legislative changes (Coppieters 2004; Jones 2013: 95, 223). The consociational agreement implied increased autonomy for the Abkhaz, even if it was very short-lived, and is coded as an autonomy concession. [1991: autonomy concession]

Concessions and restrictions

- The 1991 consociational agreement broke down shortly after the ouster of Gamsakhurdia in January 1992. The new leaders reinstated Georgia's 1921 constitution, which does not make mention of minority self-rule (Grigoryan 2015: 186). In August 1992, Georgian troops entered Abkhazia, officially to protect the rail lines from Gamsakhurdia's forces. The exact mission remained unclear; the occupation of Sukhumi, the capital of Abkhazia, proved contentious and led to civil war with Abkhazia (Jones 1997: 95-96). [1992: autonomy restriction]
- In March 1993, the Georgian parliament votes to make Abkhaz the second state language of Abkhazia (Jones 1997: 540). The 1995 constitution confirmed the official status of Abkhaz in Abkhazia. [1993: cultural rights concession]
 - o This concession occurred before the end of the war.
- There have been repeated rounds of negotiations, beginning in November 1993 (see Jones 1997: 541). In 1994 a cease-fire was signed in Moscow, under UN auspices and with Russian facilitation. Other than a cease-fire, the agreement involved a separation of forces and the deployment of Russian peace-keepers. Russian peace-keepers continue to be stationed in Abkhazia to date Coppieters (2004). But even after the war, Georgian paramilitary groups, the White Legion and the Forest Brothers, continued to undertake guerilla missions along the Abkhaz border. The 1994 agreement was vague. According to the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia: "In the political sphere the parties agreed that Abkhazia would have its own constitution and legislation, along with appropriate state symbols such as a flag, anthem and emblem. Discussions were held regarding a future distribution of powers, and the parties came to the understanding that there would be joint action in such fields as foreign policy, border controls, customs and in ensuring human and civic rights."
- There was no further progress from the vague resolution signed in 1994, and to date there is no agreed upon political resolution of the Abkhazian status (George 2009: 120). Stumble blocks include the return of IDPs (on the Georgian side), and the status of Abkhazia. Still, Tbilisi has repeatedly offered the Abkhaz increased autonomy in return for its reintegration. The offers remained vague and were rejected by the Abkhaz side.
 - o Georgia's President Shevardnadze offered the Abkhaz increased autonomy in May 1997, while ruling out recognition of Abkhazia's independence (Minahan 2002: 12). There was no implementation.
 - o In September 1998 Shevardnadze repeated its willingness to grant far-reaching autonomy within an integral Georgian federation (Minahan 2002: 12). There was no implementation.
- Still, in keeping with the codebook, we code an autonomy concession in 1995 because Georgia's 1995 constitution refers to Abkhazia as "autonomous". [1995: autonomy concession]
- Upon Georgia's initiative, the CIS imposed economic sanctions in January 1996 and henceforth the region was formally blockaded by both Georgia and Russia. The action was designed as a stick to force Abkhazia back into Georgia's hands (George 2009: 120). Russia lifted its blockade in March 2008, though it had informally lifted it much earlier. Georgia maintains its blockade, and has even intensified as a consequence of the 2008 war. Note that it is possible that Georgia's began to blockade Abkhazia already prior to 1996, but we did not find sufficient evidence. [1996: autonomy restriction]
- After the Rose Revolution, wherein Saakashvili came to power, Georgia took a more repressive stance against Abkhazia. Saakashvili seemed to perceive reunification as an historical mission that must be accomplished during his presidency (International Crisis Group 2008). In 2004 Saakashvili intensified the blockade that had been imposed in the early 1990s (see above) by in addition imposing a sea blockade on Abkhazia. The Georgian Navy was unable to fully enforce the sea blockade, but this still is evidence of a more restrictive approach, and is coded as an autonomy restriction. [2004: autonomy restriction]
- Two years later, in 2006, Saakashvili offered the Abkhaz broad autonomy in return for their reintegration into Georgia. Abkhazia rejected the offer (Radio Free Europe 2006). Saakashvili in the same year violated the 1994 cease-fire agreement by launching a large-scale anti-criminal operation in the Kodori Gorge and moved the headquarter of the exile-Abkhaz government (the one recognized by Georgia) to Kodori (Siddi 2012).

- In March 2008, President Saakashvili offered the Abkhaz far-reaching autonomy, wide federalism, and representation in the central authorities, but without giving details. Like all previous offers, Saakashvili's offer was rejected by the Abkhaz and not implemented (International Crisis Group 2008: 18-19).

Regional autonomy

- The autonomous status of Abkhazia carried over into independent Georgia. However, in early 1992, Georgia reinstated Georgia's 1921 constitution, which does not make mention of minority self-rule (Grigoryan 2015: 186). This led to the war later in 1992. To better reflect the case history, we do not apply the January 1 rule in this case and code no regional autonomy in 1992-1993. From late 1993 onwards, the Abkhaz are de-facto independent, and hence coded as regionally autonomous (International Crisis Group 2018, 2020). [1991, 1994-2020: regional autonomy]

De facto independence

- In response to the Abkhaz declaration of independence in 1992, Georgian forces occupied Abkhazia. With Russian support, the Abkhaz forces eventually were able to force the Georgian military out of (most of) Abkhazia by the end of 1993 and Georgia lost control of Abkhazia. According to Caspersen (2012: 12) and Jones (1997: 513), Abkhazia is de-facto independent 1993 onwards. Following the first of January rule, we code de-facto independence for 1994 onwards (International Crisis Group 2018, 2020). [1994-2020: de facto independence]

