IS WINTER COMING?

THE EFFECT OF CONSISTENT PATRON-STATES ON TERRITORIAL CONFLICTS BECOMING FROZEN

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Master's Thesis

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Abstract

Of the territorial intra-state conflicts around the world, there are some that live in the ‘no war, no peace’ environment. The so-called frozen conflicts have attracted significant scholarly and policy attention to explain their durability over time, and sustainability of the de facto regimes that live within such environment. This study shifts the focus from looking at the frozen state of the conflict to improving the understanding of how they become frozen in the first place. My question: ‘why do some territorial conflicts become frozen while others do not?’ sheds light on consistent-patron action during wartime to explain how, through the establishment of trade, territorial conflicts become frozen. Additional novel contributions are provided by conceptualizing patron-state support and focusing on trade as part of state-building mechanisms. A structured, focused comparison with a most-similar case design compares Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and Republika Srpska Krajina conflicts. My findings show partial support to the tested hypotheses that indicate a consistent patron-state’s trade establishment with de facto regime leads to frozen conflict. Empirical limitations within the cases limit the ability to draw stronger conclusions.

Keywords: Frozen conflict, consistent patron-state, trade establishment, third-party support, de facto regime, state-building.
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<tr>
<td>BiH</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>JNA</td>
<td>Yugoslav People’s Army</td>
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<td>NKAO</td>
<td>Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast</td>
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<td>NKR</td>
<td>Nagorno-Karabakh Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSCE/CSCE</td>
<td>Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe/ Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
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<td>RS</td>
<td>Republika Srpska</td>
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<td>RSK</td>
<td>Republika Srpska Krajina</td>
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<td>SBD</td>
<td>Serbian Security Service</td>
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<td>UCDP</td>
<td>Uppsala Conflict Data Program</td>
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<td>UNPA</td>
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CHAPTER I

1. Introduction

Contemporary conflicts rarely are fought in isolation with just the interaction between two competing actors. More commonly, intra-state conflicts between the government and rebels also involve actions by external third-parties, which have a stake in the contestation between the main belligerents. These third-party actions vary from international community mediation efforts to external government provision of supplies in support to either of two the main actors. The realm of external involvement in peace and conflict literature is rich and diverse. For instance, the attention has focused on different types and roles external actors assume, what motivates their interference (Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham 2011), or what effect and consequence their actions have on conflict dynamics (Aydin and Regan 2012).

In the spirit of trying to further untangle the complex web that is third-party role in intra-state conflicts, this study seeks to shed light on a specific domain of third-parties, which deviates from a more common notion of biased external supporters. I focus on firmly committed external governments – patron-states – that provide more sophisticated support to rebels that aspire to separate from their parent-government. Previous literature on patron-states in territorial conflicts has focused on the relationship between the patron and a de facto regime, which has formed, during the post-war period. Even once the fighting is over, the unresolved territorial incompatibility remains unresolved. During this ‘frozen’ stage, it is widely accepted that patron-states play an important role for the survival of these unrecognized states (Dembinska and Campana 2017; Caspersen 2009; Kolstø 2006). Yet, there is no uniform conceptualization of what a patron-state is. The purpose of my study is to look at patron-state actions during an understudied period of the actual warfare. This may help explain and better understand why a conflict becomes frozen in the first place and what constitutes a patron-state. Much is known about regular third-party involvement in war (Balch-Lindsay, Enterline, and Joyce 2008; Mattoon 2017; Regan 2002), but what about patron-state involvement in war?

The level of commitment and involvement of patron-states exceeds that of regular biased third-parties, hence one can expect also the consequence of such involvement to be different. The consequence my study aims to illuminate is the environment of conflict becoming frozen. The term ‘frozen conflict’ is commonly attributed to conflicts in the post-Soviet territories where unrecognized statelets have formed within formal states. The fighting has largely abated after
a ceasefire agreement, but, absent an actual political settlement, the conflict has frozen, but not terminated. While most well-known frozen conflicts have formed de facto states of Abkhazia, South Ossetia (Georgia), Transnistria (Moldova), and Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), some others include the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (Cyprus) or Somaliland and Puntland (Somalia). Most of these de facto regimes have a patron-state (Russia, Armenia, Turkey) that supports their survival and sustainability within this frozen environment. Though what their role has been before the conflict became frozen?

From this, the main research question is put forth, why do some territorial conflicts become frozen while others do not? In hindsight from the statements above, the patron-state plays a role also in conflicts becoming frozen. However, this only provides a general direction of the study. Therefore, my main causal argument follows: the presence of a consistent patron-state has a significant impact on a conflict becoming frozen, because during the war the patron is able to establish trade with the rebel-held region, thus facilitating the lack of dependence on the central government by the rebels and signalling the survivability prospect for the de facto regime in the long-term.

Previous studies have argued, for instance, that weakness of the government (King 2001), and international community’s role (MacFarlane 2009) has affected such conflicts. My argumentation emphasises the importance of trade as means to obtain income specifically, and as ability to engage in state-building generally, for the de facto state. The de facto state previously lived under the institutional order of and links between the central government it was part of. Once these ties are broken because of the war, the future survival is dependent on finding new ties, which it must utilize to sustain itself. During the war, creation of trade with the patron-state signals to the rebels that they will be able to survive also after the war is over. Of course, these new ties also must be maintained. The patron-state must be consistent in its support. So that once the active war ends, the de facto state can sustain itself even within the frozen state of conflict. This argument will be tested by a qualititative, most-similar case design comparison utilizing a Structured, Focused Comparison between two de facto states: Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in Azerbaijan and Republika Srpska Krajina in Croatia. The former received substantial support from Armenia and is still alive and living in a frozen conflict situation. The latter was supported by Serbia; however, it was not able to survive the war of its independence.
The structure of the study is as follows: Chapter II brings to light previous literature on the topic and highlights the existing research gap on patron-state actions that lead to a frozen conflict. From this, Chapter III establishes the theoretical argument and develops three interlinked hypotheses that will drive this research. Chapter IV continues by setting up the research design and establishing the methodological guidelines. Chapter V then applies these guidelines and analyses both cases to inform about the theoretical argument. Chapter VI brings these two separate cases and their findings together in a comparative analysis. Last, Chapter VII concludes the study in a summary of the main findings and proposes paths for future research.

CHAPTER II

2. Previous Literature

2.1 Frozen Conflicts: Attention to (Un)Changing Winter

The existing literature that deals with the concept of frozen conflicts has placed itself in a narrow niche of applicable cases. Namely, conflicts at the core of which lie established de facto states. Primarily, to utilize the advantage of comparative analyses (Tudoroiu 2016), the focus has been on similar conflicts in the post-Soviet sphere, i.e. Georgia, Moldova, and Azerbaijan. Several studies also expand on the ‘frozen’ notion by looking at cases in, for instance, the Korean Peninsula or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, these examples more often fall into the wider literature of intractable conflicts (see Bar-Tal 2013; Crocker, Hampson, and Aall 2005). To align itself with the more prevalent and uniform literature, this study talks about frozen conflicts, in which the common element is a presence of de facto states. From this, the relationship can be described – while not all de facto states live in frozen conflicts, all frozen conflicts house a de facto state.

Ghia Nodia (2004) explains that a frozen conflict is such, “in which violent ethno-political conflict over secession has led to the establishment of a de facto regime that is recognized by neither the international community nor the rump state from which the secession occurred” (in Clancy and Nagle 2009, 14 italics in original). Here, “the violence surrounding the secession has largely abated” describes the frozen component of the conflict (ibid, 14). An addition to these criteria is noted by Neil MacFarlane who adds a “durable mutually agreed ceasefire” and unsuccessful political settlement efforts to the definition (2009, 23). Therefore, my merger of these two authors’ definitions show that a frozen conflict is a territorial conflict between a
government and secessionist group where an unrecognized de facto regime has emerged, a ceasefire agreement has halted renewal of large-scale violence, but a political settlement has not been reached. This draws a direct link between a frozen conflict and creation of de facto regime. Hence, some additional clarity is needed. Scott Pegg (1998) terms the de facto state as an “organised political leadership, which has risen to power through some degree of indigenous capacity, received popular support and has achieved sufficient capacity to provide governmental services to a given population in a specific territorial area, over which effective control is maintained for a significant period of time but which remains illegitimate in the eyes of international society” (in Dembinska and Campana 2017, 256–57). Limited by time and space, this study does not put forth novel theoretical contributions of conceptualizations of what a de facto state is or is not. Previous scholarly work has already made significant contribution in this regard. Here the focus is on the causes of frozen conflicts rather than regimes and their lives within such conflicts.¹

Most of literature on frozen conflicts deal with the post-war situations and discuss how these established de facto states are able to survive and sustain themselves. Dembinska and Campana make a notable observation in this regard, stating that “[m]ost authors start their analysis at the end of the violent conflict” while the (pre-)war context, which is so important in understanding the dynamic life of a de facto regime, is missed in the studies (2017, 259–60; and Shevchenko 2013). Similarly, also the causes of frozen conflict are often intertwined with the conditions that keep them frozen throughout time. This distinction is often not clear. However, it is understandable. One cannot identify the presence of a frozen conflict until it is too late. There is no defined ‘temperature’, which signals entrance into a frozen state. This partly explains why frozen conflicts are analysed in their frozen state, rather than during the stage leading up to it. However, one can identify several causes of a frozen conflict that also act as maintainers of such conflicts.

MacFarlane (2009) makes a brief, but important list of factors that lead to frozen conflicts, which also resonate in other research. These factors include: first, the stability of military balance between the warring sides; second, the intractability of the “intra-societal grievance”; third, the fear and uncertainty caused by this grievance that sows distrust for any possible

¹ For more on the life of and within de facto states, see, for instance, (Kolstø 2006; Kolstø and Blakksrud 2008). The former also provides a discussion on different terms and labels used to describe these unrecognized entities. For a more brief, often anecdotal, depiction of life within de facto states, see (De Waal 2018).
negotiated settlement. Moreover, he notes that: fourth, any settlement might be resisted by those who reap economic benefits from the frozen state of the conflict (ibid, also Özkan 2008; King 2005, 2001); fifth, external powers also may see the frozen state as beneficial for their personal interests, and, last, these or other external powers, i.e. the international community, may lack the interest or capabilities for applying effective measures that could lead to peace (MacFarlane 2009, 24–25; also King 2005). Similarly, Charles King also identifies also the parent-state weakness, or the government’s inability to provide or maintain control over disputed territories, is an important factor that relates to both the causes and maintenance of frozen conflict (2005). This government’s inability to secure control of a region also hints towards the balance of military power and state weakness. If the central government is weak, the threshold for balance is lower. Moreover, the rebels often enjoy support from an external third-party, a patron-state, which increases the military capabilities of the rebels in times of war (King 2001), but also maintains security and sustainability during the conflict’s frozen phase, which has been the focus period for most research (De Waal 2018; Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2008). However, cases such as Eritrea’s independence from Ethiopia, and Somaliland’s maintenance of de facto independence from Somalia without external support2, show that patron-states are not always necessary for the survival of de facto states (Dembinska and Campana 2017). The importance of patron-states will be expanded on shortly after.

In broader terms, the identified factors above, I argue, all are important in other conflicts as well and not just those that revolve around de facto states. Whether it is the military balance (Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009), intra-societal grievances (Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013 chapter 8), distrust between parties to commit to peace (Fearon 2004), spoiler groups or individuals that benefit from continuation of conflict (King 2001; Endres 2003), third-party support (Aydin and Regan 2012), or international community mediation efforts (Beardsley 2008) – all affect the prospect of achieving a conflict termination, and not just territorial conflicts with de facto regimes.

Another important focus point on frozen conflicts can be made by studying the cases from the perspective of de facto states. For instance, using an illustrative case of Republika Srpska Krajina in Croatia, Kolstø and Paukovic (2014) seek to answer the question, why some de facto states are able to survive while others are not? In this case, their findings relate to the previous literature, and concludes that patron-state protection and support is important, but so is also

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2 In the case of Somaliland, some have argued that the US has played the role of patronage after the establishment of the regime (Caspersen 2009).
engagement in state-building as well as nation-building activities. Their research focuses on the active conflict phase, since their case did not become a frozen conflict. Though, the state-building and nation-building aspects have received relatively little attention in relation to de facto states and their post-war activities, particularly when it comes to comparative, cross-regional analyses (Dembinska and Campana 2017).

The factors listed above can be applicable for a conflict, which has already become frozen. Therefore, they contribute to the maintenance of the status quo, and not necessarily aim to explain the causes of the frozen state. While they often may overlap, the difference regarding the period under investigation, and hence the factors that contribute to an outcome, must be distinguished. While some factors cause a frozen conflict, others sustain it; sometimes they do both. In this research my interest is on the causes and not maintainers of frozen conflict; the distinction has not received sufficient scholarly attention. Still, one can summarize that the weakness of parent-state is important for the creation of frozen state, as well as the symmetry of powers must be in place. Moreover, while external governments might support the rebels, the third-party mediators are unwilling or unable to bring the parties together and reach a political settlement. This inability may be facilitated by the intra-ethnic or societal grievances that have emerged during the war or trace back to the pre-war period.

