

The London School of Economics and Political Science

## **Nurturing Dependence:**

The Role of Patron States in the State and  
Institution Building Processes of De Facto States

Till Spanke

A thesis submitted to the Department of International Relations of the London  
School of Economics and Political Science for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## **Declaration**

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## **Abstract**

De facto states are not the likeliest candidates for state building, due to their limited financial capabilities and external parent state pressures. While some de facto states built relatively stable state structures without an external patron state (e.g. Somaliland), others are largely dependent on the backing of patrons to provide basic public services and goods (e.g. Northern Cyprus). This thesis uncovers the extent to which patron states influence state and institution building efforts of de facto states. A case study of Russian involvement in Abkhazia's state building pursuits complements statistical analyses of a data set of 34 de facto states between 1945 and 2011. This thesis argues that patrons nurture the dependence of de facto states on patron support by pursuing a multi-layered policy of granting de facto state agency in an international setting of limited alternatives and providing aid that discourages self-sufficiency. Patrons support de facto states in guaranteeing minimal civilian governance to ensure a degree of sustainability and internal legitimacy. Patrons provide little state building assistance beyond this stage to ensure the status quo of dependence. Russia, for instance, concentrates on infrastructural reconstruction rather than capacity development in Abkhazia and takes on government responsibilities from the de facto authorities. By distinguishing between direct and indirect diffusion influences of patrons, this thesis clarifies why Abkhaz elites adjusted their actions according to perceived Russian interests and activities even during Abkhazia's period of partial isolation. Due to the limited availability of viable alternative choices, de facto regimes are less likely to resist coercive influences and more susceptible to indirect diffusion influences. The agency of dependent de facto states is therefore bound by patron interests and activities, which encourages legislative and institutional isomorphism. Despite limited room for manoeuvre, Abkhazia has repeatedly displayed agency in the fields of language and private property policies.

**Keywords:** De facto states, state building, institution building, public service provision, patron states, Abkhazia, Russian foreign policy

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## **Glossary of Terms**

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| ACF   | Acción contra el Hambre  |
| AIC   | Akaike's information criterion   |
| BIC   | Bayesian information criterion   |
| BTSCS | Binary time series cross-sectional                                     |
| CIS   | Commonwealth of Independent States                                     |
| DPR   | Donetsk People's Republic  |
| DRC   | Danish Refugee Council   |
| EU    | European Union   |
| GDP   | Gross domestic product   |
| ICG   | International Crisis Group   |
| ICRC  | International Committee of the Red Cross                               |
| KGB   | Комитет Государственной Безопасности<br>(Committee for State Security) |
| KM    | Kaplan-Meier   |
| MSF   | Médecins Sans Frontières   |
| NATO  | North Atlantic Treaty Organization                                     |
| NGO   | Non-governmental organisation  |
| NRC   | Norwegian Refugee Council  |
| OLS   | Ordinary least squares   |
| OSCE  | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe                   |
| PU    | Première Urgence   |
| SC    | Save the Children  |
| SSR   | Soviet Socialist Republic  |
| TSCS  | Time series cross-sectional  |

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| UCI    | University of California, Irvine               |
| UN     | United Nations                                 |
| UNDP   | United Nations Development Programme           |
| UNHCR  | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  |
| UNOMIG | United Nations Monitoring Mission              |
| UNPO   | Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization |
| US     | United States (of America)                     |
| USSR   | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics            |
| VUB    | Vrije Universiteit Brussel                     |
| WV     | World Vision                                   |

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## *Chapter 1*

### **Introduction**

Farmers, local leaders, politicians and other citizens of Somaliland gather in early 2018 for the official inauguration of the new regional office of the Ministry of Agriculture in Gabiley, a mid-sized city in Western Somaliland. A regional administrator of the breakaway republic addresses the crowd and thanks the de facto government for its continued interest and financial commitment to the region's agricultural development. Following his speech, Somaliland's Minister of Agriculture, Ahmed Mumin Saad, stresses the importance of agriculture and food sustainability for the unrecognised entity.<sup>1</sup> Four years earlier, on April 10<sup>th</sup> 2014, three days after the formation of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and one month prior to its declaration of independence, the provisional government of the DPR appoints Ekaterina Yuryevna Gubareva as its first Minister of Foreign Affairs in the republic's

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<sup>1</sup> Radio One Somalia (2018). Somaliland: Minister of Agriculture officially opens new Ministry of agricultural development Gabiley regional offices. Retrieved from: <http://radio1somalia.com/somalilandminister-of-agriculture-officially-opens-new-ministry-of-agricultural-development-gabiley-regional-offices/>

young history.<sup>2</sup> Approximately 1,500 kilometres further south and yet another six years earlier, Nechirvan Bazari, Prime Minister of Iraqi Kurdistan, solemnly inaugurates the International School of Choueifat in Erbil. During his speech, Bazari highlights the significance of education and the construction of new schools (or what he refers to as ‘educational capacity-building’) for the future of the autonomous region.<sup>34</sup>

These three events exemplify, rather whimsically, the variety of possible state building activities of a state, ranging from the appointment of government ministers to the development of civic infrastructure that ensures the provision of public services and goods to its citizens. Concurrently, the three events represent the symbolic value of state institutions, infrastructure projects and public service provision for the leadership of de facto states to convince the public of their state building abilities (Bakke et al. 2013: 1). The symbolic nature of such institutions, however, addresses audiences far beyond the domestic arena; state institutions and public services are repeatedly portrayed by de facto state representatives as indicators of successful state building and even democratisation. This means that de facto states justify their sovereignty not only with arguments surrounding national self-determination and human rights violations, but increasingly with the viability and effectiveness of their democratic state institutions (Caspersen 2011: 337-8; Johnson & Smaker 2014: 6). Caspersen (2014: 6) refers to this phenomenon as the pursuit of “earned sovereignty.” Indeed, the legitimacy of an entity depends not only on its moral right of independence, but also on its ability to provide tasks usually associated with a state (Bartmann 2004: 15).

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<sup>2</sup> Vesti.ru (2014). Екатерина Губарева: юго-восток не отступит от своих требований.

Retrieved from:

[https://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=1468524#/video/https%3A%2F%2Fplayer.vgtrk.com%2Fiframe%2Fvideo%2Fid%2F786688%2Fstart\\_zoom%2Ftrue%2FshowZoomBtn%2Ffalse%2Fsid%2Fvesti%2FisPlay%2Ftrue%2F%3Facc\\_video\\_id%3D591130](https://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=1468524#/video/https%3A%2F%2Fplayer.vgtrk.com%2Fiframe%2Fvideo%2Fid%2F786688%2Fstart_zoom%2Ftrue%2FshowZoomBtn%2Ffalse%2Fsid%2Fvesti%2FisPlay%2Ftrue%2F%3Facc_video_id%3D591130)

<sup>3</sup> Kurdistan Regional Government (2008). Prime Minister Barzani speaks at International School of Choueifat opening ceremony. Retrieved from:

<http://cabinet.gov.krd/a/d.aspx?s=010000&l=12&a=26887>

<sup>4</sup> Kurdistan Regional Government (2008). Prime Minister's speech at opening of International School of Choueifat. Retrieved from:

<http://cabinet.gov.krd/a/d.aspx?r=268&l=12&s=02040100&a=26889&s=010000>

Beyond the symbolic meaning of state and institution building in de facto states, state building serves as a significant contributing factor for a de facto state's successful transition to statehood (Florea 2017). Furthermore, the ability of de facto authorities to provide public services and goods to their citizens may promote the internal legitimacy of these entities, their leadership and institutions (Caspersen 2012: 78-79; Bakke et al. 2013: 3). Particularly de facto regimes that are in a position to guarantee security (Lake 2010) and establish the monopoly of legitimate force in their contested territory (Weber 1946) are likely to legitimise their rule (Bakke et al. 2013: 3).

Numerous de facto states appear to have succeeded in their endeavour to develop centralised governance institutions that ensure at least basic levels of state capacity and public service and goods provision (Caspersen 2012: 51; de Waal 2018).<sup>5</sup> A variety of in-depth case studies have identified institutional bases for statehood and service provision across diverse regions of the world covering Somaliland (Richards 2014; Richards & Smith 2015; Johnson & Smaker 2014), Kosovo (Capussela 2014), Iraqi Kurdistan (Richards & Smith 2015) as well as a variety of post-Soviet de facto states (von Steinsdorff 2012; Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2008). Thus, most de facto states perform at least the basic responsibilities of a comparable *de jure* state (King 2001; Ishiyama & Batta 2012: 124) and thereby warrant referring to these unrecognised entities as 'states' (refer to Caspersen (2012: 11) and Pegg (1998: 28) for the most prominent definitions of de facto states).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The de facto states in question have achieved state building according to the operationalisation of state building proposed by this thesis, that considers both state capacity and public service and goods provision as indicators of state building. See chapter 2 for a more detailed engagement with the concept of state building.

<sup>6</sup> Caspersen (2012: 11) definition of unrecognised states claims that “

- An unrecognized state has achieved de facto independence, *covering at least two-thirds of the territory to which it lays claim and including its main city and key regions.*
- Its leadership is seeking to build further state institutions and demonstrate its own legitimacy.
- The entity has declared formal independence *or demonstrated clear aspirations for independence, for example through an independence referendum, adoption of a separate currency or similar act that clear signals separate statehood.*
- The entity has not gained international recognition *or has, at the most, bee recognized by its patron state and a few other states of no great importance.*
- It has existed for at least two years.”

Despite the prevalence of institutional structures and service provision in de facto states, some structures may be more symbolic in nature or predominantly reliant on external support from actors such as external patrons, diaspora communities or international organisations. Particularly the involvement of patron states<sup>7</sup> is repeatedly used by parent states and political analysts to discredit the feasibility of state structures and sovereignty ambitions of de facto states by referring to the de facto governments as puppets or pawns of their respective patron state (von Steinsdorff 2012: 201-202). Expectedly, dependencies present a common thread in representing patron-de facto state relations. Kolstø and Blakkisrud (2008: 495), for instance, stress that the South Caucasian de facto states are not in a position to provide the necessary services to their population “without relying heavily on external support and infrastructure.” Zartman (1995) goes even further by stressing the risks of “effective foreign control” by patron states over unrecognised entities, which may result in the transformation into ‘puppet states’. Caspersen (2009) and Broers (2015), on the other hand, caution the predominant emphasis on international factors in studies on de facto states and that endogenous factors play a significant role in the development of de facto states. Comai (2018a: 87), meanwhile, refers to “the relative normalcy of their [de facto states’] external dependence” on the patron that does not exclude a degree of agency of the de facto regime.

One can broadly distinguish between two types of de facto states in terms of their reliance on external patrons. Some de facto states have built relatively successful state structures without the backing of a patron in their state building endeavour (i.e. Somaliland, Eritrea, Iraqi Kurdistan). Other unrecognised entities

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Caspersen (2017: 13) now accepts the predominant usage of de facto states instead of unrecognised states. See chapter 2 for alternative definitions of de facto states.

<sup>7</sup> Building on Shoemaker and Spanier’s (1984: 13) conceptualisation of patron-client relations in the Cold War period, patron states are commonly referred to as states that fulfil four criteria: First, the military capabilities between patron and client state is sizably different. Second, the client state plays a prominent role in the competitive race of two or more patron states. Third, the patron-client state relationship needs to be perceived as such by the international community. Fourth, the relationship between patron and client is asymmetric, not necessarily mutually beneficial and focuses mostly on the enhancement of security. See chapter 3 for an updated conceptualisation of patron-de facto state relations.

have been largely dependent on the financial, political and military support of patrons to provide basic public services and goods to their citizens (i.e. South Ossetia, Northern Cyprus, Western Sahara, Republika Srpska). The degrees to which patron states influence the state and institution building processes of the latter group of de facto states vary in intensity, across time, among patrons and cover a wide array of patron instruments ranging from restricted military support to protect the de facto state borders to the tight management of the domestic political domain of these unrecognised entities.

This dubiety surrounding the degrees of patron involvement raises a set of questions about our preconceived understanding of the role of patron states. If one assumes that de facto states are strategically and geopolitically important actors for patron states, why do patrons occasionally restrict their involvement in the state and institution building processes of de facto states? Conversely, if one presumes that de facto states are dependent on patron states, why do some patrons make concerted efforts to influence the legislative and institutional design of de facto states? This thesis explores why patrons display these variations in engaging with the state and institution building processes of de facto states by analysing the extent to which direct and indirect influences shape the state capacity and the provision of public services and goods in de facto states. The theoretical framework of this thesis distinguishes between direct coercive diffusion influences, on the one hand, and indirect diffusion influences of the patron in form of mimicry, normative and competitive diffusion, on the other hand. While direct diffusion channels represent immediate patron involvement with de facto state authorities through change agents that inform the institutional or legislative outcomes of de facto states, indirect diffusion channels refer to legislative and institutional developments in de facto states that were initiated by the de facto authorities and indirectly shaped by the presence of the patron.

A novel conceptualisation of patron-de facto state relations and the application of diffusion models serve as conceptual and theoretical tools for the analysis of central state building trajectories in Abkhazia in the context of partial dependence on Russian support and offer potential explanations for the varying degrees of patron involvement in the state and institution building processes of de

facto states. This thesis ultimately captures the ways in which patrons can nurture the dependence of de facto states on patron support by pursuing a multi-layered policy of granting de facto state agency in an international setting of limited alternatives and providing aid that discourages self-sufficiency. Due to the ensuing degrees of dependence, direct military, financial and political involvement of the patron is not always necessary, as de facto elites tend to pursue the perceived patron interests in their state and institution building development without direct patron engagement.

## 1.1 Research Questions

This thesis explores why patrons ever so often restrict their involvement in the state and institution building processes of de facto states and proposes explanations for the variations in patron state involvement ranging from extensive direct engagement to limited interference in the domestic state building endeavours. This thesis argues that the variations in patron involvement can be explained with the potential of patron states to shape state and institution developments in de facto states both directly and indirectly, due to the de facto states' dependence on patron support. As de facto authorities tend to adapt their state building processes to the patron, direct patron engagement is not always necessary. In order to arrive at this conclusion, the research of this thesis explores two research questions that specify the ways in which patron states directly and indirectly influence de facto states and capture the effect of these interrelated diffusion channels on the state and institution building processes of de facto states.

### Research Question I

*To what extent do patron states influence the domestic state and institution building developments of de facto states?*

Most studies on de facto states do not differentiate between direct and indirect patron influences, but instead refer to patron involvement in de facto states as a whole or focus on specific support channels such as military and financial aid. Gerrits and Bader's (2016) application of linkages and leverage to Russia's engagement in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, for instance, provides a wealth of detail on Russian involvement in the two de facto states, but does not distinguish between immediate policies from the Russian side and developments that are due to de facto elites mimicking Russian policies or institutions without direct Russian involvement. This can have significant implications for assessing patron interference in de facto states, the agency of de facto regimes in the context of dependency relations and the extent to which similarities between patrons and de facto states are due to direct coercive patron instruments. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of patron state influences, this thesis proposes a theoretical framework that applies diffusion

theories to state building in de facto states, which distinguish between direct coercive influences, on the one hand, and indirect influences of the patron in form of mimicry, normative or competitive diffusion, on the other hand (see chapter 2 for the theoretical framework).

Thus, the first research question captures the degree to which patrons directly and indirectly shape the state and institution building processes of de facto states. By following the causal chains of direct and indirect diffusion channels laid out in the theoretical framework and applying process tracing to the source material, the in-depth case study of Russia's influence on state building in Abkhazia (chapters 6, 7 and 8) empirically establishes that both direct and indirect diffusion is at work in Abkhazia's state and institution building processes. Chapter 6 covers detailed accounts of domestic state building patterns and trajectories in de facto states in order to examine the extent to which indirect diffusion influences shape the state and institution building processes of de facto states. The perceived interests of a patron state, trade links and even the relative power vis-à-vis the parent state, for instance, may change the behaviour and actions of domestic elites without direct patron facilitation. Due to the limited availability of alternative support sources, domestic actors need to navigate their actions according to the interests of those countries that choose to recognise them and indirect diffusion are more likely to shape domestic affairs of de facto states. In contrast, chapter 7 captures direct patron diffusion influences by exploring the ways in which Russia coercively encourages institutional and legislative reforms in Abkhazia through foreign policy instruments, such as agreements, financial contributions and institution sharing. The case study thereby highlights the contexts and conditions that facilitate the predominance of direct and indirect diffusion influences.

## **Research Question II**

*What are the effects of direct and indirect diffusion influences of patron states on the state and institution building developments of de facto states?*

The second research question delves deeper into the observable implications of direct and indirect diffusion influences of patron states on state and institution building in de facto states. The statistical analyses of chapter 5, for example, measure

whether the presence of patron states has a statistically significant impact (without distinguishing between direct and indirect diffusion influences) on the formation of governance institutions<sup>8</sup> and the state building development of de facto states. The quantitative chapter also tests a hypothesis regarding the impact of competition between the patron and parent state on state and institution building, which captures competitive diffusion influences. The case study chapters, meanwhile, explore how the varying degrees of Russian involvement affect the state and institution building processes of Abkhazia and result in observable implications such as similarities across Abkhaz and Russian state and institution structures, institution sharing or enhanced public service provisions.

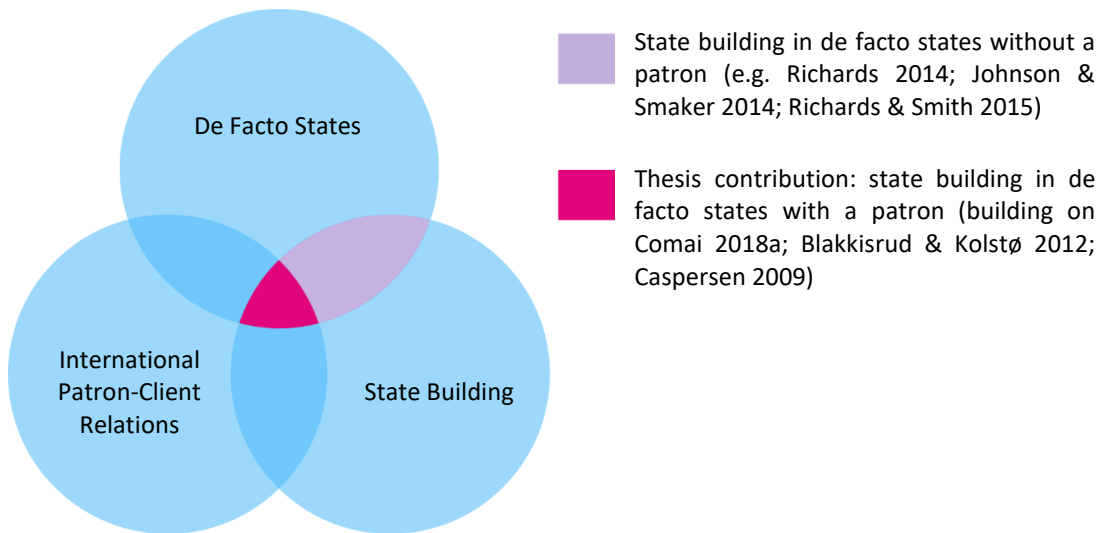
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<sup>8</sup> I understand governance institutions as institutions that enable groups or societies to organise and make decisions. Governance in that sense embodies a broader idea of norms, principles and practices related to governing certain groups. While governments are common bodies of such authority, governance institutions are not restricted to governments but can be employed by groups as wide ranging as civil society bodies and private companies. Government institutions, on the other hand, refer to particular physical governmental bodies that are in charge of implementing policies and therefore simultaneously represent potential governance institutions (see Stoker 1998; Rosenau 1992; Rhodes 1996). Unless otherwise stated, this thesis focuses predominantly on governance institutions of the central de facto state government, such as government institutions, the military or schools. I only occasionally refer to alternative governance structures, such as clans or non-governmental organisations on the de facto territory of Abkhazia.

## 1.2 Literature Review

This thesis can be situated in the academic literature on state building, de facto states and international patron-client relations. It also touches on the post-conflict literature surrounding state building in failed or war-torn states. The Venn diagram below (figure 1) represents the contribution of this thesis at the intersection of the three circles.

*Figure 1 Literature Review*



### 1.2.1 State Building in De Facto States

Several in-depth case studies of state building in de facto states illustrate the varying state building processes in de facto states ranging across entities such as Somaliland (Richards 2014; Johnson & Smaker 2014; Richards & Smith 2015), Kosovo (Capussela 2014), Iraqi Kurdistan (Richards & Smith 2015), Bougainville (Ghai & Regan 2006), Taiwan (Chu & Lin 2001) as well as a variety of Eurasian de facto states (von Steinsdorff 2012; Zabarah 2012; Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2008; 2017; Blakkisrud & Kolstø 2011; Berg & Mölder 2012; Comai 2018a). Other works attempt more general overviews of de facto states instead that in certain instances touch on state building (see e.g. Pegg 1998; King 2001; Kolstø 2006; Bahcheli et al. 2004; Caspersen 2012; Florea 2017; Ishiyama & Batta 2012). Some of these studies directly or indirectly explored the reasons for relatively successful state building within the unfavourable context of limited international recognition. Richards (2014) and Richards and Smith

(2015), for instance, illustrate in gripping detail Somaliland's state building trajectories without extensive external support. This thesis intends to contribute to this literature by accounting for the role of patron states in the state and institution building endeavours of de facto states with an external patron. In order to grasp the direct and indirect influence of patrons on state and institution building in de facto states, it is necessary to outline prevailing state and institution building developments in these unrecognised entities.

A set of common de facto state characteristics, such as the limited international recognition (Pegg 1998; King 2001), security and survival concerns (Caspersen 2012; Kolstø 2006; Johnson & Smaker 2014: 13), ethno-nationalistic tendencies (Caspersen 2011: 6), informal practices and corruption (Caspersen 2012; Kolstø 2006; Lynch 2004; Pegg 1998) and "weak econom[ies] and state structures" (Kolstø 2006: 723; Caspersen 2012) represent an additional layer of complexity to the state building processes of de facto states (a more detailed discussion on state building in de facto states can be found in the theoretical framework of this thesis in chapter 2). Despite the variations in state building levels and approaches, most de facto states have at least attained basic statehood functions (Caspersen 2012: 51). The post-Soviet de facto states, for instance, successfully built the territorial and institutional basis for statehood (von Steinsdorff 2012: 202) and developed the groundwork for achieving internal legitimacy of the entities, leaderships and institutions (Caspersen 2012: 78-79; Bakke et al. 2013: 3). De facto states exemplify thereby that international sovereignty in itself is not a necessary condition for state building (von Steinsdorff 2012: 201). Indeed, statehood in form of high levels of centralised control and capacity does not automatically increase the provision of public services and goods (Lee et al. 2014: 636). Studies by Ó'Beacháin (2012) and Blakkisrud and Kolstø (2012) even argue that the lack of international recognition can benefit state building and democratisation in de facto states. This is in line with Johnson and Smaker's (2014: 18) and Richards and Smith's (2015: 1718) claim that the potential prospect of recognition may facilitate state building and internal legitimacy by presenting a unifying narrative for the population. At the same time, limited international involvement and oversight may facilitate a degree of stability

and enable nascent de facto states to adapt institutions and governance to domestic structures and needs (Kolstø 2006; Richards & Smith 2015: 1718).

Blakkisrud and Kolstø (2011) disentangle the state building process in Transnistria into different overlapping phases from securing physical control over the contested territory, over to establishing the monopoly of legitimate use of force and basic public service provision and finally developing internal sovereignty and nation building. Their subsequent study (Blakkisrud & Kolstø 2012) refers to state and nation building processes in the de facto states of the South Caucasus as the establishment of territorial control, institutionalisation of power through elections and the development of institutions as well as identification with the unrecognised entity. Similarly, Caspersen (2012: 78-79, 85) refers to two integral processes of domestic state building in de facto states in form of establishing central coercive control and establishing internal legitimacy. Rather than referring to state building phases, this thesis explores state building trajectories and prioritisation in Abkhazia's state building development of the 1990s to reflect the likely decision-making approaches of domestic authorities towards state building. This method uncovers patterns of state formation that are informed by the geopolitical and economic considerations of the young de facto state, explores the bounded agency of state builders and reveals areas of potential access to the Abkhaz state for external actors.

### **1.2.2 The Role of Patron States in External State Building**

Post-conflict states may receive external support in a variety of forms ranging from economic, security, democratisation and governance aid to the provision of public services and goods (see e.g. Fearon & Laitin 2004; Krasner & Risse 2014). The limited international recognition of de facto states does not automatically imply a lack of external support. Indeed, de facto states can derive support from a variety of external sources, such as patrons, diaspora groups, cross-border communities and even their parent state (Caspersen 2012: 51). Zartman (1995: 272) and Caspersen (2014) stress the usefulness of such external assistance for state building in de facto states.

Conversely, Lake (2011; 2016) describes the limitations and dilemmas of external state building interventions of internationally recognised, but failed states. External state building is more likely to succeed if external actors commit extensive resources long-term, the involvement is institutionalised and legalised, responsibilities are clearly set up, processes are observed by an authority and local conditions are considered (Krasner & Risse 2014: 559). Moreover, some post-conflict and development studies are critical of the success of externally led state building and stress that state building processes must originate within the state to establish 'local ownership' (see e.g. Chesterman et al. 2004; Narten 2006; Etzioni 2004). Clearly, several of these conditions, particularly the observation by an authority are not present in the case of external state building in de facto states.

In weak or failed (but internationally recognised) states, there are mixed findings about the ability of external actors to provide public goods and services in sectors such as health care and education (Lee et al. 2014: 646). Nascent states, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, that are unable to provide basic public services and goods to their citizens due to financial constraints or preoccupation with security concerns may rely on non-state actors, such as aid organisations, NGOs, businesses or diaspora groups to offer these services to the public (Johnson & Smaker 2014: 18). In these cases, financial support does not necessarily pass through the government, but to other development actors, such as aid agencies that take on the service provider position of some traditional state sectors. Somaliland, for example, is reliant on its diaspora, international organisations (such as the UNDP) or non-state organisations to invest in public infrastructure projects, development aid and the provision of public services (Johnson & Smaker 2014: 18).

Until recently, the de facto state literature rarely accounted for the implications of using the term 'patron state'. Prominent works on de facto states (Pegg 1998; King 2001; Caspersen 2008; Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2008), for instance, do not define patron states despite using the term repeatedly in their work. Even most accounts that directly engage with the role of patron states, patronage or patron-client relations (e.g. Bakke et al. 2018; Blakkisrud & Kolstø 2012; O'Loughlin et al. 2015; Gerrits & Bader 2016; Comai 2018a; 2018b) neither offer a definition of patron states nor do they refer back to definitions of patron states or patron-client relations

in preceding literature. However, over the past few years, some scholars started engaging with patron-client relations to analyse *de facto* states (Devyatkov 2017; Berg & Pegg 2018; Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2017; Berg & Vits 2018) by either relying on the patron-client models of the Cold War period (most prominently Shoemaker & Spanier (1984) and Carney (1989)) or on Veenendaal's (2017) understanding of patron-client relations in the context of micro states.

The concrete influences and contributions of patron states on the state building processes of *de facto* states also remain insufficiently explored. While a number of articles and books (Caspersen 2008; Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2008; Gerrits & Bader 2016) have assessed the influence of patron states on *de facto* states in the military, financial and political spheres, few studies examine the effect of patron states on the capacity of authority structures and the provision of public services and goods in *de facto* states. Caspersen's (2009), Blakkisrud and Kolstø's (2012) studies as well as Comai's (2018a) PhD thesis touch upon the role of patron states in the state building processes of post-Soviet *de facto* states and are notable exceptions in this regard. Blakkisrud and Kolstø (2012), for instance, specify the role of patron states beyond mere security, financial and infrastructure assistance, by also referring to their position as providers of practicalities such as telecommunication, postal and transportation links as well as passports that enable *de facto* state citizens slightly wider international access. Comai (2018a: 73) argues that "it is external assistance that allowed these entities [post-Soviet *de facto* states] to enhance state capacities." Yet, Comai (2018a: 34) also perceives patron-led state building practices in *de facto* states to overlap with patron state integration.

The *de facto* state literature does not agree on the concrete contribution of patron states on the state building development of *de facto* states and to what extent high levels of patron support may be advantageous or unfavourable for *de facto* states. Comai (2018b: 182) argues that the "state-capacity and political economy [of post-Soviet *de facto* states] is largely determined by the technical and financial assistance they receive from external actors." Kolstø and Blakkisrud's (2008) find that state building in *de facto* states in the South Caucasus is influenced by exogenous political aspects as well as the position and strength of both the parent and patron state. The stance of the challenger state, a consistent patron state and a generous

and active diaspora enhance state building in de facto states, according to their study. Additionally, the relative strength of a patron in international politics can impact de facto states in terms of international recognition and state and nation building (Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2008; Sterio 2010; Coggins 2011; Caspersen 2015).

Caspersen (2009) and Broers (2015) caution the predominant emphasis on patron states and instead shift the focus on domestic state building developments of de facto states, the role of de facto elites and local ownership. The focus on external actors, for instance, does not answer how de facto states secure resources and how the resources and opportunities available to them shape their state and institutional structure (Broers 2015: 138). This thesis contributes to the discussion surrounding the role of patron states by differentiating between direct and indirect patron diffusion influences on the state building process of de facto states in a context of dependency and bounded agency. Moreover, this study statistically explores the extent to which patrons shape the state building developments and number of governance institutions in these unrecognised entities.

#### ***1.2.2.1 Legitimacy Dynamics in Domestic and External State Building***

Legitimacy represents an underlying or arguably even central theme of the state building literature. Particularly for regimes of post-conflict, nascent or secessionist entities legitimacy embodies a key objective of their state building ventures (Caspersen 2015; Walter 2006; Bakke et al. 2018; Richards 2014; Ghani et al. 2006; Ghani & Lockhart 2008). Separatists, for instance, not only need to win the secessionist conflict, but also demonstrate that they are able to establish state foundations, assume governance responsibilities and provide the population with public services and goods in order to ensure their legitimacy (Bakke et al. 2018: 159; Bakke et al. 2013: 3). It is therefore not surprising that the de facto state literature has placed increasing emphasis on internal legitimacy dynamics in de facto states (Caspersen 2012; Berg 2012; Berg & Mölder 2012; Bakke et al. 2013)

Regimes that pursue domestically led state building in de facto states without a patron, on the one hand, depend on the legitimacy of the local population to continue their exercise of sovereignty (Richards 2014: 56-57). This means that the de

facto leadership needs to convince the public of their ability to build a state, instil stability and security in the contested territory and protect the public from external threats in order to legitimise the de facto regime (Bakke et al. 2013: 1, 3). Caspersen (2012: 78-79, 85) highlights similarly that state builders in de facto states not only need to establish central control, but also develop internal legitimacy through public service provision or ethno-nationalism. Importantly, Bakke and her colleagues (2013: 12) not only link Weberian state building ideals surrounding the monopoly of legitimate force to internal legitimacy, but also other relational service provisions ranging from security to health.

The leadership of de facto states with an external patron, on the other hand, need to achieve internal legitimacy and manoeuvre the potential negative side effects of external patron engagement on their legitimisation strategies. While military patron support may be essential for the security of de facto states, it can have negative consequences for the internal legitimacy of the entity on the receiving end (Caspersen 2015: 7). External expectations and demands are likely translated into the state building process of de facto states, which may challenge the internal legitimacy of the de facto entities (Richards 2014: 56-57, Zartman 1995; Caspersen 2015: 3). While a combined understanding of the joint legitimacy of both domestic and external state builders would benefit the effectiveness of the external involvement, this form of negotiated understanding of legitimacy is rarely met (Krasner & Risse 2014: 547-548; Boerzel & van Huellen 2014; Lake & Farris 2014). Still, the extent to which the population of a given state legitimises the external involvement decides the influence of external actors on state capacity and service provisions (Krasner & Risse 2014: 555). Similarly, external policies are only implemented and sustainable if domestic elites accept them (Chesterman 2004; Narten 2006). The involvement of domestic elites and groups, rather than the superficial incorporation of domestic elites, in the state building process can increase the level of legitimacy (Capussela 2014: 13-14). If the external actor removed an unfavourable ruler, this improves the perception of the external actor (Krasner & Risse 2014: 552). Some form of institutionalisation, such as interstate agreements may benefit the external state building intervention, because it can increase the likelihood of local involvement (Boerzel & van Huellen 2014; Krasner & Risse 2014:

552). While this thesis touches upon the ways in which de facto elites utilise state building in form of public service and goods provisions to legitimise their rule, it engages mostly with the ways in which patron involvement is or is not legitimised by the local population and stakeholders (further details on legitimacy dynamics can be found in chapters 2 and 7).

### ***1.2.2.2 Agency under Dependence***

De facto states that find themselves in patron-de facto state relations tend to be reliant on the patron's economic, military and infrastructure support for their survival (Caspersen 2012: 82; Blakkisrud & Kolstø 2012: 291). Still, de facto state governments show a multitude of signs of agency relating to policy making and implementation as well as institution building (von Steinsdorff 2012: 201-202; Caspersen 2012: 82). Also Blakkisrud and Kolstø (2012) are critical of a view that considers the de facto states of the South Caucasus as puppets in the patron's strategic ambitions and emphasise that the Abkhaz regime has at times tried "to keep [...] Russia at arm's length even if it means missing out on economic development" (291). Comai (2018a) takes a slightly more pessimistic approach toward de facto state agency. In the context of what Comai (2018a: 87) refers to as "the relative normalcy of their external dependence," de facto authorities of the post-Soviet space tend to display agency by pragmatically managing relations with their patrons (2018a: 34-35). Yet, Comai argues that the post-Soviet de facto regimes pursue the "maintenance of the symbolic attributes of sovereignty" (2018a: 34) while moving towards patron state integration.

In this context, it is important to consider that dependency is in no way a static phenomenon, but rather a fluctuating process. The fluctuating dependency is shaped by the availability of alternative support sources, the extent of de facto state involvement in the international system, the degree of patron involvement and the extent to which parent states permit external involvement in the breakaway region (Caspersen 2012: 109). The effects of this fluctuating dependence on state building and legitimisation are debated. Some scholars argue that even if entities are dependent on an external actor, this does not chip away at the internal sovereignty of these territories (Pelczynska-Nalecz et al. 2008: 373). Zartman (1995), meanwhile,

argues that patrons are likely to reduce the level of internal legitimacy within de facto states. Developing legitimacy under dependence therefore necessitates the legitimisation of external involvement while maintaining or growing internal legitimacy.

Thus, rather than understanding de facto states as mere pawns that are under complete control of the patron states, it is more fruitful to consider de facto state agency and domestic developments within the framework of a dependency relationship. This ultimately shifts the focus away from the binary of whether de facto states can demonstrate agency or not (because several studies have shown that they can), to questions surrounding the extent to which domestic decision-making can take place independently from the patron's perceived interests. Therefore, the theoretical framework of this thesis enables considerations of how de facto state agency may be bound by the perceived interests and activities of patrons which in turn informs the influence of coercive, mimetic, normative and competitive diffusion sources in dependency relationships.

### **1.3 Argument and Research Outline**

This thesis argues that patrons can nurture the dependence of de facto states on patron support by pursuing a multi-layered policy of granting de facto state agency in an international setting of limited alternatives while providing support that discourages self-sufficiency. Patrons, for instance, limit the extent to which they support state and institution building in de facto states. Patron states support these unrecognised entities in guaranteeing minimal civilian governance to ensure a degree of sustainability and reduce the likelihood of public discontent by helping the de facto leadership in the early phases of its legitimisation process. In the early phases of the state building process, de facto state governments are more susceptible to the influence of external actors, whereas with proceeding developments and more domestic accountability, de facto state governments are slightly less reliant on external support. There are few indicators that patron states provide state building assistance to de facto states beyond this stage. Patrons appear to not support de facto states in achieving coherent government structures including an economic extraction and redistribution system, border management and internal security, as this would reduce the level of de facto state dependence on the patron state. Due to the ensuing degrees of dependence, direct military, financial and political involvement of the patron is not always necessary, as de facto elites tend to pursue the perceived patron interests in their state and institution building development without direct patron engagement. The variations in patron involvement in state and institution building processes of de facto states across time, intensity and patrons can therefore be explained with the potential of patron states to shape developments in de facto states both through immediate patron involvement and indirect diffusion influences.

Striving for a status quo of dependence can also explain why Russian involvement is linked predominantly to infrastructural reconstruction rather than capacity building in Abkhazia. The case study thereby illustrates the ways in which a patron equips a de facto state's regime with an institutional infrastructure that enables basic public service provision but not the necessary skills and capabilities to utilise the infrastructure independently. The lack of support for Abkhazia's soft capacity development ties Abkhazia closer to Russia and appears to be the biggest

threat to output legitimacy of Russian actions. Nonetheless, Russian support is largely legitimised and accepted, partly due to the limited viable alternatives for Abkhazia. Moreover, rather than contributing to the development of governance institutions, patrons and de facto states pursue a policy of institution sharing, where patrons take over government functions and responsibilities from the de facto entity. This may explain why the number of governance institutions in de facto states tends to decrease when a patron state is present. While it is not possible to identify governance institutions in Abkhazia that are outright missing due to Russian involvement, the underdevelopment of some Abkhaz state sectors can be traced back to Russian patronage.

The formal changes in the Russo-Abkhaz relationship in 1999 shaped the relative importance of direct and indirect diffusion influences. The economic easing period encouraged direct coercive diffusion instruments ranging from financial contributions to agreements that specified trading regulations between the two parties. The growing coercive diffusion influences also encouraged the role of normative and mimetic diffusion channels between Abkhazia and Russia. Particularly since Russia's recognition of Abkhazia's independence in 2008, Russia has passed treaties and agreements with the de facto state that specify state building measures. The institutionalisation of the Russo-Abkhaz relationship in form of agreements and treaties also increases the likelihood for both mimetic and normative diffusion, because they set specific institutional and public service provision standards. At the same time, the bilateral nature of the agreements and treaties safeguards Russia's quasi monopolistic position over the external influences on Abkhazia's state building processes. An additional direct instrument that nurtures Abkhaz dependence on Russia is the patron's control of relevant de facto politicians to ensure their loyalty through the provision of significant financial contributions and military support. While the Russian authorities are not necessarily concerned about micromanaging politics and state building in Abkhazia, the patron is interested in having candidates in place that have a favourable view of Russia. This can be considered a strategy by Russia to encourage mimetic and normative diffusion channels, rather than coercive diffusion.

Despite this degree of Russian involvement in Abkhazia's state building process, direct engagement and control does not always appear to be necessary for the *de facto* elites to pursue Russian interests. Even during Abkhazia's period of partial isolation, Abkhaz elites adjusted their actions and plans according to perceived Russian interests and activities, due to normative, mimetic and competitive diffusion influences, which encouraged legislative and institutional isomorphism and a degree of endogenous state building. Thus, Abkhazia achieved the most notable state building boost during a period of uncertainty and partial isolation in the 1990s when Russia did not officially function as Abkhazia's patron.

Due to the limited availability of viable alternative choices, *de facto* regimes are less likely to resist coercive influences and more susceptible to indirect diffusion influences in form of mimetic, normative and competitive diffusion. The agency of dependent *de facto* states is therefore likely to be bound by the perceived interests and activities of the patron. This bounded agency increases the likelihood for legislative and institutional isomorphism between the *de facto* state and its patron. Still, in this arena of limited manoeuvre and course of action, the *de facto* authorities and civil society repeatedly displayed agency and signalled autonomy in the symbolic fields of language policies and private property provisions.

This thesis comprises nine chapters. The second chapter develops the theoretical framework of this thesis, which combines distinctive sets of characteristics of *de facto* states with state building theories to offer a better theoretical understanding of endogenous and exogenous state building developments in *de facto* states. Furthermore, the chapter presents a theoretical framework that is predominantly based on diffusion theories that differentiate between direct coercive influences of the patron, on the one hand, and indirect patron influences that take the form of mimicry, normative and competitive diffusion, on the other hand. Considerations relating to the role of legitimacy and dependency dynamics in patron-*de facto* state relations complement the theoretical framework and set the theoretical basis for uncovering layers of patron engagement.

The third chapter proposes a conceptualisation of patron states in the context of patron-*de facto* state relations that builds on critiques of existing literature on patron-client relations from the Cold War period and more recent articles

surrounding patron states and microstates. The proposed conceptualisation of patron states encourages a closer engagement with the implications of using this concept and concurrently a more precise discussion and assessment of patron influences on de facto states. The chapter argues that domestic characteristics of patron states cannot account for common factors of patron state identification, but that patrons should be examined from a relational perspective. The conceptualisation proposes dependencies and foreign policy instruments as the defining components of patron-de facto state relations. The ensuing patron state conceptualisation challenges Florea's (2014) coding of patron states and suggests an alternative classification of patron states in his data set.

The research design chapter (chapter 4) introduces the reader to the quantitative and qualitative methods employed in this research. The statistical methods analyse a modified data set of all de facto states between 1945 and 2011 that was originally developed by Florea (2014). The alterations encompass the inclusion of a set of new dependent and independent variables, an alternative conceptualisation of patron states and different statistical models to capture the effect of patron states and competitive diffusion on state and institution building in de facto states. These findings will be complemented with qualitative research that explores the single case study of Russian involvement in Abkhazia's state building development since the early 1990s. The application of process tracing in the qualitative chapters empirically establishes that both direct and indirect diffusion is at work in Abkhazia's state and institution building processes. The case study predominantly relies on interviews conducted in Tbilisi, Sukhumi,<sup>9</sup> Saint Petersburg and Moscow in 2017 and 2018, as well as primary sources, such as agreements between Russia and Abkhazia, Abkhaz government reports, UN reports and photographic evidence from Abkhazia.

The fifth chapter examines the influence of patron states on state building in de facto states by developing state and institution building models using Florea's

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<sup>9</sup> This study predominantly uses the translated versions of Russian or Soviet names of cities (e.g. Sukhumi) and regions (e.g. Gali). This rather pragmatic choice does not disclose some of the subtleties and sensitivities of certain terms, especially in post-conflict contexts. By acknowledging my decision, I do not intend to undermine or dismiss alternative names used in these settings.

(2014) adapted time series cross-sectional data set. The chapter highlights that patrons appear to matter most when de facto states go from a stage of separatist control over the means of violence to a stage of basic civilian governance including minimal public administration, health and education services. Meanwhile, patrons do not seem to significantly impact the change from basic civilian governance to coherent governmental structures. Furthermore, this chapter shows that patrons decrease the number of governance institutions in a given de facto state. Additionally, the quantitative results present patron states as indirect competitive diffusion sources by highlighting that a militarily stronger parent state increases the likelihood of attaining coherent governance structures, while not affecting the step to basic civilian governance and even decreasing the number of governance institutions.

Chapter 6 explores the ways in which indirect diffusion sources shaped the domestic state and institution building developments of Abkhazia. By following the causal chains of indirect diffusion laid out in the theoretical framework and process tracing the source material, this case study chapter empirically establishes that indirect diffusion (mimetic, normative and competitive diffusion) has a causal effect on Abkhazia's state and institution building processes. Placing the analytical focus on indirect diffusion influences reveals how the perceived interests of patron states, trade links and even the relative power vis-à-vis the parent state may change the behaviour and actions of domestic elites without direct patron engagement. Russian mimetic and normative diffusion influences ensured that Abkhaz agency was bound by Russian perceived interests without direct Russian involvement which ultimately shaped Abkhazia's state building development in form of legislative and institutional isomorphism.

Chapter 7 identifies the extent to which Russia directly shapes Abkhazia's state building process. This chapter examines Russia's role as a patron state, how it communicates its interests and policy preferences, the presence of change agents on the ground, as well as its use of centralised and decentralised support for Abkhazia. Moreover, the chapter analyses Russian foreign policy instruments in Abkhazia, such as agreements and financial support, and the extent to which Russian involvement in Abkhazia is legitimised by the Abkhaz elite, civil society and the wider population.

These foreign policy instruments function as coercive diffusion instruments, that have simultaneous indirect diffusion influences on the capacity and public service provision of the recipient. The chapter argues that Russian support is linked predominantly to infrastructural reconstruction rather than capacity building and training, as part of Russia's goal to nurture continued dependence. Meanwhile, patrons take on specific governing or service provision tasks from Abkhazia. The chapter refers to this process as institution sharing and highlights these shared governance responsibilities as a contributing factor for the lower number of governance institutions identified in the statistical chapter.

The final chapter (chapter 8) argues that the combination of Abkhazia's selective neglect of its education sector (including a restricted geographic coverage) and Russia's primary focus on infrastructural support created opportunities for other international and domestic actors to emerge as diffusion sources and assume responsibilities of the state. The chapter also provides an in-depth analysis of how direct and indirect patron involvement and bounded agency have shaped Abkhazia's education sector since the early 1990s. This chapter, for instance, highlights that increased competition with the parent state can facilitate both domestic policy responses and direct patron involvement. Moreover, diffusion sources from Russia, international donors and NGOs do not necessarily compete outside of the Gali district, but can instead complement each other. The conclusion of this thesis (chapter nine) revisits and reflects on the findings of the thesis, considers some of the limitations of the presented research and suggests potential further research directions.

## *Chapter 2*

### **Patrons and State Building in De Facto States**

#### *A Theoretical Framework*

In order to understand the state and institution building developments of de facto states and the extent to which external actors have shaped these processes, it is tempting to extract central ideas and theories from the state building literature in similarly contested or war-torn states. The state building literature on failed states, states with limited statehood, weak states and post-conflict states offers valuable theoretical insights into a number of aspects of the state building process ranging from international interventions to legitimacy. However, compared to weak or failed states, de facto states tend to represent comparatively strong and stable self-governing entities (de Waal 2018: 6) considering the limited international recognition and the precarious international context that these regions find themselves in. Therefore, some of the assumptions put forward by the state building literature of internationally recognised but weak states may not hold true in the context of de facto states. Indeed, state building in de facto states challenges several assumptions and theories proposed by the literature on state building in internationally

recognised states. The involvement of patron states, for instance, may seemingly follow similar paths as those of external actors engaging in the state building process of failed or post-conflict states. However, this chapter highlights how patron state involvement can challenge common assumptions and intrinsic motivations behind external state building practices, which in turn affects dependency and legitimacy dynamics in de facto states.

Given the restricted applicability of some state building frameworks to de facto states and since these state-like entities operate in a distinct domestic and international context, this chapter combines state building theories of internationally recognised states with common characteristics of de facto states. Common characteristics of de facto states include their limited international recognition, economic capabilities, state building prioritisation and ethnic contexts. By combining the distinctive set of characteristics of de facto states with state building theories and taking the international isolation of de facto states into account, this chapter enables a discussion of the interplay of domestic and international approaches to state building in de facto states. Some de facto state characteristics, for instance, may benefit the development of state capacity and the provision of public goods and services in form of facilitating a consensus-oriented environment (Ó'Beacháin 2012) or encouraging institutionalisation to strive for earned sovereignty (Caspersen 2012; Broers 2014). Yet, the limited international recognition of de facto states makes these entities more susceptible to the influence of countries or actors that choose to support them. These potential dependencies on external actors, common among de facto states, can result in institution sharing and limited institutional development.

Following this discussion of the applicability of state building theories to the context of de facto states, this chapter presents a theoretical framework that captures the influence of patron states on the state building process of de facto states. The theoretical framework is predominantly based on diffusion models that differentiates between direct coercive influences of the patron, on the one hand, and indirect patron influences that take the form of mimicry, normative and competitive diffusion, on the other hand. Considerations relating to the role of legitimacy and dependency dynamics in patron-de facto state relations complement the framework.

## **2.1 Operationalising State Building**

State building is an academically contested concept without a universal definition and little agreement on what specific aspect of the state building process researchers should focus their attention on. The varying conceptualisations and applications of this term have resulted in a wide array of research subjects and findings ranging from the development of states ministries, the provision of public services and goods, power sharing practices, up to good governance ideals. At the same time, state building is repeatedly used synonymously or in combination with seemingly related concepts such as nation building (Ghai & Regan 2006; Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2008), peace building (Paris 1997), democratisation (Fukuyama 2004b; Huntington 1991) and modernisation (Przeworski 2010). The interdisciplinary combination potential of state building has had the side effect of losing its capability to identify specific research subjects and characteristics that would allow a measurement of state building effectiveness.

In other instances, state building analyses are unnecessarily limiting in their research scope by focusing selectively on those processes and institutions that one would expect in Weberian ideals of governance. Instead of restrictively analysing the development of an institutionalised technocracy or good governance practices, research would benefit from taking the local context into consideration, by examining what actions local elites pursue in order to survive or to acquire the monopoly over the legitimate use of force. State building can, for instance, be the unintended result of interactions of individuals and groups who struggle for control. This brief glimpse into the ambiguous nature of state building highlights the importance of justifying the research focus of a study. Thus, the next two sections attempt to conceptualise and operationalise state building and apply it to the context of de facto states.

### **2.1.1 The State**

The research focus of this thesis on de facto states requires a cautious handling of the term 'state', because these unrecognised entities challenge basic assumptions in the state building literature related to sovereignty, recognition and control. In order

to include the connotations and outcomes associated with state building in this thesis, it is therefore imperative to clarify the term state and the potential implications of certain assumptions surrounding it. Weber (1946: 78) defines the modern state as “a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.” Skocpol (1979: 29) expands Weber’s definition of the physical force and means associated with a modern state, by arguing that a state is “a set of administrative, policing, and military organizations headed, and more or less well coordinated by, an executive authority. Any state first and fundamentally extracts resources from society and deploys these to create and support coercive and administrative organizations.” Similarly, Krasner (1999: 4) refers to the institutional structures of states as “the formal organization of political authority within the state and the ability of public authorities to exercise effective control within the borders of their own polity.” Gellner’s (1983: 4) definition focuses particularly on the role of institutions within the state. According to him, the state is an “institution or set of institutions specifically concerned with the enforcement of order.” This thesis utilises the definitions of the state by Weber (1946), Skocpol (1979) and Gellner (1983) and understands the state as a set of institutions that are executed by an authority in order to establish order. This would mean that *de facto* states not only need to fulfil juridical statehood, but also empirical statehood by exhibiting responsibilities of a sovereign state in form of institutional and organisational capacity that ensures a degree of authority (Jackson 1990: 21).

The Weberian conception of what constitutes statehood and governance still shapes the state building involvement of states, international donors, NGOs and other international organisations in many conflict or post-conflict locations. However, the idea that the state follows prescriptions for governance that are in line with Weberian (1946) ideals such as a monopoly over the legitimate use of force, a rational and rule-based bureaucracy and charismatic or traditional leadership that enhances control over the state has received considerable criticism. *De facto* state governance or state building in fragile states, for instance, does not necessarily reflect the primary focus on the consolidation of attaining the monopoly over the use of force and a rational bureaucracy. The consolidation of power is also not reliant on

service delivery in all areas of the territory.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, internal state legitimacy in de facto states is not solely based on key-Weberian state functions of stability and control, but also on the ability of central governments to provide a variety of other services and goods (Bakke et al. 2013). Similarly, Richards (2014: 4) is critical of the predominant focus on the monopoly and legitimisation of force and control in the state building literature as a first means to achieve and uphold statehood, because, statehood has evolved beyond a Weberian idea of the monopoly of force and includes social, economic, political and humanitarian “actions of the central government outside the realm of physical and territorial security.”

This expansive understanding of state responsibilities within de facto and fragile states including ‘Western’ values and norms, liberal democracies and market economies tends to derive from international norms of statehood, that ultimately shape domestic state building processes (Richards 2015: 4). Richards (2014; 2015) warns that domestic actors considered this predominance of international norms harmful for Somaliland’s stability and that domestic contexts and demands to the state were included in the entity’s state building development as well. In the case of Somaliland, this resulted in a variation of the modern state in form of a hybrid regime that encompasses indigenous clan governance and ‘Western’ models of state building (Richards 2014: 13).

Another criticism of a common state perception relates to international norms of sovereignty and external involvement in domestic affairs (Lake 2014: 515). Krasner (1999; 2004) points out that while Westphalian sovereignty, a system that, in simplified terms, excludes external actors from interfering in the domestic power structures of entities, has been considered the appropriate model of state interactions. Yet, the reality of state practices has not reflected this ideal. Krasner (1999; 2004) terms this contradictory phenomenon ‘organized hypocrisy’ and identifies involvements of external actors in domestic authority structures across history. Meanwhile, de facto states appear to be repeatedly criticised for the involvement of external actors, particularly patron states, in their domestic affairs.

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<sup>10</sup> Thanks to Dipali Mukhopadhyay for this insight in her working paper “Palace Politics as Competition Management in Karzai’s Afghanistan” presented on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2019 at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

While the extent of the reliance on external support in de facto states may arguably be higher than in many other internationally recognised states, it would be ‘hypocritical’ to criticise de facto states for external involvement in their authority structures.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, not the mere existence of support is meaningful, but the extent and the area of external involvement. In the case of Abkhazia, for instance, it is insightful to study where Abkhaz elites permit external involvement (i.e. security, military, financial sector) and where the same elites appear to be more protective (i.e. private property, language provisions).

### **2.1.2 State Building**

This thesis builds its theoretical basis on a rich state building literature from areas of limited statehood or failed states (see e.g. Lake & Fariss 2014; Krasner & Risse 2014; Brinkenhoff & Brinkenhoff 2002; Lake 2011; 2016) as well as de facto state case studies on state building (see e.g. Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2008; Blakkisrud & Kolstø 2011; 2012; Bakke et al. 2013; Richards 2014; Comai 2018a). This literature helps to operationalise state building, reflect on concerns around legitimacy and dependency, as well as identify potential explanations for the development of institutions ranging from structural, domestic, external to diffusion causes.

Despite the varying applications of state building, most definitions have an underlying consensus that state building is institution building in one way or the other. Scholars predominantly refer to state building as “interventionist strategies to restore and rebuild the institutions and apparatus of the state” (Scott 2007: 3). These interventionist strategies not necessarily originate exogenously but can also have endogenous or structural roots. In the case of de facto states, the focus of state building is not restricted to the restoration and rebuilding of institutions, but in some instances also on the novel creation of such institutions. The context of de facto states is ultimately more in line with Fukuyama’s (2004b: 17) understanding of state building as the “creation of new government institutions and the strengthening of existing ones.” Building on this understanding, Johnson and Smaker (2014: 4-5) argue

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<sup>11</sup> Comai (2018b) therefore argues that the post-Soviet de facto states act similarly to small dependent jurisdictions.

that state building refers to the development of centralised institutions that enable revenue creation and security and order guarantees, as well as the provision of public goods. Yet, according to Richards (2015: 5), state building goes beyond mere technocratic institution building, because it manifests itself as “socio-political change that creates, sustains and legitimizes a separate political entity, both to the international community and to the domestic audience.” This means that when armed groups become state builders and take on governance responsibilities in form of security, control and provision of public goods, this opens up channels for rebels to ensure legitimacy and reduces internal struggles against them through democratic involvement, economic support and security provision (Bakke et al. 2013: 3).

Another set of scholars, most notably Lake (2011; 2016), refers to state building as an externally led development. Similarly, Sahin (2015: 1) understands state building as

long-term involvement of international agencies in the construction of democratic government capacities in ‘fragile’ or ‘failing’ countries in attempt to prevent the recurrence of violent conflict and contain the global security implications of their weak or non-existent governmental capacity through establishing and strengthening the institutional foundations of sustainable peace.

Lake (2016) points out that the development of institutional structures is only meaningful if the external ‘statebuilder’ achieves legitimacy of the domestic authorities. Therefore, the role of external actors is not restricted to ensuring the monopoly of violence, but also to enable social transformations (Lake 2016: 4). Based on these definitions, in addition to Kolstø and Blakkisrud’s definition of hard state building (2008), this thesis conceptualises state building as the formation and strengthening of state institutions in order to establish control over the territory and population and provide public services and goods in order to achieve internal legitimacy.

In practical terms, this thesis operationalises state building as processes that (1) develop centralised institutions that ensure a level of state capacity and (2) the ability of the state to provide public services and goods to the public. At first glance

these two points may appear closely interlinked or even interdependent, however, research in areas of limited statehood has shown that state institutions and capacity are not a necessary condition for the provision of public services (Krasner & Risse 2014: 545; Lee et al. 2014: 635).

Despite the focus on governance institutions and the provision of public services and goods, this thesis does not take an institutionalist stance towards state building. This is due to the belief that a state and its authority structures can only achieve legitimacy if governance institutions deliver public goods and services such as security, public health and education. Thus, rather than understanding democracy and free markets as guarantors of legitimacy, this thesis, similarly to Lake (2011; 2016) and Hobbes (1651/2009), considers legitimacy to stem from relational authority in form of public goods and service provision. At the same time, even when an ideal type institutional set-up and service provisions are present, this does not guarantee the legitimacy and survival of an entity (Lake 2016: 16). Nonetheless, state capacity, authority structures and governance institutions may benefit a *de facto* state's ability to provide services, particularly in cases where they cannot rely on external support.

The first component of state building in form of the capacity (statehood) of authority structures refers to the (re)construction of a "state's monopoly of violence, suppression of other violence-wielding groups, and equally reconstituting the legitimacy of that monopoly" (Lake & Fariss 2014: 572). Social contract theories suggest that individuals are willing to pass over their rights to a state if the state offers collective security by taking on the monopoly over the means of violence (Hobbes 1651/2009).<sup>12</sup> The control over the monopoly over the means of violence appears to be a priority in the state building strategies of *de facto* state. Lee, Walter-Drop and Wiesel (2014: 637) argue that a state's rightfulness to rule and to hold the monopoly of force needs to be continuously supported through output legitimacy, even when citizens internalised the rightful role of the state. In the case of *de facto* states, the provision of public services and goods and continued output legitimacy is

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<sup>12</sup> This increasing importance of guaranteeing external and international security in exchange for passing over one's rights played an important part in the emergence of states in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe (Tilly 1992).

arguably important as citizens of de facto states may alternatively pursue services from their patron or parent state or potentially even favour reintegration. While war legacies and animosities reduce the likelihood of reintegration, the case of Abkhazia shows that some citizens do indeed take on health services both in the parent (Georgia) and patron state (Russia) that are not provided by the Abkhaz authorities.

Meanwhile, the development of the capacity of authority structures in form of public institutions can be a part of a (de facto) state's nation building strategy as it not only encourages smoother public service and goods provision, but it also enables a degree of homogenisation and coercion (Tilly 1975: 43). It is exactly this coercion ability that enables states to extract the necessary resources for and regulate a system that provides public goods and services to its citizens (Lane 1972; Pfeiffer et al. 2008).

Kolstø and Blakkisrud's (2008: 484) definition of 'hard' state building in the de facto states of the South Caucasus specifies the functions and actions of government institutions that are part of statehood creation by referring to the formation of three key areas namely the administration, economy and military. More specifically this includes "the establishment of frontier control, securing a monopoly of coercive powers on state territory, and putting into place a system for the collection of taxes and tolls" (see also Kolstø 2000; Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2004: 8-10). Similarly, Florea's (2014) variables 'degrees of state building' and 'number of governance institutions', discussed in the research design chapter of this thesis, represent useful measurements of state capacity of de facto states at a given point in time. While the number of governance institutions does not necessarily reflect the actual capacity of an institution, it provides some indices of the present physical infrastructure and institutional priorities in the state building process.

The second component of state building takes the form of the provision of collective goods and services by the state. These good and services range from services such as education, health, sanitation to basic social services (OECD 2006) and can span as wide as the provision of a clean environment (Krasner & Risse 2014: 546). Simultaneously to the advance of the modern state in Europe, the normative understanding of what collective goods the state is required to deliver to its citizens increased beyond mere security provision (Lee et al. 2014: 636). The focus on the

state as the primary provider of public services and goods is shared by large portions of the state building literature and development programmes. Not only appears there to be a global normative understanding that it is the state's responsibility to provide public goods and services, the state is also considered an appropriate actor that either directly or by creating a framework of rules and regulations ensures that other actors provide these goods or services (Lee et al. 2014: 635). However, decentralisation reforms in a variety of developing countries in an attempt to improve the provision of public services and goods have resulted in governments and international donors "transferring power to a wide range of local institutions, including private bodies, customary authorities and NGOs" (Ribot et al. 2008). It is also not uncommon for regimes to receive external support to guarantee the provision of public services and goods. Particularly in the case of de facto states, self-sufficient public service and goods provision is unlikely given the financial and economic effects of large-scale international isolation.

As mentioned above, this thesis considers legitimacy to stem from relational authority in form of public service and goods provision and institutions as a way of achieving this provision. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the de facto states of the South Caucasus, "[p]eople's concerns about the provision of public goods such as democracy, economic development, and health services are, in addition to perceptions of safety and security (or lack thereof), important determinants for internal legitimacy" (Bakke et al. 2013: 12). Public service and goods provision represents a direct link between citizens and their state and plays a considerably role in the visibility of the state and its legitimisation to its citizens in terms of justifying taking on new powers over their constituents (Lake 2011; Levi 1989, 1997). This visibility and potential legitimisation source is significant for governments of de facto states, as the de facto authorities need to simultaneously legitimise the new (de facto) state, governance institutions and the leadership in order to decrease the risk of being challenged by their citizens. Thus, external patron support does not necessarily hamper the legitimisation process of de facto states, as long as a de facto regime is able to sustain public service and goods provision by sustaining healthy relations with a patron. In this context, it is important to note that public service and goods provision is only one of several legitimisation sources for de facto regimes. A

restrictive focus on public service and goods provisions does not capture a regime's full range of potential legitimisation strategies and practices.

## **2.2 State Building in De Facto States**

Some de facto states may be considered similar to their sovereign counterparts in regard to their populace, territory, government and civil society. Still, these unrecognised entities challenge basic assumptions of political and legal legitimacy, sovereignty and statehood in the international system. Particularly the limited international recognition of de facto states adds further complexities to the state building development of these entities by restricting their financial potential while simultaneously making the de facto governments arguably more susceptible to the influence of those external actors that decide to engage with them. Based on these additional dimensions of state building in form of dependencies and limited financial means, de facto states should not make the likeliest candidates for state building. Nonetheless, state building, statehood and public service and goods provision is not only a potential prospect of de facto states but has become a reality in a variety of cases across the globe (King 2001; Caspersen 2012; Richards 2014; de Waal 2018).

Hence, this section combines common characteristics of de facto states with state building theories in order to assess the extent to which de facto states may challenge some commonly held assumptions of state building developments. Capturing these endogenous state building paths in de facto states enables an assessment of direct and indirect patron state influences on these developments later on. Essentially, this section shows that state building can benefit from limited international recognition, because it might incentivise domestic cooperation and motivate democratic state building in order to 'earn sovereignty' (Caspersen 2012; Broers 2014: 152). Moreover, the international context of de facto states that tends to be defined by war legacies and geopolitical competition, can enhance the development of state capacity particularly in the military sector. Yet, the limited international recognition and weak political and economic structures of de facto states tends to create dependencies with some external actors and encourages institution sharing that in turn may limit the development of state capacity and independent provision of public services and goods.

Despite the terminological disagreements surrounding de facto states and a sensible caution to generalise the diverse experiences of de facto states, it is possible to identify some broad commonalities across a wide set of de facto states. Most of

the de facto state literature, for instance, agrees that de facto states sustain on an international and inter-state level despite their lack of widespread international recognition and not being considered formally sovereign in international law. Indeed, de facto states find themselves in unusual and adverse international environments in which only a small number of states, if any, recognise their self-proclaimed independence and their participation in international affairs is severely limited. Limited international recognition and contested external sovereignty can significantly impede the traditional understanding of state building developments. State building practices such as international interventions with or without international supervision (Lake 2016, Sahin 2015), public-private partnerships (Beisheim & Liese 2014) and (neo-)trusteeship (Lake & Fariss 2014; Fearon & Laitin 2004) are either unthinkable or at least highly unlikely in instances where parent states oppose or limit the state building interference of the international community. Instead, de facto states tend to rely on patrons, diaspora communities, international donors, corporations or NGOs for state building support ranging from basic humanitarian aid to more complex sharing of governance tasks. This symbolises that the limited international connectedness of de facto states does not automatically imply limited external engagement in the domestic developments of these unrecognised entities.

State building activities of external actors in the international community are in most cases not harmonised (Ghani et al. 2005; Samuels & von Esiedel 2004; Paris 2006). This is even less so the case, when a patron state is involved in the state building of de facto states, as multilateral state building and oversight does not exist as such in these unrecognised entities. Unsurprisingly, de facto states are therefore more prone to be affected by the one or two countries that recognise and choose to support them. Similarly, as de facto states are unable to access international money pools in forms of loans, grants and large-scale aid due to their lack of international recognition, they tend to rely on either the above-mentioned external actors for support or modifications to trade policies to ensure financial input.

Thereby, the limited international recognition of de facto states may develop dependencies on actors ranging from diaspora groups, patron states, international donors and NGOs. Zartman (1995: 272), for instance, argues that external support

plays a central role in facilitating state building in de facto states, warning simultaneously that long-term reliance on external actors may result in higher levels of dependency and vulnerability. Similarly, Kolstø and Blakkisrud (2008: 495) argue that the de facto states of the South Caucasus are not in a position to provide the necessary services to their population “without relying heavily on external support and infrastructure.” These dependencies may include the reliance on financial or military support but might go as far as the sharing of governance tasks and institutions. Dependencies also occur in the state building development of internationally recognised states, such as areas of limited statehood. However, in the case of de facto states, dependencies ensue due to limited alternative options, rather than the inability to perform statehood tasks themselves.

While limited international recognition may exclude some traditional state building strategies for de facto states and makes them more susceptible to the (oftentimes unregulated) influence of alternative external actors, a special edition on state building and democratisation in de facto states highlights that “the established theoretical assumption that uncontested external sovereignty is a necessary precondition for internal democratization needs to be reconsidered” (von Steinsdorff 2012: 201). In other words, de facto states do not require uncontested international recognition in order to ensure state building and even democratisation (von Steinsdorff 2012: 203). Ó’Beacháin (2012), for example, links the formation of a consensus-oriented environment in Abkhazia to its volatile international status, which facilitated cooperation and compromises among different political and ethnic groups in order to circumvent instability and parent state reintegration.

A second commonality of de facto states that may affect state building in these entities relates to the reasoning of de facto governments behind state building. On the basis of the existing literature, it is possible to identify three types of motivations for state building in de facto states. First, de facto states tend to appear in areas of the world that experience conflict and volatility (Caspersen 2011: 6). Under such geopolitical pressures, some de facto state leaders might be driven by security or even survival concerns and therefore direct their state building strategies towards military power and ethno-nationalism rather than pluralism (Ishiyama & Batta 2012: 124). Johnson and Smaker (2014: 13) even go as far as to argue that

“militarism is to be expected in nascent states that lack international recognition.” In practice, this means that de facto states may prioritise the development of its military and police in order to guarantee the safety of the public and combat potential external threats (Johnson & Smaker 2014: 5). Somaliland’s security sector, for example, accounts for more than half of the de facto state’s expenditures, even though Somalia as the parent state does not even present a concrete threat to Somaliland (Johnson & Smaker 2014: 7). The de facto government of Puntland, as an additional example of high military and police expenditures, spends around 90 per cent of its overall budget on its military, police and public administration (Johnson & Smaker 2014: 7).

While control over the territory is an important component of achieving statehood in de facto states, these entities tend to overdevelop their security apparatus (Caspersen 2012; Kolstø 2006). In the case of Somaliland and Puntland, two de facto states without a patron, the lack of international efforts to protect the two entities encouraged state building and the development of the security apparatus of the two de facto states (Johnson & Smaker 2014: 18). As mentioned above, the growth of the security apparatus in light of the absence of international protection can be seen as an integral part of the nascent state building efforts of de facto states, arguably more so in de facto states without a patron than with a patron. Abkhazia’s de facto governments, for instance, allowed and encouraged high degrees of institution sharing in the security sector with its patron Russia from 1999 onwards. This form of institution sharing, however, disincentivised the development of Abkhazia’s own security apparatus.

Second, a number of de facto states have seceded from their parent states, which may facilitate state building in form of competition between the parent and the de facto state. Nagorno-Karabakh’s threatened status in addition to Azerbaijan’s status as a strong perceived enemy encouraged reforms and service provisions in Nagorno-Karabakh to legitimise the entity’s independence, despite high polarisation and little compromise incentives (Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2012). Similarly, Somaliland’s commitment to independent statehood unified leaders, the population and facilitated stability (Johnson & Smaker 2014: 12). De facto states that pursue reconciling efforts with their parent states may witness fewer incentives to

develop statehood as the examples of Puntland (Johnson & Smaker 2014: 16) and Gagauzia suggest (Zabarah 2012). Third, the lack of recognition may serve as a motivating force for state building in de facto states. Caspersen (2012) and Broers (2014), for instance, highlight that striving for international recognition can be an incentive for pursuing (democratic) state building strategies.

A third commonality of de facto states that can affect state building is the oftentimes weak economy and state structure of these entities (Caspersen 2012; Kolstø 2006), that are partially due to 'the economic cost of non-recognition' (Pegg 1998: 43).<sup>13</sup> In practice, this involves weak tax systems, few trading partners, embargos, corruption and limited foreign investment (Caspersen 2012; Kolstø 2006; Lynch 2004; Pegg 1998). De facto states that undergo war, for example, oftentimes experience more crime that flourishes under limited order (Eide 1999). The low development of de facto state economies and state structures can push these entities into dependency relationships with external actors and may encourage economic reforms and restructuring that ensures budget income through high import and export tax (Caspersen 2012: 63). Somaliland, for instance, employs high taxes on trade and receives occasional loans from local businesses or diaspora (Bradbury 2008).

Yet, the literature on fragile states (see Reno 2000; Chabal & Saloz 1999) has shown that state weakness not necessary results in limited power of domestic elites. A weak state apparatus may be a sign of vested power in powerful influential informal networks. It is therefore not surprising that political actors in de facto states are oftentimes able to operate effectively in these state-like forms, even though the political situation is ambiguous and lacks *de jure* recognition. Reno (2000) argues that this perception and symptom of state weakness can be a strategy of authorities to grow their power. Indeed, "the creation or attainment of a state (or statehood) is not always the dominant strategy of political actors who function within asymmetric constraints, even if territory they control appears state-like in form and function" (Harvey 2010: 16). Domestic actors or powerful informal networks may even regard

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<sup>13</sup> Certainly not all de facto states are inherently weak. According to von Steinsdorff (2012: 202), for instance, "all post-Soviet de facto states succeeded in stabilizing the territorial and institutional foundations of their statehood."

state and institution building as a considerable disincentive. Therefore, domestic actors within de facto or failed states with informal networks may perform deliberate disruptions to reforms which ultimately causes an even weaker institutionalisation of control. If we assume that domestic political actors can operate effectively in de facto states despite the weakness of the state structures, it is not surprising that institution building is not the ultimate aim of authorities within de facto states, but rather military and economic security. These factors change our normative assumptions about the behaviour and motivations of domestic actors in regard to state building and the influence of external actors.

Unlike most weak, fragile, collapsed or failed state, some de facto states have not lost the monopoly on legitimate force and control within their de facto borders (Caspersen 2012). However, de facto state with a patron state are more likely to lose their monopoly on legitimate violence, due to the strong military component of the patron-de facto state relationship. Instead, one can observe a duopoly on legitimate violence in these de facto states. There are also examples where external actors take on or share institutions or governance tasks with the de facto authorities (what Popescu (2006) and Comai (2018a) refer to as “outsourcing (de facto) statehood”). Research from areas of limited statehood has found mixed evidence showing that external actors “may provide goods and services in lieu of (or alongside) the state’s own efforts” (Lee et al. 2014: 649-650). Milli Lake’s analysis of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2014), for instance, highlights that “governance is frequently the product of a complex sharing of sovereignty, involving a multitude of domestic and international actors” that work either with or independently from government agencies (Lake 2014: 515). In the case of weak or failed states, “state weakness can facilitate and be used to justify extraordinary interventions by external actors in the domestic authority structures of states” (Lake 2014: 515-516). In the case of de facto states, however, external interventions and institution sharing tends to be justified by the limited availability of other sources of support.