Major territorial changes

- In 1991, Abkhazia became part of Georgia, implying a host change. [1991: host change (new)]
- [1992: revocation of regional autonomy]
- [1993: establishment of de facto independence]

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Abkhaz
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Abkhazians
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	37207000

Power access

- The Abkhaz are coded with self-exclusion in EPR throughout, which equals a powerless score. [1991-2020: powerless]

Group size

- We follow EPR. [1991-2002: 0.017; 2003-2020: 0.03]

Regional concentration

- Most Abkhaz resided in the Abkhaz ASSR, though during the Soviet period they were clearly outnumbered by ethnic Georgians (18% vs 46% according to 1989 census). The Abkhaz made up the majority in one of Abkhazia's districts according to the 1989 census (Gudauti), but the Gudauti district harbored only approx. a third of Georgia's total Abkhaz population (30,000/90,000). This matches with information from MAR.
- The situation changed after the Abkhaz War (1992-1993), in whose aftermath the Abkhaz undertook ethnic cleansing policies against ethnic Georgians and approximately 200,000 ethnic Georgians fled the region – almost the whole Georgian population of Abkhazia (Minahan 2002: 11; MAR). Reliable information on the ethnic composition after the war is difficult to get by. It is known that roughly 40,000 Mingrelians (ethnic Georgians) returned after the war to Gali, an Abkhaz region bordering Georgia, but the Abkhaz authorities block the return of Georgians to other areas of Abkhazia (The Economist 2011). Furthermore, there has been Russian immigration. As a result, it is possible that the Abkhaz continued to constitute a minority in Abkhazia as a whole after the early 1990s war, though it seems likely that they constituted a majority if Gali is not taken into account. Furthermore, according to a 2020 census by the Abkhaz authorities, there were 125,726 ethnic Abkhazs in Abkhazia, which is slightly more than half of the population (Department of State Statistics of the Republic of Abkhazia 2021). On this basis, we code the Abkhaz as concentrated after 1992, the start of the Abkhaz war. [1991-1992: not concentrated; 1993-2020: concentrated]

Kin

- EPR notes no kin, though MAR does. Minahan (2002: 7) reports that there are approximately 35,000 Abkhaz in Turkey, which does not count as numerically significant. The Abazas in Russia are also closely related, but they number <100,000 (see the Abaza entry). [no kin]

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Ajars

Activity: 1991-2004

General notes

- The spellings ‘Ajar’ (Ajaria) and ‘Achar’ (Acharia) are both valid and used interchangeably within the literature investigated.

Movement start and end dates

- The Ajar separatists first lobbied Moscow for removal from Georgian jurisdiction in 1988, thus the start date.
- In 1989, the first openly nationalist organization was formed. The movement remained active when Georgia became independent in 1991. Thus, we code the movement in Georgia as of 1991, but note prior nonviolent activity.
- Following the Rose Revolution that established democracy, Georgia’s newly elected president Saakashvili promised to clamp down on separatists. The authorities imposed direct rule over Ajaria by ousting Aslan Abashidze – the region’s leader – in 2004, and negotiating the withdrawal of Russian troops from the region. This appears to have ended the movement (Roth 2015). Since 2004, Ajar activists have defended their right to practice Islam and build new mosques, but we found no evidence for organized claims for increased SD (Ekho Kavkaza 2020; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 14; Kmuzov 2013; Kavkazsky Uzel 2014; Kopecek 2020: 33; Kucera 2017; Marshall & Gurr 2003; Minahan 2002, 2016; Oragvelidze 2016; Roth 2015; MAR). [start date: 1988; end date: 2004]

Dominant claim

- According to Minahan (2002: 68), Ajar leaders have been careful not to challenge the territorial integrity of Georgia, limiting their demands to autonomy. While there are independence-minded groups, popular support for these groups is minimal. In line with this, George (2009: 183) suggests that even Abashidze, the most outspoken advocate of Ajar self-determination, never demanded outright separation. Hence, we code an autonomy claim until 2004, the year when Abashidze was ousted. [1991-2004: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

NA

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by the Ajars is the current Autonomous Republic of Adjara (also Ajara) in southwestern Georgia (Roth 2015: 188). We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database (GADM 2019).