A final note on frozen conflicts. Specifically, regarding the label ‘frozen’ itself. Most scholars agree that connotation behind the word is often misleading (Lynch 2005; MacFarlane 2009; Pokalova 2015; Shevchuk 2014). They are not frozen completely. Diplomatic attempts are underway in some of these conflicts and outbreak out fighting may emerge. This is particularly the case with Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in Azerbaijan (Cornell 2017), where sporadic eruption of fighting has occurred on several occasions since the ceasefire agreement in 1994. In addition, also South Ossetia and Abkhazia saw an escalation of violence with the help of Russia against Georgia in 2008. Nonetheless, these cases remain the classical examples of frozen conflicts. On the other hand, there are those cases that had the initial potential of becoming frozen conflicts but did not follow the same path. For instance, Tatarstan (Russia), Gagauzia (Moldova), or Crimea (Ukraine in 1994) (Tudoroiu 2016). Moreover, there are new conflicts, particularly, in eastern Ukraine where two de facto statelets of Donetsk and Luhansk Peoples’ Republics have emerged since 2014. While these two cases are not frozen conflicts (Zinets and Williams 2017), they do share most characteristics with other post-Soviet conflicts that have become frozen. Overall, while these conflicts might remain in ‘no war no peace’ impasse for decades, the environment that thaws frozen state can change over time. Similarly,
as humans have a direct effect on global warming and climate change, new policies and attitudes in the domestic and international political arena can bring about change and thaw in the frozen conflict environment.

2.2 Patron-States: A Special Kind of Biased Third-Party

This study applies the concept of patron-state to describe a committed external government, whose support exceeds that of a regular third-party. While the existing literature often applies the concept of patronage, its definition is not set in stone and varies across disciplines (Veenendaal 2014). For instance, when it comes to international relations literature, patronage is described in the form of relationship between the patron and client. Broadly speaking, it is a relationship of dependence where the stronger state – the patron – provides a set of goods or benefits to the client who reciprocates the exchange of favours that benefit the patron (ibid, 565-66). In conflict studies, this relationship shifts to focus on the patron itself who provides security guarantees to the client, which usually refers to a rebel group. However, while scholars use the patron concept, they refrain from clearly outlining what they mean by the term and how it is distinct from other related concepts. For instance, foreign patron-state can be synonymous to biased third-party intervention in conflict (Karlén 2017). Or, it can play the role of privatizing the international community’s roles “vis-à-vis failed states” and to act “as a guarantor of continued existence” of quasi-states (Kolstø 2006), i.e. de facto states. Further in relation to de facto states, patron’s support largely equates to provision of direct military support and financial aid (Dembinska and Campana 2017; also Caspersen 2012). In addition, it can also provide “at least limited access to the international community”, which is not available for de facto states on their own since, due to their unrecognized status, they are not part of the international system (Caspersen 2012, 74). When it comes to external support to de facto states, it often seems clear who is the patron-state even if the functions of it are not clearly outlined on a conceptual level. Particularly, regarding direct military and financial support, patron’s actions are the same ones as those of a biased third-party. However, since this study sets a distinction between a patron-state and regular biased third-party, a definition must be proposed. To do that, one must have a general understanding of what a third-party is.

Third-party intervention in armed conflicts is of notable interest not only within conflict research, but also in the wider realm of international relations. However, how is a patron different from the regular third-party? In general sense, a third-party is an actor, which is not the primary belligerent in the conflict, but can influence the conflict dynamic. Moreover, the
academic research on such actors is set on three pillars: the causes of intervention, the effect such intervention has on civil war outcome, and effect intervention has on civil war duration (Balch-Lindsay, Enterline, and Joyce 2008). The type of third-party actor can vary, as the world is populated by not only states, but also international organizations. From here, also the third-party can become a neutral actor in the conflict or biased towards one belligerent. Moreover, also their actions and type of support varies. Shying away from an endless discussion of the myriad of diverse literature third-parties have to offer, this study talks about third-parties, which are external governments, that are biased towards the side of the rebels and provides support to achieve desired outcome. The intervention itself can be defined as “transfer of resources from an external state” to the party it supports (Lockyer 2011, 2339). Moreover, the type of resources varies from money and equipment to military training and intervener’s military personnel (ibid). In general sense these resources can be divided into financial support, direct military support, and indirect military support (Lockyer 2017, 52; see also Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000). This is where distinction with patron-state comes to play.

In this study also the fourth type of resource is identified, namely, institutional resources, that distinguish the support provided by a regular third-party and patron-state. In addition to providing the main three types of resources, a patron-state support also includes providing consultations and administrative capabilities for the rebels, placing third-party cadres to take over civil administration duties, finance the local population from third-party’s welfare system or engage in non-military support that increases the institutional capacity of the rebel regime. In sum, institutional resources are those that directly deal with improving existing or creating new state-building functions. This implies that a patron directly or indirectly takes over the state administrative duties of the rebel-controlled region. For instance, in the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, the legal system has been harmonized with that in Armenia, and law students in Karabakh have the same curriculum as in Armenian universities (Waters 2006). Moreover, also “more formalized assistance and training [has been] given by Armenia on a ministry-to-ministry basis across a variety of sectors, including direct prosecutorial assistance in major cases” (ibid, 415). In Ukraine, the Russian state directly covers the budget for pensions in the de facto statelets of Donetsk and Luhansk (The Moscow Times 2016; Anton Zverev 2016).

From a brief glance, institutional support may seem like a broad and fuzzy concept. It can, after all, include a variety of aspects and elements. As interesting and challenging it would be to dive into this realm and dissect every possible element that can or cannot be considered
institutional support, the object of interest in this study is much narrower and straight-forward. Namely, the establishment of trade. But how exactly is trade between a patron-state and rebels a form of institutional support that increases the likelihood of conflict becoming frozen?

2.3 Trade: Important for State-Building

From a purely utilitarian viewpoint, trade is an exchange of goods between two parties. It entails that that both sides benefit from this exchange, especially if the ‘zero-sum’ mentality is not adopted. Related to conflict and rebel support, it is clear that “[r]egardless of its size at the beginning of the war, a rebel group must develop some form of support system to access necessary resources in order to sustain its participation” (Hazan 2013, 49). A typical support system, hence, would be the three abovementioned three types of support provided by a third-party. However, trade as support is different since it is reciprocal. Moreover, it establishes a longer-term commitment and sustainability, which is mutually beneficial to both parties. The benefits may not be proportionate, but they are more equal than one-sided support, e.g. aid.

Scholars have shown great interest in better understanding how rebel groups are able to finance themselves. Through access to resources, rebels are able to engage in trade to fund their campaign (Hazan 2013). Usually illegal in nature, the outside shadow markets are open to rebels with the help of globalization (Winer and Roule 2003). A recent study also has introduced a dataset with different ways how resources are exploited, e.g. smuggling, extortion, or theft (Walsh et al. 2018). However, in the case of rebels who aspire to establish their own state, the mere ability to finance their armed struggle is not sufficient. Indeed, they must also make sure that financial flows will be accessible in the long-term to sustain the functions of a state and not those of a rebellion. All states engage in trade with other states. The ability for separatists to establish and maintain trade with an outside actor leads to consider such action in a wider aspect of state-building. After all, given that their primary goal is to be separated from the state they have been part of before, this means that an important element that determines their success is the ability to build up a new state, with all the encompassing qualities and functions of a state. In simple terms, these functions, à la Tilly, primarily relate to coercion capabilities and access to capital (Papazian 2008). On the other hand, Weberian-style state not only controls the monopoly of violence, but also has a capable state apparatus that reaches other functions besides violence (Fritz 2006). These include providing access to health-care, education, and market regulation (ibid, 15). Intuitively, trade works not only an indicator for having control over the domestic market, but also as means to provide financial
support for other state functions that supports the de facto regime’s claim for authority and survival. Interesting here are some more recent examples of separatist movements that have flared within European Union (EU). Namely, the independence aspirations in Catalonia and Scotland. Economic consequences of possible secession play an important role in the attitudes towards separatism in Catalonia (Muñoz and Tormos 2015). While currently Catalonia enjoys full benefits of trade within EU markets through Spain’s membership, if it were to become independent, accession to EU would be subject to Spain’s veto rights while trade with EU “would be a key point for the survival of the new state” (Coufalová 2017, 145). The same concern about what future market access would look like in Scotland was during their independence referendum in 2014 (Keating 2015). While these two examples cannot be compared with, say, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in terms of economic prosperity and benefits they potentially stand to lose if they move forward with secession, it shows that separatist movements are concerned with or must calculate the economic prospects of their actions also vis-à-vis trade once they would gain independence. Therefore, I argue that if trade prospects are secured and guaranteed with an external partner, whether it is a state or group of states, separatists become more emboldened to move forward with their plans.

Going back to the literature related to de facto states and frozen conflicts, the focus on state-building has been limited (Dembinska and Campana 2017). Moreover, the focus usually is on the “domestic dynamics of state formation” (ibid, 255, Footnote 4), as in the case of, for instance, Republika Srpska Krajina (Kolstø and Paukovic 2014), though not always (Caspersen 2012, 54). Either way, some form of state-building for de facto states is essential. (Caspersen 2012; Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2008). Previous literature has been broad in its definition of state-building, which refers to “the establishment of the administrative, economic, and military groundwork of functional states” through setting up frontier control, tax collection system, and other “hard aspects of state construction”. (Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2008, 484). The study here borrows the idea of state-building, but sets the focus directly on trade establishment, which is created with the help of outside party.

2.4 Filling the Gap

Within the sections above, already several gaps in the relevant literature have been identified. However, the aim in this study is to bring elements of all three concepts together. Namely, to look at the active conflict period within frozen conflict and de facto state literature, which has been understudied by previous research. Moreover, the objective is to conceptualize a patron-
state as a more committed biased third-party, which also provides institutional support to rebels. Finally, the ambition is to bring the establishment of trade from within the wider realm of state-building measures of a de facto state, which is provided by patron’s institutional support, to inspect its effect on a conflict becoming frozen. While I have mentioned some arguments for the importance of trade for a de facto state, there is a need to dissect and theorize the bigger picture of the causal relationship between the main variables in this study.

CHAPTER III

3. Causal Story

The environment in which de facto states emerge, is defined by the relative weakness of the state from which the rebels wish to secede, and this situation also allows the unrecognized states to survive (Caspersen 2012). However, the parent state can limit the survival opportunities for the statelet by imposing blockades or engage in fighting thus making the rebel life more difficult (ibid, 65). In some cases, such as in eastern Ukraine, full blockade was imposed only some years after initial war broke out, and due to domestic pressure (Kramer 2017). Also, for instance, Azerbaijan imposed a complete blockade on Nagorno-Karabakh (Curtis and Suny 2011). Such strategy can be in odds with the international law making the government continuously “responsible for the welfare of this part of its populations”, which has been taken over by rebels (Caspersen 2012, 66). Nonetheless, it can be a preferred strategy in order to ‘suffocate’ or ‘smoke out’ the rebellion till it eventually will succumb to government’s relative might and resources available them. Any long-term strategy to create a functioning state is unfeasible for the rebels if they cannot even with the war. In a simple one-versus-one scenario it makes sense, indeed.

Can one expect the same logic to also follow if a patron-state is supporting the rebels? The allocation of military and financial resources by the patron improves the rebel chances to keep their fight alive in the hopes of eventual victory. However, with the provision of institutional resources, the rebels are also able to engage in state-building activities that relate to their longer-term survival strategy. Therefore, the establishment of trade, which is part of institutional resources, between the patron and rebels works as a confidence-builder signalling that the current situation is advantageous to further maintain independence after the war. Figure 1 illustrates the causal relationship between the main variables. With this in mind, rebels have an incentive to halt the violence, even if through mere ceasefire, as it would allow them to shift focus from war to building the new state. Since the previous economic ties have been cut off
due to the war, new ties are formed between the patron and rebels. With this, also future reintegration by the central government of the rebel territories becomes more difficult.

![Diagram of the causal relationship between consistent patron-state, trade establishment, and frozen conflict.](image)

**Figure 1: The Causal Relationship**

This outcome only entails rebel de facto independence, but not de jure, vis-à-vis the international community. Though, being aware of the international consensus on legal state territorial sovereignty, de facto statehood already is considered a “success” in rebels’ perspective (Dembinska and Campana 2017, 257). Other outcomes may include absorption into patron-state, reintegration into parent state, or full independence (Kolstø 2006). Historically, only a few cases of separatist conflicts have created new recognized states, e.g. Eritrea and South Sudan. The overall majority lack international recognition, for instance, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Northern Cyprus, South Ossetia, Transnistria, or have achieved recognition from numerous, but not all states, such as, Kosovo, Palestine, or Taiwan (for expanded list of de facto states, see Florea 2014; or Caspersen 2012).

The weak state central governments, which experience separatist war, also may see benefits in halting the fighting, even if only at the time being by committing to a ceasefire agreement, rather than negotiating peace settlement. In some cases, the weak governments have been overrun by the combined military strength of the rebels and patron-state, such as in Azerbaijan (against Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia), Croatia (Krajina Serbs and the Yugoslav army controlled by Serbia), Cyprus (Northern Cyprus and Turkey), or Georgia (Abkhazia/South Ossetia and Russia). The parent states are aware that their legal international status protects them from self-determination claims by separatists. It must be stressed, there is no expectation that the conflict will become frozen just because of a ceasefire agreement. The government may calculate that, if the fighting can be stopped, the state can regroup its forces, stabilize the weakened economy and domestic political crisis that has erupted due to or prior to the war. Moreover, in time, the balance of powers may change, and riper geopolitical situation might
come in due time. This was, for instance, the case for Croatia, which initially lost large parts of its territory, but later was able to win them back when the regional and context had changed.