The final commonality of de facto states with possible implications for state building in de facto states refers to the ethno-national character and status of these entities. De facto states, with a few notable exceptions such as Transnistria and Gagauzia, tend to follow ethno-nationalistic leanings (Caspersen 2011: 6), which

contributes to limited political pluralism (Ishiyama & Batta 2012: 124).<sup>14</sup> Ethno-nationalistic tendencies can, for instance, be identified in Taiwan's state building process, which involved the preferential placement of so called 'mainlanders' and 'half-mountains' into government and administration seats, rather than native Taiwanese (Chu & Lin 2001: 112). Preferential appointments based on the dominant ethnicity or the ethnicity that represents the government appears to be a common occurrence in heterogeneous and particularly homogenous de facto states. This is not to say that ethno-nationalistic tendencies in the institutional structure and hiring processes are impossible occurrences beyond de facto states.

The ethno-national character of some de facto states ties back to Lake's insistence that "[s]tatebuilding is not just a matter of getting the institutions "right" [...], but a process of social transformation that, to be successful, must realign the internal cleavages that caused the state to fail in the first place and then, paradoxically, were typically deepened by the conflict itself" (Lake 2016: 4). Ó'Beacháin (2012) finds that despite Abkhazia's ethnic heterogeneity and positive discrimination favouring ethnic Abkhaz, a consensus focused environment, relatively competitive and fair elections and even shifting powers were able to emerge, due to the volatile international status that brought both political and ethnic groupings together. Blakkisrud and Kolstø (2011) identify similar state building processes and domestic elite behaviour due to external threats in Nagorno-Karabakh. Unlike Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh is ethnically homogeneous, more politically polarised and less compromising. These are examples where domestic factors influence state building more than external pressures and the presence of a true cause or identity (von Steinsdorff 2012: 202). Still, parent state pressures may increase the likelihood of preferential treatments and ethnically motivated hiring.

Gagauzia, as a notable exception, initially opposed a purely ethnic Gagauzian polity. However, later on, "the predominance of Gagauz nationals in the regional administration and pressure tactics against non-Gagauz were repeatedly criticized" (Zabarah 2012: 186). Transnistria represents yet another notable example in that its

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<sup>14</sup> According to Ishiyama and Batta (2012: 129-130), highly ethnically homogenous de facto states that simultaneously have a low GDP per capita and a society that is largely unmilitarised are more likely to have a dominant party system.

de facto government did originally not pursue a national identity based on an ethnic character. Instead, the de facto authorities developed this identity after de facto independence, which shows that a national and ethnic identity can be developed at a later stage (von Steinsdorff 2012: 202).

## 2.3 Patron States in the State Building Processes of De Facto States

Patron states shape the state building processes of de facto states not only by directly interfering in the institutional and policy developments of these unrecognised entities, but also by indirectly representing a source for institution or legislative imitation. In order to capture the extent to which patron states influence the state building processes of de facto states, it is therefore necessary to grasp both the direct and indirect influences of patron states. Henceforth, this section proposes a theoretical framework that builds on diffusion models to distinguish between direct and indirect patron influences.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the framework accounts for legitimacy, agency and dependency dynamics in patron-de facto state relations that shed light on the ability of domestic actors to deliberately challenge, justify or internalise diffusion influences.

The theoretical framework of this thesis is predominantly based on Gel'man and Lankina's (2013) diffusion model that combines the temporal and elite focus of the democratisation literature (e.g. Geddes 1996; Way 2005; Kitchelt et al. 1999) with the spatial dimension of diffusion theories (e.g. O'Loughlin et al. 1998; Kopstein & Reilly 2000) to explain varying democratisation outcomes in Russian regions. Their model builds on Powell and DiMaggio's (1983) study, that conceptualises diffusion as an isomorphic process "that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions" (149). The diffusion model proves valuable in capturing both direct and indirect patron influences on de facto states and explaining institutional and legislative similarities and differences between patrons and de facto states.

Diffusion theories assume that spatial connections and proximity shape institutional outcomes. Kopstein & Reilly (2000: 2), for example, measure how political and economic conditions in the post-communist space can be explained with the "spatial diffusion of influence, institutions, norms, and expectations across borders." Also, Bakke et al. (2018) and Toal (2017) stress the analytical leverage of

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<sup>15</sup> Previous studies make similar distinctions. An article by Lankina et al. (2016: 230) distinguishes between direct and indirect diffusion influences in the context of pre-communist literacy and post-communist outcomes, where the former not only affects the latter directly, but also indirectly through communist party saturation.

considering the geographic context of de facto states. Clarifying the nature of spatiality in the context of patron-de facto state relations is therefore necessary in order to capture the ability of patrons to shape institutional and legislative outcomes in de facto states through diffusion. Spatial factors are not necessarily restricted to geographic proximity, but also cover the extent of connections and interactions between domestic actors and external agents that encourage change (Gel'man & Lankina 2013: 45). Thus, Gel'man and Lankina differentiate between two interrelated spatial components. On the one hand, spatial proximity in form of geographic closeness and, on the other hand, spatial proximity in form of contacts between external and domestic actors. While geographic proximity may contribute to the extent of connections and interactions between two actors, contiguity or proximity is not a necessary condition for extensive exchanges (Gel'man & Lankina 2013: 44-46).

Diffusion models so far contributed to the analysis of developments across internationally recognised states (see e.g. O'Loughlin et al. 1998; Brinks & Coppedge 2006; Starr & Lindborg 2003; Kopstein & Reilly 2000) and sub-national contexts (Gel'man & Lankina 2013). In order to assess the applicability and appropriateness of diffusion models to contexts of patron-client relations and de facto states, it is necessary to consider whether one can speak of spatial proximity in the case of patron-de facto state relations. Even though de facto states are not part of a federal network that propagates a specific institutional framework, de facto states are exposed to diffusion influences from patrons, diaspora groups, international donors and parent states. While many de facto states have patrons in their close proximity if not even across their de facto borders, certainly not all de facto states are geographically close to their patrons (e.g. Taiwan, Anjouan and Katanga). Nonetheless, patron-de facto state relations usually involve strong linkages at least in the military sphere, but oftentimes also in the political, economic and social sector. These contacts between the elites of patrons and de facto states and in some instances even between societal actors allows us to refer to spatial proximity in the case of patron-de facto state relations.

Powell and DiMaggio (1983) differentiate between three non-mutually exclusive diffusion influences that result in isomorphic developments: coercive,

mimetic and normative diffusion. First, coercive diffusion tends to involve a powerful actor, such as a government or international organisation, that purposefully influences the institutional or policy choices of another actor (Appuhami et al. 2011). Coercive diffusion may take a variety of forms ranging from financial pressures, sanctions to attaining the monopoly over information or expertise (Dobbin et al. 2007). Coercive diffusion appears to be particularly prominent in hierarchical and authoritarian systems (Gel'man & Lankina 2013: 45). For coercive diffusion to achieve the intended legislative or institutional isomorphism, the dominant entity requires so-called transfer or change agents, that represent actors on the ground that actively shape the decision-making or the desirability of a specific path in the recipient region (Evans 2009; Holden 2009; Rogers 1995). Transfer or change agents may, for instance, represent NGOs, state representatives, journalists or political parties. In Gel'man and Lankina's (2013) study on Russian regions, for example, United Russia embodies the national government's change agent on the ground that facilitates institutional or legislative developments. The causal mechanisms at play are an initial provision of financial, military or political incentives and pressures of the patron on the de facto authorities through change agents on the ground. By lobbying the decision-makers in the de facto state, change agents facilitate institutional or legislative amendments. These coercive diffusion influences need to be legitimised by the de facto authorities and society in order to take effect (see section 2.3.1). Furthermore, de facto authorities also have the ability to challenge certain coercive diffusion influences depending on their bounded agency (see section 2.3.2)

Coercion, in this context, does not explicitly refer to the use of force, but the ways in which patron states achieve outcomes in the de facto states that the de facto regime was originally unwilling or did not intend to do. In that sense, coercion can be facilitated through financial and military incentives or agreements. While agreements between the Russian and Abkhaz governments demonstrate some degree of de facto state influence on the drafting process, the unequal power distribution prioritises the patron's agenda. Even if Sukhumi incorporated passages into a treaty with Moscow, the patron holds the upper hand in deciding whether the treaty should be passed and the passage should be included.

Second, mimetic diffusion captures processes where actors deliberately copy and reproduce policies or institutions from another entity (Dobbin et al. 2007; Shipan & Volden 2008). Mimetic diffusion emphasises the centrality of agency of the recipient actor, whose ability and willingness to mimic legislations and institutions is shaped by necessity and the linkages with the imitated counterpart. Mimetic diffusion is prevalent during periods of high uncertainty among the leadership and the public concerning the appropriate institutional or policy choices (Mooney 2001), because entities that have made institutional or policy choices in similar contexts may serve as a guiding example for the uncertain leadership and public (Gel'man & Lankina 2013: 45). The causal chain of mimetic diffusion influences can be established by identifying legislative and institutional similarities of the patron and de facto state that transpire following a time lag.

Third, normative diffusion refers to soft or material forces that are considered "legitimate and reputable" (Powell & DiMaggio 1983: 153) by domestic actors and consequently inform the institutional or policy choice of decision-makers. These soft or material forces may, for instance, include cultural similarities, propaganda or financial incentives and can originate from a wide range of actors such as civil societies, international organisations or states. Whether or not forces are considered legitimate and reputable and therefore shape the institutional or policy choices of an entity is likely to differ depending on the leadership, time and entity. Unlike coercive and mimetic diffusion influences, normative diffusion follows less distinct causal chains. Still, researchers can search for indicators in interviews and agreements that de facto authorities perceive the patron state as an appropriate source for institutional and legislative changes in the de facto states and therefore design institutions, legislations and service provisions inspired by the patron.

These three diffusion influences are complemented with a fourth channel in form of competitive diffusion. Traditionally, competitive diffusion occurs in contexts where entities compete for capital or market shares, which shapes the policy or institutional outcomes of the involved parties (Appuhami et al. 2011: 433). Competitive diffusion is, however, also transferable to the state building processes of de facto states where perceived or actual competition with the parent states or other external actors may facilitate policy or institutional developments. In these

cases, competition not so much centres around attaining economic leverage, but demonstrating to parent states and the international community that a given de facto regime is sustainable and able to provide public services and goods including territorial security and defence. This means that competitive diffusion plays out in the geopolitical realities of de facto states involving patron, parent state and international community forces, which can shape the legislative and institutional structures of de facto states. Competition between the parent and patron state of a de facto state can, for instance, facilitate financial and security guarantee transfers from the patron state to the de facto state and encourage legislative and institutional isomorphism. In terms of causal mechanisms, competitive diffusion influences involve institutional, legislative or service provision changes that are facilitated by the de facto state authorities' perception of competing parent state involvement in the de facto state. When a variety of competing diffusion sources reach an entity, what Savage (1985: 14) refers to as "poly-nuclear" influences, the institutional outcomes on the ground may be uneven depending on the strength of each propagation model (Gel'man & Lankina 2013: 58). Abkhazia's education sector, for instance, has experienced competing external and domestic influences from Russia, Georgia and a set of international donors and NGOs, which shaped the policy and institutional outcomes in Abkhazia (see chapter 8).

The theoretical framework of this thesis proposes that the degree of competition in the triadic relationship of patron, de facto and parent states shapes the predominance of direct or indirect diffusion channels.<sup>16</sup> Assuming that patron

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<sup>16</sup> Based on the previous theoretical review of state building in de facto states, it is possible to make inferences about the central actors and their interests in the state and institution building processes of de facto states. The key players are de facto, patron and parent states as well as to a limited extent the international community. The main actors in de facto states comprise of de facto authorities that serve as the central decision-making bodies and civil society groups that can propose policy ideas and legitimise state and institution outcomes. De facto states are first and foremost interested in political survival and are therefore willing to accept some degree of dependence on their patron. However, challenges to some external patron pressures and the pursuit of viable alternative support sources beyond the patron (Berg & Pegg 2018; Dembińska & Mérand 2019) serve as indicators that de facto authorities do not favour complete reliance on patron support. Patron states comprise of actors such as the central government and a range of change agents on the ground including the official patron representations such as embassies, military personnel, media outlets and ministers. Patrons are interested in sustaining de facto states to uphold their geopolitical advantage,

states favour a degree of dependence of de facto states on patron support while providing limited financial, military and political involvement, patrons are likely to encourage indirect diffusion channels to reduce the costs associated with direct diffusion channels. Yet, heightened competition with the parent state is likely to encourage a rise in direct and indirect diffusion influences. Due to the necessity for further military and financial support to protect the de facto state from perceived or actual parent state pressures, direct diffusion influences are expected to rise. Also indirect diffusion influences increase during periods of more intense competition, because the de facto authorities perceive the patron as the predominant supporter and ultimately a source of normative and mimetic diffusion. Thus, heightened competition with the parent state encourages similarities in institutional and legislative outcomes in de facto states, higher levels of institution sharing and potentially less developed state capacity. When competition in the triadic relationship is perceived as less severe by de facto and patron authorities, direct diffusion influences are likely to decline, because the patron assumes lower demand for military and financial support. Indirect diffusion influences, meanwhile, sustain unless the de facto authorities have the ability to diversify their support network by exploring viable alternative support sources outside patronal support.

Approaching patron influences on de facto states from a diffusion perspective, enables this thesis to theorise the differences between direct and indirect patron influences by distinguishing between direct coercive influences, on the one hand, and indirect influences of the patron in form of mimicry, normative and competitive diffusion, on the other hand (see figure 2 for a visualisation of the theoretical framework). The separation between direct and indirect diffusion channels distinguishes between the extent of patron involvement in the de facto state as well as the agency of the de facto authorities. Direct diffusion channels represent immediate patron involvement with de facto state authorities through

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while limiting financial and military costs associated with direct involvement in the de facto state. This thesis argues that patron states therefore nurture a degree of dependence of the de facto state on patron support by providing limited financial, military and political involvement that discourages self-sufficiency. Parent states and the international community primarily represent a source of potential competition and contribute to some extent to the provision of public services and goods.

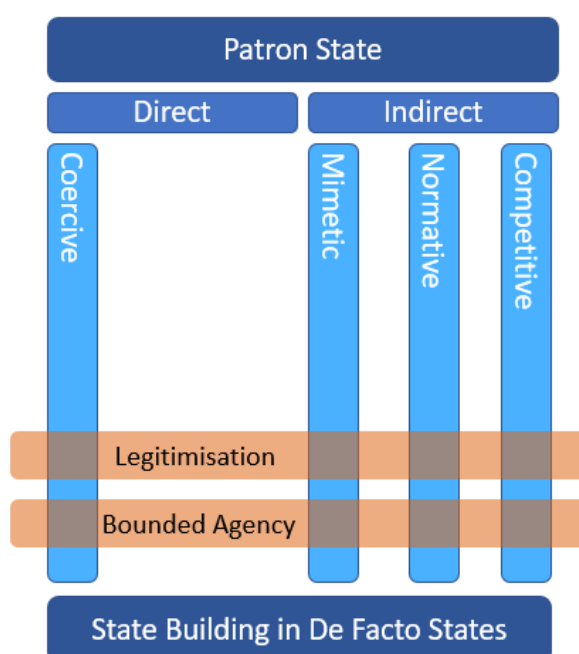
change agents that inform the institutional or legislative outcomes of de facto states (e.g. financial incentives, military promises, political pressures, agreements that set out institutional and legislative measures). Even though de facto state authorities can challenge some direct patron involvement, the recipients have limited agency beyond the implementation of the directives. Indirect diffusion channels refer to legislative and institutional developments in de facto states that were initiated by the de facto authorities and indirectly shaped by the patron (e.g. by setting an imitable example, signing agreements that have unintended spill-over consequences).

The theoretical framework of this thesis thereby addresses the shortcoming of the de facto state literature to distinguish between direct and indirect patron influences. Framing Russia's involvement in Abkhazia along the concepts of linkages and leverage (Gerrits & Bader 2016), for instance, does not differentiate between policies that Russia actively promotes in Abkhazia and legislative and institutional isomorphism that is due to Abkhaz elites mimicking Russian policies or institutions. In that sense, the theoretical framework offers causal mechanisms that may explain the causes of legislative and institutional isomorphism that Gerrits and Bader (2016) observed in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moreover, the framework guides the identification of areas of patron influence where domestic elites are more susceptible to diffusion influences. Lankina and Libman (2019), for instance, highlight trade and production chain dependencies in Ukraine from the Soviet period that facilitate diffusion through institutional path dependencies even in the post-Soviet space.

Two additional variables complement this theoretical framework and equip the qualitative analysis of Russian influences on Abkhazia's state building processes with tools to capture the dynamics and nuances of patron-client relations: considerations of the role of legitimacy in patron-de facto state relations and the implications of bounded agency in dependency relations. Legitimation and bounded agency serve as transition variables (reflected by the orange bars in figure 2) in the sense that direct and indirect diffusion channels need to transit through a legitimisation process and may be challenged by a de facto state's bounded agency. In practical terms, this means that for direct diffusion influences to affect a de facto state's state capacity and the provision of public services and goods, the coercive

diffusion channels need to be legitimised by the de facto authorities and public. Furthermore, de facto state authorities have the ability to challenge diffusion influences despite the unequal power dynamic and de facto state dependence on the patron, which is represented by the bounded agency transition variable. These two transition variables address a shortcoming of the diffusion literature that insufficiently accounts for the necessity of legitimacy to develop and sustain institutions as well as the possibility for the recipient regime to challenge direct diffusion influences. Thereby, the two variables also complement the argument of this thesis by clarifying that direct and indirect diffusion influences do not necessarily shape a de facto state's state and institution building processes unhinderedly and immediately.

*Figure 2 Theoretical Framework*



### **2.3.1 Legitimacy Dynamics in External State Building Interventions**

The state building literature of failed states and areas of limited statehood emphasises the centrality of legitimacy for the sustainability of state building developments particularly when external state builders are involved. Essentially, Lake (2016: 1) argues that the goal of state building “is to create a state that is

regarded as legitimate by the people over whom it exercises authority.”<sup>17</sup> From a relational perspective on authority, legitimacy and compliance in external state building interventions derives from a social contract that specifies the exchange of public services and goods between the external state builder or domestic government and the population (Lake 2016: 17). Legitimised external state building operations in areas of limited statehood have the advantage of requiring comparatively fewer interventions, less funding and minimal institutionalisation (Krasner & Risse’s 2014: 547).

This thesis engages particularly with the ways in which external patron engagement is legitimised by the recipient civil society and authorities.<sup>18</sup> Broadly speaking, legitimacy can be distinguished between empirical and normative legitimacy. The former refers to the extent to which domestic actors consider the external involvement as appropriate and ultimately worth complying to, whereas the latter captures how normative and moral standards justify the external involvement (Krasner & Risse 2014: 555). The focus of this thesis is primarily on empirical legitimacy, which Scharpf (1999) divides into input and output legitimacy.<sup>19</sup> Input legitimacy, on the one hand, denotes how the quality of public involvement in the decision-making process can increase the likelihood of external actor legitimisation.

Output legitimacy, on the other hand, refers to the target population’s perception of the appropriateness and performance quality of state building efforts by external actors. Krasner and Risse (2014: 557) identify two ways in which actors can attain output legitimacy in areas of limited statehood. First, international actors may be considered legitimate if the domestic population or elite awaits a certain outcome or trusts the “knowledge and moral authority” of the international actor. Second, the legitimacy of an external actor increases if the initial actions meet the

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<sup>17</sup> Legitimacy, in this context, refers to a social contract where individuals pass over their rights to a dominant state in return for public services and goods, such as security and order (Lake 2011: 8).

<sup>18</sup> This focus is not to diminish the central role of internal legitimacy in the state building developments of *de facto* states (for studies on internal legitimacy in *de facto* states see e.g. Caspersen 2012; Berg 2012; Berg & Mölder 2012; Bakke et al. 2013).

<sup>19</sup> In addition to input and output legitimacy, Krasner and Risse (2014: 556) also consider “the conformity of international norms with moral beliefs held by local or national communities” as an important legitimacy source.

expectations of the domestic actors (see also Beisheim & Liese 2014; Matanock 2014). Relatedly, external actors not only need to ensure legitimacy through their actions and outcomes, but also by continuously promoting its norms (Boerzel & van Huellen 2014).

The theoretical framework of this thesis embeds these external legitimacy dynamics by considering the legitimacy requirement as a potential transition variable that diffusion influences need to cross in order to shape the state building processes of de facto states (represented by the orange bar in figure 2). While diffusion influences may explain legislative and institutional isomorphism, they do not account for the sustainability and legitimacy of these institutional and legislative outcomes. Institutional and legislative mimicry, for instance, may shape the de facto government's internal legitimacy and the legitimacy of the institutions. The legitimacy dynamics in patron-de facto state relations in general and the case of Russian involvement in Abkhazia in particular will be analysed in more detail in section 7.3 of this thesis.

### **2.3.2 Bounded Agency in the Context of Dependency**

Dependencies in patron-client relations shape the nature and translation of diffusion influences into the state building developments of de facto states. While relations between de facto states and their patrons rarely imply a complete transfer of authority, Lake (2016: 1-2) warns that external actors, that are willing to fund state building, "are likely to have interests in the future of that country, and will therefore seek to promote leaders who share or are at least sympathetic to their interests and willing to implement their preferred policies." This, in turn, can reduce the internal legitimacy of the leadership, which Lake (2016: 70-77) refers to as the 'statebuilder's dilemma'. Furthermore, the acceptance of a dominant state's involvement reduces the subordinate state's possibilities and privileges of setting their own policies (Lake 2011: 9).

Yet, most entities voluntarily accept subordination if they receive something for this in return. Also dominant entities are willing to accept financial and possible political costs associated with the relationship if they benefit from the engagement

(Lake 2011: 7). Within this context, Comai (2018b: 189, 193) identifies a pragmatic approach of post-Soviet *de facto* states toward sustained dependence on their patron by striving for “sustainability rather than self-sustainability.” Building on these dependency dynamics that capture a degree of agency of the dependent state, the theoretical framework of this thesis offers explanatory power as to why domestic actors may be more susceptible to mimic, challenge or justify specific diffusion practices of external actors. Thus, dependencies should not only be regarded as a way for external actors to coerce certain institutional or policy choices on the recipient state, but also as a mechanism that shapes the room for manoeuvre and courses of action of domestic elites. Understanding *de facto* state agency in the context of dependency and layers of diffusion may offer insights into varying state building outcomes. This is why (bounded) agency represents a second transition variable, symbolised by the second orange bar in figure 2, that shapes the ways in which diffusion sources influence the state building processes of *de facto* states.

Diffusion frameworks have the analytical advantage of considering not only the reflective nature of the adopting agent, but also the contextual environment that may shape the decisions of domestic actors (Strang & Soule 1998: 266-267). Gel'man and Lankina (2013) highlight, for instance, how regions may act in contexts of limited choice and that entities can resist coercive diffusion in certain settings. They explain the varying institution outcomes in Russian regions not only with the aspirations of actors involved, but also with fluctuating “propagation structures” (hierarchical versus loosely networked (Savage 1985: 14)) as well as the spatial proximity and connections of individual regions. In practical terms, this means that depending on a region's penetration of national actors, so called change agents, and the regions involvement in the federal network, institutional choices can be influenced by the national government. At the same time, the involvement of national governments, even in authoritarian systems with strict hierarchies, might not be all-encompassing due to challenges from domestic actors or competing external influences (Gel'man & Lankina 2013: 46).

The ability of elites and societies to challenge external coercive diffusion influences is also conditioned by the capacity of *de facto* states, the reliance of patron states on the *de facto* state, the domestic relevance of the patron interference, the

availability of alternative support sources and pressures from the parent state. Given the limited international recognition of de facto states, these entities have reduced financial, political and military capabilities and therefore restricted room for manoeuvre in challenging external patron engagement. Also external pressures from the parent state reduce the agency of the de facto authorities to challenge patron involvement, because of higher demand for military, financial and political support from the patron. At the same time, the importance of a given legislation and institution for the legitimacy of a de facto regime (private property and language legislations in Abkhazia for instance), the availability of viable alternative support sources from countries or international institutions as well as the relevance of the de facto state for the patron state's domestic politics loosens the bind on agency and increases a regime's ability to challenge patron involvement.

The presence of alternative diffusion influences in form of resource streams and normative pressures increases the likelihood for resistance in dependent entities. However, depending on the propagation structures and organisational penetration of diffusion sources, alternative resource support and normative factors may be insufficient to counter mimicry or coercive diffusion (Gel'man & Lankina 2013: 56-58). Hence, due to the limited availability of viable alternative choices, de facto regimes are less likely to resist coercive influences and more susceptible to indirect diffusion influences in form of mimetic, normative and competitive diffusion. The agency of dependent de facto states is likely to be bound by the perceived interests and activities of the patron. This bounded agency increases the likelihood for legislative and institutional isomorphism between the de facto state and its patron. Still, in this arena of limited manoeuvre and course of action, the de facto authorities can exemplify agency and signal autonomy.

## *Chapter 3*

### **Conceptualisation of Patron States in the Context of Patron-De Facto State Relations**

Notwithstanding a growing emphasis in the de facto state literature on the agency and internal developments of de facto states (see e.g. King 2001; Caspersen 2012, Berg & Mölder 2012; Richards 2014; Bakke et al. 2013; Broers et al. 2015; Kopeček 2020), numerous studies recurrently stress the significance of patron states for these unrecognised entities in one form or the other. Florea's (2014) data set presents relations between de facto states and patron states as relatively common phenomena in international politics with 21 out of 34 de facto states falling into this category. What is more, the term patron state is repeatedly used in de facto state scholarship covering diverse regions such as South East Asia, West Africa and the South Caucasus, which assumes commonalities across patron state characteristics and practices that transcend geographical boundaries. Yet, a wide range of case studies have uncovered the varying shapes, motivations and dynamics of patron-de facto state relations. Russia's influence on Transnistria, for instance, is difficult to comprehend without contextualising the relative power dynamics of their patron-

client relationship and its ensuing dependencies (Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2017; Devyatkov 2017). Meanwhile, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh's relationship follows arguably different interests and is a prime example of fluctuating dependencies in patron-de facto state relations (Broers 2005; Kopeček 2020).

Judging by the prevalence of patron states in the de facto literature, it is somewhat surprising that scholars have not engaged more closely with the concept of patron states. The arguably most prominent works on de facto states (Pegg 1998; King 2001; Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2008; Caspersen 2012), for instance, do not define patron states despite using the term repeatedly in their work. Even most accounts that directly engage with the role of patron states, patronage or patron-client relations (e.g. Blakkisrud & Kolstø 2012; O'Loughlin et al. 2015; Gerrits & Bader 2016; Bakke et al. 2018; Comai 2018a; 2018b) neither offer a definition of patron states nor do they refer back to definitions of patron states or patron-client relations in preceding literature. This apparent limitation to present a working definition of patron states ultimately avoids considerations of the presuppositions as well as the theoretical and practical implications of using the term.

Recent scholarship has begun to address this omission. Veenendaal's (2017) study on the position of microstates in international relations through the lens of an international patron-client model popularised patron states in the international politics literature once more and also presented a common basis and reference point for subsequent de facto state studies. Some articles started engaging increasingly with patron-client relations to analyse de facto states (Devyatkov 2017; Berg & Pegg 2018; Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2017; Berg & Vits 2018) by either relying on the patron-client models of the Cold War period (most prominently Shoemaker & Spanier (1984) and Carney (1989)) or on Veenendaal's (2017) understanding of patron-client relations in the context of micro states. While this shift towards greater clarity in terms of patron-client model definitions presents an important development in the de facto state literature, this chapter argues that (1) the assumptions of the Cold War patron-client relations literature do not neatly fit the context of the post-Cold War patron-de facto state relations (e.g. patron competition, international perception of patron-client relations) and that (2) de facto states represent a different form of client class to micro states, especially in terms of their limited international

recognition and the associated limitations of engaging with these entities. Moreover, (3) the proposed definitions (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984; Carney 1989; Veenendaal 2017) do not offer a satisfactory basis for identifying patron-client relations.

Henceforth, the aim of this chapter is to propose a conceptualisation of patron states in the context of patron-de facto state relations, by building on critiques of existing literature on patron-client relations from the Cold War period. Subsequently, the chapter ascertains whether patron interests, foreign policy instruments, domestic capabilities, the relative power dynamics of patrons and de facto states or dependencies represent unique identifiers of patron states in patron-client relations. The final part of this section outlines the ways in which the ensuing patron state conceptualisation challenges Florea's (2014) coding of patron states and suggests an alternative classification of patron states in his data set. The novel conceptualisation of patron-de facto state relation will form the key independent variable in the statistical analysis of patron influences on state and institution building in de facto states (chapter 5).

This chapter argues that as commonalities across domestic characteristics of patron states cannot account for common factors of patron state identification, patrons have to be examined from a relational perspective, which shifts the focus on patron-de facto state relations rather than patron states in themselves. This chapter essentially proposes a conceptualisation of patron-de facto state relations that considers dependencies and foreign policy instruments as the defining components of these relations. More specifically, de facto states need to receive the dominant share of support from one patron state in order to develop dependencies that make up the inherent power dynamics of patron-client relations. Thus, it is necessary to go beyond mere asymmetry in patron-client relations to refer to these forms of dyadic relations. The proposed conceptualisation of patron states contributes to the clarity of debates surrounding patron state influences on de facto states by offering insights into behavioural patterns of patron states, motivations behind patron engagement and dependency dynamics in patron-de facto state relations. Understanding the dependency dynamics of patron-de facto state relations, for instance, uncovers the ways in which these relations shape the domestic realities and agency of de facto states.

### **3.1 Common Patron State Characteristics**

The term patron state in the fields of comparative politics and international relations originated in the field of anthropology. Anthropologists used the framework of patron-clientcy as a tool to understand relationships between leaders and their supporters within tribes or regions. Subsequently, the field of comparative politics adopted this concept to analyse competitions in intrastate, intraregional or intra-local settings (Carney 1989: 43). Eventually studies such as Wolf's (1966) and Kaufman's (1974) analyses of patron-client relations in the Cold War period successively applied the concept of patron-clientcy to contexts of interstate relations, which ultimately created a new set of literature on international patron-client state relationships. Clapham (1982: 31) defends this shift to interstate relationships by arguing that "the elements already identified as conducive to the emergence of clientelist styles of politics are present, sometimes to a heightened degree, in the international system."

The extensive patron-client relationship literature from the Cold War period (e.g. Wolf 1966; Kaufman 1974; Gellner & Waterbury 1977; Eisenstadt & Lemarchand 1981; Clapham 1982; Shoemaker & Spanier 1984; Carney 1989) provides valuable insights into the interests, instruments and commonalities of patron states vis-à-vis client states at that time. This literature builds the basis of this chapter's attempt to conceptualise patron states. Yet, *de facto* states represent a client subgroup that challenges some of the preconceived notions of patron-client relations and ultimately reproduces different power dynamics between patrons and *de facto* states. Moreover, the literature on patron-client relations was prevalent during a period of arguably different international settings and conditions relating to international competition and world order. In order for the Cold War literature to be applied to patron-*de facto* state relations, some of the original assumptions on competition and clients need to be reviewed.

Patron-client state relations fall under the umbrella of bilateral relations, however, specific elements that characterise the relationships between patrons and clients make it possible and necessary to distinguish between these types of relationships. According to Kaufman (1974: 285), patron-client state relationships represent

a special type of dyadic exchange, distinguishable by the following characteristics: (a) the relationship occurs between actors of unequal power and status; (b) it is based on the principle of reciprocity; that is it is a self-regulating form of interpersonal exchange, the maintenance of which depends on the return that each actor expects to obtain by rendering goods and services to the other and which ceases once the expected rewards fail to materialize; (c) the relationship is particularistic and private, anchored only loosely in public law or community norms.<sup>20</sup>

Further engagements with patron-client state relations correspondingly stress that “asymmetry, diffuseness, and reciprocity are basic features of the type of social structure that has become associated with political clientelism” (Eisenstadt & Lemarchand 1981: 15). Wolf (1966: 16) even considers these relationships a lopsided friendship in addition to their inherent asymmetry and reciprocity. Additional inherent aspects relate to the fragility of such relationships as well as the role of patron competition. Gellner and Waterbury (1977: 330), for instance, argue that “[t]o the extent that patronage arenas become competitive, relations with clients will be to varying degrees fragile and of short duration.”

Shoemaker and Spanier (1984: 16) criticise the patron-client relationship literature for its assumptions that the goals of both the patron and client states are constant, that the relationship is understood as static and that crisis situations and changes are not sufficiently accounted for. Instead, they propose that “patron-client state relationships are in reality fuzzy, fluid, fluctuating partnerships, subject to constant change and only becoming sharply defined in the context of crisis” (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 16). Similarly to Gellner and Waterbury (1977), they argue further that patron-client relationships “rest upon a tenuous foundation and are inherently unstable” (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 17). Despite incompatibilities and a basis for conflict, “the patron and client enter into relationships because of specific objectives that, for the moment, transcend the underlying antagonism” (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 17). This is one of the reasons why Shoemaker and

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<sup>20</sup> See Powell (1970), Scott (1972), Wolf (1966), Lemarchand & Legg (1972) and Eisenstadt & Roninger (1980) for alternative definitions of patron-client relations that have also served as the basis for Kaufman’s (1974) definition.

Spanier (1984: 24) argue that patron-client state relationships are essentially “bargaining relationships in which each state tries to extract from the other valuable concessions at a minimal cost.”

A central contribution of Shoemaker and Spanier’s analysis is the definition of patron-client relationships, which expands the previous definitions of Kaufman (1974) and other scholars by associating patron-client relationships as bilateral relationships that fulfil four criteria: First, the military capabilities between patron and client state need to be sizably different. This also means that a “client cannot, by itself, become a major military power in the international community; nor can it, by itself guarantee its own security” (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 13). In this aspect of security provision by the patron state, transactions are unidirectional going out from the patron to the client state. Second, the client state needs to play a prominent role in the competitive race of two or more patron states (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 13). Essentially, Shoemaker and Spanier argue that the international community and the relationships between patron states are a necessary sphere of analysis to understand patron state behaviour in client states. According to them, patron-client state relationships are “the means by which the larger powers compete and are therefore inextricably linked to the intensity of the competition between the patron states” (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 13). Third, the patron-client state relationship needs to be perceived as such by the international community. In other words, there is a perceptual dimension to the relationship. Fourth, the relationship is asymmetric, not necessarily mutually beneficial and focuses mostly on the enhancement of security.

While Shoemaker and Spanier’s definition represents an insightful contribution to understanding patron states, it has a number of limitations related to the insufficient engagement with asymmetry and dependencies, a dated understanding of patron competition and involvement as well as limited applicability to de facto states as a client subgroup. Thus, the following sections attempt to frame patron states by recognising unique identifiers of patron-de facto states relations across patron interests, foreign policy instruments, relative power capabilities and dependencies.

### 3.1.1 Patron State Interests

The interests behind patron state engagement in client states offer insights into the goals of patron states and indicate the emphasis of patron involvement in a particular region.<sup>21</sup> From a rational choice perspective, patron states engage in client states to pursue interests that outweigh the price of undertaking a potentially militarily, economically and diplomatically costly outreach. Shoemaker and Spanier (1984: 17) argue that

[t]he nature of the [patron-client] relationship is shaped by the contribution the patron believes the client can make toward these goals as well as the importance of the goals themselves. If the client can provide some valuable advantage for the patron over the patron's adversary, the patron will be willing to pay a much higher price in the relationship.

Hence, the costs of patron engagement may only be secondary if the patron-client relationship contributes to the patron's competitive advantage. Shoemaker and Spanier (1984: 14) go as far as to argue that "[t]he litmus test for determining the existence and extent of a patron-client state relationship is an evaluation of the durability and nature of a relationship in the absence of patron competition." Client states may utilise this environment of patron competition to their advantage by following a strategy that keeps the client open to both competing patrons (consider the nominal non-alignment movement for example). In return for political favours,

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<sup>21</sup> While this section focuses almost exclusively on patron interests, it is worth considering briefly the extent to which patron and de facto state interests are compatible and the ways in which this influences the patron-de facto state relation. Viacheslav Chirikba and other representatives of the Abkhaz government and civil society organisations, for instance, argue that Russia could not be considered Abkhazia's patron, because Abkhazia and Russia have diverging interests in some aspects of their relationship (interviews 7 and 12). However, patronage does not imply similar or identical interests, as long as the relationship is beneficial for both sides to some degree. Shoemaker and Spanier (1984: 17) argue, for instance, that while the provision of support is not necessarily mutually beneficial, "the patron and client enter into relationships because of specific objectives that, for the moment, transcend the underlying antagonism." Caspersen's (2009) analysis of patron state interests in de facto states describes an environment of mutual interests which provides the basis for the relationship.

clients can then receive patron support, security guarantees and more leverage (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 12).

Yet, *de facto* states present a notable exception as a subgroup of client states in this regard, which has tangible implications for patron competition. First, if patron competition in patron-*de facto* state relations motivates the involvement of patron states, the competitive element manifests itself differently for the *de facto* state, because the *de facto* regime is restricted in its ability to navigate between a variety of viable patron actors and is oftentimes reliant on the state that offers to support it. This is largely due to the limited international recognition of *de facto* states and the diplomatic and financial costs associated with engaging in these territories.<sup>22</sup> Second, when *de facto* states operate as client states, patron competition takes place within an environment of simultaneous parent state competition. This ultimately transforms the dyadic relationship of patrons and clients into a triadic one which necessitates considerations surrounding parent capabilities and interests. Patron competition may still play out in such a triadic framework where patrons respectively support the conflicting parent and *de facto* state.

Furthermore, patron competition does not appear to be a suitable instrument to identifying patron-client relations in the post-Cold War context. Since the end of the Cold War, states that do not fall into the dichotomy of a bipolar world and are not considered great powers have emerged as patron states. Meanwhile, the post-Cold War world order has moved beyond a bipolar towards a multipolar narrative. Still, patron-*de facto* relations tend to entail geopolitical and competitive elements. In some instances, competition between great powers appears to be the dominant interest facilitating patron engagement (e.g. Taiwan and the Donetsk People's Republic), whereas in other instances, regional competition contributes but is not necessarily the central cause for patron involvement (e.g. Tamil Eelam and Eastern Slavonia). Patron support would likely sustain in the latter cases even if regional or great power patron competition were absent. In other words, while competition facilitates patron engagement in *de facto* states, it rarely explains patron

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<sup>22</sup> However, Berg & Pegg (2018) outlined that *de facto* states are likely to attempt to identify alternative great power involvement to outweigh the dominance of the patron.

engagement singlehandedly. Instead, competition is likely to motivate patron involvement in combination with other interests, such as ethnic ties or security concerns. Thus, patron competition can no longer be considered the single driving force behind patron engagement in de facto states and therefore does not represent a unique identifier of patron-de facto state relations.

This finding has implications for Shoemaker and Spanier's (1984: 13) understanding of the "critical perceptual dimension" of patron-client relationships, which "is derived from consistent association between the two states for a recognizable, if sometimes only brief, period of time." In simplified terms, the international community needs to recognise the ties between two entities as a patron-client relationship (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 13). The significance of this perceptual dimension of patron-client relations appears to be largely driven by patron competition, where patrons openly demonstrate their support of and control over a strategically important region to competing patrons. Only if the competitor views the relationship between the other patron and client as such, does it benefit a patron's competitive advantage. In the case of patron-de facto state relationships, this distinction is not as clear-cut. While some patrons want to display their engagement in de facto states to display geopolitical strength or increase their bargaining power and position, other patrons support de facto states covertly to avoid the diplomatic costs associated with de facto state engagement.

Patron objectives and interests can take a variety of forms, which Shoemaker and Spanier (1984: 18-20) divide into three categories: ideological goals, international solidarity objectives and strategic advantage interests. This classification provides an insightful rational-choice perspective of patron state interests and underscores that the standard analysis of patron-client state relationships in the Cold War period places patron competition at the heart of patron state interests. However, Shoemaker and Spanier's classification (1984) does not consider goals and interests that fall out of the rational-choice spectrum such as shared ethnicity or history as potential motivating factors for a patron's engagement. The de facto state and secessionist literature recorded a substantial shift beyond mere security and military motivations behind patron engagement in de facto states in the post-Cold War period. Patron motivations behind de facto state engagement

can span ethnic (Saideman 2001; Gokcek 2011), geopolitical/spheres of influence (Wood 1981; Götz 2015; 2017), security (Coggins 2011), ideological and historical (Heraclides 1991) and economic (Bookman 1992) reasons. This presents a more nuanced understanding of patron engagement in de facto states and simultaneously expands the patron state definition beyond security and military interests.

It is important to recall in this context that patron interests are not mutually exclusive and that patron and client interests can fluctuate (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 16). Moreover, patron-de facto state relations and their inherent interests should not be understood as the outcome of a conflict, because the relationship between the patron and the de facto state may have existed beforehand. Patron-de facto state relations may also occur in non-conflictual contexts where common historic or ethnic ties motivate patron engagement. In these instances, the role of path dependencies needs to be taken into consideration.

To capture this expanded understanding of potential patron interests, all 21 patron-de facto state relations that were classified as such in Florea's dataset (2014) will be analysed and categorised according to the patron's interest vis-à-vis the de facto state (see table 1). The variable choices in the table and the classification of patron interests have been informed by de facto state case studies, studies on secessionist regions (Hewitt & Cheetham 2000, Beary 2011), Florea's codebook (2016; 2018) and newspaper article reviews.

The results of table 1 exhibit that geopolitical interests are the single most common factor informing patron engagement in de facto states. Geopolitical interests cover, for instance, regional competition (e.g. Western Sahara) and great power competition (i.e. Taiwan). Yet, geopolitical interests on their own are insufficient to understanding patron interests in de facto states and therefore do not serve as unique identifiers of patron-client relations. Instead, geopolitical interests tend to be tied to other interests such as shared ethnicity, security or economic concerns. Indeed, shared ethnicity,<sup>23</sup> history and ideology were identified as relatively common patron interests in the table, whereas economic, integration and

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<sup>23</sup> Shared ethnicity may refer to the dominant ethnic group in a de facto state or a substantial minority (Caspersen 2008).

security incentives tend to be the exception. This is line with Caspersen (2015: 7), who argues that “appealing to a shared ideology, or other normative standards, may well make the unrecognised states more likely to gain patron state support.” Interests surrounding the democratic standards of de facto states do not appear to inform patron engagement. Russia recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008, for instance, does not refer to democratic standards (Caspersen 2015: 6). Democratisation may, however, be used as a covert interest to justify patron support in the de facto state.

*Table 1 Classification of Patron-De Facto State Relations by Patron Interest<sup>24</sup>*

| <b>Patron Interest</b> | <b>Sum of Patron-De Facto State Relations</b> |
|------------------------|---|
| Geopolitical           | 19 (90%)                                      |
| Shared History         | 13 (62%)                                      |
| Security               | 13 (62%)                                      |
| Shared Ethnicity       | 10 (48%)                                      |
| Shared Ideology        | 8 (35%)                                       |
| Integration            | 7 (33%)                                       |
| Economic               | 3 (14%)                                       |
| Democratisation        | 0 (0%)  |

### **3.1.2 Patron State Instruments**

The term patron stems originally from the Latin word *patronus*, which refers to an individual’s provision of benefits to his or her clients in a hierarchical relationship. This section not only highlights the range of benefit provisions on offer for patrons, but also which foreign policy instruments patron states tend to prefer when engaging with de facto states. From a rational choice perspective, patron states pursue foreign policy instruments in de facto states that meet the equilibrium of financial, human and diplomatic costs, on the one hand, and national interest gains, on the other hand. However, the inherent asymmetry of patron-client relations in form of unidirectional transactions differ from other bilateral relationships in that they do not rest on economic and security exchanges that are mutually beneficial (Shoemaker & Spanier

<sup>24</sup> See appendix A for detailed table breakdown.

1984: 14). Therefore, patron-client relations and patron-de facto state relations in particular do not fit a rational choice framework.

The analyses of patron-client state relations from the Cold War era stress the prevalence of security transfers and military support between patrons and clients (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 15), whereas economic, social and political support for the client were not placed high on the agenda. Also Florea's (2014) classification of patron states is informed by an understanding of patrons as providers of military support to de facto states. Military support or security support can take a number of forms and channels such as alliances, treaties or security pacts between the patron and client (e.g. Taiwan), the transfer of arms (e.g. Bougainville) or even direct military involvement and presence in the client state (e.g. South Ossetia), which may include the stationing of troops and military bases (Carney 1989: 52). Military support can be a powerful tool for the patron to exert influence on a client state and to ensure strategic advantage objectives. In this aspect of security provision, transactions are unidirectional going out from the patron to the client state. Moreover, arms transfers can ensure a patron's long-term engagement in the security sector of the client state, because the weapons have to be operationalised with the right know-how and training and the patron needs to provide spare parts (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 15).

Financial instruments may cover development or humanitarian aid (e.g. Biafra), trade, financial loans or direct budgetary contributions (e.g. South Ossetia). Political instruments include the recognition of independence (e.g. Western Sahara), but can also include open support for further autonomy rights during a conflict period (e.g. Biafra). Soft power instruments can refer to cultural or student exchanges, tourism and the use of media and information resources (e.g. Transnistria). State building instruments cover support for the provision of public services and goods in the de facto state and gatekeeping refers to instruments that the patron employs to facilitate the wider international recognition of the de facto state.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Instead of focusing on the sectors that patrons penetrate, Heraclides (1990: 396) differentiates between four degrees of external support ranging from mediatory to extensive support. This classification highlights that limited, indirect or secretive patron involvement does not prevent patronage and offers potential explanations as to why patrons decide not

Judging by the result of table 2, it would be pre-mature to focus exclusively on military contributions of patron states to understand patron engagement in de facto states.<sup>26</sup> While financial, political and military instruments are indeed the most commonly employed foreign policy channels of patron states in de facto states, state building, soft power and gatekeeping are to a lesser extent among the foreign policy instruments employed by patron states. These findings highlight that patron instruments are rarely restricted to one engagement channel and military support tends to be combined with additional engagement layers. In order to sustain de facto states and thereby keep the patron competition with the parent state or another patron alive, patrons need to offer a mixture of political, military and economic support to the de facto regime. In other words, patrons are required to engage politically, militarily and financially in de facto states to fulfil their strategic advantage objectives.

*Table 2 Classification of Patron-De Facto State Relations by Patron Instruments<sup>27</sup>*

| <b>Patron Instrument</b> | <b>Sum of Patron-De Facto State Relationships</b> |
|--------------------------|---|
| Military                 | 21 (100%)   |
| Political                | 18 (86%)  |
| Financial                | 16 (76%)  |
| Soft power               | 9 (43%)   |
| State building           | 7 (33%)   |
| Gatekeeping              | 6 (29%)   |

### **3.1.3 Asymmetries and Relative Power**

Patron states are commonly depicted as great, economic and military powers. However, this thesis argues that domestic characteristics of patron states such as economic and military capabilities, landmass and population size are unsatisfactory

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to engage in a given region. Kopeček (2020) contributes to this discussion by demonstrating that external patron engagement can be fluid across time.

<sup>26</sup> As in the previous table, all 21 patron-de facto state relations were analysed and categorised according to the patron's foreign policy instruments in the de facto state. The variable choices in the table and the classification of patron instruments have been informed by Hewitt & Cheetham 2000, Beary 2011, de facto state case studies, Florea's codebook (2016; 2018) and newspaper article reviews.

<sup>27</sup> See appendix B for detailed table breakdown.

indicators of patron states. This becomes apparent when pointing out the significant variations across states that tend to be referred to as patron states ranging from the United States and Russia, which fit the stereotypical great power status, on the one hand, to Armenia and Serbia, that are not usually considered great powers, on the other hand. Hence, a patron state cannot be a patron state in and of itself. This is not to say that the economic and military power of patron states is insignificant. The statistical analyses of chapter 5, for instance, highlight that a *de facto* state with a great or regional power patron is likelier to achieve moderate degrees of state building than a *de facto* state without a patron or with a patron state that is not considered a great or regional power.

As patron states can differ considerably in terms of their domestic characteristics, it is necessary to consider patron-client relations from a relational perspective in their wider international environment and in the context of their inherent power dynamics with the client. This ultimately shifts the analytical focus on patron-client relations rather than patron states in themselves. Shoemaker and Spanier's (1984: 13) definition of patron-client relations suggests that the military capabilities between patron and client state need to be sizably different and asymmetric in order to distinguish patron-client relations from other bilateral relationships. The relative military and financial capabilities of patrons and *de facto* states are inherently asymmetric, which means that all patron states are more powerful than their *de facto* state clients, and patron-*de facto* state relations are arguably even more asymmetric compared to patron-client relations of the Cold War period. Most *de facto* states are among the weakest quasi-state entities across the globe in terms of political, economic and military capabilities as well as their limited international connectedness. *De facto* states as a subgroup of client states therefore arguably push the limits of hierarchies and asymmetry even further in terms of their relative power vis-à-vis the patron state.

The asymmetry of patron-client relations manifests itself in form of some degree of patron control over the client in order to achieve an objective and the non-mutually beneficial nature of the relationship. This control taking measure results in some autonomy handover from the client to the patron (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 14, 17). However, the asymmetric nature of patron-client and patron-*de facto* state

relations can only be a characteristic rather than a unique identifier of patron-de facto state relations, because of similar power variation patterns in recognised entities and development aid relationships. Indeed, measuring the relative power capabilities of two entities may reveal the potential of two actors to be in a patron-client state relationship, but not the dependencies, control dynamics and client agency involved in such relations.

#### **3.1.4 Fluid Dependencies and Bounded De Facto State Agency**

This section outlines the ways in which dependency dynamics in patron-de facto state relations shape the domestic realities and agency of de facto states. These dependency dynamics in patron-de facto state relations represent a unique identifier of these bilateral relations if the patron is the sole or at least predominant provider of support that contributes to the sustainability of the de facto regime.

Dependencies tend to arise in asymmetric playing fields where one party requires a tangible or intangible service or good, which a second party is in a position to supply. Dependency theorists assume that this exchange facilitates an environment in which economic developments of an entity are conditioned by the developments in another entity on which the former is dependent (Dos Santos 1970: 231). Dependence can transcend the economic sphere and cover a variety of sectors such as security and politics. It is important to note that subordination to the authority of dominant states is not itself an uncommon phenomenon even among internationally recognised states (Krasner 1999; 2004). While some subordinate entities only grant or acknowledge external authority in specific areas of their state, such as financial, foreign or military affairs, other entities accept more widespread external authority, whereas yet again others hand over full authority to another state or group of states (Lake 2011: 2-3). For some clients, patron support even manifests itself as the source of their national survival (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 21), which enables patron states to considerably influence their clients. Still, international

hierarchy<sup>28</sup> rarely manifests itself in form of all-encompassing or complete external authority and control (Lake 2011: 8).

While subordination and dependencies are not uncommon phenomena among internationally recognised states, dependencies in patron-de facto state relations involve dynamics that single out these relations compared to other bilateral asymmetric relations. Internationally recognised client states possess at least the theoretical opportunity of obtaining support from alternative sources. Even if this alternative support is only hypothetical in nature, it creates an important distinction from contexts where client states are reliant on the predominant support of a single actor. This does not mean, however, that de facto states are not in a position to access alternative support sources. Even though the choices of de facto states are severely limited due to their limited international recognition, de facto regimes can raise money from diaspora groups or through taxation on informal trade (Caspersen 2012: 63). Furthermore, Berg and Pegg (2018) as well as Dembińska and Mérand (2019) find that de facto regimes and other domestic actors in these entities have attempted to identify alternative great power involvement to outweigh the reliance on the patron state. Still, despite the presence of potential alternative sources for de facto states, such as diaspora groups or great powers, the military, financial and political support of patron states tends to contribute disproportionately to an unrecognised entity's ability to sustain its regime. While alternatives to patron support outlined by Caspersen (2012), Berg and Pegg (2018) and Dembińska and Mérand (2019) may encourage economic exchanges with the de facto state, they are unlikely to contribute to the military capabilities and sustainability of the entity due to the contentious status of de facto states and the diplomatic costs associated with further engagement.

Dependencies are more likely to occur in contexts where a de facto state's economy and potentially even its security and political environment are closely interwoven with an external source (Dos Santos 1970) and where the client is predominantly reliant on one source. If the client regime has the ability to navigate

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<sup>28</sup> Lake (2011: 9) defines hierarchy as "the extent of the authority exercised by the ruler over the ruled. The greater the number of possible actions by the ruled that the rule can legitimacy regulate, the more hierarchical is the relationship."

between various support sources or if a variety of actors supply significant contributions to the client to enable its sustainability, this reduces the dependency on the patron source which ultimately restricts the inherent dependency and control dynamics of patron-de facto state relations. This does not mean, however, that a de facto state client cannot receive alternative support or approach alternative sources, as long as the patron provides the dominant share of financial, military or political support for a given period of time. In other words, one can only talk of patron-de facto state relations if the patron is the sole or at least predominant provider of support that contributes to the sustainability of the de facto regime, as this develops dependencies between the two actors that make up the inherent characteristics of patron-de facto state relations.

In practice, dependence on patron support has significant implications for the domestic realities of de facto states, which start to reflect the political, economic and military environment of the patron state. From a diffusion standpoint, this means that dependence may encourage legislative and institutional isomorphism. Dependency theory assumes that the dominant economy can grow and sustain itself, whereas the dependent economy can only develop in accordance with the dominant one (Dos Santos 1970: 231). Economic crises, growth, sanctions and military expenditures in Russia, for instance, are likely to affect the economic, political and security realities of Abkhazia, Transnistria and South Ossetia. In 2014, Russian authorities promised financial contributions to the Abkhaz state budget, however, these promises did not fully materialise due to Russia's restricted economic room for manoeuvre following the annexation of Crimea and the subsequent sanctions. Thus, the predominant reliance on patron support in addition to the limited international recognition of de facto states facilitates dependencies between de facto regimes and their patrons that have significant implications on the domestic realities of de facto states.

Despite the centrality of dependency dynamics in patron-de facto state relations, it is important to stress that dependencies are neither stagnant nor necessarily unidirectional. First, the demand and supply for certain goods and services is unlikely to remain constant over time. This variability encourages dynamic and fluctuating dependencies, which in turn explain varying degrees of patron

engagement, control mechanisms and client agency (Berg & Toomla 2009: 27). Due to the contentious nature of de facto states in international politics and their challenges in ensuring territorial control, demands of de facto state regimes are likely to focus on security matters. The more acute and imminent the threat, the more readily the client side will accept the terms of the patrons (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 21-22). In less threatening circumstances, other client goals become more important, that do not necessitate the direct involvement of the patron (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 21-22). This dynamic would suggest that both the Transnistrian and Abkhaz de facto regimes find themselves in less threatening environments, which facilitates the search for alternative economic and diplomatic support sources as identified by Berg and Pegg (2018) and Dembińska and Mérand (2019).

Second, political entities may willingly subordinate themselves to a dominant state if they receive something in return, such as security guarantees or financial aid. Also dominant states are only willing to bear the costs of services and goods provisions if they receive something in return, such as compliance and legitimacy (Lake 2011: 8). In that sense, the arrangement between patron and de facto state can even take the form of “a symbiotic relationship that is rooted in mutual dependencies and converging interests” (Sahin 2015: 40). Veenendaal (2017) therefore argues that patron-client relations do not represent a form of simple dependence, but a complex structure based on reciprocity, asymmetry, compliance and loyalty. Indeed, Comai (2018b: 189, 193) identifies a pragmatic approach of post-Soviet de facto states toward sustained dependence on their patron by striving for “sustainability rather than self-sustainability.” Importantly, de facto state clients are not solely dependent on their patrons, as patrons themselves can be dependent on their client. While patrons are unlikely to be reliant on financial or military support from the client, patrons can achieve political or economic returns for their engagement (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984: 13-14). Particularly in the case of patrons that also function as the de facto state’s kin state, the client can utilise its ethnic kinship to influence the patron’s domestic policy agenda (Kopeček 2020), because the client’s political support contributes to the political viability of a patron state’s government. This is in line with Caspersen’s (2010: 52) observation that patronage is a “two-way street”, as the cases of Nagorno-Karabakh and Serbia’s relationships with

the de facto states on Bosnian and Croatian territory suggest (Broers 2005; Kopeček 2020; Biermann 2014). In these instances, the role of patron and client could be considered “almost reversed” (Caspersen 2010: 53). Despite the possible fluctuating and multidirectional nature of dependencies, the underlying military and financial dependencies of de facto states on their patron do not shift significantly and therefore serve as the best guiding principle for identifying patron-client relations.

Understanding dependencies as fluctuating and potentially multidirectional processes also clarifies the role of de facto state agency and accommodates varying degrees of patron support ranging from strong to limited involvement. Still, there appears to be a hesitation in the de facto state literature to view patron-client relations through the lens of dependency and vulnerability and instead authors call for greater emphasis on de facto state agency (see e.g. Caspersen 2012; Veenendaal 2017). Examining patron-de facto state relations through a dependency framework does not automatically negate client agency. Instead, this framework contextualises client behaviour and agency under dependency pressures and the ways in which de facto regimes navigate external pressures, which falls into the category of bounded agency discussed in the theoretical framework of this thesis. Berg and Vits (2018: 391) similarly suggest that de facto state agency should be viewed as an ability that

is conditioned by: (1) the capacity/capability to act; (2) the asymmetric relations moulded into interdependence with their patrons; and finally (3) the external environment which privileges traditional diplomatic connections and the rules of the game against illegal challengers.

Using the example of Transnistria, Dembińska and Mérand (2019) demonstrate a de facto regime’s ability to manoeuvre under dependency pressures, which can be understood as a form of bounded agency of the client state. The Transnistrian de facto regime and other local actors accommodate the fluctuating dependence on Russian support by laying the groundwork for alternative support channels with Europe despite their dependence on Russian economic, military and political aid. Dembińska and Mérand refer to this simultaneous manoeuvring between Russian and European interests as a policy of dual alignment, which marginally reduces

Transnistria's dependence on Russian economic support (2019: 15). These findings are in line with Dos Santos' (1970: 231) argument that "the dependence [...] on other countries cannot be overcome without a qualitative change in their internal structures and external relations." Thus, analysing patron-de facto state relations through the lens of dependency reveals valuable insights into bounded client agency in the context of dependency pressures and offers potential explanations for institutional and legislative isomorphism in client states.

### 3.2 Conceptualisation of Patron-De Facto States Relationships

On the basis of the above analysis, this section conceptualises patron-de facto state relations and compares this conceptualisation to Florea's (2014) classification of patron states in his data set. This thesis proposes that

- Patron-de facto state relations are dyadic exchanges between a de facto state and an entity that supports the unrecognised polity. The relation may even exist without the conflict between the de facto state and its parent state.
- The military and economic capabilities of both entities are sizeably different and the relationship is asymmetric and not necessarily mutually beneficial.
- Patron state are the sole or at least predominant provider of unidirectional military and financial support, in return for some level of compliance of the de facto state and in some instances also geopolitical, political and economic benefits. Patron engagement can vary across time but contributes to the sustainability of the de facto regime.
- De facto states are dependent on the patron state, which means that the de facto state's economy and security is closely interwoven and reflective of the patron even if the client can access alternative support that does not outweigh patron financial and military involvement. This dependency can fluctuate and be multidirectional, as long as the underlying military and financial dependencies on the patron do not shift significantly.
- De facto states can present a degree of (bounded) agency despite this dependence, which varies across time. In less threatening environments, de facto regimes may manoeuvre between alternative support sources.

Unlike previous definitions of patron states and patron-client relations (Shoemaker & Spanier 1984; Carney 1989; Veenendaal 2017), the conceptualisation of this thesis offers a basis for identifying patron-client relations. Furthermore, this proposed definition of patron-de facto state relations challenges Florea's (2014) classification of patron states, who defines patrons as "regularised patterns of military assistance from a third (state) party."<sup>29</sup> The table below (table 3) compares both Florea's and my classification of patron states. The green cells signify an overlap in our classification, the yellow cells propose a different time period, the orange cells suggest an alternative patron, whereas the red cells indicate that the de facto state does not have a patron according to my definition.

*Table 3 Florea and Spanke's Classifications of Patron States*

| De Facto State   | Patron State (Florea)      | Patron State (Spanke)        |
|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Abkhazia         | Russia                     | Russia                       |
| Ajaria           | Russia                     | Russia                       |
| Anjouan          | France                     | France                       |
| Biafra           | France                     | France                       |
| Bougainville     | Solomon Islands            |                              |
| Casamance        | Guinea-Bissau              |                              |
| Eastern Slavonia | Serbia                     | Serbia                       |
| Gaza             | Iran                       | Iran                         |
| Katanga          | Belgium                    | Belgium                      |
| Kosovo           | Albania                    | United States                |
| Krajina          | Serbia                     | Serbia                       |
| Nagorno-Karabakh | Armenia                    | Armenia                      |
| Northern Cyprus  | Turkey                     | Turkey                       |
| Palestine        | Saudi Arabia, Jordan, etc. |                              |
| Republika Srpska | Serbia                     | Serbia                       |
| South Ossetia    | Russia                     | Russia; North Ossetia-Alania |
| South Sudan      | Ethiopia                   |                              |
| Taiwan           | United States              | United States                |
| Tamil Eelam      | India                      | India                        |
| Transnistria     | Russia                     | Russia                       |
| Western Sahara   | Algeria                    | Algeria                      |

|                  |
|------------------|
| Agreement        |
| Different Years  |
| Different Patron |
| No Patron        |

<sup>29</sup> This was communicated to the author by email with Adrian Florea on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2018.

The majority of cases in the above table represent agreements of Florea's and my classification of patron states including French support for Anjouan (Beary 2011: 22), Iranian engagement in Gaza (Florea 2018), political, financial and military aid from Serbia and Yugoslavia to Krajina, Republika Srpska and Eastern Slavonia (Zahar 2004: 36; Florea 2018), Armenian financial, political and military support for Nagorno-Karabakh (Caspersen 2012; Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2008), Turkish financial, political and military aid to Northern Cyprus (Florea 2018), US support for Taiwan (Florea 2018), Indian financial and military support for Tamil Eelam (Mampilly 2011: 104-105) as well as Russian financial, military and political engagement in Transnistria (Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2017). In other cases, the classification of patron states was less clear-cut due to three central challenges: the relative importance of patron support, the extent of patron support and the regional fragmentation of patron support. In some instances, these concerns resulted in direct challenges to Florea's classification of patron states.

First, my conceptualisation of patron-de facto state relations highlights that predominant patron state support to de facto states is necessary to facilitate the inherent dependency characteristics of these relations. Some de facto states acquired support from a variety of external sources, but one state provided the dominant share of aid to the unrecognised entity and was therefore identified as the patron state. Katanga, for instance, received support from a variety of countries including France, South Africa, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Congo-Brazzaville, Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Yet, Belgium was Katanga's key supporter throughout its existence (Heraclides 1990: 347) making Belgium Katanga's patron. Similarly, Biafra was supported by a wide range of countries including Tanzania, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Zambia, Portugal, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Uganda, Ghana, Benin, Rwanda, Burundi, Portugal and China. France's substantial financial and military support (Heraclides 1990: 348) makes France Biafra's patron. Likewise, Western Sahara not only received sustained support from its patron Algeria, but also sporadic aid from Libya (Zunes & Mundy 2010: 9).

In other instances, it is not possible to identify a clear patron, because de facto states receive similar levels of support from a variety of sources. Palestine, for example, has received support from a wide range of countries at different stages of

its existence including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Syria without a dominant supporter that created dependencies in the sense of the patron-de facto state relation conceptualisation. Similarly, Casamance, has been supported by various actors including Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Mauritania, Gambia and Iraq, but no dominant supporter stood out. South Sudan received arms supplies from Israel and occasional and indirect support from Zaire, Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya (Heraclides 1990: 348-349), which cannot be considered sufficient to speak of patron-de facto state relations. A borderline case in this regard is Kosovo, which received substantial support from Albania and the US and arguably even the EU. In this case, the extent of external support ultimately matters. US military, financial and political involvement, including its support for Kosovo's independence and military campaigns against Kosovo's parent state Serbia presents the US as Kosovo's patron, because relative to Albanian support the US contributed significantly more to Kosovo's sustainability. Kosovo would not have been able to outweigh the extent of US involvement with alternative external sources.

The case of Kosovo identifies an arguably controversial argument in the conceptualisation of patron-de facto state relations of this thesis. Due to the focus on dependencies, this thesis proposes that de facto states can only have one patron state. This distinction is certainly not always clear-cut, as some de facto states, such as Kosovo and Palestine, receive significant support from a variety of sources. However, even though one could refer to these external supporters as patrons, such support systems develop different agency and dependency dynamics in de facto states where their regimes can navigate between various patron sources. Instead, numerous significant external support sources may be referred to as patron or support networks with varying dependency dynamics. It is important to note in this context, that the patron-de facto state conceptualisation has a clear limitation in the sense that it only considers state or regional actors as patrons. International governmental organisations, (Heraclides 1992; Bookman 1992), diaspora groups (Relitz & Biermann 2018), relief organisations or private arms suppliers can arguably also take on patron roles (Heraclides 1991). The US, for instance, used international organisations such as NATO and the UN to provide support to Kosovo.

The second challenge to Florea's classification relates to the extent of external support. Some countries, that were identified as patrons in Florea's data set, only provided limited support to the de facto state, which according to the definition of this thesis, does not make them patron states, because it does not contribute to the survival or sustainability of the unrecognised entity. The Solomon Islands, for instance, provided limited arms supplies to Bougainville (Florea 2018), which is insufficient to be considered patron support as it does not facilitate a dependency relationship between the Solomon Islands and Bougainville. The cases of Casamance and South Sudan combine the first and second challenges to Flores's definition, as the unrecognised regions received limited support from a variety of sources (Heraclides 1990: 348-349; Florea 2018). These relations are unlikely to create dependencies and are therefore not considered patron-de facto state relations according to the conceptualisation of this thesis.

Third, regional fragmentation of patron states challenges the classification of Russia as Abkhazia and South Ossetia's patron. Florea (2018) argues that Russia has been Abkhazia's patron continuously since 1991 and that South Ossetia has received military and political support from Russia and Russian regions (Florea 2018). However, Russia initiated a trade embargo and sanctions against Abkhazia between 1994 and 1999 and even though some Russian regions supported Abkhazia in that period, Abkhazia did not develop dependencies on these regions, because limited trade with the Abkhaz diaspora in Turkey presented a viable alternative for some time. From 1999 onwards, the Abkhaz de facto regime became increasingly dependent on Russia and started to function as Abkhazia's patron. This is not to say that central government support is necessary to create dependencies and to speak of patron-client relations. Regional actors can become patrons as well as the case of South Ossetia in the 1990s suggests. In these instances, it is necessary to clearly state that the central government does not represent the patron, but specific regions, such as the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania in Russia.

Overall, the table identifies 17 de facto states that are in patron-de facto state relationships as opposed to Florea's (2014) classification that suggests that 21 out of 34 de facto states between 1945 and 2011 have had a patron state at one point during their existence. If we consider Caspersen & Stansfield's (2011) definition of de

facto states, which lists 21 de facto states since World War II, 14 of them have been in a patron-de facto state relation according to Florea's (2014) definition and 13 de facto states according to the definition of this thesis. At the least, these results show the prevalence of patron states for de facto states and the importance of understanding patron influences on these unrecognised entities. The proposed classification of patron-de facto states relations also slightly modifies the original tables of patron instruments and interests (see updated tables 4 and 5).

*Table 4 Spanke's Classification of Patron-De Facto State Relations by Patron Interest<sup>30</sup>*

| <b>Patron Interest</b> | <b>Sum of Patron-De Facto State Relations</b> |
|------------------------|---|
| Geopolitical           | 15 (88%)                                      |
| Shared History         | 13 (76%)                                      |
| Security               | 10 (59%)                                      |
| Shared Ethnicity       | 10 (59%)                                      |
| Shared Ideology        | 7 (41%)                                       |
| Integration            | 6 (35%)                                       |
| Economic               | 2 (12%)                                       |
| Democratisation        | 0 (0%)  |

*Table 5 Spanke's Classification of Patron-De Facto State Relations by Patron Instruments<sup>31</sup>*

| <b>Patron Instrument</b> | <b>Sum of Patron-De Facto State Relationships</b> |
|--------------------------|---|
| Military                 | 17 (100%)   |
| Political                | 15 (88%)  |
| Financial                | 14 (82%)  |
| Soft power               | 9 (53%)   |
| State building           | 6 (35%)   |
| Gatekeeping              | 5 (29%)   |

<sup>30</sup> See appendix C for detailed table breakdown.

<sup>31</sup> See appendix D for detailed table breakdown.

### 3.3 Conclusion

Patron states tend to be depicted as great, economic and military powers that engage in client states to pursue their geopolitical or economic interests. However, this chapter demonstrated that domestic characteristics of patron states such as GDP, military capabilities, landmass or population size cannot account for common factors of patron state identification, which means that a patron state cannot be a patron state in and of itself. Instead, this thesis proposes a relational view of patron states by considering the dependency dynamics of patron-de facto state relations. Even though all patron-de facto state relations are asymmetric and involve varying relative power capabilities, this chapter suggests that hierarchies and asymmetries of patron-de facto state relations need to be redefined beyond the framework of relative power capabilities and the unidirectional provision of benefits, by highlighting that patron support arrives predominantly from one source. This redirects the focus on dependency dynamics between de facto states and their patrons that shapes the agency of de facto regimes and encourages institutional and legislative isomorphism.

Analyses of patron-client state relations from the Cold War period assumed that patrons do not usually concern themselves with economic, social and political developments within client states. Yet, in the case of de facto states, patron engagement centres not exclusively around security transfers for the de facto state, but in some instances also encompasses political and economic support to sustain de facto states and thereby keep the patron competition with the parent state or another patron alive. The real or perceived threat going out from the parent state may require the support of a patron that has more economic and military capabilities than the de facto state to match or come close to matching the parent state capabilities. In that case, political and economic support by the patron is needed to ensure the fulfilment of strategic advantage objectives of the patron. Yet, patron competition can no longer be considered the single driving force behind patron engagement in de facto states and therefore does not represent a unique identifier of patron-de facto state relations. Indeed, patron-de facto state relations may exist outside of conflictual relations, especially when ethnic or historic ties motivate patron engagement.

Conceptualising patron states in the context of patron-de facto state relations not only benefits the clarity of arguments surrounding the influence of external actors on de facto states, but it also contributes to bigger questions relating to geopolitics, state survival, dependencies, agency and legitimacy. Understanding the dependency dynamics of patron-de facto state relations, for instance, uncovers the ways in which these relations shape the domestic realities and agency of de facto states, which is necessary to analyse state building developments in de facto states. Furthermore, dependencies capture the formal and informal rules underlying interactions between patrons and de facto states and how they reinforce power relations. A more precise patron state concept also enables a nuanced engagement with the ways in which powers such as Russia, Algeria or the United States project influence and to what extent it is possible to separate a country's foreign policy from a country's role as a patron.

## *Chapter 4*

### **Research Design**

The mixed methods research design of this thesis aims to tease out patterns of patron state influences on the state and institution building processes of de facto states. The research strategy follows a combination of a large-N statistical analysis of all de facto states in the period between 1945 and 2011 with an in-depth single case study analysis. The quantitative methods test a set of hypotheses surrounding the influence of patron states and parent-patron state competition on state and institution building in de facto states. The proposed statistical approaches thereby test parts of the main argument and the theoretical framework of this thesis relating to the general impact of patron states as well as of parent-patron state competition as an indirect diffusion source on the state and institution building processes of de facto states.

While the quantitative research methods identify associations between the independent and dependent variables, they do not conclusively infer causality. Instead, this thesis will demonstrate the causal effects of patrons through its qualitative methods in form of process tracing. The case study of Russian

involvement in Abkhazia's state and institution building processes tests whether the presence of Russia as a patron state has a causal effect on state and institution building in Abkhazia and whether the direct and indirect diffusion channels set out in the theoretical framework serve as causal pathways. This form of result triangulation where a variety of methods are employed to make causal arguments represents a common empirical mixed-methods research strategy but comes with its own limitations that will be touched upon in this chapter (see Olsen 2004; Seawright 2016).