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- 2004 saw a sudden spike in violence in the context of large-scale protests as Georgian president Saakashvili encroached upon Adzharia's autonomy by trying to campaign in the region. MAR's anti-government rebellion score in 2004 is 3 ("local rebellion") due to this, but we were only able to find reports of injuries and no deaths (e.g., George 2009: 167ff). The situation was resolved by the end of 2004 and Ajaria was permitted to retain its status as an autonomous region. We found no reports of separatist violence in other years, hence a NVIOLSD classification. [NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- Supported by Turkish troops, the Adzhars declared an independent republic of Ajaria in 1918. Georgian forces took part of Ajaria in 1920, while Armenian forces annexed Kars and the south of Ajaria into then-independent Armenia. Bolshevik Russia retook Ajaria in early 1921. Ajaria became an autonomous republic under Georgian control in 1922 (Minahan 2002: 65-66; Minority Rights Group International). In 1926 the Ajars mounted an insurgency against the Soviets. After the rebellion was crushed, Stalin deported large numbers of Ajars to Central Asia. As another punitive measure, the Ajars were reclassified as ethnic Georgians in 1930. Most minority rights were restored after Stalin's death in 1953 (MAR), suggesting an upward trend in the self-determination status. On the other hand, Minahan (2002: 66) and Minorities at Risk suggest that the Communist Party of Georgia pursued a long-term strategy in the 1970s of assimilating the Ajar to Georgian culture, and that there were (unsuccessful) attempts of disestablishing Ajar autonomy. Gorbachev initiated decentralization reforms, with the introduction of multi-candidate elections throughout the Union in 1988 (Brown 1996: 166, 179; Suny 1993: 118, 141, 461; also see Linz & Stepan 1992) and limited devolution to Republics (including ASSRs) in 1989 (Solnick 1996: 224; Gorbachev 1999: 99). [1988, 1989: autonomy concession]
- The same year, Tbilisi restricted the language rights of ethnic minorities (George 2009: 110; Jones 2013: 35, 45, 48-49), but this is not a restriction since Ajars speak a dialect of Georgian (Minahan 2002: 64)
- In 1991 Gamsakhurdia launched some attempts to Christianize the Muslim Ajars (Minahan 1998: 121). Among the more oft-cited measures is the organization of mass baptisms in Muslim areas (Jones 1997: 513). Another is the appointment of an Orthodox priest as head of Akhalkikhe, a heavily Muslim area (Jones 1997: 521). [1991: cultural rights restriction]

Concessions and restrictions

- In newly independent Georgia, Abashidze, the leader of Ajaria, was able to garner ever more autonomy. It appears that Abashidze most of the times proceeded unilaterally, that is, without a formal agreement with Tbilisi. Abashidze also regularly withheld tax money owed to Tbilisi (George 2009: 121). We were unable to locate a clear-cut incidence of a concession by Tbilisi, though Tbilisi at the time at least implicitly accepted Ajaria's power grabs. The 1992 and 1995 constitution reaffirmed Ajaria's autonomous status, without establishing a clear delineation of powers (George 2009: 136-137).
- In 1994 Shevardnadze enacted a new law which established a free economic zone in Ajaria (Minahan 2002: 67; Minorities at Risk Project). By this, Tbilisi recognized Ajaria's economic autonomy (which Ajaria had exercised already before, but not explicitly recognized by Tbilisi) (Cunningham 2014: 211; Wheatley 2005: 115-117). [1994: autonomy concession]

- In 2000, Georgia passed a law on the status of the Autonomous Republic of Ajaria, which delineated the powers between the center and the region with regard to budgetary competencies. Given Ajaria's undefined status beforehand, it is unclear whether the legislation curtailed Ajaria's autonomy, and it proved meaningless given that Ajaria continuously thwarted the legislation (George 2009: 136-137). We do not code a restriction.
- Saakashvili was engaged in a campaign against corruption and for democratization (George 2009: 173), for which Ajaria with its rigged elections and high-level corruption was an obvious target. After a rhetoric war, Abashidze fled to Moscow in early May 2004. The Georgian parliament voted to remove Ajaria's ruling authorities. There was some talk about removing Ajaria's autonomy altogether, but Tbilisi instead opted to establish a clearer delineation of powers between the center and the region, which came about with the law of the Autonomous Republic of Ajaria on the Structure, Authorities, and Rules for Activities of Government of the Autonomous Republic of Ajaria (George 2009: 176). The law implied a reduction in the autonomy status. Executive posts are now appointed rather than locally elected. The local parliament can reject the presidential nomination, but after two rejections the Georgian president can dismiss the local council altogether. The ministries of defense and interior are abolished altogether. The powers of the regional parliament were reduced. While an instance of centralization, Ajaria's autonomy remained meaningful, with regional taxing and budgetary powers. The reform resembled Putin's establishment of increased vertical power in Russia (George 2009: 176-177; Minority Rights Group International). [2004: autonomy restriction]
- In the 2012 elections, Saakashvili's party was defeated by the pro-Russian Georgian Dream. Following the win, Georgian Dream leader, Bidzina Ivanishvili, pledged greater autonomy to Ajaria (Simonyan 2012). However, there is no evidence that this promise was implemented.

Regional autonomy

- The autonomous status of Ajaria carried over into independent Georgia. The exact terms and delineation of powers are no longer defined in the post-Soviet constitutions, but both the 1921 constitution, reinstated in 1992, and the newly drafted 1995 constitution acknowledges the autonomous status of Ajaria. In 2004 there was substantial centralization of powers, but Ajaria's autonomy remained meaningful, with regional taxing and budgetary powers (George 2009: 176-177; Holland et al. 2020). [1991-2004: regional autonomy]

De facto independence

- Under Abashidze, the long-term leader of Ajaria in the 1990s/early 2000s, Ajaria enjoyed a lot of de-facto competencies which it unilaterally grabbed without formal agreement with Tbilisi. However, Abashidze was careful to not demand outright independence, and has not declared independence. Hence, we do not code de facto independence.

