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Affect Paradiplomacy?
An Exploratory Research with
Cases from the North Caucasus

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Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia

Dissertation has been accepted for the commencement of the degree of doctor of Philosophy (in Political Science) on 6 September, 2022 by the Council of the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, University of Tartu.

Supervisor: Eiki Berg, PhD
                    Professor of International Relations Theory,
                    Faculty of Social Sciences
                    University of Tartu

Opponent: David Criekemans, PhD
                    Associate Professor, Department of Political Science
                    University of Antwerp

Commencement: 21 October 2022 at 16:00 at Lossi 36–214,
                    University of Tartu

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a doctoral thesis can be a lonely process when sifting through data, writing up and pouring over several bodies of literature. But even in those moments I knew that I could count on many people for support and understanding, and guidance when the data or concepts became too blurry. Depthful academic conversations, discussions during and after seminars as well as feedback in many forms were critical to ensuring a successful delivery of this thesis. While this thesis is my work, it could not have been completed without the advice, feedback and inspiration from the following individuals, named here in no particular order: Piret Ehin, Thomas Linseinmaier, Andrei Makarychev, Eoin McNamara, Viatcheslav Morozov, Julia Nikitina, Vello Pettai, Sia Spiliopoulou-Åkermark, Marta Ter, Maili Vilson and Kristel Vits. My sincere and warm thank you to all of them.

I was extremely fortunate to receive extensive institutional support from the University of Tartu and my department – the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies. The friendly and stimulating intellectual environment of the Institute helped me become the researcher I am today. In addition, I am very grateful for all the grants, scholarships and fellowships that made the research viable or facilitated specific elements from the research process. I benefited from two grants from the Archimedes Foundation (in 2019 and 2022), three international mobility grants from the Doctoral School in Economics and Innovation (once a year from 2019 to 2021), one graduate mobility grant from the BEAR Foundation (2020) and the Åland Islands Peace Fellowship (2021). Several portions of this text were written during writing retreats in Estonia, generously funded by the Doctoral School in Economics and Innovation. The funding received from the University of Tartu and the Estonian Ministry of Education – allocated to all full-time PhD students and candidates – was extremely generous in supporting my living costs throughout all the years of the doctoral programme. No matter the researcher's talent, skills or knowledge, this thesis would have been impossible without this material support. Thank you.

Noé Cornago and Alex Marshall were the examiners of this thesis and I am thankful for their extensive and insightful feedback. Earlier in the doctoral programme, Noé Cornago offered me several insights on paradiplomacy as I was just entering the topic. My doctoral supervisor, Eiki Berg, had the biggest impact on the planning, design and realisation of this project. Without his support and vision, this thesis would have never taken shape. In many ways, he took a chance in my doctoral project and I am extremely thankful for his trust and for sharing his wisdom throughout these years.

My family and friends made these PhD years pleasant and secure even with the COVID19 pandemic raging. My dear wife, Sophie Klyszcz (Qiaoyun Peng), has been my faithful companion, supporting me at each step of this doctoral project. It is to her that this work is dedicated.

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INTRODUCTION

Two transformations in international relations are behind this thesis: the pluralisation of international relations and the post-Cold War transformation of war. In the past few decades, the realm of international relations has become a more plural one. The post-Second World War state-centric world order has been slowly replaced by one where sovereignty, security and power are no longer necessarily connected (Badie 2021, 19). The result is the gradual recognition of new actors and their impact in world affairs. The influence of non-state actors in interstate relations and international organisations has driven scholars to assess their agency and impact. Similarly, sub-state governments (provinces, regions, states) are increasingly recognised as actors in international affairs, bringing in their own perspectives, values and norms even when belonging to larger states (Cornago 2013, 118). War has also changed. Just as states find themselves among other kinds of actors, inter-state war has become less frequent. Indeed, wars – when they happen – are predominantly intra-state. Databases such as Correlates of War have pointed to there being fewer wars among states (Sarkees & Wayman 2010) and civil wars becoming more prevalent. This trend has pushed some processes of conflict internationalisation to the background. Wars today are seen more often as the result of a lack of security and less frequently as a strategic choice (Badie 2021, 20). These two trends seem to go on parallel trajectories but they do in fact meet. By the middle of the 2010s, almost half of all intra-state conflicts were considered to be 'internationalised', with foreign actors having a decisive role in shaping conflict dynamics even without being open participants (Pettersson, Högbladh & Öberg 2019, 599). So, even in domestic conflicts, the international dimension plays a distinct role. Yet, that war is seen as a security deficit and not as a strategy leaves unanswered questions about the agency of the multiple international (and internationalised) actors involved. This is the broader problématique to which this thesis belongs.

The conceptual nexus between the transformations of international relations and the role of the state, and the transformations of war is too broad and complex to formulate a singular, concrete empirical question. Because of this, I narrow down the conceptual framework by focusing on paradiplomacy; it is in this body of literature where I find a research task to fulfil. Indeed, the paradiplomacy literature has something to offer to understanding the role of agency in the internationalisation of armed or high intensity conflict, albeit it remains an unexplored topic in this body of literature. Paradiplomacy – the international relations of sub-state regions – is a field that has developed with a concern over conflict. The ways that sub-state territorial governments ('regions' for short) engage in international relations has implications for the security of the state because of their territorial authority – territory being an essential matter for the state they belong to. However, we do not know the ways sub-state governments engage in international relations in conditions of internal armed conflict. We also do not know how armed conflict constrains or empowers sub-state inter-

national relations. This is a problem, as the literature on protodiplomacy and on disharmonious paradiplomacy suggest that the international relations of sub-state regions can indeed pose a challenge to policies of a central government. This problem can be sharper when happening in the strained conditions of armed conflict.

This gap in our knowledge is unexplored. There are blind spots in the paradiplomacy literature on this matter, necessitating an exploratory approach to fulfil this research task. Indeed, aside from theoretically-grounded assumptions, we do not have hypotheses on which to proceed. Consequently, this thesis' research question is exploratory: 'how does high intensity conflict affect paradiplomacy?' This thesis reports on a theory-building exploratory research guided by a theoretically-informed problem. As the trend of conflict internationalisation continues, paradiplomacy may be seen as another vector by which a conflict becomes internationalised. In fact, as this thesis finds, paradiplomacy can become a critical channel for a central government to address violent conflict in one of its territories. The gap in the literature demands a descriptive and explorative account of the ways that high intensity violent conflict affects paradiplomacy.

The general conceptual framework of paradiplomacy offers the expectation that violent conflict prompts regions and central governments to engage in certain forms of international relations to address their domestic needs. As I argue, it is possible to address this research question by opening the conceptual and analytical scope of paradiplomacy to account for geopolitical and historical factors that contextualise both region formation and the roots of conflict. This approach leads me to suggest a few non-mutually exclusive trajectories that paradiplomacy can go through in conditions of violent conflict. The research concludes by stressing that even in conditions where a plurality of international and internationalised actors operated, the state retains the means to assert its interests and even act through some of these actors.

Indeed, conflict has been a recurrent theme in the paradiplomacy literature – albeit without having directly addressed violent conflict. From early on, the paradiplomacy field pointed to centre-region disharmony over international affairs (Soldatos 1991). Some scholars have addressed the ways paradiplomacy participates in the emerging configurations of post-Cold War international relations (e.g. Cornago 1999; Aldecoa & Keating 2000). Similarly, many scholars have addressed protodiplomacy (i.e. paradiplomacy driven by secessionism, see, e.g. Cornago 2018; Criekemans 2020) and cases such as *de facto* states and rebel diplomacy (e.g. Akhmadov & Danilov 2013; Malejacq 2017) as additional instances of sub-regional internationalisation in conflictive circumstances. These frameworks will be useful to address the research task ahead, which is to investigate how armed conflict affects paradiplomacy. Generally, there is still much that paradiplomacy can offer to matters of international security and conflict (see Paquin 2020, 60).

This thesis approaches both conflict and paradiplomacy in their complexity, namely, as a phenomenon embedded in geopolitical and historical processes.

What enables this empirically-rich design is the small number of cases chosen, namely, three cases and a control case where high intensity violence was absent. The cases are Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia-Alania, federal subjects of the Russian Federation. The first three cases experienced high levels of conflict intensity in the 2010–2013 period while North Ossetia experienced low and stagnating levels of violence in the same years. In that sense, this latter case takes the place of a control case where the process of increased levels of conflict-related violence is not present. The relative ease of access to data on the violence and international engagements of these four entities render them viable cases for this thesis.

The four cases – or three and a control case – feature similarities and differences. Dagestan is Russia's southernmost federal subject and the largest autonomous republic of the North Caucasus in surface and population terms. Of the four cases, it is the only one with a coastline. It is also by far the region with the most ethno-linguistic and confessional groups. As the analysis below points to, these features have consequences for Dagestan's international relations. Ingushetia – in sharp contrast with Dagestan – is the North Caucasus smallest region in surface and population terms. It is also nearly monoethnic, with most of the population belonging to the Ingush ethnic group. While it had preceding entities during the Tsarist era and the Soviet period, Ingushetia's territory was formed after seceding from the Chechno-Ingush ASSR. Its former belonging to a broader entity is among the roots of that republic's precarious statehood, a feature that shaped its international relations thereafter. Kabardino-Balkaria is a dual nationality republic, meaning it has two 'titular' nationalities, the Kabards and the Balkars. According to political and legal documents, these two groups should share power in the republic. In practice, the Kabards – numerically superior to the Balkars – control the real centres of power. This asymmetry is reflected in the republic's international relations. Finally, there is North Ossetia. This republic is nearly monoethnic, its population consisting of the titular Ossetians and a sizable Ingush minority. Unlike the other cases considered here, North Ossetia borders an entity with a kin population of ethnic Ossetians – the *de facto* state of South Ossetia. This fact has shaped the republic's international relations since 1991, thrusting it to international affairs from the very start of the post-Soviet era.

For each of them, I deploy several indicators to trace change in paradiplomacy, both qualitative and quantitative. Here, I follow insights from Kuznetsov (2015) and Stremoukhov (2021). In employing these, I am interested in short-term change in paradiplomacy as evinced by changing levels of intensity in the external activities of the regions analysed, as well as quantitative change across the opportunity frameworks identified. In addition, I included among my cases a control case that shares many of the features of the other cases without featuring the increase in violence. The original contribution of this thesis is thus multiple: it rests on the originality of the dataset created, the comparative perspective of the cases chosen (not done before) and the findings, suggesting new avenues for paradiplomacy and conflict research.

In this thesis, I point to high intensity conflict putting the international relations of sub-state regions in different trajectories. First, high intensity conflict can be seen as a game changer that sub-state governments need to cope with, and second, it can result in centrally-imposed engagement, monitoring and restrictions. Sub-state regions are not self-standing and un-mediated actors in international relations, so, consequently, in none of these trajectories change is straightforward. In each step, there is a mediating element in the paradiplomacy system that exerts pressure on the region to change its external relations. So, crucially, I find that the central government plays a large role in shaping the international relations of regions experiencing high intensity conflict.

