

METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX: FIELDWORK AND ARCHIVES IN TORN STATES

Even though I had anticipated methodological problems when I set out to investigate the relation of separatism to organized crime, I completely misidentified what the main ones were to be. Having repeatedly done fieldwork in Kosovo, including an interview-based study of nationalism among students at Belgrade and Priština Universities (Mandic 2015), I expected the primary problems to be logistical. Since crossing “borders” (as separatists call them) or “administrative boundaries” (as host state bureaucrats call them) was often time-consuming and costly, and since ignorance of Albanian, Georgian, Ossetian and Russian often required a translator as well as a tour guide, I thought traveling would be the greatest difficulty. In fact, the two main difficulties were access to archives – by far the greatest challenge, and the most costly research component – and evaluating the credibility of sources – steering clear of nationalist propaganda and quasi-scientific references. Below I explore some of the dilemmas, challenges and regrets I have faced in the hopes that they aid future students of the topic.

Fieldwork

With the help of a Research Fellowship from the Minda de Ginzburg Center for European Studies in the 2013-4 academic year, I was able to travel extensively in Serbia/Kosovo and Georgia/South Ossetia interviewing experts, conducting informal ethnographies and exploring archives. I spent a total of five and a half months in Serbia, three of which were in Kosovo and three and a half months in Georgia, four weeks of which were in South Ossetia. I visited the four relevant capitals, cities/towns along separatist borders, and major towns on separatist territory. In Serbia proper, I have been to Belgrade, Preševo, and Bujanovac; in Kosovo itself, in Kosovska Mitrovica, Orahovac, Prizren, Uroševac, and Gnjilane. In Georgia proper, I traveled to Tbilisi,

Kutaisi, Gori, Kazbegi, and Stepantsminda; in South Ossetia itself, Tskhinvali, Leningor, Kvaisi, Kurta and Akhlagori. A civilian family in northern Mitrovica and another in Stepantsminda accepted me as a paying tenant and assisted in renting cars and finding guides; their kindness and hospitality will stay with me for life.

Serbian Bias and Comparative Insight

My acquaintance with Kosovo and Serbia is far greater than with South Ossetia and Georgia. I had written my Senior Thesis on Serbian nationalism partly with archives in Belgrade, and had traveled in Kosovo with the help of the Belgrade UNHCR when I tagged along their efforts to collect data on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). I accompanied them as they drove from village to village in 2006, and again in 2010, for a total of four weeks. On the other hand, I had never set foot in South Ossetia until November 2013. Ever since, all my efforts at traveling in Georgia have felt like “catching up” and approximating some kind of symmetry of familiarity and understanding for this comparative study. The effort was futile in some sense, but was precious as an exercise in sharpening the comparative analytic issues. What was the equivalent militia in South Ossetia to Kosovo’s KLA? Did Russian peacekeepers at the Russia-South Ossetia border crossing function like KFOR peacekeepers at the Kosovo-Albania border? In what sense was the 1999 Kosovo war analogous to the First South Ossetia War? What about the Second? Was state corruption as devastating under Shevardnadze as under Milošević?

Ultimately, the most important comparative insight that I gained while traveling was that organized crime in Kosovo and South Ossetia played *different* roles and produced *different* results. I was rather unprepared for this possibility. I approached the question of separatist success with a strong state-centered bias. I took for granted that movement mobilization and

demobilization were ultimately byproducts of what the state is doing to the separatists, to the international community, and to itself internally. I reasoned that, when the state wages an anti-crime or anti-corruption campaign, it will have similar effects on separatist escalation in both Kosovo and South Ossetia; the more it curbs organized crime, the less criminal resources will be available for separatist to use. I could not have been more misguided.

Borders

Traveling into Kosovo and South Ossetia was rather unproblematic. Like dozens of times previously, I entered Kosovo with a Serbian passport without difficulty – on some occasions riding alone by bus and on others as part of a UNHCR crew in a car. Invitation letters from Priština offices helped expedite the movement between Serbian, Kosovar and international booths – tens of meters apart but technically integrated at some crossings. Furthermore, there is a widespread myth (pervasive even among some experts) that it is impossible to enter South Ossetia except through Russia. Utter nonsense. Tour guides in Tbilisi provide cheap and guided transportation, along with taxi translation services, for people interested in making the trip northward. In the summers, they run small businesses and hiking tours of the breathtaking Ossetian mountains. South Ossetian authorities do not stamp passports, leaving you free to show it to Georgian authorities without questions raised. It may be formally true that the “administrative borders” separating Georgia proper from the separatist territories are sealed since the 2008 war, but in fact customs guards and soldiers at checkpoints cooperate daily with their friends and cousins to allow for passage without visas or even documents (at a price they agree on with the tour guides). I easily secured a permission letter via email from the Consular Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of South Ossetia, which I printed and carried with me.

Notwithstanding all this, it is certainly true that many Georgians attempting to enter the separatist region from Georgia proper (to visit cousins and the like) get stopped and harassed for “illegal” crossing.