Major territorial changes

- In 1991, Ajaria became part of Georgia, implying a host change. [1991: host change (new)]

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Ajars
<i>Scenario</i>	n:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Georgians
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	37201000

Power access

- The Ajars are essentially Muslim ethnic Georgians. Thus they form a regional branch of EPR's Georgians, who dominate the Georgian polity. The Ajars did not have meaningful representation in Georgia's national executive (personal communication with Jonathan Wheatley). [1991-2020: powerless]

Group size

- According to Minahan (2002: 63), there are approximately 260,000 Ajars in Georgia. With around 300,000, the Minorities at Risk Project's estimate is similar. According to Minahan (2016:15), there were about 360,000–400,000 Ajars in Georgia as of 2015.
- We draw on Minahan (2002). According to the World Bank, Georgia's population amounted to 4.35 millions in 2002, but this excludes South Ossetia (around 70,000 according to Minority Rights Group International) and Abkhazia (160,000-220,000 according to Minority Rights Group International). This adds up to a total population of roughly 4.35 millions. [0.0598]

Regional concentration

- According to Minahan (2002: 63), the vast majority of the Ajars resides in Ajaristan, where they make up 65% of the local population. Data from MAR provides further evidence in this direction (see gc6b, gc7, groupcon in different MAR releases). [concentrated]

Kin

- No kin according to MAR, though according to Minahan (2002: 63), there are Ajars (called Laz) in Turkey numbering 105,000. Note: the number of Laz in Turkey is unclear; estimates run from 45,000 to more than a million; we rely on the Joshua project, and according to them the number of Laz is < 100,000. [no kin]

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Armenians

Activity: 1991-2020

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- The National Unification Party (NUP) was formed in Yerevan in 1966. The NUP called for an independent Armenia which would include Western Armenia, Nakhichevan, and Nagorno-Karabakh. In 1988 in what then used to be the Georgian Socialist Soviet Republic the national-popular movement Javakhk (the Armenian for Javakheti) was created whose influence rapidly grew among the local Armenians. The official goals of the organization were the preservation of Armenian cultural heritage, science and history of Armenia in local schools, protection of national institutions and also the development of the region. While initially there were also Russians, Georgians and Greeks among the Javakhk leaders, only after Gamsakhurdia came to power 1990 did the organization assume the role of a protector of the rights of the region's Armenian population frightened by the threats on the part of the Georgian nationalists. From the very beginning, however, the goal of Armenians in Javakheti was at least to obtain autonomy, if not to unite with the region with Armenia. This initial separatist activity was still in the USSR (see Armenians under Russia).
- The Armenian movement in Georgia remained active when Georgia became independent in 1991. We code the movement as of 1991, but note that it was both active and nonviolent prior to Georgia's independence (the Armenians in Azerbaijan were involved in violence before 1991 over Nagorno-Karabakh, but not the Georgian Armenians). Since then, the movement is ongoing (Guretski 1998; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000; MRGI; Wheatley 2004).
- In 1999, Virk was established as a radical party stemming from the Javakhk. In early 2005, the United Javakhk was created as a youth movement modeled after Javakhk to demand autonomy. These parties remain active today.
- Since Saakashvili's presidency, Georgia has been pursuing an active integration policy of ethnic Armenians in the broader Georgian community. Saakashvili was the first president to visit the Javakhk area, and his integration policy drastically differed from the neo-feudal approach of his predecessors in which the central government's non-interference in local affairs was exchanged for political loyalty of the local elites (Kopecek 2019). However, his policy sparked mass demonstrations as the national government attempted to replace the largely Armenian-staffed, but notoriously corrupt police force in Javakheti. As a result, in 2005 and 2006 mass demonstrations and political meetings were organized by Samtskhe-Javakheti activists, whose demands included autonomy within Georgia for Samtskhe-Javakheti and Tsalka Armenians (Minority Rights Group International).
- In the following years, Javakheti faded as radical activists were co-opted, arrested, or left the country (Kopecek 2020; Berglund, Dragojevic & Blauvelt 2021). Yet Javakheti's major SD organizations, United Javakhk and Virk continued their activities and maintained their claims for greater autonomy (Goble 2019; Nexis 2021; Ramishvili 2020).
- In addition to autonomy, Armenians have made claims for better language rights. For example, in 2016, the Akhalkalaki district administration proposed to add Armenian language inscriptions to new road signs. The proposal was not supported at the regional and national levels (Ayvazyan and Zedginidze 2017; Berglund, Dragojevic, and Blauvelt 2021). At the same time, separatism is not a popular issue amongst ethnic Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti (International Crisis Group 2011: 14; Kopecek 2020). [start date: 1966; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- The two main vehicles associated with the Armenian movement in Georgia, United Javarkh and Virk, demand increased autonomy (Ayvazyan and Zedginidze 2017; Berglund, Dragojevic, and Blauvelt 2021; Wheatley 2004; Kanbolat & Gul 2008; Minority Rights Group International; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 28). United Javakhhk and Virk maintained their claims for greater autonomy as of 2020 (Goble 2019; Nexis 2021; Ramishvili 2020). [1991-2020: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

- We found some ambiguous evidence for claims for outright secessionism. The most concrete evidence in this direction we could find is from July 2018 and in particular, stems from “comrade” Aghassi Iordanyan who was head of the “Armenian Revolutionary Socialist Union of Javakheti” (Resistentiam 2020). Yet, we could not find further evidence of activities of the “Armenian Revolutionary Socialist Union of Javakheti” group, suggesting that the political significance of such claims is doubtful.
- More widely known radical Javakheti Parties – “Virk” and “Javakh” (Peuch 2002), do not seem to have made independence claims. “Virk”, for example, has clarified that “for the past 12 years [since 1990], no organization, no one has ever called upon the region to secede” (Peuch 2002). [no independence claims]

Irredentist claims

- Historically, there have been claims for a united great Armenia (Hovannisian 2008: 22), but in modern times the only significant irredentist movement is in Azerbaijan (i.e., Nagorno-Karabakh) (Hughes 2002: 211). An organization called the Armenian Revolutionary Federation has made claims for a merger of Armenian Georgia with Armenia, but that organization does not have considerable presence within Georgia (Sanjian 2011). [no irredentist claims]

Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by the Armenians in Georgia is predominantly the former Javakheti province in the south, which merged in 1995 to form the Samtskhe-Javakheti region. We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database (GADM 2019).

