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## **The Impact of Horizontal Concentration of Power on Ethnic Mobilization in Post-Soviet Georgia**

### **abstract**

In the specialized literature concentration of power is often viewed as conducive to democratic instability in ethnically divided societies. Arend Lijphart, the most famous proponent of power sharing, argued that stable democracy in deeply divided societies, which is understood as the absence of ethnic conflict, is highly unlikely under majoritarian winner-take-all political systems that are characterized by concentration of power in majority one-party governments and by absolute majority rule. Lijphart's consociationalism implies that a majoritarian winner-take-all system by its very nature blocks the access of ethnic minorities to the decision-making process, which leads to their alienation and which hence increases the chance for ethnic minorities' discord.

However, the vast literature exploring the causes that provoke and factors that favour ethnic mobilization generally do not focus on the impact of the horizontal concentration of power on the escalation of ethnic conflicts. Specifically, scholars who developed the political and institutional perspectives to explain ethnic mobilization either focused on specific institutional designs, as electoral systems or state territorial organizations, or analyzed the impact of a specific party system on the type and intensity of ethnic mobilization.

Hence, on the one hand consociationalist theory predicts ethnic minorities' discord in ethnically divided societies with horizontally concentrated power; on the other hand the literature on ethnic mobilization does not identify the concentration of power as one of the major factors leading to ethnic mobilization as a reaction towards the reduced access of minorities to decision-taking processes. However, clarifying both the relevance and type of impact that power concentration has on degree of ethnic mobilization is important, particularly for the post Soviet region in which several multi-ethnic republics experienced periods with horizontally concentrated power during transition.

In this article I address this gap. Mainly, I aim to establish the causal chain between horizontal power concentration and ethnic mobilization, on the basis of post-Soviet Georgia. I seek to determine if there was a causal relation between power concentration and ethnic mobilization in this country at all. Moreover, I aim to establish whether an eventual causal relation between these two phenomena points to a similar type of effect as the one established by consociationalist theory, which argues that concentrated power leads to the intensification of ethnic minorities' discord.

In my study I focus mainly on four territorially concentrated ethnic groups in Georgia: Ossetians, Abkhazians, Azeris, and Armenians.