I unfortunately did not manage to go to northern Albania and North Ossetia. The Kosovo-Albania border is in many ways far more porous (for ethnic Albanians more so, it is suspected) than the Kosovo-Serbia border, which is supposedly unrecognized internationally. Nevertheless, I did not manage to enter Albania for lack of a formal invitation/permit to enter the country *through* Kosovo (I would have had to travel elsewhere, to Macedonia or Montenegro, and it did not seem worth it prior to reading the Marty report for Chapter 4). On the other hand, I had completely overestimated how difficult it would be to cross into Kosovo from Serbia, due in part to my traveling nightmares prior to the declaration of independence of 2008. In the meantime, travel has become easier (though obscenely expensive for Kosovo Serbs who wish to keep Republic of Serbia license plates). International customs guards have become more professional and routinized since 2006. I secured UNHCR invitation letters, which may have made the experience smoother. Naturally, Albanians going into southern Serbia are harassed by Serbian guards and Serbs traveling anywhere within Kosovo are duly intimidated (every year there are incidents of stonings of buses transporting Serb children from Kosovo enclaves).

In north South Ossetia, the Roki Tunnel into Russia is marked by an immense iron gate which is closed at night. One can only travel through during daytime. Russian peacekeepers clearly control everything that passes on the Trans-Caucasus highway generally. The excuses they offer for refusing entrance are made easier by the fact that crumbling infrastructure is indeed a genuine problem (the Tunnel was constructed in 1985 but poorly maintained after the Soviets; repair work had been done in 2004), that avalanches occur every winter (sometimes

trapping vehicles and people inside the tunnel), and that the legal framework of the JCC is ambiguous enough to allow for creative, self-serving interpretations of who is allowed to be where. One young Russian soldier, drawn to the news that an American and Serbian are there (he expected one of each), shared a few informal facts with me. Some 800 vehicles pass every day, half of them trucks. Boxes of cigarettes are the best “ticket” for lonely travelers without merchandise, though customs guards might also accept other commodities. If NATO tries anything funny through Georgia, they are ready to fight; in the meantime, they are trying to keep “the lifeline” that is the Roki Tunnel functional, without which “South Ossetia dies.” The site is undoubtedly a strategic frontier for the Russian military.

Small Societies with Big Scars

In Belgrade and Tbilisi – and even more so in Tskhinvali and Priština – one is immediately struck by how small the societies are. Everyone seems to know everyone. The great economic paradox is that young people are overwhelmingly unemployed, but somehow afford to sit in eateries and cafes all day long ordering coffee upon coffee and discussing politics. I met the son-in-law of a South Ossetian minister accidentally at a Tskhinvali eatery. He immediately took me on a tour of the main government building (an architectural relic), where all separatist officials work. In Priština, I once began discussing a journalist who received mafia-death threats (by no means a rarity); my host interrupted me: “Oh, you mean so-and-so. Let me call him, he’s right around the corner!” The high social capital had its benefits, but also its risks. When word got around that an American is interested in researching KLA heroes, dozens of unsolicited emails from sources (some of them crackpots, other valuable) began flowing in. When word got out that a Serb is looking to dig up dirt on KLA criminals, however, I received a few unsavory

messages, as well as a direct verbal insult from a stranger on the street. In South Ossetia, the effect of enacting my background was the mirror opposite: being an American raised everyone's eyebrows and suspicions; being a Serb opened doors and secured free drinks over discussions of Kosovo's relevance for South Ossetia.

Simultaneously, everyone's fate is seemingly connected to the conflicts. Much of the male population is either refugees and/or former fighters, or they have some in the family. One Albanian acquaintance in Priština fought in the Bosnia war of 1995 as well as in 1999 for the KLA. An accidental meeting with a Special Units operative at a Belgrade public pool revealed he was trained through *four* wars. Almost every single adult male I have met in South Ossetia served in the military. Ossetian and Georgian refugees and their stories dominate conversations. The single most-recommended tourist site in Tskhinvali is the monument to victims of the 2008 war. Above all, ethnographers must tread carefully, as if on thin ethnic ice. Ossetians will refuse to speak in Georgian, as I learned after insulting several people by asking them to do so to a translator. In Priština, I innocently asked a young peer if he had siblings. "Do *you* have a brother or sister?" he shot back, indignantly and aggressively. Confused, I confessed I did not. "Then why the hell would you expect me to have siblings?!" he shouted back, as if to avenge an insult. In fact, I had committed one accidentally: he interpreted my question as a chauvinist Serbian prejudice about the high Albanian birthrate, which nationalists routinely ascribe to Kosovars in racist terms (they "breed like animals"). At first I thought he lost a brother in the war or the like; later we uncovered the misunderstanding. He was simply provoked because racist presuppositions are what he has come to expect from people with Serbian names. Thus even seemingly neutral, completely innocent questions can evoke ethnic polarization.