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- We found no reports of separatist violence, hence a NVIOLSD coding for 1991 onward. [NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- Armenians in Georgia are concentrated in the mountainous rayons (districts) of Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda, which together form the so-called Javakheti region in southern Georgia. Under Soviet rule, the Armenians in Georgia were not awarded with an autonomous homeland; instead, the Javakheti region was directly sub-ordinated under Georgian jurisdiction. In 1989, Tbilisi

restricted the language rights of ethnic minorities in the Georgian SSR (George 2009: 110; Jones 2013: 35, 45, 48-49). The requirement to speak Georgian in all governmental conduct was never properly implemented in the Armenian-dominated Javakheti region (Kanbolat & Gul 2008: 13), but still the harsh language law represents a restriction. [1989: cultural rights restriction]

- Note: in 1988 Gorbachev initiated multi-candidate elections throughout the Union, a measure tantamount to an autonomy concession (Brown 1996: 166, 179; Suny 1993: 118, 141, 461; also see Linz & Stepan 1992). Gorbachev local leader choice had little effect on Javakheti because it lacked an autonomous status and thus meaningful decision rights.

Concessions and restrictions

- In February 1991, Gamsakurdia introduced prefects, appointed by Tbilisi, to establish central control over the regions. The prefects, directly responsible to the president, controlled the locally elected councils, the sakrebulo. The reform led to a modest increase in centralization (Jones 2013: 65, 172-173), but the Soviet system was highly centralized as well.
 - Notably, in practice, Georgia allowed a considerable degree of self-rule on a de facto basis (Grigoryan 2015: 193; Kopecek 2020).
- In 1994, Shevardnaze introduced an extra layer of government, administered by a governor that is appointed by Tbilisi. The Armenian-dominated Javakheti region (which consists of two rayons) did not become a region of its own, but was merged with Samtshke (Meskheta) to form the Samtshkhe-Javakheti region (Wheatley 2004). Samtshke was dominated by Georgians, but Armenians made up the majority in the newly created Samtshke-Javakheti province. Despite the area's large Armenian population, Armenians were underrepresented in the regional administration, and at least until 2004 there had not been an Armenian governor (Wheatley 2004). Overall, little changed – the Georgian regional government system remained highly centralized (Swianiewicz & Mielczarek 2010).
- According to the Law on General Education, passed in 2005, Georgian language and literature, the history and geography of Georgia as well as “other social sciences” are to be taught in Georgian also in minority language schools (Lohm 2007; Wheatley 2009). We consider this too minimal to code a restriction.
- In 2005, indirect local elections of rayon (district) prefects were re-introduced (Jones 2013: 146; there were some further reforms, see George 2009: 169-170). We do not code a concession as the reform seems too limited.
- In 2006, there was a radical local government reform, wherein the number of local (municipal) units was reduced from about 1,000 to 65. The reform aimed at decentralization, but achieved relatively little in this regard (Swianiewicz & Mielczarek 2010).
- In 2014, Georgia changed its immigration law, which is regarded as discriminatory towards Armenians. Since the military conflict between Georgia and Russia in 2008, Georgian citizens require a visa to enter Russia. Considering that many Armenians do not know the Georgian language and travel to Russia for work, they have obtained Russian and Armenian citizenship to enter Russia without a visa. The new immigration law prohibits dual citizenship, and many Armenians automatically lost their Georgian citizenship. In the same year, Georgia's authorities eased visa and residency permit requirements for those who have property in the country following pressure from the Javakheti activists and Armenia's authorities (MRGI; Mghdesyan Arshaluis 2015). In 2018, Georgian authorities allowed to reinstate Georgian citizenship without losing the citizenship of another country if the former citizen passed a Georgian language test. The former citizens had the right to apply for reinstatement before 31 December 2020. (Ayvazyan 2019; JAMnews 2018). We do not code these developments because dual citizenship rights are difficult to square with our understanding of cultural rights.

Regional autonomy

NA

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

- Georgia attained independence in 1991, implying a host change. [1991: host change (new)]

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Armenians
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Armenians
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	37202000

Power access

- We draw data from EPR. [powerless]

Group size

- We draw data from EPR. [1991-2002: 0.08; 2003-2020: 0.052]

Regional concentration

- According to MRGI, “[t]here is a substantial Armenian community in Tbilisi, and rural Armenian communities are compactly settled in the southern region of Javakheti bordering on Armenia.” Wheatley (2004) provides more detailed information: approx. 90% of the Javakheti region’s (i.e. the districts Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda) population was Armenian in the Soviet 1989 census, a number that has even increased in recent years according to Wheatley. However, a closer look at the 1989 census suggests that Georgia’s Armenians cannot be considered spatially concentrated in the 1989 census: Only approx. 100,000 out of the 430,000 Armenians in the Georgian SSR lived in these two districts. The rest lived in other areas of Georgia, with larger concentrations in Tbilisi (approx. 150,000 or 12%) and Abkhazia (approx. 77,000 or 14%).
- The number of Armenians in Georgia decreased in the years thereafter, from 437,000 (1989 census) to 249,000 (2002 census). Outmigration was uneven, with relatively stable figures in the Javakheti region. Nevertheless, the Armenians cannot be considered concentrated according to our definition: Only approx. 90,000 Armenians resided in the Javakheti region, compared with 249,000 Armenians in total.
- This remained the case in more recent years. According to the 2014 census, 81,089 Armenians live in Javakheti. This population equals 48% of 168,102 Armenians that live in Georgia, and 51% of Javakheti’s 160,504 population (National Statistics Office of Georgia n.d) [not concentrated].