Finally, there are also benefits for the patron-state in accepting a lasting ceasefire agreement. Though first, one must understand the motivations behind patron’s intervention in the first place. It may be a legitimate concern for the separatist claims. Indeed, patrons usually share ethnic linkages with the rebels in the target country, and these concerns are usually cited by patrons to justify any support they provide. Ethnic kin justifications are common not only in relation to de facto states (Caspersen 2012), but biased civil war interventions more generally (for instance, Cederman, Girardin, and Gleditsch 2009; and chapter 6 in Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013). However, while the justification or façade might be legitimate concern for the ethnic kin, external interventions might aim to destabilize the target state (for instance, see Heraclides 1997; Lee 2018), or even resemble a form of neo-imperialism as it has been labelled in the case of Russia’s interventions in its ‘near abroad’ (Broers 2013). Whatever the motivation – altruistic or predatory – establishment of a ceasefire serves patron’s interests. It stops any immediate violence towards its ethnic brethren. Conversely, if a ceasefire agreement remains in place and conflict becomes frozen, it means that the patron has a potential to unfreeze it at any moment. This provides the patron with leverage to activate the conflict whenever it is felt that the target state has overcome instability. For instance, Russia’s control over the frozen conflicts in northern Caucasus and ability to reignite war has been an important instrument to try to keep Georgia away from the path of Westernization. As an analogy, to inflict long-term pain, it is more beneficial to keep a wound only partly treated rather than fully stitched, to be able to tear it open whenever need may arise.

From here, the first hypothesis can be presented. Aligned with the overall quest of the research on the relationship between a patron and frozen conflict, H1(a): presence of a patron-state during wartime will lead to a separatist conflict becoming frozen.

H1(a), however, provides limited explanatory relationship between the two main variables. Since patron-states are more committed than third-parties, one should also expect that their support is also continuous and consistent over time. A mere instance of external party providing a dozen ‘weekend warriors’ is unlikely to alter the course of the conflict. Similarly, limited level of trade over a short period of time is insufficient to convince the rebels about their future state-building prospects together with patron’s assistance.
Therefore, the next hypothesis is directly related to and builds on the first H1(a), by establishing the need for patron’s continuous efforts. H1(b): higher levels of patron-state commitment and consistency will increase the likelihood of conflict becoming frozen.

One more potential constraint remains unresolved. Since the type of commitment of the patron-state may vary, an additional hypothesis is needed to narrow the scope of consistent support as in H1(b) to argue for trade establishment as the component that links the patron-state with frozen conflict. Therefore, H1(c): establishment of consistent trade between patron-state and rebels will increase the likelihood of conflict becoming frozen.

These three hypotheses are not separate from one another. Rather, each next hypothesis (a, b, c) builds on the previous one to, ultimately, argue for the importance of consistent patron-state support, which is illustrated via trade establishment.

![Figure 2: Patron-State Support & Hypotheses](image)

An illustration is provided in Figure 2. It shows, first, how the type of support distinguishes between a patron-state and third-party. Second, it shows the three interlinked hypotheses on the same spectrum of patron-state support. Although, in different levels of commitment. H1(b) and H1(c) shows the same level of consistency, but H1(c) looks at only one aspect of institutional support.
CHAPTER IV

4. Research Design

The following chapter covers the guidelines of and reasoning behind the way the research will be conducted. The causal mechanism outlined in the previous chapter must be examined critically and through appropriate scientific methodology. The sections here lay out the case selection process, in which Mills’ method of difference is utilized, as well as identify the Structured, Focused Comparison method as the most appropriate technique to answer the key question posed by this study. In addition, focus shifts to operationalization of key variables to have clear guidelines of what indicators and criteria best inform any findings in the analysis sections that will follow thereafter.

4.1 Selection of Cases

This study sets out to test the causal claim put forth in the previous chapter. The aim here is to draw in-depth conclusions that precisely depict and explain the relationship between consistent-patron states and frozen conflicts. The identification of trade as the mechanism or “causal pathway” to explain the relationship between patron-state and frozen conflict “has come to be seen as integral to causal analysis” that needs to be explored (Gerring 2006, 5). Driven by this ambition and being aware of the limited number of cases that would be applicable, the path chosen here is to go for a small-n research design. More precisely, a cross-case comparison between two cases will be utilized. This has the potential to better present an in-depth causal story compared to a large-n design (Gschwend and Schimmelfennig 2007). Of course, this also means the applicability to generalize the findings becomes limited (George and Bennett 2005).

The study is hypothesis-testing; the cases of interest have different outcomes to the conflict (Frozen/Not Frozen). Hence, the logic is to follow a most-similar case design. Also known as the method of difference or Mill’s Method, this design allows the analyst to compare two cases, which are similar in all other relevant aspects but differ in the main independent and dependent variables (Seawright and Gerring 2008). In this case, the presence of a consistent patron-state and the outcome of conflict becoming frozen.

While there are important shortcomings that can come about when utilizing this case design (Nielsen 2016; Anckar 2008), by managing to control for any other potential confounding variables or alternative explanations to the causes of frozen conflict proposed by previous
literature (Anckar 2008), thus isolating the proposed causal relationship of trade establishment, the upside is the ability to reflect a clear logic of said mechanism. The logic behind most-similar case design can be described as elimination the other causes of phenomenon under investigation (Beach and Pedersen 2013). By choosing this method, it allows to avoid significant issues related to selection bias, where two or more cases would be selected merely based on the presence or absence of the main variables in question to prove the proposed hypotheses. By opting for such case selection method, the hope is that any findings can also be inferred in a more general universe of other cases and not just the two particular cases selected (Gerring 2006). However, the potential issues of selection bias and external validity – the ability to infer the causal relationship to a broader population (Gerring 2017) – cannot be brushed away with disregard. Any potential findings – or lack of – should be viewed with caution.

The two cases have been selected to illustrate and explain the relationship of the main variables put forth by this research. Namely, Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) conflict in the Caucasus region and Republika Srpska Krajina (RSK) in the Balkans. These cases can be considered representative or typical to the wider population as usually employed in most-similar case design (Gerring 2006, 139); they share the relevant variables with other possible cases. The selected cases are optimal for utilizing most-similar case design. Moreover, while other relevant factors are similar in NKR and RSK, the actual variables of interest (Consistent Patron and Frozen Conflict) are different in both cases (Gerring 2006, 131).

However, what is the wider population of cases that NKR and RSK represent? As the existing relevant literature and definition in the previous section point out, one of the key requirements for a conflict to be defined as frozen, there needs to be a creation of a de facto state. However, not all de facto states are in frozen conflicts. In some instances, it takes time for a de facto state to be established. In other cases, even after a de facto state has been formed, the conflict between it and the central government has ended (either through reintegration or statehood). This is where the variation comes to play. Why did some of these specific territorial conflicts established a de facto state and then become frozen while others did not? The universe of applicable cases are conflicts in which there has been establishment of a de facto state or the incompatibility in the conflict has been over the separation of existing state or creation of a new state. This falls under the wider realm of intra-state conflicts that concern the issue of territory. My focus here is on territorial conflicts that have established a de facto regime. This is done to narrow the focus and formalize the study in an already existing theoretical literature.
As an illustration of de facto state cases, Florea (2014), has identified 34 such entities 1945 and 2011. Some are still alive, while others have disappeared one way or another. While majority of these statelets emerged at the fallout of the Soviet Union or Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, the list can now be extended with two new statelets located in eastern Ukraine.

Below, Table 1 provides the general logic of most-similar case design and puts the two cases in comparison regarding the alternative explanations explored in the previous literature section. The weakness of parent state, balance of military power, inter-ethnic grievances, and external actor inability to find political solution, all have been proposed by previous literature to explain frozen conflict creation and, more often, frozen conflict maintenance. As indicated in Chapter II, these explanations are not specific to only frozen conflicts, but also can prolong other intra-state conflicts more generally. Specifically related to my selected cases, the table shows that both cases are similar in all aspects except the dependent and independent variables. RSK received substantial support from Serbia, particularly, in military assistance, but also, to a degree of institutional support, which could qualify it for a patron-state. However, the changing relationship between Serbia and RSK and, ultimately, Belgrade’s abandonment of the statelet (Kolstø and Paukovic 2014, 317), makes it not to be considered a consistent patron. The case analysis section will expand on this.

**Table 1: Most-Similar Case Design**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frozen conflict</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent Patron-State</td>
<td>Yes (Armenia)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Parent State</td>
<td>Yes (Azerbaijan)</td>
<td>Yes (Croatia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance of Military Power (through external power)</td>
<td>Yes (Armenia)</td>
<td>Yes (Serbia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-Ethnic Grievances</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Actor Inability to Find Political Solution</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On similarities, both de facto regimes emerged from relatively weak parent states (for Armenia: Laitin and Suny 1999; Zürcher 2007; for Croatia Kolstø and Paukovic 2014, 323), which
themselves were newly formed countries during the time of break-up of two large federations – the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Since both de facto states received third-party assistance in the form of military support (from Armenia and Serbia), the balance of powers in terms of military strength of the warring sides was relatively symmetric or even stronger than their parent governments’. These de facto states did not fight in isolation during the escalation of the conflict against the parent state from which they seceded. RSK received military support (amongst others) from Serbia, while NKR was backed by Armenia. Furthermore, also included is the inter-ethnic grievance aspect. Both conflicts have a strong ethnic component to them. Ethnic Armenians and ethnic Serbs were the ethnic majority within their region while an ethnic minority in the newly formed countries of Azerbaijan and Croatia.

The last element is the effect of external mediation efforts to find a resolution to the conflict. This perhaps is the part where both cases are least similar. Indeed, since the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is still alive (although frozen), it is easy to argue that neither of the attempts to achieve a political settlement to the conflict have been effective. On the other hand, the life of RSK was amidst the Bosnian War from 1992-95. The war itself drew significant attention by the international community and was finally settled with the Dayton Accords in December 1995. Leading up to the settlement one of the main parties involved in the conflict and the patron to RSK, Serbia, was subject to various diplomatic, political, and military pressure to finally come to an agreement. However, the faith of RSK was not determined by these peace settlements. Rather, the death of this de facto regime came after a successful military mission by the Croatian forces called Operation Storm in August 1995. Therefore, it can be argued that RSK did not live long enough to be part of any settlement and, instead, capitulated after a military defeat. Moreover, the relationship between Serbia and RSK was strained soon after the statelet’s establishment, which strengthens the argument for lack of consistency on Serbia’s part. Even so, there is full recognition that the specific environment in which RSK lived and died forms a tricky obstacle in the overall case comparison methodology. This might bias my results by underestimating the external pressure on Serbia, which led it to become less consistent in its support to RSK. In comparison, Armenia also was on the brink of economic collapse from economic blockades imposed on it (Miller, Miller, and Berndt 2003), yet it remained committed to NKR, as will analysis elaborate on as well. Overall, the obstacle of external pressure on patron-states is a clear example of how difficult it is to find the perfect match of two cases from the real world to utilize the most-similar case design.
Nonetheless, the potential for selecting these two cases is also noted by Caspersen (2008), who sees applicable comparisons with NKR and RSK (also Republika Srpska in Bosnia). She argues that these cases share several similarities, “which makes them well suited for a comparative study.” (359). These similarities of “disintegration of a multi-ethnic federation” which resulted in a large-scale war at the same time period in history, as well as the “stranded minority” aspect (ibid, 359), support the identified explanations by my research of the intra-ethnic grievance and weak parent state. The aspect of large-scale war indirectly relates to balance of powers (with the help of external power).

4.2 Structured, Focused Comparison Method

The method of Structured, Focused Comparison was developed and is used to analyse specific phenomena in such manner “that would draw the explanations of each case of a particular phenomenon into a broader, more complex theory” (George and Bennett 2005, 67). In this method, the structure is created by crafting specific questions that clearly resonate with the objective of the overall research. These research questions should be generalizable so that the analysis can be standardized to each case. Moreover, formulations of questions must be in a general manner to allow to pose them on other cases as well and not just the ones analysed in this study. The other part, focus, refers to the objective of considering only those certain aspects within the cases that are relevant for the research (ibid).

The structure is to analyse what are the conditions or actions that inform us about a patron-state’s consistent commitment to a de facto regime. From this also the focus aspect follows; the research questions proposed below in Table 2 relate specifically to a patron-state’s interaction with a de facto regime. The quest for the empirical analysis is to identify applicable evidence that informs me about the presence or absence of trade between the two actors. Therefore, the enquiry begins with RQ 1, where the aim is to gain evidence of informal, or secondary source, accounts that would support an argument that there had been trade established between the patron and de facto regime. Evidence such as post factum accounts from academic and scholarly literature on the conflict of existence of any trade or aims to establish it by developing the necessary infrastructure.
### Table 2: Research Questions for Structured, Focused Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
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| **RQ 1: Have there been any informal accounts of trade of goods between the patron-state and de facto regime?** | • Accounts from secondary sources of an exchange of goods (illicit/legal) transferred from or to de facto regime and patron-state;  
• Evidence of projects to develop trade infrastructure (railroad/road) that can be used for exchange of goods. |
| **RQ 2: Has any trade been formalised between the patron-state and de facto regime?** | • Formal inclusion in budgetary documents by either the patron-state or de facto regime of instances of trade;  
• Statements from officials of de facto state or patron-state on instances of trade. |
| **RQ 3: Has there been other support by the patron-state to the de facto regime?** | • Instances of direct/indirect military support by the patron-state;  
• Instances of financial support by the patron-state;  
• Instances of institutional support besides trade establishment. |

Ideally, evidence of trade would be present in official government documents or archives. For this purpose, **RQ 2** shares a similar quest as the first question. However, the emphasis is on formal documents that originate from governments in question (either the patron or de facto regime). This would give the strongest evidence of the causal mechanism being present in either of the cases. Therefore, a novel quest for such information must be done. Together, both **RQ 1** and **RQ 2** are tied to answer the third hypothesis, H1(c) of the research.