Tskhinvali is among the most hospitable cities I have ever been to. Due to low tourism in the harsh winters, when travel is difficult, and due to the occasional (seemingly arbitrary) times when entrance into the province is prohibited without express written permission from the South Ossetian authorities, residents of Tskhinvali are thrilled to see foreigners visit. RUB is the official currency in South Ossetia (just as the Serbian Dinar is in monopoly circulation in northern Kosovo, where Serbs are concentrated). On one occasion, I revealed I had no Russian money for lack of opportunity for exchange. (In fact, the Euros spent on my tour guide/translator were burdensome enough on my budget, so I tried to avoid it). Locals at an eatery immediately offered me *their* money as an allowance for a pleasant stay in South Ossetia. Pensioners invited me to stay at their homes. People voluntarily introduced me to friends and walked me throughout the city. Some of them felt an obligation to counter claims that violent banditry and corruption make Tskhinvali an unappealing place to visit. I myself found the ill repute unfounded; and many in Tbilisi agreed that these are exaggerations by eager Georgian propagandists.

Indiscriminate Snowball Interviewing

Though the bulk of this work does not reference my ethnographic observations and conversations directly, the discovery and selection of sources that led me to the evidence presented would not have been possible without the guidance of many interviewees. I heeded the advice of independent experts, journalists, NGO researchers, government officials and ordinary residents who directed me away from spurious and politicized references and towards sources I would never have considered alone.

The interviews were unsystematic and unrepresentative of broader populations. Through snowball recommendations, I came into contact with people who claimed to have expert

knowledge on mafia machinations at their firm, at their children's hospital, in government, at football games. Conspiracy theories abounded, and would in themselves be wonderful data for a study of the folk sociology of separatist populations. Organized crime was sometimes portrayed as puppet on the string of abstracted mega-powers of "the New World Order," "the KGB," "America," "Russia" and the like. At other times, invisible criminal circles and secret societies were linked to real world historical outcomes. I heard from multiple conversations that South Ossetia is Russia's attempt to destroy Georgia because Stalin was born there, which they seek to conceal; that nuclear war will break out when Kosovo is given its own army; that nuclear facilities are hidden in mountains. Real events were routinely exaggerated and given world historical and mystical significance, as if in a wailing cry to attract attention to a small, God-forsaken land that no-one cares to even think about.

In Kosovo, interviews were often preceded by introductions from friends or trusted acquaintances, from whom I also received some basic information on why the subject might have an interesting insight related to my research. The interviews were precious sources of suggestions, intuitions, interpretations and – most importantly – recommendations for data sources that I would not have otherwise gotten anywhere. Estimating freely, I would say at least a third of the sources evaluated below in the Table of Sources would not have been consulted if someone in the field had not recommended them. Furthermore, interviewees often revealed personal experiences that lent credibility to one of several competing theses/interpretations that emerged from secondary literature. One thirty-six year old man (LH) revealed that he had served time in jail for a blood feud murder of a peer who had slept with his sister. When he noticed my startled reaction, he was encouraged to further elaborate but not before repeating the promise I had made of confidentiality. He revealed that the victim's family had disgraced his, that his own

family (sometimes used synonymously with “clan”) had agreed that the blood vendetta was the only proper response, and that he was naturally the one to take the task on as the oldest son. He was 19 at the time of the murder. This led me to give second thought to the dimension of *kanun*, which I had considered an irrelevant anachronism.

In Tbilisi, I hired a total of three guides and translators who accompanied me on drives through South Ossetia, translating conversations with locals and recommending people to speak to. One guide in particular (LG) was a veteran of both the first and second South Ossetia wars, as well as a proud “businessman” who supported his family throughout the Ergneti period by selling food, electrical equipment and fuel. Like many Georgians I spoke to – and even more Ossetians – LG bemoaned the closing of Ergneti, indicating vividly through biographical examples the extent to which this criminal enterprise dominated economic and social life between the wars. The central choice, he repeatedly insisted, was between *trade* (symbolized by Ergneti) and *war* (symbolized by Saakashvili and Kokoity). Prior to sharing weeks of travel with LG, including spending many nights under the same roof and days in the same car, I had completely underappreciated the importance of the Roki Tunnel as a key site, the proximity of Ossetian and Georgian communities in South Ossetia, and the widespread dependence on smuggling for livelihood (if not survival) of a majority of the population around the disputed border. More generally, even though the market had been effectively destroyed by 2004, the “Ghost of Ergneti” haunted conversations. Many Georgians who spoke disparagingly of Ossetians and even more devastatingly of Russians were quick to endorse Ergneti, to my surprise.