Kin

- Numerically significant kin (Armenians) in Armenia, Iran, Russia, and Azerbaijan (EPR). There is also a large Armenian diaspora in the US. [kin in neighboring country]

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South Ossetians

Activity: 1991-2020

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- The movement emerged in 1988, and thus still under Soviet rule (see South Ossetians under Russia). The South Ossetian movement remained active when Georgia became independent. We code South Ossetians under the header of Georgia as of 1991. We do, however, also indicate that this movement was active and nonviolent prior to Georgia's independence.
- Soon after Georgia's independence, the conflict turned violent (see below). Violence erupted again in the 2000s, most notably in the context of the 2008 Russo-Georgia war (see below). The dispute remains ongoing, with South Ossetia maintaining de facto independence demanding formal recognition of independence.
- Between 2012 and 2018 the region enjoyed a reduced level of tensions and a rise in informal trade as Georgia and Russia pursued a policy of "normalisation". However, new tensions emerged due to dissatisfaction with the frozen conflict and because the Russian and South Ossetian security personnel fortified the boundaries between Georgian-controlled and South Ossetian-controlled lands that are located in densely populated settlements (International Crisis Group 2018, 2020). In Spring 2022, South Ossetia leadership proposed a referendum to join Russia, but the plan was abandoned (DW 2022; George 2009; Gurr 2000; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000; Hewitt et al. 2008; Jones 2013; Lynch 2004; Marshall & Gurr 2003, 2005; Minahan 1996, 2002; MAR; Wolff n.d.). [start date: 1988; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- The South Ossetians declared independence from Georgia in late 1991. In January 1992 a referendum was held on independence from Georgia and integration with Russia. Minorities at Risk suggests that the South Ossetians have maintained their demand. With the election of Eduard Kokoity as president of South Ossetia in 2000, the demand for outright independence from Georgia (George 2009: 178) and joining Russia (MAR) solidified. In Spring 2022, the leader of South Ossetia Anatoly Bibilov announced that a referendum on a merger with Russia would be held in June 2022. However, these plans were abandoned by the new leader Alan Gagloev. Gagloev questioned the timing of the referendum, but supported South Ossetia's accession to Russia eventually (DW 2022). [1991-2020: irredentist claim]

Independence claims

- As per above, it is evident that support for independence in South Ossetia has the primary aim of subsequent merger with Russia. Independence in South Ossetia is at best seen as an interim phase before a proposed merger (Jones 2014). [no independence claims]

Irredentist claims

- As per above, independence of South Ossetia is seen as an interim state prior to eventual reunion with Russia (Jones 2014). We find overwhelming evidence of this, such as the 2016 plan to hold a referendum on becoming part of Russia (TASS 2016). Political support for reunion has

therefore existed since at least the 1992 referendum on a merger with Russia; and through continuous political support (e.g. by the President of South Ossetia Leonid Tibilov; Novinite 2012). [start date: 1991; end date: ongoing]

Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by the South Ossetians is the former South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast, today a territory in northern Georgia (Wheatley 2017: 46). We code this claim based on Roth (2015: 174; also see UNCS 2015).

Sovereignty declarations

- South Ossetia declared independence from Georgia on November 28, 1991 (Jones 2013: 274). MAR notes that the South Ossetian parliament at the same time decided to join Russia. Hence we code an irredentist declaration. [1991: irredentist declaration]
- According to Jones (2013: 94), following a referendum in early 1992 on independence and integration with North Ossetia, South Ossetia declared its independence from Georgia a second time in May 1992. [1992: irredentist declaration]

Separatist armed conflict

- The HVIOLSD coding for 1991-92 follows Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl (2019). [1991-1992: HVIOLSD]
- Marshall & Gurr (2003: 57) suggest continued violence in 1993, but the war ended with the 1992 cease-fire (UCDP/PRIO; Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl 2019). MAR gives a rebellion score of 3 from 1993-2000, but several sources note that there were no open hostilities. MAR sometimes assigns a code of 3 due to declarations of sovereignty; it is possible that this was done here due to South Ossetia's de facto independence. Thus, 1993-2003 is coded with NVIOLSD. [1993-2003: NVIOLSD]
- The conflict remained unresolved and in particular, Georgia did not offer South Ossetia autonomy in return for reintegration. But the cease-fire agreement did work reasonably well while Shevardnadze was in power (George 2009: 114; Jones 2013: 95; Lynch 2004; Wolff n.d.), that is until 2003. After the Rose Revolution in which Shevardnadze was ousted, violence flared up again in 2004. UCDP/PRIO codes an armed conflict over South Ossetia in 2004. Thus 2004 is coded with LVIOLSD. [2004: LVIOLSD]
- 2005-2007 is coded with NVIOLSD as there was little violence during these years. UCDP/PRIO does not record any casualties. We found no evidence for substantial violence in other sources, with the exception of an incident involving four casualties of Chechen origin in October 2006 in which the Georgian government, however, denied any involvement. [2005-2007: NVIOLSD]
- 2008 is coded as HVIOLSD due to the Russo-Georgian war over South Ossetia (Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl 2019). [2008: HVIOLSD]
- Subsequent violence has taken place, but there were not enough casualties to code LVIOLSD. [2009-2020: NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- In 1922 South Ossetia was awarded Autonomous Oblast status (Jones 1997: 509). From the 1930s, there was a policy of Georgianization vis-à-vis the ethnic minorities. Most minority rights were restored after Stalin's death in 1953. From the 1960s there was a policy of affirmative action. By the 1980s, South Ossetians dominated the local party structures (Jones 2013: 44-45). Gorbachev initiated decentralization reforms, with the introduction of multi-candidate elections