The thesis consists of four empirical chapters and one analytical chapter. Chapter 1 sets out a conceptual framework. By reviewing the literature on paradiplomacy, I identify two different 'schools' or approaches in the study of paradiplomacy, a functionalist or neoliberal one and a historical/geopolitical one. Then, I explore the extent to which the paradiplomacy literature has addressed security and conflict issues. There are indeed a few works that can be considered to touch upon violent conflict and paradiplomacy, mostly through the lens of security, and not quite through conflict. Finally, Chapter 1 offers a conceptual framework for conceptualising paradiplomacy in a way that the effects of conflict can be identified. This way, I close the chapter by setting out my theoretically-informed expectations for data gathering.

Chapter 2 presents the methodology of the thesis. This methodology is grounded on some of the conceptual and methodological challenges of the topic. Namely, I identify the effects of violent conflict on paradiplomacy to be of a junctural nature (i.e. not based on long-term trends). The literature on para-diplomacy has yet to have a basic explanatory model but it does have accounts for the long-term emergence of paradiplomacy. Short-term and junctural change has been overall underexplored by the paradiplomacy literature. Because of these gaps, this thesis has a purpose of contributing also to the understanding of short-term change in paradiplomacy by proposing testable hypotheses about short-term change induced by changes in conflict intensity. In addition, the thesis draws from the historical/geopolitical 'school' of paradiplomacy to identify the long-term trends in paradiplomacy of the cases selected. The research design is a small-n comparison of similar cases, and uses quantitative and qualitative data as indicators of change in paradiplomacy. The fourth case is a control one, where conflict intensity did not rise and peak in the same way as in the other cases. For reasons to be precised in the chapter, I choose the early 2010s to focus on the evolution of paradiplomacy in these cases.

Chapter 3 presents the historical background of the cases chosen. This background takes on the trends of regional consolidation ('statehood' to use the Russian phrase) and the trends in external autonomy. The four cases share a similar background of regional consolidation, namely, as having been subjected to a process of imperial incorporation in the 18th and 19th centuries. At the same time, the polities of the North Caucasus were active in engaging foreign partners in what can be called a legacy of external relations. Yet, after the

region was fully brought into the imperial system ('pacified') in the mid-19th century, the external relations of these polities ceased. A differentiated system of governance was the rule, which preserved a measure of diversity in terms of administrative practices and cultural politics. Namely, the generals ruling the North Caucasus had a wide scope to govern as they saw fit. Then, imperial rule introduced the principle of ethnic territorial governance. Indeed, some of the first entities that would eventually become the North Caucasus republics of today would emerge in this period. These trends would only continue into the Bolshevik and Soviet eras, where the nationality principle would become entrenched but external relations would remain inactive. Perestroika and the Soviet collapse, seen from this perspective, gave a new scope for external action, especially in the 1990s, but one that would close progressively further into the 2000s.

Chapters 4 to 7 present the cases of Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia. Following the methodology, I present how para-diplomacy changed in these four regions in the four years of 2010 to 2013 according to quantitative and qualitative indicators. The quantitative indicators will identify whether the pace of international encounters increased or decreased in intensity (meetings per year) as violence levels peaked. The qualitative indicators will show whether change took place in the predominant purpose of paradiplomacy and whether the frameworks governing paradiplomacy changed in the time selected. To exploit the small-n research design, in addition to these indicators, I contextualise the findings in short-term and long-term trends of the region's politics and its relations with the country's central authorities.

Chapter 8 is an analytical chapter where I compare the findings of the previous four chapters to identify the cross-cutting patterns of change. The chapter also discusses implications, novelties and limitations of the thesis. Finally, the conclusion sets out the pathways for how conflict changes a region's paradiplomacy. These can be seen as testable hypotheses that future research may address for a theory of change in paradiplomacy.

CHAPTER 1
Paradiplomacy: Approaches and Conceptual Features

The study of paradiplomacy is relatively recent and is yet to develop distinct schools of thought within it. From its beginning in the late twentieth century to this day, paradiplomacy has maintained its attention on the concepts and puzzles featured in its foundational works. Nevertheless, in recent years, many researchers have sought to expand the scope of paradiplomacy and incorporate topics such as history and geopolitics, as well as evidence from regions beyond the developed West. The literature on paradiplomacy has a wealth of empirical case studies and a few comparative studies. It also features numerous articles, texts and books that offer a robust conceptual foundation to discern the different key components involved in paradiplomacy. This exploratory research aims to find what it is that we do not know in this body of literature and bridge the gap in our knowledge on the effects of high intensity conflict on paradiplomacy. Thus, to tackle the question '*how does high intensity conflict affect paradiplomacy*', I present here the basic conceptual model of paradiplomacy, describing what it entails, to what it applies and what enables and hinders it.

Within the paradiplomacy body of literature, there have been a few attempts at matching the phenomenon of paradiplomacy with security or conflict dynamics. Generally, there is a gap between the study of the structuring factors of international relations (war, security) and the scope of the study of international relations of sub-state entities. On its own, this thesis cannot fill that gap but contribute to addressing an outstanding point in it, namely the interaction between the presence of internal, violent conflict in a given region and its paradiplomacy. At the methodological level, my thesis benefits from the qualitative, in-depth case familiarisation afforded by the Most Similar System Design (MSSD) approach (next chapter). At the conceptual level, I frame conflict as a factor that affects the operational conditions of paradiplomacy and as an input that decision-makers ought to consider when designing their external engagements. This way, conflict is not reduced to an agenda item at the governor's office, nor is it sublimated as historical context.

The framework described below draws from the foreign policy decision-making model by Duchacek (1991, 17) and Duran (2015). This model necessitates centering the analysis on both the paradiplomacy-implementing bodies of the region and on the drivers of external relations. So, conflict appears to decision-makers as an agenda-setting issue that informs external policy making (i.e. paradiplomacy). Conflict also is a factor that structures the region's international relations, in what is considered here to be the environment where decision-making takes place. To analyse the operational environment, I go beyond what is proposed by Duchacek and follow Duran (2015, 70–77) in exploring the economic, political, cultural, historical, geographical and geopolitical factors that make up the 'operational environment' of paradiplomacy.

Thus, conflict is both an input and a context for paradiplomacy. This dual character necessitates a parallel approach, one that draws from the policy-centric paradiplomacy approach, and one that draws from the history-centric paradiplomacy approach.

This chapter proceeds by, first, introducing the body literature of para-diplomacy. I do this by offering a brief outline of the key concepts of para-diplomacy and presenting an account of the development of paradiplomacy as a field of study. Further on, I present the contours of the paradiplomacy literature, as organised along four distinct 'directions' in the scholarship: a explanatory/ descriptive axis, and a policy-centric/historical-geopolitical axis. By proceeding on the basis of thematic distinctions and emerging directions in the paradiplo-macy literature, I propose an approach to analysing the literature that differs from a chronological analysis, such as, for instance, that of Kuznetsov (2015). My intention is that, by proposing these four 'directions' of the literature, this chapter may add value to the broader, reflective understanding of the para-diplomacy scholarship, crucially, an understanding that acknowledges the interdisciplinary nature of this field of study. Finally, I address the gap in the study of paradiplomacy that concerns conflict and security, and proceed to introduce a systemic approach framework to paradiplomacy that allows for incorporating violent conflict in the relevant factors for paradiplomacy.

Foundational Concepts and Literature Review

'Paradiplomacy' is the shorthand term for the international relations (or 'exter-nal action') of sub-state governments. That is, the international relations of regionally-defined governments (that I may refer to here as 'regions', too) that are circumscribed and administratively inferior to a central government. These international relations may coincide, converge, advance or contradict the diplomacy or foreign policy of the central government (here referred to as 'state diplomacy', as opposed to sub-state diplomacy). As elaborated further upon below, this terminology (*Table 1*) was highly contested, albeit today it is less so.

Table 1. Summary of the key terms.

Term	Equivalent terms	Not to be confused with
Para-diplomacy	External relations [of the region]; external action [of the region]; international relations of the region; sub-state diplomacy	Relations between regions of the same state
Sub-state entity	Region, sub-state government, regional government	Local/municipal government,[1] state

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[1] Local and municipal governments do partake in international relations. However, in this thesis I do not address the phenomenon of municipal/city diplomacy. See this section for further clarification.

There is a broad, mostly consensual understanding of what paradiplomacy is, namely, the international relations of regions, broadly understood (for the precise definition used here, see below). However, beyond this rather open-ended definition there is no consensus as to what is the precise nature of paradiplomacy, or of regions for that matter (see Kuznetsov 2015, 21). This lack of definition is partly the consequence of the factors that shape paradiplomacy.

As many scholars have noted (among others, Aguirre 1999; Kuznetsov 2015, 28; Tavares 2016, 8–10), the term 'paradiplomacy' began to be used in the 1970s and 1980s to refer to the international relations of regions. It would take some time before a consensus of sorts would emerge about the label to refer to this phenomenon, as, indeed, 'paradiplomacy' as a term did not emerge alone. Many other terms were coined to refer to the phenomenon as well. Among others, 'micro-diplomacy', 'trans-sovereign activities', 'transborder regionalism' all were meant to capture the international relations of regions, or a specific aspect of them (Aguirre 1999, 187–193). Regarding 'paradiplomacy', from the very start, the use of the term was questioned due to its proximity to the term 'diplomacy', which is considered to be a competency of individual countries and not of regions (see Cornago 2010). The prefix 'para' has also been taken as carrying a negative connotation, as a form of parallel diplomacy that implicitly undermines the authority of the central government and diminishes the authority of sub-state governments. However, following Soldatos' seminal article on the topic (1991), the sense of 'parallel' was agreed to have a neutral connotation, as paradiplomacy could indeed undermine state diplomacy, but it could also be harmonious with state diplomacy (see below). Thus, according to Kuznetsov (2015, 28), it was accepted by 'default' as no other, well-known alternatives existed at the time.

Unlike traditional diplomacy, paradiplomacy does not have structurally-determined outcomes. This means that all paradiplomacy necessitates the agency and initiative of the regional government to engage in international relations (Cornago 2010, 97; Cornago 2013, 115). Indeed, unlike states – that are socialised into international relations and diplomatic customs – there is variety as to how sub-state entities institutionalise and bureaucratise their external action, if at all. For example, whilst all countries have representations (embassies, missions, consulates) abroad, only a few regions open representations outside of the borders of their respective countries. This variation reflects the undetermined character of paradiplomacy, meaning that the international system does not compel regions to engage in international relations. On these grounds, for the purposes of this research, and drawing from Kuznetsov (2015, 30–31), among others, I define paradiplomacy as *the ad hoc or permanent actions made by a regional government that involve international partners, all pursued in an official and overt way*.