This chapter specifies and justifies the research design, methods as well as variable and case selections of this research project. The quantitative methods comprise linear regression, logistic regression and survival models across a time series cross-sectional panel data set. The qualitative methods encompass three research methods covering a single case study analysis, semi-structured interviews and process tracing. As certain methods and cases may inform particular research outcomes, it is necessary to consider the appropriateness of each applied research method and case study for answering the previously defined research questions. Furthermore, both statistical analyses of de facto states and fieldwork in these contested regions present a range of limitations and challenges to the validity of the research outcomes, which will be considered in this research design chapter as well.

## 4.1 Quantitative Methods

The quantitative methods applied in this thesis test a set of hypotheses concerning the influence of patron states and parent-patron state competition on state and institution building in de facto states. The proposed statistical approaches thereby test parts of the main argument and the theoretical framework of this thesis that relate to the general impact of patron states as well as of parent-patron state competition as an indirect diffusion source on the state and institution building processes of de facto states. This section introduces the data set, justifies the modifications made to the data set and presents the variable choices and their operationalisation. Subsequently, the section introduces the statistical methods in form of linear regression, logistic regression and survival models across a time series cross-sectional panel data set. Finally, the section specifies which hypotheses and theoretical arguments will be tested through the proposed quantitative methods.

It is worth noting in this context, that quantitative studies on de facto states remain the exception to this date among the de facto state literature (refer to Bakke et al. 2009; 2013; 2018; O’Loughlin et al. 2015; Florea 2014; 2017 for notable exceptions). Recent work by Florea (2014; 2017) and Griffiths (2015) intends to break with this limitation by assembling comprehensive data sets on de facto states, secessionist regions and proto-states. Florea’s (2017) survival model of de facto states, for example, offers a noteworthy contribution to the de facto state literature by identifying external military assistance, rebel fragmentation and state building as significant factors shaping a de facto state’s transition to statehood. Still, a common reservation towards quantitative approaches in the field of de facto states is that the number of individual cases remains too small to run sophisticated regressions or that these polities are too dissimilar to offer a meaningful comparison. Florea’s (2014) data set, for instance, may be criticised for its inclusion of cases that do not fall into the common definitions of de facto states put forward by Pegg (1998), Caspersen (2012) and Caspersen and Stansfield (2011) in order to guarantee sufficient cases in the data set. To circumvent these limitations of large-N studies on de facto states, Ishiyama and Batta (2012) use fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis.

#### **4.1.1 Modifications to the Original Data Set**

Despite the above-mentioned criticism of Adrian Florea's data set, the data set of this thesis is based predominantly on his original data set from the 2014 article 'De Facto States in International Politics (1945-2011): A New Data Set'. Florea's data set offers a suitable basis for the statistical analyses of state and institution building in de facto states, because it includes both a state and institution building variable and measures de facto state developments across time. The data set regards each year that a de facto state survives in the international system as an individual observation. The nature of the data set therefore not only offers useful insights into the number of years a de facto survives, but also provides more general information about when patrons support these entities as well as the point in time when a de facto state achieves state and institution building. The observed cases include both successful and unsuccessful cases and are not restricted to violent, illegal, or non-colonial instances. I tailored Florea's data set for the purposes of this thesis by modifying and complementing the data set with a variety of newly generated dependent, independent and control variables, such as indicators for patron and parent state capabilities, a variable measuring the relative strength of patron and parent states, a clearer distinction between stages of state building, a state building experience variable and finally an alternative patron state conceptualisation.

##### **4.1.1.1 Operationalising De Facto States**

This thesis uses the term 'de facto state' put forward by Pegg (1998) to define regions with state-like structures, that declared their independence and whose independence is widely unrecognised by the international community. To this date, the term de facto state is somewhat theoretically fragmented and contested in academic literature and other scholars may have preferred to use the terms *unrecognised state* (King 2001; Caspersen 2012), *quasi-state* (Baev 1998; Kolstø 2006) or *pseudo-state* (Kolossov & O'Loughlin 1999) at some stage. However, in recent years most de facto state scholars have referred to these entities as either de facto states or unrecognised states following Pegg's (1998) and Caspersen's (2012) influential definitions. Even Caspersen (2017: 13) stated that she bows to the

predominant usage of de facto states instead of unrecognised states and argues that the term de facto state is more appropriate to consider the context in the period after Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Caspersen's (2012: 11) original definition of unrecognised states foresees that

- An unrecognized state has achieved de facto independence, *covering at least two-thirds of the territory to which it lays claim and including its main city and key regions.*
- Its leadership is seeking to build further state institutions and demonstrate its own legitimacy.
- The entity has declared formal independence *or demonstrated clear aspirations for independence, for example through an independence referendum, adoption of a separate currency or similar act that clear signals separate statehood.*<sup>32</sup>
- The entity has not gained international recognition *or has, at the most, been recognized by its patron state and a few other states of no great importance.*
- It has existed for at least two years.

Building on Caspersen's (2012) definition of de facto states, but also on Coggin's criteria for secessionist movements, Florea (2014: 791) defines de facto states as "separatist entities that exercise a monopoly over the use of violence in a given territory but lack universal recognition." More specifically, Florea (2014: 791-792) defines a de facto state as an entity that

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<sup>32</sup> Ó'Beacháin, Comai, and Tsurtsunia-Zurabashvili (2016: 442) instead propose a minimalist definition that considers de facto states as "entities that have achieved and maintained internal sovereignty over an area for an extended period, with a degree of internal legitimacy but only limited formal recognition at the international level, or none at all." Thereby, the authors remove the requirement of territorial control and declaration of or aspiration for formal independence from the definition (see also Comai 2018a: 24-25).

belongs to (or is administered by) a recognized country, but is not a colonial possession; seeks some degree of separation from that country and has declared independence (or has demonstrated aspirations for independence, for example, through a referendum or a “sovereignty declaration”); exerts military control over a territory or portions of territory inhabited by a permanent population; is not sanctioned by the government; performs at least basic governance functions (provision of social and political order); lacks international legal sovereignty, and exists for at least 24 months.

The choice of definition can have significant consequences on the number of entities included in the set of de facto states. While around six entities could be called de facto states according to Pegg’s (1998) definition, Caspersen (2012) counts 16 unrecognised states since 1991. Meanwhile, a survey by Caspersen and Stansfield (2011: 4) identifies 21 unrecognised states since 1945, whereas Relitz (2016; 2019) identifies 25 de facto states since 1945 and Florea’s dataset comprises 34 de facto states between 1945 and 2011 (2014: 793). These numbers tellingly represent the potential criticism of Florea’s data set in the sense that a certain stretching of the definition enabled the creation of a large-N study. This, in turn, presents a caveat for the results of this thesis, which will be applicable to Florea’s definition of de facto states and the specific state-like entities included in his data set, but not necessarily to Pegg’s (1998) or Caspersen’s (2012) definition. Despite the variations in the de facto state definitions and the resulting variations in de facto state identification, all 34 cases between 1945 and 2011 that were identified by Florea (2014) will be analysed in this statistical analysis. The table on the next page (table 6) lists all de facto states in Florea’s data set. The de facto states were sorted by first considering those entities with a patron state and then those without a patron state. In addition, the table was complemented with a column that indicates the time period of patron state support. The previous chapter specified an alternative conceptualisation of patron-de facto state relations, which challenges some of Florea’s classifications.

Table 6 *De Facto States and their Patrons According to Florea (2014)*

| De Facto State     | Parent State           | Emergence | Disappearance | Patron State              | Period of Patron Support |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------|---------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Abkhazia           | Georgia                | 1991      | Still present | Russia                    | 1991-present             |
| Ajaria             | Georgia                | 1991      | 2004          | Russia                    | 1991-2004                |
| Anjouan            | Comoros                | 1997      | 2008          | France                    | 1997-2008                |
| Biafra             | Nigeria                | 1967      | 1970          | France                    | 1967-1970                |
| Bougainville       | Papua New Guinea       | 1975      | 1997          | Solomon Islands           | 1975-1997                |
| Casamance          | Senegal                | 1982      | Still present | Guinea-Bissau             | 1982-present             |
| Eastern Slavonia   | Croatia                | 1995      | 1997          | Serbia/Yugoslavia         | 1995-1997                |
| Gaza               | Palestine              | 2007      | Still present | Iran                      | 2007-present             |
| Katanga            | DR Congo               | 1960      | 1963          | Belgium                   | 1960-1963                |
| Kosovo             | Serbia                 | 1998      | 2008          | Albania                   | 1998-2008                |
| Krajina            | Croatia                | 1991      | 1995          | Serbia/Yugoslavia         | 1991-1995                |
| Nagorno-Karabakh   | Azerbaijan             | 1991      | Still present | Armenia                   | 1991-present             |
| Northern Cyprus    | Cyprus                 | 1974      | Still present | Turkey                    | 1974-present             |
| Palestine          | Israel                 | 1995      | Still present | Egypt, Saudi Arabia, etc. | 1995-present             |
| Republika Srpska   | Bosnia and Herzegovina | 1992      | Still present | Serbia/Yugoslavia         | 1992-present             |
| South Ossetia      | Georgia                | 1991      | Still present | Russia                    | 1992-present             |
| South Sudan        | Sudan                  | 1956      | 2011          | Ethiopia                  | 1983-1990                |
| Taiwan             | China                  | 1971      | Still present | United States             | 1971-present             |
| Tamil Eelam        | Sri Lanka              | 1984      | 2009          | India                     | 1984-1987                |
| Transnistria       | Moldova                | 1991      | Still present | Russia                    | 1991-present             |
| Western Sahara     | Morocco                | 1975      | Still present | Algeria                   | 1975-present             |
| Aceh               | Indonesia              | 2001      | 2005          | -                         | -                        |
| Cabinda            | Angola                 | 1975      | Still present | -                         | -                        |
| Chechnya           | Russia                 | 1991      | 1999          | -                         | -                        |
| East Timor         | Indonesia              | 1975      | 2002          | -                         | -                        |
| Eritrea            | Ethiopia               | 1964      | 1993          | -                         | -                        |
| Gagauzia           | Moldova                | 1991      | 1994          | -                         | -                        |
| Kachin State       | Burma                  | 1961      | Still present | -                         | -                        |
| Karen State        | Burma                  | 1949      | Still present | -                         | -                        |
| Kurdistan          | Iraq                   | 1991      | Still present | -                         | -                        |
| Mindanao           | Philippines            | 1973      | Still present | -                         | -                        |
| Puntland           | Somalia                | 1991      | Still present | -                         | -                        |
| Rwenzururu Kingdom | Uganda                 | 1963      | 1982          | -                         | -                        |
| Somaliland         | Somalia                | 1991      | Still present | -                         | -                        |

#### 4.1.1.2 Variables

The dependent variables of the quantitative chapter (chapter 5) are the degree of state building and the number of governance institutions in a de facto state in a given year. The dependent variables are summarised in the table below (table 7). All variable descriptions are sourced from Florea's 2016 and 2018 code books apart from the newly generated variables.<sup>33</sup>

Table 7 Dependent Variables

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| dfsbuild       | Ordinal variable measuring degree of state building from 1 (low) to 4 (very high)  |
| dfsbuildmod    | Binary variable comparing low degrees of state building (0) with moderate, high and very high degrees of state building (1)    |
| dfsbuildstrong | Binary variable comparing low and moderate degrees of state building (0) with high and very high degrees of state building (1) |
| dfsinst        | Number of governance institutions in a de facto state in a given year  |

The first dependent variable (*dfsbuild*) is an ordinal variable that represents the degree of state building in a given year in a de facto state. Florea (2016: 14) codes the degree of state building by applying 4 categories:

- 1 low degree of state building: de facto state separatists control the means of violence in the territory and provide minimal public goods (such as physical security)
- 2 moderate degree of state building; in addition to 1, separatists allocate resources for civilian governance (such as minimal public administration, social security, education, health)
- 3 high degree of state building: in addition to 2, separatists develop coherent governmental structures (institutions for extraction and redistribution; internal security and border management; courts; ministries)
- 4 very high degree of state building; the polity has most characteristics of a state (including external relations, representative offices abroad, commercial relations with international partners).

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<sup>33</sup> The variable definitions in tables 7, 8 and 9 are taken from Adrian Florea's De Facto States Dataset Codebook (Versions 1.1 February 2016 and 2.0 September 2018). I do not place the variable descriptions in quotation marks, but with the exception of some newly generated variables in tables 7, 8 and 10, all descriptions are Florea's work.

As the variable *dfsbuild* is an ordered categorical variable, I decided to generate two binary variables from the original state building variable: *dfsbuildmod* and *dfsbuildstrong*. The former focuses on the step from category 1 (low degrees of state building) to category 2 (moderate degrees of state building) and the latter focuses on the step from moderate degrees of state building to high degrees of state building. Generating these two new dependent variables has two advantages in both a practical and an analytical sense. First, dividing the ordinal variable into two stages allows me to run binary logistic regressions across the time series cross-sectional data set, which would not be possible for an ordered logistic regression. The time series cross-sectional panel data literature offers more sophisticated statistical functions on binary variables than for ordered categorical variables (see e.g. Beck et al. 1998; Tucker 1999; Beck 2001; 2008). Second, as this thesis is interested in individual state and institution building developments, recoding the dependent variable allows me to analyse the steps from separatist control to basic forms of civilian governance and from basic forms of civilian governance to coherent governmental structures more thoroughly and precisely. This enables the regression models to measure the effect of independent variables on the change from low to moderate degrees of state building and from moderate to high degrees of state building.

The second dependent variable (*dfsinst*) is a discrete variable that counts the number of governance institutions in a de facto state in a given year. The variable encompasses ten categories (Florea 2016: 14-15) and does not distinguish between the origin of these institutions, which means that institutions can be inherited from previous autonomy rights or built by local separatist authorities. Florea weighs each governance institution equally, which presents a possible analytical limitation as foreign affairs institutions and militarily supported executives are coded as equivalent despite the latter's relatively higher relevance for state building. Yet, for this research, not the equal weighting presents a caveat, but that the coded institutional presence does not represent institutional capacity. In more practical terms, the presence of an independent central bank in a given de facto state does not signify the entity's capacity to perform central banking responsibilities. Abkhazia's central bank, for example, is physically present and coded as existent in

Florea's data set, but it does not perform all monetary policies usually associated with central banks. Every governance institution that is captured by the variable *dfsinst* is listed below:

- 1 an executive supported by a military (coded as present if there is a clear executive authority that makes decisions in the de facto state)
- 2 a legislature and/or regional councils (coded as present if there is a legislative body in the de facto state capital and/or regional councils)
- 3 a court or semi-formalized legal system (coded as present if there is a formal or semiformal juridical authority that adjudicates disputes between individuals or institutions in the de facto state)
- 4 a civilian tax system (coded as present if there are institutions for regularized extraction of taxes from the local population/businesses and/or from the diaspora)
- 5 an educational system (coded as present if the authorities in the de facto state establish a system of education that functions in parallel with or in lieu of the one provided by the parent state)
- 6 a welfare system (coded as present if the authorities in the de facto state establish a system of welfare – healthcare and/or pensions – that functions in parallel with or in lieu of the one provided by the parent state)
- 7 institutions for foreign affairs (coded as present if the authorities in the de facto state engage in diplomacy – establishing missions abroad; engaging in contacts with IGOs and/or foreign governments)
- 8 media or propaganda system (coded as present if the authorities in the de facto state establish media or propaganda outlets)
- 9 police and/or gendarmerie system (coded as present if the authorities in the de facto state establish a system of internal control – police and/or gendarmerie – that operates separately from the army)
- 10 an independent central banking system (coded as present if the authorities in the de facto state establish an independent central banking system that functions separately from the parent state's banking)

The outcome of interest in this thesis is the state building development of de facto states. The state building and governance institution variables of the data set relate relatively well with the qualitative operationalisation of state building of this thesis,

which refers to state building as the development of state capacity in form of institutional and governance structures as well as the provision of public services and goods (see chapter 2 for the detailed operationalisation of state building). The state building variable *dfsbuild*, for instance, uncovers the development of a given de facto state's state structures and its ability to provide public services and goods such as security, health and education. The state building models of this thesis distinguish between two state building stages. The step from low to moderate degrees of state building engages with a development to a stage of basic public services and goods, such as education and health, while simultaneously covering state capacity aspects such as minimal public administration. The step from moderate to high degrees of state building meanwhile captures a further extension of both the provision of public services and goods (e.g. internal security and border management) and state capacity in form of courts and ministries.

The governance institution variable *dfsinst* accounts at least theoretically for a de facto state's institutional capacity by listing the physical presence of a set of governance institutions such as a legislature, tax authorities and a central banking system. The institution variable simultaneously indicates the level of public service and goods provision in a given entity by considering for example education, welfare and legal service provisions. It is important to reiterate that the physical presence of such institutions does not automatically represent the practical capacity to provide services and goods associated with these institutions. Thus, the dependent variables *dfsinst* and *dfsbuild* of the large-N study appropriately capture the state building outcome of interest in this thesis and enable an estimation of how variations of direct and indirect involvement of patron states influence the provision of public services and state capacity in de facto states.

The independent variables in the statistical models of this thesis (table 8) centre primarily around patrons and parent-patron state competition. The variable *patronspanke* classifies patron states according to the definition of patron states laid out in chapter 3 of this thesis. The *relparentstrength* and *relparentgdppc* variables refer to the relative military and economic power of parent and patron states. The operationalisation of the independent variables ties in with the theoretical framework and argument of this thesis in a number of ways. The patron variable

*patronspanke* enables the measurement of the effect of the presence of a patron state on the two dependent variables and thereby captures both the direct and indirect diffusion influences of patrons on state building in de facto states. The independent variables *relparentstrength* and *relparentgdppc* meanwhile quantitatively capture the indirect diffusion influences of patrons through competitive diffusion channels.

*Table 8 Independent Variables*

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <i>patronspanke</i>      | Patron classification of this thesis (see chapter 3)    |
| <i>relparentstrength</i> | Relative parent military and economic strength          |
| <i>relparentgdppc</i>    | Relative parent GDP per capita compared to patron state |

I also included a set of control variables (table 9) to ensure the robustness of the explanations derived from the independent variables, such as prior independence of the de facto state (*dfspriorind*), the type of de facto state emergence (*typeonset*), de jure autonomy from the parent state (*dfsaut*), the war intensity on the territory of the de facto state (*dfswarint*), the presence of a large diaspora (*dias*) and the duration of de facto state survival (*duration*). In addition, I control for domestic de facto state capabilities including the relative rebel capability (*relcap*) and the fragmentation of the secessionist movement (*frag2*). See chapter 5 for a detailed theoretical justification for the inclusion of these control variables.

The proposed state and institution building models use the variable *patronspanke* as a key independent variable, whereas Florea's (2014) *patron* variable serves as a control variable in the robustness checks of the quantitative chapter. As Florea does not specify the definition of patron states in the data set codebooks, I contacted him by email and he revealed to me in 2018 that he determines the presence of a patron state by identifying "regularised patterns of military assistance from a third (state) party."

Table 9 Control Variables

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| dfspriorind | Previous independence or autonomy after 1812  |
| typeonset   | Variable categorises type of de facto state emergence:<br>(1) de facto state emerges as post-conflict outcome<br>(2) de facto state emerges out of the contentious interaction between the parent state and separatists (non-conflictual emergence)<br>(3) de facto state emerges in the wake of state/federal collapse<br>(4) de facto state emerges during the decolonization process (colonial divestment) |
| dfswarint   | War intensity in de facto state coded as:<br>(0) no battle-related deaths<br>(1) minor: between 25 and 999 battle-related deaths in a given year<br>(2) war: at least 1,000 battle-related deaths in a given year between the de facto and parent state   |
| dias        | Presence of large diaspora originating from de facto state  |
| dfsaut      | De facto state benefits from de jure autonomy within parent state   |
| duration    | Number of months entity has survived as de facto state  |
| relcap      | Relative rebel capability coded as<br>(1) weaker than the government<br>(2) at parity with the government<br>(3) stronger than the government<br>(4) much stronger than the government  |
| frag2       | Fragmentation on unified–fragmented scale (cf. Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012):<br>(1) no fragmentation<br>[...]<br>(9) extreme fragmentation   |
| patron      | De facto state has a patron. Florea (2018) defines patrons as regularised patterns of military assistance from a third (state) party  |

In addition to the already existing variables in the data set, I generated a set of variables that perform as either independent or control variables and unpack the influence of patrons and state building processes in de facto states further, situate patron-de facto state relations in a geopolitical setting and ensure more time-varying variables (see table 10). Thereby, the large-N study captures both the effect of patron states on state and institution building in de facto states as well as the impact of indirect competitive diffusion channels of patron states in form of patron-parent state competition. The supplementary variables, for instance, measure the relative patron and parent state capabilities, specify an alternative patron definition and account for previous state and institution building experiences in de facto states.

This thesis utilises the Composite indicator of National Capability (CINC) from the Correlates of War Project (Singer et al. 1972)<sup>34</sup> and World Bank GDP data to classify the military (*patronstrength* and *parentstrength*) and economic strength (*patrongdppc* and *parentgdppc*) of patron and parent states. Subsequently, the military or economic strength of the patron state was deducted from the parent state strength to capture the relative power of parent and patron states (*relparentstrength* and *relparentgdppc*).<sup>35</sup> The data set also includes variables that measure the state and institution building experience (*dfsbuildexp* and *dfsinstexp*) and the number of months since the last state or institution building experience (*tsincedfsbuildchg* and *tsincedfsinstchg*).

*Table 10 Newly Generated Independent and Control Variables*

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <i>patronspanke</i>      | Patron classification of this thesis (see chapter 3)                  |
| <i>patronname</i>        | Name of patron state  |
| <i>patrongdp</i>         | GDP of the patron state   |
| <i>patrongdppc</i>       | GDP per capita of the patron state                                    |
| <i>parentgdp</i>         | GDP of the parent state   |
| <i>parentgdppc</i>       | GDP per capita of the parent state                                    |
| <i>relparentgdp</i>      | Relative parent GDP compared to patron state                          |
| <i>relparentgdppc</i>    | Relative parent GDP per capita compared to patron state               |
| <i>relpatrongdp</i>      | Relative patron GDP compared to parent state                          |
| <i>relpatrongdppc</i>    | Relative patron GDP per capita compared to parent state               |
| <i>patronstrength</i>    | Military and economic strength of patron state using CINC             |
| <i>parentstrength</i>    | Military and economic strength of parent state using CINC             |
| <i>relparentstrength</i> | Relative parent military and economic strength                        |
| <i>relpatronstrength</i> | Relative patron military and economic strength                        |
| <i>dfsbuildexp</i>       | Number of times de facto state has experienced state building changes |
| <i>dfsinstexp</i>        | Number of times de facto state has experienced institution changes    |
| <i>tsincedfsbuildchg</i> | Number of months since last state building change                     |
| <i>tsincedfsinstchg</i>  | Number of months since last institution change                        |

<sup>34</sup> The CINC indicator uses six material capacity indicators of material capacity: total population, urban population, military personnel, military expenditure, steel and iron production as well as energy consumption (Singer et al. 1972).

<sup>35</sup> I referred to Israel as Gaza's parent state (rather than Palestine as Florea suggests in his data set) to offer a more realistic representation of relative patron and parent state strength.

#### 4.1.2 Statistical Modelling

This section introduces two statistical approaches to test three hypotheses, which shed light on the role of patron states, patron-parent state competition and temporal patterns of state building in de facto states. First, this thesis develops linear and logistic state and institution building models that measure the impact of patron states on state and institution building in de facto states, while controlling for temporal dependence and a set of domestic, structural and international variables. Even though the dependent variable *dfsinst* represents a discrete count variable, I decided to run linear regressions rather than a Poisson regression model, as the variable shares more characteristics with a continuous variable than with a traditional count variable (see appendix E for the justification). The recoded dependent variables *dfsbuildmod* and *dfsbuildstrong* will be included in logistic regression models and survival models. Second, survival model techniques uncover temporal patterns of state and institution building in de facto states and the extent to which patrons shape these developments. I used the statistics package Stata (Version 15.0) for the statistical modelling and analysis of the data set.

##### 4.1.2.1 Statistical Models for Time Series Cross-Sectional Panel Data

Unlike panel data that tends to consist of many units (*i*) across few time observations (*t*), time series cross-sectional (TSCS) panel data usually comprises large *t* and small or medium *i*. In a basic ordinary least squares (OLS) estimation for TSCS panel data, the covariates are therefore indexed both by time and unit (see equation below).

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta X_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Statistical models for time series cross-sectional panel data enable researchers to approach questions that have both spatial and temporal dimensions by covering multiple cross-sectional units across various time periods. Particularly for the research goals set out in this thesis, TSCS panel data presents an appropriate resource, as the proposed research questions and state building theories cover temporal variations across a fixed set of units. Yet, statistical models for TSCS panel data require additional statistical considerations related to temporal and spatial

dependence, various forms of heterogeneity and panel heteroscedasticity. The standard OLS assumption that the error terms are independent, for instance, is violated in the case of TSCS panel data for a variety of reasons including likely time dependence and potential spatial dependence. These considerations ultimately inform the suitability of the model choice and the appropriate means to account for temporal dependence.

The above OLS equation assumes constant intercepts and covariate effects across all observations. As this homogeneity assumption is unlikely to hold true across a diverse set of entities as *de facto* states, it is necessary to account for potential intercept and effect heterogeneity. The degree of heterogeneity informs the choice of fixed or random effect models for the state and institution building models of this thesis. Therefore, I consulted a set of descriptive statistics to uncover possible intercept and slope heterogeneity across units or time for the dependent, independent and control variables of the statistical models (see appendix F). The results indicate some heterogeneity across the unit level. For the number of governance institutions, for instance, several *de facto* states have low mean values and no change in the number of state institutions, whereas others show more institutional development. At the same time, the standard deviations are relatively similar, which indicate slightly less heterogeneity. As there are no regions with specifically high or low state institution counts, it appears at least unnecessary to create regional dummy variables.

Beyond the dependent variables, I also tested for heterogeneity across the independent and control variables of the study and found variations of variables across space, time as well as both space and time. The variables *typeonset*, *dias* and *dfspriorind* do not vary over time and would ultimately be dropped in a fixed effects model. A set of other variables (i.e. *patronspanke*) indicate little time variation. Due to the theoretical significance of these variables for state building and the research questions of this thesis, I decided to keep these variables in the model despite their limited variation across time. This is in line with Beck (2008), who stresses the importance of time-varying independent variables for most studies that work with binary time series cross-sectional (BTSCS) panel data. The heterogeneity of variables and intercepts as well as the limited variability of some independent variables, in

turn, informed the model choice and the inclusion of a set of variables that vary more across time, such as *relparentstrength* and *tsincedfsinstchg*.

Fixed effects models, on the one hand, consider unit-specific effects, where the unit effects are fixed and time effects are constrained to zero (see Stimson 1985 who refers to this as the least-squares dummy variables method). Fixed effects assume uniqueness of the fixed unit over time that covariates are unable to capture. Fixed effects models are suitable for data sets with unit heterogeneity, because they account for within-unit variation and correlations between the sources of the heterogeneity with the independent variables. However, fixed effects do not estimate the effects of covariates that do not change over a period of time within cases (Beck & Katz 2001). Random effects, on the other hand, assume that unit-specific effects are not correlated with the independent variables. Importantly for the variables in the state and institution building models, random effects models have the advantage of taking time-invariant regressors into consideration, which captures the effects of time-invariant regressors.

In light of the descriptive statistics results, a fixed effects model would not be the most appropriate model for this study, as it does not suitably take the independent variables into account that do not vary over time. Additionally, the fixed effects model would overemphasise those cases in the data set with limited independent variations (*patronspanke*, *typeonset*, *dfspriorind*). Thus, even though the Hausman test suggests that the fixed effects model may be preferred, I decided to pursue random effects models, based on the descriptive statistics and because the Hausman test cannot address covariates that are non-time-varying (the results of the Hausman test results can be found in appendix G).

The choice of the random effects model also addresses potential endogeneity in the regression models of this thesis. Endogeneity refers to the correlation of the independent variable with the error term in the regression analysis, which would result in biased coefficients. In that sense, endogenous variables are those that are determined by variables outside the model. TSCS panel data reduces the endogeneity problem somewhat, because unlike non-time-varying data sets, TSCS panel data captures correlated individual effects across time. If the assumption of random effects models that the unit-specific effects are not correlated with the independent

variable holds true, this significantly reduces the endogeneity concerns in the model. Still, it is not possible to argue that no variables were omitted, because in random effect models, omitted variable bias may affect time-varying effects. Therefore, process tracing in the case studies of this thesis may identify further omitted variables.

#### **4.1.2.2 Survival Modelling**

Survival models are also known as event history, duration or hazard models and estimate the time until a given event occurs. The event in question is conditional on the time until the event takes place (Box-Steffensmeier & Bradford 2004; Cleves et al. 2016; Mills 2011). For this thesis, survival models enable a deeper engagement with potential temporal patterns of state building in de facto states and the extent to which patron states shift these dynamics across time.

From the outset, survival models necessitate the modification of the original data set in such a way, that the events of attaining moderate degrees of state building or high degrees of state building represent the final observation for each unit. In other words, all observations that take place after the state building event (*dfsbuildmod* or *dfsbuildstrong*) will be dropped. Unfortunately, the discarded observations reduce the number of observations to an extent that makes parametric and Cox models statistically infeasible. Furthermore, it is necessary to declare data as survival data and choose the appropriate temporal variable. Rather than comparing de facto states across years, I decided to pursue an ahistoric approach that measures state building using the number of months an entity survived (*duration*). While this approach does not consider the potential influence of historical contexts on state building, it enables a better comparison across de facto states based on the number of months that these entities survived.

The modified data sets produce insightful results about temporal patterns of state building by utilising a useful feature of survival analysis in form of the Kaplan-Meier estimator, that estimates the likelihood of an event not taking place at a given point in time. In other words, it estimates the survival function for a non-parametric method and estimates survival at time  $t$ . This estimator can be used to understand

the likelihood (or risk) of moderate or high state building taking place in de facto states and at what point in time this step is likely to happen.

#### **4.1.3 Hypotheses Testing**

The aim of this thesis is to identify the causal effects of patrons on state and institution building in de facto states. The theoretical framework of this thesis suggests that these effects can take the form of direct and indirect diffusion influences and may be shaped by the legitimisation of patron involvement and the bounded agency of de facto states. The data set of this thesis enables the isolation of the association between the independent variable (*patronspanke*) and the dependent variables (*dfsbuildmod*, *dfsbuildstrong* and *dfsinst*), by holding a set of control variables and confounders constant. However, the quantitative methods are insufficient for causal identification, because the data set offers limited room for manoeuvre to capture counterfactuals. Thus, the quantitative research methods identify associations between the independent and dependent variables through hypotheses testing, but do not identify causality. Instead, causality will be demonstrated through the method of process tracing in the case studies of this thesis.

The proposed state and institution building models of this thesis test a set of hypotheses that link the statistical findings to the argument and the theoretical framework of this thesis. On the basis of the existing literature on state and institution building in de facto states and the role of patron states, chapter 5 establishes three hypotheses:

- H<sub>1</sub>:** *Patron states increase a de facto state's degrees of state building and number of governance institutions.*
- H<sub>2</sub>:** *The stronger the parent state compared to the patron state, the likelier de facto states pursue state and institution building.*
- H<sub>3</sub>:** *Patrons decrease the time it takes for de facto states to achieve state and institution building.*

Hypothesis one directly relates to the argument of the thesis that patrons limit the extent to which they support state and institution building in de facto states by guaranteeing minimal civilian governance, but not coherent government structures. The central argument of this thesis also states that patrons reduce the number of governance institutions through institution sharing. Thus, testing hypothesis one captures both the direct and indirect impact of patrons on the degrees of state building and the number of governance institutions in de facto states. Hypothesis two explores the presence and impact of competitive diffusion influences on state and institution building in de facto states, as suggested by the theoretical framework of this thesis. Thereby, the proposed model tests whether competition between parent and patron states as an indirect diffusion source encourages state and institution building in de facto states. The third hypothesis accounts for the effect of patrons on the temporal state and institution building processes of de facto states and thereby demonstrates both the direct and indirect effect of patron states on the pace of state and institution building processes.

## **4.2 Qualitative Methods**

This section introduces the qualitative methods of this thesis that cover a single in-depth case study, process tracing as well as the analysis of interview data and a variety of other primary sources. The aim of the qualitative methods employed in this thesis is to tease out causal mechanisms through process tracing and thereby complement, specify or dispute some of the quantitative findings in a case study setting. More specifically, the case study explores whether patron states shape the state and institution building processes of de facto states through direct and indirect diffusion influences, in what settings these diffusion influences take place and what the impact on the state and institution building is. Thereby, the qualitative findings add robustness to the quantitative findings of this thesis, by addressing potential measurement and endogeneity concerns in the quantitative methods. The case studies, for instance, may uncover variables that were not accounted for in the statistical models and offer insights into alternative causal paths that result in a given outcome.

### **4.2.1 Single Case Study Analysis and Selection**

A case study analysis represents “an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident” (Yin 2009: 14). In the context of this thesis, case studies can descriptively illustrate the state and institution building processes of de facto states in a thick historical narrative by carefully considering the developments and fluctuating dependence on patron involvement. This, in turn, sheds more light on direct and indirect patron involvement, which enables a closer engagement with the causal mechanisms that facilitate state and institution building in de facto states.

The selection of an appropriate case study to identify and illustrate causal mechanisms can follow a variety of methodological strategies ranging from randomisation (Fearon & Laitin 2008) to the choice of extreme or deviant cases on the independent variable (Seawright & Gerring 2008). I selected the single case study of this thesis at least partially to ensure result triangulation where the case study

offers insights into causal pathways that explain the findings of the quantitative study. This form of result triangulation where a variety of methods are employed to make causal arguments (Olsen 2004) represents a common empirical mixed-methods research strategy, but comes with its own limitations (Seawright 2016). Particularly when the qualitative and quantitative research outcomes are either very similar or different, the combination of the respective findings may be problematic on the basis of the epistemological differences of the methods (Seawright 2016). While Seawright (2016) suggests an integrative mixed methods approach, the triangulation of research outcomes can still be considered appropriate for this thesis as neither approach makes arguments about the final inference supported by the other method, but instead the qualitative methods offer causal pathways that help explain the quantitative findings.

Beyond the goal of result triangulation, Russian patron engagement in Abkhazia's state and institution building development was purposively selected as the case study of this thesis, because it contains a set of essential attributes associated with the research matter of this thesis. More specifically, the chosen case study covers a set of practical and thematic characteristics that make the study suitable for the research of this thesis, including a degree of state building progress in the de facto state, the presence of a patron state, the availability of primary and secondary sources as well as its location in the post-Soviet space.<sup>36</sup> Applying these standards to the de facto states of the South Caucasus and Eastern Europe presents Abkhazia, Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh as the most appropriate case study choices. These regions have a patron, operated as de facto states since the early 1990s, which provided these entities with enough time to develop their state and governance institutions (unlike the Luhansk and Donetsk People Republics) and were accessible for fieldwork (unlike South Ossetia). In terms of state and institution building development, figures 3 and 4<sup>37</sup> demonstrate that Abkhazia is not an outlier among the de facto states of the post-Soviet space, as it shares similar state and

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<sup>36</sup> The final point can only be justified in so far that the post-Soviet space is a region of particular interest to me personally as a researcher and that I wanted to conduct interviews in Russian.

<sup>37</sup> Both graphs draw from the data of Florea's (2014) data set, with a restricted focus on the post-Soviet de facto states.

institution building developments with South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria.

In addition to the above-mentioned requirements, the theoretical framework and the patron conceptualisation of this thesis need to be applicable to the case study in question. Russia's engagement in Abkhazia's state and institution building endeavour is an appropriate case study in this regard, because it represents varying degrees of patron involvement as well as changes in the de facto state's dependence on the patron state. According to the conceptualisation of patron states of this thesis, Russia cannot officially be considered Abkhazia's patron until 1999 (see chapter 3). Thus, the case of Russo-Abkhaz relations has the analytical advantage of capturing how direct and indirect diffusion sources operate with and without the presence of a patron. The case study shows that even when Russia did not act as a patron, there are signs of indirect mimetic, competitive and normative diffusion influences from Russia. Furthermore, the case study highlights the ways in which Russia helped sustain the state and institution building achievements both directly and indirectly from 1999 onwards.

Figure 3 State Building in Post-Soviet De Facto States

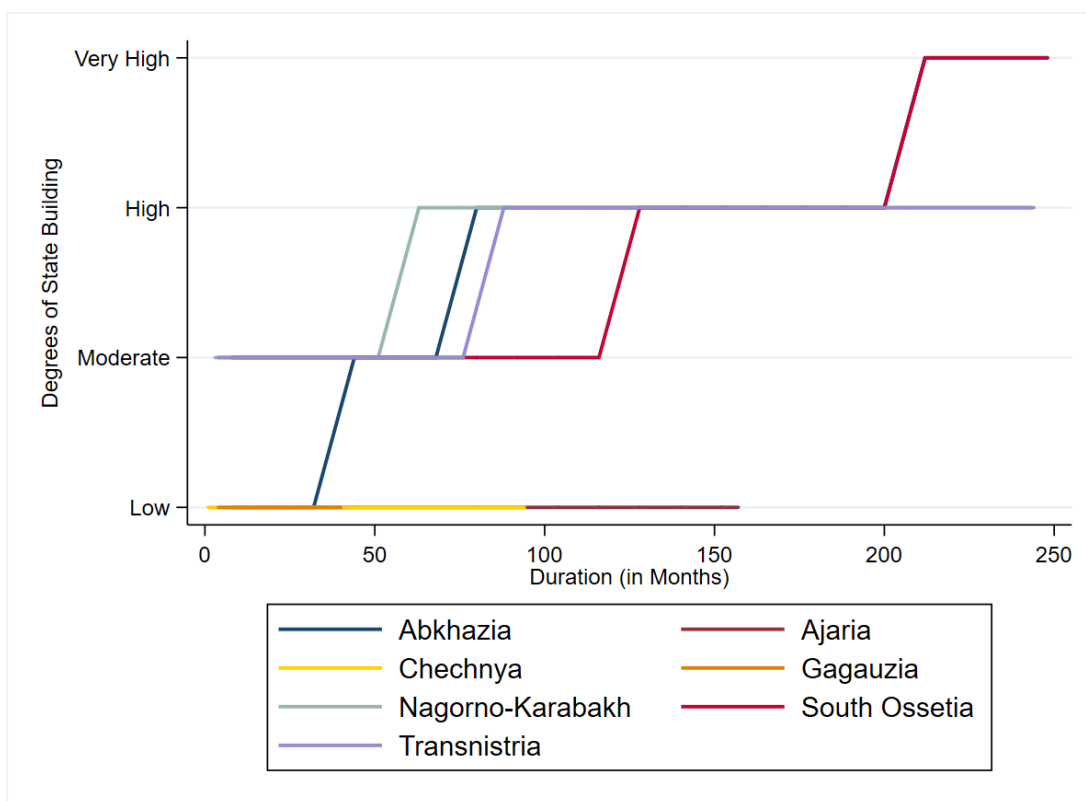
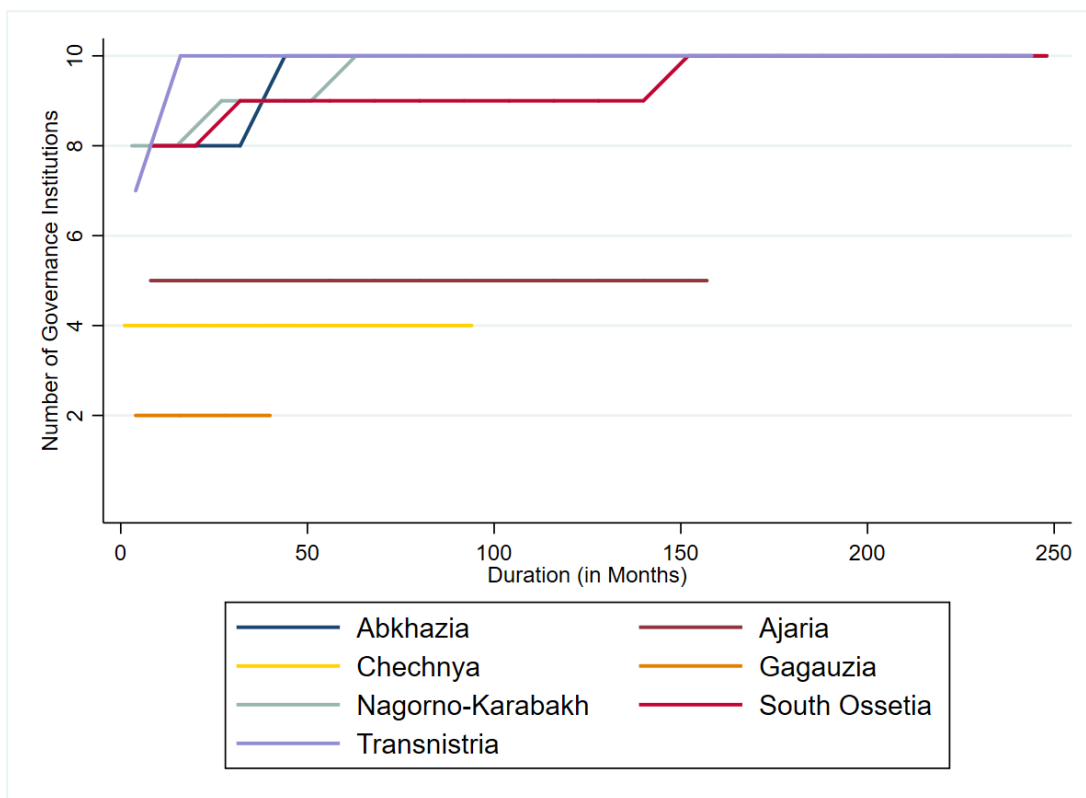


Figure 4 Number of Governance Institutions in Post-Soviet De Facto States



For the sake of transparency, it has to be noted that the selection of the case study was also informed by changes in the research focus of this thesis. In the early stages of the PhD project, I intended to compare Abkhazia and South Ossetia's state building process and the extent to which the same patron state shapes the developments in two de facto states with arguably different independence intentions. Due to the difficulties of (legally) reaching South Ossetia and acquiring data on the ground, I soon later considered a case comparison of a smaller number of cases that were selected based on state building differences and similarities, while ensuring variation across the independent patron state variable. However, inspired by the in-depth case studies of Transnistria (Blakkisrud & Kolstø 2011) and Somaliland (Richards 2014), I decided that a pathway case (Gerring 2007) encourages closer engagement with the causal mechanisms behind patron involvement in the state building processes of de facto states. The general relationship between the dependent and independent variables tends to be known in pathway case studies and the case study is used to capture the causal process behind this relationship and to test hypotheses (Collier 1993: 108). Thus, Russia's involvement in Abkhazia from the early 1990s until today serves as the pathway case to identify the causal mechanisms between dependent and independent variables and tease out the direct and indirect patron influences of a patron state on the state and institution building processes in a de facto state.

Even though this thesis engages with a single case, the qualitative research enables the pursuit of comparative analyses throughout the study in form of within-case analyses (see Collier & Mahoney 1996; Gerring 2007).<sup>38</sup> Building on Prelz Oltramonti's (2015) classification of Russo-Abkhaz economic relations, I compare Abkhazia's state building processes across periods of varying degrees of patron involvement. This form of within-case analysis offers insights into the role of patron states and levels of dependency on particular state building developments at given time periods.

In addition, chapter 8 represents a case-within-a-case that is dedicated to the analysis of Russian direct and indirect engagement in Abkhazia's education sector.

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<sup>38</sup> Even in single case studies one pursues implicit descriptive comparisons by judging developments as either strong or weak and present or absent.

This supplementary case examination offers a set of additional analytical perspectives on the variations of patron involvement in the state and institution building processes of de facto states and contributes to the theoretical framework of this thesis. First, chapters 6 and 7 offer an overview of Abkhazia's state and institution building development in its entirety. By examining Abkhazia's education sector in particular, the case-within-a-case exemplifies direct and indirect patron involvement and bounded agency at hand of one specific state sector. Education represents a basic service in most internationally recognised countries and can serve as an instrument to ensure a level of control and power over a group of people by establishing a degree of legitimacy between the population and the ruling class. In that regard, an analysis of Abkhazia's education sector can be considered insightful in its own right. At the same time, an exploration of Russian direct and indirect involvement in Abkhazia's education sector sheds light on the extent of patron engagement in de facto states, because unlike the defence and financial sector of de facto states, education represents a sector where patron involvement is not necessarily expected. Second, the analysis of Abkhazia's education sector represents an insightful illustrative case study of competitive diffusion playing out in a specific state sector of a de facto state and the extent to which international actors might be prepared to go in supporting de facto authorities with the provision of public services and goods. These insights contribute to the theoretical framework of this thesis by fleshing out the origins, patterns and consequences of competing diffusion sources in de facto states. The chapter, for instance, contributes to the theoretical framework by highlighting that Russian and other diffusion sources do not necessarily directly compete outside of the Gali district but can complement each other.

A limitation of the outlined case study selection relates to its predominant focus on the central de facto government and its governance institutions to capture state and institution building developments in Abkhazia. The inclusion of regional and civil society developments in the analysis would have likely contributed to a more comprehensive picture of state building processes in de facto states and the extent of patron engagement. This criticism has been put forward by Milli Lake (2014: 516), who differentiates between "three distinct levels of governance – the central, local and community levels," and argues that central governments are not the only

settings for state building. Indeed, in the case of Abkhazia, one can observe significant differences in state building trajectories across regions such as Gali and Upper Kodori, that matter particularly in regard to territorial control (see chapter 6) and parent state engagement (see chapter 8). This thesis touches upon some community and local developments in the education chapter (see chapter 8), but further research needs to be conducted to capture the full extent of state building developments in Abkhazia beyond the central government.

#### **4.2.2 Qualitative Data: Interviews and Primary Sources**

The field research for this thesis was conducted for four months in the summer of 2017 and autumn of 2018 covering Abkhazia, Georgia and Russia. The rationale of the fieldwork in the three regions was twofold. First, fieldwork in the parent, patron and de facto state enables a closer engagement with primary sources and facilitates the identification of central actors and processes in the regions of interest. In that sense, fieldwork encourages researchers to get a feeling for the studied regions and to observe aspects that would otherwise get lost in desktop research, such as the experience of crossing the de facto border between Georgia and Abkhazia and the lack of international companies in the de facto state. Second, the fieldwork enabled the collection of data, secondary sources and primary sources in form of interviews, agreements, written accounts and photographs. Indeed, I collected the predominant share of qualitative data points for this study during my field research in Abkhazia, Georgia and Russia. These rich data points shed light on the ways in which the Abkhaz de facto government pursued state and institution building and offer insights into the extent and ways in which Russia has shaped Abkhazia's state and institution building processes.

However, data collection in fieldwork settings comes with a set of limitations and ethical considerations that can shape the research outcomes (see e.g. Cronin-Furman & Lake (2018) for an overview of ethical and practical implications of fieldwork activities in areas of state weakness and conflict). Yemelianova's (2015) analysis of the prevalent theoretical and methodological approaches of Western English-language scholarship on de facto states, for instance, uncovers a set of

distinctive challenges that may affect the quality of conducted research. According to her, many researchers not only approached the post-Soviet de facto state conflicts from a Russia-centric perspective, but also “often lacked the in-depth knowledge and necessary linguistic skills to deal with ethno-political conflicts and processes in non-Russian parts of the former Soviet Union” (Yemelianova 2015: 65). Furthermore, she finds that

[t]horough field work on de facto states has been relatively limited, with the bulk of it based on short-term visits there and interviews with capital based English or Russian-speaking policy-makers and academics as well as journalistic reports. As a result, data have sometimes been less than comprehensive, which has inevitably affected the validity of at least some of the conclusions reached (Yemelianova 2015: 65).

Even though I was aware of these limitations while planning my fieldwork, it was difficult to avoid falling into similar methodological traps during the fieldwork in Abkhazia and Georgia. Not only did I conduct my research interviews predominantly in English and Russian rather than Georgian or Abkhaz, I also conducted most of my field research in the capital cities of Georgia, Abkhazia and Russia. It is therefore necessary to account for the limitations of the interview data in terms of generalisability and coverage. Moreover, there are a variety of limitations to interview research in general and in conflict or post-conflict contexts in particular. Especially in geographically small regions or regions with small populations, where only a limited number of people are willing to be interviewed, it is likely that the findings of the interviews drive the research of a number of researchers simultaneously. I noticed, for instance, that I had previously read some of the interview results of my interviews in other research studies. Therefore, it is important to approach potential interviewees beyond those interview subjects that were referred to you by other researchers. Furthermore, field researchers should attempt to come up with questions that differ from previous studies in order to produce new research insights.

Interview data constitutes a significant portion of the qualitative data points of the cases studies. Semi-structured interviews have the advantage of flexibility in terms of what interviewees want to say in their own way (Carruthers 1990) and they allow the researcher to adapt the interview to the situation (Kajornboon 2005). The interview data of this thesis is the result of in-country field research in the de facto Republic of Abkhazia, Georgia and the Russian Federation, specifically in Sukhumi, the de facto capital of Abkhazia, Tbilisi, Saint Petersburg and Moscow. I interviewed a variety of stakeholders of the Abkhaz government including ministers and politicians. In addition, I interviewed previous members of the Abkhaz government and bureaucracy that experienced the state and institution building process of Abkhazia in the post-Soviet period of the 1990s first-hand, but moved on to work for international donors or NGOs in Sukhumi. Moreover, I interviewed international donors, NGOs, political analysts and researchers secondary to the state building process that regularly interacted with Abkhaz officials in some form. Thus, the interviews in Abkhazia were primarily selected to represent both an external and internal perspective on state building in Abkhazia and to offer insights into the interviewees' experiences on the ground during the state building developments. These interviews uncover how and why the Abkhaz de facto government took certain decisions, what state and institution building measures it prioritised and how the authorities were influenced by Russia.

Despite attempts to interview representatives from the Russian government, it was only possible to interview scholars that had expertise in Russo-Abkhaz relations, that previously visited Abkhazia or worked directly with Russian officials. Therefore, Russian motivations behind their engagement in Abkhazia can only be assessed through second-hand information, which certainly presents a limitation of the interview results. Still, the interviews with Georgian, Abkhaz and Russian officials offered insights into the actions of Russian representatives on the ground and their policy prioritisations in Abkhazia. This information does not provide conclusive evidence on patron motivations, but uncovers the practical implications of patron engagement. The interviews with Abkhaz government officials, for instance, revealed that Russian engagement discourages Abkhaz self-sufficiency.

I developed an interview guide for the semi-structured interviews that focused on a set of core questions (Bogner et al. 2009) covering five topics: domestic state building developments, the role of limited international recognition, the involvement of external actors, Russian engagement in Abkhazia and Abkhazia's education sector. The interviews lasted between 30 to 120 minutes. Four of the 18 interviews were conducted in Russian without a translator and transcribed by a Russian transcription service. The remaining interviews were conducted in English and transcribed by a transcription service in London. With the exception of five interviews, all interviews were audio recorded. In one instance, I was not allowed to bring electronic equipment with me and in the other four cases the interview setting did not lend itself to recording the interview.

The interviews are numbered consecutively to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees, but three interviewees agreed to having their names and/or professional titles used. For the sake of transparency, I indicate which findings derive from which interviewee. The interview data was cross-referenced with secondary or alternative primary findings. If it was not possible to cross-reference the interview data, the thesis clearly states that a specific finding was 'alleged' or 'argued' by one of the interviewees. The complete list of interviews is summarised in the table below (table 11).

*Table 11 Interview Information*

| <b>Interview</b> | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Location</b>          | <b>Year</b> |
|------------------|---|--------------------------|-------------|
| 1                | Georgian scholar  | Tbilisi, Georgia         | 2017        |
| 2                | Two representatives of an international donor                                       | Tbilisi, Georgia         | 2017        |
| 3                | Former Georgian diplomat  | Tbilisi, Georgia         | 2017        |
| 4                | Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia              | Tbilisi, Georgia         | 2017        |
| 5                | Representative of an international organisation                                     | Sukhumi, Abkhazia        | 2017        |
| 6                | Representative of an international organisation                                     | Sukhumi, Abkhazia        | 2017        |
| 7                | Viacheslav Chirikba: former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia | Sukhumi, Abkhazia        | 2017        |
| 8                | Adgur Kakoba: current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia             | Sukhumi, Abkhazia        | 2017        |
| 9                | Government representative of the Republic of Abkhazia                               | Sukhumi, Abkhazia        | 2017        |
| 10               | Representative of an international organisation                                     | Sukhumi, Abkhazia        | 2017        |
| 11               | Representative of a non-governmental organisation                                   | Sukhumi, Abkhazia        | 2017        |
| 12               | Representative of an international organisation                                     | Sukhumi, Abkhazia        | 2017        |
| 13               | Representative of a non-governmental organisation                                   | Sukhumi, Abkhazia        | 2017        |
| 14               | Russian scholar   | Saint Petersburg, Russia | 2018        |
| 15               | Abkhaz scholar  | Saint Petersburg, Russia | 2018        |
| 16               | Russian scholar   | Moscow, Russia           | 2018        |
| 17               | American scholar  | Moscow, Russia           | 2018        |
| 18               | Russian scholar   | Moscow, Russia           | 2018        |

In addition to the interviews, the data analysed in this thesis includes legal documents, such as treaties and agreements between the Russian Federation and the de facto Republic of Abkhazia from 2008 onwards. Especially the 2014 agreement offered detailed insights into Russian state building support for Abkhazia (see chapter 7). Furthermore, I obtained primary sources on Abkhazia's state building development in the Russian National Library in Moscow. These sources include exchanges between the Abkhaz, Russian and Georgian governments in the 1990s, statements and legal acts of the Abkhaz de facto authorities, photos of Abkhazia in the Soviet and post-Soviet period, as well as UN status reports assessing the situation in Abkhazia in the 1990s. The visual data of this thesis was either sourced from photo

albums from the Russian National Library or was produced by myself during my field research. The interviews, primary sources and photographs create a rich set of data points that enable a vivid representation of state building developments in Abkhazia.

The photographic evidence in the thesis serves two dominant purposes for the analysis of the case studies. First, the photographs visually demonstrate the presence of state, governance and education infrastructure and institutions in Abkhazia's Soviet and post-Soviet period. The photographic evidence thereby illustrates the potential for institutional path dependence in the post-Soviet period and the ability of Abkhaz rebel groups to utilise the foundations of the pre-existing institutional structure for their state and institution building endeavours (see figures 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20, 25, 26, 27 and 28). Relatedly, some pictures depict cultural norms surrounding teaching settings and school uniforms in Abkhazia during the Soviet period. Some of these norms outlived the Soviet period and reflect a continuation of cultural norms in Abkhazia's post-Soviet period outlined in the qualitative findings of chapter 8 (see figures 19, 21, 24 and 29). Second, some photographs vividly capture the war and post-war devastation in Abkhazia that exemplify the domestic state and institution building hurdles of the de facto regime. The pictures thereby also serve as an explanation why Russian state building support to Abkhazia focused predominantly on infrastructural assistance (see figures 22 and 23).

#### **4.2.3 Process Tracing**

The previously introduced case study of Russian involvement in the state and institution building processes of Abkhazia will be analysed with the help of process tracing. Process tracing enables the identification of causal chains between an independent and a dependent variable (Checkel & Moravcsik 2001). Identifying and subsequently understanding the causal chain is necessary to establish causality between the variables in question and to recognise the causal mechanism at play (Collier 2011). More specifically, process tracing captures the actors and processes involved in the causal chain, which enables researchers to make claims about the presence of individual variables in the causal chain, their individual or combined

impact and whether there is a causal or temporal link between independent and dependent variables (George & Bennett 2005: 6). Thereby, process tracing also permits the categorical exclusion of independent variables from the equation and disconfirming hypotheses if variables are found not to have a causal or temporal effect. Furthermore, process tracing enables an assessment whether there is sufficient evidence in favour of a causal mechanism as opposed to an alternative direct or indirect pathway (George & Bennett 2005: 6). Due to the large and detailed data points necessary to uncover the process leading to an outcome, not all potential events and paths can be explored in process tracing (Checkel 2008).

Hence, exploring the case study through process tracing tests whether the presence of a Russia as a patron state has a causal effect on state and institution building in Abkhazia and whether the direct and indirect diffusion channels set out in the theoretical framework serve as a causal pathway. In other words, the case study chapters outline the individual steps from patron state (independent variable) to state and institution building in Abkhazia (dependent variable). In addition, the case study chapters test the applicability of the causal chains set out in the theoretical framework in form of direct (coercive diffusion) and indirect (normative, mimetic and competitive diffusion) influences as potential causal mechanisms. In the following paragraphs, I will present three sections of the argument and theoretical framework that will be tested in the case studies through the application of process tracing.

First, the central argument of this thesis poses that “patrons can nurture the dependence of de facto states on patron support by pursuing a multi-layered policy of granting de facto state agency in an international setting of limited alternatives while providing support that discourages self-sufficiency.” The case study tests whether the nurturing of dependence is truly at the heart of Russo-Abkhaz relations, by exploring the ways in which Russia grants agency to Abkhazia while discouraging self-sufficiency. This will be done by exploring agreements between the two parties and analysing the interviews for signs of such behaviour. The interviews do not uncover the motivation of Russia as a patron state, however they offer insights into Russia’s actions in Abkhazia and Abkhazia’s state building development. These actions and developments can be assessed for their impact on the de facto state’s agency and limited self-sufficiency. The case study, for instance, uncovers that

Russian support focuses predominantly on infrastructural reconstruction rather than capacity building, which hints at the limited self-sufficiency of Abkhazia. Similarly, the interviews and agreements direct the focus on a degree of institution sharing between Russia and Abkhazia, which demonstrates restricted self-sufficiency without knowing the motivations of the patron state.

Second, the theoretical framework suggests that patron states can not only have a direct effect on the institutional outcome of a de facto state, but also an indirect influence through indirect diffusion channels. The case study tests whether there is evidence of causal mechanisms between the presence of a patron and the state and institution building outcome in a de facto state in form of competitive, normative, mimetic and coercive diffusion and what these causal mechanisms involve (i.e. actors and processes). These causal mechanisms can subsequently be linked to observable implications relating to the state and institution building development of Abkhazia, such as similarities across Abkhaz and Russian state and institution structures, institution sharing or developments in public service provisions. The interviews with former and present Abkhaz government representatives, for example, uncover that even during Abkhazia's period of partial isolation, Abkhaz elites adjusted their actions and plans according to Russian interests and activities which hints at the role of indirect diffusion sources.

Third, process tracing can also test the role of transition variables identified in the theoretical framework, such as bounded agency and legitimacy that shape the ways in which diffusion influences affect the state and institution building processes of de facto states. The thesis argues, for instance, that bounded agency increases the likelihood for legislative and institutional isomorphism between the de facto state and its patron due to the limited availability of alternative choices. The case study therefore explores the extent to which direct or indirect diffusion influences become more important, the more dependent the de facto state is on the patron. This may, for instance, take place in areas and during periods where competition with the parent state is more pronounced. Particularly the interviews used in chapters 6 and 8 explore the ways in which competition serves as an indirect diffusion source that accelerates a state and institution building response from the Abkhaz government.

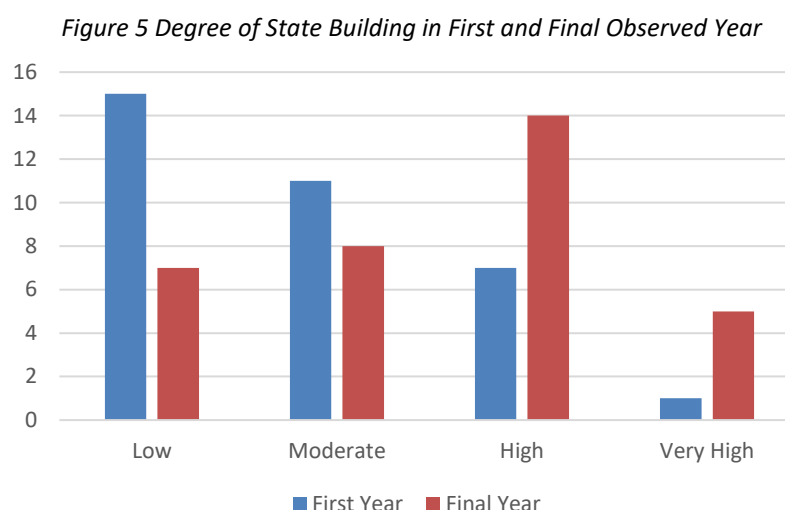
## *Chapter 5*

### **Patron States and Triadic Competition in the State and Institution Building Developments of De Facto States** *Statistical Analyses*

Following a visit of Russian parliamentarians in Tbilisi in late June 2019, thousands of Georgians took to the streets of their capital to protest Russia's 'occupation' of Georgian territories and the allegedly close ties between the Georgian and Russian governments. When the protests turned violent, Georgian musicians, footballers and other celebrities also started sharing their disdain over Russia's presence in the Georgian de facto states on social media platforms. These protests exemplify that Russian engagement in Abkhazia and South Ossetia continues to be at the heart of Georgian-Russian relations. While Russian involvement in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is undisputed, the analytical focus tends to be restricted to Russia's financial and military support in the two breakaway regions. This view omits a set of possible measures that patron states may pursue in de facto states to encourage the viability and sustainability of de facto states, such as state and institution building support.

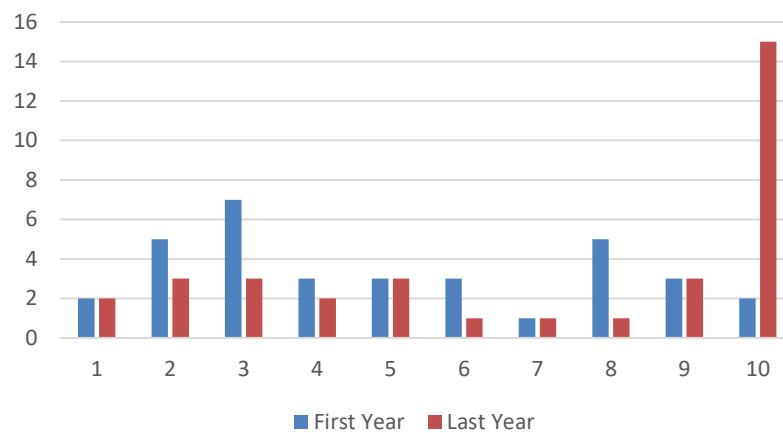
De facto states do not represent the likeliest candidates for state and

institution building due to their prevalent lack of widespread international recognition, on average less developed economies (Kolstø 2006), the common presence of war lords and crime in these regions as well as their unfavourable international settings involving ethnic tensions or parent state threats (Caspersen 2012). Yet, a visual representation of state building levels in the first and last observed years of all de facto states between 1945 and 2011 (see figure 5) highlights a substantial shift from de facto state governments merely controlling the means of violence and providing basic public goods to establishing coherent governance structures (see appendix H for frequency table details).



An even more pronounced shift is observable across the number of governance institutions in de facto states between the first and final observed year (see figure 6). While some de facto states have five or fewer governance institutions in the final observed year, there appears to be a trend to high numbers of governance institutions among de facto states as time passes (see appendix I for detailed frequency tables). These state and institution building shifts ultimately signify the general state and institution building potential of de facto states.

*Figure 6 Number of Governance Institutions in First and Final Observed Year*



Yet, given the disadvantageous domestic and international context of many de facto states, how are these unrecognised entities able to achieve the observed state building growth and increase in governance institutions? This chapter is particularly interested in uncovering whether patrons and their competition with parent states predominantly shape the state building potential of de facto states as Kolstø and Blakkisrud (2008) suggest<sup>39</sup> and whether the statistical results uncover indicators of variations in patron involvement in de facto states. Moreover, this chapter explores the temporal state and institution building patterns of de facto states and in how far the presence of a patron impacts the state and institution building rate of de facto states. This chapter attempts to offer answers to these posed questions by testing three hypotheses surrounding the impact of patron states and patron-parent state competition on state and institution building in de facto states.

The first section of this chapter develops three hypotheses on the basis of theories and literature that offer explanations for the state and institution building development of de facto states. Second, the research design of this chapter introduces the empirical state and institution building models that emphasise the role of patron states, competition and temporal dependence. The third section discusses the findings of the state and institution building models relating to the impact of patron states, the relative power dynamics between parent and the temporal patterns of state and institution building in de facto states.

<sup>39</sup> As opposed to Broers (2015) and Caspersen (2012), who highlight the centrality of domestic factors in the state and institution building developments of de facto states.

This chapter highlights that patrons appear to matter most when de facto states go from a stage of separatist control over the means of violence to a stage of basic civilian governance including minimal public administration, health and education services. Meanwhile, patrons do not seem to significantly impact the change from basic civilian governance to coherent governmental structures and patrons decrease the number of governance institutions in a given de facto state. This chapter thereby highlights the potential variations in the extent of patron involvement, which can have consequences for the state capacity and service provision of a de facto state.

The results of the models also demonstrate that a militarily stronger parent state increases the likelihood of attaining coherent governance structures such as internal security and border management, while not affecting the step to basic civilian governance and even decreasing the number of governance institutions. These findings indicate that a patron not only has a direct effect on state and institution building in de facto states, but also serves as an indirect diffusion source for de facto states through the geopolitical competition with the parent state. The statistical results also suggest that patron involvement appears to increase the more pronounced the competition with the parent state is.

Moreover, this chapter identifies the impact of patrons on the temporal patterns of the state and institution building processes of de facto states. De facto states that do not achieve basic civilian governance within the first eight years and coherent government structures within 13 years, are unlikely to get to this stage at all or it will take them considerably longer to do so. Patrons accelerate the state building processes of de facto states, particularly for high degrees of state building and to a lesser extent for moderate degrees of state building. Furthermore, the chapter finds that each month that a de facto state survives increases the likelihood of achieving basic civilian governance and coherent governance structures and raises the number of governance institutions. However, the longer de facto state governments do not develop new governance institutions, the less likely it is for regimes to develop new institutions. Similarly, it is less likely for de facto governments to attain coherent governance structures, the more time has passed since the last state building development.

## 5.1 The Impact of Patron States, Triadic Competition and Time

A variety of qualitative studies have found that external assistance can, despite a number of limitations and potential negative side effects, benefit the state building development of de facto states (see e.g. Zartman 1995; Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2008; Caspersen 2015). Abkhazia, for example, would have been unable “to fulfil its obligations towards the population without relying heavily on external support and infrastructure” (Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2008: 495). Particularly great power patrons appear to play a significant role in shaping the domestic and international realities of de facto states by facilitating wider international recognition and arguably even encouraging a level of state building (Sterio 2010; Coggins 2011; Caspersen 2015: 6).

*Table 12 State Building if Patron State is Present (1) or Not (0)*

| Degrees of State Building | Patron (Florea) |     | Patron (Spanke) |     | Total |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----|-----------------|-----|-------|
|                           | 0               | 1   | 0               | 1   |       |
| Low                       | 227             | 66  | 275             | 18  | 293   |
| Moderate                  | 97              | 72  | 108             | 61  | 169   |
| High                      | 92              | 166 | 111             | 147 | 258   |
| Very High                 | 3               | 57  | 3               | 57  | 60    |
| Total                     | 419             | 361 | 497             | 283 | 780   |

The descriptive statistics of table 12 suggest that de facto states with a patron tend to have higher degrees of state building than de facto states without patron state relationships across both conceptualisations of patron states. De facto states that have most characteristics of the state and relations with external actors (very high degrees of state building) are rare when a de facto state lacks a patron. The caveat of these descriptive statistics is that the results are likely to be driven by a few units that survive for a long period of time. On the basis of the qualitative literature on patron states, this chapter will test the following hypothesis to capture the direct effect of patron states on de facto states:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *Patron states increase a de facto state’s degrees of state building and number of governance institutions.*

### 5.1.1 Triadic Competition: Relative Power of Patron and Parent States

The state and institution building processes of de facto states do not take place in a geopolitical vacuum. The involvement of patron states in de facto states or secessionist regions transforms dyadic relationships between the de facto or secessionist state with its parent state into a triadic relationship. Thereby, patron states have a consequential effect on the equilibrium of the involved parties, their power relations and bargaining positions (Siroky 2009: 38). The relative capabilities of patron states can, for instance, outweigh the economic and military capabilities of the parent state, which may discourage de facto states to pursue further state building in light of the relative security under patron protection. Hence, it is insufficient to account for the presence of patron states, but instead the competitive position and strength of both the parent and patron state need to be considered (Kolstø & Blakkisrud's 2008: 507). Therefore, this chapter situates the provision of public services and the development of state capacity in the wider geopolitical environment of de facto states including parent and patron state competition and their relative power capabilities to account for the potential indirect diffusion influence of patron states via patron-parent state competition on state and institution building in de facto states.

Most de facto states with a patron state are situated in a geopolitical context where their patrons are militarily stronger (16 out of 17 de facto states), whereas the relative economic capabilities are more evenly divided across parent and patron states (11 out of 17 patrons have a higher GDP per capita). The economic capability results are likely to be informed by the on average higher population counts in patron states compared to parent states, which naturally influences the GDP per capita numbers. Table 13 outlines this division across relative military and economic capabilities (see appendix J for exact breakdown). The above cited literature informs the following hypothesis that captures indirect competitive diffusion influences of patron states on de facto states:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** *The stronger the parent state compared to the patron state, the likelier de facto states pursue state and institution building.*

Table 13 Relative Military and Economic Power between Patron and Parent State<sup>40</sup>

| De Facto State   | Military             |                      | Economy              |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|                  | More Powerful Patron | More Powerful Parent | More Powerful Patron | More Powerful Parent |
| Abkhazia         | ✓                    |                      | ✓                    |                      |
| Ajaria           | ✓                    |                      | ✓                    |                      |
| Anjouan          | ✓                    |                      | ✓                    |                      |
| Biafra           | ✓                    |                      | ✓                    |                      |
| Eastern Slavonia | ✓                    |                      |                      | ✓                    |
| Gaza             | ✓                    |                      |                      | ✓                    |
| Katanga          | ✓                    |                      | ✓                    |                      |
| Kosovo           | ✓                    |                      | ✓                    |                      |
| Krajina          | ✓                    |                      |                      | ✓                    |
| Nagorno-Karabakh |                      | ✓                    |                      | ✓                    |
| Northern Cyprus  | ✓                    |                      |                      | ✓                    |
| Republika Srpska | ✓                    |                      | ✓                    |                      |
| South Ossetia    | ✓                    |                      | ✓                    |                      |
| Taiwan           | ✓                    |                      | ✓                    |                      |
| Tamil Eelam      | ✓                    |                      |                      | ✓                    |
| Transnistria     | ✓                    |                      | ✓                    |                      |
| Western Sahara   | ✓                    |                      | ✓                    |                      |

### 5.1.2 Patrons and Temporal State Building Patterns of De Facto States

De facto states represent entities that encapsulate a wide spectrum of state building paces and experiences. On the one extreme, cases such as Karen State survive for decades without experiencing any significant state or institution building development. On the other extreme, Taiwan shared most characteristics of a state as early as the first year of its existence. Most de facto states depict at least some state building progress that takes place within either of these extremes, such as Abkhazia, which attained coherent governance structures within a period of seven years.