Lastly, **RQ 3** broadens the search for evidence to look at any other forms of support by the patron-state besides trade. Answers to this question will clearly relate to hypotheses H1(a) and H1(b), which relate to patron-state presence and consistency. Again, to be considered a patron-state, the external power must provide institutional support along with those of a third-party (financial and military). If one can identify that other forms support are similar (**RQ 3**), but different in terms of trade establishment (**RQ 1 & RQ 2**), this would further strengthen the
argument for the significance of trade on the conflict outcome. Moreover, the questions are made to be applicable for other cases and comparisons between them. As such, RQ 3 makes it a necessity for any potential patron to be involved in the conflict. Otherwise, one could compare cases between a strongly committed patron and a third-party that has barely provided any form of support, not to mention trade at all.

4.3 Operationalization of Main Variables

An earlier chapter provided the general definitions of the key independent and dependent variables, which were adapted from the existing literature. However, to better identify the presence or absence of each variable in the selected cases, there is a need to operationalize them. This will allow for a more informed and concrete conclusion of the observable relationship between the main variables.

Frozen Conflict Criteria

The dependent variable is frozen conflict. For this, Table 3 provides a list of criteria and indicators for when one can observe this phenomenon empirically. As frozen conflicts revolve around the issue of territory and its separation from an existing state, one must expect that there would be open declaration or calls for independence by the rebels. Since some of these conflicts initially might have differing declarations, also those calls that concern unification with another state are applicable. Moreover, the separatist conflict must develop into an actual military confrontation between the warring sides. The scale of the confrontation may vary, however.

There also needs to be a de facto state. For this, indicators from Florea (2014) are used as they also fall within the expected scope of this study. Furthermore, a lasting ceasefire agreement must be present, which is followed by an absence of large-scale violence. The absence of such violence will primarily be informed by available sources and, if necessary, also Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) will be consulted, where the cut-off point of 25 battle-related deaths per year will be used, as is commonly applied within conflict literature (Allansson, Melander, and Themnér 2017). The elusiveness of the ‘frozen’ state of the conflict was already discussed in an earlier chapter, especially when it comes to the levels of violence. Some violence and minor skirmishes may still reoccur, but it is limited in scale and time. Therefore, if any escalation of violence is observed, one must observe whether it has resulted in any change in the overall conflict situation, e.g. control over new territory, implementation of new ceasefire agreement, or political settlement.
Table 3: Criteria for Frozen Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Separatist Conflict** | • Declaration of independence/secession from the parent state or unification with another state;  
• Military confrontation between the opposing sides. |
| **Existence of De Facto State**<sup>3</sup> | • Contested territory belongs to a recognized country;  
• Contested territory is fully or partly under military control of the separatists, which is has a permanent population;  
• Government does not sanction the contested territory;  
• Has at least basic forms of governance functioning ("provision of social and political order");  
• Does not have international/external sovereignty;  
• Has existed for no less than 24 months. |
| **Lasting Ceasefire Agreement** | • Ceasefire agreement between belligerents has been signed;  
• No large-scale violence (> 25 deaths) for 24 months;  
• Violence is not followed by alteration in control of territory, new ceasefire agreement, or peace settlement; |
| **No peace agreement** | • No peace agreement within 24 months after ceasefire |

Last, after the ceasefire has been established, there is no comprehensive peace settlement that follows. For this, again, secondary sources will be consulted. If necessary, databases such as, The Peace Accords Matrix database (Kroc Institute 2018) and Peace Agreements Database (PA-X 2017) will inform about any existing ceasefire agreements and (lack of) comprehensive peace agreements. It should be noted that both ceasefire and comprehensive peace agreements must be implemented and not only signed. While the implementation of ceasefire agreement will be informed by the absence of violence, the implementation of peace agreement will be informed by PAM and PA-X databases. Any peace agreement must follow within 24 months after a ceasefire agreement.

<sup>3</sup> The indicators for this criterion come from Florea (2014), 791-92.
Patron-State and Trade Criteria

The operationalization procedure also must be constructed for the explanatory variable, the patron-state. For this, Table 4 summarizes the criteria outlined in previous chapters of what constitutes a patron-state. It is expected that the patron-state would make a formal declaration or announcement in support for the rebel cause for independence/annexation. Also, as already discussed, a patron-state is a more committed biased third-party. Hence, besides the financial and (in)direct military support, one should also expect institutional support to be provided by the patron-state in form of state-building initiatives.

Table 4: Criteria for Patron-State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of Separatist Claim</td>
<td>• Declaration made following the separatist announcements that support their cause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biased third-party support</td>
<td>• Supply of financial aid;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Supply of direct military forces;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Supply of military inventory/intelligence/training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Support</td>
<td>• Provision of administrative cadres to de facto state’s formal institutions;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Direct support of de facto state’s welfare system (e.g. payment of pensions to the local population);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Importing/mirroring of patron’s government in de facto regime (judicial, executive, legislative systems).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of Trade links</td>
<td>• Declarations of establishing bilateral trade to exchange goods (consumer goods, energy) between regions;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Informal evidence post factum of any bilateral trade.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lastly, in order to explore the presence of the causal mechanism, trade, a separate criterion is listed for this particular action within the institutional support realm. Therefore, identification is required for official data, announcements of any exchange of goods between the de facto regime and patron-state. Alternatively, also informal/secondary source evidence is appropriate to prove existence of any trade.
4.4 Time Frame, Data Collection

Each case will be analysed in a specific time frame. That is, starting from the onset of the conflict when declarations of separatism have been announced or violence has broken out. The end period will be 24 months after the signing of the ceasefire agreement. There are several arguments that justify such an end-date. First, it is not uncommon in conflicts for there to be several ceasefire agreements. Some can be very brief and signed for strategic reasons rather than as a sign of commitment for peace and violence may soon resume (Mahieu 2007). Alternatively, other can be followed by a peace agreement that settles the conflict. (Mahieu 2007; Zartman 1995; also, Fortna 2004)\(^4\). Second, at the time of signing a ceasefire agreement, neither of the parties can be certain about the future developments. In that sense, no one can assume that a conflict has become frozen solely because a ceasefire has been signed. Moreover, absence of violence and lack of peace agreement must be present for a frozen conflict. Again, 24 months gives time for potential peace agreement to be made.

Regarding data collection, the focus will be on secondary sources. Primarily, peer-reviewed journal articles and books on the subject and cases to make the material more comparable for both NKR and RSK. The timeframe of applicable sources will vary; sources from both 1990s and more contemporary ones will be consulted. This is done to get a clearer picture from period when the conflict outcome may not have been known yet, and from when outcome was known, and when more evidence has become available. All sources will be found in Uppsala University’s digital or print libraries. Moreover, the journals and publishers will be those outside the conflict region – i.e. Armenian, Serbian, Azerbaijani, Croatian. Given the sensitive topic of the conflicts within the respective societies there is a potential for bias or prejudice in the way factual information can be presented, downplayed, or omitted.

Another set of secondary sources that will be consulted is international non-governmental organization and news reports from the period when the conflicts were still in the active phase. This will be done to obtain more ‘real-time’ evidence and context. However, this will be limited, given that English-language reports on the respective conflicts were often limited – particularly, in Eurasia (King 2001, 550). Analysis sections will expand on availability of such sources. When possible, triangulation – reliance on several sources informing of the same evidence – will be used. Last, also respective government websites and archives will be

\(^4\) Fortna (2004) provides a much wider focus on ceasefire agreements. However, her focus is on interstate conflicts.
consulted to potentially obtain formal evidence of datasets or reports of any support from the patron-state to its respective de facto regime.

Regarding military confrontation after a ceasefire, reliance will be on secondary sources that inform of not only violent skirmishes, but also political aftermath of them. If necessary, also UCDP datasets on state-based violence will be used to inform of escalation of violence. It is a useful tool since it provides a per-year casualty county between different actor dyads. However, the fluid or mutable nature of frozen conflicts, in which some escalation of violence is possible, but it is limited in scale and time, sole reliance on UCDP might not be informative of any change in conflict dynamics that has resulted from the brief skirmishes. Therefore, secondary sources might be more useful.

4.5 Structure of Analysis

For each case, after providing a background to the conflict, first, the focus will be on patron-state actions. Here, evidence will be provided to answer the three research questions (Table 2). Afterwards, the dependent variable is described in each case, i.e. presence/absence of frozen conflict. After empirical evidence is provided for each case, a comparative analysis will follow. The evidence is discussed and compared between the cases and analysed together. From there, the section shifts its focus to the implications of findings in the analysis on the proposed theory of the research, and, specifically, on the three hypotheses.

The final part of the analysis extends the scope of the research by looking at alternative explanations, which could contribute to or affect the relationship between the two main variables. Moreover, several additional observations are discussed. Last, also a section is provided on several methodological, empirical, and theoretical limitations of the study that could affect the findings and implications.
CHAPTER V

5.1 Analysis of Case I – Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

5.1.1 Background & Context

Mountainous ‘Black Garden’ or Nagorno-Karabakh was the first conflict to erupt during the downfall of the Soviet Union. Situated in the Trans-Caucasus, the territory is landlocked between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Conflict erupted in 1988, and later escalated in an open war 1991 between two countries and Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR). Contrary to the myth of century-old grudge, the roots of the conflict more appropriately date back to 1918 (Laitin & Suny, 1999; Souleimanov, 2013), when both Armenia and Azerbaijan enjoyed few years of independence before being absorbed into USSR. During this period, Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO), a predominantly ethnic Armenian administrative region, was under Baku’s rule of Soviet Azerbaijan (Laitin & Suny, 1999). Increasingly, at the second part of 1980s during Gorbachev’s reconstruction and transparency policies – perestroika and glasnost – the nationalistic sentiments within Soviet republics grew and were allowed to be heard, including Armenians in both Karabakh and Armenia-proper. In early 1988, protesters in Karabakh’s capital Stepanakert and, a few days later, in Yerevan called for NKOA to be merged with Armenian Soviet Republic (Laitin & Suny, 1999). Counter-demonstrations erupted in Azerbaijan’s city of Sumgait and capital Baku, where protests turned into violent pogroms targeting ethnic Armenians. Even though sporadic and short in nature, the violence against Armenians put in spotlight again the collective Armenian memory of experiences of oppression and violence at the beginning of 20th century. However, during the protests there was no plan to systematically murder ethnic Armenians (ibid). In these initial stages, an “undeclared war” was reported by the press, with both Armenians and Azerbijanis accusing each other of initiating the violence (Altstadt 1996, 231). At this time, Armenian Soviet Republic proposed to annex NKAO (Croissant 1998, appendix C). However, the conflict was still considered an internal affair of the Soviet Union.
As the Soviet Union fell in 1991, both Azerbaijan and Armenia proclaimed independence on August 30 and September 23, respectively (Altstadt 1996, 232). The once low-scale conflict erupted in a war. Later in November, Azerbaijan abolished NKAO. The reaction of Armenians in Stepanakert was to call a referendum in December and subsequently declare independence of NKAO and establish NKR in January 1992. Though, the new republic was not recognized by any state, not even Armenia itself (Altstadt, 1996). Warfare continued with various successes on both sides. International community actors sought to broker a peace deal, but to no avail. It was not until May 9, 1994 that a Moscow-brokered ceasefire agreement, the Bishkek Protocol, was signed and the fighting stopped (PA-X 1994; Potier 2001), but no permanent solution has been negotiated. Overall, since the beginning of the conflict around 15,000 people have died and hundreds of thousands have become refugees or internally displaced persons (Nichol 2011, 8). Effectively, Armenia and NKR took control of almost entire Karabakh region and occupies significant parts of Azerbaijan’s territory in the vicinity, which still are out of Baku’s reach.

5.1.2 Presence of Consistent Patron-State – Armenia’s Involvement

This section is devoted to the empirical accounts available in order to answer the research questions posed in the Research Design chapter. The primary time frame is from February 1988

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Source: (Nagorno-Karabakh: The Volatile Core of the South Caucasus 2017). Format and colours modified.
till May 1996 (24-months after signing the Bishkek Protocol). However, as the analysis will inform, also later accounts are taken into consideration as they, in retrospect, inform about an earlier stage.

*RQ 1: Have there been any informal accounts of trade of goods between the patron-state and de facto regime?*

While the conflict began during the time when Soviet Union was still alive, Armenia’s full-fledged support became more visible and apparent once the country became independent. During this time, also reports and information accessible to outsiders became available. A specific event during the war becomes a critical point when one can see Armenia increase its involvement. Namely, the capture of Shushi and Lachin villages in May 1992. The victory over a narrow territory, the Lachin Corridor, finally connected the landlocked NKR with Armenia-proper (Laitin & Suny, 1999). This proved to be a crucial development in terms of logistical support during the war as it established direct lifeline to NKR (Balayev and Mamedov 1998; Cornell 1997; Croissant 1998). Already before, both Armenia and NKR were suffering from an economic blockade by Azerbaijan, which began already in 1989 (Curtis & Suny, 2011), and came into full effect in 1991 (Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 1994a). Armenia quickly felt the consequences of the blockade. In addition, “in the early 1990s, the Armenian economy was also stressed by direct support of Karabakh self-determination, which received massive shipments of food and other materials through the Lachin corridor” (Curtis and Suny 2011, 147). This was continued also in 1992 (Geukjian, 2012). Even years later, “all communication and trade between Nagorno-Karabakh and the outside world have been redirected across the Lachin Corridor” (Blakkisrud and Kolstø 2012, 289); this later account falls outside the time scope. Together, however, these accounts inform of the importance and immediate significance the control of Lachin Corridor had not only during the war, but also later. Although, this evidence of food and goods shipments can be also seen as immediate assistance to fighting, rather than long-term trade establishment.