This definition of paradiplomacy points to what the concept entails, what are and are not instances of paradiplomacy, what enables it and hinders it, and what mechanisms can explain its behaviour. Paradiplomacy – under this definition – can only be carried out by meso-level authorities, not top-level or municipal-

level authorities (see below). Then, this definition centres the regional government, meaning that not all state and state-affiliated institutions can be considered to engage in paradiplomacy. In other words, paradiplomacy is a publicly-funded phenomenon but not defined by its public funding. For example, a state (public) university can engage in international relations but it does not engage in paradiplomacy as it is not a regional government. Such public institutions may be considered to engage in paradiplomacy *only* if they are involved in initiatives *led* by its regional government. Furthermore, the counterpart or partners define what is paradiplomacy. A regional government may engage partners outside of the region, but these partners must be based abroad for the interaction to be considered paradiplomacy. So, for instance, horizontal engagements between a country's constituent regional governments cannot be considered paradiplomacy as there is no international element to these interactions. It is thus necessary for the region's counterpart to be foreign. In this sense, paradiplomacy is a phenomenon with a global presence (see below) that happens on an international scale. It also has a national scale – of centre-region relations (see below) –, and a local scale – of the region itself. Moreover, paradiplomacy can consist of either *ad hoc* initiatives carried out with a limited duration or involve open-ended, 'permanent' engagements with foreign partners. Agreements and representations abroad are examples of the latter (e.g. Tavares 2016, 95). Finally, paradiplomacy must be overt to be considered here under this definition. Indeed, there is a normative element to paradiplomacy, namely, that it asserts that sub-state governments are more than passive bystanders in international affairs and that they may participate in international relations with their own values and perspectives (Cornago 2013, 118). So, the assumption is that engagements between the regional government and foreign partners must be made in an official capacity, i.e. fulfilling the function of representing the region abroad according to the normative aspirations implicit in paradiplomacy. This also implies that the engagement is without secrecy, i.e. there must be reporting on it. This point precludes the inclusion of secret diplomacy and covert communications.[2]

To address what enables and hinders paradiplomacy, I begin from the undetermined character of sub-state international relations. As discussed here and further below, the lack of structural determination for paradiplomacy has many sources. Many authors have attempted to identify these by drawing from different research fields, such as International Relations and Federalism Studies. However, I argue, what gives paradiplomacy this *prima facie* undetermined character is that paradiplomacy is not a legitimate part of the state-centric international system. Following Lecours (2002), Bartmann (2006) and Cornago (2010), I consider the fundamental permissive causes for paradiplomacy to be the presence of a sub-state government and having permissive conditions for engaging foreign partners.

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[2]   Covert paradiplomacy is another unexplored phenomenon.

The territory-bound sub-state government is a by-product of the consolidation of the modern, Westphalian nation-state. The emergence of the modern state came along with the demise of the varied forms of pre-modern territorial administration, namely those that were dependent on the delegation of local governance, war-making capabilities and tax collection to small, more or less loyal rulers. The transformations brought about by the emergence of the modern state meant the beginning of 'direct control' by the sovereign power over its country's territory, a process that involved the standardisation of administrative structures (Tilly 1992, 107–117). Direct control, however, still requires delegation due to the geographic and hierarchical scales that modern states can have. Thus, like states themselves, regions have territory, population and government, but lack sovereignty (Duran 2015, 57–58). It is not uncommon that the start point for the analysis of paradiplomacy of a given region is the administrative-political configuration of the state to which the region belongs (for instance Cohn and Smith, 1996; Nagelschmidt 1999).

In order to proceed with precision, I follow the established literature on paradiplomacy to define what a 'sub-state entity' is. Drawing from Kuznetzov (2015, 22), for the purpose of this study, 'sub-state entity', 'region' and the other equivalent terms on *Table 1* refer to *a non-sovereign territorial-administrative unit that is administratively, immediately inferior to the central, top-level government*. This definition thus concerns a hierarchical, administrative and territorial notion of what a 'region' is. Any authority that is regionally-bound but administratively inferior to the central government is thus not a 'region'. So, following Cornago (2010a), I exclude cities and small municipalities even when they are once inferior from the central government (for instance, Beijing in China, Moscow in Russia, and Brasilia in Brazil). The reason is that the small, usually city-bound territory of these entities is not large enough to truly challenge the integrity of the state overall, neither in real or symbolic terms. This definition of region is generally in line with the literature as it stands today, but it contrasts from many specific methodological approaches. For instance, Criekemans (2010) limits his scope to regions with autonomous legislative powers. Nevertheless, while the literature has oscillated between considering paradiplomacy a general phenomenon (see Cornago 2010a) and a phenomenon limited to federal democracies, the fundamental character of the region has not been problematised from the perspective of the field of paradiplomacy. Thus, there is little variation in the way regions are treated in this literature.

As to permissive centre-region relations, this refers to the aforementioned point about the legitimacy of regions as international actors. International law, international institutions and rule-shaping international treaties are all built around the agency of the state and its sovereignty. While other actors have gained prominence in recent years, such as non-state actors, these remain illegitimate in the international system and thus secondary at the macro, structural level. The same applies to sub-state governments, as these are sovereignty-free actors and are not recognised by international law (Lecours

2002, 94; Paquin 2020, 56). However, the international activities of regions resemble that of states inasmuch they are carried out at the official level and often with normative aspirations, and are thus at the 'antechamber' of sovereignty (Bartmann 2006, 544; Cornago 2013, 118). In turn, this international activity carries implicitly a threat to state sovereignty due to the explicit decentralisation of traditional diplomacy. As a consequence, in chancelleries, ministries of foreign affairs and other bodies involved in state diplomacy, paradiplomacy appears as an intrusion or disruption (Cornago 2010 93, 98). States may even perceive the external actions of regions as threatening, as they challenge the unified political subjectivity of the state and assert a regional subjectivity on the international stage. This is specially the case when it involves minority regions with a background of separatism or independent statehood (Cornago 2010, 98–99; Cornago 2018). However, any involvement for a sub-state region to engage in international relations needs to draw from the sovereignty and international status of the state they are part of. In this sense, sub-state governments must share the sovereignty of the state to engage in international relations. Therefore, a permissive relationship between the central government and the region is a fundamental, necessary condition for paradiplomacy to take place (Bartmann 2006, 557; Paquin 2020, 57; see also McConnell, Moreau & Dittmer 2012). What follows is the constant and open-ended negotiation between regions and the central government as to the limits of their international action (Cornago 2010, 93, 98). Therefore, any international activities that a region does engage in, may be assumed to have been at least tacitly approved by the central government. This is one of the key assumptions for this thesis.

As a regional government is not expected nor allowed to infringe on the exclusive domain of the central government, a region's international relations tend to have a 'low politics' character. That is, paradiplomacy is expected to focus on commerce and culture, and not in strategic areas such as defence, security and state diplomacy (Soldatos 1991, 36). Beyond this, paradiplomacy may converge with or diverge from state diplomacy. In a watershed article on the topic, Soldatos (1991) offers a typology of supportive and substitutive external action by regions engaged in international relations, with greater or smaller degrees of supervision and direction from the central government. Thus, cooperative action may be coordinated by the central government or deliberately co-organised with the regional government. Substitutive action may either be carried out in harmony with the central government and with more or less monitoring from it, or in disharmony, thus in conflict (1991, 38).

Since the work of Soldatos, many scholars have sought to bring empirical evidence to enrich the knowledge on the ways paradiplomacy and diplomacy interact, diverge, converge and conflict. Notably, there has been a growing interest in analysing the ways regions influence the foreign policy of the central government (more on this below). For instance, Plagemann and Destradi (2015) enquire about the way that sub-state policy towards neighbouring countries may hinder or even redirect the foreign policy of the whole state. Illustrative is the

case of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka; the former, an Indian region with kinship bonds with the Tamil of Sri Lanka, pressured New Delhi in 2013 to adopt a more assertive policy towards the post-war government of Sri Lanka, undermining India's long-standing policy of non-interference (Plagemann and Destradi 2015, 737–738). This may be seen as a case of successful lobbying by a sub-state government to change the policy of the country overall.

Divergence with the foreign policy of the state may happen, but it may not indicate an intention to secede. However, there are cases when paradiplomacy is pursued with the intention to prepare the international system, or at least some specific actors, to recognise a secessionist government (Cornago 2018, 5). The literature has brought this distinction early on (Duchacek 1986) as 'proto-diplomacy'. Protodiplomacy, like paradiplomacy, may take a variety of shapes, many familiar with those of paradiplomacy, such as promoting the region's distinct identity abroad (Cornago 2018, 5). Protodiplomacy as a phenomenon that overlaps in some ways with paradiplomacy has attracted attention from scholars since Duchacek to this day (see, for instance, McHugh 2015, 249–250).

Thus, I proceed under the assumption that two necessary conditions are needed for paradiplomacy to emerge: a distinct regional government and a permissive central government. These are, I argue, common assumptions for the paradiplomacy literature. These two negative factors, or conditions of possibility, are indeed found throughout the world as paradiplomacy has become 'normal', and not a specific case of developed countries or nationalistic regions. A seminal article by Noé Cornago (2010a) brought this realisation to the literature by proposing a comprehensive explanation of how paradiplomacy became a 'normal' political process in the contemporary period and phenomenon across the world. The 'normalisation' of paradiplomacy is seen by Cornago as a result of several causes: first, regions facing new conditions that are relevant at the global scale –notably economic ones–; second, processes of state groupings (European Union, African Union, among other regional blocs) that create opportunity structures for regions throughout the globe; and third, reflexive adaptation by regional governments, such as emulation of 'best practices' and contestation of new foreign policy directions adopted by the state. Chief among these is the generalisation of paradiplomacy, and the accompanying expectation that it is 'normal' for regions to have at least a modicum of liberty to engage international partners.

Few attempts have been made to systematically classify the study of paradiplomacy as a self-standing field of inquiry. For my own attempt to do so, I draw from Kuznetsov (2015) and Aguirre (1999), however, I depart from Kuznetsov's chronological approach to the development of the field, to adopt a thematic approach to the literature. In the following, I proceed to classify the literature on paradiplomacy along two axes: a (sub-)disciplinary and a thematic one. Along the first axis, I trace the evolution of the literature along the question of an explanatory framework for paradiplomacy. This portion of the literature has sought either to identify the in-case causes of paradiplomacy or more general causes of paradiplomacy within the framework of another established

field. Along the second axis, I describe two distinct, emerging approaches to paradiplomacy, namely a policy-centric approach and a historical approach. Thus, the literature may be classified roughly along a two-by-two matrix (*Table 2*). These are, however, not exclusive nor contradictory categories. Indeed, many inquiries overlap and may easily belong to any one category mentioned here. My own conceptual framework (presented further below) draws from each one of these four categories to a greater or lesser extent. Moreover, these four categories can be better understood not as discrete blocs, but as gradients, with every work on paradiplomacy standing somewhere between 'Explanatory' and 'Descriptive', and 'Policy-centric and 'Historical/geopolitical'. Thus, these two axes and their resulting categories can be seen as emerging 'directions' within paradiplomacy.