Finally, being in the field dispelled a common misconception of mine regarding religion. Textbooks unanimously classify South Ossetian religion as “Orthodox Christian,” as it is in

Georgia. Dozens of obscure, breathtaking monasteries are scattered around the mountainous terrain, many of them from the 9th Century. Orthodox Christian symbolism – particularly of the Russian variety – is certainly present in the province. But I was privileged, by fortuitous circumstances, to briefly witness both a wedding and a funeral in South Ossetia. Notable rituals during both ceremonies were paganistic and animistic, with references to magical mythological elements. This was by no stretch of the imagination Orthodox Christian custom as practiced in Georgia. The events contradicted my inherited knowledge that the religion of the Ossetians is Orthodox Christian and thus on a par with Georgian religion; this may be formally true, but is completely misleading. Similarly deceptive is the emphasis on Kosovo Albanians as Islamic. State socialist Yugoslavia did have a profoundly secularizing effect on the province. One immediately sees that practicing Muslims in Kosovo are a miniscule minority, and that Mosques are largely empty (one might compare how Mosques are full in southern towns of Serbia proper, such as Novi Pazar, with the religious scene in Priština; see Djurić 1998).

Organized Crime Looming in the Air

If any single finding could be salvaged from my unsystematic interviewing in both places, it is this: there is a pervasive, strongly-held belief in the existence of a shadowy, organized criminal underworld among ordinary people not only in the separatist territory, but in Serbia and Georgia proper. I am reminded of the Thomas Theorem: “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Calhoun 2007, p.16). Part of the power that organized crime enjoys in these places is certainly the fear and notoriety they generate in public opinion. One respondent (NK), a chatty and hospitable restaurant owner in Tbilisi (only kilometers away from a police station) approached me when he heard my companion and I speaking English.

Though he did *not* know my topic was organized crime, he proceeded to complain about payments he had to make to a local strongman. I recorded the following exchange in my notebook:

DM: Do you think that there is organized crime in this area?

NK: Naturally there is. Naturally there is. They are everywhere. They take care of each others' backs, and they are connected everywhere. They are only interested in helping each other, and the rest of us better stay out of the way. I don't think there is anybody who can stop them. They have too much money. They have connections. They can make actions together without anyone stopping them. Too many people are scared or take bribes. Politicians are just actors. The real organization is the guys with connections. We just have to swim, save our heads. Politicians too.

For the sake of symmetry, I give another anecdote from Kosovo. In a downtown Priština cafe, I sat with a TV crew from UNHCR from Belgrade that had come to film a segment on refugee returnees. At the table was also a driver who knew the province well. Mid-coffee, a noticeable man walked down the stairs from the cafe's upper platform: he was in casts, had visible bruises over his face, and descended alone with two crutches. "That guy is the owner of this place," the driver said audibly and indiscreetly. "He was kidnapped last week." As the youngest and greenest, I was stunned most, and asked to confirm if I had heard correctly. "Yeah," the driver continued nonchalantly, slightly raising his voice and waving his arm: "You know, they tied him to a radiator or who knows what. It was Haradinaj's people, they do the racket here. Maybe he owed them money, or he tried to swindle them, who knows? They do this every few months." The substance was as intriguing as the tone: his surprise was greater than mine, because he could not believe that someone would find this unusual. Paying taxes in Priština, on the other hand, is truly a rarity.

In sum, spending time in Kosovo and South Ossetia led me to correct what had been my greatest conceptual and theoretical mistake: I had approached the question of separatism firmly

committed to a state-centered approach to separatist movement outcomes, largely ignoring organized crime. I was aware, of course, that corruption and violent criminality pervade state structures. I had heard that para-state cliques of greedy individuals engage in petty law-breaking to steal, smuggle, cut a few corners, etc. I knew that for many young people in Serbia and Georgia, going to prison is better as a rite-of-passage than going to university (the former gives better social capital, status, and job opportunities upon completion). But I hesitated to treat organized crime as an agent and phenomenon in its own right. At the very least, organized crime is pervasive in these provinces in the folk sociology of the population. For this reason alone it is worth considering.

Ethical Issues and Safety

Well-meaning colleagues who heard about the purpose of my travels often worried about my safety; some even congratulated me on my courage. Both thoughts are unwarranted, and somewhat ridiculous. I never once feared for my safety, nor do I believe it is appropriate to categorize Kosovo and South Ossetia as particularly risky sites for fieldwork. I think the underdevelopment and poor quality of infrastructure (electricity, plumbing, roads, etc.) offend Western sensibilities, and this mistakenly gets interpreted as insecurity or rampant violence towards visitors. In fact, neighborhoods in Boston or New York are statistically far riskier for feared crimes. If one adheres to common sense and politeness, avoiding obvious provocations along ethnic or political lines, speaking freely and audibly in public places about mafias, smuggling, crime and the like is as secure as gossiping.

That being said, I did notice the benefits of misrepresenting my Serbian origins in Kosovo. One afternoon, I wandered with an American friend based in Priština to a downtown

gathering of *Vetëvendosje* (“Self-determination”), a fringe movement of young people known for its radical politics and occasionally extreme tactics. Some 40-50 people stood around a large cardboard map of Kosovo displaying administrative reforms. They opposed them as national betrayal and capitulation to Serbia. I naturally spoke only English. But my phone rang. Instinctively, I answered it in Serbian. After a few sentences, I raised my eyes to see dozens of heads ominously turned towards me – away from the map around which we were all gathered. Would they attack me, now that they hear Serbian? My friend discretely pulled at my sleeve to signal that I should end the conversation. I quickly switched to English on the phone, as if to communicate “Oh, those words out of my mouth were an accident – I have no idea what language that is, I’m an American!” We left the crowd. I later consulted with my friend as to whether there was a genuine reason for fear, or whether I was simply panicking from internalized Serbian prejudice towards Albanians. She said she also felt a tad uncomfortable, but that she is absolutely certain nobody would have attacked us. For the sake of convenience, I hitherto presented myself as the more American “Dan” instead of “Danilo.”