Yet, the role of time is rarely featured as a central component in the analyses of state and institution building processes in de facto states. Still, temporal considerations occasionally emerge in some de facto state studies. Zabarah (2012), for instance, highlights the relevance of the initial state building phase for the overall success of both Transnistria and Gagauzia. Caspersen (2012: 90) agrees with the relevance of the initial state building process in particular for establishing domestic

<sup>40</sup> I compared the Composite indicator of National Capability and GDP per capita variables of both the parent and patron state. If the difference is negative (parent strength minus patron strength), this indicates that over the measured period, the patron was on average militarily more powerful or had a higher GDP per capita.

control. The beginning stages of Somaliland's independence campaign focused predominantly on ensuring security and obtaining revenue, which encouraged state building by uniting the nation (Johnson & Smaker 2014: 6). Yemelianova (2015: 60-61) touches on the role of time as a variable in the state building processes of de facto states by determining the year by which Abkhazia had formed all central governance institutions. Blakkisrud and Kolstø (2011: 178) not only argue that "the time factor will eventually transform secessionists into state-builders," but also offer arguably the most extensive overview of state building from a quasi-temporal perspective by disentangling the state building process into three (overlapping) phases. The first phase involves the securing of physical control over the de facto territory. The second phase establishes the monopoly of legitimate use of force and basic public service provision. The third step focuses on creating state capacity.

This chapter contributes to these findings by testing whether similar temporal patterns as those identified by Zabarah (2012), Caspersen (2012), Johnson and Smaker (2014) and Blakkisrud and Kolstø (2011) can be identified across the 34 de facto states in the data set and in what ways these temporal patterns can be shaped by the patron:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** *Patrons decrease the time it takes for de facto states to achieve state and institution building.*

## 5.2 Research Design

A set of case studies have captured the state building processes across a number of de facto states and offered varying interpretations on the causes of state building developments ranging from domestic, international to structural reasons (see e.g. Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2008; 2017; Blakkisrud & Kolstø 2011; Caspersen 2012; Broers 2015; Richards 2014; Richards & Smith 2015; Johnson and Smaker 2014; von Steinsdorff 2012). Kolstø and Blakkisrud's (2008: 506-507) study on 'hard state building'<sup>41</sup> in the three contemporary de facto states of the South Caucasus, for instance, argues that exogenous political influences and the positions and capabilities of parent and patron states are the deciding factors in the state building development of Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Broers (2015) and Caspersen (2012), instead, propose that more emphasis should be placed on domestic developments and the agency of de facto regimes when analysing the state building processes of de facto states.

On the basis of these qualitative case study analyses, this section justifies the choice and operationalisation of variables for the state and institution building models of this thesis. Subsequently, this section introduces the empirical models that capture the impact of patron states and parent-patron state competition on state and institution building in de facto states. Finally, a set of robustness checks will be conducted to test the appropriateness of the modelling and variable choices.

### 5.2.1 Description, Justification and Operationalisation of Variables

The theoretical foundations for the variable choices of the empirical models of this thesis are predominantly sourced from Kolstø and Blakkisrud (2008), Broers (2015) and Caspersen's (2012) qualitative studies on state and institution building in de facto states. The variables identified by Kolstø and Blakkisrud (2008) as either significant or insignificant were matched with an appropriate independent variable in Florea's (2014) modified data set. Kolstø and Blakkisrud (2008: 506-507) argue that the size

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<sup>41</sup> Hard state building, according to Kolstø and Blakkisrud's (2008), includes the ability of de facto states to defend themselves, protect their borders and territory, economic development and the building of state institutions.

of the de facto state in terms of territory and population, their previous autonomy status in the Soviet Union (which will be measured with the variable *dfspriorind*) as well as war destruction (*dfswarint*) are not determining factors for state building in de facto states in the South Caucasus. Instead, it matters what stance the parent state takes. The more uncompromising and stronger a parent state is (*parentgdppc*<sup>42</sup>), the higher the independent state building of a de facto entity. The more accommodating the parent state, the less inclined a de facto state might be to work on independent state building (*dfsaut*). In addition, a consistent patron state (*patronspanke*) and an active and generous diaspora abroad (*dias*) facilitate state building in the de facto states of the South Caucasus. Note that not all of the variables that were highlighted by Kolstø and Blakkisrud were included in the final models of this thesis (see appendix K for Kolstø and Blakkisrud's adapted state and institution building model).

While Kolstø and Blakkisrud's model offers insights into the role that structural and international factors play in the state building development of de facto states, it largely omits potential domestic influences. Similarly, Broers (2015: 138) argues that Kolstø and Blakkisrud's "focus on external actors and particularly patron states [...] leaves out the local ownership of actors within the de facto government such as elites [and] [...] does not answer how they secured resources and how the resources and opportunities available influenced the way of government." Broers' criticism is in line with an increasing body of literature that attempts to capture the role of agency and domestic developments and internal legitimacy in de facto states (King 2001; Caspersen 2012; Berg & Mölder 2012; Richards 2014; Bakke et al. 2013; Broers et al. 2015; Kopeček 2020).

Thus, the state and institution building models of this thesis complement Kolstø and Blakkisrud's (2008) international and structural variables with three additional variables that shed more light on domestic factors shaping state building: the type of state emergence (*typeonset*), the degree of rebel fragmentation (*frag2*) and the relative rebel capability compared to the parent state government (*relcap*). It has proven difficult to capture reliable and comparable quantitative data of de

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<sup>42</sup> This variable refers to the economic strength of the parent state.

facto states that could capture domestic capabilities more effectively. While the three variables are in no way exhaustive, they represent some of the domestic developments and capabilities that can be linked to state building in de facto states.

Furthermore, the state and institution building models of this thesis dissect the relationships between the de facto states, patron states and parent states by complementing the empirical model with a relative parent state strength variable (*relparentstrength*) that measures the impact of the relative military capabilities of the parent and patron states on state building in de facto states.<sup>43</sup> The military strength of the parent and patron states will be measured utilising the Composite indicator of National Capability, which captures, among others, military expenditures and personnel, whereas the economic strength will be measured with the GDP per capita of the countries in a given year (*relparentgdppc*). Thereby, the model tests whether a militarily or economically more powerful patron state compared to the parent state incentivises or disincentivises the state and institution building progress of de facto states. Concurrently, the variables account for the role of competition as a potential indirect diffusion mechanism that encourages or discourages state and institution building in de facto states.

The final variable in the state and institution building models measures potential time dependence. Rebel groups in secessionist regions or de facto governments in de facto states are likely to be constrained by a degree of time dependence throughout their pursuit of state and institution building. De facto governments are unlikely to develop extraction and redistribution systems, border management and basic public services such as education and health from the outset of their de facto independence. In order to account for potential time dependence, the state and institution building models of this thesis were complemented with a variable that measures time (*duration*).

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<sup>43</sup> The state and institution building models use the relative parent strength variable (*relparentstrength*) instead of the parent GDP per capita variable (*parentgdppc*) used in Kolstø and Blakkisrud's (2008) adapted state building model.

### 5.2.2 Empirical Models

The state and institution building models of this thesis translated the arguments put forward by Kolstø and Blakkisrud's (2008) study on state building in the de facto states of the South Caucasus onto a wider data set of all 34 de facto states between 1945 and 2011 to test their applicability beyond the specified geographical context. The models of this thesis adopt a set of variables from Kolstø and Blakkisrud's model including the presence of a patron (*patronspanke*), war intensity (*dfswarint*), the presence of a sizeable diaspora (*dias*) and previous independence (*dfspriorind*). Three domestic variables complement the variables from Kolstø and Blakkisrud's adapted state and institution building models in order to shed more light on domestic factors shaping state building: the type of state emergence (*typeonset*), the degree of rebel fragmentation (*frag2*) and the relative rebel capability compared to the parent state government (*relcap*). These variables were informed by the wider de facto state literature on state building (i.e. Johnson & Smaker 2014; Zabarah 2012; Caspersen 2012; Richards & Smith 2015; Broers 2015). Finally, variables that account for competition (*relparentstrength*) and time dependence (*duration*) complete the state and institution building models.

Thus, the two empirical models capture the impact of patron states and patron-parent state competition on state and institution building in de facto states. First, a binary logistic regression model for the degrees of state building distinguishes between moderate degrees of state building (model (1) in table 14), on the one hand, and high degrees of state building of de facto states (model (2) in table 14), on the other hand. The findings for the logistic regression models are reported as log odds. Second, a linear regression model was created for the number of governance institutions in de facto states (model (3) in table 15).

The R-squared and pseudo R-squared of the models suggest that the models fit the step to moderate degrees of state building better than to high degrees of state building (refer to appendices L and M for a comparison of the models of this thesis to models without temporal dependence and without parent state competition). The pseudo R-squared used for the TSCS logistic regression models in chapter 5 was calculated using McKelvey and Zavoina's R-squared calculation (1975), which focuses

on the variance decomposition and is an appropriate calculation to compare the goodness of fit for binary and ordinal logit models.

*Table 14 State Building in De Facto States Model (Logistic Regression)*

| Degrees of State Building | (1)<br>Moderate      | (2)<br>High          |
|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Patron (Spanke)           | 57.65***<br>(7.377)  | 5.516<br>(2.93)      |
| Diaspora                  | 52.52***<br>(10.07)  | 7.412<br>(5.02)      |
| War Intensity             |                      |                      |
| <i>Minor</i>              | -2.123<br>(1.95)     | -2.713<br>(2.386)    |
| <i>War</i>                | -5.19<br>(10.77)     | -5.546<br>(3.042)    |
| Prev. Autonomy            | -53.06***<br>(12.21) | -11.91**<br>(4.096)  |
| Emergence Type            |                      |                      |
| <i>Non-Conflictual</i>    | -57.38***<br>(10.55) | -10.56<br>(5.776)    |
| <i>State Collapse</i>     | -73.82***<br>(6.992) | 2.715<br>(3.162)     |
| <i>Decolonisation</i>     | -114.2***<br>(13.97) | -46.77***<br>(4.746) |
| Rebel Capability          |                      |                      |
| <i>At Parity</i>          | 18.51***<br>(3.531)  | 9.294*<br>(4.634)    |
| <i>Stronger</i>           | 81.55***<br>(20.19)  | 17.77**<br>(6.746)   |
| <i>Much Stronger</i>      | 72.38***<br>(9.697)  | 11.09*<br>(5.056)    |
| Rebel Fragmentation       | 4.041**<br>(1.305)   | 0.336<br>(0.586)     |
| Relative Parent Strength  | -71.62<br>(68.62)    | 203.8**<br>(62.42)   |
| Months Survived           | 0.164***<br>(0.0166) | 0.115***<br>(0.0085) |
| Constant                  | -7.823<br>(7.677)    | -35.4***<br>(5.88)   |
| Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>     | 0.9306               | 0.3742               |
| N                         | 776                  | 776                  |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

Table 15 Governance Institution Building in De Facto States Model (Linear Regression)

| Number of Governance Institutions | (3)                      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Patron (Spanke)                   | -0.584**<br>(0.222)      |
| Diaspora                          | 3.651***<br>(0.914)      |
| War Intensity                     |                          |
| <i>Minor</i>                      | -0.703***<br>(0.0985)    |
| <i>War</i>                        | -0.441**<br>(0.138)      |
| Prev. Autonomy                    | -0.687<br>(0.77)         |
| Emergence Type                    |                          |
| <i>Non-Conflictual</i>            | -0.0436<br>(1.407)       |
| <i>State Collapse</i>             | 1.846*<br>(0.919)        |
| <i>Decolonisation</i>             | -1.789<br>(1.144)        |
| Rebel Capability                  |                          |
| <i>At Parity</i>                  | 0.964***<br>(0.204)      |
| <i>Stronger</i>                   | 2.8***<br>(0.617)        |
| <i>Much Stronger</i>              | 1.627***<br>(0.369)      |
| Rebel Fragmentation               | 0.0813**<br>(0.0301)     |
| Relative Parent Strength          | -7.896*<br>(3.66)        |
| Months Survived                   | 0.00369***<br>(0.000326) |
| Constant                          | 2.291<br>(1.194)         |
| R <sup>2</sup>                    | 0.5835                   |
| N                                 | 776                      |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

### 5.2.3 Robustness Checks

In order to test the robustness of the state and institution building models of this thesis, I conducted a set of robustness checks spanning alternative model specifications, regional dummies and alternative variable measurements. First, as many variables from the state and institution building models of this thesis were derived from case studies of de facto states in the post-Soviet space, it is necessary to account for the extent to which the observations from the post-Soviet space inform the statistical significance of the overall findings. Therefore, I tested the applicability and robustness of the findings beyond the post-Soviet space by removing post-Soviet de facto state observations from the data set and rerunning the state and institution building models (see appendices N, O and P). A simple logistic regression excluding the post-Soviet cases (appendix N) supports the findings of the state building model of this thesis that patron states influence the likelihood of achieving moderate degrees of state building but not high degrees of state building. However, when control variables are included (see appendix O), patrons no longer statistically significantly increase the likelihood of moderate degrees of state building. This might hint at the importance of the post-Soviet cases for the statistically significant effect of patrons on moderate degrees of state building in de facto states. The general trends of the institution building model remain mostly constant even when the post-Soviet cases are excluded (appendix P). Yet, the detrimental effect of patrons on the number of governance institutions appears to be even larger when the post-Soviet observations are removed from the data set.

Second, Beck, Katz and Tucker (1998) are critical of ordinary logit and probit models across BTSCS data that assume temporal independence of repeated unit observations. To account for temporal dependence in logit and probit models across BTSCS data, the authors suggest the inclusion of temporal dummy variables. Therefore, I tested and compared alternative measurements to appropriately capture time dependence and the temporal impact on state and institution building in de facto states in the models of this thesis. Measures of time dependence covered, among others, temporal dummy variables, the natural logarithm of time and cubic splines, which were compared using the Akaike's information criterion and Bayesian information criterion (see appendix Q). Each model incorporated a different time

measure to estimate time dependence, which was subsequently compared to a model without a temporal variable to identify the most appropriate temporal measure. The results of the likelihood-ratio and AIC tests suggest that a linear time model models time dependence appropriately for moderate and high degrees of state building. This thesis therefore uses a linear time variable (*duration*) to account for time dependence in its state and institution building models. A model that includes the natural logarithm of duration, squared time or cubic splines also presented potential alternatives to account for time dependence.

Third, this thesis produced a novel conceptualisation of patron states in chapter 3, which was translated into the data set in form of the independent variable *patronspanke*. I tested the robustness of the results from the state and institution building models that rely on the patron definition of this thesis by taking into account Adrian Florea's alternative specification of patron states (*patron*) that defines patron support as "regularised patterns of military assistance from a third (state) party."<sup>44</sup> I reran the state building model (appendix R) and governance institution building model (appendix S) with Florea's patron variable instead of the patron variable of this thesis to uncover potential differences between the conceptualisations. The results of the state and institution building models of this thesis identify a distinction between a patron's impact on moderate and high degrees of state building. This separation holds true even when Florea's conceptualisation of patron states is used instead. However, when temporal dependence is accounted for in the model, patrons also increase the likelihood of achieving high degrees of state building even if it is to a lesser extent than moderate degrees of state building (see appendix R). Similarly to the governance institution model of this thesis, the number of governance institutions decreases under Florea's conceptualisation of patron states and appears to have an even larger detrimental effect on the dependent variable (see appendix S).

Finally, this thesis proposes to capture the number of governance institutions in a de facto state in a linear model even though the dependent variable strictly speaking constitutes a discrete variable instead of a continuous variable. The

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<sup>44</sup> This was communicated to the author by email with Adrian Florea on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2018.

selection of a linear regression model instead of a Poisson regression model is based on the characteristics that the dependent variable *dfsinst* shares with a continuous rather than a discrete variable (see appendix E). A linear model is more appropriate to capture the impact of patrons on the number of governance institutions, for instance, because the variable *dfsinst* contains numerous observations across the values from 1 to 10. Furthermore, one can observe a tendency of the number of governance institutions to remain steady or increase in a de facto state from year to year. Traditional count variables tend to undergo repeated up- and downward fluctuations instead. Nonetheless, I reran the governance institution model as a Poisson regression model to compare the results to the original linear regression model of this thesis (see appendix T). The estimates in the Poisson regression model do indeed highlight some differences compared to the linear regression model of this thesis. The estimates for the patron variables, for instance, are not statistically significant in a Poisson regression specification and therefore neither increase nor decrease the logs of expected counts of governance institutions.

## **5.3 Discussion of Results**

This section discusses the findings of the state and institution building models and tests the previously formulated hypotheses. The central findings of this chapter are reported in regression tables 14 and 15. Some supplementary findings capturing patron influences on the temporal state building developments of de facto states will be presented in regression tables 16 and 17 as well as graphs 7 to 10 below.

### **5.3.1 Impact of Patrons on State and Institution Building in De Facto States**

The results of the state building model (table 14) reveal that patrons increase the likelihood of de facto states achieving a state building change from low to moderate degrees of state building, which is statistically significant at a 99.9 per cent confidence interval. Patrons do not, however, significantly impact the step from moderate to high degrees of state building. In more practical terms, patrons appear to matter most when de facto states go from a stage of separatist control over the means of violence to a stage of basic civilian governance, such as minimal public administration, health and education services. However, patrons do not significantly impact the change from basic civilian governance to coherent governmental structures, such as extraction and redistribution structures.

A conversion of these findings to predictive margins enables an assessment of the probability, rather than the log odds or the odds ratios, of a de facto state achieving moderate or high degrees of state building when a patron is present. The results show that the presence of a patron state (according to the definition of this thesis) is associated with a 28.2 per cent increase in the probability of de facto states having moderate degrees of state building. For high degrees of state building, the presence of a patron state is associated with a 4.8 per cent increase in the probability of de facto states having high degrees of state building. The results for high degrees of state building, however, do not pass the chi-square test (see appendix U).

The control variables of the state building model offer a variety of supplementary insights into the state building endeavours of de facto states. Large diaspora groups, for instance, increase the likelihood of moderate but not high degrees of state building all other variables held equal at a 99.9 per cent confidence

interval.<sup>45</sup> Both minor and severe war intensity on the territory of the de facto state neither decreases nor increase the likelihood of reaching either moderate or high degrees of state building all other variables held equal.<sup>46</sup> Previous independence or autonomy decreases both the likelihood of achieving moderate and high degrees of state building at a 99.9 and 99 per cent confidence interval all other variables held equal. The type of de facto state emergence also appears to be a strong indicator for achieving moderate degrees of state building and to a lesser extent for strong degrees of state building. De facto states that emerge out of state collapse, through decolonisation or a non-conflictual emergence are less likely to achieve moderate degrees of state building, whereas de facto states that emerge out of a decolonisation process are also less likely to achieve coherent governance structures (high degrees of state building).<sup>47</sup> If rebels in a de facto state have the same, stronger or much stronger capabilities than the government of the parent state, this increases particularly the likelihood of de facto states achieving moderate degrees of state building at a 99.9 per cent confidence interval, but also to a slightly lesser extent the likelihood of attaining high degrees of state building all other variables held constant at a 95 and 99 per cent confidence interval depending on the relative strength. The more fragmented the rebel movement is, the likelier it is to achieve moderate degrees of state building at a 99 per cent confidence interval all other variables held constant.

An analysis of the same independent variables on the number of governance institutions in de facto states (table 15) reveals that patrons decrease the number of governance institutions in de facto states by about half a governance institution at a 99 per cent confidence interval all other variables held equal. A sizeable diaspora

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<sup>45</sup> The relevance of sizeable diaspora groups for state building in de facto states may underscore the significance of financial and economic support for these entities rather than military support.

<sup>46</sup> The statistically insignificant effect of military conflict identified in the statistical models supports the claim by Kolstø and Blakkisrud (2008) that the continued negative impact of war legacies in form of casualties, infrastructure destruction and economic downturns does not impede the ability of de facto states to pursue state building.

<sup>47</sup> The decreasing likelihood of achieving civilian governance and to a certain extent coherent governance structures in de facto states that emerge out of state collapse is in line with Krasner and Risse's (2014: 547) finding that state building and service provision "are more difficult to provide, especially in failed states, where indigenous state capacity hardly exists, as opposed to polities with areas of limited statehood."

increases, and minor and severe war intensity decreases the number of governance institutions all other variables held equal at a 99.9 and 99 per cent confidence interval. Previous independence does not have a statistically significant effect on the number of governance institutions. In addition, the type of emergence of a de facto state does not statistically significantly influence the number of state institutions with the exception of de facto states that emerge out of state collapse, which observe an increase in the number of governance institutions all other variables held constant at a 95 per cent confidence interval. De facto governments that are as strong, stronger or much stronger than their parent state see an increase in the number of governance institutions at a 99.9 per cent confidence interval all other variables held equal. The more fragmented a rebel movement, the higher the number of governance institutions tend to be at a 99 per cent confidence interval.

The findings from the state and institution building models allow us to make a couple of preliminary conclusions about the role of patron states in the state and institution building endeavours of de facto states. First, the state building model makes a meaningful distinction between achieving basic civilian governance and coherent state structures. While some variables, such as a sizeable diaspora, rebel fragmentation and war intensity, shape the state building potential of de facto states regardless of their development stage, other variables matter more or less depending on the state building step the entity attempts to attain. Most notably for this thesis, the presence of a patron state influences the likelihood of de facto states reaching basic civilian governance, but not coherent state structures. The results of the state building model of this thesis suggests that patrons significantly increase the likelihood of achieving basic civilian governance in de facto states (moderate degrees of state building) all other variables held equal at a 99.9 per cent confidence interval. However, patrons do not appear to have a statistically significant effect on de facto states attaining coherent governance structures including an economic extraction and redistribution system, border management and internal security (high degrees of state building).

Second, the decrease in the number of governance institutions among de facto states with a patron initially may appear counterintuitive, as one would expect higher number of governance institutions in entities that benefit from the military or

financial support and related relative stability of patron states. However, the lower number of governance institutions may hint at the presence of a degree of institution sharing where the patron takes on governance functions from the de facto state, which makes the presence of certain governance institutions obsolete (see chapter 7 for further details on institution sharing).

Thus, the results of the state building models can only partially confirm the first hypothesis, because they identify a crucial distinction between moderate and high degrees of state building and demonstrate that patrons only influence the former. In other words, these research findings illustrate the nuances of patron support, where the presence of a patron positively enhances the likelihood of de facto states achieving basic civilian governance, but not coherent governance structures. Meanwhile, de facto states with a patron have on average fewer governance institutions over time. These findings speak to the theoretical framework of this thesis in so far that they highlight the variations in the extent of patron involvement as patrons may limit or expand their support to sustain a level of dependence of the de facto state on the patron. The theoretical framework also offers a potential explanation for the simultaneous support for basic civilian governance and a reduction in the number of governance institutions. Indeed, these findings may not be a contradiction but a representation of a patron's intent to ensure a level of dependence of the de facto state on patron support while guaranteeing a degree of self-sufficiency and bounded agency of the de facto authorities.

### **5.3.2 Competition as an Indirect Diffusion Source for State and Institution Building**

The inclusion of the relative military parent strength variable (*relparentstrength*) in the state and institution building models measures the influence of patron-parent state competition on the state and institution building potential of de facto states. The models thereby capture competition as one of the potential indirect diffusion influences of patrons on the state and institution building processes of de facto states. Overall, the results highlight that the stronger the parent state in terms of military capabilities, the likelier it is for de facto states to attain coherent governance

structures (high degrees of state building) all other variable held equal at a 99 per cent confidence interval. The likelihood of attaining basic civilian governance (moderate degrees of state building) is not influenced significantly by a relatively stronger parent state. The number of governance institutions, meanwhile, significantly decreases the stronger the parent is compared to the patron state all other variables held equal at a 95 per cent confidence interval. These results are also applicable to de facto states that do not have a patron state as it captures the military strength of parent states in general.

The impact of the parent state's relative economic strength in form of GDP per capita (*relparentgdppc*) on state and institution building in de facto states is also mixed (see appendix V). Economically stronger parent states increase the number of governance institutions and the likelihood of high degrees of state building, but decrease the likelihood of moderate degrees of state building. While a relatively stronger parent state in terms of GDP per capita performance increases the likelihood of achieving coherent governance structures (high degrees of state building) and the number of governance institutions all other variables held equal at a 95 and 99 per cent confidence interval, the variable does not have a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of a de facto state achieving basic civilian governance (moderate degrees of state building).

The results highlight that stronger parent states in terms of military capabilities compared to patron states increase the likelihood of de facto states attaining coherent government structures (high degrees of state building), but not basic civilian governance (moderate degrees of state building) and the number of governance institutions all other variables held equal. In other words, competition as an indirect diffusion source appears to encourage particularly the development of coherent governance structures such as internal security and border management. Yet, competition appears to matter less in the early state building developments when de facto regimes go from rebel governance to basic civilian governance. Therefore, the second hypothesis of this chapter can only be partially confirmed depending on the degree of state building development.

Even though the relative parent strength variable overemphasises the role of parent states when a de facto state does not have a patron, the results, nonetheless,

support the argument put forward by Kolstø and Blakkisrud (2008) that a strong parent state incentivises state building in de facto states at least for high degrees of state building. The regression results also reiterate the results of chapter 2 that the absolute capabilities of a patron state matter less than the patron's relative capabilities vis-à-vis the parent state. In practical terms, the results of both relative military and economic capabilities may be explained with a tendency among de facto states with a patron to use the patron's economic and military capabilities to outweigh or match the real or perceived threat and capabilities from the parent state. Specifically great or regional powers can shift the power balance of the dyadic relation between de facto states and their parents significantly. Therefore, the regression results can be interpreted in a way that if the patron's military capabilities are high and outweigh the parent's military capabilities, this may disincentivise domestic state and institution building in de facto states due to a reliance or even dependence on patron support to protect the de facto states from potential parent state threats. The opportunity structures of de facto states with a patron that enable these entities to rely on their patron's military protection may disincentive domestic state and institution building despite a wider range of financial resources. De facto states without a patron meanwhile are likelier to be incentivised to increase their public service provision and state capacity including border security and domestic security in light of a real or perceived parent state threat. This form of dependence on military support from the patron state can be identified in a number of de facto states. Abkhazia and South Ossetia, for instance, would have been unlikely to withstand the Georgian offensives without Russia's military support (Caspersen 2015: 6).

These findings speak to the theoretical framework in so far that they highlight the presence of indirect diffusion sources such as competition on the state building development of de facto states. Indeed, the diffusion literature would explain the higher likelihood of state building and the lower number of governance institutions with the role of indirect diffusion channels such as geopolitical competition in facilitating institution or policy diffusion. Thereby, this chapter has not only shown that patrons have both a direct and indirect diffusion impact on the degrees of state building and the number of governance institution, but also that patron involvement

appears to increase if competition with the parent state is higher. Geopolitical competition with the parent state may incentivise de facto governments to pursue institutional or policy transformations, whereas the presence of patron states may reduce the competitive diffusion influences of the parent state on de facto states. The reduction in the number of governance institutions when a parent state is stronger, for instance, may indicate that patrons take over governance institutions from de facto states when pressures from the parent state are higher and that it can be more difficult to establish governance institutions under heightened external pressures (see section 6.3.3 for further details on the role of competitive diffusion in Abkhazia's state building development).

### **5.3.3 Patrons and the Temporal Patterns of State and Institution Building**

The final discussion section of this chapter captures temporal patterns of state and institution building in de facto states and the extent to which the presence of a patron accelerates or decelerates these developments. Rebel groups in de facto governments are unlikely to develop extraction and redistribution systems, border management and basic public services from the outset of their de facto independence. In other words, state and institution building is expected to be constrained by a degree of time dependence. The presence of a patron state may however accelerate the state and institution building processes, because the patron may present a potential income source and offer military support.

The state and institution building models of this thesis expectedly indicate a degree of time dependence in the state and institution building processes of de facto states. Each month that a de facto state survives increases the likelihood of achieving basic civilian governance and coherent governance structures (moderate and high degrees of state building) at a 99.9 per cent confidence interval all other variables held constant. Time dependence is also prevalent in the case of institution building in de facto states. Each additional month that a de facto state survives increases the number of governance institutions at a 99.9 per cent confidence interval all other variables held constant. Yet, the Kaplan-Meier estimators indicate that this might mean that de facto states do not achieve moderate or high degrees of state building

for an extensive period of time.

However, these findings present two limitations. First, while both state and institution building examples reveal some level of time dependence, they do not uncover the precise developments within de facto states that increase the number of governance institutions and the likelihood of state building for each additional month. A qualitative analysis of state and institution building processes may be necessary to identify the root cause for the presence of time dependence. Second, the findings do not uncover the influence of patron states on the temporal patterns of state and institution building in de facto states. Therefore, the next section captures the differences between the state and institution building paths of de facto states with and without a patron state, which enables the testing of the third hypothesis.

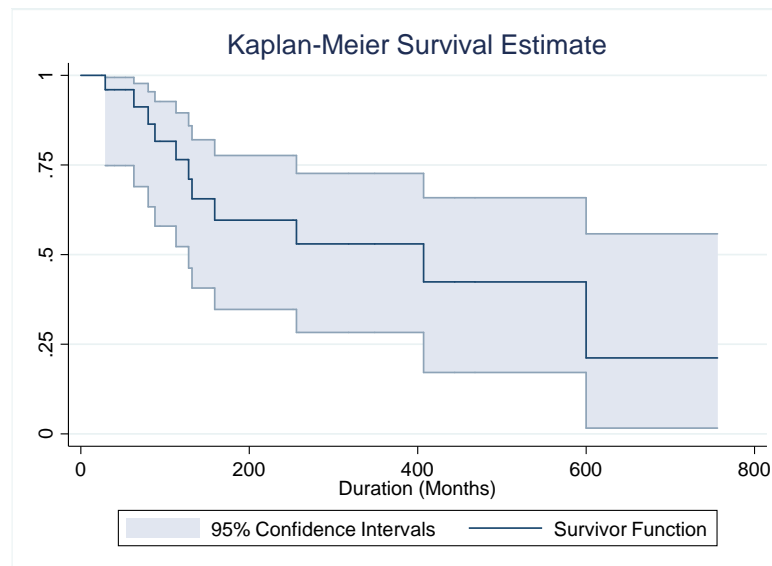
#### ***5.3.3.1 Patrons as State Building Accelerators***

The Kaplan-Meier (KM) estimator approximates the likelihood of an event not taking place at a given point in time. This means that in the context of state building in de facto states, the KM estimator measures the average time period of de facto states achieving basic civilian governance (moderate degrees of state building) or coherent governance structures (high degrees of state building). A look at the KM estimates for high degrees of state building (appendix W) reveals that within the first four and a half years (53 months), only one out of 26 de facto states (96 per cent) achieved coherent governance structures (high degrees of state building) from a level of separatist control (low degrees of state building) or civilian governance (moderate degrees of state building). In the period between four and a half and 13 years, a significant portion of de facto states achieve coherent governance structures. From 13 years onwards, only three de facto states achieve high degrees of state building, whereas seven de facto states either attain statehood, disintegrate or are reabsorbed into the parent state. After 21 years (256 months) nearly half of the de facto states, who did not have high degrees of state building at the start, achieved this degree of state building.

The graph (figure 7) and the Kaplan-Meier estimator (appendix W) suggest

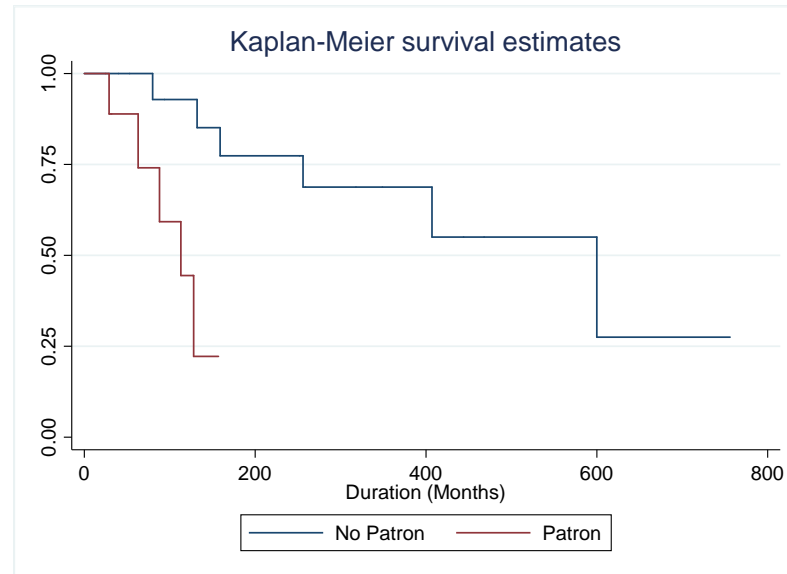
that de facto states that do not achieve coherent governance structures (high degrees of state building) within the first 13 years are likely to not achieve this level of state development at all or it will take them considerably longer to do so. The other graph below (figure 8) offers insights into the temporal state building patterns of de facto states with and without a patron by distinguishing between the Kaplan-Meier survival estimates of de facto states with a patron (red) and without a patron (blue). The graph signifies that de facto states with a patron are likelier to attain coherent governance structures (high degrees of state building) more rapidly than de facto states without a patron. The graph also suggests that de facto states with a patron appear to achieve coherent governance structures within the first 13 years and subsequently their state building development flatlines. These findings support the findings by Zabarah (2012), Caspersen (2012) and Johnson & Smaker (2014) that the initial state building phase is important for the overall state building development of de facto states. Particularly de facto states with a patron tend to achieve coherent governance structures earlier on or otherwise fail to do so in the end.

Figure 7 Kaplan-Meier and Greenwood Estimator Graph High State Building<sup>48</sup>



<sup>48</sup> The Greenwood variance estimator estimates the uncertainty surrounding the Kaplan-Meier estimator.

Figure 8 Kaplan-Meier Estimator Graph High State Building with and without Patron



A look at the temporal patterns of de facto states in terms of their likelihood to attain moderate degrees of state building reveals similar trends about the state building processes of de facto states (see appendix X for the KM estimates for moderate degrees of state building). Within the first eight years, three de facto states that started with separatist control (low degrees of state building) attained basic civilian governance (moderate degrees of state building), while three de facto states failed in the same time period. The results also suggest that de facto states that do not reach a stage of basic civilian governance within the first eight years, require significantly more time to achieve this state building step from separatist control to civilian governance. However, between year 11 (157 months) and year 26 (312 months), one can observe another sharp decline in the survivor function (from 77 to 38 per cent), which signifies that many de facto states achieve moderate degrees of state building in this period. Beyond the 26<sup>th</sup> year only one de facto state achieved civilian governance while three entities failed.

Figure 9 Kaplan-Meier and Greenwood Estimator Graph Moderate State Building

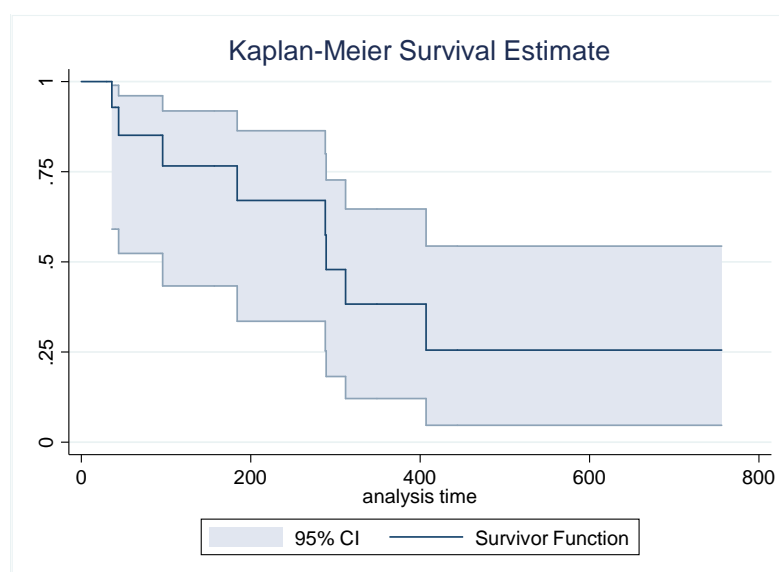
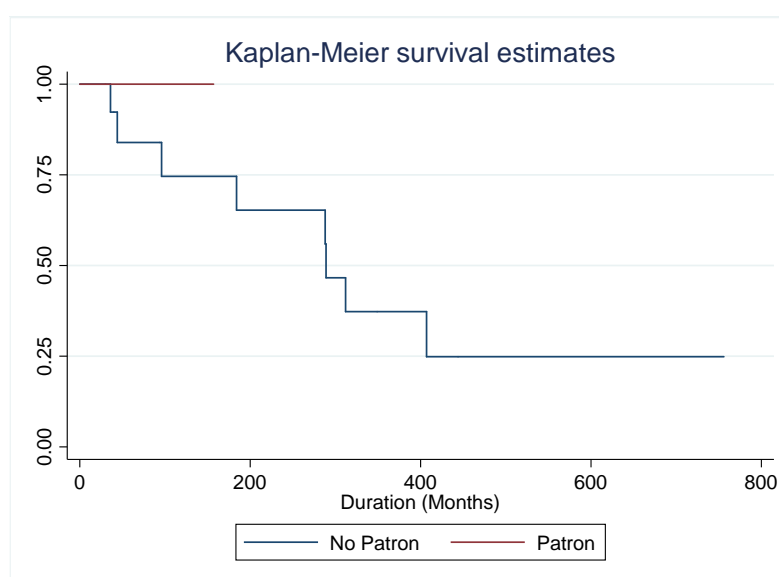


Figure 10 Kaplan-Meier Estimator Graph Moderate State Building with and without Patron



Overall, the graph (figure 9) and estimates (appendix X) suggest that achieving basic civilian governance (moderate degrees of state building) appears to be a slightly more gradual process compared to coherent governance structures (high degrees of state building). In the latter case, de facto states experience coherent governance structures (high degrees of state building) particularly in the first 13 years. Following the first 13 years, the process of state building slows down. Achieving moderate degrees of state building takes place particularly in the first eight years and

subsequently slows down. Both state building stages therefore highlight the importance of the first years for state building in de facto states with and without a patron. De facto states with a patron tend to drop out of the data set relatively quickly which suggests that de facto states already achieved moderate degrees of state building from the onset or ceased to exist (see figure 10). Still, the graphs support the conclusion that de facto states with a patron tend to be considerably faster in achieving high degrees of state building than de facto states without a patron.

It is important to remember, that if all de facto states were included in this model and not only those that entities that have not yet achieved moderate or high degrees of state building, the tables and graph would render different results. In that case, one would observe a much sharper and rapid decline in the survival function in the first five years and a subsequent flattening of the survival function. This suggests that if de facto states do not make the step to moderate degrees of state building within the first five years, it will probably take them longer to achieve this step.

This section confirms the third hypothesis, that patrons accelerate the state building processes of de facto states, particularly for high degrees of state building and to a lesser extent for moderate degrees of state building. Furthermore, the section demonstrates that de facto states that do not reach a stage of basic civilian governance within the first eight years require significantly more time to achieve this state building step from separatist control to civilian governance. Similarly, de facto states that do not achieve coherent governance structures including border management, internal security, ministries, courts and an economic extraction and redistribution system within the first 13 years are unlikely to achieve this level of state building at all or it will take them considerably longer to do so.

#### ***5.3.3.2 Time Since Last State or Institution Building Experience***

The final section explores whether or not the duration since the last state or institution building event affects the state and institution building potential of de facto states. The previous analyses highlighted that prior independence, somehow counterintuitively, reduces the likelihood of state building and has no significant

effect on the number of governance institutions. An alternative way to account for state building experience is to refer to previous state and institution building developments as state building experience. By including a newly generated variable that captures the months since the last change in the degrees of state building (*tsincedfsbuildchg*) and the number of governance institutions (*tsincedfsinstchg*), this section estimates the effect of previous state and institution building experience (see tables 16 and 17). The regression table below (table 16) indicates that each additional month since achieving a degree of civilian governance (moderate degrees of state building) decreases the likelihood of attaining coherent governance structures (high degrees of state building) all other variables held constant at a 99.9 per confidence interval. The next regression table highlights that each additional month that a de facto state does not build new governance institutions decreases the number of governance institutions all other variables held equal at a 99.9 per cent confidence interval (see table 17). In other words, the longer de facto state rebels do not develop new governance institutions, the more unlikely it is that they end up developing new institutions.

Table 16 State Building Model Including Experience Variable (Logistic Regression)

|                                       | (4)                    |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Degrees of State Building             | High                   |
| Patron (Spanke)                       | 8.445***<br>(2.062)    |
| Diaspora                              | 3.914<br>(3.061)       |
| War Intensity                         |                        |
| <i>Minor</i>                          | -0.272<br>(1.376)      |
| <i>War</i>                            | -3.144<br>(1.766)      |
| Prev. Autonomy                        | -4.815*<br>(2.291)     |
| Emergence Type                        |                        |
| <i>Non-Conflictual</i>                | -9.685*<br>(4.475)     |
| <i>State Collapse</i>                 | -0.68<br>(2.098)       |
| <i>Decolonisation</i>                 | -10.82***<br>(2.298)   |
| Rebel Capability                      |                        |
| <i>At Parity</i>                      | 3.106<br>(2.346)       |
| <i>Stronger</i>                       | 4.629<br>(3.44)        |
| <i>Much Stronger</i>                  | 2.733<br>(2.877)       |
| Rebel Fragmentation                   | 1.062***<br>(0.3)      |
| Relative Parent Strength              | 45.79<br>(45.68)       |
| Months Survived                       | 0.0632***<br>(0.00564) |
| Time Since Last State Building Change | -0.697***<br>(0.111)   |
| Constant                              | -14.99<br>(3.909)      |
| Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>                 | 0.6089                 |
| N                                     | 724                    |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

Table 17 Institution Building Model Including Experience Variable (Linear Regression)

| Number of Governance Institutions  | (5)                      |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Patron (Spanke)                    | 0.315<br>(0.252)         |
| Diaspora                           | 2.257*<br>(1.003)        |
| War Intensity                      |                          |
| <i>Minor</i>                       | -0.299***<br>(0.0826)    |
| <i>War</i>                         | 0.101<br>(0.115)         |
| Prev. Autonomy                     | -0.74<br>(0.812)         |
| Emergence Type                     |                          |
| <i>Non-Conflictual</i>             | -2.495<br>(1.714)        |
| <i>State Collapse</i>              | 1.214<br>(0.95)          |
| <i>Decolonisation</i>              | -2.24<br>(1.182)         |
| Rebel Capability                   |                          |
| <i>At Parity</i>                   | -0.0378<br>(0.176)       |
| <i>Stronger</i>                    | 1.155*<br>(0.575)        |
| <i>Much Stronger</i>               | 0.631<br>(0.36)          |
| Rebel Fragmentation                | 0.0285<br>(0.0276)       |
| Relative Parent Strength           | 11.93*<br>(5.398)        |
| Months Survived                    | 0.00861***<br>(0.000351) |
| Time Since Last Institution Change | -0.0985***<br>(0.00433)  |
| Constant                           | 4.342***<br>(1.293)      |
| R <sup>2</sup>                     | 0.5212                   |
| N                                  | 602                      |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

## 5.4 Conclusion

This chapter contributes to the wider debates surrounding patron states and state and institution building in de facto states by applying research findings of individual de facto state case studies to a data set of all de facto states between 1945 and 2011. The research findings captured the effect of patron states on state and institution building across 34 de facto states. Furthermore, the chapter uncovered the impact of patron-parent state competition as an indirect diffusion source and offered insights into temporal patterns of state and institution building in de facto states. While the results of this chapter do not necessarily support the argument of some Georgian protestors that Russia occupies Abkhazia and South Ossetia, this chapter revealed that Russia, as Abkhazia and South Ossetia's patron, is likely to contribute to and accelerate the state building developments of both de facto states and thereby enhances their chances of survival.

At the same time, the results of this chapter uncovered variations in the extent to which patrons influence both state and institution building in de facto states. The statistical models of this chapter proposed an important distinction between civilian governance (moderate degrees of state building) and coherent governance structures (high degrees of state building). Domestic factors appear to matter more in the earlier state building stages and become less impactful in the step to coherent governance institutions. At the same time, external factors such as patron states and a sizeable diaspora are more significant for the step from separatist control to basic civilian governance than they are for more advanced forms of state building. Some variables, such as a previous independence and rebel capabilities shape the state building potential of de facto states regardless of their development stage. Other variables matter more or less depending on the state building step the entity attempts to attain. The presence of a patron state, for instance, influences the likelihood of de facto states reaching basic civilian governance, but not coherent state structures. In terms of public service and goods provision, these findings reflect that patrons encourage minimal public administration and the provision of social security, education and health, but patrons do not necessarily support the development of an economic extraction and redistribution system. Patrons may limit

or expand their support for a de facto state to sustain a level of dependence of the de facto regime on the patron while guaranteeing a degree of self-sufficiency and bounded agency of the de facto authorities.

This chapter also indicated that patrons not only have a direct impact on the state and institution building endeavours of de facto states, but also present an indirect diffusion source in form of competition with the parent state. The stronger the parent state in terms of military capabilities, the higher the likelihood of achieving coherent governance structures, whereas the likelihood of attaining basic civilian governance is not affected and the number of governance institutions decreases with a relatively stronger parent state. Also the effect of economically stronger parent states is mixed. These findings not only capture both a patron's direct and indirect diffusion impact on the degrees of state building and the number of governance institution, but also suggest that patron involvement appears to increase the more pronounced the competition with the parent state is.

In terms of institution building, this chapter highlighted that the presence of a patron decreases the number of governance institutions in a de facto state. The lower number of governance institutions may hint at the presence of a degree of institution sharing where the patron takes on governance functions from the de facto state, which makes the presence of certain governance institutions obsolete. These findings may also indicate that patrons decrease a de facto state's institutional capacity by lowering the number of governance institutions such as a legislature, tax authorities and a central banking system. It is important to reiterate however that the physical presence of such institutions does not automatically represent the practical capacity to provide services and goods associated with these institutions. Institution sharing will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7 of this thesis.

Furthermore, state and institution building in de facto states follow temporal patterns and a degree of time dependence. De facto states that do not achieve basic civilian governance within the first eight years and coherent government structures within 13 years, are unlikely to get to this stage at all or it will take them considerably longer to do so. Each month that a de facto state survives increases the likelihood of achieving basic civilian governance and coherent governance structures and raises the number of governance institutions. However, the longer de facto state

governments do not develop new governance institutions, the more unlikely it is that they end up developing new institutions. Also achieving coherent governance structures is less likely, the more time has passed since the last state building development. Patrons appear to accelerate the state building process particularly for high degrees of state building and to a limited degree for moderate degrees of state building.

Reflecting on these findings raises two central questions: First, why do patrons enhance the development of basic civilian governance in de facto states, but not of more coherent government structures? And second, do patron support for basic governance in de facto states and the concurrent negative impact of patrons on the number of governance institutions contradict each other? These questions pose uncertainty about the precise causal mechanisms behind patron state engagement in de facto states. The available quantitative data, for instance, does not capture whether it is indeed the patron that facilitates state building or whether patrons tend to support de facto states with better state building potential. Furthermore, even if the patron leadership is uninterested in state building support, the mere presence of a patron state may encourage or discourage state and institution building in de facto states. Therefore, it is essential to distinguish between direct and indirect patron states influences when analysing patron involvement in the state building processes of de facto states.

Despite these causality concerns, this thesis argues that patron states support de facto states in guaranteeing minimal civilian governance to ensure a degree of sustainability of the unrecognised entity and to reduce the likelihood of public discontent. It is important for armed groups or rebels to achieve internal legitimacy in the initial phases through public service provision, security, economy and control (Bakke et al. 2013: 3). Patrons may support these armed groups in this early phase of legitimacy building. Moreover, the quantitative results highlighted that de facto state governments are more susceptible to the influence of external actors in the early phases of the state building process, whereas with proceeding time and more domestic accountability, de facto state governments are slightly less reliant on external support. In addition, patrons may not be interested in creating coherent government structures in de facto states, as this would reduce the level of de facto

state dependence on the patron state. Striving for a status quo of dependence may also explain why the number of governance institutions in de facto states tends to be lower when a patron state is present, as patrons and their clients pursue a policy of institution sharing. In other words, patron states nurture dependence through their financial, military but also state building support to de facto states. These findings in combination with the theoretical framework of this thesis offer an explanation why we can see the observed variations in patron involvement in de facto states.

The role of dependence to explain the distinction between patron support for moderate and high degrees of state building, as proposed in this conclusion, cannot be sufficiently proven with the available quantitative data. Therefore, more in-depth qualitative analyses are needed to offer potential causal explanations for some of the findings of this chapter and to test the argumentation in the previous paragraph. For example, this chapter highlighted that patron states increase the likelihood of state building in some cases, but not the exact ways in which patrons influence state and institution building. Similarly, the chapter revealed that the relative military strength and to a certain extent economic power of parent states can have a positive effect on state building, but not how the competition between parent, patron and de facto states affects the state building process of de facto states in practice. A qualitative analysis of state and institution building processes is therefore necessary to complement the quantitative findings and identify the causal mechanisms behind direct and indirect patron state diffusion influences on state building in de facto states. These open questions and concerns will be addressed in the next three chapters of this thesis when the case study of Russia's direct and indirect involvement in Abkhazia's state building process will be presented and analysed. The case studies also explore the extent to which direct and indirect diffusion influences become more important if competition with the parent state is more pronounced.

## *Chapter 6*

### **Russia on their Mind**

#### *Abkhazia's Domestic State Building Trajectories and Russian Indirect Diffusion Influences*

As I stroll the tree-lined boulevards of Sukhumi, the capital city of the de facto Republic of Abkhazia, I pass schools, a courthouse and medical facilities while a garbage disposal truck occasionally halts on the street to collect garbage containers. In Sukhumi's east, a police officer intermittently patrols two bulky Soviet-style government buildings at the crossroads of Lakoba and Zvanba street, which host most of the ministries of the de facto government of Abkhazia, ranging from the Abkhaz Ministry of Education, to the Ministry of Health over to the Abkhaz Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see figure 11). This administrative district of Sukhumi conveys the impression of an ordinarily functioning site of political decision-making similar to internationally recognised states of comparable size. Yet, after a few days in the city, the absence of international companies and a postal service becomes increasingly apparent, which indicate that Sukhumi lacks some characteristics usually associated with capital cities of internationally recognised states.

Still, the presence of basic administrative infrastructure, schools and hospitals raises the question in what ways the Abkhaz de facto regime achieved and sustained these levels of state development despite the legacies of the Georgian-Abkhaz war, outmigration and limited economic room for manoeuvre due to restricted international recognition. Abkhazia's relatively successful state building track record (Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2008) appears even more surprising taking into consideration Russia's trade embargo on Abkhazia for a significant period of time in the 1990s in addition to occasional periods of violence. Even if one was to argue that Abkhazia's state capacity is low and its institutions represent hollow structures rather than settings for public service provision (Lynch 2004: 63), it is worth considering how de facto state authorities prioritise and finance their state building endeavour and the extent to which Russia shaped Abkhazia's domestic state and institution building developments.

*Figure 11 Cabinet of Ministers in Central Sukhumi (Spanke 2017)*



The statistical findings of the previous chapter raised a set of questions about the causal mechanisms behind patron state engagement in de facto states that could not be adequately answered with the quantitative information available in the data set. The statistical findings uncovered that patrons enhance a de facto state's likelihood of achieving basic civilian governance, but did not specify whether this impact can be associated with the direct coercive involvement of the patron state or indirect influences, such as competitive, mimetic and normative diffusion influences. Furthermore, the quantitative chapter found that the relative military strength and

to a certain extent economic power of parent states can have a positive effect on state building, but not how the competition between parent, patron and de facto states affects the state building process of de facto states in practice. By following the causal chains of indirect diffusion laid out in the theoretical framework and process tracing the source material, this case study chapter empirically establishes that indirect diffusion (mimetic, normative and competitive diffusion) has a causal effect on Abkhazia's state and institution building processes (direct coercive diffusion influences will be covered in chapter 7). These causal mechanisms can subsequently be linked to observable implications relating to the state and institution building development of Abkhazia, such as similarities across Abkhaz and Russian state and institution structures, institution sharing or enhanced public service provisions.

This chapter contributes to answering the central research question of this thesis by offering detailed accounts of domestic state building patterns and trajectories in a de facto state and capturing the indirect diffusion influences of a patron on this process, including mimetic, normative and competitive diffusion. Placing the analytical focus on indirect diffusion influences reveals how the perceived interests of patron states, trade links and even the relative power vis-à-vis the parent state may change the behaviour and actions of domestic elites without direct patron engagement.

The first section of this chapter provides a descriptive chronological overview of central state building developments in Abkhazia that is guided by critical historical events. This section, for example, finds that the formal changes in the Russo-Abkhaz relationship in 1999 marked an increase in direct coercive diffusion channels, which also encouraged further normative, mimetic and competitive diffusion. The second section discusses state building trajectories that shaped Abkhazia's state building process including the incorporation of Soviet institutions, the ethnic trends in hiring government personnel, competitive diffusion influences, the funding of public service provisions as well as the prioritisation of specific state sectors. Instead of focusing on rebel fragmentation and relative rebel strength to capture domestic capabilities as in the previous quantitative chapter, this chapter is able to address a wider array of qualitative variables to examine Abkhazia's endogenous state building developments. Finally, in order to offer a comprehensive understanding of the

influence of patron states on state building in de facto states, it is necessary to not only examine how patrons directly exert coercive influences on state building, but also to account for the indirect influences of patrons in form of mimetic, normative and competitive diffusion. This chapter thereby tests the applicability of indirect diffusion channels to the case of patron-de facto state relations and fleshes out some of the causal mechanisms behind patron influences on the state building processes of de facto states.

This chapter argues that Abkhazia achieved the most notable state building boost during a period of uncertainty and partial isolation in the 1990s where Russia did not officially function as Abkhazia's patron, because Soviet legacies provided Abkhaz officials with the basic political institutional structure to develop its institutions further and sporadic trade with Russian regions and Turkish diaspora groups sustained the de facto regime at least partially. Abkhaz officials attained control over the existing set of state institutions by strategically regulating the hiring of ethnic groups to influential state positions and limiting the scope of the state to central state functions including the management of Abkhazia's external relations, basic resource extraction and distribution as well as the provision of law and order. With increasing Russian involvement, the scope of the state as well as public service and goods provisions expanded along with the enhancement of Abkhazia's security and economic situation. Concurrently, Russia started taking on governance and institutional responsibilities from the Abkhaz de facto authorities, which reduced their state capacity.

Meanwhile, Russian mimetic and normative diffusion influences ensured that Russian perceived interests were considered by the Abkhaz authorities without direct Russian involvement. Due to the limited availability of alternative partners, domestic actors needed to navigate their actions according to Russian indirect diffusion was more likely to shape domestic affairs. The process tracing in this chapter shows that Abkhazia's agency is bound by the perceived interests and activities of its patron, which represents one of the transition variables of the theoretical framework. This bounded agency explains the legislative and institutional isomorphism between the de facto state and its patron, because of the predominance of indirect diffusion influences in contexts where de facto states are dependent on patron support. Still,

in this arena of limited manoeuvre and course of action, the Abkhaz de facto authorities and civil society repeatedly exemplified agency and signalled autonomy especially in the symbolic fields of language and private property provisions.

## 6.1 A Brief Chronology of State Building in Abkhazia

Abkhazia's state building development has undergone significant challenges and changes since the early 1990s. In order to specify the analysis of Abkhazia's domestic state building process and to enable a within-case comparison, this chapter builds on Prelz Oltramonti's (2015: 171) classification of Russo-Abkhaz economic relations, which distinguishes between two distinct periods in Abkhazia's relationship with its northern neighbour. First, a period of partial isolation between 1994 and 1999 that was marked by a Russia-led embargo and sanctions, where Russia, according to the definition of this thesis, did not act as Abkhazia's patron. Second, from 1999 until 2008, an easing period, in which the sanctions against Abkhazia were progressively lifted and borders between Russia and Abkhazia were opened. This chapter proposes to specify Prelz Oltramonti's classification by contextualising Russo-Abkhaz relations beyond the economic sphere, indicating the exact years of the individual periods and introducing two additional periods (see table 18). This distinction not only forms the broader framework of analysis of this chapter, but also enables a within-case study comparison, by comparing Abkhaz state building developments in the four different periods and across varying degrees of patron dependence.

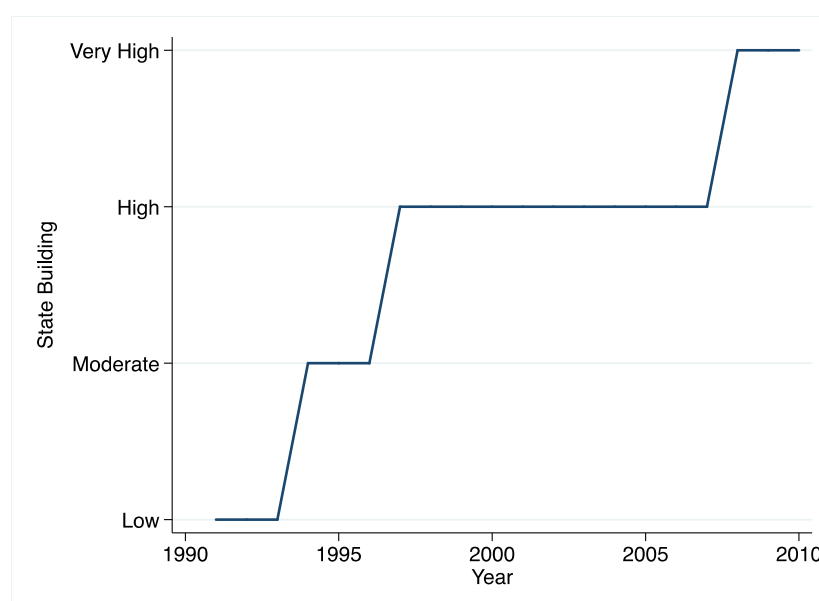
*Table 18 Four Phases of Russo-Abkhaz Relations*

|                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1992 - 1994    | Uncertainty       |
| 1994 - 1999    | Partial isolation |
| 1999 - 2008    | Easing            |
| 2008 - present | Rapprochement     |

On the basis of this extended classification, the graph below (figure 12) offers surprising insights into Abkhazia's degrees of state building between 1991 and 2011. The graph highlights that Abkhazia achieved high degrees of state building within seven years in the period between 1991 and 1997. This state building phase covered the formation of ministries, public administration, basic provisions of social services, border management as well as the set-up of an extraction and redistribution system. When Russia recognised Abkhazia in 2008, Abkhazia achieved very high degrees of state building, which means that "the polity has most characteristics of a state

(including external relations, representative offices abroad, commercial relations with international partners)” (Florea 2016: 14). Nonetheless, the most remarkable development is certainly Abkhazia’s state building from low to high degrees of state building in the 1990s, because of Abkhazia’s partial isolation and uncertainty in this period. In other words, Abkhazia achieved the most state building progress during a period when it was largely isolated, focused predominantly on domestic resource extraction and Russia enacted a trade embargo. This not only challenges arguments that state and institution building in the 1990s was limited due to war legacies, the blockade, sanctions and limited international support, but it also justifies the chapter’s predominant focus on state building developments in the uncertainty and partial isolation periods. Still, even after 1997, when Abkhazia had achieved high degrees of state building characterised by coherent government structures including an economic extraction and redistribution system and border control, it was necessary for the Abkhaz regime to sustain these initial developments. This section therefore not only covers central state building developments in the period of uncertainty and partial isolation, but also examines the extent to which Abkhaz authorities prioritised and financed certain state building developments beyond 1997.

*Figure 12 State Building in Abkhazia (1991-2011)*



### **6.1.1 The Emergence of the (de facto) Republic of Abkhazia**

Years of dissatisfaction with political and economic stagnation, coup attempts as well as rising nationalism and independence declarations in the union republics of the Soviet Union contributed to its dissolution in December 1991. The Supreme Council of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, as one of the Soviet union republics in question, declared Georgian independence in April 1991 following an independence referendum in late March of the same year. In this limbo of uncertainty and volatility and following increasing tensions with Georgia over Abkhazia's position within the Georgian Union Republic, the Abkhaz nationalist movement found itself with an opportunity to ensure some degree of sovereignty for its territory.

Importantly, the Abkhaz independence movement of the 1980s and 1990s was not primarily concerned with building an Abkhaz state, but rather to distance itself from Georgia as much as possible.<sup>49</sup> The majority of ethnic Abkhaz ultimately desired an Abkhaz republic within the political structure of the Soviet Union.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1991, Abkhazia held a referendum where the majority (98 per cent) of the Abkhaz population voted, not in favour of leaving the Soviet Union and becoming independent, but in favour of remaining in a reformed Soviet Union (Duffy-Toft 2003: 98).<sup>51</sup> However, due to infightings in Moscow, the Abkhaz SSR could not pursue the wish of this referendum and eventually found itself, at least momentarily between 26<sup>th</sup> December 1991 and 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1992, united in the newly formed Georgian Republic. Despite or perhaps due to this volatile context, the Abkhaz regime pursued a certain degree of state and institution building already before the independence declaration of July 1992. A declaration of the Abkhaz Soviet Socialist Republic leadership from 25<sup>th</sup> August 1990, for instance, announces Abkhazia's control over its own economic affairs and natural resources. Moreover, the document declares the formation of an independent central bank, a monetary,

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<sup>49</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>50</sup> Interview 15: Abkhaz scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>51</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

financial, customs and tax system as well as a state budget and a currency fund.<sup>52</sup> The Supreme Council of Abkhazia also declared the abolition of the KGB of Abkhazia and instead the installation of the State Security Service of Abkhazia on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1991.<sup>53</sup> These declarations have a symbolic importance for Abkhazia, however, the Abkhaz SSR was unlikely to have been permitted the official introduction of these institutions while being part of the Soviet Union. A few months later, on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1992, the Supreme Council reinstated ministries including the Ministries of Health, Industry, Energy, Finance, Trade and Interior and appointed their ministers and staff.<sup>54</sup> These examples show at least the intent of the Abkhaz regime to expand its state institutions before its proclamation of independence of July 1992. Whether or not these institutions actually had the capacity to provide public services and goods or whether Abkhazia's state building development was used as a bargaining tool in negotiations with Georgian and Russian officials remain open questions.

Following increasing tensions over Abkhazia's autonomy and Abkhaz militants taking over government buildings in Sukhumi, Abkhazia's government proclaimed Abkhazia's independence on 23 July 1992. On the same day, Abkhazia revived the old Abkhaz SSR constitution from 1925 (Marychuba 2008; Chirikba 2014: 5), which meant that between 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1992 and 14<sup>th</sup> August 1992, the Republic of Abkhazia found itself in a union with the Georgian Republic (Marychuba 2008). For nearly one and a half years after the independence declaration of Georgia and Abkhazia's referendum to remain in the Soviet Union, Abkhazia functioned officially as part of Georgia.<sup>55</sup> During this period, the government structures that Abkhazia inherited from the Soviet Union as an autonomous republic continued to operate, however, officially under Georgian supervision. While the Georgian government installed Georgian

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<sup>52</sup> Московский государственный институт международных отношений МИД России. Центр Кавказских исследований (2008). *Конфликты в Абхазии И Южной Осетии. Документы 1989-2006 гг.* Москва: Русская Панорама. No. 56, pp. 110-112

<sup>53</sup> No. 69, p.129.

<sup>54</sup> No. 78, p. 136.

<sup>55</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

supervisors in the Abkhaz government structures, its presence was otherwise limited in this period.<sup>56</sup>

Eventually, the Abkhaz-Georgian war broke out in August 1992 and lasted approximately one year and two months. Since 1993, when Georgia somewhat surprisingly lost the war, Georgia has not held any control over the Abkhaz territory. The war created a humanitarian crisis that significantly impacted Abkhazia's state building process. The Abkhaz-Georgian war destroyed a considerable part of the Abkhaz infrastructure including government and civilian buildings<sup>57</sup> and ended almost all the operations of most ministries of Abkhazia.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the Abkhaz leadership struggled under limited financial means, the inability to guarantee a stable energy supply<sup>59</sup> and significant outmigration (around two thirds of the original Abkhaz population fled the region, in particular ethnic Georgians).<sup>60 61</sup>

During and immediately after the war, the Abkhaz state structure and some of the state infrastructure remained largely the same as before the conflict when Abkhazia acted as an autonomous republic.<sup>62 63 64</sup> The photographic evidence of this chapter visually demonstrates the presence of state and governance infrastructure and institutions in Abkhazia's Soviet and post-Soviet period. This infrastructure illustrates the potential for institutional path dependence in the post-Soviet period and the ability of Abkhaz rebel groups to utilise the foundations of the pre-existing institutional structure for their state and institution building endeavours (see figures 11, 13, 14, 16). Experienced bureaucrats and leadership that were appointed before the Abkhaz-Georgian war mostly remained in their positions and continued working

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<sup>56</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>57</sup> Interview 6: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>58</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>59</sup> Interview 6: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>60</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>61</sup> Interview 15: Abkhaz scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>62</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>63</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>64</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

for the Abkhaz government during and after the war.<sup>65 66</sup> Meanwhile, parliamentarians worked simultaneously in the executive branch, despite the envisioned separation of the three branches of government. Similarly to the choice of a centralised presidential system, this was justified with the extreme situation surrounding the war that made it difficult to form state institutions and train new cadres.<sup>67</sup> Initially, the Abkhaz de facto government prioritised setting up local resource extraction and electricity infrastructure in order to minimise dependency on external sources and simultaneously sustain the basic state institutions. However, as Abkhazia had gotten used to relatively high levels of public spending during the Soviet Union and several institutions to be sustained, the domestically extracted resources were insufficient (Prelz Oltramonti 2015: 176).

Despite the limited financial means and the regime's preoccupation with domestic resource extraction, energy supply and warfare, the Abkhaz de facto government expanded its governance institutions by establishing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence during the war.<sup>68</sup> Until the end of the blockade, the responsibilities of the newly founded Foreign Ministry were restricted to managing the relationship with Moscow and the negotiations with Georgia.<sup>69 70</sup>

In December 1993, following the end of the Georgian-Abkhaz war, a new Abkhaz de facto government was formed, which essentially utilised the previous structures from the Supreme Soviet as its basis and encompassed an additional set of new ministries, such as the Ministry of Ecology, the Ministry of Culture the Ministry of Information and Press, a Customs Committee and the Ministry for Taxes, which developed out of a tax committee (see table 19 for a representation of Abkhazia's incorporation of Soviet institutional structures).<sup>71 72</sup> In the meantime, the Abkhaz

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<sup>65</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>66</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>67</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>68</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>69</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>70</sup> Interview 9: Government representative of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>71</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>72</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

authorities were required to modify Abkhazia's legal basis in order to reflect the new realities of de facto statehood, rather than the Georgia-based laws from the Autonomous Republic period.<sup>73</sup>

The legislative changes also included the passing of a new constitution on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1994 (Marychuba 2008; Chirikba 2014). The constitution enacted several structural changes to Abkhazia's state system ranging from a presidential system with vertical authority structures to partial decentralisation. The 1994 constitution, for instance, prescribed that heads of local administrations will be appointed by the president from a pool of deputies of local self-government bodies, such as local assemblies and parliaments. The system choices were largely justified with the post-war devastations, which left Abkhazia with few resources and necessitated a centralised system with vertical power structures centred around strong presidential power and authority.<sup>74</sup> However, the state structure outcomes in Abkhazia cannot solely be explained with its war legacies. Abkhazia's centralised system with vertical power structures represented the default option for most post-Soviet states irrespective of their war experiences. In that sense, some of the state structure outcomes reflect institutional path dependencies.

*Figure 13 Administration Building of Gulripshskiy Region (Chachkhalia 2005)*

*This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

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<sup>73</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>74</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

From a territorial control point of view rather than an institutional perspective, the Abkhaz forces did not achieve full control over their de facto territory during the war and did not do so until the 2008 Russo-Georgian war (Blakkisrud & Kolstø 2012: 282). Particularly the south-eastern Gali region and Upper Kodori in north-eastern Abkhazia remained contentious regions after the Georgian-Abkhaz war. The latter region was even reintegrated into Georgia in 2006, before becoming a part of Abkhazia with Russian military support in 2008 (Blakkisrud & Kolstø 2012). A monitoring mission from the United Nations (UNOMIG) offered some supplementary security provision in the conflict zones and may have contributed somewhat to internal security levels, but was unable to get involved in recurring violence in 1998 and 2008 (Comai 2018a: 68).

This section highlighted the degrees of state building activity and the de facto regime's intent to develop at least the institutional structures that formed the basis for subsequent state capacity even before the Georgian-Abkhaz war broke out in 1992. The de facto regime was preoccupied with guaranteeing domestic resource extraction, energy supply and warfare in this period, but also started setting up the basis for engaging in foreign relations. In this context, Abkhazia's institutional and infrastructural foundation and the interrelated path dependencies from its period as an Autonomous Republic benefited the regime's ability to provide basic public services and goods, even though it did not guarantee full territorial integrity and internal security until after 2008.

### **6.1.2 State Building During the Blockade and Sanctions**

With the end of the war in September 1993, negotiations between Abkhazia and Georgia with Russian and international organisation involvement were set up.<sup>75</sup> Initially, Russia, at least on an official level, pressured Abkhazia to reintegrate with Georgia.<sup>76</sup> In order to emphasise this point, Russia as a member of the CIS established a so-called blockade against Abkhazia in form of a Russo-Abkhaz border closure for men of the age between 16 and 60, which resulted in the partial isolation of Abkhazia

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<sup>75</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>76</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

for approximately 6 years.<sup>77 78</sup> In January 1996, the CIS countries adopted a resolution outlining the elements of the embargo and additional sanctions, which ultimately banned CIS “trade, financial, transportation, communications, and other ties with Abkhazia at the state level” (Prelz Oltramonti 2015: 171).<sup>79</sup>

Despite some channels of support from Russia and Turkey, most Abkhaz interviewees refer to the time of the blockade as a period of survival, because Abkhazia not only had limited financial resources, but some areas even lacked electricity and clean drinking water.<sup>80 81</sup> As many villages were close to being self-sufficient, hunger was not one of the central issues in Abkhazia during the blockade.<sup>82</sup> The limited financial means of the Abkhaz regime meant that it was unable to pay the salaries of public servants. Ministry staff and teachers at schools and universities, for instance, were not paid until the end of 1994.<sup>83</sup> But even after 1994, the salaries were low, irregular and rather symbolic in nature.<sup>84 85</sup> Government staff and teachers were therefore reliant on help from relatives abroad, domestic agricultural products or international organisations that provided humanitarian aid.<sup>86</sup>

Hence, the Abkhaz de facto state took on a specific position in people’s life that was not all-encompassing but was restricted to central functions such as security provision, including border management, policing and setting up a legal framework, external relations as well as an extraction and redistribution system. One interviewee described the role of the state in that period as follows:

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<sup>77</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>78</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>79</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>80</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>81</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>82</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>83</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>84</sup> Interview 15: Abkhaz scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>85</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>86</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

[A]t that time, [...] people depended on themselves more than on the state [...]. The state was more responsible for our external situation, the negotiation process and [...] for the provision of certain degree of law and order.<sup>87</sup>

**Representative of a Non-Governmental Organisation in Sukhumi**

Despite the blockade and the focus on survival, the central Abkhaz ministries started operating again and the Abkhaz regime rebuilt its infrastructure after the war.<sup>88</sup> One interviewee argues that the Abkhaz leadership had no other choice but to pursue at least some limited degree of state building, due to its isolation, the blockade and limited cooperation possibilities with Russia and Georgia.<sup>89</sup> In other words, Abkhazia's partial isolation may have made Abkhazia more self-reliant and focused on local ownership which consequently benefited the state building process. Levitsky and Way (2006; 2010) would argue that the low degrees of linkages between Abkhazia and Russia in that period shifted the focus on endogenous factors and benefited state building in Abkhazia. Similarly, periods of predominant isolation and the absence of international involvement may present de facto states with the opportunity of stabilisation (Kolstø 2006) and state building can develop without a strict external blueprint, which enables more domestic input (Richards & Smith 2015: 1718). At the same time, isolation may incentivise the maintenance of unity and shift the state building emphasis on military force (Ishiyama & Batta 2012: 124).