At a fundamental level, paradiplomacy as a field of study has yet to develop distinct 'schools' of thought. This is not to say that there have been no alternatives to the concept of paradiplomacy. As described above, early on there were many competing terms. But, more than just distinct terms, Kincaid's 'constituent diplomacy' and Hocking's 'multilayered diplomacy' (1993) offer comprehensive alternatives to the framework of paradiplomacy. These can be seen as alternative explanations of the paradiplomatic phenomenon that attempt to circumvent the implicit association of paradiplomacy with diplomacy and the centering of the regional government as object of analysis (see Cornago 2010, 94). Thus these two concepts may be seen as alternatives to paradiplomacy and not as 'schools' within paradiplomacy (see Aguirre 1999, 198; Kuznetsov 2015, 45).

Table 2. A classification of the literature on paradiplomacy. Based on Aguirre (1999), Lecours (2002), Kuznetsov (2015).

	Policy-centric	**Historical/geopolitical**
Explanatory	Introduction of paradi-plomacy into distinct subfields, identification of ge-neral factors	Constituting processes in the *longue durée*
Descriptive	Effectiveness of specific po-licies, preference for case-studies, identification of spe-cific factors	Accounts of the inst-itutional, geopolitical and historical development of paradiplomacy

Paradiplomacy: the Search for an Explanatory Framework

The first axis that I use to classify the literature goes between inventories and conceptual descriptions of paradiplomacy in case-studies, to more ambitious attempts at finding an explanatory framework. In the preceding, I presented two

permissive factors for paradiplomacy to emerge, namely the presence of a regional government and a permissive central government. The evolution of the literature, however, has placed its interest in finding what are the *positive* factors that shape paradiplomacy. In the following, I present the explanatory-descriptive axis by way of presenting the question of an explanatory framework for paradiplomacy.

As many have noted (Lecours 2002, 92; Bursens and Deforche 2010; Duran 2016, 4; Cantir 2015, 266–267), for most of its early history, the study of paradiplomacy has proceeded without a general explanatory framework available to understand the causes of paradiplomacy. This is one of the two critical limitations of the field of paradiplomacy, the other being its over-reliance on case studies from the developed countries of the 'Global North' (see Dickson 2014, 693; Cantir 2015, 266). These two limitations have been a driving force in the literature since roughly the year 2000. In particular, the realisation that the field operates without a theoretical framework has been a key driver for much of the subsequent literature on paradiplomacy, and its imprint is visible in the evolution of the field ever since. First, I describe the fundamental account of how paradiplomacy emerged as a field of inquiry. Then, I enquire into the specific attempts to explain the emergence and determinants of the phenomenon.

The precise point in time when paradiplomacy began as a field of study is widely accepted to be in the 1980s and 1990s, albeit some of the earlier accounts of the phenomenon were in the 1970s (Kuznetsov 2015, 26, 34–36).[3] In either case, the field first dedicated itself to demonstrating that paradiplomacy is a real phenomenon and that it has a real impact in the structures that frame international relations (Lecours 2002, 93–94; Bursens and Deforche 2010, 151–157).[4] Because of this, a large extent of the early literature on paradiplomacy has a *descriptive* character, mostly with the intention to assess the efficacy of paradiplomacy in specific case-studies. This constitutes one pole along the 'explanatory' and 'descriptive' axis mentioned above (*Table 2*). However, even the descriptive accounts sought to answer the question on the positive factors driving paradiplomacy. In these accounts, globalisation and interdependence were thought of as the primary factors both enabling and pressuring regions to engage in international relations. This has remained a key premise of the literature ever since (Duchacek 1991; Nagelschmidt 1999; Paquin 2005, 129–130; Plagemann and Destradi 2015). Globalisation is relevant to paradiplomacy, it is argued, as it results in a diminished role of the central government in regional affairs, a larger scope for centre-region relations and negotiation, an overall trend towards decentralisation, and a decreased dependence and reliance on central budgets for regional economic growth (Loughlin 2013, 15). For instance, Plagemann and Destradi talk about 'soft sovereignty'

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[3] Kuznetsov argues persuasively (2015, 26) that the very first use of 'paradiplomacy' as a term was in the 1960s.

[4] I thank Noé Cornago for this insight.

(2015, 732–733) as the defining condition of states in the era of globalisation and as a facilitating condition for paradiplomacy.

The explanation of paradiplomacy as a product of globalisation, while widely accepted, does not suffice to understand the specific characteristics of a region's international relations. Thus, beyond the early inventories of paradiplomatic activities, a constant in the field of paradiplomacy has been its interdisciplinary focus. The paradiplomatic phenomenon, once established as a relevant object of study in the social sciences, has been studied from a diversity of sub-fields. In fact, paradiplomacy has been studied both from the perspective of International Relations – as evidence of a changing international system– and Comparative Politics – as a continuation of domestic politics in international affairs (Lecours 2002, 93). Later on, specific sub-fields would examine paradiplomacy from their own perspectives, such as Developmental Studies, Critical Geopolitics, among other theoretical approaches.

As paradiplomacy is an international phenomenon, part of the efforts to establish it as an object of study looked into how paradiplomacy impacts and interacts with the structural factors that determine the international system. These, traditionally understood, are those of conflict and security. Thus, a seminal 1999 article by Noé Cornago explored the different ways paradiplomacy affects international security. In his account, regional governments engaging in paradiplomacy to address the needs of trans-border minorities has a tangible impact in stabilising conflicts, such as Yunnan's direct channels of communication to Myanmar authorities. Then, paradiplomacy may facilitate the cohesion of country blocs, such as is the case of the European Union (1999, 41–50). Then, Lecours (2002) analyses the capacity of regions to compel state governments in other countries to change their policies, much like inter-state relations take place. His case study of Québec suggests that regions have little leverage as negotiators vis-à-vis governments in other countries. So, Québec, in spite of its relatively large external action apparatus, kinship bonds and shared history, at the height of its secessionist drive was unable to persuade Paris to change its views on Québécois independence (2002, 107–108). While this suggests the limits of paradiplomacy, many scholars have enquired into the ways that paradiplomacy is indeed efficient in international relations. Paquin (2005) examines the ways that paradiplomacy is capable of shaping international relations and is thus a phenomenon relevant to both International Relations and Comparative Politics. Paquin argues, much in line with the rest of the literature, that regions have demonstrated a capacity to contest and lobby for new policies for their 'parent' state, as well as contest foreign policy decisions made by the central government. In this sense, regions can and frequently have an impact in international relations (Paquin 2005, 138–142). Scholars such as Cohn and Smith (1996, 29) have sought to place paradiplomacy as an international phenomenon that can also be studied from the perspective of levels of international relations. Thus, they look at the relations of Canadian provinces at the level of national factors – issues at the national level –, subnational factors – nationalism in Québec – and global factors – globalisation – with an attempt at

individual factors[5] – the personality of the regional heads of government (Cohn and Smith 1996, 29–34, see also Lecours 2002). Future works would go beyond the Neoliberal foundations of paradiplomacy to deploy Constructivist approaches to the phenomenon (Tubilewicz & Omond 2021). Nevertheless, in spite of these works among others, paradiplomacy never acquired much attention from either International Relations or Comparative Politics (Paquin 2005).

Another sub-field that has been of interest to paradiplomacy is Diplomatic Studies. Indeed, many seminal articles on paradiplomacy have been published in Diplomatic Studies journals. However, within the field of Diplomatic Studies, paradiplomacy has also received scant attention (Cornago 2010, 93). Cornago (2013), in reflecting on the contemporary transformations of diplomacy as a whole, introduces paradiplomacy as part of the many trends that affect the state centralisation of official diplomacy (2013, 118). Duran (2016) has sought to reconnect paradiplomacy with Diplomatic Studies by re-centring the diplomatic procedure as the object of analysis of paradiplomacy through the dynamics of separation. To do so, Duran proposes a Der Derian-inspired turn in the field of paradiplomacy that places the management of alienation – estrangement from the Other – as the central analytical feature. Thus, the concrete actions of paradiplomacy may be classified as either increasing or decreasing estrangement between the region, and the central government, another country or foreign partner.

In line with the initial expectation that only regions in developed, federal democracies would engage in international relations, Federalism Studies have given attention to the phenomenon of paradiplomacy. One of the early watershed volumes is *Federalism and International Relations* published in 1991 by Michelmann and Soldatos already presented most of the concepts I dwell on here. Since then, Federalism Studies has continued to pay attention to paradiplomacy, doing so, however, from the premise that federalism is the key variable in driving regions to go abroad (see Lecours and Moreno 2003, 267). Federalism Studies would continue to be a field interested in paradiplomacy, as many recent articles on the topic are indeed featured in leading journals in the sub-discipline, such as *Regional and Federal Studies*. More recently, Lequesne and Paquin (2017) brought attention back to the central issue of state centrality and authority in federal states, in face of the growing relevance and weight of paradiplomacy in international negotiations. By addressing this emerging *problematique*, Lequesne and Paquin tackle the question of 'who governs' in federal systems (2017, 185–186).

While these four fields – International Relations, Comparative Politics, Federalism Studies and Diplomatic Studies – constituted the first 'host' disciplines of paradiplomacy, paradiplomacy would become a regular topic of interest only in Federalism Studies. This lack of interest did not prevent the

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[5]   Here Lecours proposes (2002, 101–102) the party system as the fundamental regional element of analysis.

proliferation of new approaches to paradiplomacy in other sub-disciplines later on. Thus, for instance, there have been works that tackle paradiplomacy from the lens of Critical Geopolitics (Jackson 2018), Developmental Studies (Nganje 2016), democratisation in foreign policy (Nganje 2014), historical-institutional approaches (Lecours 2002; Bursens and Deforche 2010; Royles 2017) and Nationalism Studies (Cantir 2019, 2). Other scholars have brought attention to the different areas of external action of regions, such as commercial para-diplomacy (Ouimet 2015), paradiplomacy as a state-building instrument (Lecours and Moreno 2003; Tubilewicz 2017), paradiplomacy and its role in emerging patterns of re-territorialisation (Duran 2015), and paradiplomacy with kin states (Cantir 2019).

In summary, the first axis of analysis places the scholarship on paradiplomacy between attempts at explanatory models and conceptual, and descriptive accounts of paradiplomacy, notably through case studies. As Bursens and Deforche mention (2010, 151–157), the paradiplomacy literature has been effective at making a conceptual inventory of the external relations of regions, including of factors that may encourage them to go abroad, but not at generating theoretically-embedded hypotheses that may be empirically tested. As discussed above, several scholars have sought to address this question by framing para-diplomacy within existing theories, and a few others have sought to establish synthetic explanatory frameworks on the basis of the paradiplomacy literature itself. The second axis distinguishes the efficacy of paradiplomacy and the analysis of its structural constraints. These I call the 'thematic' approaches.