Conversations with criminals were few, and perfectly pleasant and uneventful. I spoke to former Mkhedrioni and National Guard fighters-turned-smugglers in Tbilisi, as well as veterans of the prison system. I met Zemun Clan members in Belgrade. None of them hide in dark alleys surrounded by bodyguards. I encountered most of them through their business partners or former comrades-in-arms. All but one did not even care to accept my offer that he be guaranteed anonymity (they made me feel that my offer was silly and pretentious). We met in cafes. In one instance at a public pool in Belgrade, I identified a Zemun Clan member because of a distinctive neck tattoo (members of the “Red Berets” or *Jedinica za Specijalne Operacije* share it). The man knew Ulemek, the Zemun Clan boss who is now serving time for the Clan’s assassination of the

Prime Minister. Our long conversation was completely anticlimactic: he swore the whole thing was a set-up, that the JSO are a misunderstood patriotic organization, and that everything they did (including extortion-kidnappings which he explicitly admitted to) was for the greater good of the Serbian people. More generally, gangsters in my experience are much-mystified as dangerous or unusual: the ones I spoke to were charming, fiercely loyal to their superiors, disciplined – and had vivid imaginations.

My ethical dilemmas came not from talking to criminals, but to victims. Many experts I spoke to had experienced threats and coercion for their work. Through the UNHCR offices in Belgrade and Tbilisi, I crossed paths with displaced persons and refugees of both conflicts in Kosovo and South Ossetia. One of the more chilling encounters was with a middle-aged woman in Tskhinvali. I had been referred to her by a courageous journalist who had written extensively on the issue of human trafficking and had collaborated with Tbilisi-based NGOs raising awareness of the issue. After I promised to respect her anonymity, we paid her a visit in a local Soviet-era park near her workplace. We spoke for no more than 20 minutes, with the journalist translating. She had sold her baby to human traffickers for 2,000 Euros because, as was translated to me: “The best life I could give her here is worse than the worst life she can have with them in Istanbul.” I put my notebook away, humbled by the situation. What does one make of a statement like that? Was it ethical of me to wonder if she is lying? Did I *want* her to be lying, or would it be worse if her judgment were true? Did she expect me to do something about that testimony? What did I even expect to hear from her, and why didn’t I proceed to ask about the traffickers themselves? More generally, I found myself wondering during many conversations whether I am being invited to help, merely being informed, or being lied to. Encounters like these, if nothing else, remind one of the individual destinies behind the statistics.

On a lighter note, I learned that dark humor is a staple of well-meaning experts who seek to introduce ignorant outside observers to local conditions. A military and police expert to whom I was referred to by then-Minister of Defense Nebojša Rodić explained to me – reflecting on his career in law-enforcement in Kosovo – that his colleagues answered “How goes it?” with “Better than tomorrow.” When asked about the role of animistic spirituality in the Tskhinvali community, an NGO expert from TraCCC corrected me: the real question is not about beliefs in the afterlife, but: “Is there life *before* death in South Ossetia?” Thus, one is as aware of matters of life and death as of the resilient, defiant lightheartedness with which knowledgeable people discuss them.

Archives

Inspired by Goodwin’s comparative design (2001), I originally intended to compare all separatist movements in the two regions as he did revolutionary movements in three regions. Thankfully, the megalomania of the idea quickly became apparent. Not only are there too many cases for a serious analysis in a single dissertation, but the available secondary literature on most of them is modest. Having narrowed my scope, data availability began to be manageable. For a list of major sources, their scope and their credibility, see the Table of Sources beneath this Appendix.

My initial hope was to have much more criminological and census/opinion polling data, and of a much higher quality. The idea was to compare, say, the effects of a rise in certain kinds of criminal activity (arms trafficking, ethnic murders, nonviolent smuggling) with ethnic polarization or public trust in state and separatist institutions. Both components were lacking: the data is scarce, and far from fine-grained enough for causal-temporal ordering at such a brief time

scale. Furthermore, the issue was not so much lack of evidence, but time spent over *selection* of evidence. Much of the data are so politicized and disputed that one is hesitant even to cite them. Many of the secondary sources were nationalistically polarized and contradictory, requiring local experts to adjudicate between them. Ultimately, I combined archival digging, expert-guidance on selection of secondary data, and retrieval of documents from government sources.