- throughout the Union in 1988 that allowed for the local election of leaders (Brown 1996: 166, 179; Suny 1993: 118, 141, 461; also see Linz & Stepan 1992). [1988: autonomy concession]
- However, beginning in 1989 Tbilisi initiated a series of downgrades, with the establishment of Georgian as the sole state language in 1989 (MAR; Jones 2013: 35, 45, 48-49; Wolff n.d.; George 2009: 110) and the revocation of South Ossetian autonomy in 1990 (Jones 1997: 536; George 2009: 110-111; Jones 2013: 45; Minority Rights Group International). [1989: cultural rights restriction] [1990: autonomy restriction]

Concessions and restrictions

- In January 1991, Tbilisi imposed an economic blockade on South Ossetia, which it maintained throughout the duration of the war (George 2009: 114; Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl 2019; Wolff n.d.). [1991: autonomy restriction]
 - o Note: This restriction was imposed in response to escalating violence and the beginning of the civil war, which Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl peg to January 1991. This restriction therefore occurred after the onset of violence.
- In June 1992, Russia, Georgia, and South Ossetia signed a formal cease-fire. The agreement also established a military buffer zone and was followed by the deployment of an OSCE Observer Mission and Russian-led peacekeepers. The agreement did not lead to a formal resolution to the conflict (George 2009: 114; Jones 2013: 95) but did work reasonably while Shevardnaze was in power. Pragmatic considerations drove both sides to accept the status quo (Lynch 2004; Wolff n.d.). Georgia subsequently lifted the economic blockade it had upheld since 1991. After the war, the so-called Ergneti market emerged, a kind of economic free zone where Georgians, South Ossetians, and Russians sell their products without paying customs or taxes. While of course illegal under Georgian law, the Ergneti market was implicitly accepted by Tbilisi and even actively supported by Georgian law enforcers (George 2009: 138). We do not code the lifting of the economic blockade as a concession in line with the codebook.
- In a peaceful 2003 transition, the so-called “Rose Revolution”, a new president – Mikheil Saakashvili – came to power. Among the most important of his goals was the restoration of Georgia’s territorial integrity (George 2009: 179). Saakashvili demonstrated willingness to engage in brinkmanship to achieve this goal (MAR). In particular, Saakashvili in 2004 closed the Ergneti market, the lifeline of South Ossetia’s crumbling economy (George 2009: 167, 179), and thereby effectively imposed an economic blockade on South Ossetia (which is coded as an autonomy restriction). The narrative in the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia (<https://ucdp.uu.se/conflict/393>) suggests that the closure of the Ergneti market in 2004 preceded the escalation of violence in the same year. [2004: autonomy restriction]
- Moreover, Saakashvili initiated an attempt to re-take South Ossetia by force in the summer of 2004 (Minority Rights Group International), which is though not a restriction as defined in the codebook.
- After the failure of the 2004 attempt at retaking South Ossetia, Saakashvili changed his strategy and began to offer a re-instatement of autonomy to South Ossetia. After the war in the early 1990s, South Ossetia had showed some willingness to return to Georgia, under the condition that Georgia re-establishes (and improves) their territorial autonomy status. At the time this demand proved unacceptable to the Georgian side (George 2009: 126-127). Saakashvili was the first president of Georgia to offer autonomy to South Ossetia (George 2009: 173). The first time Saakashvili initiated such a plan was in September 2004 at the UN General Assembly (Jones 2013: 146-147; George 2009: 180-181). The plan was not implemented, however.
- Saakashvili presented a modified proposal in 2005 (Jones 2013: 146-147; George 2009: 180-181). Still, Tbilisi’s offers remained overly vague, and there were no steps taken towards implementation. Georgia’s constitution does not acknowledge South Ossetian autonomy (while it acknowledges autonomy for Abkhazia and Ajara) and continues to refer to the ‘Former Autonomous Region of South Ossetia’. The South Ossetians rejected Tbilisi’s offer.
- Note: While offering autonomy, Saakashvili continued to engage in repressive brinkmanship. The Ergneti market remained closed, and the economic blockade thus in place. Moreover, Saakashvili began to secure ties with a former South Ossetian prime minister, Dmitri Sanakoev,

and established an ‘alternative’ South Ossetian government with Sanakoev as head of government in the small piece of South Ossetian land that is effectively controlled by Georgia. Moreover, Georgia built-up its military forces, and there was aggressive rhetoric directed against South Ossetia. For instance, in 2006 Georgia’s defense minister announced he would spend next New Year’s in Tskhinvali, South Ossetia’s capital (George 2009: 181).