Paradiplomacy: Thematic Approaches

What the preceding evinces is that the literature on paradiplomacy is rich in diversity and empirical evidence, conceptual apparatus and theoretically-informed insights into its object of study. This diversity presents a challenge for classifying the literature in ways other than chronological. As mentioned above, there are no schools of paradiplomacy. Yet, as I argue below, there are two emerging, distinct directions in the study of paradiplomacy in what concerns the structure-agency dilemma. In the following, I attempt to classify the literature of paradiplomacy according to two main approaches or themes: a policy-focused approach and a historical/geopolitical approach.[6] These are not mutually exclusive, and there are many cases of research that cannot be easily classified in either group. However, I believe this distinction adds value to our under-standing as it distinguishes two different – sometimes complimentary – answers to the question on the fundamental nature of agency in paradiplomacy.

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[6]   I thank Noé Cornago for this insight.

Policy-centric approach

This tranche of the literature is focused on the effectiveness and efficacy of paradiplomacy as a policy instrument for decision-makers. It also considers the impact of paradiplomacy in terms of policy-implementation both by the region as well as by the central government. As I describe below, its fundamental assumption is the primacy of agency of regional governments in crafting and implementing an external policy.

As mentioned above, much of the early literature on paradiplomacy enquired about the success of a region's external relations, and has departed primarily from the analysis of opportunity structures (see, for instance, globalisation as a driving factor) and the analysis of regional agency in the international system (Lecours 2002, 94). Thus, much of the literature from the 1980s and early 1990s addressed the phenomenon of paradiplomacy in terms not only of identifying and categorising the paradiplomatic initiatives of regions, but also of assessing them in terms of efficacy and efficiency. This is the reason why the literature proceeded on the basis of paradigmatic cases defined by the most 'advanced' and sophisticated paradiplomatic apparatuses; the cases of Québec, Catalunya, Scotland and the states and provinces of the Us and Canada could be seen as potential benchmarks and 'best practices' for regions everywhere. The 'best-practices' methodological approach has been repeatedly feature in the literature, and has centred many studies in the Global North (for instance Criekemans 2010, 38). One consequence from this approach to case studies is that much of the paradiplomacy literature has a tendency to focus on the 'Global North' (Cantir 2015, 266), a trend that only recently has been offset by studies focused on other parts of the world (Kuznetsov 2015, 38; see below). Thus, the focus of this section of the paradiplomacy literature has been on policy-making, the impact of paradiplomacy as a policy instrument and patterns of paradiplomacy policy-making among developed cases.

The efficiency of paradiplomacy as a policy instrument has been studied routinely by the literature. For instance, Criekemans (2010), by using an innovative comparative approach across regions, analyses different paradiplomacy instruments used by regions and categorises them as models of paradiplomacy. The conclusion points to the evolving and growing sophistication of paradiplomacy, its professionalisation and its growing scope, all of which blur the qualitative boundary between diplomacy and paradiplomacy. Tatham (2013), following Criekemans, studies whether this blurring may lead to greater conflicts between representations. His research shows that regional representations in Brussels (the seat of many European institutions) does not result in greater conflict between state and regional representations (2013, 82–83).

Regarding effectiveness, there are a number of studies about the different ways that paradiplomacy, as a policy instrument, affects domestic and international politics. The preceding discussion on paradiplomacy and International Relations scholarship fits here (Cohn & Smith 1996; Cornago 1999; Paquin 2005). The same goes to its impact on state diplomacy, such as international

negotiations (Lequesne and Paquin 2017). How regions adapt to the conditions of globalisation has also been a topic within this section of the literature, as regional governments seek to harness the opportunities that globalisation may offer to them (Nagelschmidt, 1999). Lequesne and Paquin (2017) argue for addressing the impact that paradiplomacy's greater relevance has on the efficiency and legitimacy of state level diplomacy and negotiations (2017, 199). Joenniemi and Sergunin (2014) set out to assess the impact of the policy implications and instruments of paradiplomacy in terms of capacity building. To do so, they classify the direct and indirect instruments of regions to interact with international partners. In the process, they assess the extent to which these instruments have resulted in more than 'bureaucratic tourism' (2014, 26). All these are examples of scholars attempting to find and implement parameters to assess the relevance of paradiplomacy as a policy instrument across several dimensions. While the policy-centric paradiplomacy literature has had clear policy relevance inasmuch it clarifies the impact of sub-state diplomacy, few works have been directed towards informing practitioners. The key exception is Tavares (2016), a monograph directed at government officials seeking to design and implement an external policy for regional governments.

Within the policy-centric paradiplomacy literature it is possible to identify two emerging currents of study, each one shaped by the experience of their case studies. The policy-centric approach may be understood as contrasting under-standings from the European Union and the United States about centre-region relations. As Dickson argues (2014, 693), the study of the international relations of regions from an European perspective has been shaped more by Hocking's multi-level governance model, while the North American model of study of paradiplomacy has rather been shaped by Federal Studies. The former is more interested in the principles of subsidiarity, a key term in European Union paradiplomacy, while the latter is more focused on centre-region conflicts over foreign policy. As Dickson mentions, these two are different but not contra-dictory approaches to the same phenomenon. Indeed, there have been studies of paradiplomacy in Europe from the perspective of potential conflict in centre-region relations (for instance Tatham 2013).

A limit of this approach is that it de-territorialises and de-contextualises its units of analysis, centring its interest on the agency without much interest in the structure, beyond opportunities and constraints (see Lecours 2002). However, a relatively more recent approach emerged in recent years that gives more emphasis on the structural factors that enable and shape paradiplomacy. Thus, it places its focus beyond agency to incorporate agency-structure interactions.

Historical/geopolitical approach

While both the policy-centric and historical approaches share the same foundational concepts, what I call here the historical/geopolitical approach takes on a different angle to the paradiplomacy phenomenon. Instead of focusing on the effectiveness of paradiplomacy and on the agency of regional governments,

the historical approach places its interest in the interaction between structure and agency in paradiplomacy, notably enduring historical legacies and spatially-bound factors, such as geopolitics. Thus, this approach is interested in the persistence of concrete paradiplomatic practices across time or across space, more than their relative effectiveness as policy instruments for sub-state governments. In this section, I explore how the literature on paradiplomacy has tackled history and spatial processes as factors in paradiplomacy.

History has had a place in even the 'mainstream' analysis of paradiplomacy. Evidence of this has been the sensibility of the literature regarding nationalism and legacies of independent statehood (see Duran 2015, 8; Ouimet 2015). An example is what has been called '*paradiplomatie identitaire*' or 'identity paradiplomacy', typically pursued by nationalist-driven regional governments with the aim of promoting their regional identity internationally (Paquin 2005, 133). As mentioned above, a central government may be especially sensitive about the paradiplomacy of regions with a background of separatism or independent statehood; the aforementioned cases illustrate that this concern is not grounded on the content or form of the external activities themselves, but on the background of past secessionism and independent statehood (Cornago 2010, 99). Nationalism has even been considered as the primary independent variable of paradiplomacy (see Duran 2016, 8).

In spite of these *ad hoc* appraisals of history's role in paradiplomacy, few works have truly engaged with the enduring legacies of the past and their influence on paradiplomacy. While many works have sought to place para-diplomacy within the context of International Relations, none has departed from the call to approach international history along the line of Buzan and Little (2001), namely to adopt a broader historical perspective that interrogates the long-term trends of international politics in history. Indeed, the emergence of what I call here the 'historical/geopolitical' approach began not within the framework of International Relations, but of institutionalism, namely with the work of Lecours (2002). His seminal 2002 article is often credited with inno-vating the field of paradiplomacy by drawing attention to its constitutive institutional processes that structure paradiplomacy and change across time (see Royles 2017, 394). This article is also credited with bringing attention to the question of the need of a explanatory framework in paradiplomacy (Bursens and Deforche 2010, 154), and with being the first attempt at a comprehensive explanatory framework for paradiplomacy (Duran 2016, 8). Lecours' interest is to address the explanatory question of paradiplomacy, namely through 'historical institutionalism' and the analysis of the interplay between domestic and international factors. Unlike previous attempts to approach paradiplomacy from other sub-fields, this history-focused approach is qualitatively different as it departs from agency-focused premises to an approach more conscious of the role that structure has on paradiplomacy (Lecours 2002, 96). Consequently, the historical-institutional approach of Lecours casts a different light on the domestic-level factors that impact paradiplomacy, emphasising the structural level that facilitates (or hinders) the emergence of a regional political

subjectivity capable of exploiting the opportunities to engage the international system. Thus, his case study of the Wallonia region of Belgium takes into account, simultaneously, the changing international environment of Belgium (beginning of the European Region and the Francophonie), and the changing domestic institutions of Belgium (federalisation) and Wallonia (international activism of Walloon political parties) (Lecours 2002, 96–100).

Lecours' innovations opened a new focus for the analysis of paradiplomacy, one that places its interest in the interaction between agency and structure and not only agency. In the process, history and geography become critical themes in the analysis of paradiplomacy. Several scholars have explored history as a source of insight into the structures that frame and enable paradiplomacy. For example, Royles (2017) deploys a historical institutional analysis along the lines of Lecours to examine the evolution of Welsh external action governmental bodies. His analysis brings attention to the opportunity structures that enable different external domains for Welsh external action. These domains would emerge and consolidate as the international circumstances of the United Kingdom and of Wales itself evolved; notably, through the European Union, networks of sub-state governments and UN programmes. Deviating from the 'mainstream' are those works that enquire into the international processes that regions have had beyond the era of post-war globalisation. A notable example is Duran's account of Mediterranean paradiplomacies. In it, history is acknowledged as a factor that influences the operational environment where paradiplomacy is deployed (2015, 76–77). This historical factor, together with culture, consists of language, political legacies, cultural heritages, processes of state formation and diplomacy formation, as well as legacies of international interactions. The historical factor joins the politico-economic conditions and the spatial conditions to form the operational milieu of paradiplomacy (2015, 72). Similarly, Cornago (2016) looks into the legacies of independent statehood, past territorial configurations and, in general, old forms of political pluralism in paradiplomatic practices. In particular, he points to the early modern empires, notably the Spanish and the Ottoman as well as Qing China, as politico-administrative orders that enabled the kinds of international interactions that would fall under the category of 'paradiplomacy' (2016, 179–181). In these imperial entities, their constituent units would routinely hold diplomatic relations with other polities on an official level, creating in the process precedents for independent diplomacy, such as the successor states of Spain's Latin American empire. These practices were not marginal, as they facilitated the adaptation of imperial orders into local contexts, namely to adapt to the existing plurality of each region. For instance, the relations between the emerging politico-administrative regions of the Spanish crown in America with the already existing indigenous polities were primarily defined by conquest and war, but also included negotiation and diplomacy as part of the crown's 'peaceful conquest' (2016, 183, 186). On the basis of this historical record, Cornago argues for an understanding of paradiplomacy as a practice that is intrinsically connected to domestic political and cultural pluralism, and the

constitutive processes of state-building (2016, 186). Thus, paradiplomacy as a practice draws from legacies and precedents from the past.