The extensive focus on establishing state capacity and basic provision of services and goods in Abkhazia's initial state building period is in line with studies that stress the relevance of the initial state building progress for establishing control (Caspersen 2012: 90) and the overall success of some de facto states (Zabarah 2012; Johnson & Smaker 2014: 6). There is, however, a crucial regional distinction in Abkhazia between Lower and Upper Gali in terms of state building during this period. In Upper Gali between 1994 and 1998, authorities built rudimentary state infrastructures in form of basic police control over the territory, a reward system and

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<sup>87</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>88</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>89</sup> Interview 15: Abkhaz scholar (Saint Petersburg)

a tax collection system with the support of the local government. In Lower Gali, on the other hand, there was essentially no state infrastructure, no local government and lack of manpower.<sup>90</sup> Still, Abkhazia was able to provide basic public services and goods even though the regime had not attained statehood and full control over its territory. This supports the finding that strong statehood is not necessary for public service and goods provision (Lee et al. 2014: 636).

### **6.1.3 State Building Motivation in the Easing Phase**

Following Abkhazia's official declaration of independence in October 1999 after a referendum where 97 per cent voted in favour of adopting the constitution of 1994 and with Putin's first presidency, the blockade and most sanctions ended gradually (Chirikba 2014; Mihalkanin 2004).<sup>91</sup> According to Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi (2010: 7-8), this was in response to tensions over Chechnya between the Russian Federation and Georgia. The beginning of the economic easing period between Abkhazia and Russia did not result in immediate financial contributions from Russia, as their economic relationship focused predominantly on the easing of sanctions and fewer border controls (ICG 2006: 16).

By 1999, Abkhazia had already formed all central governance institutions (Yemelianova 2015: 60-61), yet the motivations behind Abkhazia's state building efforts are not always clear. Until 2004, Georgia and Abkhazia continued their negotiations under Russian mediation due to external pressures, even though some Abkhaz leaders already envisioned independent statehood at this point.<sup>92 93</sup> However, it is difficult to link Abkhazia's state building efforts up to this point restrictively to its pursuit of independent statehood, as the creation of state institutions and the provision of limited public services and goods may have been also used as a bargaining tool in the negotiation process.<sup>94</sup> In addition, the Abkhaz

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<sup>90</sup> Interview 17: American scholar (Moscow)

<sup>91</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>92</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>93</sup> Interview 1: Georgian scholar (Tbilisi)

<sup>94</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

regime pursued state building to manage expectations among the public relating to the provision of security and other basic services, while pragmatically engaging with Russian and Georgian pressures.<sup>95</sup> One interviewee argued that up until 2008 the driving force behind state building for the population and the government was to show the world that Abkhazia can be a functioning state, which simultaneously unified the population behind the goal of recognition. Since Russia's recognition in 2008, the motivation behind state building has changed and new unifying strategies have been lacking.<sup>96</sup>

The formal changes in the Russo-Abkhaz relationship in 1999 shaped the relative importance of direct and indirect diffusion influences. The economic easing period permitted the expansion of direct coercive diffusion instruments ranging from financial contributions to agreements that specified trading regulations between the two parties. The prevalence of indirect diffusion channels observable during Abkhazia's period of partial isolation did not fade, however, as the growing coercive diffusion influences encouraged the role of normative and mimetic diffusion channels. At the same time, the rise in coercive diffusion sources in form of military and financial support facilitated competitive diffusion influences, because Russia was willing to defend Georgian military campaigns against Abkhazia and presented a viable alternative source for healthcare and education services.

In terms of internal legitimacy and perceptions of state building after twenty years of de facto statehood, a survey showed that the majority of ethnic Abkhaz support independence, that trust in the president is high, but that less than half of respondents trust the police and courts (Bakke et al. 2013: 5-6). Meanwhile, Abkhazia's economic development worries citizens and while attitudes towards health care are slightly more optimistic, the Abkhaz population is sceptical of health care provision (7). This signifies that the Abkhaz regime has been more successful in ensuring state and regime legitimacy than institutional legitimacy. Still, concerns about security and economic provision may reduce the confidence of the public in the status quo and the ruling elite (Bakke et al. 2018: 165).

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<sup>95</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>96</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

### **6.3 Domestic State Building Trajectories in Abkhazia**

Guided by Blakkisrud and Kolstø's (2011; 2012) analyses of state and nation building in Transnistria and the de facto states of the South Caucasus, as well as a set of studies on institution building in Abkhazia (Krylov 2002; Skakov 2005; Berg & Mölder 2012; Ó'Beacháin 2012; von Steinsdorff 2012; Bakke et al. 2013; Kopeček 2017), this chapter examines the circumstances, actions and coincidences that facilitated state building in Abkhazia and the ways in which the Abkhaz regime financed and prioritised internal state and institution building to attain the capacity to provide public services and goods.<sup>97</sup> Instead of approaching Abkhazia's state building development from a chronological perspective, this section accentuates dominant trends in Abkhazia's state institution development and the provision of public goods and services. Focusing on central domestic state building trajectories enables a closer engagement with the developments that facilitated Abkhazia's state capacity and the provision of public goods and services. This section thereby addresses the ways in which de facto states may pursue state building without direct external patron engagement and covers how the presence of a patron indirectly shapes the decision-making of domestic elites in terms of state building prioritisation. These domestic state building trajectories cover the inclusion of Soviet structures, state building prioritisation, war and trade as state building facilitators and public service appointments.

#### **6.3.1 Historical Legacies of the Soviet Union and Abkhazia's State Structure**

Studies on Abkhazia's state and institution building developments do not always consider the institutional legacies from the Soviet period when assessing the

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<sup>97</sup> State capacity and the provision of public services and goods are only two aspects of the state building process of a nascent state. Richards (2015: 5), for instance, argues that state building goes beyond mere technocratic institution building, because it manifests itself as "socio-political change that creates, sustains and legitimizes a separate political entity, both to the international community and to the domestic audience." It is therefore also worth considering other societal developments and nation building practices in Abkhazia. Dembińska (2019) and Clogg (2008), for example, offer a detailed insight into nation-building strategies in Abkhazia. While the predominant focus on governance institutions in this chapter does not reveal the whole story of state building in Abkhazia, it uncovers the institutional priorities of the (de facto) authorities in setting up the state.

institutional realities of the de facto state. In a comparative study of state building in post-Soviet de facto states of the South Caucasus, Kolstø and Blakkisrud (2008: 506) even argue that, at least for South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh, “former status in the hierarchy of Soviet national autonomous units does not seem to play a role [...] [in] potential state-building.” Their definition of state building refers specifically to defence, border and territorial control, economic development and the consolidation of state institutions. However, this section argues that while the long-term impact on contemporary state structures is debated, the historical legacies of the Soviet Union accounted for the basic institutional structure of Abkhazia after the disintegration of the USSR.<sup>98 99</sup> This section thereby positions itself more in line with Caspersen (2012: 35), who argues that “the former autonomous institutions could be used as a basis for the creation of state-like structures.” Several interviews reflected this line of argument by understanding the Abkhaz state as a continuation of the old Soviet system, where a clear break or even a distinct transformation of Soviet institutions did not take place.<sup>100 101</sup> Hence, this section highlights that the Soviet structures formed the basis of Abkhazia’s state capacity in the early 1990s, which did not necessitate external patron support.

At the same time, this argumentation counters the findings of the statistical analyses of this thesis, which uncover that previous independence does either not affect the likelihood of achieving moderate or high degrees of state building or even decreases the likelihood (see chapter 5). Similarly, the number of governance institutions are not significantly impacted by previous independence of de facto states. While the findings of this Abkhaz case study do not invalidate the statistical findings of the thesis, it illustrates the ways in which de facto states may utilise their previous autonomy status in their state and institution building endeavour.

The Soviet Union was a federal union comprising fifteen union republics that consisted of additional hierarchical, administrative layers, such as *oblasts* or *krais*. In addition to the union republics, the Soviet Union included twenty autonomous Soviet

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<sup>98</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>99</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>100</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>101</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

socialist republics, which were associated with union republics, but had more autonomy rights than *oblasts* or *krais* (Carr 1950-1978; Motyl 2001; Noah 1966: 48-50). Depending on their administrative title, entities were subsequently granted varying degrees of autonomous rights (Cornell 2002: 248).

Since 1931, the Abkhaz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was one of twenty autonomous republics in the Soviet Union that enjoyed a set of autonomy privileges including the control over their own set of ministries (see photographic evidence in figures 13, 14 and 16 for example). One Georgian interviewee even argued that Abkhazia received disproportionately more political attention and health sector investments from the Georgian Union Republic and the Soviet central government due to its history, geography and appeal as a tourist destination. Soviet Georgia, for instance, allegedly invested more resources into the Abkhaz infrastructure than in any other Georgian region.<sup>102</sup>

*Figure 14 Frunze Street. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers of the Abkhazian ASSR (Shakaya 1979)*

*This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

Thus, the state structure of the Soviet Union facilitated the presence of a more or less sophisticated network of institutions and political and managerial awareness within the union republics, autonomous republics and regions.<sup>103</sup> Abkhazia inherited

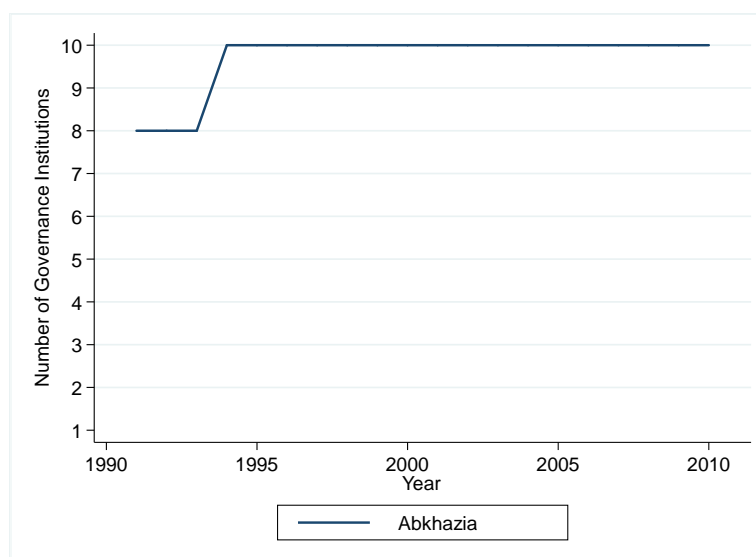
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<sup>102</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>103</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

a set of state institutions and structures from its previous status as an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, such as ministries, a parliament as well as education and health infrastructure.<sup>104 105 106</sup> While ministries in autonomous republics at least nominally had the status of ministries, they had limited financial, material and political authority.<sup>107</sup> Major policy decisions, for instance, were taken in either Tbilisi or Moscow.<sup>108 109</sup> Nonetheless, the execution of governance tasks, which required an experienced bureaucracy, was taking place locally in Abkhaz ministries.<sup>110</sup> The graph below (figure 15) confirms the relatively high number of (physically present) governance institutions in Abkhazia from the early 1990s onwards when the Soviet Union dissolved, according to Florea’s (2016) classification.

*Figure 15 Number of Governance Institutions in Abkhazia (1991- 2011)*



Both interview and primary source data confirm that most of the institutional structures of the Abkhaz Autonomous Republic were transformed into Abkhaz

<sup>104</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>105</sup> Interview 4: Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (Tbilisi)

<sup>106</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>107</sup> Interview 4: Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (Tbilisi)

<sup>108</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>109</sup> Interview 1: Georgian scholar (Tbilisi)

<sup>110</sup> Interview 1: Georgian scholar (Tbilisi)

government structures.<sup>111</sup> In the pre- and post-war period, Abkhaz ministries and political structures remained largely the same and may have only changed in name rather than in content.<sup>112</sup> On 27<sup>th</sup> November 1991, for instance, the Abkhaz authorities abolished the KGB of Abkhazia and on its basis installed the State Security Service of Abkhazia.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, the Abkhaz Health Ministry was opened on the structures of the Soviet Health Ministry in Sukhumi.<sup>114</sup> Meanwhile, the Abkhaz authorities continued the use of Soviet institutions as wide-ranging as university and research institutions, criminal legislation and Soviet passports (see table 19 for a representation of Abkhazia's incorporation of Soviet institutional structures).<sup>115 116</sup>

<sup>117</sup> An additional institution that was shaped by Abkhazia's previous level of autonomy within the Soviet Union is the Abkhaz bureaucracy, including administrative personnel and standard operating procedures. The presence of formal state institutions that controlled the implementation of executive orders ensured that the Abkhaz regime was not entirely new to leadership and bureaucracy. This advantage was enhanced by several central leadership figures and bureaucrats remaining in their position during and after the war.<sup>118 119 120</sup>

Still, the Abkhaz regime not only relied on existing infrastructure, but also developed new governance institutions that were not initially part of the institutional framework of Autonomous Republics in order to address the needs of the new realities of de facto independence. The Abkhaz government, for instance, established both a Ministry of Defence and a Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the war to

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<sup>111</sup> Interview 1: Georgian scholar (Tbilisi)

<sup>112</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>113</sup> Московский государственный институт международных отношений МИД России. Центр Кавказских исследований (2008). *Конфликты в Абхазии И Южной Осетии. Документы 1989-2006 гг.* Москва: Русская Панорама. No. 69, p.129.

<sup>114</sup> Interview 2: Representatives of an international donor (Sukhumi)

<sup>115</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>116</sup> Interview 4: Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (Tbilisi)

<sup>117</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>118</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>119</sup> Interview 1: Georgian scholar (Tbilisi)

<sup>120</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

organise the protection of the Abkhaz de facto territory.<sup>121</sup> In December 1993, a new Abkhaz government was formed that included a number of new ministries, such as a Ministry of Ecology, Ministry of Culture and a Ministry of Information and Press (see table 19 for newly created institutions).<sup>122 123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>122</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>123</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

Table 19 Institutional Transition<sup>124</sup>

|                    | Soviet Period (1978 Constitution)          | Post-1994 Constitution                                    |
|--------------------|--|---|
| <b>Executive</b>   |  |   |
|                    | <i>Chairman of the Supreme Soviet</i>      | /   |
|                    | /  | <i>President</i>  |
|                    | /  | <i>Vice President</i>                                     |
|                    | /  | <i>Prime Minister</i>                                     |
|                    | <i>Council of Ministers</i>                | <i>Cabinet of Ministers</i>                               |
|                    | <i>Ministry of Health</i>                  | <i>Ministry of Health</i>                                 |
|                    | <i>Ministry of Education</i>               | <i>Ministry of Education</i>                              |
|                    | <i>Tax Committee</i>                       | <i>Ministry of Taxes and Fees</i>                         |
|                    | <i>(Budgetary) Responsibilities</i>        | <i>Ministry of Finance</i>                                |
|                    | <i>Responsibilities</i>                    | <i>Ministry of Interior</i>                               |
|                    | <i>Responsibilities</i>                    | <i>Ministry of Justice</i>                                |
|                    | <i>Responsibilities</i>                    | <i>Ministry of Economy and Foreign Economic Relations</i> |
|                    | <i>Responsibilities</i>                    | <i>Ministry of Work and Social Development</i>            |
|                    | <i>Responsibilities</i>                    | <i>Ministry of Agriculture</i>                            |
|                    | <i>Responsibilities</i>                    | <i>Ministry of Culture</i>                                |
|                    | <i>Responsibilities</i>                    | <i>Ministry of Ecology</i>                                |
|                    | <i>Responsibilities</i>                    | <i>Ministry of Industry</i>                               |
|                    | /  | <i>Ministry of Defence</i>                                |
|                    | /  | <i>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</i>                        |
|                    | /  | <i>Ministry of Information and Press</i>                  |
|                    | /  | <i>Ministry of Energy</i>                                 |
|                    | /  | <i>6 Government Committees<sup>125</sup></i>              |
|                    | <i>Local Councils of People's Deputies</i> | <i>Regional Governments and Ministries</i>                |
| <b>Legislative</b> |  |   |
|                    | <i>Supreme Soviet</i>                      | <i>People's Assembly of Abkhazia</i>                      |
| <b>Judiciary</b>   |  |   |
|                    | <i>Supreme Court</i>                       | <i>Supreme Court</i>                                      |
|                    | <i>Arbitration Court</i>                   | <i>Arbitration Court</i>                                  |
|                    | <i>Local Courts</i>                        | <i>Local Courts</i>                                       |
|                    | /  | <i>Military Court</i>                                     |
| <b>Other</b>       |  |   |
|                    | <i>KGB</i>                                 | <i>Abkhaz State Security Service</i>                      |
|                    | /  | <i>National Central Bank</i>                              |

<sup>124</sup> This table is based on publications by Chirikba (2014), Shanava et al. (2015) as well as research interviews. '/' indicates that the institution was not present at that point in time. It was not always possible to identify sources that confirm the presence of official ministries in Abkhazia during the Soviet period. However, in some instances the 1978 constitution describes government responsibilities in a variety of government sectors that may indicate previous exposure to certain government sectors before the constitution of 1994 (these are simply referred to as *responsibilities* in the table). Furthermore, the number and names of ministries tended to change frequently, which means that this table does not account for institutional developments between the constitutions of 1978 and 1994.

<sup>125</sup> Government Committees included the Government Committee of Customs; Property Management and Privatisation; Resorts and Tourism; Repatriation; Youth and Sport; Ecology and Environmental Management (Chirikba 2014).

An additional Soviet legacy as well as a legacy of the post-war period is that family networks and clans play an important role in reducing the potential for poverty, limiting the effect of brain drain and ensuring legal protections of individuals (Trier et al. 2010). In terms of informal political institutions and practices, the Abkhaz political system is to this day oftentimes linked to clan structures and clientelism (Kopeček 2017: 123-124). Kopeček (2017: 124) identified two clans in different regional locations (the Gudauta or Bzyp and the Ochamchira or Abzhua). Kopeček (2017: 124) also stresses the role of “clientelist networks based on family, friendship and business interests” that are especially dominant in regional and local level.

Overall, Abkhaz authorities had little incentive and limited financial political capital to break with and transform the, at least partially, predetermined Soviet state structures of Abkhazia. The institutional legacies of the Soviet period presented the authorities with a degree of state capacity and permitted the Abkhaz regime to develop a political Abkhaz elite that relatively rapidly took control over Abkhazia’s territory and administration (Cornell 2002: 265-266). This was of particular importance in relation to controlling Abkhazia’s opportunity structures, be they of a geographic, economic or resource nature, which could subsequently improve Abkhazia’s bargaining position (i.e. Zabarah 2012: 183). The existing institutional structures and a common history with other Soviet successor states also facilitated at least partial external support. Abkhaz elites were able to source support from former Soviet military personnel, for instance, due to existing Communist Party connections (Cornell 2002: 265-266).

### **6.3.2 Prioritisation in Abkhazia’s State Building Development**

Caspersen (2012) and Blakkisrud and Kolstø (2011) disentangle state building in de facto states by dividing these developments into different possibly overlapping phases and processes ranging from the establishment of physical control to internal legitimacy. Rather than referring to state building phases, this section approaches the state building developments in Abkhazia from a prioritisation perspective, as this reflects the decision-making approaches of domestic authorities towards state building. Framing Abkhazia’s state building development through the lens of

prioritisation uncovers patterns of state formation that are informed by the geopolitical and economic considerations of the young de facto state, explores the bounded agency of state builders and reveals areas of potential access to the Abkhaz state for external actors. In other words, areas of the state that are selectively neglected by the regime may result in sporadic state weakness, which in turn enables domestic and international actors to influence the policies, institutions and practices of the entity (Lake 2014: 524). Thus, this section highlights that Abkhazia's domestic state building prioritisation impacts the structure and scope of the state, which in turn shapes the entity's ability to provide public services and goods and affects the susceptibility to external influences (see chapter 8 for an analysis of how these dynamics play out in Abkhazia's education sector).

The blockade and sanctions of the 1990s as well as the restricted international support presented the de facto regime with limited economic and financial room for manoeuvre for its state and institution building development. While the Abkhaz state could at least partially rely on the existing institutional framework and bureaucratic experience from the Soviet Union, this institutional basis proved insufficient in guaranteeing security, the provision of public services and maintaining the salaries for public servants. Ultimately, these constraints required the Abkhaz regime to prioritise certain sectors in its state building endeavour. Particularly the periods of uncertainty and partial isolation were earmarked by survival efforts of both the Abkhaz state and its population.<sup>126 127</sup> The population on Abkhaz territory, on the one hand, did not necessarily suffer from wide-spread hunger because of a high degree of agricultural self-sufficiency, however, many regions experienced high levels of crime and did not have electricity, running water and sufficient salaries.<sup>128</sup> In these periods, people depended on themselves more than they did on the state, which had significant implications for the perception of what constituted the state and its responsibilities vis-à-vis the population. The Abkhaz state, on the other hand, was therefore not preoccupied with service provision per se, but was instead responsible

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<sup>126</sup> Interview 6: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>127</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>128</sup> Interview 9: Government representative of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

for a set of core tasks including the management of Abkhazia's external relations (i.e. the negotiation process with Russia, Georgia and international organisations), setting up a basic resource extraction and distribution system including trade as well as the provision of law and order (i.e. border controls, military, security services and a legal framework).<sup>129</sup> Declarations by the Abkhaz Soviet Socialist Republic and the Supreme Council of Abkhazia mirror this state building prioritisation in the period of uncertainty and partial isolation. A substantial portion of the de facto state's written output represents exchanges between Sukhumi, Tbilisi and Moscow, which reflect the de facto state's newly adopted role as manager of external relations on behalf of the Abkhaz public.<sup>130</sup> By 1990, Abkhazia had already started to declare its intentions to set up the framework for basic resource extraction and its domestic and international distribution by setting up a central bank, a tax system and customs regulations.<sup>131</sup> One year later, the Abkhaz authorities intended to install the State Security Service of Abkhazia, which was at least partially responsible for the assurance of law and order on Abkhaz territory.<sup>132</sup> Despite the symbolic significance of these declarations of intent, it is unlikely that the Abkhaz SSR was permitted to introduce these institutions while being part of the Soviet Union.

Until the early 2000s, Abkhazia's security and defence was considered a clear priority for its regime, because of the real or perceived threat from Georgia and repeated violent attacks in the border area.<sup>133</sup> <sup>134</sup> Abkhazia also faced criminal violence and a struggle for power from a variety of civilian, former military and other criminal networks, particularly in the Gali region of Abkhazia (Khashig 2003; 2004). This showed that the Abkhaz central regime did not have complete control over its de facto territory (Lynch 2004), which allowed the parent state to develop alternative

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<sup>129</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>130</sup> Московский государственный институт международных отношений МИД России. Центр Кавказских исследований (2008). *Конфликты в Абхазии И Южной Осетии. Документы 1989-2006 гг.* Москва: Русская Панорама.

<sup>131</sup> Московский государственный институт международных отношений МИД России. Центр Кавказских исследований (2008). *Конфликты в Абхазии И Южной Осетии. Документы 1989-2006 гг.* Москва: Русская Панорама. No. 56, pp. 110-112

<sup>132</sup> No. 69, p.129.

<sup>133</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>134</sup> Interview 9: Government representative of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

rivalling structures (Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2008). This is not in itself surprising as post-war periods are oftentimes quite violent and not actually represent post-conflict societies in the strict sense (Bakke 2011: 90, 94). Particularly de facto states that emerge out of violent conflicts and had fragmented separatist groups have to deal with internal violence over political control (Cunningham et al. 2012). If the violence at the end of the official war continues, because the de facto regime is unable to ensure security and control, this may negatively influence public service and goods provision which in turn increases the likelihood of effecting internal legitimacy (Bakke 2011: 91; 2013: 11). The Abkhaz authorities therefore spent significant financial and human resources on its army and border protection.<sup>135</sup>

Meanwhile, the Abkhaz regime placed emphasis on the development of a compatible banking system<sup>136</sup> and the energy supply to and within Abkhazia. According to a Georgian official, the energy infrastructure was even the first priority in the immediate post-war period, because the Abkhaz regime spent significant resources into the maintenance of energy facilities and infrastructure.<sup>137</sup> Up to that point, Abkhazia's energy supply had largely originated from the Inguri Dam hydropower station, the second largest energy source in terms of volume and output in the Soviet Union. According to an official that was involved in Georgian-Abkhaz post-war negotiations, Abkhazia and Georgia came to an agreement of joint exploitation of the hydropower plant on the first day after the conflict, because the reservoir is on the Georgian side and the technical facilities are situated on the Abkhaz side.

In the easing phase from 1999 onwards, the Abkhaz authorities started to gradually rely on Russian support in terms of security provision, which facilitated reduced Abkhaz military spending and a slow-down of its military development.<sup>138</sup> Instead, the Abkhaz regime stated placing more emphasis on welfare provisions.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Interview 9: Government representative of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>136</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>137</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>138</sup> The importance of understanding not only the effects of physical security, but also ontological security has been highlighted by Jakša (2017).

<sup>139</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

Despite the increasing welfare focus, such as pension payments, Abkhazia's education (discussed in chapter 8) and health sector received limited attention until the late 2000s.

Hence, Abkhazia's state building prioritisation as well as its geopolitical and economic circumstances shaped the structure and extent of the de facto state. Even if the declarations of the de facto officials represent intentions rather than actions, they unveil the ways in which the Abkhaz regime prioritised its state building efforts and how it perceived its responsibilities. This argument is at least partially in line with Lake and Fariss' (2014: 570) view that national and international leaders do not see state capacity as their primary or even singular goal. Instead, national leaders focus on political survival and therefore attempt to identify support coalitions (Lake & Fariss 2014). Abkhazia's prioritisation of economic and security structures as well as the management of its foreign affairs contributed at least partially to the political survival of the Abkhaz regime. It is therefore not surprising that public service and goods provision, including education, health and welfare policies, were not high on the list of priorities until the easing phase of the 2000s. However, the more the de facto regime evolved, the higher were the demands toward the state regarding public service and goods provision beyond security.

### **6.3.3 Internal and External (Military) Competition as a State Building Mechanism**

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, but arguably already in 1931 with Abkhazia's integration into the Georgian Union Republic, Abkhazia found itself in the centre of geopolitical and ethnic tensions with Georgia. Thus, the Abkhaz regime not only had to curtail the privatised violence on its territory that had made secession possible in order to avoid losing internal legitimacy and cohesion (Bakke 2011; Bakke et al. 2013), but the authorities also had to manage the perceived or actual external pressures from Georgia. The role of conflict in the state building developments of internationally recognised states has been discussed prominently by Tilly (1975; 1992) and has also been set in the context of de facto states (King 2001; Caspersen 2011). Wars are considered state building facilitators for de facto states, because they stimulate the development of military institutions, a common

ideology, unity and a resource extraction system (King 2001; Ishiyama & Batta 2012). At the same time, the continued real or perceived threat of an external actor encourages the desire for a strong state and facilitates institution and state building (Caspersen 2012: 77). The statistical results of this thesis, for instance, highlighted that stronger parent states in terms of military capabilities compared to patron states increase the likelihood of de facto states attaining coherent government structures (high degrees of state building), but not basic civilian governance (moderate degrees of state building) and the number of governance institutions all other variables held equal. In other words, competition as an indirect diffusion source appears to encourage particularly the development of coherent governance structures such as internal security and border management. Yet, competition appears to matter less in the early state building developments when de facto regimes go from rebel governance to basic civilian governance. However, also domestic competition can affect state building in a given entity. If criminal activities are widespread, especially in the economic sector following war, this might reduce the quantity and quality of public service and goods provision as elites focus more on getting local warlords or even external support on their side instead of providing public services and goods (Reno 2002).

Rather than analysing Abkhazia's state building development through Tilly's (1975; 1992) and King's (2001) perspective of conflict and war, this section examines policy and institutional choices in Abkhazia's state building development through the lens of competitive diffusion instead. In the case of Abkhazia, competition diffusion takes place in the context of patron, parent and international community forces competing for control over particular sectors of the state, which in turn may motivate policy or institutional developments beyond the military sphere. The de facto regime essentially competes with the perceived or actual aggression from Georgia over the control of Abkhaz territory, resources and service provision. Henceforth, Kolstø and Blakkisrud's (2008) argument that parent state opposition to extended autonomy rights for de facto states encourages state building efforts of these unrecognised entities in the post-Soviet context can be neatly situated in a competition diffusion context. Similarly, the competition diffusion framework is in line with Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi's (2010: 10) claim that "[c]reating viable governmental institutions,

rehabilitating the economy and enforcing the rule of law are perceived as the best protection against ‘Georgian imperialism and aggression’, since such measures are seen as strengthening and legitimizing the de facto state in the eyes of the international community.” The causal mechanisms in these instances are legislative or service provision changes that are facilitated by the de facto state authorities’ perception of competing parent state involvement in the de facto state. By following the causal chains of competitive diffusion laid out in the theoretical framework and applying process tracing to the source material, this section empirically establishes that competitive diffusion is at work in Abkhazia’s state and institution building processes.

In the case of Abkhazia, competition with the parent state encouraged diffusion channels that facilitated more defined hierarchical power structures, a shared ideology and arguably even a national identity (Iskandaryan 2015: 31). Meanwhile, competitive diffusion stimulated the development of a political system that ensured the dominance of ethnic Abkhaz by cooperating with ethnic Armenians and Russians on Abkhaz territory and nations from the north Caucasus in order to increase the distance with Georgia (Cornell 2002: 264). While, the quality and sustainability of these institutions is not necessarily ensured, they nonetheless build a basis to win wars and protect a stable population (Iskandaryan 2015: 31). It is not unusual for post-Soviet de facto state elites to also concede domestically on the dominant focus on the monopoly of force and coercion for tactical or pragmatic reasons for at least some time (Broers 2015: 141). Even though some “shadow state-like networks were still evident within the formal bureaucratic structures” in the early 2000s, de facto elites did not share coercive control with non-governmental armed groups (Broers 2015: 141). This is also where the distinction between the patron classification of this thesis and Florea comes into play. Until 1999, Abkhazia was largely self-reliant with some support from Russian regions. This partial isolation pressured the Abkhaz regime to develop its security forces more. Since 1999, the strength of Abkhaz security and military forces has deteriorated with Russian forces taking over security and military responsibilities from Abkhazia. Thus, at least in the security and military sector, the presence of a patron appears to have resulted in less development.

By applying a competition diffusion framework to Abkhazia, this section goes beyond the mere influences of military conflict on military institutions and national cohesion, because it encompasses competitive diffusion sources brought forward by the conflict that penetrate sectors as diverse as energy, education and health care. The following three examples attempt to outline the ways in which competition diffusion sources exert influence on specific state institutions and policy decisions of the de facto regime. Interestingly, each example encouraged different responses from the Abkhaz authorities ranging from direct counteraction, patron involvement to compromise. The examples highlight the varied outcomes of competitive diffusion with observable implications such as institution sharing, developments in public service provisions and accelerated state building responses. The findings also demonstrate that competition with the parent state facilitates direct diffusion influences (as in Abkhazia's healthcare example), while not reducing the importance of indirect diffusion sources.

The first example of competitive diffusion occurs in the Lower Gali region in southern Abkhazia where the Georgian government supports some schools by providing free Georgian textbooks, rehabilitating school infrastructure and in some cases supplementing the salaries of teachers and other education staff (Trier et al. 2010: 71-72). This involvement of the Georgian government represents competitive diffusion in the sense that it motivated the de facto authorities in Sukhumi to extend their control over and involvement in the schools of Lower Gali by providing Abkhaz and Russian textbooks and demanding the use of the Abkhaz curriculum in return (128). In other words, Lower Gali's education sector exemplifies how the Abkhaz regime retaliated Georgia's involvement with a set of education policies addressing the competition in this region of Abkhazia. Process tracing thereby demonstrates that the perceived competition by the Abkhaz authorities of Georgian involvement in Lower Gali facilitated an observable implication in form of an accelerated state building response from the Abkhaz government and an extension of the state building provisions in an area where the de facto authorities had limited territorial control.

Second, Georgia enacted a health care programme targeting citizens on Abkhaz territory with free or highly subsidised health care treatments in Georgia,

which instigated cross-border movements for health care purposes especially in severe and costly cases.<sup>140 141</sup> Even though few people in Abkhazia would admit to receiving Georgian health care treatment,<sup>142</sup> the existence of the programme alone can be considered a challenge by the Georgian government against Abkhazia as the sole provider of public services and goods. Yet, unlike the first example, the Abkhaz regime has not focused on the provision of better domestic health care provisions, but instead relies partially on Russian support to match or outweigh Georgian diffusion influences. Russia has, for instance, started introducing quotas for treatments in Russia to patients on Abkhaz territory, which ensures that most patients are at least partially funded by the Russian budget. In addition, Russia has started providing financial and material resources to improve Abkhaz domestic health care provision especially since 2011.<sup>143</sup> Based on the timeline of policy implementations, the policy of the Abkhaz authorities can be seen as a response to increasing Georgian offerings in the health care sector. In that sense, competitive diffusion encouraged observable outcomes involving institution and service provision sharing.

Third, Abkhazia's energy sector exemplifies how the Abkhaz elite may still pursue a strategy of cooperation with the Georgian government despite the competitive environment if it ensures Abkhaz viability. The Inguri Dam hydropower plant represents a central component in Abkhazia's state building strategy in the immediate aftermath of the Georgian-Abkhaz war in order to ensure the energy supply on Abkhaz territory. Yet, due to the geographical division of the hydropower plant between the Abkhaz and Georgian territories and due to the insufficient know-how and experience on the Abkhaz side in operating the plant, the Abkhaz authorities were required to cooperate with Georgia (energy supply was certainly also in Georgia's interest). Both parties agreed that from the first day after the war, Georgian engineers were allowed to cross the de facto border to work on the Abkhaz

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<sup>140</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>141</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>142</sup> Interview 6: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>143</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

side of the hydropower plant and support Abkhaz engineers.<sup>144</sup> Thus, despite competition between the parent and de facto state, both parties can engage in joint public goods provision.

#### **6.3.4 Financing State Building**

Building and subsequently sustaining a state necessitates tremendous financial and human resource investments, ranging from maintaining health equipment, setting up new ministries to paying salaries for public service employees. This section therefore examines the ways in which Abkhazia managed to finance its state and institution building efforts and how this, in turn, shaped the Abkhaz state structure.

In order to finance the Abkhaz regime's state building efforts, the authorities relied predominantly on domestic resource extraction between 1993 and 2008 to pay for the provision of basic services to the public (Prelz Oltramonti 2015; Broers 2015), which Broers (2015: 146) refers to as the subsistent model. This was largely due to the international context of the post-war years including the blockade and CIS sanctions until 1999, which significantly restricted alternative sources of income, such as external support and trade. It is, however, somewhat of a myth that Abkhazia was completely isolated in the period up to 1999. While the sanctions and blockade resulted in widespread international isolation, Abkhazia continued to rely on informal channels with Russian regions, because Russia did not comply with all the requirements from the CIS agreement.<sup>145</sup> Russia, for instance, occasionally opened its border with Abkhazia allowing trade of Abkhaz agricultural produce.<sup>146 147 148</sup> The continuation of sporadic trade was possible due to the inclusion of a clause in a CIS agreement under Chernomyrdin's leadership that while prohibiting government interactions with Abkhazia, permitted private sector interactions.<sup>149</sup> In other words,

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<sup>144</sup> Also the United Nations and the European Union were involved in the infrastructural support for the Ingur/Enguri power plant project (Trier et al. 2010: 14-15).

<sup>145</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>146</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>147</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>148</sup> Interview 4: Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (Tbilisi)

<sup>149</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

CIS governments were not allowed to provide financial, material and economic assistance to Abkhazia, whereas private companies, organisations or individuals were allowed to do so.<sup>150</sup> This not only had the implication that the railway connection between Sochi and Sukhumi was opened,<sup>151</sup> but also that Russian businessmen travelled to Abkhazia to buy agricultural produce from farmers and ship the goods across the border.<sup>152</sup> As the blockade did not permit Abkhaz men of working age to cross the Russo-Abkhaz border, women played an increasingly important role as traders.<sup>153</sup> One interviewee describes how women worked as traders during the blockade:

[W]omen [...] on their shoulders [...] were taking goods like citrus fruits, mandarins, cucumbers, whatever was growing in Abkhazia, including flowers, for instance, mimosa [...] to Russia, selling it there, bringing back some other goods.<sup>154</sup>

**Representative of a non-governmental organisation in Sukhumi**

The trade connections with Russia took place particularly through the north Caucasus (Prelz Oltramonti 2015) as well as other Russian regions (see section 7.1.2 on Russian regional support), which enabled Abkhazia to develop relatively close connections with individual subjects of the Russian Federation despite the blockade and sanctions, that were orchestrated by the central Russian government. Especially in the first few post-war years, some Russian regions provided humanitarian aid to Abkhazia, including Tatarstan, Bashkiria, Krasnodar Krai and some republics of the North Caucasus.<sup>155</sup> Specifically citizens of the republics of the North Caucasus occasionally visited Abkhazia for business, trade and tourism.<sup>156 157 158</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Interview 4: Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (Tbilisi)

<sup>151</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>152</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>153</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>154</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>155</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>156</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>157</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>158</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

Besides agricultural products, the Abkhaz authorities identified ways to earn an income through private companies and the Abkhaz diaspora in Turkey thanks to an operating port in Abkhazia.<sup>159</sup> Abkhaz companies as well as firms run by the Abkhaz diaspora in Turkey, for instance, began collecting and selling timber as well as scrap metal and raw materials, such as coal, from factories, that Abkhazia used to operate but that stopped working during the war, to Turkey, Russia and even Georgia.<sup>160 161 162</sup> The trade of scrap metal did not always take official government routes, but criminal activities involved the destruction of factories and stealing of metals in old factories that were then sold for little money to Turkey.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, Abkhazia granted fishing licenses to Turkish ships in the Black Sea, which were subsequently used as an export product.<sup>164</sup> In addition, a passenger ferry between Trabzon and Sukhumi was particularly used by Turkish business people and the Abkhaz diaspora (Gültekin-Punsmann et al. 2009: 10). After 1995, due to Georgian pressures, Turkey suspended the ferry and one year later installed an embargo that is still in place (Hewitt 2013). Despite the embargo, Turkish businesspeople continue trading with Abkhazia to this date (see Smolnik et al. (2017) for a detailed discussion on Turkish involvement in Abkhazia). Another source of income was the CIS peacekeeping mission, which employed locals and increased the demand for Abkhaz produce (Trier et al. 2010: 106).

The beginning of the economic easing period between Abkhazia and Russia from 1999 onwards did not result in immediate financial contributions from Russia but focused mostly on the easing of sanctions and fewer border controls (ICG 2006: 16). In the early 2000s, for instance, Russia started issuing passports and citizenship to Abkhaz citizens and removed the border restriction, which allowed the male population to engage in economic activity with new businesses and trade.<sup>165</sup> This also

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<sup>159</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>160</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>161</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>162</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>163</sup> Interview 1: Georgian scholar (Tbilisi)

<sup>164</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>165</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

opened up other financial channels, as Abkhaz citizens left Abkhazia to work in Russia or other countries and sent money to their relatives in Abkhazia.<sup>166</sup> The CIS sanctions were only fully removed unilaterally in 2008 when relations between Russia and Georgia worsened (Kizilbuga 2006: 83-89). Still, in the easing period Russia provided some financial contributions in form of infrastructural aid and from 2002 onwards, pension payments (ICG 2006: 16).

Abkhazia's limited financial capabilities and its approach to financing the state building developments had implications on the structure and functioning of the state. Abkhazia's weak economy following the Georgian-Abkhaz war and the phase of partial isolation encouraged a political climate of cooperation among politicians with the aim of making the Abkhaz economy viable (Mihalkanin 2004: 154). However, some de facto elites used the post-war and post-socialist economy to consolidate their power rather than to transform the economy (Prelz Oltramonti 2015). The implications of the Abkhaz economic context were manifold and included for instance the quasi-privatisation of Abkhazia's health care sector.<sup>167</sup>

Abkhazia's limited financial room for manoeuvre meant that state employees such as government staff, ministers and teachers were not paid for months in a row.<sup>168 169</sup> The current Minister of Education, for example, received no salary for his position as assistant professor at the University of Abkhazia for approximately two years after the end of the Abkhaz-Georgian war, but was instead reimbursed with bread.<sup>170 171</sup> While some people remained in their government positions despite the lack or limited pay, others decided to change their professions due to the precarious financial situation and started working in trading professions, like shuttle trade or driving tangerines. Abkhazia's education sector came up with a particular solution to ensure teacher salaries in form of parental contributions, which meant that parents contributed a monthly small amount of money to the schools, which paid for school

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<sup>166</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>167</sup> Interview 2: Representatives of an international donor (Sukhumi)

<sup>168</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>169</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>170</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>171</sup> Interview 9: Government representative of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

renovations, new textbooks and in some instances teacher salaries.<sup>172</sup> Many citizens were willing to work for less motivated by the prospect of independent statehood.<sup>173</sup> According to an international donor representative in Abkhazia, this was possible, because the people that worked as teachers, doctors or in government ministries in the 1990s were almost exclusively raised in the Soviet time where the idea and ideology arguably meant more compared to the younger generation of government representatives.<sup>174</sup> Today, Comai (2018b: 182) argues that the economic structure of post-Soviet de facto states “fits at least in part the MIRAB model (migration, remittances, aid, and bureaucracy).” Other sources stress the role of clans, families or individual businesspeople that run much of the Abkhaz economy and facilitate investments, such as the Adleiba, Avidzba and Tsuba families and businessman Beslan Butba (Trier et al. 2010: 109). These families play an important role in manifesting economic links with Russia, because they oftentimes invest through Russo-Abkhaz joint ventures (Trier et al. 2010).

Abkhazia’s overall economic development theoretically enables the de facto regime to be self-sustainable from an economic standpoint. However, the continued and increasing levels of Russian support in form of financial contributions, tourist streams, pension provisions, public salary payments and infrastructure projects contributed to a significant increase in living standards in Abkhazia that would not be sustainable if the de facto authorities decided to limit Russian involvement (Comai 2018a: 92). In other words, Russia’s significant financial, welfare and economic contributions nurture Abkhaz dependence on Russia, because even though economic self-sustainability presents a theoretical option, it would most likely result in a significant drop in living standards.

### **6.3.5 (Ethnic) Public Service Appointments**

The ethnic makeup and post-war appointment process of de facto state bureaucracies can reveal the national character of a state especially in heterogenous de facto states and its effect on state capacity. Indeed, whether a country is

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<sup>172</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>173</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>174</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

monoethnic or heterogenous and whether it bases its legitimacy on ethnicity, previous independence or outside threats tends to be reflected in its appointments of public servants.<sup>175</sup> At the same time, the appointment of bureaucrats can be considered a mechanism of the de facto authorities to achieve control over institutions and increase the state capacity. This section therefore examines Abkhazia's ethnic public service appointment strategies and the extent to which this shapes Abkhazia's state building process.

The allocation of bureaucratic posts along ethnic lines in the pre- and post-war period needs to be seen in the wider context of Abkhazia's state and nation building process:

In the decisive years of the late 1980s and early 1990s, Abkhazia developed into an ethnically defined state entity. [...] it is a fact that an ethno-nationalist discourse today dominates the state building project in Abkhazia. The main priorities as seen by most Abkhazians are to secure their language and culture, and thereby, it is perceived, their future survival as a nation. This, many believe, can be done only by keeping the demographic balance numerically in favour of the ethnic Abkhazians and the political power in their hands (Trier et al. 2010: 9).

The Soviet Union's ethno-federalism granted ethnicities and nationalities the right for a so-called 'homeland' within the hierarchical structure of the Soviet Union. The principle not only included the right to language instruction in the local language, but also that bureaucracies, politicians and *nomenklatura* represent the nationality of the local people (Trier et al. 2010: 95-95). The Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia hosted a number of sizeable ethnic groups beyond Abkhazians including Georgians, Russians and Armenians. The Soviet system allocated guaranteed government seats or positions to Georgians, Armenians, Abkhazians and Russians in the Abkhaz state institutions. Yet, ethnic Abkhaz represented higher shares in the institutional structure than the general population proportions would suggest (Trier et al. 2010: 21-22). Before the Georgian-Abkhaz war, ethnic Abkhaz headed the majority of

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<sup>175</sup> Interview 18: Russian scholar (Moscow)

government ministries and district governments,<sup>176</sup> which was partially due to a minimum requirement of ethnic Abkhaz in institutions, such as the Supreme Council, ministries and universities,<sup>177</sup> which ensured their “significant over-representation” (Anchbadze 1999: 138). Still, the considerable presence of ethnic Georgians in the state administration was perceived by several ethnic Abkhaz as a threat. These threats intensified with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Georgia’s independence, as it ended Abkhazians’ entitlement to control its state institutions (Trier et al. 2010: 94).

*Figure 16 The Abkhazian Regional Committee of the Communist Party in Shota Rustaveli Street (Shakaya 1979)*

*This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

Abkhaz civil servants that were appointed before the war, continued working for the Abkhaz state apparatus during and after the war in most cases.<sup>178</sup> If the existing Soviet staff were Abkhaz, Russian or Armenians and supported the Abkhaz side, they also remained in their offices.<sup>179</sup> Yet, Abkhaz officials tended to be suspicious of the

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<sup>176</sup> Interview 4: Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (Tbilisi)

<sup>177</sup> Interview 1: Georgian scholar (Tbilisi)

<sup>178</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>179</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

influence of minorities in light of potential hostilities and justified their ethnically motivated control over the state apparatus with their dedication to the Abkhaz nation and responsibility during the war (Trier et al. 2010: 95). Thereby, the Abkhaz regime developed a state system that is based on principles of sharp vertical ethnic hierarchies (Trier et al. 2010: 89). The sharp population decline in the post-war period strengthened the situation for the titular nations (Blakkisrud & Kolstø 2012: 288).

Following the war, the new Abkhaz state was required to fill staff gaps that were caused by casualties in the war, outmigration and profession changes due to insufficient salaries in Abkhazia's public administration.<sup>180</sup> In addition, Abkhazia reinstated its constitution from 1925 in 1992, which commanded Abkhaz control over Abkhazia's state apparatus (Cornell 2002: 264-265), while new ministries were founded in 1993 and 1994 that needed to be filled with civil servants.

A number of people joined the Abkhaz state administration to fill these gaps even before the war that had not previously worked in governance positions, such as the first President of Abkhazia, and other intellectuals, historians, lawyers, poets and soldiers.<sup>181 182 183</sup> Yet, the continuation of many civil servants throughout and beyond the war ensured at least some governance and bureaucracy experience in Abkhazia.<sup>184 185 186</sup> In addition, many parliamentarians worked simultaneously in the executive branch during and after the war, due to the limited availability of potential staff and insufficient time to train cadres.<sup>187</sup> It has to be noted, however, that the low salaries for state officials meant that predominantly members of the public with strong kinship ties and business relations could represent Abkhazia politically (Trier et al. 2010: 92)

The appointments of state officials were also used as a strategic state building instruments by the authorities in Sukhumi. The Abkhaz government sent an ethnic

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<sup>180</sup> Interview 9: Government representative of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>181</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>182</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>183</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>184</sup> Interview 1: Georgian scholar (Tbilisi)

<sup>185</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>186</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>187</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

Abkhaz official, a so-called special presidential representative, to the Gali region to head the local administration (Trier et al. 2010: 89).<sup>188</sup> When the Abkhaz authorities focused increasingly on domestic security from 1998 onwards, they soon realised that their strategy of sending ethnic Abkhaz representatives to head the local administration was insufficient to guarantee stable and relatively peaceful conditions in Gali and ensure the control over the territory. Therefore, the regime in Sukhumi started appointing local representatives from non-Abkhaz ethnicities to represent the de facto government in the southern region.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Interview 1: Georgian scholar (Tbilisi)

<sup>189</sup> Interview 17: American scholar (Moscow)

## **6.4 Russian Influences without Direct Involvement**

In order to paint a picture of the full extent of patron state influences on the state building processes of de facto states, it is important to examine patron influences not only through the framework of direct coercive influences (as will be discussed in chapter 7) and competitive diffusion (as discussed in section 6.3.3), but also through the lens of indirect patron diffusion influences. Russia, for instance, has shaped Abkhazia's state capacity and provision of public services and goods beyond direct financial contributions, military support and political involvement, in form of mimetic and normative diffusion influences. By applying process tracing and the causal chains of diffusion influences laid out in the theoretical framework, this section tests whether there is evidence of (1) normative, (2) mimetic and (3) overlapping normative and mimetic diffusion sources. Furthermore, the observable implications of these indirect diffusion influences in Abkhazia's state building development since the early 1990s will be captured. When discussing the indirect impact of patron states on state and institution building in de facto states, it is necessary to distinguish between developments that can be attributed to a de facto state's attempt to adapt to the patron, on the one hand, and institutional path dependencies, on the other hand. This section focuses primarily on the former, whereas institutional path dependencies were discussed in section 6.1.1.

This section argues that Russia is not necessarily required to intervene directly in Abkhazia, because even during period of uncertainty and partial isolation, Abkhaz elites adjusted their actions and plans at least partially according to Russian interests, activities, institutions and legislation. These isomorphic tendencies hint at the role of indirect diffusion sources ranging from mimetic, normative to competition diffusion. In other words, the agency of dependent Abkhazia was bound by the (perceived) interests and activities of its patron. This bounded agency increases the likelihood for legislative and institutional isomorphism between the de facto state and its patron, because of the limited availability of viable alternative choices, which made Abkhazia more susceptible to indirect diffusion influences in form of mimetic, normative and competitive diffusion. Beyond the role of dependency and the competitive geopolitical context that de facto states find themselves in (discussed in section 6.3.3), this section finds that normative and mimetic diffusion influences are more

prevalent in periods of uncertainty and when the patron pursues direct coercive diffusion in the de facto state. This is particularly the case for normative diffusion, as this diffusion type necessitates soft or material forces from the patron state that are oftentimes present in coercive diffusion sources and ultimately inform the institutional or policy choices of the de facto state. Thus, the more coercive involvement is legitimised and perceived reputable by the de facto authorities, the higher the likelihood for normative diffusion.

First, Russia penetrates a variety of sectors in Abkhazia through soft power and material channels that increase the likelihood that Russian policies or institutions are considered appropriate and respected by political decision-makers and the public. This, in turn, may motivate the Abkhaz government to consider Russian institutional or policy choices for their own context. Even though there is an understanding on both sides that Abkhazia is a different country and culture from Russia<sup>190</sup> and with few people identifying themselves with Russia directly,<sup>191</sup> Russia and Abkhazia have a close relationship with strong social linkages, which is amplified by their common history in the Soviet Union.<sup>192</sup> Social linkages between the two entities manifest themselves through “the presence of Russian minorities, the position of the Russian language and more generally the popularity of Russian culture and media” which offers Russia potential channels of influencing the region beyond high-level politics. In addition, Abkhazia continues to experience a high influx of Russian tourists,<sup>193 194</sup> whereas some Abkhaz citizens travel to Russia for health care and education.<sup>195</sup> In a different context, but arguably applicable to the case of Russo-Abkhaz relations, Lankina and Libman (2019) find that trade and production chain dependencies in Ukraine from the Soviet period maintain institutional path dependencies and are likely to shape diffusion even in the post-Soviet space. Even though many Abkhaz citizens put forward a differentiated view of the relationship

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<sup>190</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>191</sup> Interview 15: Abkhaz scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>192</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>193</sup> Interview 2: Representatives of an international donor (Sukhumi)

<sup>194</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>195</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

with Russia (Bakke et al. 2018), the strong social and economic linkages, Russian media penetration and continued financial and military support from Russia, makes Russian policies and institutions likely candidates for normative appreciation, because Russia remains on the people's minds. Kolstø and Blakkisrud (2017) refer to this as the "Russia factor" in their analysis of regime development in Transnistria.

These examples represent evidence for the causal mechanisms of normative diffusion set out in the theoretical framework involving soft or material forces from the patron state that the de facto state actors consider "legitimate and reputable" (Powell & DiMaggio 1983: 153). In the case of Russian involvement in Abkhazia, these soft and material forces appear to predominantly cover social linkages, culture and media, as well as financial incentives. While it is difficult to identify definite proof of normative diffusion beyond statements from politicians about the appropriateness of Russian state building, the high levels of mimetic diffusion discussed below are indicators that Russian policy and institutional choices are at least perceived as appropriate bases for mimicry. At the same time, normative diffusion influences are more prevalent when the patron pursues direct coercive diffusion in the de facto state, because this diffusion type necessitates soft or material forces from the patron state that are oftentimes present in coercive diffusion sources and ultimately inform the institutional or policy choices of the de facto state.

A potential negative side effect of normative diffusion is the possibility for issue displacement on the basis of perceived or actual patron or donor interests. In development contexts, client states may abandon programmes, policies or institutions on the basis of their perception that only certain policies receive continued funding (Lake 2014: 523). This form of issue displacement may also occur in the case of Abkhazia's relationship with Russia, where Abkhaz elites need to navigate Russia's perceived interests in order to ensure continued military and financial support. Unlike recognised states, however, de facto states do not have the opportunity to strategically manoeuvre the interests and potential support from alternative external sources, which means that the de facto elites experience higher pressures to consider Russian interests. Even if Russia does not directly communicate its preferences or prioritisation, their perceived role plays a role for Abkhaz actions.

Second, mimetic diffusion assumes a central role in the institutional and legislative development of Abkhazia's larger state building development (Gerrits & Bader 2016: 305-306). Mimetic diffusion is not only likelier due to the previously discussed normative diffusion basis of Russo-Abkhaz relations, but also due to high levels of uncertainty among the Abkhaz leadership and public in the 1990s and simultaneous rapid institutional advances, which encourage the adoption of policies and institutions of regions in similar contexts (see Mooney 2001). There is strong evidence for the causal mechanism of mimetic diffusion set out in the theoretical framework in form of legislative and institutional similarities of the patron and de facto state following a given time lag. Indeed, the findings capture that decision-makers in the de facto state deliberately copy and reproduce policies and institutions from the patron state.

In practice, Abkhazia assumed and, in some instances, adapted Russian institutional designs and legislature. While institutional and legislative similarities across borders do not necessarily represent their respective diffusion, specific Abkhaz legislation and governance institutions are nearly identical to their Russian counterpart. This reliance on mimicry may also be explained with the limited experience of the law makers of the Abkhaz regime and the restricted international influences beyond the Soviet Union (Trier et al. 2010: 75).

Institutional isomorphism between Russia and Abkhazia, on the one hand, covers the semi-presidential political system of both entities including the constitutional arrangements regarding power sharing between the branches of government (ICG 2010b). According to Bader, Grävingholt and Kästner (2010), authoritarian states benefit from similar authoritarian state structure in their neighbourhood. Legislative isomorphism, on the other hand, ranges from Abkhazia's constitution from 1994, which is very similar to Russia's constitution from 1993, to political party and electoral legislation (Gerrits & Bader 2016: 305-306).<sup>196</sup>

The high degrees of legislative isomorphism in Abkhazia can be explained with the necessity of rapid legislative changes in the war and post-war period. As

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<sup>196</sup> Kopeček (2020) identified a degree of agency among the de facto regime in Nagorno-Karabakh, which does not copy each Armenian law and implements it in the de facto state, but is instead selective of which legislation to consider for mimicry.

Abkhazia's legal basis in the post-war period stemmed from the Autonomous Republic period and was based on Georgian laws, the authorities needed to change these laws in order to reflect the new realities of de facto statehood in the 1990s. Additionally, in a context where de facto state lawmakers may lack the experience to independently transform the legislative framework of Abkhazia, mimetic diffusion appears to be a likely option for the de facto regime.<sup>197</sup> With the support of the theoretical framework of the thesis, this section thereby identifies a potential causal mechanism behind legislative and institutional isomorphism in Abkhazia.

Third, diffusion sources are not mutually exclusive. Trade and education in the Russo-Abkhaz relationship, for instance, represent equally mimetic and normative diffusion influences shaping Abkhazia's state building development. The previously discussed high levels of social linkages play out particularly in the education of the Abkhaz public and public officials. Most Abkhaz state officials and students (particularly medical staff) have studied either in Russia or the Soviet Union.<sup>198 199 200 201</sup> Meanwhile, ethnic Russians and Russian citizens are situated in key positions in Abkhaz ministries, departments and law enforcement agencies. More specifically, Russians can be found at ministerial level (for example the previous Minister of Health) and deputy ministerial level. Furthermore, two of the five deputies of the chairman of the Abkhaz Security Service are Russian citizens, who did not previously work in Abkhazia during the Soviet Union, but joined Abkhazia following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.<sup>202</sup> Some of the above mentioned ministers and deputies had previous ties with Abkhazia and fought in the Abkhaz-Georgian war.

This should certainly not imply that these representatives of Abkhazia's state apparatus are incapable of making independent judgements and taking decisions that are in the interest of Abkhazia. Indeed, the de facto regime may act out of

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<sup>197</sup> According to Kopeček (2020), Nagorno-Karabakh is selective in terms of the laws it copies from Armenia.

<sup>198</sup> Interview 9: Government representative of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>199</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>200</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>201</sup> Interview 1: Georgian scholar (Tbilisi)

<sup>202</sup> Interview 6: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

necessity or pragmatism that informs the extent of patron engagement (Comai 2018a: 34), which represents a form of bounded agency. At the same time, there is no definitive proof that Russia directly controls the hiring of ethnic Russians and Russian citizens into the Abkhaz state apparatus. Yet, the partial socialisation of some Abkhaz state representatives in Russia may encourage mimetic and normative diffusion, because Russian policy and institution choices are likelier to be considered appropriate and reputable policy choices for Abkhazia.

Russo-Abkhaz trade can also simultaneously encourage mimetic and normative diffusion. Recent post-conflict literature has shifted the focus increasingly on the impact of trade on post-conflict state building (Cheng 2018). Also in Abkhazia's case, sporadic trade in the 1990s not only encouraged the reinstatement of the Abkhaz central bank and Ministry of Economy and Trade, but it also shaped Abkhazia's institutions and legal framework, such as trade legislation and customs regulations, in line with the structures of its main trading partners. As Abkhaz trade with Turkey developed informally with diaspora groups rather than the central government, trade with Russian regions in the 1990s and later on with the Russian central government presented the likeliest candidate for mimetic diffusion sources. It is important to consider these forms of normative and mimetic diffusion, as they do not encourage the development of ownership on their own.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

## 6.5 Conclusion

Political elites in Abkhazia are required to subordinate their state building plans at least partially to the foreign policy interests of external powers (Broers 2013: 62). Yet, understanding Abkhazia's state building projects as mere subordination in the geopolitical context of this entity disregards some of the local achievements in Abkhazia outlined in this chapter. Nonetheless, subordination is a phenomenon that can be observed repeatedly throughout the chapter in one form or the other. Even during Abkhazia's significant state building progress during the period of uncertainty and partial isolation between 1992 and 1999, Abkhazia's elites adjusted their legislations and institutions at least partially according to Russia's structures and its perceived interests. This chapter highlighted how bounded agency, as one of the transition variables of the theoretical framework, encourages legislative and institutional isomorphism, because of the predominance of indirect diffusion influences in contexts where *de facto* states are dependent on patron support. This form of bounded agency shows that Russia does not necessarily need to coercively intervene in Abkhazia, because of Russian mimetic and normative diffusion influences that keep Russia on the minds of both the Abkhaz regime and its population. Indeed, the chapter empirically uncovered evidence for the causal mechanisms behind competitive, mimetic and normative diffusion influences on Abkhazia's state and institution building processes. In this context, the chapter specified the varied outcomes of competitive diffusion with observable implications such as institution sharing, developments in public service provisions and accelerated state building responses. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that normative and mimetic diffusion influences are more prevalent in periods of uncertainty and when the patron pursues direct coercive diffusion in the *de facto* state.

Henceforth, Abkhazia's state building development needs to be framed in the wider context of its power relationship with Russia. Many *de facto* states find themselves at the very end of the power spectrum with weak governance institutions, economic and military capabilities as well as limited international recognition. These economic, political and security vulnerabilities draw Abkhazia into the Russian sphere of influence whether their *de facto* elites desire it or not (Kereselidze 2015). Russia's (quasi) isolationist policy towards Abkhazia in the 1990s,

for instance, encouraged the Abkhaz de facto state to take on a specific position in people's life that was not all-encompassing but was restricted to central functions such as security provision, the development of an economic system and the international representation of the Abkhaz state. Still, some endogenous state building developments can be considered mostly outside the context of Russian and Georgian diffusion influences, such as the incorporation of Soviet institutional structures, public servant hiring along ethnic lines and state building prioritisation. These trajectories exemplify the agency of the Abkhaz authorities to develop their state capacity and determine the direction of public service and goods provisions. Understanding the endogenous state building trajectories in de facto states also offers insights into the ways in which de facto regimes attempt to provide order and control, which may help the authorities to attain internal legitimacy and increase public confidence into the de facto state's right of existence, its regime and institutions (Bakke et al 2013: 2-3). After all, de facto regimes not only need to win the war, but also become state builders (Bakke et al. 2018: 159, 161).

While the findings of this chapter do not represent the realities of all de facto states beyond Abkhazia, the results may indicate how other de facto states operate in dependency relations with their patrons and the ways in which de facto authorities may prioritise their state building in the context of limited financial room for manoeuvre. The chapter, for instance, offered insights into the kind of institutions that de facto or other nascent states may prioritise, such as (border) security, energy infrastructure, economic extraction and redistribution systems and foreign affairs institutions. Due to the limited availability of viable alternative choices, de facto regimes are, for instance, likely to be more susceptible to indirect diffusion influences in form of mimetic, normative and competitive diffusion. The agency of dependent de facto states is likely bound by the perceived interests and activities of the patron, which in turn increases the likelihood for legislative and institutional isomorphism between the de facto state and its patron.

Even though Russia does arguably not need to be directly involved in Abkhazia's state building development, Russia decided on numerous occasions to intervene in Abkhazia. The extent of this direct Russian coercive involvement in

Abkhazia's state building development will be discussed in the next chapter of this thesis.

## Chapter 7

### Nurturing Dependence

#### *Direct Involvement and Legitimisation of Patron States in the State Building Processes of De Facto States*

Following the discovery of offshore natural gas reserves in the Aegean Sea and renewed tensions between the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in October 2018, Turkish President Erdoğan emphasised Turkey's predominance over Northern Cyprus by declaring that "no step can be taken in Cyprus [...] at the expense of Turkey."<sup>204</sup> Two months earlier, Algeria renewed its pledge to provide the Polisario Front, a national liberation movement in the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (Western Sahara), "with the necessary financial support to carry out administrative works."<sup>205</sup> Meanwhile, former US National Security Advisor John Bolton confirmed the United States' commitment to the Taiwan Relations Act

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<sup>204</sup> VOA News (2018). *Erdogan Toughens Stance as Cyprus Faces Permanent Partition*. Retrieved from: <https://www.voanews.com/a/erdogan-toughens-stance-cyprus-faces-permanent-partition/4601823.html>

<sup>205</sup> Yabiladi (2018). *Western Sahara: Algeria and South Africa reaffirm their support to the Polisario*. Retrieved from: <https://en.yabiladi.com/articles/details/68510/western-sahara-algeria-south-africa.html>

from 1979, that guarantees the necessary military support for Taiwanese self-defence.<sup>206</sup> These three examples reflect the dominant coverage of relationships between de facto states and their patrons, concentrating on military support, financial aid and direct interference in the domestic political affairs of the unrecognised entities. Similarly, Russian foreign policy towards its near abroad is frequently portrayed along military, economic and political dimensions and in terms of hard power instruments (Kramer 2008: 3-4).<sup>207</sup>

The while, several de facto states have achieved and sustained relatively high levels of state building despite limited financial means, low international connectedness and in some instances even legacies of war (Caspersen 2012: 51; de Waal 2018). A range of studies examined the extent to which internationally recognised and unrecognised post-conflict states can benefit from the support of external actors to provide public services and goods (see e.g. Zartman 1995; Caspersen 2015; Fearon & Laitin 2004; Krasner & Risse, 2014). However, the concrete influence and contribution of patron states on the state building processes of de facto states remain insufficiently explored. While a number of articles and books (Caspersen 2008; Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2008; Gerrits & Bader 2016) have assessed the influence of patron states on de facto states in the military, financial and political spheres, few studies examine the effect of patron states on the capacity of authority structures and the provision of public services and goods in de facto states. Blakkisrud and Kolstø's (2012) study on state and nation building in the de facto states of the South Caucasus and Comai's (2018a) thesis on the post-Soviet de facto states touch upon the role of patron states and are notable exceptions in this regard.

The previous chapter examined Russia's indirect influence on Abkhazia's state building process and concluded that there does not appear to be the need for continued direct coercive diffusion influences of the patron. Even during the phase of partial isolation, Abkhaz elites adjusted their actions and plans according to perceived Russian interests and activities, which signifies Russia's mimetic and

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<sup>206</sup> Taiwan News (2019). *Bolton says US commitments to Taiwan Relations Act 'are clear' after Chinese jet incursion*. Retrieved from: <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3671232>

<sup>207</sup> Some studies expanded this framework by including Russian soft power instruments as an additional foreign policy tool (see e.g. Lankina & Niemczyk 2015).

normative diffusion potential and the bounded agency of de facto states. This chapter uncovers that Russia has nonetheless intervened in Abkhazia on several occasions through direct coercive diffusion influences such as agreements and treaties, financial contributions, institution sharing and technocratic linkages. The central argument of this thesis poses that “patrons can nurture the dependence of de facto states on patron support by pursuing a multi-layered policy of granting de facto state agency in an international setting of limited alternatives while providing support that discourages self-sufficiency.” This chapter tests whether the nurturing of dependence is truly at the heart of Russo-Abkhaz relations, by exploring the ways in which Russia grants agency to Abkhazia while discouraging self-sufficiency through a range of direct coercive instruments. This chapter also applies process tracing to the case study to examine whether the direct diffusion mechanisms set out in the theoretical framework serve as a causal pathway.

The research identifies dependence as one of the outcomes of Russian engagement in Abkhazia. Dependence can explain the statistical findings of this thesis that show that patron states generally do not encourage the development of coherent government structures, but predominantly guarantee minimal civilian governance in de facto states. Russian support for Abkhazia, for instance, is linked predominantly to infrastructural reconstruction rather than capacity building and training. Essentially, Russia finances an institutional infrastructure that enables basic public service provision and potential further state development.

Furthermore, rather than contributing to the development of governance institutions, Russia takes on specific governing or service provision functions and responsibilities from the Abkhaz de facto authorities, despite Abkhazia’s relatively strong statehood and wide penetration of the state. Institution sharing in these instances reduces Abkhazia’s self-sustainability, because it disincentivises institutional development. This example may partly explain why, according to the findings of the statistical analysis, the number of governance institutions tends to drop with the presence of a patron state. As such, Russia’s role as a patron from 1999 onwards did not change the number of governance institutions in Abkhazia, but reduced the de facto state’s ability to provide public services and goods independently. An additional instrument that ensures the status quo of dependence

is Russian control of relevant de facto politicians to ensure their loyalty through the provision of significant financial contributions and military support. While the Russian authorities are not necessarily interested in micromanaging politics and state building in Abkhazia, the patron is interested in having candidates in place that have a favourable view on Russia and can be manipulated more easily. This can be seen as a strategy by Russia to encourage mimetic and normative diffusion channels, rather than coercive diffusion.

There are a few indicators that patron states provide state building assistance to de facto states beyond the stage of basic civilian governance. Treaties and agreements between Abkhazia and Russia, for instance, specify state building measures and institutionalise the relationship which increases the likelihood for both mimetic and normative diffusion. At the same time, the bilateral nature of the agreements and treaties safeguards Russia's monopoly position over the external influences on Abkhazia's state building processes.

Russian engagement in Abkhazia is certainly not representative for all patron-de facto state relations and does not cover an exhaustive list of potential forms of involvement. Still, the case study demonstrates the ways in which a set of patron instruments shape the state and institution building processes of de facto states and how this involvement may be legitimised by the de facto state. Understanding the direct coercive diffusion channels behind patron engagement in de facto states not only offers insights into how far patron states are prepared to go in terms of their support for de facto states, but also the extent to which this involvement is legitimised by the local elites and population. The lack of support for Abkhazia's soft component appears to be the biggest threat to output legitimacy of Russian actions. Nonetheless, Russian support is largely legitimised and accepted, partly due to limited viable alternatives. Moreover, Russian involvement in Abkhazia represents an insightful case study of change in the nature of patron support. According to the conceptualisation of patron-de facto state relations of this thesis, Russia only became Abkhazia's patron from 1999 onwards when the dependency criteria of this thesis was met. The case study therefore outlines how the formal changes in the Russo-Abkhaz relationship in 1999 marked the beginning of a range of direct coercive diffusion instruments, which also encouraged the role of normative, mimetic and

competitive diffusion channels.

In order to assess the direct diffusion influences of the Russian Federation on state building in Abkhazia, this chapter is structured as follows: The first section examines Russia's role as a patron state, how it communicates its interests and policy preferences, the presence of change agents on the ground, as well as its centralised and decentralised penetration of Abkhazia. The second section analyses specific Russian coercive diffusion instruments that influence the state and institution building process of Abkhazia. The third section discusses the extent to which Russian involvement in Abkhazia is legitimised by the Abkhaz elite, civil society and the wider population.

## **7.1 Russian Involvement in Abkhazia**

The economic, governmental and societal linkages between Russia and Abkhazia are among the deepest in the post-Soviet space (Gerrits & Bader 2016: 297). Still, the scope of Russo-Abkhaz relations and the extent to which Russia provides support to the de facto state has changed significantly over time and under different Abkhaz and Russian presidencies.<sup>208</sup> Therefore, this section attempts to offer a nuanced view on Russia as a patron state ranging from the ways in which Russia set up communication channels with Abkhazia to the decentralised nature of Russian support for much of the 1990s. This section essentially highlights how Russia adapted its communication channels to the political context of its relationship with Abkhazia, which set the foundation for coercive, mimetic and normative diffusion influences. The analysis of Russo-Abkhaz communication exchanges also identifies Russian change agents on the ground that are an essential component of the causal mechanisms of coercive diffusion channels laid out in the theoretical framework. Moreover, this section challenges the dominant understanding of centralised Russian patron support and Russia as a unitary actor by outlining the decentralised support networks that aided Abkhazia particularly in the 1990s. This perspective frames Russian regional support as an additional diffusion source that shaped Abkhazia's state building development.

### **7.1.1 Russo-Abkhaz Communication Channels**

The theoretical framework of this thesis established that strong communication linkages between two or more entities can build the basis of diffusion channels without geographic contiguity. Russo-Abkhaz relations exemplify spatial connectedness beyond mere geographic proximity remarkably well in form of layers of connections between the two entities that range from the governmental to the societal level. Understanding Russo-Abkhaz connections and communication channels not only uncovers how both parties communicate their interests, but also the ways in which Russia guarantees the spread of its preferences in almost all areas of Abkhaz public life. This section therefore reveals the extent of Russia's web of

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<sup>208</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

connections across ministries and departments, how regular ministerial meetings signify the centrality of Russia in Abkhaz domestic policy making and that Abkhaz domestic politics is partially made abroad.

Since Russia's recognition of Abkhazia in 2008, the two entities have communicated their interests and preferences predominantly through official diplomatic channels.<sup>209</sup> Abkhazia installed special envoys that are responsible for its relationship with Russia<sup>210</sup> and formal agreements and treaties institutionalised the relationship, which further facilitated closer connections between both parties. One interviewee explains the collective adherence to formal diplomatic channels and agreements with Russia's attempt to signal its respect towards Abkhazia's independence.<sup>211</sup> In practice, this implies that Russia respects the diplomatic protocol in most official meetings between Abkhaz and Russian officials.<sup>212</sup> According to former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia Viacheslav Chirikba, "all levels, from [the lowest] level [...] to the [highest], [follow a] very delicate etiquette. All the questions [...] are discussed very frankly."<sup>213</sup> Despite Russia's signalling of respect through the use of diplomatic channels, some interviewees argue that Abkhazia is viewed by Russia as a Russian region.<sup>214</sup> The financial coordination of infrastructure development in Abkhazia, for instance, is organised by the Russian Ministry of Regional Development, which is responsible for domestic regions rather than external entities (Gerrits & Bader 2016: 302-303).