Lies, Damn Lies and Data on Separatist Territories

Consider just one example that led me to give up hope on fine-grained statistics on ethnic mobilization and polarization of attitudes: census data. It reflects the widespread misrepresentation of census claims in international discussions of separatist issues more generally. Between 1981 and 2012, there had been no census in Kosovo. Yet I have come across literally *dozens* of disparate demographic statistics for this period, most of them extrapolations of parameters from thirty-year-old census results. Some estimates differed among themselves by factors of 10-20, particularly as related to ethnic proportions. One Kosovo Albanian hoax insisted that there are 20,000 Serbs remaining in Kosovo after the war; an equally ambitious fabrication from Belgrade claimed there were over a million left after 1999 (200,000 is the more reliable figure). These estimates appeared in major dailies, were cited in the parliaments of Serbia and Kosovo, and appeared in legislation drafts. One of them even appears in a publication by the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Such propaganda mostly remains unexposed, though occasionally it is so blatantly fraudulent that it is becomes embarrassing to propagate. In the 2011 elections, the Central Electoral Commission of Kosovo announced that the definitive number of registered voters was 1,630,636. The same institution added that the proportion of the total population under 19 years

of age was 43%. Merging those two data, one deduced that as many as 2.7 million people live in Kosovo. Yet only months later (April 2012) the actual number was found to be 1.7 million – the same as the number of registered voters!

Consider another election-related misconception. Numerous estimates insist Kokoity's popularity remained high in 2011. Uncontroversially, it grew astronomically when Georgia attacked South Ossetia in 2008 – a familiar cohesion effect under external threat, discussed in Chapter 2. The 2011 estimates (ranging from 60-90% popularity), however, rested on polling and election results in the 2011 elections (later invalidated by the Supreme Court of South Ossetia). I later discovered through independent journalists who had published about this in Russian that leading opposition candidates had been prevented from even registering in this election cycle. Furthermore, opposition candidates had been beaten, jailed and – in the case of a senior member of a disqualified political party – *murdered* in North Ossetia. The “chilling effect” of these was hardly reflected in the estimates.

When I came across such fabrications, they gave me pause. I decided to rely on conservative estimates for all figures related to referendums, public opinion, ethnic distance measurements, political party popularity, population movements, casualties and refugee figures, sizes of crowds at major collective actions, numbers of troops and active militia men, and – perhaps most importantly of all – the sizes of criminal clans. I tried to follow three general steps: (1) take the most neutral and credible institution/publisher with the most methodologically sound study of the question; (2) find a second confirmation of that particular range from an independent source unrelated to that institution/publisher; (3) cross-reference the estimates with official government/separatist institution estimates; and (4) ask an independent expert in the field what

she thinks of that particular figure. In the far-right column of the Table of Sources below, I list some of these evaluations for future students of these sources.

Expert Guidance

A number of individuals in Belgrade and Tbilisi have been precious guides on checking figures, adjudicating between sources and discovering new data. I should highlight four in particular:

- Milivoje Mihajlović, Head of the Office for Media Affairs at the Office of the President of the Republic of Serbia, is originally from Kosovo himself, and has been a journalist for over three decades following all major developments in the province.
- Sladjana Djurić, born in Priština, is Professor at Belgrade's University of Security Studies and author of dozens of classic sociological works on Kosovo and Serb-Albanian relations, including a landmark study of blood feuds among Kosovo Albanians (Djurić 1998).
- Louise Shelley, Professor of Public Policy at George Mason University and Director of the Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC), is the author of a classic book on human trafficking (2010) and is intimately knowledgeable about Georgian organized crime in particular. The Tbilisi-based TraCCC office and their publications were formative of the bulk of my analyses in Chapters 2-3, as well as supplements to Chapter 4.
- Giorgi Sordia, Georgian by origin, is Associate Professor at the University of Georgia and Senior Research Associate at the European Centre for Minority Issues – Caucasus;

Dr. Sordia is the world's leading specialist on Ossetians in Georgia, and minority issues in the country more broadly.

In addition, I have been fortunate to get referrals to numerous experts with whom I have spoken or corresponded, or whose work has informed my research. Ljilja Smajlovic of Belgrade's daily *Politika* has directed me to Dejan Anastasijevic, Jovo Bakic, Zoran Cirjakovic, Vesna Petkovic, Sklezen Gasi, Nedzmedin Spahiu, Ilir Deda, Shpend Ahmeti and Idra Seferi. Robyn Angley of Harvard's Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies has kindly directed me to leading authorities on Georgia-South Ossetia relations and the Ergneti Market in particular, including Jonathan Wheatly, Julie George, Celine Francis, Stephen Jones, Archil Gegeshidze, Donnacha O Beachain, Chritoph Stefes, George Hewitt, Kornely Kakachia, Ghia Nodia, Revaz Gachechiladze, Peter Kabachnik, Mark Mullen, Tim Blauvelt, David J. Smith, Lili di Puppo, and Lara Sigwart. Their published works and/or personal correspondences led me to credible data sources and secondary literature on South Ossetian separatism and organized crime. Without Ms. Smajlovic's and Dr. Angley's guidance, I would not have benefited from the remarkable work and advice of these experts.