Just as history has had an unacknowledged place in the 'mainstream' of the paradiplomacy literature, so has geography. Some scholars do not start from the perspective that geography is a key factor in shaping paradiplomacy, yet arrive at that conclusion. For instance, Schiavon (2010) finds that the central Mexican states needed to invest more of their efforts into their promotion abroad, as they could not benefit from the trans-border investments that their northern neighbours received (2010, 95). Similarly, Tubilewicz (2014) finds that Yunnan's elites are cognisant of the strategic location of their province, and thus aim at remaining a key part of Beijing South East Asia engagements. In their analysis of Russia's northwestern federal subjects and their paradiplomacy, Sergunin and Joennimi (2014) remain predominantly focused on policy impact and relevance. Yet, they incorporate geographic and historical elements into their analysis. Notably, neighbouring regions and shared historical legacies are seen as conducive to effective paradiplomatic initiatives. These instances of incorporation of geography into their analysis places these scholarly works closer to the middle of the 'policy-centric' and 'historical/geographical' axis. However, the conceptualisation of spatiality and geography in the constituting processes of paradiplomacy remains under-explored.

A few scholars have indeed proceeded from a territory-focused premise. Duran (2015) uses the framework of (re-)territorialisation as the lens for analysing changing patterns in paradiplomacy in the Mediterranean basin. The central premise is that paradiplomacy reflects changing patterns of international and regional-level spatial configurations (2015, 10). Jackson (2018) proposes to look at the international activities of regions through the theoretical framework of critical geopolitics. As Jackson mentions (2018, 5), paradiplomacy has been seldom studied from the perspective of political geographers, yet it stands to benefit from a thorough interrogation of how paradiplomacy is actualised in the spatial plane. This is not to say that there are no works that enquire into the spatial dimension of paradiplomacy. As mentioned above, Duran (2015) does exactly that, by comprehensively examining the 'mediterranean' character of the paradiplomacy of selected regions from France, Italy and Spain.

Paradiplomacy Beyond the 'Global North'

One final element to introduce to the review of the literature is the progressive accumulation of case-studies beyond the developed 'North'. As mentioned above, most of the literature was built on the basis of conceptual inventories drawn from a selected few cases in developed countries in Europe and North America. However, there has been a progressive realisation that paradiplomacy is a general phenomenon (Cornago 2010a), potentially found in any country. Also, the over-reliance on cases from democracies and developed countries has inadvertently left out evidence from instances of international relations of

regions in countries that do not fit those criteria. Thus, we find scholars interested in bringing in empirical evidence through case-studies in countries beyond those of the paradigmatic cases of the paradiplomacy literature (i.e. Québec, Scotland, Catalunya, Basque Country, US states and Canadian provinces) (Kuznetsov 2015, 41–42). To illustrate this, I show in *Table 3* a few examples of these new case studies beyond the paradigmatic cases of the literature.

Among democracies and democratising states, we see India, Mexico and South Africa gaining some attention. India, the world's largest democracy and a federal state, has only recently featured in the English-language paradiplomacy literature. Jain and Maini (2017, 287) argue that, part of the reason is that paradiplomacy is a relatively recent phenomenon in contemporary India.

Table 3. Selected case-studies of paradiplomacy that do not belong to the paradigmatic cases of the paradiplomacy literature. Cases in the 'Global North' category are cases that, while they belong to the same region as the paradigmatic cases of the literature, they do not feature in the literature at all or rarely. To distinguish between 'autocracy/ hybrid regime' and 'democracy' I use the *Economist Intelligence Unit* Democracy index, 2019 edition. Sources: the literature on these cases may be expansive, so I mention here only a selected few accounts of paradiplomacy in each country. Alberta (Kuznetsov 2015); Russia (Makarychev 2000); Wales (Royles 2017); India (Purnendra & Maini 2017); Mexico (Schiavon 2010); China (Liu & Song, 2020); South Africa (Nganje 2014, 2016).

Democracy	Autocracy/hybrid regime	'Global North'
India	Russia	Wales, UK
Mexico	Moldova	Alberta, Canada
South Africa	China	

In analysing Mexico's case, Schiavon (2010) finds that paradiplomacy in Mexico is shaped by that country's democratisation process, as well as Mexico's progressive entry into globalisation (2010, 95–96).

Among non-democracies, there is the well-studied case of Russia, but also that of China and the hybrid, democratising Moldova. While there have seldom been any studies synthesising the character of paradiplomacy in non-democracies (Cornago, forthcoming), it is possible to gather that paradiplomacy takes place even in highly centralised authoritarian states. Chinese paradiplomacy has received substantive attention in the English-language literature, albeit rather recently (e.g. Tubilewicz 2017, 931; Liu & Song 2020). In spite of the highly centralised nature of the unitary Chinese government, paradiplomacy takes place, revealing complex centre-region relations. For instance, Tubilewicz sheds

light on the way that Yunnanese authorities are able to both implement Beijing's foreign policy towards the Greater Mekong Subregion and, in the process, find enough scope to establish and sustain a relatively autonomous international agency (2014, 939). This complex process escapes a clear-cut categorisation of external relations of regions in non-democracies between fully autonomous and state-directed. This conclusion is reflected in the analysis of Liu & Song (2020, 9), who see the policy direction of the central government as structurally embedded into the external relations processes of Chinese provinces. This means that Chinese provinces have, on the whole, a smaller scope of autonomous action abroad than their Western counterparts.

Conflict and Paradiplomacy: Blind Spots and Research Problem

In the preceding, I have identified key concepts and approaches in the study of paradiplomacy. As I mentioned, an objective of this thesis is to draw the attention of the paradiplomacy field to the role of violent conflict, a research agenda that, as mentioned above too, is among the foundations of the field. As Cantir remarks (2015, 267), few works have enquired the causes for states to allow their constituent regions to engage in paradiplomacy. Therefore, the following seeks to explore the particular subset of works that engage conflict, security and paradiplomacy.

The literature of paradiplomacy dedicates little attention to the involvement of regional governments in matters relating to conflict, or international security in general (see Paquin 2020, 60). Nevertheless, some scholars have given attention to the ways paradiplomacy intersects with the security domain. As mentioned above, an early work in this direction is that of Cornago (1999, 41), who explores precisely that, under the redefinition and expansion of security studies beyond the traditional Strategic Studies Cold War-era research agenda. Since that article was published, more scholars have given attention to the role of regional governments in cross-border governance and in new security domains, such as environmental cooperation.[7] Yet, as I argue below, the effect of violent conflict on paradiplomacy remains unexplored.

Of the several intersections between paradiplomacy and security, cross-border cooperation on security issues has been a frequent topic of analysis in the literature. For instance, Morin and Poliquin (2016) examine the way the Québequois government has fashioned a security policy vis-à-vis the changing security imperatives of the North American continent. Focusing mostly on cross-border security and governance, they find that the Québec regional government, including its Ministry of International Relations actively contribute to border governance, both in carrying it out and in shaping it through

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[7] Paradiplomacy and regional concertation, the third component that Cornago identified as relevant to international security, remains an under-explored area of inquiry.

establishing cooperation agreements on security matters with US federal and regional governments (2016, 266–268). Plagemann and Destradi enquire into this process, albeit with the trans-border cases of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, and West Bengal and Bangladesh (2015, 735–738). Cantir (2019) continues Cornago's argumentation on trans-border minorities, looking specifically into the interaction of paradiplomacy and peaceful inter-state conflict, as seen through a Nationalism Studies lens (Cantir 2019, 2). The cases selected, namely the Åland Islands, Québec and South Tyrol, have featured conflict and disharmony but not high intensity conflict. Thus they have a limited overlap with my own research interest. However, the focus on the triad of kin state-minority region-parent states offers an insight into the ways enduring ethnic conflict plays a role in paradiplomacy. Namely, that regions will seek to engage their kin states, introducing the possibility of conflict between the parent state and the kin state (Cantir 2019, 12–13). Joenniemi and Sergunin (2014) argue that the paradiplomacy of Russia's northwestern regions may assuage trans-border conflicts, such as facilitating travel from Finland to Karelia, and facilitating Kaliningrad's interactions with its neighbours. It may also help to improve outside public perception of Russia (2014, 25–27). All these studies continue on Cornago's premise about paradiplomacy and trans-border conflict and security, yet none of these address paradiplomacy in the context of immediate violent conflict.

Defence matters and security beyond border issues have received almost no attention from the paradiplomacy literature. A notable exception is Paquin (2004). He dedicates a chapter of his landmark work on paradiplomacy and international relations to the role of security and defence institutions in the international relations of regions. In particular, the intersection of the domain of activities of regional authorities and matters of defence and state foreign policy stand out to Paquin. So, he mentions several instances of such intersecting activities, focusing on examples from the US: US regions (states) have imposed sanctions, lobbied the federal government to change its foreign policy, imposed restrictions on federal authorities to carry out certain defence or foreign policy initiatives on their territory (for instance, install nuclear arsenals), participated in boycotts against foreign states (Apartheid South Africa). He also mentions the participation of the Québécois government in peace operations in Haiti, including police training in peace operations. Finally, Paquin also makes reference to the aforementioned 1999 article by Noé Cornago, adding cross-border cooperation in conflict-prone arenas and state-bloc cohesion (2004, 147–163). International cooperation in security matters among regions and other governments also remains understudied. One of the few studies on this matter is that of Dunton and Kitchen (2014). In their article, they explore the ways that regional police forces cooperate across the US-Canada border. They find that Canadian provinces and municipalities are prone to share information in policing, with ad hoc and permanent instances of operational cooperation (2014, 186). These, they argue, are evidence of how sub-state governmental actors contribute and constantly shape international security (2014, 196).

In sum, the paradiplomacy literature has approached many of the inter-sections of sub-state international relations and security matters, and the role of conflict therein. High intensity conflict, however, has not been identified as a potential factor or variable affecting paradiplomacy. On the basis of the preceding, it is possible to formulate a research problem: as high intensity conflict happens throughout the world, and paradiplomacy is a normalised phenomenon throughout the world too, it can be expected that regions experiencing violent conflict would also engage in international relations. However, we do not know what trajectories paradiplomacy takes as high intensity conflict takes place. This thesis seeks to explore through an inductive approach what we do not know about the effects of high intensity conflict on paradiplomacy. Its findings would thus contribute to theory building rather than hypothesis testing. Then, to proceed, I will dedicate the following to formulate theoretically-informed expectations of where the potential connections between paradiplomacy and high intensity conflict are.

A Systemic Look at Paradiplomacy and Violent Conflict

Drawing from the paradiplomacy literature, I set out in this section a basic model of paradiplomacy and proceed to speculate where high intensity conflict may have an impact. These speculations will serve as guidelines to set out a methodology later on with the aim to explore the gap in our knowledge on the effects of high intensity conflict on paradiplomacy. The basic argument is that paradiplomacy operates on the basis of inputs and outputs, and operates in a given international environment. High intensity conflict may result in new inputs, different outputs meant to address the effects of conflict, and a changed operational environment shaped by the fallout from the conflict. Stated otherwise, regions change their paradiplomacy when faced with high conflict intensity.