The Russian embassy officially opened in Sukhumi in 2008<sup>215</sup> and is responsible for sending out statements that may indicate Russian policy preferences.<sup>216</sup> The residence of the Russian Ambassador to Abkhazia is symbolically located in the former residence of Soviet Security and Secret Police Apparatus Chief Lavrentiy Beria. The dacha is situated on top of the hills overseeing Sukhumi, which

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<sup>209</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>210</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>211</sup> Interview 14: Russian scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>212</sup> Interview 14: Russian scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>213</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>214</sup> Interview 14: Russian scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>215</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>216</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

an interviewee rather bluntly interprets as the subjugation of Abkhaz politicians to the Russian ambassador.<sup>217</sup> The centrality of the Russian embassy in terms of coordinating ministerial visits and indicating Russian policy preferences places this institution as a potential change agent on the ground, because the embassy may shape the institutional and legislative preferences of Abkhaz decision-makers. The role of the Russian embassy and its ambassador in Sukhumi as a crossroad of communication channels is similar to the model in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus where the Turkish ambassador delivers and pursues Turkish interests.<sup>218</sup>

It is important to note in this context, that Russia's expression of interests and policy preferences goes beyond the official diplomatic level and the Russian embassy in Sukhumi. Russia and Abkhazia have developed an extensive framework of communication channels within the political structure of the Abkhaz Republic outside the diplomatic sphere. Most Russian and Abkhaz departments established interdepartmental agreements that set out joint information exchanges and training, for example, between the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Abkhazia and Russia, the Prosecutor General's Office and the Department of Custom Officers. The Ministry of Emergency Situations in Russia, for instance, offers support to Abkhazia in form of training, joint exercises and equipment, sending experts to Abkhazia or alternatively inviting Abkhaz specialists to Russia. Similarly, Abkhaz custom officers are trained by the Russian Custom Officers Department through training sessions and seminars in Russia.<sup>219</sup>

Moreover, regular exchanges on the ministerial level<sup>220 221</sup> build the basis of normative, mimetic and coercive diffusion between Russia and Abkhazia. The two parties established a joint information coordination centre at the Ministry of Interior<sup>222</sup> and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia and Russia installed coordination mechanisms.<sup>223</sup> According to an interviewee with links to the Abkhaz

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<sup>217</sup> Interview 14: Russian scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>218</sup> Interview 14: Russian scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>219</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>220</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>221</sup> Interview 14: Russian scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>222</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>223</sup> Interview 9: Government representative of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

government, some Abkhaz ministers tend to spend only one to two days per week in their office in Sukhumi, whereas the remaining three to four days of the week are spent in Moscow.<sup>224</sup> While these numbers might be slightly exaggerated, the regularity of meetings and opinion exchanges was also confirmed by a representative from the Abkhaz government.<sup>225</sup> During these visits in Russia, Abkhaz ministers focus primarily on meeting their Russian counterparts and representatives from the Russian central bank in order to identify financial support opportunities and settle state concerns.<sup>226</sup> One can observe similar behavioural patterns across ministers or heads of government from the Donetsk Republic, Luhansk Republic and Transnistria, who spend several days each month in Moscow and have regular meetings with Russian officials.<sup>227</sup> In addition to monthly meetings in Moscow or Sukhumi, Russia and Abkhazia engage in discussions in Geneva every three months, which necessitate further meetings between Abkhazia and Russia before and after the negotiations in Geneva.<sup>228</sup>

These regular ministerial and departmental exchanges can ultimately sway policy directions and the desirability of a specific outcome and therefore represent change agents that pave the way for coercive diffusion influences. Due to the strong ties with Abkhaz legislatures, ministries and even presidents, Russia is able to exert coercive pressures on Abkhazia that encourage institutional and legislative isomorphism. At the same time, various different Russian ministries and departments engage with individual aspects of Russia's relationship with Abkhazia ranging from military, social to financial matters. This wide range of actors produces potentially competing influences depending on the ministry or department in question.<sup>229</sup> It is therefore difficult to identify which Russian ministries or departments influence which Abkhaz policies. In a number of cases, Russia has expressed its policy preferences in Abkhazia during ministerial meetings between the two entities. During a meeting with Abkhaz officials in 2017, for instance, a Russian

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<sup>224</sup> Interview 14: Russian scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>225</sup> Interview 9: Government representative of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>226</sup> Interview 14: Russian scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>227</sup> Interview 18: Russian scholar (Moscow)

<sup>228</sup> Interview 9: Government representative of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>229</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

official stressed that the restrictions on selling private property to foreigners should be lifted by the Abkhaz government.<sup>230</sup> This specific example of private property legislation however represents a case where Abkhazia has remained firm and did not bow to Russia's insistence despite Abkhazia's dependence on Russian support.

Beyond the formal diplomatic and governmental channels, Russia has also set up a framework of extensive links with Abkhazia in the security, business and media sector, that allows Russia to express its interests and political preferences beyond the official governmental and diplomatic channels.<sup>231</sup> These linkages are part of a greater network of non-state level channels that may also influence public opinion in Abkhazia. These communication channels have the advantage of reducing the potential of an accountability dilemma. If patrons outline their state building intentions in official documents, they may be held to account for their actions both by the international community and actors within the patron and the client state.

### **7.1.2 Russian Regional Support**

A historical perspective on the origin of Russian support for Abkhazia challenges the predominant narrative that Russian involvement in Abkhazia derives exclusively from central authorities in Moscow. Even though Russia's central authorities have orchestrated most of Russia's engagement in Abkhazia since 1999 and especially since 2008, Russian regions had already established close ties with the Abkhaz regime in the early 1990s and represented a source of external support for Abkhazia during a phase of partial isolation. To this day, individual Russian regions occasionally offer their support for Abkhazia. This perspective shifts the focus of patron state diffusion away from a restrictively central diffusion source to a more inclusive approach that encompasses decentralised diffusion influences. At the same time, the pronounced role of Russian regions challenges the common perception of Russia as a unitary patron actor.

In the 1990s and particularly during the so-called CIS blockade and embargo against Abkhazia, Russian central government support was restricted to

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<sup>230</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>231</sup> Interview 2: Representatives of an international donor (Sukhumi)

humanitarian aid after floods, medical treatments in Russia for sick and injured Abkhaz citizens as well as occasional trading opportunities for Abkhaz produce.<sup>232</sup> Various CIS documents highlight that during Yeltsin's presidency, Russia, at least officially, stressed the special position and sovereignty of Georgia.<sup>233 234</sup> While the central Russian government restricted its involvement in Abkhazia, individual subjects of the Russian Federation offered support to the war-torn region at the Black Sea.<sup>235</sup>

In the period of uncertainty and partial isolation from 1992 to approximately 1999, Abkhaz ties with regions of the Russian Federation were considerably stronger than with Russian central authorities.<sup>236</sup> In 1994, shortly after the end of the Georgian-Abkhaz war, Abkhaz authorities initiated relations and even signed treaties and agreements with Republics of the Russian Federation. The Russian Foreign Ministry officially condemned these regional connections and agreements,<sup>237</sup> however the Russian constitution and the political climate at that time granted republics more sovereign rights and enabled these relations.<sup>238</sup> Following the first agreement, more and more Russian republics started engaging with Abkhazia, which allowed the de facto authorities to develop a network of business, cultural and education ties.<sup>239</sup> Tatarstan, Bashkiria, Krasnodar and the republics of the North Caucasus were among the Russian regions that provided humanitarian aid to Abkhazia<sup>240</sup> and signed official agreements with the de facto state in 1994.<sup>241</sup> These Russian regions, for instance, allocated quotas to Abkhaz students, which meant that by 1994 and 1995 Abkhaz students started studying in cities such as Kazan, Ufa, Nalchik and Maykop.<sup>242</sup> In some instances, these Russian regions also sent teachers

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<sup>232</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>233</sup> Interview 14: Russian scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>234</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>235</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>236</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>237</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>238</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>239</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>240</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>241</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>242</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

to Abkhazia or encouraged trade with Abkhazia.<sup>243</sup> Particularly regions from the North Caucasus supported Abkhazia economically and militarily during and after the Georgian-Abkhaz war. During the blockade, people from the North Caucasus that had supported Abkhazia during the war came to Abkhazia for business or tourism (see Derluguian (2005) for further information on Abkhaz military links with the North Caucasus).<sup>244</sup> These relationships with Russian regions not only represented a significant breakthrough for the Abkhaz regime in form of developing connections with outside entities, but it also meant that Abkhazia received some limited local state building assistance from these Russian Republics early on in form of economic support and that hundreds of students could study for free in these regions.<sup>245</sup>

The phase of restricted support from the Russian central authorities drew to a close in 1999 and 2000 when Putin assumed office and initiated a gradual process of sanction reductions, aid increases and preparations to lift the blockade.<sup>246 247</sup> Russia eventually cancelled the travel restrictions for Abkhaz men and official trading between Abkhazia and Russia resumed.<sup>248</sup> Putin also pursued, with varying success, various recentralisation policies in an attempt to achieve institutional uniformity across the regions (Reddaway & Orttung 2004-2005; Chebankova 2007). These developments may explain why central Russian support, rather than Russian regional support, became increasingly important from 1999 onwards. Still, Russian regions that had previously supported Abkhazia continue to shape Russian policies towards the de facto state. In April 2008, for instance, the Russian government developed a policy package (the so-called ‘Decree on the Main Directions of the Development of Relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia’) to develop direct economic, political and legal relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In this process, “the territorial authorities (Krasnodarsky Kray and Republic Alania in North Ossetia) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation were assigned to provide effective

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<sup>243</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>244</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>245</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>246</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>247</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>248</sup> Interview 9: Government representative of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

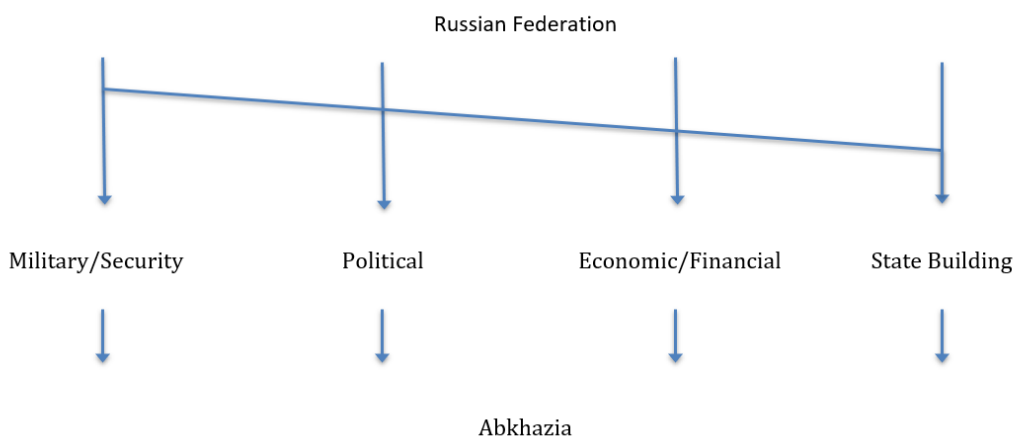
consultative assistance to the citizens of Abkhazia and South Ossetia” (Pelnens et al. 2010: 112-113).

This section touched upon Russian involvement in Abkhaz affairs long before Russia’s official recognition of the breakaway region in 2008. Nonetheless, the official recognition marks an important point in time for Russo-Abkhaz relations as it intensified and from a Russian perspective legitimised engagement in the de facto region. The next section therefore explores the specific state building instruments that Russia has employed in Abkhazia since 2008 and that represent direct coercive diffusion sources.

## 7.2 Russian Coercive Diffusion Influences in Abkhazia

Studies on Russian involvement in its near abroad tend to focus predominantly on three foreign policy areas: security, political and financial channels of influence. A smaller contingent of research is dedicated to Russia's influence on the social sphere in the countries of its near abroad. A closer examination of Russia's influence on the post-Soviet space and particularly de facto states reveals the need for a broader view on Russia's sphere of influence beyond the common analytical channels and foreign policy instruments Russia employs in its neighbourhood. Russian security, political and financial involvement indeed represent an important building block for Abkhazia's state building development. Russia's direct involvement in the state building process of Abkhazia therefore needs to be understood in the context of these three foreign policy channels. Thus, the simplified graph below (figure 17) signifies the three foreign policy channels in addition to a separate state building channel. Moreover, the graph highlights that the state building channel is sourced from the other three channels of Russian influence.

*Figure 17 Channels of Russian Influence on Abkhazia*



The previous chapter illustrated that the formal changes in the Russo-Abkhaz relationship in 1999 reformed the relative importance of direct and indirect diffusion influences. The economic easing period, for instance, permitted the expansion of coercive diffusion instruments that have had an imminent impact on the state building process of the de facto state. Russia's growing coercive involvement in Abkhazia from 1999 onwards also set the basis for further normative and mimetic

diffusion influences in form of agreements, close ties with politicians, security guarantees and financial contributions. Thus, some foreign policy instruments of patrons function as coercive diffusion instruments that have simultaneous indirect diffusion influences on the capacity and public service provision of de facto states.

The theoretical framework of this thesis presumes that patrons are interested in sustaining de facto states to uphold their geopolitical advantage, while limiting financial and military costs associated with direct involvement in the de facto state. This thesis argues that patron states therefore encourage a degree of dependence of the de facto state on patron support by providing limited financial, military and political involvement that discourages self-sufficiency.<sup>249</sup> Hence, this section attempts to isolate the causal mechanisms behind coercive diffusion influences and to support the claim that Russia nurtures the dependence of Abkhazia on Russian support.

An analysis of Russian coercive diffusion influences on Abkhazia reveals four central trends: First, Russian support is linked predominantly to infrastructural reconstruction and not systematic change or the development of people's capacity.<sup>250</sup> Essentially, this means that Russia finances Abkhazia's institutional infrastructure that enables basic public service provisions and ensures an institutional basis for further domestic state developments.<sup>251</sup> Second, Russia and Abkhazia pursue institution sharing, which reduces Abkhazia's self-sustainability opportunities, because it disincentivises institutional development in Abkhazia. This is particularly visible in Abkhazia's security services and the economy.<sup>252</sup> Third, Russia controls relevant de facto politicians or ensures that politicians have close ties with Russia. This dependence of politicians on Russia is achieved among other things through Russia's continued financial contribution to the Abkhaz state budget and military assistance. Russia appears to support candidates that have a favourable view of Russia, which encourages mimetic and normative diffusion influences. Fourth,

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<sup>249</sup> Based on the interview results, it is difficult to source conclusive evidence about the motivations behind Russian direct coercive engagement in Abkhazia as a patron. Instead, this chapter uncovers the observable implications of direct patron involvement.

<sup>250</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>251</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>252</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

Russia has passed treaties and agreements with Abkhazia that specify state building measures in form of health care reforms, legislative changes, education sector advancements and social sector payments. This institutionalisation of the Russo-Abkhaz relationship increases the likelihood for both mimetic and normative isomorphism, because the treaties and agreements contain specific institutional and public service provision examples from the Russian context.

### **7.2.1 Financial Contributions Related to State Building**

Since Russia's recognition of Abkhazia in 2008, the Russian Federation has provided substantial direct financial support to the Abkhaz budget (ICG 2010a). This makes the breakaway region one of a few places in the near abroad to receive direct development support from Russia (Wierzbowska-Miazga & Kaczmarek 2011). Revealingly, the financial coordination of infrastructure development is organised by the Russian Ministry of Regional Development, which focuses on domestic regions and not external countries (Gerrits & Bader 2016: 302-303). Russia's financial contributions exemplify the asymmetric relationship between the Russian Federation and Abkhazia. In 2009, direct aid from Russia accounted for 60 per cent of the Abkhaz state budget (ICG 2010a). Between 2012 and 2015, Russia accounted for more than 50 per cent of the Abkhaz budget contributions excluding pension payments and infrastructure subsidies (Comai 2018b: 188). However, when infrastructural subsidies are included, the overall financial contributions amount to approximately 70 per cent of Abkhazia's budget (ICG 2013: 6). For instance, Russia contributed \$465 million to Abkhaz military infrastructure until 2015 (Freedom House 2015). To put this into context, Russia provides considerably less than \$1 billion to Abkhazia and South Ossetia in a given year, which represents about 0.3 per cent of the Russian budget. This is a significant decrease since 2013, when Russia spent about \$1 billion on Abkhazia and South Ossetia excluding military expenditures (Comai 2018a). This downward trend may be explained with falling exchange rates and a shift in Russian foreign policy priorities (Comai 2018a).

Russia and Abkhazia jointly decide on the direction and extent of Russian funding to Abkhazia.<sup>253</sup> <sup>254</sup> Russian investment programmes for Abkhazia, for instance, “are developed by ‘joint inter-governmental commissions for social-economic cooperation’ that include representatives of both Russia and Abkhazia” (Comai 2018a: 109). Importantly in this context, the Abkhaz authorities have a degree of agency in the decision-making processes with Russia. According to Ambrosio and Lange (2016), Abkhaz opinions and contributions have had an effect on the decision-making outcome despite Abkhazia’s weaker negotiation position and its dependence on Russia.

Russian financial assistance tends to be based on investment packages, that arrive in Abkhazia via two channels.<sup>255</sup> First, Russian budget contributions within the framework of the Complex Development Plan or Investment Programme allocate funds to Abkhaz infrastructure projects and the provision of public services.<sup>256</sup> This programme targets reconstructions and repairs covering areas such as health, education, transport and other basic needs.<sup>257</sup> <sup>258</sup> Abkhazia’s investment programme for the period between 2015 and 2017, for instance, covers large-scale infrastructure projects including road and sanitation infrastructure,<sup>259</sup> but also the construction and renovation of governance institution buildings, as well as health, education<sup>260</sup> and

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<sup>253</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>254</sup> This chapter claims that the official recognition presents a crucial point in time for Abkhazia’s state building development as it facilitated further international recognition, military and economic integration as well as detailed plans for state building and public service provisions between Russia and Abkhazia. However, beyond Russia’s recognition and subsequent involvement, international recognition has had little effect on state building in Abkhazia.

<sup>255</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>256</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>257</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>258</sup> Russia has helped to renovate transport links, such as the railway running from Sochi to Sukhumi. There was likely some self-interest involved, as this also benefited Russia in terms of the tourist infrastructure and military purposes. In 2008, for example, Russia used the railway link to introduce weaponry into Abkhazia. Russia also helps to keep the airport in Sukhumi operational, but only for flights to Russia, as it is not internationally recognised (Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)). Furthermore, Abkhazia is reliant on mobile, internet, banking and power connections from Russia (Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)).

<sup>259</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>260</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

tourism infrastructure (Comai 2018a: 109). Notably, the investment programme even encompasses state capacity funding in form of the development of a land registry and blueprints of water sanitation systems (Comai 2018a). A number of interviewees raised their concerns over the predominant focus on infrastructural projects in form of equipment provision, infrastructure redevelopment and renovations, or what one interviewee refers to as ‘the hard component’ of Russian support.<sup>261</sup> Insufficient financial support for soft components and capacity building, such as training courses for teachers or guidelines on how to use medical equipment,<sup>262</sup> appears to be the biggest threat to the legitimacy of Russian state building engagement in Abkhazia according to the interviews of this thesis.

Second, the Social and Economic Support Programme pays millions of roubles in lump sums for welfare and social transfers of the state.<sup>263 264 265</sup> This programme finances, for instance, top-up salaries for public sector employees such as law enforcement<sup>266</sup> and allowances of pensioners who hold Russian passports.<sup>267 268</sup> Russian financial support for Abkhazia in form of welfare and social transfers exhibits notable similarities with Russian social policies towards its regions.<sup>269</sup> These financial contributions fit in neatly with the causal mechanisms laid out in the theoretical framework, as they incentivise and pressure the de facto authorities to pursue state and institution building developments laid out in these packages.

The significant Russian financial contributions are, however, not guaranteed to reach the de facto state due to corruption, embezzlement and funds being channelled back to Russia in some instances. This appears to be especially the case in South Ossetia but is also a concern in Abkhazia.<sup>270</sup> Therefore, talks between Russian and Abkhaz authorities were repeatedly clouded by disagreements on the

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<sup>261</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>262</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>263</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>264</sup> Interview 14: Russian scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>265</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>266</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>267</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>268</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>269</sup> Interview 14: Russian scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>270</sup> Interview 2: Representatives of an international donor (Sukhumi)

appropriate spending of the Abkhaz budget (Gogoryan 2011; Krivitsky 2013). Some Abkhaz representatives have been critical of the low implementation rates of Russian financial support,<sup>271</sup> the inadequate planning, which may result in money not being spent, as well as the dissonance between needs on the ground and actual money spent.<sup>272</sup> Concerns surrounding the spending of Russian financial contributions has considerably restricted the freedom of Abkhaz authorities to distribute funding since 2014, as Russia not only reduced its financial support somewhat, but also enforced a stricter oversight over the allocation of funds.<sup>273</sup> Once Russia has sent its contributions to the Abkhaz budget, Russian ministries still need to approve specific actions before the implementation process can begin. This continued involvement of ministries is only applicable for the Investment Programme, but not the Social and Economic Support Programme (Comai 2018: 109-110). While a breach in trust between the two parties related to corruption charges can partly explain this change in control mechanisms, the decreasing financial support may also be due to Russian economic struggles since 2014.<sup>274</sup> Overall, the current system of Russian financial contributions mirrors Abkhazia's exposure to and limited control over Russia's allocation of funds. This can be observed in Russian continued support to infrastructural projects rather than capacity building and increased oversight regarding Abkhazia's budget spending.

Russian financial support goes beyond state budget contributions as Russia also provides funds for humanitarian aid projects as well as civil infrastructure projects. Russian investment and reconstruction support started in 2002 and was largely driven by interests of Abkhaz businessmen in Russia focusing particularly on tourism, infrastructure and construction ventures (Trier et al. 2010: 8, 107). It is therefore not surprising that Russia is Abkhazia's biggest source of foreign direct investment (Relitz 2016: 11). Concurrently, Russia positioned itself as the main trading partner for Abkhazia. Russia is Abkhazia's biggest trading partner with nearly 80% of consumer goods in Abkhazia being imported from Russia (ICG 2010a). The

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<sup>271</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>272</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>273</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>274</sup> Interview 6: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Support and the Alliance and Strategic Partnership Treaty facilitate further economic integration between Russia and Abkhazia. However, the development of Abkhazia's economy appears to be stagnant, with both Russia and Abkhazia contributing little to the growth of the economic sector. According to an interviewee, the Russian government was recently willing to change the nature of its investment by initiating economic projects in Abkhazia, but the Abkhaz government was allegedly not prepared for this step.<sup>275</sup>

Studies in development contexts and areas of limited statehood have shown that NGOs and government agencies may redirect their prioritisation and own interests in order to receive funding from an external actor (Lake 2014: 523). There are signs that this form of issue displacement takes place in Abkhazia on the basis of Russia's prioritisation as well. Russia's funding focuses primarily on infrastructure and social support, rather than economic development or capacity development. It is possible, that Abkhaz elites have also prioritised certain aspects of their state building project based on perceived Russian interest or potential funding from Russia.

Ultimately, Russia's substantial state budget contributions as well as its trading position have lasting effects on the state building efforts of the de facto state. In terms of capital accumulation, for instance, Abkhazia pursued a political economy pathway that relies predominantly on patron contributions and a subsidised economy.<sup>276</sup> In return for external financial patron support, Abkhaz elites are more

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<sup>275</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>276</sup> Broers' (2015) classification of political economies in post-Soviet de facto states is a beneficial tool to understand where and how specific countries and regions extract their resources and the ways in which this affects the relationship between elites and the general public. Broers identifies three political economy models in the post-Soviet space: The subsistent, the rentier and the monopoly mediator model. The subsistent model covers entities that focus predominantly on domestic resource extraction and the provision of basic services to the public. The rentier model includes entities that focus more on external rather than domestic source extraction, which results in limited autonomy for the entity and increasing reliance on external actors. The monopoly mediator model is a mixture of the first two models where elites try to develop local capacity building, but believe that external source extraction from one particular sponsor remains an important factor to sustain the provision of services to the public (145). Broers argues that concerning capital accumulation, de facto states could follow two possible pathways (142). While the first pathway includes a high level of self-reliance, the second pathway "could turn outwards towards dependence on a patron-state, building heavily subsidized economies in return for specified kinds of

likely to remain loyal to Russia and prioritise political developments in line with Russia's ideals (Broers 2015: 142). While external state builders might be interested in capable states, as they offer more opportunities for extraction, they tend to prefer loyalty over capacity and even accept take legitimacy concerns (Lake & Fariss 2014: 570). In other words, Abkhazia's financial dependence on Russia severely limits the ability of politicians to independently and impartially set and implement policies (Freedom House 2015). It is important to note, that dependence on an external actor does not necessarily chip away at internal sovereignty (Pelczynska-Nalecz et al. 2008: 373). Similarly, Abkhaz dependence on external support is likely to fluctuate and vary depending on alternative resource access, the willingness of the patron to provide support, the involvement of the parent state and the general position of the de facto state in the international community (Caspersen 2012: 109).

At least theoretically, Abkhazia could be self-sustainable in terms of its economy. However, the welfare and public service payments make a break from Russian support unlikely (Comai 2018b: 188). The extensive financial aid from Russia for the Abkhazian budget also affects the structure and functioning of the de facto authorities, because the wages of the public sector, government institutions and the provision of the public services are financed directly by the budget (Gerrits & Bader 2016: 307). The Alliance and Strategic Partnership Treaty of 2014, for example, promised specific budgetary contributions that raise the average salaries of public servants to similar levels as in Southern Russia (301-302). Overall, Russian financial support in form of trade, financial aid, pension and public salary payments as well as infrastructure projects nurtures Abkhaz dependence on Russia, because it decreases the likelihood of the Abkhaz regime to limit Russian influence, as this would, in turn, significantly reduce the standard of living in Abkhazia (Comai 2018a: 92). These findings show that financial aid, pension payments, and public salary payments nurture Abkhazia's dependence on Russia. While the interviews with Russian and Abkhaz representatives hint at this being a strategic choice of the Russian

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loyalty and particular model of political development" (142). An endogenous resource model in de facto states results in legitimacy of de facto elites through elite-society negotiations. An exogenous model, on the other hand, does not ensure this form of loyalty between society and elites (143).

government, there is no conclusive evidence that unveils Russian motivations and suggests that the Russian government strategically enacts these support packages to nurture dependence. Nonetheless, the outcomes of these support measures demonstrate that Russian coercive diffusion sources nurture Abkhaz dependence on Russian support.

### **7.2.2 Agreements and Treaties**

A significant dimension of Russian coercive diffusion influence on state building in Abkhazia spans the formulation of agreements and treaties between the patron and de facto state (see table 20). The quote below by former Deputy Foreign Minister of Abkhazia Irakli Khintba stresses the relevance of Russian involvement in Abkhazia. In addition, Khintba makes insightful references to a contractual framework that regulates the relations between Abkhazia and Russia, which is likely to denote the agreements and treaties signed between the two parties.

Russian influence in Abkhazia certainly does exist. It is natural, since Russia is currently the only country in the world, which provides enormous assistance to Abkhazia, not only in socio-economic development, but also in strengthening and improving the efficiency of the Abkhaz state as a whole. It is some kind of "Marshall Plan" for Europe, as Russia is helping us to cope with the consequences of the war to strengthen the Abkhaz statehood as much as possible. All aspects of the Russian-Abkhaz cooperation are regulated by a solid contractual framework that exists between our two countries.<sup>277</sup>

**Former Deputy Foreign Minister of Abkhazia Irakli Khintba**

The institutionalised nature of the Russo-Abkhaz relationship can denote a path for civil society to be involved in the decision-making process surrounding external engagement in Abkhazia's domestic affairs. Depending on the quality of civil society involvement, this may increase the input legitimacy of the external actor (Scharpf

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<sup>277</sup> Abkhaz World (2013). *Russian Influence in Abkhazia Certainly Does Exist: Interview with Irakli Khintba*. Retrieved from: <http://abkhazworld.com/aw/interview/83-interview-with-the-deputy-foreign-minister-ir-khintba-for-the-magazine-kommersant-vlast>

1999; Krasner & Risse 2014: 552). Furthermore, studies of contracting either in the form of delegation (Matanock 2014) or interstate agreements (Boerzel & van Huellen 2014) have shown that institutionalising a relationship can result in more successful state building interventions if the responsibilities and tasks are clearly set up, the process is observed and examined by an authority and local conditions are taken into account when the institutional design is developed (Krasner & Risse 2014: 559). Whether or not Russia and Abkhazia decided to institutionalise their relationship for the purpose of enhancing legitimacy or better oversight is difficult to trace back. It is telling, however, that the treaties and agreements were all signed bilaterally rather than multilateral, which signifies Russia's unwillingness or inability to include further international actors into Abkhazia's support network (Gerrits & Bader 2016: 299; Stewart 2010: 7). The bilateral nature of the agreements and treaties can be considered coercive diffusion in so far that it ensures that Russia attains the monopoly over the external influences on Abkhaz state building processes. At the same time, this institutionalisation also increases the likelihood for both mimetic and normative diffusion, because the treaties and agreements contain specific institutional and public service provision examples ranging from the average pay of public service employees to the harmonisation of laws.

Shortly after the recognition of Abkhazia, Russia signed the Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance Treaty on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2008 with Abkhazia. The treaty covered the pledge for economic integration and military support to defend Abkhazia's sovereignty (Gerrits & Bader 2016: 301-302). Since Russia's recognition of Abkhazia in 2008, the Abkhaz economy has indeed become more integrated with the Russian economy. The economic integration of Abkhazia and Russia was operationalised by transferring economic and infrastructural assets (i.e. electricity grids, rail network, oil reserves), adopting technical and commercial standards, lifting trade barriers and installing the rouble as a common currency (Gerrits & Bader 2016: 301). State building itself does not appear to be the priority, but economic, military, economic and administrative integration is high on the list (Kereselidze 2015: 205).

On 24<sup>th</sup> November 2014, Abkhazia and Russia signed the Alliance and

Strategic Partnership Treaty,<sup>278</sup> however the first draft of the agreement had to undergo redrafting as it raised concerns among the Abkhaz population and politicians regarding a possible threat to Abkhazia's independence.<sup>279</sup> Among other changes, the word 'integration' was dropped and the term 'strategic partnership' was used instead, Abkhaz and Russian military forces worked jointly under Russian command and Russia was obliged to facilitate further international recognition for the sovereign state of Abkhazia.<sup>280</sup> Moreover, Abkhazia managed to ensure that "the foreign policy of both countries will not be 'coordinated' but instead 'agreed' upon."<sup>281</sup> Thereby, Abkhazians hoped that the self-proclaimed independence of Abkhazia is not endangered and that it reduced the threat of a possible annexation.<sup>282</sup> While these changes can certainly be considered an achievement from the Abkhaz negotiation side, it would be too early and too optimistic to argue that "Abkhazia has achieved to keep its military, political and economic independence, while at the same time securing stronger cooperation in foreign, defence, economic and social policy with Russia."<sup>283</sup>

The association agreement between Abkhazia and Russia in 2014 indicates that Russia will spend up to 12 billion roubles to Abkhazia by 2017. The agreement foresees that Abkhazia passes on the management and modernisation of central infrastructure over to Russia for ten years such as the Abkhaz railway and airports in return for investments and loans (Hewitt 2012). The treaty includes provisions to make Russian citizenship easier and the levelling of public service wages similar to

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<sup>278</sup> ДОГОВОР между Российской Федерацией и Республикой Абхазия о союзничестве и стратегическом партнерстве. Retrieved from:

<http://m.government.ru/media/files/wNsltFsYzes.pdf>

<sup>279</sup> Nationalia (2016). *Will South Ossetia be the next Crimea?* Retrieved from: [http://www.nationalia.info/noticia/10770/ossetia-del-sud-sera-la-propera-crimea?llengua\\_ant=en](http://www.nationalia.info/noticia/10770/ossetia-del-sud-sera-la-propera-crimea?llengua_ant=en)

<sup>280</sup> Nationalia (2016). *Will South Ossetia be the next Crimea?* Retrieved from: [http://www.nationalia.info/noticia/10770/ossetia-del-sud-sera-la-propera-crimea?llengua\\_ant=en](http://www.nationalia.info/noticia/10770/ossetia-del-sud-sera-la-propera-crimea?llengua_ant=en)

<sup>281</sup> UNPO (2014). *New Russian-Abkhaz Treaty on 'Alliance and Strategic Partnership' Not a Threat to Abkhazia's De Facto Independence*. Retrieved from: <http://unpo.org/article/17796>

<sup>282</sup> Nationalia (2016). *Will South Ossetia be the next Crimea?* Retrieved from: [http://www.nationalia.info/noticia/10770/ossetia-del-sud-sera-la-propera-crimea?llengua\\_ant=en](http://www.nationalia.info/noticia/10770/ossetia-del-sud-sera-la-propera-crimea?llengua_ant=en)

<sup>283</sup> UNPO (2014). *New Russian-Abkhaz Treaty on 'Alliance and Strategic Partnership' Not a Threat to Abkhazia's De Facto Independence*. Retrieved from: <http://unpo.org/article/17796>

Southern Federal District of Russia wages (Gerrits & Bader 2016: 301-302).

A closer look at the agreement reveals some aspects that can be considered significant in terms of their effect on state building in Abkhazia. Article 10 of the agreement lays out the internal affairs coordination. Article 11 sets out the harmonisation of laws, including budget (4) and customs (1) legislation. Article 18 focuses on similar measures for individuals and organisations in the field of pharmaceutical or medical activities. Article 14 of the Alliance and Strategic Partnership Treaty outlines that “the Republic of Abkhazia shall gradually increase the average wage in main areas of public employees such as health care, education, science, culture, sports and social services to a level comparable with the level of wage payments of appropriate categories of workers in the southern federal districts of Russia.”<sup>284</sup>

Article 20 of the agreement states that:

in order to improve the quality of education in the Republic of Abkhazia with the assistance of the Russian Federation, the Republic of Abkhazia within 3 years from the date of entry into force of this Treaty: Develop the education system of the Republic of Abkhazia and the support of the organisations, carrying out educational activities in the Republic of Abkhazia, normative legal acts correspond to the legislation of the Russian Federation in education; organise the development of educational programs, training and professional development of teachers organisations carrying out educational activities; implementing agreed measures aimed at training professionals in priority areas of science and technology, as well as the mutual recognition of studies and qualifications.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> This is a translation of the following original quote in Russian: “Республика Абхазия поэтапно осуществляет повышение средней заработной платы основных категорий работников государственных учреждений в сфере здравоохранения, образования, науки, культуры, спорта и социального обслуживания граждан до уровня, сопоставимого с уровнем оплаты труда соответствующих категорий работников в Южном федеральном округе Российской Федерации.” Retrieved from <http://m.government.ru/media/files/wNsltFsYzes.pdf>.

<sup>285</sup> This is a translation of the following original quote in Russian: “В целях повышения качества образования в Республике Абхазия при содействии Российской Федерации Республика Абхазия не позднее 3 лет со дня вступления в силу настоящего Договора: принимает направленные на развитие системы образования Республики Абхазия и обеспечение деятельности организаций, осуществляющих образовательную

Article 20 is a good example of the treaty between Russia and Abkhazia that involves specific criteria and plans for the provision of public services in Abkhazia. While the focus of the treaties and agreements is primarily on economic development and integration as well as military relations, the provision of security, institutional and technocratic state building takes place as well.

*Table 20 Inexhaustive List of Agreements and Treaties Signed between Russia and Abkhazia*

| Year | Treaty/Agreement   |
|------|--|
| 2008 | Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance Treaty                             |
| 2009 | Cooperation Agreement on State Border Protection                                 |
| 2009 | Agreement on Socio-Economic Development Assistance                               |
| 2010 | Agreement on Joint Military Base in Abkhazia                                     |
| 2011 | Agreement on the Establishment of and Conditions for Information-Culture Centres |
| 2012 | Agreement on Cooperation in Disaster Prevention and Management                   |
| 2012 | Agreement on Procedures for Pension Provisions for Employees of Domestic Affairs |
| 2012 | Agreement on the Trade of Goods  |
| 2014 | Alliance and Strategic Partnership Treaty  |
| 2016 | Agreement on Joint Group of Armed Forces   |

Russia and Abkhazia signed several dozen additional agreements (table 20) that demonstrate clear links to Abkhazia's state capacity and its ability to provide public services and goods. The agreements, for instance, touch upon border management, military bases and joint forces that provide security guarantees as well as trade legislation. Agreements in the form of coercive diffusion channels therefore also encourage institutional and legislative isomorphism.

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деятельность в Республике Абхазия, нормативные правовые акты, корреспондирующие с законодательством Российской Федерации об образовании; организует разработку образовательных программ, подготовку и повышение квалификации педагогических работников организаций, осуществляющих образовательную деятельность; осуществляет согласованные меры, направленные на подготовку специалистов по приоритетным направлениям науки и техники, а также на обеспечение взаимного признания образования и квалификаций.” Retrieved from <http://m.government.ru/media/files/wNsltFsYzes.pdf>.

### 7.2.3 Institution Sharing

State building is not necessarily limited to the building of new government institutions and the provision of services, but also includes the maintenance, funding and reorganisation of governance institutions and public services. This section shows that some de facto states might even be inclined to pass over some of their governance responsibilities and institutional requirements to other actors through institution sharing in order to sustain public service and goods provision. Popescu (2006) and Comai (2018a: 93) refer to this phenomenon as 'outsourcing (de facto) statehood', however this thesis uses the term institution sharing to signify the degree of agency from a de facto state perspective and to emphasise the role of cooperation and joint actions, even if only in name, throughout the agreements and treaties signed between Russia and Abkhazia.

The results of the statistical analysis highlight the decreasing number of governance institutions among de facto states with a patron by around half a governance institution. Initially, these findings appear to be counter intuitive, as patron support should ensure a more stable security situation and financial contributions for de facto states that benefit the building of new governance institutions. The lower number of governance institutions in de facto states with a patron may be explained with patrons taking over some of the responsibilities and tasks of governance institutions in a de facto state. In other words, the statistical findings of this thesis uncover a degree of institution sharing in the relationships between de facto states and patron states. These findings speak to the theoretical framework of this thesis in so far that they highlight the variations in patron involvement where patrons may limit or expand their support to sustain a level of dependence of the de facto state on the patron. The theoretical framework also offers a potential explanation for the simultaneous support for basic civilian governance and a reduction in the number of governance institutions. Indeed, these findings may not be a contradiction but a representation of a patron's intent to ensure a level of dependence of the de facto state on patron support while guaranteeing a degree of self-sufficiency and bounded agency of the de facto authorities. It has to be reiterated in this context, that the lower number of governance institutions does not necessarily equate to hampered state capacity and

public services and goods provision. At the same time, the physical presence of a governance institution does not present a de facto state's ability to provide public services and goods.

It is not uncommon in regions without central government penetration, so-called weak, failed and fragile states or areas with limited statehood, that organisations on the ground ranging from NGOs to civil society organisations take on basic governance functions from the central government (Lake 2014: 519). These organisations can even “function as the de facto legitimate authorities” (Lake 2014: 519) in a region, by engaging in policy making and institutional oversight (Büscher & Vlassenroot 2010; Trefon 2011).<sup>286</sup> This section argues that in the case of de facto states such as Abkhazia, one can observe similar developments of institution sharing both with patron states and international organisations on the ground, particularly in the security, monetary and education sectors. Importantly, this form of institution sharing takes place despite Abkhazia's relatively strong statehood and wide penetration of the state. Instead, institution sharing in Abkhazia is partly due to years of neglect of specific state sectors, alternative prioritisation of the de facto authorities as well as Abkhazia's reliance on patron state protection. These dynamics have created opportunities for non-state actors and external entities to assume power by entering and influencing responsibilities that would usually be considered a state's responsibility (see chapter 8 for a discussion on institution sharing in Abkhazia's education sector). This reliance on non-state actors or external states to take on responsibilities that are usually reserved for sovereign states can develop dependencies on these external resources and may ultimately reduce the state capacity, because it disincentivises investments from the state itself (Lake 2014: 524).

A look at the descriptive of statistics of Abkhazia (figure 15) reveals that according to Florea's classification, Abkhazia already possessed all ten governance institutions by 1994. This means that Russia's role as a patron from 1999 onwards did not change the number of governance institutions as such, but reduced

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<sup>286</sup> In Eastern DR Congo, for example, “[d]omestic and international NGOs have assumed responsibility for maintaining public order, paying fees to public officials in lieu of salaries from the state, and coordinating and administering trials, in addition to providing health and education services” (Lake 2014: 519).

Abkhazia's ability to provide public services and goods independently. In that sense, this section is able to trace back the reduction in independent service and goods provision in Abkhazia and its reliance on institution sharing to Russian patronage. These findings may explain Abkhazia's underdevelopment in state sectors ranging from its military to central banking responsibilities.

One interviewed Russian foreign policy expert compares the Russo-Abkhaz patron-client relationship to parasites and symbiosis. According to him, *de facto* states are not required to possess all state institutions in order to function as a state and *de facto* state elites are oftentimes unable to develop an extensive institutional framework themselves,<sup>287</sup> due to insufficient capacity, know-how or financial opportunities.<sup>288</sup> Therefore, as in most cases of natural symbiosis, *de facto* states rely on patrons for some governance responsibilities and public service provision tasks, whereas patrons receive the *de facto* state's loyalty in return.<sup>289</sup> For instance, Abkhazia relies almost exclusively on Russia for telephone, internet and postal connections with the outside world.<sup>290</sup> Also Biermann and Harsch (2017) highlight that patrons may take over state responsibilities from *de facto* states, such as border control and the payment of public employee salaries. However, the ability of external actors to take on governance responsibilities from the *de facto* state depends on the legitimacy of the external actor and the perceived appropriateness of the envisioned governance structure or service provision (see e.g. Krasner & Risse 2014: 555). At the same time, institution sharing may influence the internal legitimacy of the affected institutions and possibly even the domestic regime.

Russo-Abkhaz institution sharing is particularly visible in Abkhazia's military and security sectors. Throughout the 1990s, the Abkhaz military and security capabilities expanded considerably, because of dedicated budgetary contributions by the *de facto* authorities to Abkhazia's security infrastructure and regional military support from individual Russian republics of the North Caucasus. However, from 1999 onwards, Abkhazia's regime has relied almost exclusively on Russia for the

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<sup>287</sup> Interview 16: Russian scholar (Moscow)

<sup>288</sup> Interview 15: Abkhaz scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>289</sup> Interview 16: Russian scholar (Moscow)

<sup>290</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

provision of security services and military protection. In addition to limited financial capabilities, this may explain why Abkhazia did not commit to the development of its own security and military institutions.<sup>291</sup> The treaties between Abkhazia and Russia from 2008 and 2014 facilitated further military integration and established joint troops between the two parties. Particular the focus on a “coordinated foreign policy” and a “single space of defence and security” signifies the military involvement of Russia in Abkhazia (Gerrits & Bader 2016: 301-302). In practice, this means that Abkhazia and Russia have a joint military force and that Abkhazia does not control its de facto border independently as Russia also controls the border at the Inguri bridge. While the Abkhaz side checks the documents of incoming people, the Russian FSB checkpoint at the same border also validates passports.<sup>292</sup> Abkhazia’s security and military sector therefore tellingly represents the extent to which institution sharing and dependence on Russia decreases the state capacity and provision of public services and goods in Abkhazia. At the same time, Abkhaz dependence on Russian military and security support as well as its reliance on telephone, internet and postal connections highlights the limited alternatives for Abkhaz authorities, which encourages institution sharing.

Beyond the military and security sectors, there are signs of institution sharing in certain Abkhaz ministries and departments as well. In the Ministry of Interior, for instance, Russia and Abkhazia have a joint information coordination centre,<sup>293</sup> whereas the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia employs a coordination mechanism with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia.<sup>294</sup> Gerrits and Bader (2016: 298) even argue that Russia “carries out part of public administration” in Abkhazia. In the education sector, on the other hand, Abkhazia relies a lot on international organisations such as the UN and UNICEF (see Chapter 8 for further insight into the Abkhaz education sector).<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>292</sup> Interview 1: Georgian scholar (Tbilisi)

<sup>293</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>294</sup> Interview 9: Government representative of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>295</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

*Figure 18 Abkhaz National Bank (Shakaya 1979)*

*This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

Even though Abkhazia was in possession of all ten governance institutions by 1994 according to Florea's data set (2014), the physical presence of these governance institutions does not necessarily reflect the capacity and ability to perform the tasks and responsibilities usually associated with these institutions. Institution sharing, in this context, does not imply the closure or removal of the existing physical structures, but that the responsibilities are taken over by an external body. Rather than a reduction in physical governance institutions as shown in the quantitative chapter of this thesis, this section observes a reduction in independent service and goods provision from 1999 onwards, that can be traced back to Russian patronhood. These institution sharing dynamics are particularly noticeable in the Abkhaz monetary sector. Abkhazia's central bank, while physically present (see figure 18) and counted as one of ten governance institutions in Florea's data set, does not perform traditional central bank responsibilities. In other words, Abkhazia may have a building that officially hosts the Abkhaz Central Bank and some employees may be assigned to work in this Central Bank, but the actual monetary policy usually performed by a Central Bank takes place not in Sukhumi but in the Russian Central Bank in Moscow. Abkhazia uses Russian roubles as its currency<sup>296</sup> with the Abkhaz Apsar currency

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<sup>296</sup> Interview 1: Georgian scholar (Tbilisi)

essentially not in use.<sup>297</sup> This is one of the reasons why Abkhaz citizens cannot make international transactions without a Russian bank as a mediator.<sup>298</sup> The Central Bank in Abkhazia focuses primarily on the clearance of bank and social transfers instead.<sup>299</sup> Similar to Abkhazia's military and security sector, Abkhazia's Central Bank represents an instance where Abkhaz authorities had little room for manoeuvre and few alternative viable operation options, due to the inability to stem monetary policies independently and Abkhaz dependence on Russian financial support, tourism and trade.

Hence, institution sharing has significant implications for the state capacity of de facto states and their ability to provide public services and goods. On the one hand, institution sharing can arguably facilitate state building by ensuring a broader variety of public services and goods for the citizens that otherwise would not have been available. On the other hand, institution sharing may restrict state building by reducing the capacity of domestic institutions and disincentivising institutional developments. Institution sharing appears to affect particularly governance institutions of the state, but can also shape governance institutions of non-state actors. Indeed, this section presented evidence supporting the argument that Russia takes on some public service and goods provisions from the Abkhaz authorities. While there are few signs of governance institutions in Abkhazia outright missing due to Russian patronage, the underdevelopment of some sectors of the Abkhaz de facto state that discourage independent public service and goods provision can be traced back to Russian patronhood. This section also argued that de facto states oftentimes cannot oppose institution sharing due to their dependence on patron support for public service and goods provision and their inability to stem public service and goods provisions without patron support. This is particular the case in terms of telephone, internet and postal connections with the outside world, but also covers Abkhazia's military, security and monetary sector.

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<sup>297</sup> Interview 15: Abkhaz scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>298</sup> Interview 1: Georgian scholar (Tbilisi)

<sup>299</sup> Interview 15: Abkhaz scholar (Saint Petersburg)

#### 7.2.4 Technocratic Influences

Scholars such as Skalov (2011) and Sukhov (2009) argue that Russia does not need to interfere directly in the everyday political decision-making of Abkhazia, because it holds a monopoly position as Abkhazia's sole patron. From their perspective, all major parties and candidates in Abkhazia are aware of their reliance on Russian support. Thus, the election outcome is to large extents irrelevant, as the stance towards Russia will remain largely positive. The fact that Russia interfered in previous presidential elections in Abkhazia weakens Skalov's (2011) and Sukhov's (2009) argument somewhat, as it shows that it is in Russia's interest to establish susceptible decision-makers in Abkhazia. Essentially, this section argues that Russian technocratic influences in Abkhazia highlight that Russia is not necessarily interested in micromanaging politics and state building in Abkhazia, but in having candidates in place that have a favourable view on Russia and can be manipulated more easily. This, in turn, highlights that Russia encourages mimetic and normative diffusion, rather than sustained coercive diffusion, which results in institutional and legislative isomorphism. This is in line with Lake and Fariss' (2014) argument that external state builders are more interested in loyalty and adherence to policy preferences rather than the state capacity of the client state.

Russia has a track record of intervening in elections and high-level appointments of de facto states in its near abroad (e.g. Abkhazia in 2004 and 2014 as well as in South Ossetia in 2017).<sup>300</sup> In the first round of the 2004 presidential election in Abkhazia, Moscow and outgoing President Vladislav Ardzinba backed candidate Raul Khajimba who lost to Sergei Bagapsh, a candidate that was supported by "civil society organisations, the veteran's association, businessmen and disgruntled former government ministers" (Caspersen 2011: 343).<sup>301</sup> <sup>302</sup> Russia went as far as to block railway traffic and Abkhaz produce and threatened the end of pension payments and the distribution of Russian passports if people voted for Bagapsh in the second round of the presidential election. This is an indication of what Gel'man and Lankina (2013)

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<sup>300</sup> Interview 2: Representatives of an international donor (Sukhumi)

<sup>301</sup> Interview 4: Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (Tbilisi)

<sup>302</sup> Interview 16: Russian scholar (Moscow)

refer to as authoritarian diffusion across Russia's regions. In the end, both candidates pursued a power sharing agreement with a combined ticket (Trier et al. 2010: 10-11). This was a first striking sign of the growing role of Abkhazia's civil society and that Russian influence was not absolute. At the same time, Russian support for a specific candidate in the presidential election indicates Russia's readiness to directly interfere in Abkhaz domestic politics and high-level appointments.<sup>303</sup> Also the resignation of Abkhaz de facto President Aleksandr Ankvab in 2014 was arguably motivated by Russian interference (Kereselidze 2015: 206).

These examples highlight Russia's support for candidates that have a favourable view of Russia. Russia is therefore willing to directly engage in the appointment or demotion of high-level candidates. Lake (2016: 1-2) warns that external actors, that are willing to fund state building, "are likely to have interests in the future of that country, and will therefore seek to promote leaders who share or are at least sympathetic to their interests and willing to implement their preferred policies." Especially in cases where the policy ideas of citizens and external state builders diverge, the latter is more likely to support political actors with similar preferences to the external state building (Lake & Fariss 2014: 570). This, in turn, can reduce the legitimacy of the leader domestically, which Lake (2016: 2) refers to as the statebuilder's dilemma, but also of the external state builder.

Some interviewees suggested that Russia has utilised these connections with high-ranking politicians to shape Abkhazia's government agenda.<sup>304</sup> Russia, for instance, has attempted to push private property legislation through parliament.<sup>305</sup> However, Russia's success in influencing specific legislation appears to be limited even under changing Abkhaz presidencies.<sup>306</sup> This is an example where a de facto state challenges coercive diffusion despite its bounded agency and political pressures from the patron to amend legislations through persistent lobbying of decision-makers.

The control of relevant political actors reaches groups and individuals beyond

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<sup>303</sup> Interview 2: Representatives of an international donor (Sukhumi)

<sup>304</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>305</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>306</sup> Interview 4: Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (Tbilisi)

top-level decision-makers. Russia not only targets Abkhaz government officials and political decision-makers, but also non-governmental organisations (Gerrits & Bader 2016: 299-300). In these cases, Russia lures these groups with financial contributions and increased political and intergovernmental access and involvement. Also industrial and business ties between Abkhazia and Russia can present legacies from the Soviet period that shape the state building processes of the de facto state. Lankina and Libman (2019), for instance, highlight trade and production chain dependencies in Ukraine from the Soviet period that facilitate diffusion through institutional path dependencies even in the post-Soviet era. One could argue that Abkhazia's institutional path dependence on Russian tourists falls into a similar form of Soviet legacy.

As previously mentioned, coordination mechanisms between certain Abkhaz and Russian ministries and departments, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Prosecutor General's Office, tie Russian and Abkhaz officials closer together.<sup>307</sup> These coordination mechanisms mirror Sahin's (2015: 27) rather telling description of external interventions in relation to recruitment within government bodies and co-staffed departments, as blurring the differences between internal and external. Moreover, many Abkhaz officials, such as custom officers, have been trained in Russia.<sup>308</sup> Russia forms these close ties between Russian and Abkhaz decision-makers, bureaucrats and non-state actors through financial and military support, direct intervention, coordination mechanisms and education. In other instances, the close connections can be shaped by legacies from the Soviet period. The resulting blurring of internal and external differences encourages mimetic and normative diffusion and increases the likelihood for institutional and legislative isomorphism.

#### **7.2.5 Duopoly of Legitimate Violence**

Domestic security provision tends to be a state building priority across de facto states, because it represents a central component of ensuring internal legitimacy (Bakke et al. 2013: 3). This section argues that Abkhazia's monopoly on legitimate

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<sup>307</sup> Interview 9: Government representative of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>308</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

violence and its ability to exercise control domestically is largely due to Russian military and security support. Indeed, the de facto regime has relied to varying degrees on Russian military support to ensure security on the de facto territory. Henceforth, rather than referring to Abkhazia's monopoly of legitimate violence, this phenomenon should be described as a duopoly of legitimate violence.

Russia supported Abkhazia militarily long before its official recognition in 2008. Since the early 1990s, Russia has engaged in a variety of military practices including security alliances, the stationing of military and peacekeeping troops, covert military operations, building of military bases, active involvement in defence during the wars in 1992-1993, 1998 and 2008, protection of borders, organisation of joint troops and the supply of logistical and military aid (German 2012; Hedskog & Larsson 2007; Gerrits & Bader 2016). It is important to note in this context, that Russian military support in the early 1990s did not originate from the Russian central government, but individual Russian republics. Particularly from 1999 onwards, the Russian government started to be more openly involved in military operations. The Russian military support during the Russo-Georgian war of 2008, for instance, enabled the Abkhaz army to reclaim Upper Kodori and establish territorial control (Blakkisrud & Kolstø 2012: 283). Abkhazia enjoys significant military support beyond direct military involvement by Russian troops. Some key positions in the law enforcement agencies and in ministries are staffed with Russian citizens. Two of the five deputies of the Chairman of the Abkhaz Security Service, for instance, are former Russians military generals.<sup>309</sup> Moreover, Abkhazia and Russia exchange relevant security intelligence through the joint information coordination centre at the Ministry of Interior.<sup>310</sup>

Russia's official recognition of Abkhazia marked a point of further intensification of military relations. Russia, for the first time, did not recognise Georgia's territorial integrity and the so-called CIS peacekeeping missions in Abkhazia turned into official military support. The 2008 Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance Treaty grants Russia to establish Russian military bases and station

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<sup>309</sup> Interview 6: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>310</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

soldiers on Abkhaz territory and promises the protection of Abkhazia's de facto border and sovereignty (ICG 2010a; Gerrits & Bader: 2016: 298). A 2010 agreement covers the lease of a military base for 49 years and Russia is also interested in setting up naval capabilities in Ochamchira (Blakkisrud & Kolstø 2012: 290). In 2014, Russia signed the Alliance and Strategic Partnership Treaty with Abkhazia, which facilitates further military integration and establishes joint troops between the de facto state and Russia. Particular the focus on a "coordinated foreign policy" and a "single space of defence and security" signifies the military involvement of Russia in Abkhazia (Gerrits & Bader 2016: 301-302). Generally, survey results show that Abkhaz citizens (with the exception of the Gali district) support Russia's military presence on their territory and even argue that Russia should stay in Abkhazia permanently (O'Loughlin et al. 2015: 437).

Russia's involvement in the military and security sector of Abkhazia is significant for Abkhazia's state building development for two reasons. First, by providing Abkhazia with security guarantees, Russia matches the Georgian military capabilities and ensures the status quo of relative stability in the de facto state (Blakkisrud & Kolstø 2012: 290). Due to Abkhazia's reliance on Russia in security matters, Abkhazia has not developed its own military institutions as extensively.<sup>311</sup> This is an example where institution sharing and dependence decreases state and institution building of a de facto state. These findings also complement the statistical results of this thesis, that found that a militarily stronger parent state compared to the patron can increase the likelihood for high degrees of state building in de facto states, whereas a stronger patron may discourage or disincentivise further state building. Second, Abkhazia's military integration with Russia and its reliance on Russian military protection has significant effects on a traditional understanding of sovereignty and Abkhaz control over its de facto territory. The above-mentioned extent of Russian military involvement indicates that Abkhazia does not hold the monopoly of violence on its territory, but rather shares some of the responsibilities with Russia. The Abkhaz border, for instance, is controlled to this day both by Abkhaz

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<sup>311</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

and Russian forces at separate checkpoints.<sup>312</sup> In this sense, it is more applicable to speak of a duopoly rather than a monopoly of violence in Abkhazia. However, Krasner (1999; 2004) finds that similar external involvement in domestic authority structures is commonplace across history. Instead of highlighting the potential threat of such a duopoly of violence to Abkhazia's sovereignty, it is more insightful to examine how the dependence on external support shapes domestic legitimacy dynamics. Therefore, the next section explores the ways in which Abkhazia's reliance on Russian support has affected the legitimacy of Russian involvement in Abkhazia.

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<sup>312</sup> Interview 6: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

### 7.3 Legitimisation of Russian Involvement

*If Russia could build Abkhazia as it imagines an ideal state, then there would not be what [there is] now.<sup>313</sup>*

**Abkhaz Scholar Residing in Saint Petersburg, Russia**

External involvement in the state and institution building processes of de facto states raises concerns around the legitimacy of this external involvement and whether local ownership can sustain in the context of likely dependence on the external state builder (see Caspersen 2015). Thus, in order to assess the extent to which Russian involvement is legitimised and has lasting effects on Abkhazia's state building process, it is necessary to reconsider the role of input and output legitimacy in patron-client relations. As discussed in the theoretical framework of this thesis, a variety of legitimacy dynamics play a role in the effectiveness and success of state building processes in de facto states. Both direct (coercive) and indirect (normative, mimetic and competitive) diffusion influences have to be legitimised in order to shape the state and institutional structure of an entity. Lake (2016), for instance, points out that the development of institutional structures is only meaningful if domestic authorities legitimise the external state builder. Therefore, the task of external state builders is not restricted to facilitating the provision of public services and goods as well as ensuring the monopoly of violence, but also to enable social transformations that increase the likelihood for legitimisation (Lake 2016: 4).

Based on findings from areas of limited statehood, external actors can increase state capacity and provide public services if domestic communities and elites perceive the external actor as legitimate (Krasner & Risse 2014: 555). Legitimised external state builders facilitate an external state building process that necessitates fewer interventions even if the institutionalisation and funding is low (547).<sup>314</sup> This section argues that Russia's partial support in Abkhazia's early state building campaign, the institutionalisation of Russian involvement since 2008 as well

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<sup>313</sup> Interview 15: Abkhaz scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>314</sup> While the quoted literature refers predominantly to failed states, areas of limited statehood and weak states, some of the assumptions and results also show surprising applicability in de facto states.

as the ability of domestic elites to challenge certain Russian policy proposals ensures a degree of input legitimacy of Russian actions. However, the relative freedom of Abkhaz domestic elites has decreased since 2014. Output legitimacy, on the other hand, is driven predominantly by Russia's initial military support in the early 1990s, financial support from 1999 onwards and particularly Russia's recognition of Abkhazia in 2008. At the same time, some Abkhaz elites question the appropriateness of state building efforts by Russia, which may challenge Russia's output legitimacy. Nonetheless, both input and output legitimacy are safeguarded to a certain extent, because Russia is Abkhazia's only viable partner and both parties have internalised this situation.

Scharpf (1999) refers to two forms of empirical legitimacy in form of input and output legitimacy (refer back to chapter 2 for a more detailed overview of legitimacy dynamics in external state building). Input legitimacy denotes how the quality of public involvement in the decision-making process can increase the likelihood of external actor legitimisation. Output legitimacy refers to the target population's perception of the appropriateness and performance quality of state building efforts by external actors. Krasner and Risse (2014: 557) identify two ways in which actors can attain output legitimacy in areas of limited statehood. First, international actors may be considered legitimate if the domestic population or elite awaits a certain outcome or trusts the "knowledge and moral authority" of the international actor. Second, the legitimacy of an external actor increases if the initial actions meet the expectations of the domestic actors (see also Beisheim & Liese 2014; Matanock 2014). External actors, for instance, may achieve output legitimacy if the external actor removed an unfavourable ruler or regime.

The agreements and treaties signed between Russia and Abkhazia represent an institutionalised form of a certain degree of input legitimacy. The institutional structure of the relationship between external and domestic actors can ensure at least some involvement of domestic actors in the decision-making process. The quality of this process increases the input legitimacy vis-à-vis external actors (Scharpf 1999; Krasner & Risse 2014: 552). Contracting, either in the form of delegation (Matanock 2014) or interstate agreements (Boerzel & van Huellen 2014), is an example of such an institutional framework. Also the departmental and ministerial

coordination mechanisms between Abkhazia and Russia can be considered a form of institutionalised input legitimacy. Yet, there are few signs that the public is significantly involved in the decision-making behind agreements and treaties.

In terms of domestic elite and society involvement in the state building process, the interviewees suggest that despite the direct contributions to the Abkhaz budget and deep social linkages, the Abkhaz authorities take important decisions regarding the development of their state institutions and public service provision.<sup>315</sup>

<sup>316</sup> The standard procedure in determining Russian financial contributions, for instance, commences with a request from the Abkhaz government outlining the quantity and purpose of the desired funding.<sup>317</sup> Subsequently, the Russian budgetary mechanisms allocate the funds to Abkhazia. According to a representative from an international organisation in Sukhumi, the quantity and purpose of the allocated funds can be renegotiated.<sup>318</sup> Following the transfer of funds, Russian inspection teams travel to Abkhazia to monitor the spending of funds and may identify potential discrepancies.<sup>319</sup> This standard procedure highlights at least some level of domestic elite involvement, even though it is not clear to what extent domestic actors can renegotiate the funding allocation in practice. At least according to Ambrosio and Lange (2016), Abkhaz opinions and contributions have had an effect on the decision-making outcome despite Abkhazia's weaker negotiation position and its dependence on Russia. At the same time, the monitoring teams from Russia represent a relatively tight external control over domestic affairs and expenditures. Russia has tightened its grip on Abkhazia in the last years with stricter guidelines and control mechanisms on how and when these funds are spent, due to alleged corruption schemes significantly limiting the amount of money arriving in Abkhazia.<sup>320 321</sup>

In some instances, Russian involvement in domestic affairs has caused frictions within Abkhazia's ruling elite and the general public (Gerrits & Bader 2016:

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<sup>315</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>316</sup> Interview 15: Abkhaz scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>317</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>318</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>319</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>320</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>321</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

298). In cases of diverging opinions or viewpoints, Abkhaz authorities have challenged certain Russian involvement and were able to stand their ground in some instances.<sup>322 323</sup> While Russia takes over responsibilities from Abkhazia in certain areas, because Abkhazia does not have the necessary international access, Abkhazians would not offer Russia full responsibility to negotiate on their behalf. One interviewee goes as far as to argue that Abkhazia would have lost all control to Russia after 2008 if they had not made a firm and formative approach.<sup>324</sup> The most prominent example in this respect is Russia's continued challenge of the Abkhaz private property law that only permits ethnic Abkhaz to acquire private property on Abkhaz soil.<sup>325 326</sup> On the one hand, Russia respects Abkhaz domestic affairs to the extent that Russian representatives consult and attempt to persuade Abkhaz elites, while the Abkhaz side is able to stand its ground under mounting pressure and despite its dependence on Russian support.<sup>327</sup> On the other hand, it is questionable whether Abkhazia would be willing to give up its ties with Russia over the private property question. At the same time, Russia does not appear to risk such a scenario to begin with. The private property question signifies an area of potential input legitimacy erosion, but the commitment of domestic elites to challenge Russian interests in this regard should ultimately strengthen input legitimacy. Concurrently, the mounting Russian pressure may negatively influence the legitimacy perception of Abkhaz elites and citizens vis-à-vis Russia's position as an external support source.

In addition, a variety of developments since Abkhazia's recognition in 2008 decreased the relative freedom of domestic elites in directing their own policies and state building process. While some interviewees appreciated Russia for respecting Abkhaz independence, others highlighted that Russia appears to impose conditions on Abkhazia or ask Abkhaz officials to mimic Russian policies or institutions, which

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<sup>322</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>323</sup> Interview 15: Abkhaz scholar (Saint Petersburg)

<sup>324</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>325</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>326</sup> Other areas of contention, that are also corner stones of the negotiations with Russia are church and internal affairs.

<sup>327</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

would eventually deprive the de facto state of its sovereignty and ownership.<sup>328 329</sup> Russian interference in high-level appointments and elections, such as in the 2004 presidential election in Abkhazia, may also reduce input legitimacy as it signifies to the Abkhaz population the extent of Russian involvement in domestic affairs with little regard for Abkhaz' self-conception of sovereignty. Nonetheless, Abkhazia does not have any realistic alternatives to Russian support and therefore political actors in the two regions rarely disagree on the Russian role in Abkhazia, but rather on how Abkhazia should utilise Russian support. As all major candidates and parties in Abkhazia depend on financial support from Russia, there are no parliamentary or opposition fractions that are per se opposed to Russian support.<sup>330</sup> Essentially, the Abkhaz government and opposition attempt to differentiate themselves by promoting varying degrees of relationship intensities with Russia.<sup>331</sup>

The output legitimacy of the Russo-Abkhaz relationship appears to be largely driven by Russia's initial military support in the early 1990s, financial support from 1999 onwards and particularly Russia's recognition of Abkhazia in 2008. To this date, the Abkhaz elite and population appreciates Russian (regional) support during the Georgian-Abkhaz war, Russia's eventual recognition and subsequent financial and humanitarian aid.<sup>332 333</sup> While it was not necessarily Russia's involvement that ensured the regime change in 1992 and 1993 that removed an unfavourable regime, some troops from the North Caucasus supported Abkhazia in its endeavour. Furthermore, regional ties with Russian regions benefitted Abkhazia's state building development throughout the 1990s. Thus, Russia's partial support for Abkhazia in the early state building campaign can be considered a contributing factor to a certain degree of output legitimacy of Russian involvement in Abkhazia. Most Abkhaz

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<sup>328</sup> Interview 4: Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (Tbilisi)

<sup>329</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>330</sup> Interview 4: Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (Tbilisi)

<sup>331</sup> Interview 4: Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (Tbilisi)

<sup>332</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>333</sup> Interview 4: Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (Tbilisi)

citizens have a favourable view of Russia (O'Loughlin et al. 2015; Bakke et al. 2018). A survey conducted in Abkhazia and other post-Soviet de facto states, for instance, shows that Abkhaz respondents (with significant differences in the Gali region) trust the Russian government more than their leadership (O'Loughlin et al. 2015: 435) and support Russia's military presence (436-437). The Abkhaz respondents also value economic ties with Russia, "but dispute its use, modalities, instruments, and its "price."" (O'Loughlin et al. 2015: 436).

Several Abkhaz interviewees questioned whether Russia's agenda is compatible with Abkhaz interests and instead highlighted a number of aspects that Russia and Abkhazia disagree on.<sup>334</sup> <sup>335</sup> The interviews revealed, for instance, a reoccurring challenge to output legitimacy in Russo-Abkhaz relationship relating to the appropriateness of state building efforts by Russia. Russia appears to be preoccupied with infrastructural development, equipment provision and welfare support in Abkhazia, rather than the development of the Abkhaz society, opportunities for economic revenue and human capacity.<sup>336</sup> The focus on infrastructural development and equipment, however, does not necessarily result in better quality service provision.<sup>337</sup> The Abkhaz health care sector is an insightful case in this context as it exemplifies Russia's focus on infrastructure and equipment rather than soft components. Before 2010, Russian financial assistance for the Abkhaz health care sector was minimal and once financial assistance poured in, it was limited to physical infrastructure and equipment investments. The allocation of funds to the Abkhaz health care sector did not necessarily result in better quality of the health services, due to insufficient investments in soft components such as staff capacities, maintenance, management and methodologies.<sup>338</sup> Unsurprisingly, Russia remains the central reference for technical and practical support (Comai 2018a: 34) and does not encourage the endogenous development of technical and practical know-how. This might be due to limited resources, insufficient capacities and expertise or not

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<sup>334</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>335</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>336</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>337</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>338</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

enough interest to enforce a change in the existing approach and perform the required investment in capacity development.<sup>339</sup>

Some officials on the Abkhaz and Russian sides have started to realise the significance of the soft component for Abkhazia's state building development in the last couple of years and first minor steps have been taken to address this limitation.<sup>340</sup> In the meantime, the preoccupation with infrastructure support over capacity building remains the main challenge to output legitimacy in Russo-Abkhaz relations.

These findings relating to the extent of Russian support in Abkhazia's state and institution building process are reflected in the statistical analysis of this thesis. Patron states generally support de facto states in guaranteeing minimal civilian governance, but do not encourage the development of coherent government structures in de facto states. Thus, Abkhaz officials are reliant on coming up with own initiatives to develop the capacities of health and teaching staff unless they accept the continued reliance on Russian expertise or training sessions from local international donors and NGOs.

A second challenge to output legitimacy in Russo-Abkhaz relations relate to failures by Russia to meet expectations of the Abkhaz partners and in some instances even contractual agreements. Russia, for example, significantly revised a promised amount of funding for Abkhazia in 2016 that Russia had previously agreed to in an agreement in 2014.<sup>341</sup> Moreover, a variety of interviewees stated that since the recognition in 2008, both Abkhazia and Russia have not had a concrete goal to work towards, which is reflected in diverging expectations on both sides.

Krasner and Risse (2014) identify a variety of ways for external state builders to achieve input and output legitimacy in areas of limited statehood ranging from trust in the moral authority of the external actor to delivered results meeting the expectations of the local elite and population. A closer look at relationships between patrons and de facto states reveals an additional way to achieve both input and output legitimacy in entities that have limited viable alternatives. If the external actor

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<sup>339</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>340</sup> Interview 10: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>341</sup> Interview 6: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

is the only potential actor available to offer support, this reduces the requirements and expectations in terms of output. While the absence of viable alternative support systems may not legitimise the actions of external actors independently, it, nonetheless, significantly reduces the requirements and expectations set by the domestic elite and civil society on the external actor. If the external actor is the only available resource for support, the demands and expectations for the external actor are significantly lower for output legitimacy and elites may demand less direct involvement in the state building process than they would if more viable alternatives were present. In other words, the higher the dependence on an external actor, the lower the expectations set out by the local population. However, this form of legitimacy making exercise may not be considered legitimacy in the strict sense, but rather legitimacy out of necessity.

Unsurprisingly, Abkhazia's limited international recognition results in large-scale international isolation for the de facto states. This has reduced Abkhazia's perspectives in terms of potential international partnerships and pushed the region further into the Russian sphere of influence.<sup>342</sup> <sup>343</sup> Several Abkhaz interviewees admitted Abkhazia's dependence on Russia in a variety of areas ranging from financial to military support.<sup>344</sup> In some areas, Abkhazia is exclusively reliant on Russian support, such as banking and internet provision.<sup>345</sup> Therefore, elites in Abkhazia tend to modify their behaviour accordingly when they are reliant on patron support and have no viable alternatives. The acceptance of Russian involvement appears to depend on the specific area it influences and the extent to which it affects their understanding of sovereignty. A government representative, for instance, revealed that Abkhazia is dependent economically on Russia, however, Abkhazia remains fully sovereign according to him.<sup>346</sup> Interestingly, Abkhaz representatives appear to be more protective of legislations surrounding private property, land and language rights. In these sectors, the Abkhaz elite is able to withstand substantial coercive diffusion pressures from Russian change agents. Yet, Abkhaz decision-

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<sup>342</sup> Interview 1: Georgian scholar (Tbilisi)

<sup>343</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>344</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>345</sup> Interview 1: Georgian scholar (Tbilisi)

<sup>346</sup> Interview 9: Government representative of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

makers are more susceptible to external engagement in sectors such as Abkhazia's security institutions, the economy and border control.<sup>347</sup>

In sum, both input and output legitimacy are considerably affected by an understanding by the Abkhaz elites, civil society and public of the limited viable alternatives to Russian support. On the one hand, Abkhazia welcomes Russian support and the political discussions centre predominantly on how the financial contributions originating in Russia should be utilised. On the other hand, Abkhazia's limited viable alternatives reduce the likelihood that Russo-Abkhaz relations will suffer under a lack of input or output legitimacy. The institutionalisation of the Russo-Abkhaz relationship since 2008 has also benefitted input legitimacy to a certain extent. Input legitimacy may, however, suffer under impositions to mimic institutional practices and increased Russian control over the allocation of funds in Abkhazia. Output legitimacy is predominantly sourced through what Russia symbolises and what Russia has previously delivered in form of military support and international recognition in 2008. At least since 2014, Russia has been criticised for its focus on the hard component of state building in form of infrastructural support. Nonetheless, output legitimacy is ensured to a certain extent as Russia is Abkhazia's only viable partner at this stage.