- The cease-fire agreement concluded after the August 2008 war initiated another round of negotiations under the auspices of the EU, OSCE, and the UN. It appears that the negotiations did not involve the status of Abkhazia or South Ossetia, and were limited to security and humanitarian issues. There was limited, if any, success. The Ergneti market remained shut, and it appears Georgia did not repeat its autonomy offer.
- There were plans to re-open the Ergneti market from 2012 onwards, but these have not materialized (Kemoklidze & Wolff 2020).
- Note: In post-Soviet Georgia there were some local government reforms of the non-federal part of Georgia (to which South Ossetia, at least de jure, belongs). However, these reforms changed relatively little in terms of decentralization, and are thus not coded (Jones 2013: 65, 146, 172-173; Wheatley 2004; Swianiewicz & Mielczarek 2010; George 2009: 169-170; also see the notes for the Armenians in Georgia).

Regional autonomy

- Tbilisi had abolished South Ossetia’s autonomous status in 1990. The regional autonomy code follows the establishment of de-facto independence (International Crisis Group 2018, 2020). [1993-2020: regional autonomy]

De facto independence

- According to Caspersen (2012: 12), South Ossetia is de-facto independent 1992 onwards (also see (International Crisis Group 2018, 2020). Following the first of January rule, we code de facto independence from 1993 onwards. [1993-2020: de facto independence]

Major territorial changes

- In 1991, South Ossetia became part of newly independent Georgia, implying a host change. [1991: host change (new)]
- [1992: establishment of de-facto autonomy]

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	South Ossetians
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Ossetians (South)
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	37206000

Power access

- We follow EPR, with one exception (see below). Self-exclusion = powerless. [1991-1992: discriminated; 1993-2020: powerless]
 - o EPR codes the South Ossetians as de facto independent (ie, self-excluded) in 1991-1992, but case evidence suggests de facto independence started after that. After Georgia's independence in 1991, South Ossetia declared itself independent but, according to

Caspersen (2012: 12), South Ossetia only achieved de facto control at some point in 1992. Following the first of January rule, we code de facto independence from 1993 onwards and recode 1991-1992 with discriminated (Georgia blockaded South Ossetia throughout 1991 and implemented other discriminatory practices, such as the revocation of autonomy).

Group size

- We follow EPR. [1991-2002: 0.032; 2003-2020: 0.016]

Regional concentration

- Information on the South Ossetians' spatial concentration is contradictory. According to Minahan (2002: 1474) there are approx. 170,000 South Ossetians in Georgia, concentrated in the de-facto entity of South Ossetia and adjacent areas. Approx. 60,000 South Ossetians live in the separatist entity according to Minahan, where they make up 63% of the local population (as we will see, Minahan appears to report the figures from the 1989 census). MAR, on the other hand, suggests that most South Ossetians reside in South Ossetia, both in 1990 (see gc7 in phase I-IV release) and in recent years (see GC7 in phase V release).
- Our own research suggests that the South Ossetians cannot be considered spatially concentrated according to our rules before 1991, but thereafter. According to the Soviet 1989 census, there were approx. 165,000 Ossetians in the Georgian SSR, 65,000 of them in the former South Ossetian autonomous oblast, and they made up approx. 66% of the local population (Sordia 2009: 6). The evidence we collected suggests that the remaining approx. 100,000 Ossetians in Georgia mostly lived dispersed across Georgia. The largest community was in Tbilisi, the capital, with approx. 30,000. Other areas with higher concentrations of Ossetians include Borjomi and Akhmeta districts, each with about 10-15% Ossetians. Both these districts are not adjacent to South Ossetia. It has to be noted that there was a somewhat higher concentration in a number of districts adjacent to South Ossetia: Gori, Kaspi, and Qareli, though the Ossetians made up only 10-15% of the local population in these districts (Bondyrev et al. 2015: 35). Nevertheless, though we cannot be 100% sure, this suggests that the double 50% rule was not fulfilled before the war (i.e. we cannot fully preclude the possibility that there is an area consisting of South Ossetia plus some adjacent areas that would fulfil the criteria, but this appears unlikely).
- The situation changed as a result of the war that began in 1991 (Sordia 2009: 6). Many South Ossetians left Georgia, mostly for Russia (North Ossetia, in particular). Few returned after the war. The 2002 census in Georgia counted but 40,000 Ossetians (not counting South Ossetia). The number has become yet smaller as a result of the 2008 war. At the same time, many Georgians left South Ossetia as a result of the war (Sammut & Cvetkovski 1996). According to the 2015 South Ossetia census, there are 48,146 Ossetians in South Ossetia. This population makes up 90% of the de-facto independent region's 53,438 population (Department of State Statistics of the Republic of South Ossetia 2016). According to the 2015 Georgia census, 14,385 Ossetians live in the rest of Georgia (excluding South Ossetia and Abkhazia) (National Statistics Office of Georgia n.d.). Based on this evidence, we code spatial concentration from 1992 onwards. [1991: not concentrated, 1992-2020: concentrated]

Kin

- The South Ossetians have transnational kin in Russia since the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 (see EPR; Minahan 2002: 1474). The number of Ossetians in Russia (approx. 500,000) easily crosses the numeric threshold. We found no other kin (see e.g. MAR). [kin in neighboring country]

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