Another important form of assistance came in the form of monetary support. There is ample evidence that NKR received large amounts of money in the form of loans from Armenia (International Monetary Fund 1995). This information will be elaborated on more in the answers to *RQ 3*, as this relates more to other forms of institutional and financial support. However, related to these ‘loans’, Curtis & Sunny highlight that “in the early 1990s, […] although Karabakh sent electricity to Armenia in return, the balance of trade was over two to
one in favour of Karabakh, and Armenian credits covered most of Karabakh’s budget deficits” (2011, 147). Here the most important aspect is the electricity being sent from Karabakh to Armenia. Put into context, the blockade by Azerbaijan had caused massive power shortages in Armenia, which previously had relied on most of its energy through imports, and “in 1990 Armenia produced less than 1 percent of its energy requirement” (Curtis and Suny 2011, 196). Its own nuclear powerplant in the country’s northwest was shut down after an earthquake in 1988 (more on earthquake’s impact, see Miller, Miller, and Berndt 2003). While surely NKR could not provide sufficient energy supply for all of Armenia, it could, at least, relieve some of the blackouts and shortages.

There is also ample information available that stems from years later than the observed timeframe. However, there is lack of precise date of when key events or phenomena was first observed or established. For instance, a humanitarian report from 2005 claims that “Armenians [in Karabakh] rely on free movement and trade between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia proper” (AlertNet 2005). Another article from 2007 on the natural resource availability in NKR states that, “currently, [NKR] produces sufficient electricity to meet its own needs and exports power to Armenia,” while at the same time 60% of the food is imported (Sharrow 2007, 14). While the former evidence again highlights the importance of having a land corridor between the two territories, the latter emphasises NKR’s energy supply even years after the initial observation by Curtis & Sunny.

Moreover, due to NKR’s unrecognized status, no international treaties apply to this territory (Blakkisrud and Kolstø 2012); hence, it cannot engage in formal trade with other countries. Any formal imports come directly from or through Armenia. Having direct land access to Armenia opens NKR to outside markets in other countries even if they do not recognize NKR (Ajemian 2011). Also, NKR’s payment of “various direct and indirect taxes to Yerevan” shows the close links between the two regimes and NKR integration “into the economy and budgetary structures of Armenia” (Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2008, 469). When this was started is unclear, but, for instance, the unification of monetary systems is already evident a few months after the ceasefire, in September 1994 (Balayev & Mamedov, 1998). This monetary unification has direct implications also for easing up trade relations and prospects, since it breaks down the virtual barrier of having different currencies. The plan to unify and integrate NKR’s budget was already voted on back in January 1990 by the Armenian government (Balayev and Mamedov 1998; De Waal 2003). However, then it only lasted till May when NKR’s budget
was returned to Azerbaijan (De Waal 2003, 322). Together this latter evidence more suggests institutional support in general, and not necessarily trade per se.

A more physical integration again is highlighted after the military successes of capturing the Lachin Corridor. Here, Cornell (1999) refers to the project worth $11 million sponsored by the Armenian diaspora in 1996 to improve the road through Lachin Corridor “to make this mountain road safer and able to carry higher amounts of goods” (44). The author also notes that usually these goods originate in neighbouring Iran to the south where there is an established border trade with Armenia (ibid, 44).

To summarize, more direct and evident interaction between Armenia and NKR in the trade aspect becomes clear after securing the Lachin Corridor. Both figuratively and literally, this allowed to link Karabakh with Armenia-proper. While large sums of money, technically as loans, filled the budget of NKR, it also gave back what it could through energy supply. There is lack of concrete evidence of how much, what kind, and at what time actual trade was established during the war, the capture of the land corridor made trade possible in the short term, but also intuitively reaffirmed the lifeline’s value in the long term. It is notable, that in any diplomatic negotiations, the giving up of Lachin Corridor is out of the question for NKR (Croissant 1998). The blockade by Azerbaijan (also later Turkey) caused suffrage throughout Armenia, which increasingly disrupted any kind of economic activity for Armenia, and therefore, for NKR. While in time this has been alleviated, with a large help of also Armenian diaspora, both Armenia and NKR have maintained their connectivity also years after the ceasefire.

**RQ 2: Has any trade been formalised between the patron-state and de facto regime?**

Ideally, the evidence answering this question would come from official government documents and public statements that are available of the time period in question. Unfortunately, as Taline Papazian notes, there is lack of information of the war period between 1991-1994. Related to accessibility and accuracy of the data from Armenia’s economy during the war, she finds that “for reasons linked to the unresolved status of the conflict, accurate information is not yet available for this formative period” (Papazian 2008, 15). Armenia has been reluctant of, if not completely against, open admission on its role in the conflict, as also visible on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website in a section on NKR (MFA Armenia 2018). Similarly, also Altstadt echoes the lack of information on the conflict also from the Azerbaijani side, where, if not available at all, any information is either in Azerbaijani Turkish or Russian (Altstadt, 1996).
Moreover, some have expressed unreliability concerns of the official government statistics in Armenia when it comes to, for instance, unemployment rates in mid-1990s when compared with UNICEF data (Masih & Krikorian, 1999). In addition, for official documents, the government of the NKR has established websites with directories to its ministries. Unfortunately, the website of the Ministry of Economy and Industrial Infrastructures is under construction during the time of this research (Government of Nagorno Karabakh Republic 2018). Moreover, any available documents and reports from the Ministry of Finance date back only to 2009 (“Ministry of Finance of Artsakh,” 2018). Understandably, all the documentation is in Armenian. Similarly, also within Armenian government websites no data or information could be found.

Nonetheless, some reliance can rest on other sources that have conducted or refer to interviews with and statements from officials in either NKR or Armenia. However, here also the information is limited and only hints at certain actions noted in passing. For instance, in 1997 the former Foreign Minister of NKR, who became president of the self-declared republic, on the topic of possible peace proposal at the time stressed that “any status for Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan is impossible” and pledged to expand the Karabakh military and broaden [emphasis added] economic integration with Armenia” (Croissant 1998, 121). Broaden to and from what extent is unclear, however.

From interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch, “high-level government officials state […] that Armenia provided everything necessary for [NKR’s] economy and security” (Human Rights Watch/Helsinki 1994b). In addition, some officials have admitted that “in the economic and financial field, Karabakh and Armenia are actually one entity, just as their unified budget” (Cornell 1999, 44).

Therefore, the answers to RQ 2 are unsatisfactory. Understandably, due to the closed nature Armenia has shown about its involvement during the conflict period, as well as, the language obstacle and general online information accessibility in the period in question, full account of formal evidence is not available. Instead, empirics must rely on secondary sources. While there is confidence in the reliability of these accounts, they still cannot paint the full picture that would answer this research question.

RQ 3: Has there been other support by the patron-state to the de facto regime?

To get a clearer picture of the type of support the patron-state provided, a brief analysis is also given on the other, third-party and non-trade institutional, support by Armenia to NKR.
Regarding this, the assistance through loans was already mentioned. In 1995 this was $13 million out of the total of $20 million annual budget of NKR (Tchilingirian 1997). These long-term credits were to cover the basic expenses in Karabakh, such as healthcare, welfare, and education (ibid, 43). This shows that the financial support is provided to directly provide state-building measures within NKR. Moreover, a report from Human Rights Watch/Helsinki claims that since the beginning of the conflict “Armenia provided aid, weapons, and volunteers.” (Human Rights Watch/Helsinki 1995). Moreover, “[A]ccording to Karabakh authorities, Armenia was providing upwards of 90 percent of the enclave’s yearly budget in the form of interest-free credits,” which some believe to have “constituted 7 to 9 percent of Armenia’s yearly budget” (ibid). NKR’s heavy reliance on medicine, weapons, and food from Armenia is noted by other as well (Curtis and Suny 2011, 209). Moreover, “in 1994 the NKR accounted for 40 per cent of its budget, the same proportion as before the conflict, with the rest provided by Armenia (formerly, Azerbaijan had made up the difference)” (Alexei Zverev 1996, 36). This leads to conclude that NKR was “wholly dependent on Armenia economically” also already by the early 2000s (Panossian 2001, 143).

The Armenian financial and military support to NKR was present and continuous during the conflict. The literature covering the events and analyses of the war all accept Armenia’s involvement. The variation, however, is more in regard to how large the involvement was, how significant it’s effect has been, and when it began.

As shown by Zürcher (2007), after going through various sources, by late 1992, over 21,000 soldiers were in Karabakh (around 8,000 made up from local Karabakh militias and 13,000 from recently created Armenian army), with the same number of reserves. During this time Azerbaijan’s army also consisted of the same number of soldiers as in Karabakh. However, in 1994, NKR’s army size was 10,000 in addition to 20,000 soldiers from the Armenian army who were involved in the conflict. In comparison, by now Azerbaijan’s military size had reached 45,000 soldiers (2007, 174–75, 179) Although, these are still estimates. Going back to the lack of data, “there are no reliable data on the funding of the organization of violence in Karabakh”; however, besides the national mobilization in Karabakh, NKR “received massive support from Armenia in the form of paramilitary troops, weapons, and funding” (both in Zürcher 2007, 175). And while NKR military forces often were independent from Armenian government (Curtis and Suny 2011), Armenia’s involvement escalated after Azeri military offensive in late 1993; a time when Armenia ‘began’ to send regular troops to Karabakh (Human Rights Watch/Helsinki 1995). Overall, the NKR troops, although fierce fighters,
“could never have prevailed without the troops, money, and advice from Armenia” (Rieff 1997, 124).

Going back to institutional support, evidence of close integration between Armenia and NKR is shown years after the ceasefire. For instance, through issuing of Armenian passports in NKR (De Waal 2003) or synchronizing legal systems (Waters 2006). However, it is unclear when these aspects began to take place, so cannot be considered to fully fall within the period in question.

Overall, this brief outline of evidence and that provided in the previous two sections, confirms Armenia’s support in providing continuous financial support, direct military support (Armenian army), and indirect military support. Particularly, the loans during the years after the ceasefire have been directly related to providing state-building functions within NKR.

5.1.3 The Frozen Conflict

There have been numerous attempts to achieve peace already during the early stages of the conflict. At first under Soviet Union’s initiative, but also later including other regional and international actors. These include Russia, Iran, Turkey, the US, OSCE (formerly CSCE), and even more locally between Armenians and Azerbaijanis themselves. While some have come close (Laitin and Suny 1999), so far all have failed. Nonetheless, at the end it was Russia’s influence and power that stopped the violence and negotiated a ceasefire agreement. Throughout the war, both Armenia and Azerbaijan severely suffered economically and politically. The blockade on Armenia caused tremendous human suffering (Miller, Miller, and Berndt 2003). While in Azerbaijan, since independence within 15 months four leaders were overthrown in either popular uprisings or military coups (Croissant 1998). There have been sporadic escalations of violence between the combatants, most notably (but not limited to), in April 1997 (Croissant 1998), early March 2005 (S. Grigoryan 2011), and more recently during the Four-Day War of April 2016 (Bayramov 2016). This latest instance, “saw the most significant violation of the cease-fire since its inception” killing 20 soldiers (Cornell 2017, 1). However, some have suggested the overall casualty rate, thus, including civilians, was close to 200 people (in Bayramov 2016). These brief skirmishes highlight how misleading notion of ‘frozen’ state of the conflict may be. Nonetheless, over two decades have passed since the signing of the ceasefire agreement, which largely holds. Yet, no political solution has come about. Due to the relatively brief period of skirmishes (usually lasting a few days), and limited number of casualties, as well as swift return to absence of violence, it objectively cannot be
concluded that the original ceasefire agreement is dead. Overall, the de facto state has managed to survive. The establishment of trade between Armenia and NKR during the war might shed some light to what allowed the conflict to become frozen in the first place. However, this is not the sole reason why the conflict has continued to be frozen decades later. As discussed in the introductory chapters of this research, the sustainability of the de facto states may relate to several aspects. Nonetheless, as gathered from the empirical evidence and other scholars, Armenia continues to have a direct role in helping NKR survive, but also diaspora has helped a lot (Rieff 1997). In the end, the independence declaration in 1992 is still alive. Despite lack of international recognition, decades later the de facto state shows no signs of disappearing. The same can be said about the ‘frozen’ conflict itself. A rather grim Caucasian proverb seems fitting, “When will the blood cease to flow in the mountains? When the sugar-canes grow in the snows.” (in Croissant 1998, 131).

5.2 Analysis of Case II – Republika Srpska Krajina Conflict

5.2.1 Background & Context

The conflict between Croatia and the separatist Krajina Serbs is part of the wider geopolitical confrontation in the Balkan region – the wars of succession of the former Yugoslavia in 1990s. The rise of nationalism that preceded in 1980s set the beginning stages for the dissolution of the socialist federation. For Croatia, the national elections in early 1990 brought the new president, Franjo Tudjman, to power with the promises of creating a Croat nation state (Klemenčič and Žagar 2004, 303). For the ethnic Serbs within Croatia, the new Croatian aspirations brought back the memories of the Second World War, during which a fascist Croatian government had open and violent anti-Serb policies (ibid). The newly perceived threat from Croat nationalism brought the local Serbs closer to their brethren in Serbia-proper where ethnic nationalism was also on the rise under the president Slobodan Milošević. The rise of nationalism not only in Croatia, but also in Slovenia, was countered by Milošević’s policy advocacy for ‘all Serbs in one state’, a rally cry for Greater Serbia. This meant that the ethnic Serbs in Croatia, but also Bosnia, were destined to remain part of Yugoslavia even if their respective countries wished to leave (Barić 2014). It was seen with great appeal for the Serb minorities (Klemenčič and Žagar 2004).
The local Serb authorities within Croatia began to push for autonomy through declarations and referenda in their respective regions where they enjoyed a majority status. Even though these regions were scattered around Croatia, the centre of Serbian activity became the city of Knin in Dalmatia region. In August 1990, the local Serbs in Knin rebelled against the local authorities to take control over the police. Already then the Serbs “enjoyed the moral support and political guidance of the Belgrade regime” even though it was still unofficial (Silber and Little 1996, 103). As the events unfolded, the confrontations erupted in other regions as well. In other parts of Croatia where local Serbs would rebel, any attempts by government to suppress the uprising were halted by the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA), which stepped in between the local Serbs and Croats, and stopped the fighting. In effect, this freezing of fighting assisted the Serbs to solidify the control of territory (Pavković 2000; Silber and Little 1996).