Overall, analysing the legitimisation of external support offers valuable insights into the distinction between areas where Abkhaz elites challenge Russian involvement and areas where they are more open to a quasi-takeover of Russia. Abkhazia flexibly deals with the issue of legitimacy, by holding certain criticisms back and restricting Russian influence in certain areas in order to ensure sustained support. This flexibility is in line with Castel-Branco's (2008) understanding of ownership. According to him (Castel-Branco 2008: 3),

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<sup>347</sup> I would encourage further research into the reasoning behind Abkhazia's sovereignty concerns when it comes to private property rights, but not its border control or military institutions.

what matters in social and economic development is not ownership *per se*, but the dynamics of the contest for, and the social and political basis of, ownership. In other words, whether the aid recipient government has ownership or not of development policy is a lesser issue than that of the social and political interactions and direction of the development policy followed by such a government, because the latter reflects the dynamics of the contest for, and the social and political basis of, ownership.

At the same time, de facto regimes need to consider that if respondents distrust the patron, this reduces the trust in the de facto state leadership and the status quo (Bakke et al. 2018: 159). Vice versa, trust in the patron leadership increases the credibility of the de facto ruler (165). In other words, the Abkhaz regime would be wise to encourage both input and output legitimacy of Russia's engagement in the de facto state.

## 7.4 Conclusion

Russia's involvement in Abkhazia's state building development and the interwoven legitimacy dynamics are certainly not representative for all forms of patron-de facto state relations. Still, this chapter outlines the potential extent of patron involvement in de facto states, foreign policy instruments available to patron states and the necessary legitimisation processes behind external interventions. Whether or not Russia is indeed required to intervene directly in Abkhazia to achieve a desired goal and sustain a level of dependence, this chapter has shown that Russia does actively engage with this entity in areas that surpass mere military support, financial assistance and direct involvement in elections. A close examination of the ways in which Russia influences Abkhazia highlights the necessity to complement common perspectives on Russian foreign policy with an additional foreign policy channel in form of state building. At the same time, this chapter stressed that it is imperative to go beyond centralised views of foreign policy and Russia as a unitary actor when analysing Russian influences on Abkhazia, as Russian regions offered humanitarian support, education exchanges and trading opportunities as well.

The statistical analysis of this thesis underscored that patron states are unlikely to support the creation of coherent government structures, but encourage the development of minimal civilian governance. This is in line with the qualitative analysis of key Russian state building instruments in Abkhazia, which revealed that Russian support is linked predominantly to infrastructural reconstruction rather than capacity building and training. Russia prioritises loyalty and the creation of a basic sustainable institutional framework over the capacity and capabilities of the Abkhaz de facto state institutions. In other words, Russia pursues a policy of nurturing Abkhazia's dependence on external support by providing aid that discourages self-sufficiency. Russian prioritisation of state building in Abkhazia therefore shapes Abkhazia's state capability and the provision of public services and goods. Another significant effect on Abkhazia's state capacity and service provision is Abkhazia's reliance on institution sharing with patrons and non-state actors, which take on specific governance or service provision tasks from the unrecognised entity. If these developments are commonplace across other patron-de facto state relations, this

may explain why some de facto states struggle to develop more coherent government structures despite the presence of financial support from a patron state.

By following the causal chains of coercive diffusion laid out in the theoretical framework and applying process tracing to the source material, this chapter empirically established that coercive diffusion shapes Abkhazia's state and institution building processes. Yet, this chapter also highlighted that Russian involvement in Abkhazia goes beyond direct coercive diffusion channels, by setting the basis for normative and mimetic diffusion. Russia, for instance, controls relevant de facto politicians or ensures that politicians have close ties with Russia through the provision of significant financial contributions and military support. Russia and Abkhazia also signed treaties and agreements that specify state building measures. These developments encourage mimetic and normative diffusion through which de facto elites take on policy ideas, legislature and institutional practices from Russia without the necessity of direct Russian involvement.

Decisive nuances can also be identified in Abkhazia's behaviour vis-à-vis Russia. Abkhazia appears to be more open to external influences in certain areas of its de facto state including education, health, finance and security. This openness to external involvement has resulted in institution sharing and outsourcing of governance tasks in some instances. At the same time, the Abkhaz government and civil society appear to be protective of some aspects of their state including private property and language legislations, which tend to be associated with Abkhaz nationhood. In these sectors, the Abkhaz elite is able to withstand extensive coercive diffusion pressures of Russian change agents. Abkhaz resistance in these sectors is not due to the involvement of alternative support sources, but arguably because they represent symbolic battles over Russian influence and Abkhazia's national identity that the Abkhaz regime is much keener to fight.

Finally, Abkhazia flexibly deals with the issue of legitimacy, by holding certain criticisms back and restricting Russian influence in certain areas in order to ensure sustained support. This is largely due to some level of sustained input and output legitimacy, because Russia is Abkhazia's only viable partner and both parties have internalised this situation. The following and final empirical chapter applies the

theoretical model of this thesis to Abkhazia's education sector in order to capture the developments and state building dynamics in one specific state sector.

## *Chapter 8*

### **The ABC of De Facto State Education Reform**

*How Selective State Building and Restricted Patron Support Encouraged  
Competitive Diffusion in Abkhazia's Education Sector*

Russian foreign policies towards countries and regions of its near abroad tend to be viewed with suspicion by many politicians and analysts, particularly when these policies involve direct military, political or economic action. Russian involvement in Abkhazia is certainly not an exception in this regard. While considerable attention has been paid to Russia's hard power endeavours in the post-Soviet space, Russia's pursuit of soft power interests including its involvement in education activities abroad is oftentimes overlooked. The goal of this chapter is to go beyond the common Russian hard power narrative by examining the extent to which Russian direct and indirect diffusion influences penetrate one specific public sector in Abkhazia's state building quest and the ways in which domestic and external policy prioritisations have shaped Abkhazia's education sector since 1992. Abkhazia's education sector development should not necessarily be seen as a unique or outlier case, as other countries and de facto states experienced similar challenges and

trajectories during the post-Soviet transition period. The findings thereby also contribute to an increasingly rich literature on domestic concerns surrounding ethno-linguistic developments in de facto states of the post-Soviet space that touch upon education reforms (Clogg 2008; Trier et al. 2010; Blakkisrud & Kolstø 2011; Ó'Beacháin 2012; Dembińska & Danero Iglesias 2013; Comai & Venturi 2015; Pashentseva 2018; Dembińska 2019).

The previous chapters of this thesis provided insights into the striking state building development of the de facto Republic of Abkhazia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Abkhazia's education sector during the same period however appears to have undergone merely minor modifications from the outgoing Soviet education system. Abkhazia's susceptibility to external actors as an internationally largely unrecognised entity offers insights into the extent to which patron states support de facto authorities with the provision of public services and goods. Unlike the defence and financial sectors of de facto states, for instance, education represents a segment of the state where patron involvement is not necessarily expected. Furthermore, this chapter offers additional analytical perspectives on the variations of direct and indirect patron involvement by shedding light on how competing domestic and international diffusion sources (NGOs, international donors, kin states, patron states, de facto authorities and parent states) have shaped Abkhazia's education sector. By following the causal chains of the diffusion channels laid out in the theoretical framework and applying process tracing to the source material, this section empirically establishes that particularly competitive diffusion informs Abkhazia's education sector transformations. These insights contribute to the theoretical framework of this thesis by fleshing out the origins, patterns and consequences of competing diffusion sources in de facto states. The chapter, for instance, highlights that Russian and other diffusion sources do not necessarily directly compete outside of the Gali district but can complement each other. Furthermore, competing parent state involvement in Gali facilitates direct patron involvement and de facto state responses.

In addition to applying diffusion models as a theoretical tool to distinguish between direct and indirect influences of external actors on the domestic affairs of a given entity, this chapter utilises the concept of education change to complement

the domestic education developments in Abkhazia with an additional analytical layer. Karpov and Lisovskaya (2005: 23) differentiate between two forms of education change. On the one hand, reforms, which involve “intended changes of educational institutions in a desirable direction” and on the other hand, mutations, which refer to “spontaneous, micro-level adaptive reactions of educational institutions to their unstable environment.” Mutations occur in every education sector in one way or the other, primarily because the implementation process of an original reform plan rarely results in the exact planned outcome. Furthermore, the unstable societal environment of education and the schooling system increases the likelihood for education mutations. Indeed, the more unstable a societal environment, the more likely are mutations to occur, as the implementation of the original plan is less likely to succeed (Karpov & Lisovskaya 2005: 23). This additional theoretical layer helps to capture the extent to which selective domestic state building prioritisation can facilitate state building mutations, which may shape the state building trajectories of de facto states and the ability of competing actors to take on responsibilities from the central de facto government.

*This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

*Figure 19 Abkhaz School Class (Shakaya 1979)<sup>348</sup>*

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<sup>348</sup> All the pictures in this chapter depict education institutions and scenes that provide a glimpse into the education sector of Soviet and post-Soviet Abkhazia. I uncovered the pictures that are used in this chapter in the Russian State Library in Moscow in 2018. The picture for figure 25 was taken during my fieldwork in Sukhumi in 2017.

This chapter draws four central conclusions from the analysis of domestic and international influences on Abkhazia's provision of education services. First, Soviet legacies in form of institutional and cultural standards are a key contributing factor to the ability of the de facto regime to provide education services to its citizens in the period following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Due to the common Soviet past, education reforms in other post-Soviet regions are likely sources of mimetic and normative diffusion. Second, with the exception of minor modifications in relation to textbooks, language laws and syllabi, the general education infrastructure in Abkhazia has not changed significantly in the last quarter of a century. Instead, mutations appear to be the norm, because the Abkhaz regime has not consistently prioritised education reforms. Nonetheless, education was regarded as a tool to achieve one of the de facto state's central interests namely nation building and the revival of the Abkhaz language.

Third, Russia's involvement in Abkhazia's education sector illustrates the albeit limited education dimension of Russian foreign policy under the umbrella of Russian humanitarian foreign policy. While extensive content reform of Abkhazia's schooling system does not appear to be a primary concern of Russia in its engagement with Abkhazia, Russia provides significant financial contributions to Abkhazia's de facto state budget, which ultimately if indirectly pays for structural aspects of Abkhazia's education system. In terms of education content, despite more aspirational goals in a set of Russo-Abkhaz agreements, Russia's influence is restricted to education exchange programmes for Abkhaz students with set quotas and the approval and distribution of some textbooks.

Fourth, the combination of Abkhazia's selective neglect of its education sector (including a restricted geographic coverage) and Russia's primary focus on infrastructural support created opportunities for other international and domestic actors to emerge as diffusion sources and assume responsibilities of the state. These factors encouraged some degree of institution sharing with international donors and NGOs despite Abkhazia's relatively strong statehood and wide penetration of the state. Some kin states, international donors and NGOs, for instance, were able to significantly reshape teaching methodologies and teacher training in schools on the Abkhaz de facto territory. Still, the approval and incorporation of the de facto

authorities was necessary to increase the spread of these reform programmes.

## 8.2 Domestic Developments of Education Provision in Abkhazia

A well-functioning education sector<sup>349</sup> can be considered the backbone of a society, nation and state. Not only does education represent investments into the future of a country's economy, it simultaneously serves as an instrument to legitimise the rule of the political class over the population and increase the visibility and durability of the state. Moreover, Abkhazia's education sector embodies an instrument that may contribute to the survival and wider use of the Abkhaz language in the context of Abkhazia's nation building development. Already Eugene Weber (1976) highlighted the indoctrinatory power of the French school system that taught the French peasantry the language skills and values of the dominant culture including patriotism.

Unlike many other education sector reforms, but similarly to most Soviet successor states, the transformation of Abkhazia's education system had as its basis "a fully modern education system which, during half a century of its existence, had formed its own traditions and (for better or for worse) a strong institutional inertia" (Karpov & Lisovskaya 2005: 48). Despite the presence of an institutional framework and extensive experience in the provision of education services, sustaining an education sector requires considerable and continuous financial and human investment. This raises the question to what extent Abkhaz authorities prioritised education provision and accumulated the necessary resources during a period of partial isolation and post-war legacies in the 1990s and much of the 2000s. This section thereby captures what the statistical classification of degrees of state building (Florea 2014) means in practice when it refers to *de facto* states achieving moderate degree of state building in form of budgetary allocations for education services.

Essentially, the institutional and cultural legacies of the Soviet education sector shaped Abkhazia's capacity to provide education service in the post-war period. The limited financial and human resources in addition to a demolished education infrastructure placed education reform towards the bottom of the list of priorities for the Abkhaz regime. Instead, the first decade of Abkhazia's *de facto*

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<sup>349</sup> The focus of this chapter lies on formal rather than non-formal education within the *de facto* Republic of Abkhazia. Formal education refers to "those institutions in which teaching is regularly provided for students who are working toward the completion of a specific course of study." (Noah 1966: 2).

independence was spent on renovating and rebuilding the education infrastructure and ensuring the provision of basic education services. Unsurprisingly, one can identify more mutations than reforms in Abkhazia's education sector in this period, which reflects an environment in which teachers, students, parents and authorities had to spontaneously come up with solutions to deal with Abkhazia's scarce resources and unstable environment. Nonetheless, the de facto authorities passed minor content reforms of its education sector including the provision of Abkhaz textbooks for newly introduced subjects and language training. Still, the authorities resisted reforms concerning teaching methodologies and teacher training until the late 2000s. At the same time, the struggle with Georgia and for some time Russia helped to limit the societal critique against the lack of appropriate education reform. Throughout the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s, Abkhazia's education sector was only exposed to limited external diffusion influences with the exception of competitive diffusion, which encouraged some domestic reforms relating to language legislation and textbook provisions. Yet, the incorporation of Soviet legacies in addition to selectively neglecting the education sector opened up channels for other international and domestic actors to influence Abkhazia's state building sector.

### **8.2.1 Soviet Legacies in Abkhazia's Education System**

The state structure of the Soviet Union facilitated a more or less sophisticated network of institutions as well as some degree of political and managerial experience within its union republics, autonomous republics and regions. Despite the federal nature of the Soviet Union, the education system of the Soviet Union represented a highly centralised and integrated system (Gerrits & Bader 2016: 303). Wages of teachers and school directors, for example, were set by central authorities and subsequently standardised across the Soviet Union (Sutherland 1999: 117).<sup>350</sup> The standardisation of the Soviet education sector also covered school and university curricula and syllabi with only limited leeway for minor alterations (Noah 1966: 2).<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> In certain areas of the Union, such as more remote or 'difficult' areas, wages of teachers and other school staff could be higher (Sutherland 1999: 117).

<sup>351</sup> While union republics were formally responsible for the provision and content development of textbooks, school regulations and school programmes, the central

The common Soviet past and the standardisation of the education systems, presents education reforms in other post-Soviet regions as likely sources of mimetic and normative diffusion, because of the similarities between the transition periods and the inherent troubles. Abkhaz decision-makers are therefore inclined to look for Russia or other post-Soviet cases for legislative and institutional inspiration in such unstable and uncertain periods.

The Soviet Union essentially formed historical legacies that shape Abkhazia's education sector to this date. Adgur Kakoba, Abkhazia's Minister of Education, describes the situation of the Abkhaz education system and Soviet legacies in the following way:

Our education system has not changed for many years. This is the same Soviet education system, which existed in all the republics under the USSR. And now these, too, the most basic principles, basic directions and basic educational standards have remained since the Soviet period.<sup>352</sup>

**Adgur Kakoba, Education Minister of the Republic of Abkhazia**

The Soviet legacies can broadly be categorised into institutional and cultural legacies. First, the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia was one of twenty autonomous republics in the Soviet Union that possessed a specific set of state institutions, including a Ministry of Education, schooling infrastructure as well as a limited degree of autonomy regarding education provision (see figures 20, 25, 26, 27 and 28).<sup>353</sup> Thus, the Soviet Union produced a basic structural framework in form of schools, a pedagogical institute, a ministry and from 1976 onwards a university, that

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authorities in Moscow highly influenced these aspects of the education sector and had the final say of approval (Noah 1966: 19). Grant (1979: 33) summarises this by stating that “[a]ll aspects of Soviet education are [...] planned in detail, from the finance of universities to the curriculum and teaching methods for the elementary classes, from building programmes to admission figures for the colleges.”

<sup>352</sup> Interview 8 : Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>353</sup> Education Ministries were responsible for schools but not higher education (Grant 1979: 36-37).

serves as the basis for Abkhazia's current education sector.<sup>354</sup> The photographic evidence of this chapter captures the presence of education infrastructure and institutions in Abkhazia's Soviet and post-Soviet period. The photographs thereby demonstrate the potential for institutional path dependence in the post-Soviet period and the ability of Abkhaz rebel groups to utilise the foundations of the pre-existing institutional structure for their state and institution building endeavours (see figures 20, 25, 26, 27 and 28). Moreover, Abkhaz authorities had acquired experience overseeing the bureaucratic and governing side of its education sector.

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*Figure 20 School in the mountain village of Achandara (Shakaya 1979)*

While the literature on failed and weak states as well as areas of limited statehood highlights that statehood is not a necessary condition for the provision of education services in these entities (Lee et al. 2014: 647), the provision of education services can certainly benefit from state capacity and an existing infrastructure in form of ministries, schools and universities. This means that Abkhazia had a substantial advantage following the war in terms of guaranteeing the provision of basic education services, despite the destruction of much of the education infrastructure.

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<sup>354</sup> Unlike Union Republics, Abkhazia had no Academy of Science and official university (Broers et al. 2015: 29). However, in 1979, the Abkhazian State University (figure 26) was founded on the basis of the Sukhumi Pedagogical Institute (see figure 28).

Second, the Soviet Union had a lasting effect on the cultural standards surrounding education in its successor (de facto) states (Broers et al. 2015: 29). Some photographic evidence in this chapter depicts cultural norms surrounding teaching settings and school uniforms in Abkhazia during the Soviet period. Some of these norms outlived the Soviet period and reflect a continuation of cultural norms in Abkhazia's post-Soviet period (see figures 19, 21, 24 and 29). Beyond a general understanding that general education schools should be free of charge, secular and mass-entry based (Noah 1966: 19), the teaching methodologies and curricula in Abkhazia are to this date largely based on Soviet versions and have only changed minimally.<sup>355 356 357</sup> Also cultural characteristics such as school uniforms have largely stayed the same to this day (see figures 19 and 21).

*This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

*Figure 21 In Sukhum Kindergarten No 11 (Chashba 1960)*

### **8.2.2 Post-Soviet Challenges to the Provision of Education Services**

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Abkhazia faced serious challenges regarding its future status in the international system and a phase of uncertainty

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<sup>355</sup> Sutherland found similar developments in Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union, where “nominally, ‘Soviet’ education ceased to exist, although in reality the same system of teaching was to continue for many years, until the new independent states or republics had fully formulated their own systems” (1999: xiv).

<sup>356</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>357</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

(what some interviewees referred to as a period of survival).<sup>358</sup> <sup>359</sup> <sup>360</sup> <sup>361</sup> Most prominently, the Abkhaz de facto regime had to navigate the legacies of the Georgian-Abkhaz war, an inauspicious economic environment in light of economic transition and large-scale international isolation, as well as high levels of outmigration (Trier et al. 2010: 34).<sup>362</sup> In addition, the Abkhaz de facto government faced a variety of specific challenges and uncertainties ranging from the CIS embargo to war legacies and the economic costs associated with them. Unsurprisingly, education reforms did not place highly on the priority list in this period after the war (Comai & Venturi 2015: 897). Still, the de facto regime in Sukhumi needed to address a set of obstacles that hindered the provision of education services across its territory.

First, most schools and other education institutions were destroyed during the Georgian-Abkhaz war and it was not possible to immediately rebuild and renovate all of them.<sup>363</sup> Some photographs vividly capture the war and post-war devastation in Abkhazia that exemplify the domestic state and institution building hurdles of the de facto regime. The pictures thereby also serve as an explanation why Russian state building support to Abkhazia focused predominantly on infrastructural assistance (see figures 22 and 23). In the Gali district, for example, nearly all education facilities were demolished. According to the Minister of Education of Abkhazia Adgur Kakoba, the situation was most dire in the secondary specialised education institutions, such as colleges and technical schools, because almost all of buildings needed to be repaired.<sup>364</sup> Even the schools that were not destroyed lacked

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<sup>358</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>359</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>360</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>361</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>362</sup> Abkhazia's educational challenges and transformational needs following the dissolution of the Soviet Union were certainly not unique. The transition to a market economy, for instance, resulted in inflation and consequently rising wages for many post-Soviet countries. Meanwhile, education staff wages were rarely raised and did not keep up with the high inflation rates and industry wages (Sutherland 1999: 91).

<sup>363</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>364</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

the necessary material or technical infrastructure,<sup>365</sup> “which were [partly] the result of decades of neglect” (Webber 2000: 13). Overall, war destruction, limited financial opportunities and outmigration are also reflected in the number of schools on Abkhaz territory, which decreased from 447 schools in 1945 (Orynyanskiy & Fadeev 1935: 36) to 165 in the academic year 2013-2014 (Comai & Venturi 2015: 897).

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*Figure 22 Burnt and looted building of the Abkhaz Institute of Language, Literature and History (Gaguly 1995)*

*This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

*Figure 23 Destroyed School (Gaguly 1995)*

Second, Abkhazia faced a shortage of qualified teachers, as many of them either died during the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict or left Abkhazia due to the adverse economic

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<sup>365</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

situation after the war.<sup>366</sup> At the same time, the continuation of a large contingent of the teaching body represents a degree of institutional path dependence. Those teachers that stayed behind tended to be underpaid if they were paid at all. During the war and in the first months of the post-war period, teachers and university staff worked practically without a salary and received bread instead.<sup>367</sup> This changed slowly in 1993 to 1994, when a few people started receiving a minimal salary.<sup>368 369</sup> Still, some teachers were not paid during holidays or months in arrears, which made the teaching profession an undesirable position resulting in further shortages of teaching staff.<sup>370 371</sup> To this day, even the Ministry of Education admits that the salaries for teachers in Abkhazia are insufficient and barely guarantee a basic living wage.<sup>372</sup> The salaries are allegedly approximately a maximum of \$100 a month.<sup>373</sup> Other sources argue that the salaries for teachers range from between 200 – 1300 Russian roubles, which translates to \$8-50 a month (Trier et al. 2010: 65-66).

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<sup>366</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>367</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>368</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>369</sup> To this day, the Gali district in Southern Abkhazia experiences a shortage of qualified teachers and teachers are not regularly paid (Trier et al. 2010: 66).

<sup>370</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>371</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>372</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>373</sup> Interview 6: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

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*Figure 24 Students [and Teacher] of the Institute of Subtropical Farming in Production Practice  
(Chashba 1960)*

Third, teachers that previously taught in Russian had to become proficient in an additional language (Sutherland 1999: 88-89). This remains an issue in Abkhazia's education sector as many teachers do not speak Abkhaz proficiently (Dembińska 2019; Clogg 2008). Thus, teacher training projects needed to be introduced in order to develop a workforce of qualified teachers that is able to teach in the local language. Relatedly, Abkhazia's education system required an overhaul of its textbooks and curricula in order to reflect the de facto authority's wish to teach in the local language with appropriate teaching material (see Sutherland 1999: 153 for similar developments in Russia). Fourth, Soviet teaching methods and education materials did not meet the latest pedagogical standards. Teachers in Abkhazia continued utilising textbooks, curricula and teaching methods from the Soviet period up to the mid-2000s and beyond.<sup>374</sup>

### **8.2.3 Education Reforms and Mutations of Abkhazia's Education System**

The aforementioned challenges considerably impeded the de facto authorities' self-proclaimed goal of sustaining the de facto Republic of Abkhazia, let alone reform its

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<sup>374</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

education sector.<sup>375 376</sup> In addition, limited financial resources and expertise reduced the room for manoeuvre for the authorities to consider more complex reforms of the education system.<sup>377</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that the Abkhaz education system has not changed considerably since the Soviet Union.<sup>378 379 380 381</sup> As education did not play a dominant role for the Abkhaz regime during the post-war phase, mutations rather than reforms appear to have been the norm to ensure the provision of basic education services. This is in line with comparable unstable societal environments where the importance of mutations is likely to grow (Karpov & Lisovskaya 2005).

Instead of wide-reaching education reform, the Abkhaz government reduced their attention to infrastructure rehabilitation and minor curricula reforms as a tool to broaden the scope of Abkhaz language usage.<sup>382</sup> Some interviewees attempted to explain the limited reforms with a hesitation on the side of the authorities, because the education system was seen as more or less functioning and abrupt changes may have resulted in its collapse.<sup>383</sup> The limited changes in Abkhazia's education sector may be explained with norms having been "perhaps too deeply and firmly established in both the school and society to be fundamentally changed in a decade of even the most radical reforms" (Karpov & Lisovskaya 2005: 48).

Particularly in the post-war period, Russia and other post-Soviet countries may have represented normative and mimetic diffusion sources, due to the similarity of their transition challenges and common institutional and cultural education framework. Mimetic diffusion occurs particularly in areas of high uncertainty and the institutional or policy choices of entities in similar contexts are likely to have been considered legitimate and an inspiration for the Abkhaz authorities. The next section

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<sup>375</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>376</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>377</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>378</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>379</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>380</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>381</sup> Interview 8 : Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>382</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>383</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

outlines the central reforms and mutations in Abkhazia's education sector, by distinguishing between content and structural transformations as two distinct forms of educational change.

### **8.2.3.1 Content Reforms and Mutations**

Since the beginning of the Georgian-Abkhaz war, Abkhazia's education sector has experienced only minimal content reforms of its teaching methodologies, syllabi and textbooks. Still, the de facto authorities placed heavy emphasis on establishing Abkhaz as a language of instruction in schools within the wider context of their nation building efforts. The Abkhaz education system also experienced a set of mutations that are predominantly situated around the provision of textbooks and language teaching.

Up to the late 2000s and arguably even the early 2010s, the Abkhaz de facto authorities did not adequately address the issue of teaching methods. During several interviews with civil society organisations in Abkhazia, the Ministry of Education was singled out and criticised for its lack of inspiration and willingness for reform in the area of teaching methods.<sup>384 385</sup> Hence, the Soviet school type including the inherent teaching methods and pedagogy remained largely the same in Abkhazia until the late 2000s.<sup>386</sup> This phenomenon can also partially be traced back to the predominance of elderly and often even retired teachers in the Abkhaz teacher work force. Furthermore, the de facto authorities remained resistant to any kind of methodological and pedagogical reform for a long period of time. When some NGOs and international donors pushed for more contemporary teaching methodologies and training opportunities for student teachers in 2005, for instance, the de facto government blocked any education reform and instead welcomed mere infrastructural support.<sup>387</sup>

However, the de facto authorities slowly changed their perspective and introduced initiatives to improve the teaching methodologies in schools on Abkhaz

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<sup>384</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>385</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>386</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>387</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

territory. Particularly from 2014 onwards, with a change in government, the authorities became more accessible to suggestions, which enabled NGOs and international donors to become more engaged (see section 8.3 for further details on domestic and international influences).<sup>388</sup> It is telling, that the involvement of authorities was necessary to increase the widespread influence of NGOs and international donors on Abkhazia's education sector. Due to the wide penetration of the de facto authorities and relatively strong statehood, NGOs and international donors do not hold sufficient leverage to make policy decisions and manage institutions on behalf or instead of the authorities despite the limited role of Abkhazia's Ministry of Education.

In the late 2000s, the de facto authorities passed legislation that permitted teachers from certain ethnic backgrounds such as Armenians or Russians to receive teachers' training in their respective kin states. This was part of an attempt to increase the number of teachers in the de facto states (Comai & Venturi 2015: 897). While this programme does not enjoy a high degree of support from the kin states and improvements in teaching quality have not yet been confirmed (Trier et al. 2010: 65-66), this reform signifies the governments awareness of teaching methodology limitations in their education system and willingness to address these challenges. However, in 2014 there were still insufficient available qualified teachers across Abkhazia and even in the de facto capital city (Kvitsinia 2014; Comai & Venturi 2015: 897).

In terms of textbooks, the Abkhaz de facto authorities relied predominantly on Soviet and Russian textbooks or textbooks from other kin states for periods of time.<sup>389</sup> In some instances, Russia provides these textbooks to schools in Abkhazia free of charge, however, oftentimes families would need to pay for the textbooks themselves. Henceforth, many schools in Abkhazia, including Abkhaz language schools, still rely on Soviet educational material or operate without textbooks, because they cannot afford new textbooks (Trier et al. 2010: 65-67).

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<sup>388</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>389</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)



*Figure 25 School in Central Sukhumi (Spanke 2017)*

These difficulties surrounding textbook provision were heightened, because Abkhaz authorities reformed certain subjects, syllabi and curricula in order to reflect their new found understanding of history, geography, literature and social studies.<sup>390</sup> The Abkhaz Ministry of Education, for instance, introduced a new curriculum in 1995, that not only introduced new subjects but also facilitated replacing Georgian language education with its Russian equivalent (Dembińska 2019: 309). In addition, the de facto government foresees textbooks to be available in the Abkhaz language, which ultimately necessitated the production of new school textbooks.<sup>391</sup> As an example, Abkhaz grammar textbooks for native and non-native speakers do not exist beyond the first four grades (Trier et al. 2010: 62-63). Thus, the Abkhaz Ministry of Education produces textbooks both in Abkhaz and Russian (Clogg 2008: 316).

The de facto government has started addressing these issues and placed more emphases on wider dissemination of education materials (Comai & Venturi 2015: 897). History and literature textbooks as well as Abkhaz grammar textbooks for the first four years in addition to some Russian textbooks were written in the late 2000s under the supervision of the de facto authorities when funds were made available specifically for the purpose of establishing these subjects in Abkhaz at all schools (Trier et al. 2010: 62). Despite the recent provision of history and literature

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<sup>390</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>391</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

textbooks, the de facto authorities and civil society organisations are aware of the need of further Abkhaz textbooks. Meanwhile, schools have experienced delays in acquiring the newly written textbooks, because of publication delays and deficiencies in the distribution of books (68). Some schools that do not teach in Abkhaz contacted kin states (specifically Russia, Armenia and Georgia) for textbooks and additional education material. Despite these kin state contacts, the costs of educational material from kin states are too high for many families, making it difficult for some to send their children to non-Abkhaz language school classes (65-67).

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*Figure 26 The Abkhazian State University named after Maxim Gorky (Shakaya 1979)*

The textbooks and syllabi concerns neatly link to the role of Abkhaz as a language of instruction in Abkhazia. Abkhaz primary schools teach children in Abkhaz up to the fourth grade and from the fifth grade onwards, all classes except Abkhaz literature are in Russian.<sup>392</sup> At Russian schools, on the other hand, classes are conducted in Russian, whereas Abkhaz is taught as a subject.<sup>393</sup> Meanwhile, most kindergartens<sup>394</sup> as well as colleges and universities operate predominantly in Russian,<sup>395</sup> which is primarily due to capacity issues such as a lack of Abkhaz textbooks, limited language development, which makes it difficult to teach physics and chemistry in Abkhaz, as

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<sup>392</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>393</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>394</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>395</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

well as insufficient teachers that are able to teach in Abkhaz.<sup>396</sup> While the department of Abkhaz language and literature operates in Abkhaz, all other university departments work in Russian.<sup>397</sup>

In order to address what the de facto authorities perceive as the insufficient dissemination of Abkhaz language teaching, the Abkhaz government has passed a variety of language legislation to preserve the Abkhaz language. The Education Ministry, for instance, has been pursuing a slow change of one subject per grade from Russian to Abkhaz in all grades. At the time of the field work, the ministry has achieved this up to the seventh grade.<sup>398</sup> An additional provision by the Education Ministry established Abkhaz as a mandatory second language at minority schools in Abkhazia at primary school level. In other words, grades one to four not only teach Armenian or Russian for example, but also Abkhaz as a second language.<sup>399</sup>

However, several Abkhaz cities and towns lack the infrastructure for school and pre-school facilities where children could learn Abkhaz. Particularly the lack of textbooks and Abkhaz-speaking teachers severely complicates appropriate teaching of the Abkhaz language and the implementation of these provisions (Hewitt 1999: 173; Trier et al. 2010: 65). The lack of teachers that speak Abkhaz in these non-Abkhaz schools is particularly visible in the Gali district (see Trier et al. (2010): 70-73 and Clogg (2008) for further details on the Gali district and the differences between Upper and Lower Gali). To tackle these deficiencies in the field of teaching resources, the Abkhaz government formed a Fund for the Development of the Abkhaz Language in 2001, which has created education material for children and teachers (Trier et al. 2010: 60). Despite these language reforms, Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi (2010: 59) argue that “there has been a lack of direction in language policies” by the de facto authorities since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. A detailed analysis of language laws and reforms is also presented by Clogg (2008) and Comai and Venturi (2015).

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<sup>396</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>397</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>398</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>399</sup> The Abkhaz constitution guarantees that Abkhaz or any other minority language can be taught in schools on Abkhaz territory as long as the Abkhaz language as well as the Abkhaz curriculum is taught as well (Trier et al. 2010: 63).

### **8.2.3.2 Structural Reforms and Mutations**

Structural reforms in Abkhazia's education sector centred predominantly around the decentralisation of the education system and the restoration of education infrastructure, but also included the provision of private school opportunities. In the meantime, a set of mutations surrounding teachers' salaries adjusted the education system in order to ensure the sustained provision of basic education services to its citizens.

In the early 1990s, many post-Soviet transition countries decentralised their education systems considerably (Webber 2000: 70). In 1992, the Abkhaz education system, for instance, consisted of one single subordination. Following the Abkhaz-Georgian war, the Abkhaz de facto authorities divided the state system including its education sector into administrative districts.<sup>400</sup> Essentially, each administrative entity of the federalised education system (Sukhumi, Gali, Tkvarcheli, Ochamchira, Gulripshi, Sukhumi *raion*, Gudauta and Gagra) possesses its own education department, that is structurally subordinate to district governments and holds specific rights and oversight responsibilities in terms of their education policies. Teachers, for instance, receive their salary from the district government.<sup>401</sup> The general structure of the school system shows clear similarities to the Soviet school system. As in Soviet times, schools in Abkhazia offer eleven grades of elementary education in which the first four years are taught in Abkhaz at Abkhaz schools (Trier et al. 2010: 62). However, the Gali administrative *raion* is not yet fully integrated into Abkhazia's central education system in terms of language of instruction and curriculum policies (Trier et al. 2010: 48). One of the measures by the de facto authorities to integrate the schools of the Gali district into the central education system involved the payment of regular salaries to teachers in the Lower Gali region in 2006 (Trier et al. 2010: 72).

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<sup>400</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>401</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

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*Figure 27 In the Georgian Institute of Subtropical Crops (Shakaya 1979)*

During the civil war in 1992-93, many schools and education facilities in Abkhazia were destroyed. In the Gali district nearly all school buildings were demolished. Therefore, the de facto authorities prioritised the restoration of its Soviet education infrastructure in order to sustain the provision of education services. The limited budget of Abkhazia and the even smaller percentage allocated for education was, thus, ultimately spent on the rehabilitation of some of the schools rather than on content reform. After the war, as a preliminary measure by the de facto authorities, all more or less intact universities and secondary school started operating again.<sup>402</sup> Even though international organisations such as UNHCR, UNICEF, the International Red Cross and the Swedish International Development Agency started rebuilding and renovating some of Abkhazia's basic education infrastructure,<sup>403</sup> many schools remain in desolate situations (Trier et al. 2010: 66, 71). Still, the general rehabilitation of basic school infrastructure can be considered somewhat successful.

By 2006, Abkhazia also had three private schools teaching in Abkhaz, Russian and Turkish (Trier et al. 2010: 62). The presence of private schools in Abkhazia

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<sup>402</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>403</sup> Interview 6: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

signifies that the Abkhaz de facto authorities opened up its education system for private schools. Moreover, the Ministry of Education introduced an experimental school that reports directly to the Ministry and where the Abkhaz government tests newly published textbooks for one year to gather feedback before distributing it to other schools.<sup>404</sup>

Abkhazia's federal education structure is mostly financed by the central federal budget. In the current education and budget system, however, there is "no functioning redistribution of funds to schools from the de facto state budget" (66). The de facto authorities are still not in a position to guarantee adequate teacher salaries throughout Abkhazia (66). The salaries for teachers are considered low ranging from 200 to 1,300 Russian roubles, which accounts for \$8-50 per month (65-66). In order to address the salary situation of teachers and education staff, parents introduced parental contributions to teachers in schools. This mutation of the education sector stems from a need of school material, school renovations and teachers to be paid adequately. These payments were in themselves illegal and officially outlawed in the early 2010s. Nonetheless, they ensured the payment of teachers and some renovations and school material by parents contributing a small amount each month to the school.<sup>405</sup> <sup>406</sup> However, the smaller the school and the lower the number of pupils, the more expensive it is for parents to contribute to the fixed costs of sustaining a school including the salaries of teachers, heating and renovation works (Trier et al. 2010: 66). This affects smaller ethnic groups that want to send their children to non-Russian or non-Abkhaz schools and rural schools disproportionately more. Some support for teachers was also provided in form of humanitarian aid by international donors or NGOs on the ground.<sup>407</sup> Also the Abkhaz regime started addressing qualified teaching shortcoming by increasing teacher salaries, which was agreed upon in the 2014 treaty between Russia and Abkhazia (Comai 2018a: 156).

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<sup>404</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>405</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>406</sup> Interview 6: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>407</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

### **8.3 External Diffusion Influences on Abkhazia's Education Sector**

The institutional and cultural legacies of the Soviet Union as well as some limited domestic education reforms and mutations contributed to the provision of education services in the de facto Republic of Abkhazia. Still, these factors do not satisfactorily explain how the de facto authorities were able to sustain the education sector financially and accumulate the expertise to implement content reforms. Therefore, this section examines the role of external actors as potential diffusion influences on Abkhazia's education sector ranging from international donors, NGOs, kin states to patron states.

This section highlights that external diffusion far surpasses mere direct coercive diffusion channels such as financial support. While Russia's involvement in Abkhazia's education sector is limited primarily to infrastructural support and education exchanges, Russian budget contributions and the institutionalisation of the Russo-Abkhaz relationship also set the basis for mimetic and normative diffusion. Meanwhile, extensive content reform of Abkhazia's schooling system does not appear to be a primary concern of Russia in its engagement with Abkhazia. The combination of Abkhazia's selective neglect of its education sector (including a restricted geographic coverage) and Russia's predominant focus on infrastructural support created opportunities for other external actors to emerge as additional diffusion influences and assume state responsibilities in the education sector. Some kin state, international donor and NGO involvement significantly shaped teaching methodologies and teacher training in Abkhazia. However, the approval and incorporation of the de facto authorities was necessary to increase the spread of these reform programmes. This section also finds that Russian and other diffusion sources do not directly compete with each other outside of the Gali district but take on complementary positions instead.

#### **8.3.1 Russian Diffusion Influences on Abkhazia's Education Sector**

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia has attempted to increase its leverage within the states of the former Soviet Union through a wide array of foreign policy instruments ranging from hard power military operations, economic and

political integration to soft power (Lankina & Niemczyk 2015). Both Russia's language and education policies abroad are defined under the umbrella term of the "humanitarian trend" of Russian foreign policy in the Russian Federation's Foreign Policy Review of 27 March 2007,<sup>408</sup> which includes "traditional elements of Russia's actions in its near abroad (human rights, compatriots, campaigns of aspersion and propaganda, political consolidation of Russian speaking minorities), the technical/practical means to enforce these actions (consular issues, informational superiority), and new approaches of soft power (culture, education, science, public diplomacy)" (Pelnens et al. 2010: 13). Russian education involvement in Abkhazia appears to go beyond the scope of soft power, as Russia not only uses instruments of attraction, but also coerces and pays for certain policies surrounding the provision of education services. Thus, the education dimension of Russian foreign policy bridges the gap between soft and hard power instruments.

Rossotrudnichestvo, the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation, is predominantly responsible for the execution of Russia's education policy in its neighbourhood. The agency, for instance, "implements projects and programs aimed at the export of Russian education, the promotion of international scientific cooperation, the attraction of foreign citizens to study in Russia, as well as interaction with graduates of Russian (Soviet) universities" (Rossotrudnichestvo 2016). Rossotrudnichestvo's scope is at least officially restricted to Russian schools and covers the promotion of schooling in the Russian language, ensuring general education for Russian citizens and establishing the appropriate informational and logistical infrastructure (Rossotrudnichestvo 2016). Governments can utilise this infrastructural basis to pursue their soft power interests by directly and indirectly supporting governments to promote their culture and values (Nye 2004). In the case of Abkhazia, Russia tends to pursue its soft power objectives through government structures, such as embassies and diplomatic services. In addition to governmental structures and consular activities, Russia also built cultural

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<sup>408</sup> Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2007). *Obzor vneshnei politiki Rossiskoi Federazii, 431. March 27, 2007*. Retrieved from: [www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/07/204750.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/07/204750.shtml)

and science centres to develop Russia's attraction as a cultural, educational and language power in Abkhazia.

Interviews with de facto authorities, civil society representatives and international donors suggest that Russia is primarily involved in structural aspects of Abkhazia's education sector, rather than the specific content of education services.<sup>409</sup> Along with the gradual lifting of CIS sanctions in 1999, Abkhazia started receiving some direct financial contributions to its budget from Russia in the early 2000s. These financial budget injections are likely to have contributed to sustaining Abkhazia's education sector for much of the 2000s. Unsurprisingly, Russia's involvement in Abkhazia's education sector intensified in 2008 when Russia recognised Abkhazia as an independent state both in terms of direct budget contributions and specific agreements relating to education service provisions. Since 2008, Russia provides direct financial contributions to the Abkhaz state budget under an investment programme which contributes among other things to the rehabilitation of schools. The 2015-2017 investment programme agreed upon by Russia and Abkhazia foresees, for instance, infrastructure project investments into education facilities covering kindergartens, schools and universities (Comai 2018a: 109).

This means that Russia supports the (re)construction and renovation of schools on Abkhaz territory by providing the necessary funds to the Abkhaz budget. While Russia does not offer direct support to schools on Abkhaz territory, it contributes significant amounts to Abkhazia's budget in order to rehabilitate Abkhazia's education infrastructure. Overall, the reconstruction and renovation of education facilities appears to be a success with increases in the number of kindergartens and schools, which are estimated to meet Abkhaz education infrastructure demands by the end of 2020 (156). Thus, Russian support for the reconstruction and renovation of Abkhazia's education system represents a clear contribution to the de facto government's infrastructural capacity to sustain the provision of public services.

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<sup>409</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

*This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

*Figure 28 New Study Complex of the Sukhum Pedagogic Institute (Chashba 1960)*

Beyond financial contributions, Russia and Abkhazia have signed agreements and policy proposals since 2008 that indicate specific provisions for Abkhazia's education sector. In April 2008, for instance, the Russian government developed a policy package to develop direct economic, political and legal relations with Abkhazia. This 'Decree on the Main Directions of the Development of Relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia' outlines some of the intents and goals of Russia's future relationships with Abkhazia in a number of fields such as trade, the economy, legal assistance, but also covering "social, scientific-technical, informational, educational, and cultural spheres" (Pelnens et al. 2010: 112-113). Furthermore, the Alliance and Strategic Partnership Agreement from 2014 includes clear references to the Abkhaz education sector and hints at Russia's potential involvement in the education infrastructure and the provision of education services in Abkhazia. Beyond the financial promises made by Russia in the 2014 agreement,<sup>410</sup> Article 14 outlines that

the Republic of Abkhazia shall gradually increase the average wage in main areas of public employees such as health care, education, science, culture, sports and social services to a level comparable with the level of wage payments of appropriate categories of workers in the southern federal districts of Russia.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> The association agreement between Abkhazia and Russia in 2014 indicates that Russia will spend up to 12 billion roubles on Abkhazia by 2017.

<sup>411</sup> This is a translation of the following original quote in Russian: "Республика Абхазия поэтапно осуществляет повышение средней заработной платы основных категорий работников государственных учреждений в сфере здравоохранения, образования, науки, культуры, спорта и социального обслуживания граждан до уровня,

This article promises the Abkhaz regime to significantly increase teacher salaries. Still, Russia's influence on Abkhaz domestic policies goes beyond wage provisions of teachers and other education related professions. Article 20 of the agreement states that

in order to improve the quality of education in the Republic of Abkhazia with the assistance of the Russian Federation, the Republic of Abkhazia, within 3 years from the date of entry into force of this Agreement, [shall] develop the education system of the Republic of Abkhazia and support its institutions; carry out educational activities in the Republic of Abkhazia; [pass] normative legal acts corresponding to the legislation of the Russian Federation in education; organise the development of educational, training and professional development programmes for teachers and institutions carrying out educational activities; implement agreed measures aimed at training professionals in priority areas of science and technology; as well as mutually recognise studies and qualifications.<sup>412</sup>

Article 20 lists specific criteria and plans for the provision of education services in Abkhazia that go beyond infrastructural and financial support and thereby represents clear coercive diffusion influences on Abkhazia's education system. Article 20 references, among other provisions, the training of teachers and the development of education activities, which shows the extent to which Russia's support addresses education content. Most notably, the agreement incentivises legislative copying in

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сопоставимого с уровнем оплаты труда соответствующих категорий работников в Южном федеральном округе Российской Федерации.” Retrieved from <http://m.government.ru/media/files/wNsltFsYzes.pdf>.

<sup>412</sup> This is a translation of the following original quote in Russian: “В целях повышения качества образования в Республике Абхазия при содействии Российской Федерации Республика Абхазия не позднее 3 лет со дня вступления в силу настоящего Договора: принимает направленные на развитие системы образования Республики Абхазия и обеспечение деятельности организаций, осуществляющих образовательную деятельность в Республике Абхазия, нормативные правовые акты, корреспондирующие с законодательством Российской Федерации об образовании; организует разработку образовательных программ, подготовку и повышение квалификации педагогических работников организаций, осуществляющих образовательную деятельность; осуществляет согласованные меры, направленные на подготовку специалистов по приоритетным направлениям науки и техники, а также на обеспечение взаимного признания образования и квалификаций.” Retrieved from <http://m.government.ru/media/files/wNsltFsYzes.pdf>.

the education sphere. This signifies that the agreement should not only be regarded as a source of coercive diffusion, because it also sets the basis for mimetic and normative diffusion, which increases the likelihood for legislative and institutional isomorphism in Abkhazia's education sector.

The facilitation of mimetic practices not only takes the form of agreement and treaties, but arguably also originates in the special dependency relationship between Russia and Abkhazia and a path dependence of legislative and institutional mimicry. The Soviet Union encapsulates a long history of mimetic diffusion. In many cases, standardisation was achieved by smaller Union Republics copying the legislation of the Russian Union Republic and "by adopting suggestions emanating from the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the [Russian Union Republic]." (Noah 1966: 19-20). Therefore, the role of the Russian Union Republic cannot be understated, because it "set the pattern for the other Union Republics, especially in educational and financial matters" (Noah 1966: 48). This tendency by the Abkhaz authorities to mimic Russian legislations and institutions takes place without a clear understanding of the implications for the Abkhaz context, according to an Abkhaz source.<sup>413</sup>

Despite the clear reference to education content standards in the 2014 agreement, interviewed civil society and international donor representatives are sceptical as to whether Russia delivers on this front.<sup>414 415 416</sup> According to them, Russia does not appear to hold specific interests in teaching methodologies, teacher training and the content of classes with the exception of some interests in the language of instruction and education exchange between Abkhazia and Russia. This may be due to existing provision of services being in line with Russian interests. Russia's failure, inability or lack of interest to offer training opportunities for teachers and other education staff created opportunities for other external actors to emerge as additional diffusion influences and assume state responsibilities in the education sector. Still, Russia has some influence on the content of school classes in Abkhazia, because the textbooks and curricula used in Abkhazia are approved by the Russian

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<sup>413</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>414</sup> Interview 12: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>415</sup> Interview 11: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>416</sup> Interview 1: Representative of an international donor (Tbilisi)

Ministry of Education (Pelnens et al. 2010: 129). In addition, an agreement between Abkhazia and Russia ensures that most textbooks besides Abkhaz grammar, history and literature books are predominantly from Russia.<sup>417</sup>

*This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

*Figure 29 In the Laboratory of the Abkhaz Department of the Scientific Research Institute of Balneology and Physiotherapy of the Georgian SSR (Chashba 1960)*

As mentioned above, the education dimension of Russian foreign policy not only covers tangible direct influences in form of financial and infrastructural contributions as well as agreements, but also includes soft power instruments, such as education exchanges and quotas for Abkhaz high school graduates to study in Russia (see also Kirova 2012: 19; Gerrits & Bader 2016; Trier et al. 2010: 67; Comai 2018a). Educational exchanges are one way of building soft power by socialising other groups to the ideas, practices and norms of the hosting country. Already during the Cold War, leaders utilised student exchange programmes to wield political power and gain influence (Atkinson 2010: 2). Atkinson's (2010: 1) study on education exchange programmes between the US and non-democratic states demonstrates that the experience for the visiting students "may impact the political institutions and influence political behavior in their home countries."<sup>418</sup> Similarly, Nye (2004: 13)

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<sup>417</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>418</sup> This influence takes place if at least the following three conditions are fulfilled "(i) the depth and extent of social interactions that occur while abroad, (ii) the sharing of a sense of community or common identity between participants and their hosts, and (iii) the

emphasises the relevance of education exchanges as an instrument of soft power if countries share experiences with the citizens of other countries that they wish to convince of their ways of governing or acting.

In the Russo-Abkhaz context, education exchange quotas guarantee scholarships and free studies for some Abkhaz students.<sup>419</sup> The number of scholarships range from 100,<sup>420</sup> 150-200<sup>421</sup> to 250 places<sup>422</sup> depending on the year and the interviewee. In 2016, for example, Rossotrudnichestvo provided 200 scholarships to residents of Abkhazia on the basis of local demands and needs and in accordance with Abkhaz government representatives (Comai 2018a: 156-157). According Abkhazia's de facto Education Minister, Adgur Kakoba, more than two to three thousand Abkhaz students have studied at Russian universities within this framework.<sup>423</sup> Such scholarships are particularly demanded in subjects where Abkhaz universities are unable to cater for certain specialties. This is predominantly the case in the medical field, because Abkhazia does not have a medical faculty.<sup>424</sup> Russian regions introduced education quotas even earlier than the central government following the Georgian-Abkhaz war. Tatarstan, Bashkiria, Krasnodar and the republics of the North Caucasus invited Abkhaz students to study in their regions,<sup>425</sup> which meant that by 1994 to 1995, some Abkhaz residents went to Kazan, Ufa, Nalchik and Maykop to study.<sup>426</sup> In the post-Soviet period and for the elites in the post-Soviet space a degree from a Russia institute remains a prestigious asset and appears to be common among the Abkhaz elite (Gerrits & Bader 2016: 303).

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attainment of a politically influential position by the exchange participant after returning home" (Atkinson 2010: 2).

<sup>419</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>420</sup> Interview 3: Former Georgian diplomat (Tbilisi)

<sup>421</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>422</sup> Interview 7: Viacheslav Chirikba – former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>423</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>424</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>425</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>426</sup> Interview 13: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

Despite the official recognition of Abkhazia by Russia in 2008, education exchanges tend to take place regionally to this date, perhaps to signify that these projects are organic activities, rather than centrally organised soft power instruments.<sup>427</sup> The City of Moscow regional government, for instance, financially supports small programmes for Abkhaz education bodies through subsidiary offices in Abkhazia (Comai 2018a: 156). Similar trends can be observed in the two de facto Donbas Republics and Transnistria where education exchanges take place predominantly with Russian regions.<sup>428</sup> These exchange programmes can facilitate further normative and mimetic diffusion in Abkhazia's education sector, because it encourages students to engage more closely with the Russian education context, which may sway the perceptions vis-à-vis Abkhaz and Russian legislature and institutions once these students return from Russia.

### **8.3.2 Competitive Diffusion of NGOs, International Donors, Parent and Kin States?**

Patron states are certainly not the only external actors involved in the internal affairs of de facto states. During and following the Georgian-Abkhaz in the early 1990s, a number of international donors and NGOs arrived in Abkhazia to address the ensuing humanitarian crisis in the de facto state. While some organisations left Abkhazia after a period of time, others remained in the de facto Republic and in some instances redirected their focus on education provision. Also kin states of Abkhazia's ethnic minorities occasionally engaged in Abkhazia's domestic matters relating to education.

This section argues that Abkhazia's selective neglect of its education sector in addition to Russia's prioritisation of infrastructure support opened up opportunities for other external and domestic actors, such as international donors, NGOs, kin states and parent states to assume power in Abkhazia by entering Abkhazia's education sector and taking on responsibilities from the de facto state. These additional diffusion influences predominantly shaped teaching methodologies and teacher training in Abkhazia, but also covered school renovations and textbook provision. The

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<sup>427</sup> Interview 18: Russian scholar (Moscow)

<sup>428</sup> Interview 18: Russian scholar (Moscow)

teaching methodology and teacher training reforms of the late 2000s would not have been possible without the sustained efforts of domestic NGOs and international donors in addition to more receptive de facto authorities, because of Abkhazia's relatively strong statehood and wide penetration of the state (with the exception of the Gali region). Abkhazia's and Russia's restricted geographic coverage in the Gali district encouraged additional competing diffusion influences in this region, which, in turn, facilitated increased central government engagement in Lower Gali.

A wide variety of NGOs and international donors have operated in Abkhazia at some stage during its de facto existence.<sup>429</sup> Given the domestic and international circumstances, most of these organisations shifted their focus from humanitarian aid in the 1990s to development aid in the 2000s (Trier et al. 2010). Development aid in the context of Abkhazia's education sector encompasses among other aspects the introduction and adoption of new teaching methods, such as teacher-student interactions and skills training. In 2004, for example, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities introduced an initiative called 'Teachers for Understanding' in three administrative districts of Abkhazia (the Gali, Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli districts), which envisioned Georgian and Abkhaz language training for teachers and the creation of a teacher network (Trier et al. 2010: 66). Development aid also covers the renovation of education infrastructure<sup>430 431</sup> and the provision of equipment for education facilities.<sup>432</sup> Overall, NGOs and international donors have focused predominantly on training programmes and supporting education facility renovations.

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<sup>429</sup> This includes the "UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), World Vision (WV), Save the Children (SC), Première Urgence (PU), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Accion Contra el Hambre (ACF) and Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation-along with conflict prevention and peace-building actors such as Conciliation Resources, International Alert, Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, and academicians from University of California, Irvine (UCI) and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)" (Trier et al. 2010: 15).

<sup>430</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>431</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>432</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

International organisations, such as the UNDP, World Vision, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and UNICEF, have been particularly active in schools in the Gali district,<sup>433 434</sup> due to the restricted involvement of the de facto authorities in Sukhumi. UNICEF and World Vision, for instance, developed youth clubs and created teacher training programmes (Comai 2018a: 155). Nonetheless, NGO and international donor support surpasses the borders of Gali and covers schools in districts such as Tkvarcheli, Ochamchira, as well as the Sukhumi and Gagra regions. While these international organisations have improved the education situation on Abkhazia's countryside, their programmes tend to be on a smaller scale and are unable to address all the limitations of Abkhazia's education system (Comai 2018a: 155).

The relationship between the Abkhaz authorities and international organisations has undergone significant changes that shaped the ways in which these organisations were able to influence the provision of education services in Abkhazia. Up to the mid to late 2000s, the Abkhaz authorities resisted sustained attempts by NGOs and international donors to shape teaching methodologies and training for student teachers.<sup>435</sup> Instead, the Ministry of Education was predominantly concerned with accumulating financial and practical support for Abkhazia's education infrastructure.<sup>436</sup> This preoccupation with the education infrastructure might also explain Russia's limited involvement in Abkhaz content reforms, as the de facto authorities may not have deemed it necessary or too invasive for Russia to influence Abkhaz education content. With a change in government in 2014, the Abkhaz authorities and particularly the Ministry of Education became more accessible to external influences, which allowed NGOs and international donors, such as UNICEF, to become more engaged in teacher training and establish new teaching methodologies.<sup>437</sup> This change in receptivity to external influences from 2014 onwards may be due to sustained efforts by domestic actors for methodological

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<sup>433</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>434</sup> Interview 11: Representative of a non-governmental organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>435</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>436</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>437</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

change and the simultaneous insistence of NGOs and international actors. In that sense, the NGOs and international donors on the ground represent change agents for coercive influence, because they directly influenced the policy direction of the Abkhaz Ministry of Education. The developments may, however, also be explained with a realisation from the authorities that education content reform was necessary and that Russia was not going to deliver on its promises of teacher training set out in the 2014 agreement.

The change in governmental receptivity in 2014 encouraged a set of education reforms in Abkhazia that pursue student-oriented methodologies and teacher training.<sup>438</sup> UNICEF, with the approval of the Ministry of Education, for instance, holds annual or even more regular training courses for teachers in Abkhazia, which are conducted by Abkhaz teachers, scientists and experts from Russia. Moreover, the Ministry of Education organises refresher courses for teachers, managers, directors and head teachers.<sup>439</sup> According to Adgur Kakoba, almost all teachers in Abkhazia have been trained with this new methodology.<sup>440</sup> The Ministry of Education even intends to make these refresher courses mandatory for employment at a state institution.<sup>441</sup> Furthermore, some international organisations support the Ministry of Education in publishing and buying textbooks for underprivileged families. In these cases, international organisations purchase textbooks for struggling families, that had been identified by the Ministry of Education.<sup>442</sup> Hence, domestic NGOs and international donors have assumed positions of de facto legitimate authorities in certain areas of the Abkhaz education sector, such as teacher training and teaching methodologies.

While the selective neglect of central authorities up to the late 2000s has created opportunities to enter the education sector, it was necessary to receive the consent of local authorities for a wider penetration and adoption of the policy

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<sup>438</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>439</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>440</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

<sup>441</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

<sup>442</sup> Interview 8: Adgur Kakoba – current Minister of Education of the Republic of Abkhazia (Sukhumi)

suggestions of NGOs and international donors. Indeed, the Abkhaz regime continues to have “a significant say on the kind of activity that international organisations conduct in their territory” (Comai 2018a: 35). In that sense, these domestic and international organisations do not hold the monopoly of power to take policy decisions and manage institutions as is the case of some fragile, weak or failed states (cf. Lake 2014). This is predominantly due to the wide penetration of the de facto state and relative strong statehood (with the exception of Gali). Still, the central role in education service provision in Abkhazia, gives these organisations the ability to significantly influence public life and education services. While the Abkhaz authorities appear to be open to external and domestic coercive influences from Russia, NGOs, international donors and kin states, the Abkhaz elites challenge some influences relating to the language of instruction in order to ensure the use of Abkhaz in Abkhaz schools and Abkhaz language classes in other ethnic schools. This represents a clear prioritisation of the Abkhaz authorities in terms of education policies.

Some kin states have also contributed to the provision of education services in Abkhazia with infrastructural support, methodological and teacher training as well as textbook provisions. However, the support tends to be restricted to those minority schools of their nationality rather than the Abkhaz education sector as a whole. Armenian schools, for instance, study according to the Armenian curriculum<sup>443</sup> and receive free education materials from Armenia about once a year (Trier et al. 2010: 67-68). Moreover, since the early 2000s, the de facto authorities permit Armenian teachers to receive teachers’ training in Armenia (65-66). Still, teachers at Armenian schools are paid by the Abkhaz government.<sup>444</sup> Abkhaz diaspora groups in Turkey, the while, facilitate places for Abkhaz students at Turkish universities (Comai 2018a: 157).

The Georgian government, as Abkhazia’s parent state and kin state to the Georgian population in Abkhazia, supports Georgian language schools in the Lower Gali region with free Georgian textbooks, rehabilitating school infrastructure and in

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<sup>443</sup> Even Armenian schools need to teach courses on Abkhaz history written in Russian (Trier et al. 2010: 67-68).

<sup>444</sup> Interview 5: Representative of an international organisation (Sukhumi)

some cases supplementing the salaries of teachers and other education staff (Trier et al. 2010: 71-72). The Georgian government also offers scholarships for undergraduate studies at Georgian universities. Predominantly Gali residents pick up this offer (Comai 2018a: 157). Despite the degree of Georgian government support, the situation for Georgian language schools remains bleak, as Georgian textbooks are not accepted (Clogg 2008: 316) and most schools in the Gali region have to teach in Russian with some exceptions in Lower Gali (Dembińska 2019: 309; Comai & Venturi 2015: 897). Despite this problematic context and school closures, some Georgian language schools continue to operate (Comai & Venturi 2015: 887). This extent of Georgian engagement in the Gali region shows that Georgia as a parent state is more directly and openly involved in the education sector of Abkhazia, at least in a region of specific interest to Georgia, than Russia as a patron state. While Russia provides direct contributions to the Abkhaz budget, which pays for the upkeep of schools, Russian involvement does not go as far as paying teacher wages directly.

The number of fully subsidised study opportunities in Russia, Georgia and to a lesser extent in Turkey exemplifies the range of study opportunities abroad for residents from Abkhazia (Comai 2018a: 157). The opportunities offered by international organisations, such as training courses or brief exchange programmes, cannot compete with this offering at least in the scholarship sector. The predominance of Russian scholarships is therefore unsurprising (157-158) and international donors appear unable and unwilling to compete with this diffusion source. In other areas of Abkhazia's education system, such as teacher and methodology training, NGOs and international donors provide services to schools in Abkhazia. However, rather than competing with Abkhaz or Russian provisions, the services appear to complement the existing supply, because Russia and the de facto government provide only limited support in these specific sectors. Even the support for education infrastructure reconstruction and renovation, a sector where the de facto government, patron and international donors are involved, appears to be complementary rather than competitive.

However, Georgian engagement in Lower Gali represents a competitive diffusion source that facilitated a reaction from the de facto central government in Sukhumi. Georgian support for Georgian schools in the region motivated the de facto

authorities in Sukhumi to extend their control over and involvement in the schools of Lower Gali by providing Abkhaz and Russian textbooks and demanding the use of the Abkhaz curriculum in return (Trier et al. 2010: 128). In some instances, Georgian schools were even closed by the authorities (Dembńska 2019). Furthermore, due to an outflux of Georgian youth to study in Georgia, the Abkhaz authorities invited students from Gali to study at the Abkhaz State University, which increased the number of Gali residents studying at Abkhaz institutions (Conciliation Resources 2015: 11). In a nutshell, Lower Gali's education sector exemplifies the ways in which the Abkhaz regime retaliated Georgia's involvement with a set of education policies to address the competition in this region of Abkhazia.

In cases of "poly-nuclear" influences from a variety of (competing) diffusion sources, (Savage 1985: 14) the institutional outcomes may be uneven depending on the strength of each propagation model (Gel'man & Lankina 2013: 58). In the case of de facto states, external diffusion influences from actors besides the patron that may advocate for specific institutional frameworks are limited. The involvement of NGOs, international donors, kin and parent states in Abkhazia's education sector has shown that there are indeed competing sources of diffusion. Still, it is difficult to identify areas outside the Gali district where patron influences and the diffusion sources from other actors directly compete with each other. In other words, it appears that external diffusion sources do not compete, but rather complement each other and the institutional outcomes are therefore not necessarily uneven.

## 8.4 Conclusion

This chapter not only outlined the development of Abkhazia's education sector since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but also illustrated diffusion dynamics between patron states, domestic de facto regimes, international donors and parent states surrounding the provision of education services. Abkhazia was able to provide education services to the population, if to a limited degree, throughout the 1990s despite the embargo and widespread international isolation, because of the cultural and institutional legacies of the Soviet Union and a set of minor reforms and mutations. Even when the sanctions were lifted and Abkhazia received financial support, the Abkhaz de facto authorities did not prioritise education reform beyond Abkhaz language concerns and syllabi modifications. The additional theoretical layer of mutations and reforms captured the extent to which selective domestic state building prioritisation can facilitate state building mutations, which contributed to the de facto state's ability to provide education services in the post-war period.

The chapter also examined the potential extent of patron state involvement in the education sector of de facto states. Russian involvement, for instance, is primarily restricted to budget contributions and infrastructure rehabilitation. However, some agreements between Russia and Abkhazia specify provisions for education reforms and encourage legislative and institutional isomorphism. It appears that the Russia authorities have the aspiration to sustain the basic level of public education provisions in Abkhazia and simultaneously establish closer educational ties between the two parties. Even if Russian involvement in Abkhazia's education sector is limited, this chapter has highlighted that its restricted involvement has serious consequences on state building in Abkhazia and the availability of alternative diffusion sources.

The combination of Abkhazia's selective neglect of its education sector (including a restricted geographic coverage) and Russia's primary focus on infrastructural support created surprising openings for other external and domestic actors, such as NGOs, international donors, as well as kin and parent states, to emerge as diffusion sources and influence Abkhazia's education sector. This chapter thereby shows the potential consequences of limited state building development and restricted patron state involvement. Some of these alternative diffusion sources

significantly transformed the availability of teaching methodologies and teacher training in Abkhazia. The wide adoption of these programmes was made possible because of a continued push from NGOs and international donors for reform in addition to a change in governmental receptivity in 2014 towards content changes. Whether or not the involvement of external actors developed capacities of the Abkhaz state authorities remains to be seen. While it did not relieve the Education Ministry from its responsibilities to provide basic education services, the de facto authorities have little incentive to invest time and resources into developing the education sector beyond its current provision.

The chapter also contributed to the theoretical framework of this thesis by fleshing out the origins, patterns and consequences of competing diffusion sources in de facto states. The chapter highlighted that Russian and other diffusion sources do not necessarily directly compete outside of the Gali district but can complement each other. The analysis of Georgian engagement in the Gali region presented an illustrative case study of how external actors can establish rivalling support even in the education sector of a de facto state, because of the de facto government's limited physical control over the territory (Blakkisrud and Kolstø 2011: 184). In that instance, the Abkhaz regime responded to Georgia's involvement with a set of education policies that addressed the competitive engagement in Lower Gali, which simultaneously facilitated greater central government engagement in the contested region of Abkhazia.

## *Chapter 9*

### **Conclusion**

De facto states returned on the agenda of policy makers, diplomats and academics worldwide, because these state-like political entities have repeatedly generated power vacuums, regional instabilities and even military conflict. The independence declaration of Kosovo, the Russo-Georgian war in 2008, referendum announcements in Bougainville, militia clashes in Somaliland and the formation of two new de facto states in eastern Ukraine in 2014 highlight the wide-ranging effects of de facto states on world politics. It is therefore unsurprising, that Walter (2006) and Marshall and Gurr (2003) identified secessionist movements as central sources for conflict in the last decades. While policy makers struggle to adequately engage with de facto states politically and legally (de Waal 2018), their external patrons have been frequently criticised by parent state representatives and political operatives for their alleged involvement in the military, political and economic spheres of de facto states. These concerns surrounding external patron engagement and the appropriate way to address de facto states did not prevent some de facto states to attain de facto statehood in the meantime. Florea (2017) finds that a de facto state's path towards

statehood benefits, among other contributing factors, from higher degrees of state building development in the unrecognised entity. Advancing the present understanding of the state and institution building processes of de facto states and the associated direct and indirect involvement of patron states may therefore offer insights into the ways in which de facto states sustain on an international level.

The aforementioned developments and research outputs directed the focus of this thesis on the ways and extent to which patron states influence state and institution building processes of de facto states. Approaching this research project not only necessitated a conceptualisation of patron states in the context of patron-de facto state relations, but also a distinction between direct and indirect diffusion influences of patron states on de facto states. This approach also emphasised the role of legitimisation and bounded agency in the context of dependency relationships to explain some of the observable state building outcomes in de facto states. These theoretical and conceptual tools enabled this thesis to offer explanations for the variations in patron engagement ranging from limited to extensive involvement in the state and institution building processes of de facto states.

The term patron state has evolved from its original meaning of the Cold War period and no longer refers exclusively to bilateral relations that are primarily motivated by patron competition, because some patron-de facto state relations would exist outside the realm of patron conflict. Patron support has also moved beyond mere military support and instead represents a symbiotic relationship that oftentimes involves financial and political and in some instances state building involvement. This thesis found that domestic characteristics of patron states cannot account for common factors of patron state identification, which necessitated a relational approach to conceptualising patron states instead. As all patron-de facto state relations are asymmetric and involve varying relative power capabilities and hierarchies, this thesis considered the dependency dynamics of patron-de facto state relations as unique identifiers of these bilateral relations. This means that one can only refer to patron-de facto state relations if the patron is the sole or at least predominant provider of support that contributes to the sustainability of the de facto regime. This type of patron support facilitates dependencies between the two actors that make up the inherent characteristics of patron-de facto state relations. The

proposed conceptualisation of patron-de facto state relations not only benefits the clarity of debates surrounding patron state influences on de facto states, but also offers insights into behavioural patterns of patron states and dependency dynamics in patron-de facto state relations.

The theoretical framework of this thesis captured the differences between direct and indirect patron state influences on the state building processes of de facto states based on diffusion theories. This theoretical model enabled the thesis to distinguish between direct coercive influences, on the one hand, and indirect influences of the patron in form of mimicry, normative and competitive diffusion, on the other hand. Considerations of the role of legitimacy in patron-de facto state relations and the implications of bounded agency in dependency relations complemented the theoretical framework in form of transition variables. Both legitimacy and bounded agency dynamics may shape the ways in which diffusion sources enter de facto states and influence their state building processes. Thus, the theoretical framework granted the freedom to consider how domestic, external and structural factors allow domestic elites to challenge certain external diffusion influences. Furthermore, the theoretical framework suggested a set of causal mechanisms that explained state and institution building outcomes in de facto states. The theoretical framework therefore serves as a potential tool to fill a gap in the literature that has not offered causal explanations for legislative and institutional isomorphism between patron and de facto states. Gerrits and Bader (2016), for instance, observed legislative and institutional mimicry in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but did not produce a causal mechanism that facilitated this form of isomorphism. By following the causal chains of direct and indirect diffusion channels laid out in the theoretical framework and applying process tracing to the qualitative source material, this thesis empirically established that coercive, mimetic, normative and competitive diffusion mechanisms are at work in Abkhazia's state and institution building processes.

In this context, the thesis proposes that the relative prevalence of direct and indirect diffusion influences can be context dependent. Normative and mimetic diffusion influences, for instance, are more common during periods of high levels of direct coercive diffusion influences from the patron. An upsurge in competition

between the de facto state and its parent encourages both direct and indirect diffusion influences. Also the changes in the Russo-Abkhaz relationship in 1999 shaped the relative prevalence of direct and indirect diffusion influences by widening the range of potential coercive diffusion instruments to official agreements as well as financial and military support, which subsequently encouraged further normative, mimetic and competitive diffusion.

The conceptual and theoretical basis informed the statistical and case study analyses of this thesis, which permitted the framing of state building in de facto states and the role of patron states in a new light. The proposed conceptualisation of patron-de facto state relations of this thesis, for instance, challenged the common perception of Russia as Abkhazia's patron since the early 1990s. Despite some Russian regional support in the 1990s, Russia only took on the position as Abkhazia's patron from 1999 onwards when the relationship met the dependency criteria of the patron-de facto state relations conceptualisation. Russian involvement in Abkhazia therefore represents an insightful case study of change in the nature of patron support that captures the variations in Russia's engagement before and after 1999.