Freedom of Information Act Requests

I filed for Freedom of Information Act requests in both Belgrade and Tbilisi, broadly requesting all documents that are "of public interest" on organized crime, corruption, smuggling, etc. during the period 1989-2012. I formulated both requests rather open-endedly, at the suggestion of experts. I appealed to my Harvard affiliation, but neglected to mention that the research was for a dissertation. Rather, I said it was an independent research project and that I was a concerned but informed citizen who plans to publish widely. I took the liberty to insinuate

that the heroic efforts of the government in question to fight organized crime were a centerpiece of my work. Otherwise, the key was to meticulously state in the application form/letter details of the Freedom of Information Act procedure (“appealing to subsection *so-and-so* of *so-and-so* sub-law of the FIA, adopted by the Parliament of *so-and-so* on *such-and-such* date...”). Even the most trivial omission or departure from (anachronistic) paperwork could add months to the process.

In Belgrade, my Serbian citizenship allowed me to file a request directly (the form was processed online). It took some time: I filed in August 2013, and the documents were not available for pickup in hard copy until mid-December. At that time, I went to the Bureau for Information of Public Significance and signed a confirmation form that my request had been honored and that I was to use the documents for “scientific purposes alone.” I did have to act as a nuisance every two weeks in the nearly four-month interval, calling and writing repeatedly to follow up and inquire why it was taking so long. I gained the trust of archival worker Mr. Ljubisa Kosutanac, who allegedly helped to speed things up and ensured that I was duly informed of missing application documents. He recommended that I rewrite my original request to frame my research as being focused on “the area of separatism and organized crime in the Republic of Serbia and the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija,” presumably because my earlier omission of “Autonomous Province” implied that Kosovo was an independent nation. I ultimately picked up hundreds of pages of documents, the most valuable of which was Public Safety Bureau (1999) on KLA organized crime, which formed the basis of much of Chapter 2 and parts of Chapter 3. I was also given the 2001 “White Book” with extensive details about organized criminal clans (the Zemun Clan foremost among them) on a CD. Though segments of this document were available publicly, it was helpful to receive the complete 42-page version.

In Tbilisi, law required that a Georgian citizen file the application, which precluded me. I was fortunate to know a Georgian (a Yale alumnus at that), Levan Nadibaidze, as he worked at the Finance Ministry in Belgrade for a mutual friend from Princeton. He filed a Freedom of Information Act request in his name, on my behalf. The procedure was free and generally painless. We received a fair assortment of documents electronically within two months of filing in October 2013, with some follow-up contacts but no secondary insider connections. Major useful documents included statistics and excerpts from the “thieves-in-law” database from the Anti-Organized Crime Unit of the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs (1989-2012), as well as an internal report (Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia 2005) on the first few years of the anti-corruption revolution begun under Saakashvili in 2003. Media watchdogs and NGOs in Tbilisi routinely blast their government agencies for being slow and hesitant in providing information. But I must say I found the procedure fair and reasonably quick compared to Serbia’s. Most importantly, I was glad to receive documents in electronic form – including some that were word-searchable.

The bulk of the data for Chapter 3 comes from drug, human and arms trafficking figures given through these requests and supplemented with the national Statistics Bureaus of both states. The Ministries of Internal Affairs of both countries have, on the whole, been very cooperative (if slow). My good fortune was due in part to the fact that both institutions have much to prove in terms of their reputations: they do indeed want to present themselves as efficient and transparent, willing to help citizen researchers in acquiring criminological data. Interestingly, while the police bureaucracies aided my research, the request for documents or interviewees from *military* information bureaus under the two Ministries of Defense were entirely futile. Though military archivists formally-legally also have to respond to Freedom of

Information Act requests, in practice they do not. One official at the Belgrade MUP office remarked “You can forget about that,” with a condescending laugh.

If I may, I would offer a piece of advice for investigators planning similar applications. Nepotism in research sites like Belgrade and Tbilisi is a fact of life that researchers must pragmatically adapt to. Following formal procedures alone is a sure way to deny oneself access and prolong the agony. These bureaucracies are themselves often conflicted about what the proper rules and procedures are. They are bombarded with quasi-formal requests from cousins of the Minister and the like. They are forced to prioritize applications with some hint of endorsement from their higher-ups, and to postpone most requests for fear of political pressure. They are understaffed and underpaid. In Belgrade, in particular (and my accomplice Nadibaidze in Tbilisi reported similar experiences), getting at least superficially acquainted with office workers, secretaries or whoever picks up the phone in the relevant bureaus was what did the trick. If one can “name-drop” someone higher up the ladder, all the better.