In May 1991, RSK voted for independence and soon the JNA began to openly support the Krajina Serbs in a war against Croatia. Fighting erupted throughout the country until the end of the year (Rogel 2004). And on December 19, 1991, the autonomous Serb regions in Croatia declared an establishment of RSK, with the president Milan Babić and capital Knin (Klemenčič and Žagar 2004). Soon after in January 1992, with the pressure from the international community, a UN-backed peace agreement, the Vance Plan, was signed, though in effect it

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only worked as a ceasefire agreement (Barić 2014; Kolstø and Paukovic 2014). By this time the RSK held over a quarter of Croatia’s territory (Gow 2003). Large-scale fighting in Croatia abated, to an extent thanks to deployment of United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). However, limited fighting still continued and the main theatre of war moved to the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) (Gow 2003).

5.2.2 Absence of Consistent Patron-State – Serbia’s Engagement

The history of events throughout the years of wars in former Yugoslavia is rich and complex. The first major military confrontation within the boundaries of post-WWII Europe coupled with the appalling acts of violence and terror inflicted on the local populations has attracted vast scholarly attention to different aspects, broad and narrow, of the conflict. For the purposes of this research, the scope is narrow; to focus on the events that directly surround RSK and Croatia’s war of independence from 1991 till 1995. However, at times events must be considered in context with the wider confrontation also within BiH.

RQ 1: Have there been any informal accounts of trade of goods between the patron-state and de facto regime?

An important aspect that hampered the ability for RSK to function and establish unitary functioning of its territory was the fact that the republic consisted of three separated regions (Kolstø and Paukovic 2014), some were several hundred kilometres away from Serbia-proper (Rogel 2004). The capital Knin was located south from Bosnia, while other parts were west of it (western Slavonia) and to the north (eastern Slavonia). Only the northern part had a direct land access to Serbia. For the other regions, any connection had to run through Republika Srpska (RS) in Bosnia (Klemenčič and Žagar 2004). Even though Milošević had been the one to encourage RSK separatism, his change in strategy towards the support of RSK left the local Serbs to assume that ‘they were on their own’ (Burg and Shoup 1999, 89). Some even state that already by late 1991, Milošević had used RSK as a mere bargaining chip (Silber and Little 1996). While he knew Croatia could not live without controlling large parts of its territory now in the hands of RSK, “Milošević was not attached to Knin; privately he even said that Knin […] always belonged in Croatia […]” (Silber and Little 1996, 306). The detachment from Serbia-proper, both physical and strategic, helps understand the weak state RSK was in already from the beginning in terms of state-building in general, and economy, along with trade aspect, in particular. However, RSK still remained fully dependent on Serbia in strategic, military, and
economic aspects, since it severed any links with Croatia at the beginning of the war (Kolstø and Paukovic 2014).

Any economy that was in the republic relied heavily on smuggling and illicit trade. And while “the economy of the RSK could not function without substantial support from Serbia”, the republic lacked “virtually all necessities” (Kolstø and Paukovic 2014, 318; also Caspersen 2007). Specifically related to trade, Nina Caspersen concludes that “only a few unrecognized states, such as [RSK], have been almost completely unable to profit from some form of trade” (2012, 64). Moreover, Caspersen’s interview with a former deputy prime minister of RSK, Branko Lubovac, reveals that in the midst of economic collapse, “the only functioning part of the economy was agriculture, but Krajina was, due to international sanction only able export to Serbia” (Caspersen 2012, 64). This evidence does show that there indeed was some form of trade between RSK and Serbia, constituting to patron-state support. However, Serbia’s economy was edging towards collapse due to being under international sanctions. Therefore, any trade that was there “provided limited revenue”, while export opportunities to other states was not permitted (Caspersen 2012, 64). The basic trade, as much as it could, relied on smuggling. Through war profiteers, RSK was able to obtain some basic goods, such as toothpaste or oil and flour at inflated prices. However, these goods, in their illicit nature, actually came from the trade with Bosnian Muslims and Croatia (Svarm 1993). The next section will elaborate on this particularity. The effect of international sanctions on Serbia and its damaging effect on RSK’s economy is also highlighted by Baric, who accounts that even though Milošević had helped give rise to RSK, Serbia did not have the economic resources to actually support it (Barić 2014).

Another instance that shows RSK’s difficult relationship with Serbia is through the relationship Milošević had with RS in Bosnia. Due to political disagreements with RS, in late summer of 1994 Serbia used its economic levers to blockade RS (Caspersen 2007). While Milošević did not introduce the same measure targeting RSK, the blockade imposed on RS directly affected the economy of Krajina Serbs as well, “since the only supply route to the western part of [RSK] went through Bosnia” (Caspersen 2012, 131). The evidence of blockade imposition indicates that there has been some kind of flow of goods prior to it. However, ultimately the changing attitudes between the leaders of Serbia and RSK, as well as, RS on how to deal with the developments in the war often put these natural allies at odds. Ultimately, the deteriorating relationship between Serbia and RSK (but also RS) is summed as biting “the hand that fed them” (Kolstø and Paukovic 2014, 316).
Overall, the informal accounts paint a grim picture of the economy, including trade, that RSK had found itself. While, the answers to the other two questions will provide further evidence, it becomes clear that RSK trade potential was limited, if not almost barely existing, with Serbia. The major source of population income and access to goods was done in the form of smuggling. The lack of land access to Serbia and international sanctions also complicated any long-term trade establishment. However, from the evidence here (and later) it becomes clearer that the bigger issue has been the level of commitment Serbia was willing to take in assisting proper functioning of RSK.

RQ 2: Has any trade been formalised between the patron-state and de facto regime?

The answers to this question ideally lie in official document from either RSK or Serbia that would inform about any formal trade links established between the two regions. However, since RSK does not exist since 1995, any expectation to find primary sources is low. The same can be expected regarding primary sources originating from official Serbian (or former Yugoslav) archives. Serbia has downplayed its involvement in directly assisting both RSK and RS (Caspersen 2012, 55). Regarding RSK sources, the article by Kolsto & Paukovic (2014) is useful as in their analysis of the self-declared republic they base their research largely on primary sources from RSK. Yet, they also highlight that a large part of the official RSK documents were taken by the Croatian forces during Operation. Most important sections of these documents were published by Croatia in a book form only in 2005. This might shed light why previous studies and authors have not relied heavily on RSK documents in their analyses. Moreover, the authors also note that the research interest on RSK has primarily been in Croatia, while within Serbia the interest has been “virtually non-existent” (Kolstø and Paukovic 2014, 313). Therefore, again as with the first case study, the answers for the second research for RSK are primarily found in statements and comments from officials at the time, which relate specifically to economy and trade, that are found in secondary sources.

Information on trade is limited. Nonetheless, “economically, the RSK was totally dependent upon Serbia”; was confirmed by one of the leaders of RSK, Milan Babić, during his testimony at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in 2002 (Kolstø and Paukovic 2014, 316).

a more descriptive assessment of the local economy is provided by Krajina’s Prime Minister Borislav Mikelic on 21 April 1994. The short excerpts are quoted in Vreme NDE, a Belgrade-based English-language magazine on the contemporary events in Yugoslavia (more
information on source, see Rutgers University Libraries 2018). The assessment from Krajina briefly touches upon several aspects of the overall republic’s economic situation. For instance, it states that out of the total population of 430,000 only about 8% are employed. Moreover, regarding local business and trade, the assessment follows, “The RSK registered hundreds of new companies, mainly in the sales sector. The RSK has very little benefit from those companies since their dealings mainly fall into the category of the gray economy and cause great damage [...]” (in Svarm 1994). The local economy’s sustainment on illegal trade and crime is also noted by the mayor of Vukovar city in 1992, and by RSK local field commanders (for both Kolstø and Paukovic 2014), which was often sponsored by RSK leadership. In addition, “The goods reserves were almost emptied during the war and the economy instead of recording a rise in substance is recording a rapid loss based on social expenditure and wide-spread criminal activity.” (in Svarm 1994). Lastly, regarding energy, the same Krajina economic assessment claims that the local production was almost 276 MWh. While this is higher than RSK had planned to produce, it is still far short from the 540 MWh that were consumed (ibid). This indicates that almost half of the electricity needs have been imported from elsewhere. Yet, from where exactly is still unclear. The grim picture provided by the assessment suggests and further embraces the notion that indeed, the local economy was not able to sustain itself and was not relieved sufficiently by outside help.

There was high illegal trade activity between different regions, which became normalized to an extent to conclude that “life at the crossroads of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serb Krajina symbolises the victory of a healthy business spirit over national divisions” (Mekina 1994). As stated by Ramo Hikic, the Minister of Economy in the Government of AP Western Bosnia (an autonomous Bosnian region bordering RSK in the west), “It is no secret that one of two megawatts that we need comes from [RSK]. We buy it at a high price, ten cents per one kilowatthour.” (in ibid). In return the Bosnians send foodstuffs to RSK. As the author notes, “Everybody knows, but no one was willing to confirm it officially, that some electricity is paid by exporting Croatian oil. A stable partnership has been created. The Muslims supply Croatian oil to [RSK], Croatia is satisfied as it has an ally that shatters the idea of unitary Bosnia, while AP Western Bosnia uses Serb Krajina as a corridor and a link with the west that enables her to survive” (ibid). This example further highlights how business and trade was conducted within and between different regions. The illicit economy was a way of survival. Yet, however profitable it may be for the few entrepreneurs, such activities have negative effects on any attempts for state-building in order to ensure a regime’s sustainability in the longer term.
Overall, evidence of any formal trade link establishments remains low. The material to support any trade or even economic activity between RSK and Serbia heavily relies on few secondary sources that discuss the issue. Even then, the main emphasis is on the criminality of local economy rather than on support of sustainable trade.

There are two possible reasons for the low evidence. First, the inner economic situation of RSK in relation to Serbia has not been looked at significantly by scholars, which limits the evidence available. Second, by understanding the difficult and often conflicting relationship RSK had with Serbia, along with the economic weakness of both, the actual material support and flow of goods from Serbia to RSK and vice-versa was limited. Instead, as the war still raged on since establishment of RSK, the economy along with social and political life in the republic was influenced and shaped by the war mentality in the population. Some call it a “garrison society”, as Silber & Little put it (1996, 355), or a “rural guerrilla community” (Žunec 2001, 77).

**RQ 3: Has there been other support by the patron-state to the de facto regime?**

It has already been mentioned above about the regular third-party support that Serbia provided to RSK, both militarily and financially. Militarily, the support came through the JNA, which although was the army of Yugoslavia, was increasingly controlled and manipulated by Serbia (Rogel 2004). And while officially Serbia downplayed its involvement, there is ample evidence from secondary sources that finds support for Serbia’s role vis-à-vis RSK.

Already at the initial stages of the uprising in Knin in 1990, the local paramilitary groups were aided and organized by the Serbian Security Service (SBD), “with Service Chief Jovica Stanišić overseeing the campaign, along with another senior figure, General Radmilo Bogdanović, and head of operations, Frenki Simatović, implementing it” (Gow 2003, 80; on SBD assistance also, ibid, 147-48). Also in further military confrontations, such as, for instance, the capture of Croatian town of Pakrac (spring 1991) or Plitvice National Park (February 1991), the JNA worked as a separator between the local Serbs and Croats, thus helping Serbs maintain control of seized territories (Pavković 2000; Silber and Little 1996). This led to Croatia to conclude that “in everything the Krajina Serbs did in the early months of their rebellion, Tudjman’s men saw only the hand of Slobodan Milošević” (Silber and Little 1996, 135). This was also later confirmed and strengthened by RSK leader Milan Martić, who acknowledged to a Serbian newspaper in August 1991 that his forces “were now acting in full cooperation with the JNA” (ibid, 171). Indeed, during the latter part of 1991, the JNA was openly fighting to support RSK (Kolstø and Paukovic 2014). The gains that were made during
1991 were significant. As the ceasefire agreement, the Vance Plan, took effect, the intensity of fighting within Croatia lowered. This could have helped RSK solidify gains over the territory. However, already by autumn 1993, the Serb leadership had concluded that due to RSK’s geographical disposition, it was “the weakest link in the chain of the Serb national programme” and thus any actual defence of it in the long term was not feasible (Žunec 2001, 71–72). During the years of war, RSK tried to build-up state institutions, however one of its main difficulties was the deficit in qualified cadres to fill the positions in various key positions. While Belgrade made promises to help, it’s primary cadre assistance was by sending “leading military personnel” to Krajina (Kolstø and Paukovic 2014, 316–17).

Overall, the evidence suggests that at the beginning of the Serb uprising in Croatia, through JNA Serbia provided much-needed military support to help RSK establish control over its territories. However, after the Vance Plan was put in place along with the UNPROFOR troops, JNA and Serbia’s attention shifted to Bosnia. It was clear that RSK territories would not be able to defend themselves. This was particularly true for the western Slavonia enclave, which was the furthest RSK region from Serbia (Žunec 2001).

Unfortunately for RSK, even though Serbia and RS promised that Krajina would be defended by Yugoslav army in the event of a Croatian attack, once this attack actually came, “Belgrade did not lift a finger” (Silber and Little 1996, 353; also Pavković 2000). During the military Operation Storm, the Croatian army had around 130,00 soldiers, while the RSK army size was more than three times smaller, at around 40,000 soldiers (Žunec 2001). The operation began in early August, and after a few days, almost all RSK territory was lost, including capital Knin, signifying the end of the self-declared republic.