This thesis argued that patrons can nurture the dependence of de facto states on patron support by pursuing a multi-layered policy of granting de facto state agency in an international setting of limited alternatives and providing support that discourages self-sufficiency. The statistical results of this thesis underscored that patron states support de facto states in guaranteeing minimal civilian governance in order to ensure a degree of sustainability of the unrecognised entity and thereby support the regime in attaining internal legitimacy. In the early phases of the state building process, de facto state governments are more susceptible to the influence of external actors, whereas with proceeding developments and more domestic accountability, de facto state governments are slightly less reliant on external support. At the same time, patrons appear to not support de facto states in achieving coherent government structures including an economic extraction and redistribution system, border management and internal security, as this would reduce the level of de facto state dependence on the patron state. Striving for a status quo of dependence may also explain why the number of governance institutions in de facto states tends to decrease when a patron state is present, as patrons and their clients

pursue a policy of institution sharing. The focus on dependence and the distinction between direct and indirect diffusion channels ultimately explains why patron state not always directly intervene in de facto states, because de facto authorities tend to orient their state and institution building developments according to the perceived interests of the patron state.

The qualitative analysis of Russia's attempts to nurture Abkhaz dependence on patron support reinforced some of the quantitative findings of this thesis. Russian involvement, for instance, is linked predominantly to infrastructural reconstruction rather than capacity building, which equips the Abkhaz regime with an institutional infrastructure that enables basic public service provision but not the necessary skills and capabilities to utilise the infrastructure independently. The lack of support for Abkhazia's soft capacity development ties Abkhazia closer to Russia and appears to be the biggest threat to output legitimacy of Russian actions. Nonetheless, Russian support is largely legitimised and accepted, partly due to the limited viable alternatives for Abkhazia. An additional instrument that nurtures Abkhaz dependence on Russia is the patron's control of relevant de facto politicians to ensure their loyalty through the provision of significant financial contributions and military support. While the Russian authorities are not necessarily concerned about micromanaging politics and state building in Abkhazia, the patron is interested in having candidates in place that have a favourable view of Russia. This can be considered a strategy by Russia to encourage mimetic and normative diffusion channels, rather than coercive diffusion.

Since Russia's recognition of Abkhazia's independence in 2008, Russia has passed treaties and agreements with the de facto state that specify state building measures. Particularly the Alliance and Strategic Partnership Treaty of 2014 indicates specific state building plans in form of health care reforms, legislative changes, education sector advancements and social sector payments. The institutionalisation of the Russo-Abkhaz relationship in form of agreements and treaties also increases the likelihood for both mimetic and normative diffusion, because they set specific institutional and public service provision standards. Russia's use of agreements and treaties represents a foreign policy instrument that functions as a coercive diffusion instrument and simultaneously has unintended or indirect diffusion influences on the

capacity and public service provision of Abkhazia's de facto regime. Moreover, the bilateral nature of the agreements and treaties safeguards Russia's quasi monopoly position over the external influences on Abkhazia's state building processes.

By 1999, Abkhazia had already developed most central governance institutions. In that sense, Russia did not necessarily contribute to the development of new governance institutions but helped sustain the existing state capacity. With the direct patron involvement from 1999 onwards, the scope of the state, on the one hand, expanded along with the enhancement of Abkhazia's security and economic situation, but, on the other hand, Russia took on specific service provision functions and responsibilities from the Abkhaz de facto authorities, despite Abkhazia's relatively strong statehood and wide penetration of the state. Institution sharing in these instances has reduced Abkhazia's self-sustainability, because it disincentivised institutional development particularly in the military and security sector. In that sense, governance institutions in Abkhazia are not outright missing due to Russian patronage, however the underdevelopment of some sectors of the Abkhaz de facto state that deny independent public service and goods provision can be traced back to Russia. The phenomena of institution sharing may also explain the statistical finding of this thesis that de facto states with a patron have fewer governance institutions.

Despite this degree of Russian involvement in Abkhazia's state building process, this thesis demonstrated that direct engagement and control does not always appear to be necessary for the de facto elites to adhere to Russian state and institution building. Even during a period of partial isolation and limited direct Russian involvement, Abkhaz elites adjusted their actions and plans at least partly according to Russian interests and activities due to normative, mimetic and competitive diffusion influences, which encouraged legislative and institutional isomorphism and a degree of endogenous state building. Thus, Abkhazia achieved the most notable state building boost during a period of uncertainty and partial isolation in the 1990s when Russia did not officially function as Abkhazia's patron. Soviet legacies provided Abkhaz officials with the basic political institutional structure to develop its institutions further and sporadic trade with Russian regions and Turkish diaspora groups sustained the de facto regime at least partially. These

findings also highlight the importance of distinguishing between developments that can be attributed to a de facto state's attempt to adapt to the patron through indirect diffusion channels, on the one hand, and institutional path dependencies, on the other hand. Abkhaz officials attained control over the existing set of state institutions by strategically regulating the hiring of ethnic groups to influential state positions. In this period, competition with Georgia presented a likely motivating force for continued state building developments in Abkhazia, which is in line with the statistical findings of this thesis that indicate that stronger parent states compared to patron states encourage state and institution building in de facto states.

Furthermore, the prioritisation of certain state building developments by the Abkhaz de facto authorities shaped the scope of Abkhazia's statehood. In the immediate post-war period, the war legacies, lack of international recognition and geopolitical context necessitated a prioritisation pursuit by the Abkhaz regime that shaped the perception of what constitutes the state and its responsibilities vis-à-vis the population. In this period, the Abkhaz public depended on itself more than it did on the state, because the de facto regime prioritised a set of core tasks over basic service and goods provision. These core tasks covered the management of Abkhazia's external relations, setting up a basic resource extraction and distribution system including trade as well as the provision of law and order. Abkhazia's education sector illustrates that the degree of patron involvement in addition to domestic neglect of particular state sectors can have consequences for the involvement of competing diffusion sources. Blakkisrud and Kolstø (2011: 182) identify similar prioritisation patterns in Transnistria's state building process. The Transnistrian de facto regime focused first and foremost on the establishment of physical control, securing the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence as well as economic development.

The domestic developments in Abkhazia under fluctuating dependencies on Russian support illustrates the agency of de facto state under dependence. This framework challenges the simplistic dichotomy of de facto states either representing puppet states or exhibiting full-fledged agency. Patron-de facto state relations ultimately represent a playing field where the de facto state exhibits agency that is constrained by perceived patron interests and mimetic, normative and competitive diffusion influences. The patron is likely to shape domestic developments in de facto

states through coercive diffusion influences as well. Due to the susceptibility to indirect diffusion influences in form of mimetic, normative and competitive diffusion, the agency of dependent de facto states is likely to be bound by the (perceived) interests of the patron. Due to the limited availability of alternative viable choices, de facto entities are also less likely to resist coercive influences. This bounded agency increases the likelihood for legislative and institutional isomorphism between the de facto state and its patron. In this arena of limited manoeuvre and course of action, the Abkhaz de facto authorities continued to signal autonomy by protecting symbolic institutions and legislations relating to private property and language rights.

This playing field accommodates for the possibilities of fluctuating dependencies and represents a more or less comfortable framework for both teams. For the inherent dynamics of patron-de facto state relations to change, either side would have to break with the relative comfort that it provides. In practical terms, this means that the Russian government is unlikely to pursue policies that further encourage self-sufficient statehood of Abkhazia, whereas the Abkhaz regime works towards continued support inflow that guarantees the entity's security and welfare provision, as long as Abkhaz private property and language privileges are upheld and internal legitimacy is not impaired. This would explain why the Abkhaz regime appears to strategise its legitimacy by flexibly dealing with the issue of legitimacy, which involves holding certain criticisms back and restricting Russian influence in certain areas in order to ensure sustained support.

Due to the complexity of state building in de facto states and the extensive scope of potential patron involvement, it is necessary to account for a set of limitations of the presented research. This thesis focused predominantly on the policies, institutions and practices of the central government of the de facto Republic of Abkhazia to capture state and institution building processes in Abkhazia, rather than covering regional and community developments. Based on Lake' (2014: 516) differentiation of "three distinct levels of governance – the central, local and community levels," it is insufficient to consider central governments as the only settings for state building in de facto states. Indeed, in the case of Abkhazia, one can observe significant differences in state building trajectories across regions such as Upper and Lower Gali. While this study touched upon some community and local

developments, further research needs to be conducted to capture the full extent of state building developments in Abkhazia. These findings would have also offered insights into the levels of governance that patron states tend to penetrate, be it the central government, local administration or community developments. An overview of the socio-economic transformations and realities on the ground could have also offered a more wholesome understanding of state building in Abkhazia. In addition, a variety of actors would have deserved separate attention to grasp their influence on the state building developments in Abkhazia, such as NGOs and international donors, clan and family structures, as well as individual Abkhaz leaders such as Ardzinba, Bagapsh, Khajimba and Ankvab.

The research findings of this thesis uncovered a set of questions and research directions that might be worth pursuing in the near future. First, Adrian Florea has been working on an updated version of his data set of de facto states from 2014 that has not been published yet. It would be appealing to test the statistical findings of this thesis on a wider range of cases that also cover, for instance, the Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics. Second, it is worth examining in more detail why and in what ways Abkhazia challenges Russian coercive or mimicry diffusion sources in sectors such as private property or language reform, while permitting external involvement in other sectors. Third, analysing diffusion dynamics across de facto states could uncover whether these entities perceive themselves similar enough to consider institutional and legislative mimicry. At the same time, this research would contribute to the growing literature on the international relations of de facto states. Fourth, building on the proposed conceptualisation of patron states, it would be insightful to test whether it is possible to differentiate between Russia's actions as a regional power in its near abroad and Russia's action as a patron. Relatedly, it is worth conducting more research on dependency relations between actors such as Russia and Central Asian countries or development contexts to tease out the nuances of dependencies even more clearly. Fifth, the research findings of this thesis speak to greater questions surrounding statehood and world order.<sup>445</sup> At what stage of

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<sup>445</sup> These questions are largely informed by a discussion with Jesse Driscoll from the University of California San Diego at the APSA Annual Meeting in 2019.

state and institution building development, for example, can one refer to de facto states and nascent states exhibiting characteristics of statehood? And to what extent is the answer to this question informed by the point in time that the question is asked and the nature of the respective world order? De facto states would likely not have survived in a pre-1945 world order setting. What did the transformations in the international system entail that facilitated these arguably lower requirements of statehood and differences from the Weberian archetype one can now observe?

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## Appendix

## Appendix A

Table 21 Classification of Patron-De Facto State Relations by Patron Interests (Florea)

| Sum                 |                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------|------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Algeria             | Western Sahara   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Russia              | Transnistria     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| India               | Tamil Eelam      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| USA                 | Taiwan           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ethiopia            | South Sudan      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Russia              | South Ossetia    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Serbia              | Republika Srpska |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Saudi-Arabia (etc.) | Palestine        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Turkey              | Northern Cyprus  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Armenia             | Nagorno-Karabakh |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Serbia              | Krajina          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Albania             | Kosovo           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Belgium             | Katanga          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Iran                | Gaza             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Serbia              | Eastern Slavonia |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Guinea-Bissau       | Casamance        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Solomon Islands     | Bougainville     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| France              | Biafra           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Russia              | Ajaria           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| France              | Anjouan          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Russia              | Abkhazia         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                     |                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                     |                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                     |                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                     |                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                     |                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                     |                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                     |                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                     |                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                     |                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Patron (Florea)     | De Facto State   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

| Interests                |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Geopolitical/Competition | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 19 |
| Shared History           | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 13 |
| Shared Ethnicity         | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 10 |
| Shared Ideology          | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8  |
| Integration              | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7  |
| Economic                 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3  |
| Security                 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 13 |
| Democratisation          | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  |

## Appendix B

*Table 22 Classification of Patron-De Facto State Relations by Patron Instruments (Florea)*

| Sum                 |                  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---------------------|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Algeria             | Western Sahara   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Russia              | Transnistria     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| India               | Tamil Eelam      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| USA                 | Taiwan           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Ethiopia            | South Sudan      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Russia              | South Ossetia    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Serbia              | Republika Srpska |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Saudi-Arabia (etc.) | Palestine        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Turkey              | Northern Cyprus  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Armenia             | Nagorno-Karabakh |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Serbia              | Krajina          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Albania             | Kosovo           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Belgium             | Katanga          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Iran                | Gaza             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Serbia              | Eastern Slavonia |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Guinea-Bissau       | Casamance        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Solomon Islands     | Bougainville     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| France              | Biafra           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Russia              | Ajaria           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| France              | Anjouan          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Russia              | Abkhazia         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                     |                  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Patron (Florea)     | De Facto State   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Instruments         |                  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Financial/Economic  |                  | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 16 |
| Political           |                  | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 18 |
| Military/Security   |                  | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 21 |
| Soft Power          |                  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 9  |
| State Building      |                  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7  |
| Gatekeeping         |                  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6  |

## Appendix C

Table 23 Classification of Patron-De Facto State Relations by Patron Interests (Spanke)

| Patron (Spanke) | De Facto State | Sum                      |                  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------------------|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
|                 |                | Algeria                  | Western Sahara   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | Russia                   | Transnistria     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | India                    | Tamil Eelam      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | USA                      | Taiwan           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | Russia                   | South Ossetia    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | Serbia                   | Republika Srpska |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | Turkey                   | Northern Cyprus  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | Armenia                  | Nagorno-Karabakh |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | Serbia                   | Krajina          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | United States            | Kosovo           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | Belgium                  | Katanga          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | Iran                     | Gaza             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | Serbia                   | Eastern Slavonia |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | France                   | Biafra           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | Russia                   | Ajaria           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | France                   | Anjouan          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | Russia                   | Abkhazia         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | Interests                |                  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                 |                | Geopolitical/Competition | 1                | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 15 |
|                 |                | Shared History           | 1                | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 13 |
|                 |                | Shared Ethnicity         | 1                | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 10 |
|                 |                | Shared Ideology          | 0                | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7  |
|                 |                | Integration              | 0                | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6  |
|                 |                | Economic                 | 0                | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2  |
|                 |                | Security                 | 1                | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
|                 |                | Democratisation          | 0                | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  |

## Appendix D

Table 24 Classification of Patron-De Facto State Relations by Patron Instruments (Spanke)

| Sum                |                  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--------------------|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Algeria            | Western Sahara   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Russia             | Transnistria     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| India              | Tamil Eelam      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| USA                | Taiwan           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Russia             | South Ossetia    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Serbia             | Republika Srpska |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Turkey             | Northern Cyprus  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Armenia            | Nagorno-Karabakh |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Serbia             | Krajina          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| United States      | Kosovo           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Belgium            | Katanga          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Iran               | Gaza             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Serbia             | Eastern Slavonia |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| France             | Biafra           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Russia             | Ajaria           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| France             | Anjouan          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Russia             | Abkhazia         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|                    |                  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Patron (Spanke)    | De Facto State   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Instruments        |                  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Financial/Economic |                  | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 14 |
| Political          |                  | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 15 |
| Military/Security  |                  | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 17 |
| Soft Power         |                  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 9  |
| State Building     |                  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 6  |
| Gatekeeping        |                  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5  |

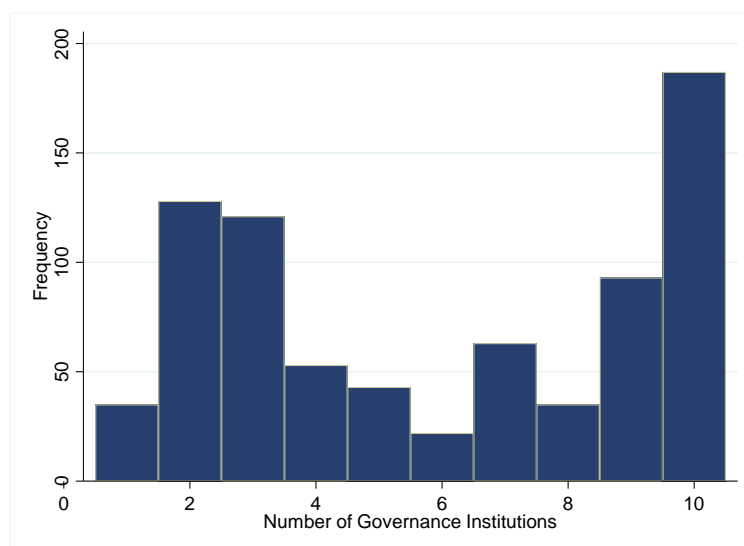
## Appendix E

Even though *dfsinst* represents a discrete count variable, I decided to run linear regressions to analyse the dependent variable, because it shares many characteristics with a continuous variable rather than a traditional count variable (see table 25 and figure 30 below). Traditional count data tends to follow a Poisson distribution and a Poisson regression could calculate the rate of occurrence.

*Table 25 Number of Governance Institutions*

| dfsinst     |    |          |             |          |  |
|-------------|----|----------|-------------|----------|--|
| Percentiles |    | Smallest |             |          |  |
| 1%          | 1  | 1        |             |          |  |
| 5%          | 2  | 1        |             |          |  |
| 10%         | 2  | 1        | Obs         | 780      |  |
| 25%         | 3  | 1        | Sum of Wgt. | 780      |  |
|             |    |          |             |          |  |
| 50%         | 6  |          | Mean        | 5.95     |  |
|             |    | Largest  | Std. Dev.   | 3.263571 |  |
| 75%         | 9  | 10       |             |          |  |
| 90%         | 10 | 10       | Variance    | 10.6509  |  |
| 95%         | 10 | 10       | Skewness    | -.00866  |  |
| 99%         | 10 | 10       | Kurtosis    | 1.373156 |  |

*Figure 30 Histogram Number of Governance Institutions*



## Appendix F

*Table 26 Moderate Degrees of State Building Across Units*

Summary for variables: dfsbuildmod  
by categories of: dfsname (dfsname)

| dfsname          | mean     | sd       | min | max |
|------------------|----------|----------|-----|-----|
| Abkhazia         | .8571429 | .3585686 | 0   | 1   |
| Aceh             | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Ajaria           | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Anjouan          | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Biafra           | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Bougainville     | .3478261 | .4869848 | 0   | 1   |
| Cabinda          | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Casamance        | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Chechnya         | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| East Timor       | .1428571 | .3563483 | 0   | 1   |
| Eastern Slavonia | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Eritrea          | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Gagauzia         | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Gaza             | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Kachin State     | .3529412 | .4826398 | 0   | 1   |
| Karen State      | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Katanga          | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Kosovo           | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Krajina          | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Kurdistan        | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Mindanao         | .4102564 | .4983102 | 0   | 1   |
| Nagorno-Karabakh | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Northern Cyprus  | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Palestine        | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Puntland         | .6666667 | .4830459 | 0   | 1   |
| Republika Srpska | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Rwenzururu Kingd | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Somaliland       | .9047619 | .3007926 | 0   | 1   |
| South Ossetia    | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| South Sudan      | .5535714 | .5016207 | 0   | 1   |
| Taiwan           | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Tamil Eelam      | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Transnistria     | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Western Sahara   | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Total            | .624359  | .4845987 | 0   | 1   |

**Table 27 High Degrees of State Building Across Units**

Summary for variables: dfsbuildstrong  
by categories of: dfsname (dfsname)

| dfsname          | mean     | sd       | min | max |
|------------------|----------|----------|-----|-----|
| Abkhazia         | .7142857 | .46291   | 0   | 1   |
| Aceh             | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Ajaria           | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Anjouan          | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Biafra           | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Bougainville     | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Cabinda          | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Casamance        | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Chechnya         | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| East Timor       | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Eastern Slavonia | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Eritrea          | .3       | .4660916 | 0   | 1   |
| Gagauzia         | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Gaza             | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Kachin State     | .3529412 | .4826398 | 0   | 1   |
| Karen State      | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Katanga          | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Kosovo           | .8181818 | .4045199 | 0   | 1   |
| Krajina          | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Kurdistan        | .3809524 | .4976134 | 0   | 1   |
| Mindanao         | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Nagorno-Karabakh | .7619048 | .4364358 | 0   | 1   |
| Northern Cyprus  | .7631579 | .4308515 | 0   | 1   |
| Palestine        | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Puntland         | 0        | 0        | 0   | 0   |
| Republika Srpska | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Rwenzururu Kingd | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Somaliland       | .5238095 | .5117663 | 0   | 1   |
| South Ossetia    | .5238095 | .5117663 | 0   | 1   |
| South Sudan      | .125     | .3337119 | 0   | 1   |
| Taiwan           | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Tamil Eelam      | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Transnistria     | .6666667 | .4830459 | 0   | 1   |
| Western Sahara   | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Total            | .4076923 | .4917207 | 0   | 1   |

*Table 28 State Institutions Across Units*

Summary for variables: dfsinst  
by categories of: dfsname

| dfsname          | mean     | sd       | min | max |
|------------------|----------|----------|-----|-----|
| Abkhazia         | 9.714286 | .7171372 | 8   | 10  |
| Aceh             | 4        | 0        | 4   | 4   |
| Ajaria           | 5        | 0        | 5   | 5   |
| Anjouan          | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Biafra           | 9.75     | .5       | 9   | 10  |
| Bougainville     | 1        | 0        | 1   | 1   |
| Cabinda          | 3        | 0        | 3   | 3   |
| Casamance        | 3        | 0        | 3   | 3   |
| Chechnya         | 4        | 0        | 4   | 4   |
| East Timor       | 2.892857 | 2.282612 | 2   | 10  |
| Eastern Slavonia | 10       | 0        | 10  | 10  |
| Eritrea          | 6.333333 | 1.748563 | 3   | 9   |
| Gagauzia         | 2        | 0        | 2   | 2   |
| Gaza             | 5        | 0        | 5   | 5   |
| Kachin State     | 3.058824 | 1.447919 | 2   | 5   |
| Karen State      | 2        | 0        | 2   | 2   |
| Katanga          | 2        | 0        | 2   | 2   |
| Kosovo           | 9.636364 | 1.206045 | 6   | 10  |
| Krajina          | 9.8      | .4472136 | 9   | 10  |
| Kurdistan        | 8.238095 | 1.70014  | 3   | 10  |
| Mindanao         | 3        | 0        | 3   | 3   |
| Nagorno-Karabakh | 9.666667 | .6582806 | 8   | 10  |
| Northern Cyprus  | 9.657895 | .745303  | 6   | 10  |
| Palestine        | 8.882353 | .3321056 | 8   | 9   |
| Puntland         | 6.190476 | 2.337072 | 3   | 8   |
| Republika Srpska | 9.75     | .4442617 | 9   | 10  |
| Rwenzururu Kingd | 6        | 0        | 6   | 6   |
| Somaliland       | 9.380952 | .7400129 | 8   | 10  |
| South Ossetia    | 9.333333 | .6582806 | 8   | 10  |
| South Sudan      | 5.071429 | 1.693379 | 4   | 10  |
| Taiwan           | 10       | 0        | 10  | 10  |
| Tamil Eelam      | 6.538462 | .8593378 | 5   | 7   |
| Transnistria     | 9.857143 | .6546537 | 7   | 10  |
| Western Sahara   | 8.837838 | .9863939 | 3   | 9   |
| Total            | 5.95     | 3.263571 | 1   | 10  |

**Table 29 Heterogeneity Across Independent and Control Variables**

| Variable |         | Mean      | Std. Dev. | Min       | Max      | Observations    |
|----------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------------|
| patro~ke | overall | .3628205  | .4811222  | 0         | 1        | N = 780         |
|          | between |           | .4916567  | 0         | 1        | n = 34          |
|          | within  |           | .1396591  | -.2562271 | 1.219963 | T-bar = 22.9412 |
| dias     | overall | .6333333  | .4822036  | 0         | 1        | N = 780         |
|          | between |           | .4748581  | 0         | 1        | n = 34          |
|          | within  |           | 0         | .6333333  | .6333333 | T-bar = 22.9412 |
| dfswar~t | overall | .5320513  | .6799897  | 0         | 2        | N = 780         |
|          | between |           | .519789   | 0         | 2        | n = 34          |
|          | within  |           | .4918799  | -1.044872 | 2.47942  | T-bar = 22.9412 |
| dfspr~d  | overall | .5282051  | .4995241  | 0         | 1        | N = 780         |
|          | between |           | .4935592  | 0         | 1        | n = 34          |
|          | within  |           | .0320462  | .3282051  | 1.328205 | T-bar = 22.9412 |
| typeon~t | overall | 2.620513  | 1.182712  | 1         | 4        | N = 780         |
|          | between |           | 1.134847  | 1         | 4        | n = 34          |
|          | within  |           | 0         | 2.620513  | 2.620513 | T-bar = 22.9412 |
| relcap   | overall | 2.207692  | .9151091  | 1         | 4        | N = 780         |
|          | between |           | .8829207  | 1         | 4        | n = 34          |
|          | within  |           | .2635548  | .5576923  | 3.636264 | T-bar = 22.9412 |
| frag2    | overall | 3.994872  | 2.340682  | 1         | 9        | N = 780         |
|          | between |           | 2.106797  | 1         | 9        | n = 34          |
|          | within  |           | 1.406668  | -.4645877 | 8.375824 | T-bar = 22.9412 |
| relpar~h | overall | -.0043858 | .0207582  | -.1024379 | .1033478 | N = 776         |
|          | between |           | .0223714  | -.0586133 | .0640664 | n = 34          |
|          | within  |           | .0090992  | -.0568021 | .068931  | T-bar = 22.8235 |
| duration | overall | 198.7192  | 159.2024  | 1         | 756      | N = 780         |
|          | between |           | 94.47486  | 16.25     | 384      | n = 34          |
|          | within  |           | 126.5195  | -173.2808 | 570.7192 | T-bar = 22.9412 |

## Appendix G

**Table 30 Hausman Test Governance Institutions**

|              | Coefficients |               | (b-B)<br>Difference | sqrt(diag(V_b-V_B))<br>S.E. |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
|              | (b)<br>fixed | (B)<br>random |                     |                             |
| 1.patrons~e  | -.7233969    | -.6130195     | -.1103773           | .0224962                    |
| dfswarint    |              |               |                     |                             |
| 1            | -.6501902    | -.6695853     | .0193951            | .                           |
| 2            | -.5939688    | -.593852      | -.0001169           | .                           |
| relcap       |              |               |                     |                             |
| 2            | .5584083     | .5759435      | -.0175352           | .0240677                    |
| 4            | 1.458337     | 1.444559      | .013778             | .0607887                    |
| frag2        | .050862      | .0471817      | .0036803            | .0058248                    |
| relparentg~c | .0000464     | .0000372      | 9.13e-06            | 4.10e-06                    |
| duration     | .0034672     | .0035044      | -.0000373           | .                           |

b = consistent under Ho and Ha; obtained from xtreg  
B = inconsistent under Ha, efficient under Ho; obtained from xtreg

Test: Ho: difference in coefficients not systematic

chi2(7) = (b-B)'[(V\_b-V\_B)^(-1)](b-B)  
= -71.89      chi2<0 ==> model fitted on these  
data fails to meet the asymptotic  
assumptions of the Hausman test;  
see suest for a generalized test

## Appendix H

The frequency table below (see table 31) suggests that more than half (59.23%) of individual observations are in the low or moderate degrees of state building category. While 33.08% of observations are in the high degrees of state building category, only 7.69% of observations have very high degrees of state building.

*Table 31 State Building Frequency Table*

| dfsbuild | Freq. | Percent | Cum.   |
|----------|-------|---------|--------|
| 1        | 293   | 37.56   | 37.56  |
| 2        | 169   | 21.67   | 59.23  |
| 3        | 258   | 33.08   | 92.31  |
| 4        | 60    | 7.69    | 100.00 |
| Total    | 780   | 100.00  |        |

A snapshot of all 34 de facto states in their first and last observed year reveals a slightly different and possibly more insightful picture (see tables 32 and 33). While 76.46% of the 34 de facto states in their first year of existence show low or moderate degrees of state building, only Taiwan has very high degrees of state building in its first year. The state building mean in de facto states in their first year is 1.82. In the final observed year of all 34 de facto states, the majority (55.78%) of de facto states have achieved a high or very high degree of state building. The state building mean in de facto states in their last observed year is 2.5 and therefore 0.68 points higher than in the first observed year. While these tables omit the period between the first and final observation, they nonetheless reveal the state building potential of de facto states. While the number of de facto states with low degrees of state building in the first observed year is quite high with 15 out of 34 de facto states, the last observed year shows that the majority (19 out of 34) of de facto states is in the high or very high degrees category.

*Table 33 State Building (first observation)*

| dfsbuild | Freq. | Percent | Cum.   |
|----------|-------|---------|--------|
| 1        | 15    | 44.12   | 44.12  |
| 2        | 11    | 32.35   | 76.47  |
| 3        | 7     | 20.59   | 97.06  |
| 4        | 1     | 2.94    | 100.00 |
| Total    | 34    | 100.00  |        |

*Table 32 State Building (last observation)*

| dfsbuild | Freq. | Percent | Cum.   |
|----------|-------|---------|--------|
| 1        | 7     | 20.59   | 20.59  |
| 2        | 8     | 23.53   | 44.12  |
| 3        | 14    | 41.18   | 85.29  |
| 4        | 5     | 14.71   | 100.00 |
| Total    | 34    | 100.00  |        |

## Appendix I

The second dependent variable of this thesis is the number of governance institutions a de facto state has in a given year (*dfsinst*). The variable measures the number of governance institutions from 1 to 10. The frequency tables below (tables 34 and 35) show that in the first year of observation, there is no clear trend to either low or high numbers of state institutions among de facto states. However, in the first year, 41.18% of de facto states have only up to 3 out of 10 state institutions.

*Table 34 Number of Institutions (first observation)*

| dfsinst | Freq. | Percent | Cum.   |
|---------|-------|---------|--------|
| 1       | 2     | 5.88    | 5.88   |
| 2       | 5     | 14.71   | 20.59  |
| 3       | 7     | 20.59   | 41.18  |
| 4       | 3     | 8.82    | 50.00  |
| 5       | 3     | 8.82    | 58.82  |
| 6       | 3     | 8.82    | 67.65  |
| 7       | 1     | 2.94    | 70.59  |
| 8       | 5     | 14.71   | 85.29  |
| 9       | 3     | 8.82    | 94.12  |
| 10      | 2     | 5.88    | 100.00 |
| Total   | 34    | 100.00  |        |

*Table 35 Number of Institutions (final observation)*

| dfsinst | Freq. | Percent | Cum.   |
|---------|-------|---------|--------|
| 1       | 2     | 5.88    | 5.88   |
| 2       | 3     | 8.82    | 14.71  |
| 3       | 3     | 8.82    | 23.53  |
| 4       | 2     | 5.88    | 29.41  |
| 5       | 3     | 8.82    | 38.24  |
| 6       | 1     | 2.94    | 41.18  |
| 7       | 1     | 2.94    | 44.12  |
| 8       | 1     | 2.94    | 47.06  |
| 9       | 3     | 8.82    | 55.88  |
| 10      | 15    | 44.12   | 100.00 |
| Total   | 34    | 100.00  |        |

## Appendix J

*Table 36 Relative Parent GDP per Capita*

Summary for variables: relparentgdppc  
by categories of: dfsname (dfsname)

| dfsname          | mean      | sd       | min       | max       |
|------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Abkhazia         | -6095.01  | 1289.142 | -8268.849 | -4155.131 |
| Aceh             | 2343.591  | 129.5638 | 2190.766  | 2519.51   |
| Ajaria           | -5333.137 | 753.9557 | -6417.253 | -4155.131 |
| Anjouan          | -38248.6  | 2011.221 | -40839.73 | -34361.28 |
| Biafra           | -17734.3  | 758.0622 | -18442.49 | -16934.67 |
| Bougainville     | 1230.359  | 647.4178 | 192.2292  | 1873.905  |
| Cabinda          | 2201.382  | 638.3733 | 1323.345  | 3579.703  |
| Casamance        | 321.9739  | 109.0687 | 78.53233  | 463.1699  |
| Chechnya         | 6533.666  | 1178.854 | 5505.628  | 9033.072  |
| East Timor       | 1657.489  | 458.93   | 948.7627  | 2433.341  |
| Eastern Slavonia | 6061.579  | 526.2167 | 5321.757  | 6538.14   |
| Eritrea          | 206.344   | 21.32461 | 163.6233  | 234.7267  |
| Gagauzia         | .         | .        | .         | .         |
| Gaza             | 23877.92  | 632.2252 | 23302.29  | 24860.32  |
| Kachin State     | 334.0469  | 239.0076 | 164.2937  | 1034.772  |
| Karen State      | 334.0469  | 239.0076 | 164.2937  | 1034.772  |
| Katanga          | -1141.667 | 63.03701 | -1202.89  | -1053.378 |
| Kosovo           | 1345.715  | 269.1454 | 972.567   | 1733.678  |
| Krajina          | 5321.757  | .        | 5321.757  | 5321.757  |
| Kurdistan        | 3461.662  | 1012.778 | 1427.921  | 4695.357  |
| Mindanao         | 1630.477  | 206.6635 | 1380.682  | 2171.492  |
| Nagorno-Karabakh | 843.7623  | 870.6757 | 97.62772  | 2624.424  |
| Northern Cyprus  | 14421.15  | 5659.96  | 2650.715  | 22052.27  |
| Palestine        | 8903.62   | 1626.44  | 5943.391  | 11383.35  |
| Puntland         | .         | .        | .         | .         |
| Republika Srpska | -773.7242 | 588.597  | -2286.443 | 698.5643  |
| Rwenzururu Kingd | 303.2819  | .        | 303.2819  | 303.2819  |
| Somaliland       | .         | .        | .         | .         |
| South Ossetia    | -6095.01  | 1289.142 | -8268.849 | -4155.131 |
| South Sudan      | 909.1351  | 272.0716 | 517.6121  | 1592.964  |
| Taiwan           | -35572.81 | 7389.713 | -46506.1  | -23537.46 |
| Tamil Eelam      | 1561.373  | 582.8684 | 605.0262  | 2616.087  |
| Transnistria     | -6844.683 | 1853.273 | -9486.901 | -4527.803 |
| Western Sahara   | -1854.109 | 345.3924 | -2485.801 | -1316.115 |
| Total            | -1809.894 | 11713.38 | -46506.1  | 24860.32  |

**Table 37 Relative Parent Strength**

Summary for variables: relparentstrength  
by categories of: dfsname (dfsname)

| dfsname          | mean      | sd       | min       | max       |
|------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Abkhazia         | -.05241   | .0144662 | -.102253  | -.0388767 |
| Aceh             | .0146772  | .0003718 | .014142   | .0150144  |
| Ajaria           | -.0586133 | .0140481 | -.102253  | -.0472187 |
| Anjouan          | -.0196246 | .0013619 | -.0220633 | -.0179964 |
| Biafra           | -.0200306 | .001244  | -.0215797 | -.0185965 |
| Bougainville     | .0001903  | .000013  | .0001785  | .0002174  |
| Cabinda          | .0015552  | .0004817 | .0007264  | .0023175  |
| Casamance        | .0005297  | .0000411 | .0004593  | .0006253  |
| Chechnya         | .0640664  | .0158494 | .0512986  | .1033478  |
| East Timor       | .0135176  | .001179  | .0118299  | .0166369  |
| Eastern Slavonia | -.0012945 | .0001006 | -.001387  | -.001176  |
| Eritrea          | .0027614  | .0008087 | .0016984  | .0039108  |
| Gagauzia         | .0006931  | .0001554 | .0005623  | .0009099  |
| Gaza             | -.0101597 | .0004589 | -.010969  | -.0098253 |
| Kachin State     | .0042147  | .0013419 | .0026011  | .0070645  |
| Karen State      | .0038367  | .0014399 | .0020677  | .0070645  |
| Katanga          | -.0057247 | .0001651 | -.0059216 | -.0055279 |
| Kosovo           | .0012985  | .0003577 | .0007942  | .0020188  |
| Krajina          | -.0011326 | .0003269 | -.001389  | -.0007044 |
| Kurdistan        | .0063149  | .0009405 | .0045582  | .0083689  |
| Mindanao         | .0050935  | .0004126 | .0039835  | .0056357  |
| Nagorno-Karabakh | .0006863  | .0001244 | .0004138  | .0008593  |
| Northern Cyprus  | -.0128887 | .0024073 | -.0162392 | -.0083604 |
| Palestine        | -.0069613 | .0010202 | -.0086492 | -.005347  |
| Puntland         | .0005951  | .0000978 | .0004852  | .0008053  |
| Republika Srpska | -.0012067 | .0003928 | -.0018863 | -.0006117 |
| Rwenzururu Kingd | .0006826  | .0001112 | .0004773  | .0008297  |
| Somaliland       | .0005951  | .0000978 | .0004852  | .0008053  |
| South Ossetia    | -.05241   | .0144662 | -.102253  | -.0388767 |
| South Sudan      | .0012686  | .0014037 | -.0020459 | .00292    |
| Taiwan           | -.0043643 | .0297463 | -.0567806 | .0689525  |
| Tamil Eelam      | -.0070282 | .0209376 | -.0565644 | .002115   |
| Transnistria     | -.0524826 | .0144627 | -.1024379 | -.0390851 |
| Western Sahara   | -.0001108 | .0003336 | -.0006951 | .0005811  |
| Total            | -.0043858 | .0207582 | -.1024379 | .1033478  |

## Appendix K

Table 38 Adapted Kolstø and Blakkisrud (2008) State Building Model (Logistic Regression)

| Degrees of State Building     | (1)<br>Moderate          | (2)<br>High              |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Patron (Spanke)               | 23.91***<br>(3.46)       | 1.053<br>(1.063)         |
| Diaspora                      | 10.46***<br>(2.552)      | 6.185*<br>(2.733)        |
| Parent State GDP per capita   | 0.00447***<br>(0.000566) | 0.00228***<br>(0.000313) |
| Autonomy Rights               | -1.022<br>(0.524)        | -0.375<br>(1.011)        |
| War Intensity<br><i>Minor</i> | -0.829<br>(0.51)         | -3.948***<br>(0.745)     |
| <i>War</i>                    | -3.068**<br>(1.091)      | -4.959***<br>(1.182)     |
| Prev. Autonomy                | -18.6***<br>(2.582)      | -6.413*<br>(2.778)       |
| Constant                      | -4.746<br>(2.499)        | -9.629***<br>(1.975)     |
| Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>         | 0.8456                   | 0.5745                   |
| N                             | 643                      | 643                      |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

The results of the adapted model do indeed confirm some of the arguments put forward by Kolstø and Blakkisrud (2008) beyond the de facto states of the South Caucasus, while rejecting the statistical significance of other independent variables. An analysis of the results supports the claim that patrons and a diaspora positively enhance the log odds of moderate state building in de facto states all other variables held constant, which is statistically significant at a 99.9 per cent confidence interval. Interestingly, the presence of a patron does not appear to significantly affect the change from low or moderate to high degrees of state building in de facto states. In terms of the capabilities of the parent state, one can observe that an increase in the GDP per capita of the parent state minimally increases the likelihood of achieving both moderate and high degrees of state building at a 99.9 per cent confidence interval. Kolstø and Blakkisrud's argument that a more lenient attitude of the parent state towards the de facto state in terms of autonomy rights has a negative influence

on the log odds of the degree of state building in de facto states cannot be confirmed for moderate and high degrees of state building. Contrary to what Kolstø and Blakkisrud argued, severe war intensity can indeed impede state building in de facto states outside the de facto states of the south Caucasus. Rather surprisingly and going beyond Kolstø and Blakkisrud's argument that previous autonomy status in the Soviet Union does not matter, de facto states that experienced previous autonomy are less likely to achieve both moderate and high degrees of state building.

## Appendix L

Table 39 State Building in De Facto States Model Stages (Logistic Regression)

| Degrees of State Building | (1)<br>Moderate      | (2)<br>High          | (3)<br>Moderate      | (4)<br>High          | (5)<br>Moderate      | (6)<br>High          |
|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Patron (Spanke)           | 12.97***<br>(3.285)  | 3.407**<br>(1.277)   | 11.5***<br>(3.163)   | 3.544*<br>(1.498)    | 57.65***<br>(7.377)  | 5.516<br>(2.93)      |
| Diaspora                  | 15.87**<br>(5.868)   | 9.106**<br>(2.959)   | 16.93**<br>(5.561)   | 9.223<br>(5.019)     | 52.52***<br>(10.07)  | 7.412<br>(5.02)      |
| War Intensity             |                      |                      |                      |                      |                      |                      |
| <i>Minor</i>              | -1.952***<br>(0.552) | -5.126***<br>(0.777) | -2.099***<br>(0.559) | -4.966***<br>(0.759) | -2.123<br>(1.95)     | -2.713<br>(2.386)    |
| <i>War</i>                | -3.883***<br>(1.152) | -4.723***<br>(0.958) | -4.044***<br>(1.147) | -4.623***<br>(0.969) | -5.19<br>(10.77)     | -5.546<br>(3.042)    |
| Prev. Autonomy            | -16.76**<br>(5.37)   | -9.361***<br>(2.61)  | -17.07***<br>(5.077) | -8.37***<br>(2.279)  | -53.06***<br>(12.21) | -11.91**<br>(4.096)  |
| Emergence Type            |                      |                      |                      |                      |                      |                      |
| <i>Non-Conflictual</i>    | -5.731<br>(5.094)    | 2.041<br>(3.411)     | -3.758<br>(4.882)    | 0.223<br>(7.376)     | -57.38***<br>(10.55) | -10.56<br>(5.776)    |
| <i>State Collapse</i>     | -17.45***<br>(4.136) | -6.612*<br>(2.694)   | -17.05***<br>(3.814) | -4.65*<br>(2.264)    | -73.82***<br>(6.992) | 2.715<br>(3.162)     |
| <i>Decolonisation</i>     | -28.49***<br>(7.213) | -12.18**<br>(3.993)  | -27.91***<br>(6.768) | -12.46***<br>(3.065) | -114.2***<br>(13.97) | -46.77***<br>(4.746) |
| Rebel Capability          |                      |                      |                      |                      |                      |                      |
| <i>At Parity</i>          | 1.381<br>(1.597)     | 3.701<br>(2.605)     | 1.969<br>(1.642)     | 4.897<br>(3.674)     | 18.51***<br>(3.531)  | 9.294*<br>(4.634)    |
| <i>Stronger</i>           | 21.59*<br>(8.438)    | 9.993**<br>(3.787)   | 23.94**<br>(7.812)   | 11.79*<br>(5.702)    | 81.55***<br>(20.19)  | 17.77**<br>(6.746)   |
| <i>Much Stronger</i>      | 13.45**<br>(4.44)    | 5.884*<br>(2.837)    | 14***<br>(3.899)     | 7.319<br>(3.865)     | 72.38***<br>(9.697)  | 11.09*<br>(5.056)    |
| Rebel Fragmentation       | 1.532***<br>(0.305)  | 1.376***<br>(0.214)  | 1.538***<br>(0.299)  | 1.28***<br>(0.257)   | 4.041**<br>(1.305)   | 0.336<br>(0.586)     |
| Relative Parent Strength  |                      |                      | -31.65<br>(31.11)    | 140.1***<br>(34.42)  | -71.62<br>(68.62)    | 203.8**<br>(62.42)   |
| Months Survived           |                      |                      |                      |                      | 0.164***<br>(0.0166) | 0.115***<br>(0.0085) |
| Constant                  | 3.436<br>(3.842)     | -9.83**<br>(3.646)   | 1.657<br>(3.876)     | -10.98*<br>(4.515)   | -7.823<br>(7.677)    | -35.4***<br>(5.88)   |
| Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>     | 0.9665               | 0.575                | 0.9775               | 0.4783               | 0.9306               | 0.3742               |
| N                         | 780                  | 780                  | 776                  | 776                  | 776                  | 776                  |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses<sup>446</sup>

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

<sup>446</sup> The t-statistics for all regressions are two-tailed.

## Appendix M

Table 40 Governance Institutions in De Facto States Model Stages (Linear Regression)

| Number of Governance Institutions | (7)                  | (8)                  | (9)                      |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Patron (Spanke)                   | -0.308<br>(0.237)    | -0.313<br>(0.239)    | -0.584**<br>(0.222)      |
| Diaspora                          | 3.322***<br>(0.953)  | 3.459***<br>(0.96)   | 3.651***<br>(0.914)      |
| War Intensity                     |                      |                      |                          |
| <i>Minor</i>                      | -0.831***<br>(0.105) | -0.844***<br>(0.106) | -0.703***<br>(0.0985)    |
| <i>War</i>                        | -0.778***<br>(0.145) | -0.79***<br>(0.145)  | -0.441**<br>(0.138)      |
| Prev. Autonomy                    | -1.455*<br>(0.693)   | -0.598<br>(0.808)    | -0.687<br>(0.77)         |
| Emergence Type                    |                      |                      |                          |
| <i>Non-Conflictual</i>            | -0.194<br>(1.466)    | 0.0481<br>(1.477)    | -0.0436<br>(1.407)       |
| <i>State Collapse</i>             | 1.366<br>(0.959)     | 1.341<br>(0.963)     | 1.846*<br>(0.919)        |
| <i>Decolonisation</i>             | -1.822<br>(1.192)    | -1.638<br>(1.2)      | -1.789<br>(1.144)        |
| Rebel Capability                  |                      |                      |                          |
| <i>At Parity</i>                  | 0.694**<br>(0.217)   | 0.69**<br>(0.219)    | 0.964***<br>(0.204)      |
| <i>Stronger</i>                   | 1.956**<br>(0.609)   | 2.431***<br>(0.66)   | 2.8***<br>(0.617)        |
| <i>Much Stronger</i>              | 1.449***<br>(0.392)  | 1.582***<br>(0.398)  | 1.627***<br>(0.369)      |
| Rebel Fragmentation               | 0.242***<br>(0.0277) | 0.239***<br>(0.0289) | 0.0813**<br>(0.0301)     |
| Relative Parent Strength          |                      | 1.244<br>(3.854)     | -7.896*<br>(3.66)        |
| Months Survived                   |                      |                      | 0.00369***<br>(0.000326) |
| Constant                          | 3.315**<br>(1.196)   | 2.597*<br>(1.255)    | 2.291<br>(1.194)         |
| R <sup>2</sup>                    | 0.5495               | 0.5729               | 0.5835                   |
| N                                 | 780                  | 776                  | 776                      |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses<sup>447</sup>

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

<sup>447</sup> The t-statistics for all regressions are two-tailed.

## Appendix N

*Table 41 State Building and Patrons without Post-Soviet Cases (Logistic Regression)*

| Degrees of State Building | Moderate           | High                |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Patron (Spanke)           | 8.243**<br>(2.824) | -0.847<br>(1.269)   |
| Constant                  | 2.191<br>(2.241)   | -3.946**<br>(1.366) |
| Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>     | 0.2195             | 0.0011              |
| N                         | 669                | 669                 |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

## Appendix O

Table 42 State Building in De Facto States Model without Post-Soviet Cases (Logistic Regression)

|                           | (1)                  | (2)                    |
|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Degrees of State Building | Moderate             | High                   |
| Patron (Spanke)           | 196.7<br>(46856.2)   | 3.656<br>(2.538)       |
| Diaspora                  | 236.4<br>(46881.6)   | 5.291*<br>(2.496)      |
| War Intensity             |                      |                        |
| <i>Minor</i>              | -2.348<br>(2.422)    | -5.496**<br>(1.855)    |
| <i>War</i>                | 3.107<br>(1979.7)    | -4.477*<br>(2.112)     |
| Prev. Autonomy            | -238.5<br>(46881.6)  | -5.918**<br>(2.16)     |
| Emergence Type            |                      |                        |
| <i>Non-Conflictual</i>    | -104.8*<br>(43.02)   | -6.869*<br>(3.307)     |
| <i>State Collapse</i>     | -26<br>(47187.7)     | 3.566<br>(2.774)       |
| <i>Decolonisation</i>     | -314.4<br>(46881.7)  | -8.837***<br>(2.259)   |
| Rebel Capability          |                      |                        |
| <i>At Parity</i>          | -8.249<br>(35.57)    | 1.298<br>(2.933)       |
| <i>Stronger</i>           | 255.1<br>(46881.7)   | 2.022<br>(4.923)       |
| <i>Much Stronger</i>      | -10.04<br>(47187.7)  | 2.589<br>(3.116)       |
| Rebel Fragmentation       | -0.145<br>(2.022)    | 0.697*<br>(0.308)      |
| Relative Parent Strength  | -129.9<br>(489.2)    | -238.5**<br>(72.63)    |
| Months Survived           | 0.201***<br>(0.0181) | 0.0399***<br>(0.00499) |
| Constant                  | 25.39<br>(37.92)     | -11.36**<br>(3.699)    |
| Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>     | 0.9924               | 0.5401                 |
| N                         | 665                  | 665                    |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

## Appendix P

Table 43 Institution Building Model without Post-Soviet Cases (Linear Regression)

| Number of Governance Institutions |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Patron (Spanke)                   | -1.072***<br>(0.294)     |
| Diaspora                          | 4.129***<br>(0.942)      |
| War Intensity                     |                          |
| <i>Minor</i>                      | -0.715***<br>(0.11)      |
| <i>War</i>                        | -0.421**<br>(0.156)      |
| Prev. Autonomy                    | -0.0808<br>(0.752)       |
| Emergence Type                    |                          |
| <i>Non-Conflictual</i>            | -0.124<br>(1.291)        |
| <i>State Collapse</i>             | 2.698**<br>(1.02)        |
| <i>Decolonisation</i>             | -1.325<br>(1.035)        |
| Rebel Capability                  |                          |
| <i>At Parity</i>                  | 0.924***<br>(0.218)      |
| <i>Stronger</i>                   | 1.428<br>(0.775)         |
| <i>Much Stronger</i>              | 1.59***<br>(0.391)       |
| Rebel Fragmentation               | 0.0776*<br>(0.0326)      |
| Relative Parent Strength          | -16.04***<br>(4.689)     |
| Months Survived                   | 0.00374***<br>(0.000351) |
| Constant                          | 1.939<br>(1.155)         |
| R <sup>2</sup>                    | 0.5598                   |
| N                                 | 665                      |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

## Appendix Q

I identified the most appropriate way to account for time dependence by comparing various time variable models using the Akaike's information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC). Each model models time dependency in a different way (duration squared, the log of duration, cubic splines, lowess, linear duration and duration dummies) and the estimates are then compared to a model that does not accounts for time. The likelihood-ratio and AIC tests suggest that for moderate degrees of state building a linear time model models time dependency the best, because the AIC of the linear model is the smallest number among all models and it also performs well for the log-likelihood coefficient. A model that includes splines or duration squared would also be a suitable alternative, because the log-likelihood coefficients are small. For strong state building, a linear time model, squared time or cubic splines would be most appropriate. For the sake of a more straightforward interpretation I decided to account for time dependence with a linear duration variable.

*Tables 44 AIC and BIC Tests for Moderate Degrees of State Building*

Likelihood-ratio test  
(Assumption: notime nested in lowess\_mod)

LR chi2(1) = 7.69  
Prob > chi2 = 0.0055

Akaike's information criterion and Bayesian information criterion

| Model             | Obs | ll(null) | ll(model) | df | AIC      | BIC      |
|-------------------|-----|----------|-----------|----|----------|----------|
| <u>notime</u>     | 776 | .        | -123.9654 | 15 | 277.9308 | 347.7431 |
| <u>lowess_mod</u> | 776 | .        | -120.1186 | 16 | 272.2372 | 346.7037 |

Note: N=Obs used in calculating BIC; see [\[R\] BIC note](#).

Likelihood-ratio test  
(Assumption: notime nested in splt\_mod)

LR chi2(3) = 169.39  
Prob > chi2 = 0.0000

Akaike's information criterion and Bayesian information criterion

| Model           | Obs | ll(null) | ll(model) | df | AIC      | BIC      |
|-----------------|-----|----------|-----------|----|----------|----------|
| <u>notime</u>   | 776 | .        | -123.9654 | 15 | 277.9308 | 347.7431 |
| <u>splt_mod</u> | 776 | .        | -39.27279 | 18 | 114.5456 | 198.3203 |

Note: N=Obs used in calculating BIC; see [\[R\] BIC note](#).

Likelihood-ratio test  
(Assumption: notime nested in tquad\_mod)

LR chi2(1) = 159.62  
Prob > chi2 = 0.0000

Akaike's information criterion and Bayesian information criterion

| Model            | Obs | ll(null) | ll(model) | df | AIC      | BIC      |
|------------------|-----|----------|-----------|----|----------|----------|
| <u>notime</u>    | 776 | .        | -123.9654 | 15 | 277.9308 | 347.7431 |
| <u>tquad_mod</u> | 776 | .        | -44.15453 | 16 | 120.3091 | 194.7755 |

Note: N=Obs used in calculating BIC; see [\[R\] BIC note](#).

Akaike's information criterion and Bayesian information criterion

Note: N=Obs used in calculating BIC; see [R] BIC note.

Akaike's information criterion and Bayesian information criterion

Note: N=Obs used in calculating BIC; see [R] BIC note.

Akaike's information criterion and Bayesian information criterion

Note: N=Obs used in calculating BIC; see [R] BIC note.

Akaike's information criterion and Bayesian information criterion

Note: N=Obs used in calculating BIC; see [R] BIC note.

Akaike's information criterion and Bayesian information criterion

Note: N=Obs used in calculating BIC; see [R] BIC note.

Akaike's information criterion and Bayesian information criterion

Note: N=Obs used in calculating BIC: see [R] BIC note.

Akaike's information criterion and Bayesian information criterion

Note: N=Obs used in calculating BIC; see [\[R\] BIC note](#).

## Appendix R

Table 46 State Building in De Facto States Model Stages Florea Patron (Logistic Regression)

| Degrees of State Building | (1)<br>Moderate      | (2)<br>High          | (3)<br>Moderate      | (4)<br>High          | (5)<br>Moderate      | (6)<br>High            |
|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Patron (Florea)           | 15.99***<br>(3.804)  | 1.748<br>(2.021)     | 18.7***<br>(4.957)   | 3.009<br>(1.548)     | 45.76***<br>(6.106)  | 7.848***<br>(1.721)    |
| Diaspora                  | 23.06***<br>(6.196)  | 9.188***<br>(2.763)  | 23.79***<br>(6.479)  | 9.642**<br>(3.18)    | 53.15***<br>(7.731)  | 6.185**<br>(2.148)     |
| War Intensity             |                      |                      |                      |                      |                      |                        |
| <i>Minor</i>              | -1.951***<br>(0.541) | -5.124***<br>(0.771) | -1.99***<br>(0.543)  | -5.016***<br>(0.758) | -1.862<br>(1.524)    | -1.752<br>(1.113)      |
| <i>War</i>                | -3.883***<br>(1.153) | -4.738***<br>(0.954) | -3.911***<br>(1.179) | -4.7***<br>(0.998)   | -4.692<br>(4.854)    | -3.133*<br>(1.383)     |
| Prev. Autonomy            | -23.55***<br>(5.771) | -9.177***<br>(2.504) | -24.85***<br>(6.079) | -8.394***<br>(2.163) | -53.8***<br>(8.47)   | -6.265**<br>(2.371)    |
| Emergence Type            |                      |                      |                      |                      |                      |                        |
| <i>Non-Conflictual</i>    | -7.155*<br>(4.489)   | 2.055<br>(3.577)     | -9.04<br>(5.089)     | 1.471<br>(3.643)     | -31.38***<br>(6.165) | -4.721<br>(3.311)      |
| <i>State Collapse</i>     | -22.92***<br>(4.924) | -5.717*<br>(2.751)   | -24.2***<br>(5.184)  | -4.315<br>(2.235)    | -40.22***<br>(7.592) | -1.179<br>(2.768)      |
| <i>Decolonisation</i>     | -38.04***<br>(7.934) | -11.89***<br>(3.314) | -40.52***<br>(8.604) | -14.38***<br>(3.171) | -86.21***<br>(10.75) | -16.02***<br>(2.296)   |
| Rebel Capability          |                      |                      |                      |                      |                      |                        |
| <i>At Parity</i>          | 0.607<br>(1.664)     | 3.727<br>(2.593)     | 0.306<br>(1.869)     | 4.437<br>(3.269)     | 12.3**<br>(4.365)    | 6.15<br>(2.481)        |
| <i>Stronger</i>           | 20.62***<br>(5.746)  | 10.3**<br>(3.863)    | 20.25***<br>(6.012)  | 10.4*<br>(5.006)     | 50.19***<br>(8.129)  | 6.241*<br>(2.899)      |
| <i>Much Stronger</i>      | 18.37***<br>(4.024)  | 5.893*<br>(2.831)    | 19.12***<br>(5.31)   | 6.829*<br>(3.461)    | 49.94***<br>(7.29)   | 6.512*<br>(2.792)      |
| Rebel Fragmentation       | 1.727***<br>(0.336)  | 1.343***<br>(0.213)  | 1.722***<br>(0.341)  | 1.284***<br>(0.229)  | 2.603*<br>(1.184)    | 0.206<br>(0.291)       |
| Relative Parent Strength  |                      |                      | 32.3<br>(36.42)      | 147.6***<br>(37.28)  | -20.25<br>(58.23)    | 83.61*<br>(40.41)      |
| Months Survived           |                      |                      |                      |                      | 0.12***<br>(0.0125)  | 0.0535***<br>(0.00482) |
| Constant                  | 3.139<br>(3.636)     | -9.572**<br>(3.633)  | 4.28<br>(3.947)      | -10.93**<br>(4.047)  | -22.26***<br>(5.627) | -16.31***<br>(3.453)   |
| Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>     | 0.9833               | 0.5721               | 0.9817               | 0.489                | 0.9617               | 0.5641                 |
| N                         | 780                  | 780                  | 776                  | 776                  | 776                  | 776                    |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses<sup>448</sup>

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

<sup>448</sup> The t-statistics for all regressions are two-tailed.

## Appendix S

Table 47 Governance Institutions in De Facto States Model Stages Florea Patron (Linear Regression)

| Number of Governance Institutions | (1)       | (2)       | (3)        |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Patron (Florea)                   | -0.586*   | -0.616*   | -1.008***  |
|                                   | (0.287)   | (0.296)   | (0.276)    |
| Diaspora                          | 3.397***  | 3.549***  | 3.767***   |
|                                   | (0.966)   | (0.97)    | (0.924)    |
| War Intensity                     |           |           |            |
| <i>Minor</i>                      | -0.816*** | -0.829*** | -0.679***  |
|                                   | (0.105)   | (0.106)   | (0.0984)   |
| <i>War</i>                        | -0.784*** | -0.795*** | -0.441**   |
|                                   | (0.144)   | (0.145)   | (0.137)    |
| Prev. Autonomy                    | -1.475*   | -0.583    | -0.659     |
|                                   | (0.699)   | (0.817)   | (0.778)    |
| Emergence Type                    |           |           |            |
| <i>Non-Conflictual</i>            | -0.00506  | 0.269     | 0.278      |
|                                   | (1.49)    | (1.499)   | (1.428)    |
| <i>State Collapse</i>             | 1.442     | 1.409     | 1.933*     |
|                                   | (0.972)   | (0.973)   | (0.928)    |
| <i>Decolonisation</i>             | -1.778    | -1.575    | -1.7       |
|                                   | (1.208)   | (1.214)   | (1.157)    |
| Rebel Capability                  |           |           |            |
| <i>At Parity</i>                  | 0.672**   | 0.676**   | 0.948***   |
|                                   | (0.217)   | (0.219)   | (0.203)    |
| <i>Stronger</i>                   | 2**       | 2.522***  | 2.931***   |
|                                   | (0.611)   | (0.664)   | (0.619)    |
| <i>Much Stronger</i>              | 1.445***  | 1.585***  | 1.628***   |
|                                   | (0.392)   | (0.398)   | (0.368)    |
| Rebel Fragmentation               | 0.236***  | 0.236***  | 0.0744*    |
|                                   | (0.0279)  | (0.0289)  | (0.0301)   |
| Relative Parent Strength          |           | -0.207    | -10.28**   |
|                                   |           | (3.949)   | (3.752)    |
| Months Survived                   |           |           | 0.00374*** |
|                                   |           |           | (0.000325) |
| Constant                          | 3.429**   | 2.658*    | 2.393*     |
|                                   | (1.212)   | (1.268)   | (1.206)    |
| R <sup>2</sup>                    | 0.5335    | 0.5607    | 0.5607     |
| N                                 | 780       | 776       | 776        |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses<sup>449</sup>

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

<sup>449</sup> The t-statistics for all regressions are two-tailed.

## Appendix T

The first model (1) in regression table 41 represents the institution building model of this thesis as a Poisson model, the second model (2) includes time since last change.

Table 48 Institution Building in De Facto States Models (Poisson Regression)

| Number of Governance Institutions    | (1)                       | (2)                     |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Patron (Spanke)                      | -0.0271<br>(0.09)         | -0.0703<br>(0.135)      |
| Diaspora                             | 0.673***<br>(0.162)       | 0.467*<br>(0.194)       |
| War Intensity                        |                           |                         |
| <i>Minor</i>                         | -0.133**<br>(0.0507)      | -0.184***<br>(0.0533)   |
| <i>War</i>                           | -0.0769<br>(0.0696)       | -0.144*<br>(0.72)       |
| Prev. Autonomy                       | -0.127<br>(0.139)         | -0.126<br>(0.163)       |
| Emergence Type                       |                           |                         |
| <i>Non-Conflictual</i>               | -0.218<br>(0.24)          | -0.473<br>(0.314)       |
| <i>State Collapse</i>                | 0.217<br>(0.168)          | 0.0753<br>(0.189)       |
| <i>Decolonisation</i>                | -0.503*<br>(0.198)        | -0.423*<br>(0.214)      |
| Rebel Capability                     |                           |                         |
| <i>At Parity</i>                     | 0.097<br>(0.116)          | 0.0297<br>(0.118)       |
| <i>Stronger</i>                      | 0.262<br>(0.189)          | 0.0196<br>(0.223)       |
| <i>Much Stronger</i>                 | 0.0891<br>(0.153)         | 0.0572<br>(0.174)       |
| Rebel Fragmentation                  | 0.0104<br>(0.0143)        | 0.0674***<br>(0.0158)   |
| Relative Parent Strength             | -2.725*<br>(1.38)         | 0.998<br>(2.525)        |
| Months Survived                      | 0.000793***<br>(0.000169) |                         |
| Months since last Institution Change |                           | -0.00772**<br>(0.00241) |
| Constant                             | 1.185***<br>(0.225)       | 1.371***<br>(0.262)     |
| N                                    | 776                       | 602                     |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

## Appendix U

```
. margins r.patronspanke, contrast
```

Contrasts of predictive margins

Model VCE : OIM

Expression : Pr(dfsbuildstrong=1), predict(pr)

|              | df | chi2 | P>chi2 |
|--------------|----|------|--------|
| patronspanke | 1  | 3.69 | 0.0547 |

|                          | Delta-method |           | [95% Conf. Interval] |          |
|--------------------------|--------------|-----------|----------------------|----------|
|                          | Contrast     | Std. Err. |                      |          |
| patronspanke<br>(1 vs 0) | .048135      | .0250578  | -.0009773            | .0972473 |

```
. margins r.patronspanke, contrast
```

Contrasts of predictive margins

Model VCE : OIM

Expression : Pr(dfsbuildmod=1), predict(pr)

|              | df | chi2  | P>chi2 |
|--------------|----|-------|--------|
| patronspanke | 1  | 65.07 | 0.0000 |

|                          | Delta-method |           | [95% Conf. Interval] |          |
|--------------------------|--------------|-----------|----------------------|----------|
|                          | Contrast     | Std. Err. |                      |          |
| patronspanke<br>(1 vs 0) | .2817227     | .0349244  | .213272              | .3501733 |

## Appendix V

Table 49 State Building Model including Relative GDP per Capita Variable (Logistic Regression)

|                                | (1)                    | (2)                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Degrees of State Building      | Moderate               | High                   |
| Patron (Spanke)                | 17.6<br>(7.868)        | 8.933*<br>(4.481)      |
| Diaspora                       | 40.46<br>(58.26)       | -3.719<br>(23.35)      |
| War Intensity                  |                        |                        |
| <i>Minor</i>                   | -1.944<br>(1.221)      | -2.909<br>(2.845)      |
| <i>War</i>                     | -2.856<br>(2.79)       | -6.877<br>(3.965)      |
| Prev. Autonomy                 | -54.92***<br>(7.398)   | -26.28***<br>(6.922)   |
| Emergence Type                 |                        |                        |
| <i>Non-Conflictual</i>         | -19.95<br>(57.2)       | -66.9**<br>(24.99)     |
| <i>State Collapse</i>          | -10.53<br>(11.71)      | 7.914<br>(5.41)        |
| <i>Decolonisation</i>          | -62.98<br>(.)          | -80.9***<br>(8.674)    |
| Rebel Capability               |                        |                        |
| <i>At Parity</i>               | 4.849<br>(2.803)       | -1.889<br>(4.183)      |
| <i>Stronger</i>                | 58.71<br>(57.7)        | 26.26<br>(23.21)       |
| <i>Much Stronger</i>           | 0<br>(.)               | 1.176<br>(6.72)        |
| Rebel Fragmentation            | 2.647<br>(1.352)       | -0.285<br>(0.856)      |
| Relative Parent GDP per capita | -0.00125<br>(0.00106)  | 0.000689*<br>(0.00031) |
| Months Survived                | 0.0523***<br>(0.00711) | 0.146***<br>(0.0116)   |
| Constant                       | -5.41<br>(57.29)       | -16.98<br>(24.32)      |
| Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>          | 0.9584                 | 0.4545                 |
| N                              | 572                    | 643                    |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

Table 50 Institution Building Model including Relative GDP per Capita Variable (Linear Regression)

| Number of Governance Institutions | (3)                        |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Patron (Spanke)                   | -0.613**<br>(0.206)        |
| Diaspora                          | 3.604***<br>(1.06)         |
| War Intensity                     |                            |
| <i>Minor</i>                      | -0.67***<br>(0.0934)       |
| <i>War</i>                        | -0.594***<br>(0.144)       |
| Prev. Autonomy                    | -0.484<br>(0.793)          |
| Emergence Type                    |                            |
| <i>Non-Conflictual</i>            | -0.649<br>(1.474)          |
| <i>State Collapse</i>             | 2.306*<br>(0.929)          |
| <i>Decolonisation</i>             | -1.83<br>(1.13)            |
| Rebel Capability                  |                            |
| <i>At Parity</i>                  | 0.576**<br>(0.214)         |
| <i>Stronger</i>                   | 2.505*<br>(1.058)          |
| <i>Much Stronger</i>              | 1.445***<br>(0.374)        |
| Rebel Fragmentation               | 0.0472<br>(0.032)          |
| Relative Parent GDP per capita    | 0.0000372**<br>(0.0000129) |
| Months Survived                   | 0.0035***<br>(0.000344)    |
| Constant                          | 2.613<br>(1.339)           |
| R <sup>2</sup>                    | 0.5168                     |
| N                                 | 643                        |

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

## Appendix W

*Table 51 Kaplan-Meier Estimator Strong State Building*

| Time | Beg.<br>Total | Fail | Net<br>Lost | Survivor<br>Function | Std.<br>Error | [95% Conf. Int.] |        |
|------|---------------|------|-------------|----------------------|---------------|------------------|--------|
| 25   | 26            | 0    | 1           | 1.0000               | .             | .                | .      |
| 29   | 25            | 1    | 0           | 0.9600               | 0.0392        | 0.7484           | 0.9943 |
| 30   | 24            | 0    | 1           | 0.9600               | 0.0392        | 0.7484           | 0.9943 |
| 32   | 23            | 0    | 1           | 0.9600               | 0.0392        | 0.7484           | 0.9943 |
| 40   | 22            | 0    | 1           | 0.9600               | 0.0392        | 0.7484           | 0.9943 |
| 53   | 21            | 0    | 1           | 0.9600               | 0.0392        | 0.7484           | 0.9943 |
| 63   | 20            | 1    | 0           | 0.9120               | 0.0598        | 0.6896           | 0.9774 |
| 80   | 19            | 1    | 0           | 0.8640               | 0.0734        | 0.6333           | 0.9543 |
| 88   | 18            | 1    | 0           | 0.8160               | 0.0836        | 0.5794           | 0.9270 |
| 94   | 17            | 0    | 1           | 0.8160               | 0.0836        | 0.5794           | 0.9270 |
| 113  | 16            | 1    | 0           | 0.7650               | 0.0926        | 0.5223           | 0.8954 |
| 127  | 15            | 0    | 1           | 0.7650               | 0.0926        | 0.5223           | 0.8954 |
| 128  | 14            | 1    | 0           | 0.7104               | 0.1008        | 0.4623           | 0.8593 |
| 132  | 13            | 1    | 0           | 0.6557               | 0.1069        | 0.4067           | 0.8204 |
| 157  | 12            | 0    | 1           | 0.6557               | 0.1069        | 0.4067           | 0.8204 |
| 159  | 11            | 1    | 0           | 0.5961               | 0.1126        | 0.3472           | 0.7765 |
| 252  | 10            | 0    | 1           | 0.5961               | 0.1126        | 0.3472           | 0.7765 |
| 256  | 9             | 1    | 0           | 0.5299               | 0.1179        | 0.2830           | 0.7265 |
| 259  | 8             | 0    | 1           | 0.5299               | 0.1179        | 0.2830           | 0.7265 |
| 318  | 7             | 0    | 1           | 0.5299               | 0.1179        | 0.2830           | 0.7265 |
| 349  | 6             | 0    | 1           | 0.5299               | 0.1179        | 0.2830           | 0.7265 |
| 407  | 5             | 1    | 0           | 0.4239               | 0.1337        | 0.1713           | 0.6587 |
| 444  | 4             | 0    | 1           | 0.4239               | 0.1337        | 0.1713           | 0.6587 |
| 468  | 3             | 0    | 1           | 0.4239               | 0.1337        | 0.1713           | 0.6587 |
| 600  | 2             | 1    | 0           | 0.2119               | 0.1641        | 0.0161           | 0.5580 |
| 756  | 1             | 0    | 1           | 0.2119               | 0.1641        | 0.0161           | 0.5580 |

## Appendix X

*Table 52 Kaplan-Meier Estimator Moderate State Building*

| Time | Beg.<br>Total | Fail | Net<br>Lost | Survivor<br>Function | Std.<br>Error | [95% Conf. Int.] |        |
|------|---------------|------|-------------|----------------------|---------------|------------------|--------|
| 30   | 15            | 0    | 1           | 1.0000               | .             | .                | .      |
| 36   | 14            | 1    | 0           | 0.9286               | 0.0688        | 0.5908           | 0.9896 |
| 40   | 13            | 0    | 1           | 0.9286               | 0.0688        | 0.5908           | 0.9896 |
| 44   | 12            | 1    | 0           | 0.8512               | 0.0973        | 0.5234           | 0.9607 |
| 94   | 11            | 0    | 1           | 0.8512               | 0.0973        | 0.5234           | 0.9607 |
| 96   | 10            | 1    | 0           | 0.7661               | 0.1191        | 0.4333           | 0.9186 |
| 157  | 9             | 0    | 1           | 0.7661               | 0.1191        | 0.4333           | 0.9186 |
| 184  | 8             | 1    | 0           | 0.6703               | 0.1374        | 0.3354           | 0.8637 |
| 288  | 7             | 1    | 0           | 0.5746               | 0.1474        | 0.2532           | 0.7996 |
| 289  | 6             | 1    | 0           | 0.4788               | 0.1508        | 0.1822           | 0.7272 |
| 312  | 5             | 1    | 0           | 0.3830               | 0.1479        | 0.1210           | 0.6466 |
| 349  | 4             | 0    | 1           | 0.3830               | 0.1479        | 0.1210           | 0.6466 |
| 407  | 3             | 1    | 0           | 0.2554               | 0.1435        | 0.0469           | 0.5438 |
| 444  | 2             | 0    | 1           | 0.2554               | 0.1435        | 0.0469           | 0.5438 |
| 756  | 1             | 0    | 1           | 0.2554               | 0.1435        | 0.0469           | 0.5438 |