First, 'high conflict intensity' must be addressed. Peace Studies and other fields have sought ways to typify and grade conflict, finding variety in both kinds and degrees of conflict. Here, I focus on the degree rather than the kinds of conflict. This latter one is frequently measured by casualty numbers, with higher casualties indicating higher intensity. Influential datasets such as COW uses a threshold of 1000 conflict-related deaths to distinguish between violent conflict and outright war (Sarkees & Wayman 2010). Other approaches further distinguish through death counts between minor and intermediate violence conflict, and full-scale war (Gleditsch et al. 2002, 619). In defining high intensity conflict, I draw from the works of the Heidelberg Institute for Inter-national Conflict Research (HIIK in German). This organisation adopted a methodology that distinguishes between low, medium and high intensity conflict. Low intensity conflict contemplates disputes and crises where violence has not happened yet. Medium and high conflict intensity are those disputes and crises where violence has been recorded and resulted in casualties. These two

levels are distinguished by the extent and consequences of the violence (Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research 2022, 7–10). Because the literature on paradiplomacy has not explored the effects of violent conflict at all, I bracket together the two levels of violent conflict as 'high intensity' and identify non-violent conflict as 'low intensity'. Thus, high intensity conflicts are those disputes and crises where conflict-related deaths are recorded, as opposed to conflicts with no deaths recorded. Consequently, in the following I refer to 'violent conflict' and 'high intensity conflict' interchangeably.

Regarding paradiplomacy, I pursue no major innovations in the 'mainstream' paradiplomacy framework. Indeed, I aim to ground this concept in the established literature of the field. Indeed, I follow Duchacek's adaptation (1991, 17) of Easton's 1965 policy systems model of analysis (*cfr.* Clarke 1989, 29), with some input from Clarke (1989), for my conceptualisation of paradiplomacy under violent conflict. This way, the contribution of this thesis to the field of paradiplomacy is twofold: a conceptual one and a theoretical one. First, it proposes a way to analyse the paradiplomacy of regions under conflict. It does so by suggesting that conflict appears to regions' decision-makers as both an input for external policy and as a feature in the operational milieu or environment where paradiplomacy is formulated and implemented. Second, through its in-depth comparative analysis, the thesis enquires how violent conflict may be seen as a cause for paradiplomacy to change, increase or decrease in intensity. While the focus on decision-makers gives attention to agency in paradiplomacy, the systemic view – particularly the 'environment', as described below – offers a way to engage with the structural factors of paradiplomacy as mentioned by Lecours and the historical/geopolitical approach to paradiplomacy. Consequently, recalling the two axes of the paradiplomacy literature (the 'explanatory/ descriptive' and the 'policy-centric/ historical-geopolitical' axes), this thesis may be found near the intersection of both of them. Indeed, my research aims to both explain and describe, and gives attention to both agency and policies, and structures and history.

Duchacek's model of analysis of the international relations of regions places the regional-level authorities at the centre of the paradiplomacy model. The authorities receive inputs from their constituents and produce outputs in terms of policies. These inputs may be supports or demands, and outputs may be policies and actions. These actions bring results that in turn loop back and give feedback to the authorities and their constituents, depending on the results (or lack thereof). Paradiplomacy takes place when these outputs involve international partners, be them central governments or other regional authorities. Another aspect of the model is interference, namely when a country affects the inputs that regional authorities contemplate for their policies (I do not explore this aspect in this thesis) (Duchacek 1991, 17–18). The model of Duchacek does not contemplate one further element, that of the environment. Environment is, namely, the circumstances that surround the policy system, that nevertheless are not directly involved in it. This is, according to Clarke (1989, 36), the more nebulous aspect of the foreign policy system, as it may involve several different

factors, albeit these may be narrowed down to a few most relevant ones. Clarke offers the example of NATO as the most relevant environment for defence policy in the West. In short, the basis of the analytical model used here is an input-output-environment that is centred on the regional authorities (*Figure 1*).

Inputs. As Duchacek points to (1991, 17), regions operate within a national system that requires understanding in order to properly ground the study of a region's paradiplomacy. Following the established literature (Nagelschmidt 1999), my inquiry departs too from an analysis of the centre-region administrative and political configuration. Namely, I assume the embedded-ness of regions into a certain state-level distribution of competencies, rights and resources that determine strongly their capabilities to engage partners abroad. In concrete terms, this means that regional authorities are also subject to 'top-down' demands from central authorities, as well as to 'bottom-up' demands from their constituents (see Kuznetsov 2015, 102–104). Following Clarke (1989, 33), inputs can be understood as both concrete, tangible pressures or issues, or as more subtle reinforcements in decision-making.
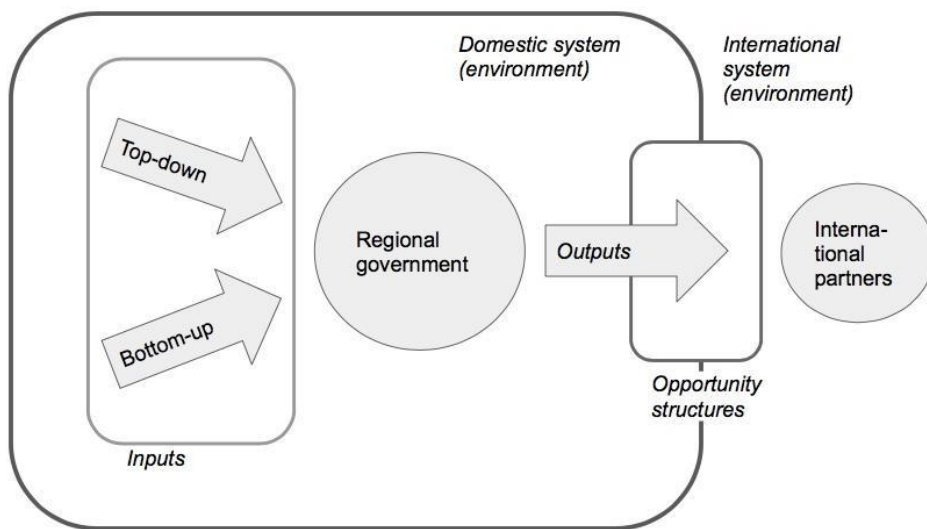
Figure 1. Visual representation of the analytical model used here. Based on Duchacek 1991, Clarke 1989 and Duran 2015.

Violent conflict can have a concrete impact at the level of inputs for paradiplomacy. Because of its destructiveness, violent conflict exerts pressure on the capacities of the state and strains the resilience of the population. It also impacts the economic output of the country in general and the affected regions in particular. The presence of violent conflict in a given sub-state region can pressure authorities in all levels to address at least some of the elements of conflict, be they the effective causes of conflict, the sources of conflict, the

fallout from the violence, among other relevant elements. The specific pressures for these measures can come from constituents demanding the regional government to act (i.e. bottom-up pressures) or from top-level authorities demanding the regional government to mitigate the effects of conflict (i.e. top-down pressures). In sum, regions can be expected to change their paradiplomacy when faced with high conflict intensity.

Following Duchacek, it could also be interference from other governments (1991, 17–18). In any case, I proceed on the assumption that, indeed, violent conflict will appear as an input for decision-makers to interpret and decide upon. How decision-makers of the sub-state region interpret this input and how they decide to act – if they decide to act at all – depends on the processes that authorities follow (Clarke 1989, 34–35), which I do not explore here at all.

Outputs. As mentioned above in the discussion about structural permissive factors, paradiplomacy as an output may take many shapes. For instance, Tavares (2016, 121) identifies ten different policies that sub-state entities pursue that involve a foreign component. These are: trade and investment, environmental protection, tourism, social policies, economic development, branding, financial exchanges, international development assistance, lobbying and large international events such as competitions and more. For his part, Kuznetsov (2015, 111–113) identifies six tangible forms in which regions institutionalise their foreign relations and engage foreign partners. These are: establishing a special governing body for international affairs, opening permanent representations abroad, official visits abroad, participations in international events, participation in international networks and working groups and joining national delegations in visits abroad. These forms of engagement can be seen as both functional (i.e. they accomplish specific tasks) and normative, both asserting the agency of sub-state governments and making claims to its legitimacy (see Jeffrey, McConnell & Wilson 2015).

To understand the relevance of these paradiplomacy outputs in relation to conflict, I follow Joenniemi and Sergunin (2014) in conceptualising them as means for capacity building. Joenniemi and Sergunin argue, namely, that paradiplomacy may be understood as a policy instrument for regional governments to solve local problems and increase their autonomy vis-à-vis the country's capital. Nevertheless, they argue, the entire country ultimately benefits from paradiplomacy as a whole. On the basis of their case study of Russian federal subjects, they argue that paradiplomacy helps keep Russia integrated into its neighbourhood and international relations, and may also function as a catalyst for domestic reforms (2014, 31). Many forms of paradiplomacy outputs are relevant here. While commercial paradiplomacy may appear disconnected from conflict, I follow Paquin (2004, 24) and Ouimet (2015) to argue the opposite. Paquin (2004), for instance, follows the general post-Cold War reorientation of security studies away from the state-centric Strategic Studies paradigm. Indeed, he argues, globalisation and the growing importance of commerce as a field of competition among states renders the economic aspects of paradiplomacy more relevant to international relations

(2004, 23–24). Ouimet, moreover, argues that the cases of Québec and Scotland show that commercial paradiplomacy may play a strategic role in carrying out the policy of the regional government. In those cases, commercial paradiplomacy, Ouimet argues (2015), contributed to Québec and Scotland's state-building by reducing Québec's dependence on Anglophone capital and empowering Scotland's drive for greater autonomy in the UK. Tubilewicz (2017) reaches similar conclusions in his study of Yunnan's implementation of Beijing South East Asia policy. Following these scholars, I also place an emphasis in commerce and trade as important dimensions of paradiplomacy.

Operational environment. Heeding Clarke's remark about this component of the systems, I take the operational environment (or just 'environment') as one of the more complex elements of analysis. To conceptualise the environment of paradiplomacy, I draw from Duran's (2015, 70–78) understanding of environmental factors relevant to paradiplomacy. As I mentioned above, for Duran, the environmental factors relevant to paradiplomacy amount to a 'geopolitical DNA' of regions, namely the inherent, territory and location-bound factors that make up the region's geopolitical 'Self'. This may be understood as the operational milieu for each specific region and may be disaggregated into: first, the 'opportunity structures' (Lecours 2002) made up by the political and economic environment; second, the geographical and geopolitical features relevant to the region; and third, culture and history understood both in the *longue durée* and in the short term.