The military support at the beginning of uprising and lack of it at the final days of RSK again points to the change in relations and lack of consistency on the part of Serbia. At first there was clear and overwhelming support for RSK coming from Belgrade. In time, due to political, economic, and strategic calculations, the efforts to help RSK faded and eventually disappeared. This is also mentioned by former Chief of Staff of RSK, General Milan Čeleketić, soon after the initial Croatian military gains in 1995. He puts the blame on “the lack of political and military support from outside the Krajina, which [he] had expected to materialise because it had been previously agreed, and also because of the dirty political games being played [now] by certain individuals” (in O’Shea 2005, 188). While the statement does not name who are the ones from ‘outside’, the only options possible were either RS or Serbia, or both. Gen. Čeleketić
also points at the political infightings that existed both within RSK leadership and with Serbia, which has been highlighted in other research as well (see, for instance, Caspersen 2007, 2012).

5.2.3 The Conflict Termination

Already in 1991, the international community was involved in trying to negotiate the conflict in Croatia. The agreement on the Vance Plan had established a large UN peacekeeping presence in the territories, and UN Protected Areas (UNPA) were created to separate the warring sides. Theoretically, this halt of large-scale war could have given RSK breathing space to build-up state institutions and cement their presence in the region. It allowed Croatia to change its strategy in the war it initially lost so badly. While some have argued that Croatia’s halt in military operations to recover its territory was part of President Tudjman’s effort to reintegrate Serb-held territories peacefully (Barić 2014), other attribute it to the political logic of Croatia to go ahead with its plan to partition BiH (Žunec 2001). Either way, the theatre of war had shifted to Bosnia, which could have allowed RSK to reach their own goals of either increasing its independence not only domestically, but also internationally, or bring itself closer to integration with Serbia. As the evidence above suggests, RSK did not manage to reach either of these goals. Instead, the republic was riddled with lawlessness and alienation from its population and Belgrade (Caspersen 2012).

In early 1995, Croatia announced that UNPROFOR mandate would be terminated by the end of March (Rogel 2004). Croatia’s troops received training from former US army officers in preparation of a military takeover of RSK (Pavković 2000). Winning back RSK territories began in May, when Croatia militarily retook Western Slavonia during Operation Flash. Even as it signalled of what was to follow in other RSK territories, Serbia remained silent (Caspersen 2007). The final blow began in August 4, when, during Operation Storm, Croatia retook RSK capital Knin with barely any resistance. By this time, Milošević “was ready to accept almost anything on offer. For him the overriding priority was the lifting of sanctions”, which built confidence for Croatia that Serbia would not come to aid RSK (Silber and Little 1996, 356; Pavković 2000). Before, Milošević had tried to convince RSK to accept any peace offer from Croatia, but to no avail. A pro-Milošević Serbian newspaper concluded on the day of Operation Storm that Krajina Serb leaders were responsible for “leading their people into a virtual dead end” (Silber and Little 1996, 356). The loss of Krajina signalled the beginning of more losses to Serbia. However, due to the political infighting in the Serb statelet, some have concluded that RSK had failed already “before” the sanctions were put in place in 1993 (Caspersen 2012,
The relative ease in which Knin was taken, “demonstrated that the Serb state in Croatia had rotten from within, so that by the time the Croats had built an army capable of turning the military tide, they were, in fact, pushing at a decayed structure” (Silber and Little 1996, 359–60). The military operation was also followed by a Croatian sanctioned campaign of expelling and killing any Serbs that had remained in the territory, mostly civilians (Klemenčič and Žagar 2004; Mirković 1998; Silber and Little 1996). What remained of RSK was the territory in eastern Slavonia, bordering Serbia. However, after a UN transitional administration was put in place in 1995, it was reintegrated back to Croatia in 1998. (Barić 2014).

CHAPTER VI

6.1 Comparative Analysis

6.1.1 Link between Consistent Patron and Frozen Conflict per Case

The evidence from the first case study suggests that consistent patronage by Armenia has been instrumental to the initial creation and survivability of NKR. During the years of conflict, Armenia provided all three types of support of a regular third-party support, as well as institutional support. Understandably, the military support has been of high importance to not only take control of the Nagorno-Karabakh territory, but also secure a buffer zone in NKR’s vicinity. Vital was the capture of the Lachin Corridor that created a physical connection between Armenia-proper and NKR. The economic situation in Armenia, and, in extension, in NKR was dire. Transitioning from Soviet-era economy of reliance on other republics for energy supply and other goods, Armenia suffered from the blockade imposed by Azerbaijan and later Turkey. NKR was able to alleviate some electricity needs for Armenia, but the accounts of this during wartime are limited. However, the development of road infrastructure in the Lachin Corridor with the help of diaspora soon after the ceasefire agreement, strengthens the argument of how important this land connection has been to allow the flow of goods between the regions. While there is lack of formal data on trade volumes between Armenia and NKR, secondary sources are uniform in highlighting the importance of the corridor not only during the initial phases of the conflict or soon after the ceasefire, but also years after. This has allowed NKR to obtain some sort of access to the outside world without being part of the international system itself. While brief skirmishes and hostilities have occurred throughout the years, the lack of progress in reaching a political settlement and continued survivability of NKR makes the conflicts one of the most well-known frozen conflicts in contemporary history.
The case of RSK also highlights the support Serbia provided to help establish the unrecognized republic within Croatia in early 1990s. JNA support was key to allow RSK take over the regions it laid claim on and maintain it for the better part during the conflict in the region. There is also evidence that RSK fully relied on the various type of support from Serbia to sustain itself, including sending military cadres and limited trade. Yet, this has been insignificant and disruptive over time. Therefore, the main source of goods to sustain the local population came from illicit trade, which was also conducted between the warring sides during the conflict. In addition, RSK relied on land connection that went through RS within BiH. Throughout the years of conflict Serbia’s relationship with the leadership with RS and RSK made the reliance on Belgrade inconsistent and unfeasible. The blockade on RS, which extended to RSK is also evident of this. Therefore, when it comes to trade, RSK had to rely on illegal activities by itself rather than continuous and strong support from Serbia. The strongest indication of Serbia’s loss of faith in and support to RSK came in the summer of 1994. In a matter of days, Croatia’s military operation was successful in winning back almost the entire territory held by RSK. Serbia refrained from providing any support to fend off the attack and rather blamed RSK leadership for its misfortunes. The political differences between Belgrade and RSK through the years along with geographical distance between the two republics made Serbia an unwilling patron to assist RSK in state-building efforts. Overall, the evidence does indicate that Serbia was indeed a patron-state, but it cannot be considered a consistent patron.

6.1.2 Between-Case Comparison: Trade Aspect Compared between Cases

While for each case separately the trade relations and potential as well as economic connectivity with its respective patron-state might still appear limited, the importance of these aspects comes to light when both cases are compared together.

Both Armenia and Serbia suffered economically from their involvement in the conflict to support the respective de facto republics. While Armenia suffered condemnation mostly from the neighbours, Serbia’s involvement in the war led to sanctions by the international community. It is difficult to establish, which country suffered more for their actions, since Armenia’s economic starting position was already weakened by the change in economic model due to the fall of the Soviet Union, while Serbia during the times of Yugoslavia was economically much stronger than Armenia. Nonetheless, during the war Armenia maintained active support, also through economic means, to NKR. This perhaps was coupled with the strong emotional and moral support that linked Karabakh and Armenia-proper. In contrast,
Serbia’s lifeline to RSK waned over time. While at the beginning Serbia was key to establishing RSK, by the end of the war Belgrade’s support had completely disappeared. The capture and control of Lachin Corridor has been instrumental in providing a lifeline to NKR, which has allowed establish economic transit for the de facto regime both with Armenia and, later in the years through Armenia with the rest of the world. The land connection between RSK and Serbia ran through RS in Bosnia. The geographical distance and political differences made Serbia unreliable for Krajina Serbs, which resorted to illegal trade for their sustenance. As such, NKR having secured guarantees and future potential to sustain itself with the help of Armenia, had a preference to halt the active conflict phase. In contrast, RSK lacked potential to sustain itself through long-term guarantees from Serbia. As such, also the short-term conclusion of RSK was a military capitulation of the republic.

6.1.3 Implications for the Hypotheses

H1(a): *Presence of a patron-state during wartime will lead to a separatist conflict becoming frozen.*

The evidence from the case studies shows that in both cases patron-states were present. However, only in the case of NKR did the conflict become frozen. In contrast, Serbia’s patronage did not lead the conflict to enter such a state. Therefore, the hypothesis is not supported. The mere presence of a patron-state is not attributable to the conflict becoming frozen.

Table 5: Summary of Hypothesis H1(a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Presence of Patron</th>
<th>Expected outcome</th>
<th>Observed results</th>
<th>Support for H1(a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NKR</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Frozen</td>
<td>Frozen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSK</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Frozen</td>
<td>Not Frozen</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H1(b): *Higher levels of patron-state commitment and consistency will increase the likelihood of conflict becoming frozen.*

The evidence from the case studies shows that Armenia’s commitment to NKR has been consistent throughout the war years, and even after the initial signing of a ceasefire agreement. On the other hand, while Serbia was committed to assist RSK at the initial stages of the conflict, in time, its assistance waned and disappeared completely. Therefore, I conclude that this
hypothesis is supported. Higher level of patron-state commitment, which is consistent over time, increases the likelihood of conflict becoming frozen.

Table 6: Summary of Hypothesis H1(b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Patron consistency</th>
<th>Expected outcome</th>
<th>Observed results</th>
<th>Support for H1(b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NKR</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Frozen</td>
<td>Frozen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSK</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Not frozen</td>
<td>Not Frozen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H1(c): Establishment of consistent trade between patron-state and rebels will increase the likelihood of conflict becoming frozen.

NKR directly benefited from the capture of Lachin Corridor through which it was and still can engage in trade with Armenia and even the outside world. In contrast, RSK and Serbia engaged in limited trade activity during the years of war. Moreover, this activity was not consistent and subject to disruption. Instead, RSK had to rely on illicit economy rather than formalizing any continuous trade relations with Belgrade. However, the lack of formal evidence in both cases of volumes of trade dampen the support for this hypothesis. Since I must heavily rely on secondary sources for evidence, this hypothesis can only be partially supported. I observed partial evidence of consistent trade establishment in NKR, and lack of in the case of RSK. Lack of data does not permit having a stronger support for the hypothesis.

Table 7: Summary of Hypothesis H1(c)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Trade establishment</th>
<th>Expected outcome</th>
<th>Observed results</th>
<th>Support for H1(c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NKR</td>
<td>Yes (partial)</td>
<td>Frozen</td>
<td>Frozen</td>
<td>Yes (partial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSK</td>
<td>No (partial)</td>
<td>Not Frozen</td>
<td>Not Frozen</td>
<td>Yes (partial)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.1.4 Implications for Trade as the Causal Mechanism for the Relationship

Both cases show the intimate links in this causal relationship, where it is not only the mere presence of a patron-state with any support that can lead to a frozen conflict, but the establishment of trade, at first, and then maintaining it consistently throughout that made the difference. Indeed, both Armenia and Serbia provided valuable support for the initial establishment of NKR and RSK, respectively. In addition, both patrons showed support that exceeded that of a regular third-party. The institutional support was present in some form in
both cases. As I narrowed the institutional support to looked at the trade specifically, again both patrons did show some evidence of trade being present with their respective de facto regimes. However, the difference maker here has been the level of commitment and consistency of which trade, as part of the institutional support, was maintained.

While, again, the exact levels of trade remain in the shadows due to the lack of available data, the information and sources that are available push the conclusion in the direction that support the theoretical claim of this study. By securing of a lifeline, through which commerce can take place in Karabakh, NKR has been able to maintain its livelihood after the ceasefire was agreed on between the conflicting parties. In the opposite faith, RSK had to rely on illicit trade while the institutional support that came from Serbia, including trade, was not extensive enough nor consistent that it could secure its livelihood.

Yet, RSK lost all the support from Serbia and not just institutional. It is difficult to assume that a more committed support, i.e. institutional, could be maintained if no other form of third-party support is present. Moreover, is the trade the sole determinant that can be attributed to the outcome of each case? This leads to consider alternative explanations and additional observations that also could influence the outcome in NKR and RSK.

6.2 Alternative explanations

International Community Involvement

Perhaps the most notable alternative explanation that could explain the different outcomes in the two conflicts is the involvement of the international community to help reach a settlement. For NKR, it was after the fall of the Soviet Union when regional and international actors got involved. On an international stage, both UN and OSCE/CSCE played a role in trying to reach a political settlement in the conflict. Moreover, also neighbouring Iran and Turkey made attempts to broker peace. However, it was Russia in 1994, which was able to end the active fighting with an establishment of a ceasefire. While throughout the conflict Moscow had sided with either Azerbaijan or Armenia on several occasions, after the ceasefire agreement, Russia kept closer relations with Armenia, even signing a bilateral agreement in 1995 to allow Russian military bases in Armenia (A. Grigoryan 2014). Alternatively, European Community and UN were quickly involved in the conflict in Croatia. This led to a swift deployment of UNPROFOR peacekeeping force in the region. Moreover, the US was actively involved as well. Besides active mediation efforts by the United States, the US also provided military support to Croatia (Pavković 2000; Rogel 2004). This has also led to credit the international involvement as the
main difference maker between Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (and others in the former Soviet Union) and the former Yugoslavia conflicts (Cornell 2017). Although, here the author has emphasised the solution to war in Kosovo and BiH. Nonetheless, biased or not, it seems that in one case the dominant international or regional actors have sided with the patron-state, i.e. Armenia, whereas in the other case with the parent state, i.e. Croatia. Therefore, also the outcome weights in support of the party, which received such support.