Other Archives

I oriented my travels around NGOs, media outlets, university offices and other archival sites that opened their doors to me after email correspondences. In Belgrade, I was welcomed to the archives of the Humanitarian Law Centre, the Helsinki Committee on Human Rights, the daily *Politika*, the UNHCR Belgrade office, and the Bureau for Coordination of Protection of Human Trafficking Victims. In Tbilisi, the Caucasus Research Resource Center, the Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC), the USAID branch office, the UNHCR Tbilisi office, and the International Crisis Group office. Most of these visits were disappointments: whether because of irrelevant/insufficient data, inaccessible archives, or

language barriers, I did not extract what I naively thought was possible in terms of statistics, surveys, maps, and reliable data generally. But the conversations and sources I picked up were formative in my selection of evidence and my thinking about the relation of organized crime to the state and civil society. I would like to single out UNHCR Belgrade (particularly Mrs. Vesna Petkovic) and TraCCC (particularly Dr. Louise Shelley) as outstanding organization heads whose efforts have left historic marks nationally as well as regionally.

Ironically enough, my research into organized crime led me to several archivists who asked (in no uncertain terms) for bribes and informal “service fees” for opening up boxes of documents or checking if something is available or not. In both Serbia and Georgia, I was often perceived as a wealthy Westerner on a self-indulgent intellectual safari – one that should properly be charged as such. Two separate archivists working for Tbilisi-based newspapers requested unreasonable amounts in cash for access to un-digitized articles. One of them, after I secured an email from his editor that stated there is no policy of charging for materials in that media establishment, simply lowered the asking price. In Belgrade, government offices abounded with employees discretely insinuating that things could be sped up with counter-favors.

What I found to be remarkable – and similar – in Belgrade and Tbilisi bureaucracies was that requests for information and service can be equally difficult from both “ends” of the bureaucratic hierarchy: from the bottom *and* from the top. One fully expects that a request from the bottom is doomed to failure: one diligently prepares all the documents required for a particular inquiry, stands in line at an obscure bureau or office waiting room, and is at the mercy of a suspicious and overworked inquiry-desk employee with no incentive whatever to be efficient. There are always enough contradictory rules for your request to be denied regardless of

how well-prepared and legitimate it is. This is presumably normal: one is sending a “message in a bottle” from the very bottom of the hierarchy, praying that the information desk will forward your request on to decision-makers up the ladder. If it gets to higher-ups, it might work.

Amazingly, however, I have witnessed that those at the very top of the relevant hierarchies often have equally difficult times pushing through an order or request *downward*. In other words, the supposed superiors at the peaks of the pyramids are often incapable of executing decisions they command to their subordinates. For instance, I managed to schedule a meeting with the Serbian Minister of Defense in August 2013 (who met me at 5:00am sharp for 40 minutes). He guaranteed – with full enthusiasm, it seemed to me – that my request for non-classified, non-sensitive Kosovo-related documents from military archives would be fulfilled. He gave me the name of an under-Colonel who was ordered to help me, and an endorsement of my research. The request was never honored. His personal assistant later lamented that the Minister tried his best but that, alas, the workers in the archival department are eccentric and cannot be fired. The “middles” of these bureaucracies, she said, “are conservative black holes – whichever direction one tries to poke at them, they are unresponsive.”

Thus the perception of these institutions as well-oiled command structures should not mislead investigators. Decades of inefficient state socialism and another decade of failed reforms have given much undeserved institutional autonomy for mid-level technocrats. Many bureaucratic organs have lost all functionality or purpose, but persevere as employment opportunities. Many of these bureaus are remnants of communist apparatuses that have no proper legal underpinning in contemporary laws, but continue to exist. This curiosity, in part, made me appreciate the comparative advantage of organized criminal hierarchies and remnants of militias:

they are more perfectly hierarchical, and less tolerant of insubordination. Little wonder that they are able to dominate civil society to the extent that they do.

TABLE OF SOURCES

Institution/ Publisher	Document Type and Date	Scope of Data	Time Period	Volume	Availability	Credibility
Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs, Analytics Bureau	Compiled reports, forensic evidence, statistics (Sept.1999 – Nov. 2013)	On KLA, organized crime, ethnic violence, Serbian military crackdown.	1996 - 2004	33 pages.	By permission, Freedom of Information Act.	High.
Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, Dobrivoje Radovanovic, director of the Institute for Criminological and Sociological Research	Report (Jan. 2006)	Serbian organized crime related to war structures, state security apparatus, militias.	1992 - 2012	32 pages.	Public, online.	Moderate (biased towards state agencies)
Tanjug - Politika Belgrade, Serbia	Book (2006)	30-years' worth of research on Kosovo-related historical, economic, political, social, cultural data.	1989 - 2005	165 pages.	By permission.	High.
Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) Belgrade, Serbia	Report/ Research <i>Understanding Transnational Organized Crime as a Security Threat and Security Theories</i> by Sasa Djordjevic (2009)	Data on perception of transnational crime, government policy towards it, and international reports on law and order in Serbia proper. Following UN Convention against Organized Crime, the data largely excludes state-sponsored smuggling.	2000 - 2007	14 pages.	Public, online.	Moderate (narrow definition of organized crime)
Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs, Bureau of Public Safety.	Internal report, later declassified (1999/2000)	Separatist terrorism in Kosovo, methods and chronology.	1992 - 1998	78 pages.	By permission; Freedom of Information Act.	High.