Part of the international involvement were also the sanctions against Serbia, which played an important role in forcing Belgrade to shift its political strategy. Yet, Armenia also suffered tremendously from the economic blockade it was subject to. Moreover, RS in Bosnia was part of the peace agreement signed soon after the fall of RSK. As a result, while it did not become sovereign republic, it enjoys wide autonomy within BiH. This suggests that perhaps RSK, too, might have enjoyed similar status within Croatia was it not overran militarly a few months before the Dayton Agreement that ended the conflict in BiH.

The different approach and commitment the international and regional community played in each of these cases did influence the conflict dynamics. However, it is difficult to measure and compare how and which activities were the most detrimental without considering other aspects, such as the different commitment Armenia and Serbia had to their respective de facto regimes. The Armenian people were deeply connected to the fight for Karabakh, whereas the Serbs outside Krajina were not.

**Parent-State Weakness and Change over Time**

Both Azerbaijan and Croatia emerged as newly independent states during dissolution of the federations they were part of. Each conflict erupted in environment of a weak parent state. During the war, Azerbaijan experienced four overthrows of political leadership in less than two years (Croissant 1998), leading some to conclude that the war was won “largely because Azerbaijan had collapsed into a failed state.” (Cornell 2017, 9). In Croatia, the newly formed National Guard in 1991 had to rely on “commandeered grocery vans and customized tourist buses” in the battle zones against the military strength of the JNA; “the two sides were hopelessly mismatched.” (both in Silber and Little 1996, 170). In time, Croatia was able to rebuild as a state and with the help of US also became a strong military force capable to retake RSK territories (Kolstø and Paukovic 2014; Rogel 2004). This shows that while both separatists enjoyed initial success due to a weak parent state, NKR was able to enter the frozen conflict stage because Azerbaijan remained weak, while Croatia was able to overcome the
initial instability. In the latter case, this was done with the support of external actors. However, it was not only Azerbaijan that was weak, but also the patron-state – Armenia. Particularly due to the blockade imposed on it, it, too, was on a brink of collapse. Here, Russia has played an important role on providing security guarantees to Armenia after the ceasefire agreement, and, in essence, helping keep the conflict frozen (Laitin and Suny 1999). Over time, as Azerbaijan has improved its domestic situation, the conflict, however, has not returned to the ‘hot’ stage. This shows also the importance of not only the strength or weakness of the patron who directly supports the de facto regime, but also the commitment of other third-parties to either of the sides in the conflict – a patron’s patron (e.g. Russia’s support to Armenia in Broers 2013).

6.3 Additional Observations

**Importance of Nation-Building**

The focus in this study has been on the state-building aspect of the de facto regime. However, some scholars have also highlighted the importance of nation-building (for instance, Dembinska and Campana 2017; Kolstø and Paukovic 2014). This relates to the ‘soft’ side of state consolidation, including establishing a shared identity and unity within the population. This can be done through states symbols, propaganda, and ideology (see Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2008, 484). While NKR has been able to construct and build upon a distinct Karabakhi identity and a sense of unity (Curtis and Suny 2011; see also De Waal 2003), the Krajina Serbs were not successful in their nation-building endeavours (Kolstø and Paukovic 2014).

**Diaspora Support**

Another aspect that played in favour of NKR and Armenia was the ethnic diaspora, which strongly supported the Karabakh struggle during the war and after, both with direct financing and lobbying in countries such as the US (Koinova 2014; see also Broers 2013; Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2008; Zürcher 2007). More generally, in ethnic conflicts diasporas are increasingly seen as critical for the material and moral support (Caspersen 2008), particularly, where no patron support is available (Dembinska and Campana 2017). While NKR has enjoyed significant support from the diaspora, in the case of RSK no evidence of such trans-border linkages and support was found. Again, this indirectly links back to the previous observation of nation-building. It can be argued there is an intimate relationship between nation-building and diaspora support, given that any diaspora is present. A common sense of unity and identity may help attract and mobilize ethnic brethren abroad to help with their struggle. Conversely, the diaspora can assist in strengthening the ethnic sense of unity at homeland.
In NKR, the major military success was the capture of the Lachin Corridor to establish a land connection between Karabakh and Armenia. Even after the ceasefire agreement, this territory has served as a vital lifeline for NKR that allows it to survive also through trade connection with Armenia. On the other hand, RSK was detached from Serbia, and any routes had to pass through RS in Bosnia. It was already pointed out in the analysis that this geographical distance also influenced the political ‘distance’ between the leadership in RSK and Belgrade. In other frozen conflicts, such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the direct border with their patron Russia has been beneficial. Also in eastern Ukraine, the two de facto statelets directly benefit from the border with Russia, for instance, in their sale of coal (Potocki 2018). Similarly, on the physical linkage importance, in the Russian-occupied Crimea, Moscow has spent billions of euros to create a bridge that would allow to connect the peninsula with Russia (MacFarquhar 2018). Only Transnistria is physically separated from Moscow. Here, the large Russian troop presence from the Soviet times has been beneficial. Overall, these examples point towards an obvious conclusion: it is easier for a patron-state to provide support if the de facto regime is attached to its physical borders. This is not unique to de facto states, but also on a wider scale of intra-state conflicts where rebels enjoy third-party support. Logistically, the external state can easier provide support to rebels if they are close to one another.

6.4 Limitations

Methodological Limitations

As it is often with small-n studies, the limited number of cases analysed points towards a potential bias on generalizability to the wider population of cases. The alternative explanations and additional observations point out at several differences and nuances in the selected cases that may also have contributed to the outcome of each conflict. A more robust way to limit or control for this bias would be to compare more than just two cases. Unfortunately, due to the limited scope and length of this research, such strategy remains open for future research. From here, another issue arises. Namely, the size of the population in general. The number of cases of de facto states since mid-20th century is limited. The variation in them is, oftentimes, severe. Also, previous authors have primarily focused on the post-Soviet and former-Yugoslavia conflicts, with greatly higher interest in the former region, leaving cases within Africa or Asia understudied. Therefore, to follow a most-similar case design with more than two cases, is a difficult task.
Another potential issue in relation to the cases is the selection bias. To an extent this bias has been alleviated by opting for a between-case comparison rather than a single within-case comparison. However, in the purposive qualitative analysis selection process, the two cases were chosen for their values in the dependent and independent variables that in other cases might not be true. An important potential limitation here is the duration of ‘hot’ war. In NKR it was from 1988-1994; in RSK it was 1991-1995. In some cases of frozen conflict, the actual duration of war has been relatively short. In Northern Cyprus it was less than a month, in Transnistria a few months, in Abkhazia and South Ossetia just over a year. The longer period of war might have given more time for the patron and de facto state to establish trade. To an extent this has been overcome in the research design by looking at a time frame of 24 months after the ceasefire agreement. I have argued that during the signing of ceasefire, the parties are not aware that the conflict will become frozen and resumption of violence might soon follow. However, 24 months is an arbitrary period, which coincides with previous literature, where the same time period for a de facto state to be considered established. Extending or shortening this period might bring different results.

**Empirical Limitations**

A critical limitation in this study has been the availability of empirical evidence. The lack of formal evidence of government records and archives seriously hampers the ability to make stronger conclusions on the relationship between consistent patron-state and frozen conflict. Due to the lack of information on NKR and other post-Soviet conflicts during the 1990s, some have described these cases as “informational black holes” (King, 2001, in Blakkisrud and Kolstø 2012, 282). Moreover, while there is extensive literature available on the wars of Yugoslavia’s secession, the primary focus has been on the military and political dynamics of the conflicts, and within BiH. Less attention has been paid on non-military support between Serbia and RSK. Understandably, since RSK was not able to survive, the attention to it is limited.

Related empirical hurdle in the analysis chapter has been the strong reliance on secondary sources. Moreover, all are in the English language. The issue of credibility of sources is not of major concern here. All literature that informed about empirical findings is peer-reviewed journal articles, books from respected authors and publishers, or other sources that are referenced from there. Where necessary, triangulation was employed. However, the bigger issue is that heavy reliance on secondary (or tertiary) sources means that my investigation is
dependent on what previous scholars have deemed (un)necessary to include in their respective analyses. The topic of trade establishment during war in these cases has not been sufficiently addressed by previous literature. However, the absence of such evidence in secondary sources does not necessarily entail that there was not elaborate trade altogether. Moreover, it could be that more research on the topic has been done by regional and national scholars in languages other than English. Unfortunately, I have not accessed such sources in other languages.

**Theoretical Limitations**

Further limitations relate to the conceptualization and operationalization of the main variables. Frozen conflict oftentimes is an elusive concept, as was discussed in Chapter II. Particularly, when it comes to escalation of violence, the operationalization becomes difficult. As seen in the case of NKR, violent skirmishes have periodically broken out throughout the years since 1994. However, it is still considered a frozen conflict by virtually all scholars. However, a mere reliance on, say, UCDP data would not confirm this. Also, in 2008 there was a brief war in Abkhazia and South Ossetia with Georgia. With the operationalization utilized in this research, some could argue that the ‘timer’ of 24 months after a ceasefire agreement should be reset.

When it comes to the patron-state, I have conceptualized this variable differently from previous research. Here, a patron-state is such that not only provides third-party support to rebels, but also institutional support. While I employ this novel conceptualization, my research on a large part has been based on previous literature, which discusses the concept of patronage in different terms, i.e. not necessarily with provision of institutional support. In both of my cases Armenia and Serbia fitted my definition of patron-state (although only the former was a consistent patron-state). Previous literature that has discussed either Armenia’s or Serbia’s role have also labelled them as patron-states. However, the utilization of the concept, which is not set in stone, could potentially lead to make varying conclusion across other cases.

Last, in my proposed causal relationship, my focus has been on dyadic relationship between the patron and de facto state. The third actor, the central government, has been defined as a weak state and further neglected in the analysis. As RSK case showed, Croatia was weak until at one point it was not. The inclusion of central government in a triadic actor relationship could paint a different picture regarding explanations of a particular conflict outcome.
CHAPTER VII

7. Conclusion

This research has aimed to illustrate the nuanced relationship between consistent patron-state and frozen conflicts. As such, ‘why do some territorial conflicts become frozen while others do not?’ was set as the main research question. I have made a theoretical argument that the presence of a consistent patron-state is an important factor that leads to a frozen conflict, because during the war the patron is able to establish trade with the rebel-held region, thus facilitating the lack of dependence on the central government by the rebels and signalling the survivability prospect for the de facto regime in the long-term. The strategy to illustrate this relationship has been the most-similar case design and Structured, Focused Comparison. By analysing two case studies, Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in Azerbaijan and Republika Srpska Krajina in Croatia, the empirical evidence shows partial support for the hypothesis that trade establishment by a consistent patron does increase the likelihood of conflict becoming frozen. More specifically, both Armenia and Serbia showed characteristics of a patron-state, which I defined as an external party that also provides institutional support in addition to financial and (in)direct military support. However, the difference between these two patrons has been that Armenia was committed and consistent throughout the war period and after the ceasefire agreement was established. While, on the other hand, Serbia was committed to RSK’s cause at the beginning of the conflict, but soon after this commitment disappeared. Eventually, this led to a complete abandonment of RSK, and its ultimate defeat by the Croatian Armed Forces.

The comparative analysis shows only partial support for the causal argument, however. Primarily, this is due to the empirical limitations I have come across during the analysis. Specifically, the lack of primary source evidence on trade establishment between the respective patron-states and de facto regimes does not allow to draw stronger conclusion and support for the hypothesis H1(c). However, sources that were available do show support for the theoretical argument. Indeed, it appears that trade establishment by consistent Armenia has played an important factor that contributed to NKR conflict to become frozen, while the lack of consistency by Serbia’s trade has contributed to the downfall of RSK a few years after its establishment.

While the findings draw modest support and conclusions of the theoretical argument, this study has also complemented previous research on the topic in various ways. First, I looked at the relationship between de facto regimes and patron-states during the conflict’s active phase,
rather than during the frozen environment. Second, I have proposed a novel conceptualization of what a patron-state is. Third, and last, I have looked at trade establishment as the mechanism that links patron-state and frozen conflict. A clear focus on trade has not been conducted in previous relevant literature.

From here, several considerations for future research on the topic are proposed. I echo Dembinska and Campana’s (2017) suggestion that more focus should be paid to (pre-)war period of de facto regimes and the frozen conflicts that do or do not follow. In addition, while previous research has looked at state-building component in de facto states, attention could be devoted to dissecting this wide concept by looking at activities and aspects within state-building. Moreover, oftentimes the focus is either on the de facto state or patron-state and the relationship between the two. What is missing, is the central government’s role in this triadic relationship. Often the governments are characterized as weak or failed states. However, the non-military aspects and actions by the government are not analysed, also not my research. A potential remedy would be to look at government’s role in peaceful economic reintegration of the territories it has lost control over. For instance, the current Ukrainian government has been cooperating with Croatian counterparts on possible strategies to re-take control over the Donbas region. Here, a military operation, such as Croatia’s Operation Storm, is the least likely option. The primary scenario relates to Eastern Slavonia regions, which had a peacekeeping operation and transitional administration in place before it was reintegrated back into Croatia. This brief example shows illustrates that governments also take note of historical cases and can, potentially, play a significant role in the way how such territorial conflicts play out. It is not merely up to the patron and de facto state interactions. Overall, I show the relationship and its change over time between a patron-state and de facto regime. This change can be affected by external pressure, e.g. sanctions, but also can be altered by domestic political differences that emerge over time. Together, this shows that the parent state, but also international community actors can tweak and alter the relationship between the patron and rebels and alienate one from another in time. However, how this can be done exactly, remains open for future research.
Bibliography