1. Opportunity structures. As discussed above, the literature on paradiplomacy has a long trajectory of studying the opportunity structures for regions to engage in international relations. Duran's own framing of these focuses on the political and economic circumstances that facilitate or hinder paradiplomacy. Duran narrows these down to the regional political party structure, the distribution of formal political power for regions, the presence of intergovernmental relations, the channels available for regions to influence central policy and continental regimes and country blocs to which the parent state belongs (2015, 72–74). For my analysis, this level implies that the legal and institutional structures that frame paradiplomacy, both at the country-level (the country's constitution, the role of country-level ministries and the country-level policies towards paradiplomacy) and at the level of the region, become critical. Specifically, legal and institutional structures are part of the opportunity structures that are either open or closed for regions to engage in paradiplomacy (Kuznetsov 2015, 108–109, 111–113).

2. Geographical and geopolitical features. While I refrain from committing to a critical geopolitics approach, I also draw inspiration from Jackson (2018, 7–9) in interrogating the environment/geopolitics of paradiplomacy at different scales. So, instead of choosing an approach involving a broader geographical region – such as Duran (2015) does with the Mediterranean basin – or a de-territorialised approach – such as that featured in the policy-centric approach – I seek to understand the geopolitical frames that emerge from the external action of the regions. In other words, I consider that paradiplomacy – due to its spatial

constraints – is embedded into a geopolitical framework that is actualised in the instances of regions engaging partners abroad. Following Cohn and Smith (1996, 29), I disaggregate these at the global, national, subnational and individual levels to enquire what factors are relevant at each level in shaping paradiplomacy. However, I place the most emphasis on the level between the national and the global, the sub-global level.[8] For the sub-national level, I follow Plagemann and Destradi (2015) in focusing on the political parties and changes in power at the level of regions. I also follow Royles (2017) in incorporating a within-case analysis of external action policy areas, following the institutional development of paradiplomacy institutions across time.

3. History and culture. Hinting at a historical understanding of the structures that determine paradiplomacy, Duran points to the temporal dimensions of the political and social processes that determine paradiplomacy. Specifically, the long-term political and social processes and the short term events implicit in, namely, state formation, diplomatic culture, language and vernacular formation, cultural and political heritages, and emergent ways of regional thinking (2015, 76–77; Cantir 2019).

Violent conflict makes itself relevant to the operational milieu of paradiplomacy in several ways. First, it may be assumed that violent conflict affects opportunity structures, closing and eschewing some, and perhaps opening some other ones. Second, conflict may hinge on geopolitical disputes, such as claims on trans-border minorities, irredentist claims, among other instances of territorial discord. At this point, it may be speculated that the geopolitical dimension of conflict affects paradiplomacy in a variety of ways, including the manner that the central government regards the afflicted area and its international relations. Third, history and culture are relevant to conflict if we adopt a group-identity based analysis of conflict dynamics. Following Azar's understanding of conflict dynamics (*cfr*. Cook-Huffman 2009, 22), group identity and its components (either religion, ethnicity, culture, among others) gives a reliable insight into conflict dynamics. These components are all reflected in the environment as kinship, diaspora relations and other identity-based milieus play a role in paradiplomacy. For instance, Ho & McConnell conceptualise 'diaspora diplomacy' (2019) by acknowledging that governments engage diasporas for their policy and that diasporas are assisted by globalisation to partake in the governance of their homelands. For sub-state regions, diaspora diplomacy is a recurrent theme, both in terms of diasporas pursuing an agenda concerning their (sub-state) homeland and their (sub-state) homeland pursuing an agenda through their diaspora engagements.

The elements described here constitute the analytical model of Duchacek (1991) with slight additions, namely the operational environment dimension. As an exploratory research, I have drawn from the paradiplomacy literature to set out a few expectations of how conflict affects paradiplomacy. These are not

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[8]   I use this rather clunky label for what is normally called 'regional' to avoid ambiguity with the label for sub-state entities as 'regions'.

testable hypotheses but elements of a theoretically-informed research problem, namely, that of the effects of high intensity conflict on paradiplomacy. First, conflict may be seen as a source of pressure or demands for the regional government to engage in paradiplomacy. This pressure can be bottom-up and top-down. Then, paradiplomacy may be used by regional and central authorities to offset conflict, either to assuage its consequences or to otherwise build capacities. Furthermore, conflict dynamics may overlap with several of the relevant factors of the operational milieu of paradiplomacy, thus becoming an unavoidable element of the paradiplomacy environment. In more concrete terms, conflict may affect opportunity structures, hinge on geopolitical or territorial disputes, or be grounded on the same historical or cultural elements upon which paradiplomacy operates. All of these elements are presented here in the context of the literature, yet the extent to which they intersect with violent conflict is an area of inquiry that this thesis seeks to explore, and, in the process, contribute to the understanding of paradiplomacy the role and impact of violent conflict.

CHAPTER 2
Methodology: the Challenges of Analysing Short-term Change and Long-term Trends in Paradiplomacy

As the previous chapter argued, the paradiplomacy literature has struggled with formulating a general theoretical framework to explain paradiplomacy. This chapter proceeds to describe the methodology of the thesis by arguing that the paradiplomacy literature has a second challenge, namely, that of discerning short-term and long-term change in paradiplomacy. I present this as primarily a methodological problem, and I propose a methodology to respond to it. This methodology addresses the question '*how does conflict drive paradiplomacy?*' as a question whose answer demands description and explanation (McNabb 2015, 4). The lack of a theory of paradiplomacy means that this thesis has no ready-made explanatory framework to attribute change in paradiplomacy to change in conflict levels. Because of this, the theory-building purpose of this thesis is to formulate testable hypotheses of causal links between conflict and change in paradiplomacy.

The methodology of this thesis tackles the problem of short-term change with process tracing attuned for exploratory research. Thus, I use typical cases whose outcomes are known, and rely on quantitative, qualitative and other indicators. Following the conceptual framework, this thesis remains in the broad 'mainstream' of the paradiplomacy literature by focusing on structural opportunities and exogenous factors. First, the chapter elaborates on the way I treat conflict-related violence and how it relates to paradiplomacy. Then, I address the challenge of tracing short-term change in paradiplomacy, and how I tackle this challenge. Finally, I set out three approaches to identify critical junctures in paradiplomacy. These will be the grounds for answering the question on how conflict affects paradiplomacy.

Research Design and Case Selection

Following the discussion above about Duchacek's systemic model of paradiplomacy (1991), I proposed some conceptual expectations about how conflict may affect paradiplomacy. Namely, there are some areas where violent conflict may result in new pressures for change in paradiplomacy. These pressures may restrict and redirect the region's paradiplomacy, and may come both from constituents and from central authorities. In addition, violent conflict may 'change the game' for the paradiplomacy of the affected region through changes in its operational environment. The aggregate picture is that violence can be seen as an exogenous factor for the region's decision-making on paradiplomacy. By focusing on the effects of an exogenous factor, this thesis proceeds along the lines of the mainstream in the paradiplomacy literature (Tubilewicz & Omond 2021, 33). Locating the conflict as an exogenous factor has implications for research design and case selection.

To carry out this exploratory research, I deploy process tracing. This is a methodology meant to infer causality from a reconstruction of a sequence of events, using counterfactuals and other methods of elimination (Collier 2011; Mahoney 2012; Ricks & Liu 2018). Process tracing is typically used to test hypotheses but it can also be deployed in exploratory research. However, the differences between confirmatory and exploratory research must be briefly addressed here to attune this methodology for exploratory purposes. The crucial difference between the two is that confirmatory research proceeds on the basis of refuting competing hypotheses with the aim of inferring causal relations. Exploratory research proceeds on the basis of a research problem with the aim of generating testable hypotheses (Jaeger & Halliday 1998). In this sense, exploratory research is '*mild*, *flexible* and *post-hoc*', meaning that it allows for false positives, offers flexibility in the research strategy to employ and allows to select hypotheses for future testing *after* the data has been analysed (Goeman & Solari 2011, 584–585). As a theory-focused research, exploratory research ultimately aims at theory-building (Rohlfing 2012, 11).

Exploratory process tracing is thus useful where testable hypotheses are not available and where flexibility is needed. In addition, exploratory process tracing can point to different trajectories connecting potential independent variables and dependent variables. In this sense, it is a suitable approach to address the question '*how does high intensity conflict affect paradiplomacy?*' Accordingly, I deploy a research strategy suitable for this methodology, namely, a small-n, comparative design of similar cases with a control case (see Pion-Berlin & Aćacio 2022, 232). Because of the exploratory and descriptive goal of this research, a small-n design enables an empirically-rich within-case and cross-case analysis. The independent variable – and differentiating factor among the cases – is the presence of changing levels of conflict intensity. This approach facilitates addressing the complexity of paradiplomacy in its different dimensions, including those where I expect to see conflict having an impact. Similar cases also reduce the commensurability problem in paradiplomacy, where different cases have different institutional and centre-region relations shaping their external relations (see Criekemans 2010). Seeking the most cost-effective research strategy (McNabb 2015, 34), my case selection is further driven by concerns of how well-documented are the cases as many conflict regions in the world have sparse documentation on many features in local government. Finally, as discussed above, the literature in paradiplomacy has tended to focus on the developed West partly because of ease of access to information, and partly because of assumptions about paradiplomacy and democracy. Many areas of the world that feature high intensity violent conflict are not full democracies (e.g. Elbadawi & Sambanis 2000), so, I regard non-democratic regimes as typical.

With these concerns in mind, the cases I have chosen are Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia, four North Caucasus regions of the Russian Federation. The general North Caucasus area suffered in the 2000s and 2010s from high levels of conflict intensity led by the *Imrat Kavkaz*

(Caucasus Emirate) terrorist organisation (O'Loughlin & Witmer 2011). As shown in *Figure 2*, the violence approached the 1000 deaths threshold in 2011 for Dagestan, while all other cases – except for the control case – experienced violence levels that can be considered elevated albeit short of war (see Gleditsch et al. 2002, 619). The violence prompted policy responses in all regions of the area. In addition, all four governments, because of their location, faced similar trends in centre-region relations, often with similar federal frameworks and top-down policies. These will be explored in detail in the following chapters, but in relation to paradiplomacy these can be generally characterised as centralisation and increased federal monitoring over their external relations (Arteev & Kentros Klyszcz 2021). To select a well-documented timeframe, I chose the 2010–2013 years. Four years was a compromise between choosing enough time for changes to take place, but not short enough to deprive the thesis from sufficient observations. The years chosen contemplate similar conditions in the sources of conflict-related violence. The time frame mostly overlaps with a discreet stage of *Imrat Kavkaz* development Youngman identified (2019, 378–382) as its stage of 'internationalised ambiguity' from late 2010 to 2013, when the group entered a stage of weakness and overall decline. As this played similarly across all cases chosen except the control case, this adds to the similarity among cases. As *Figure 2* shows, the overall trend of casualties in the North Caucasus entered its decline in around 2011–2012 depending on the region. This peak serves as the moment of highest conflict intensity in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria. The main indicator I use is the Caucasian Knot count of conflict-related casualties. Caucasian Knot is an independent, Russia-based news agency operating since 2001. Its casualty count aggregates casualty numbers taken from verifiable sources as reported by the press and other reliable sources. Because of its commitment to reliability and verifiability, Caucasian Knot has been used by researchers repeatedly to trace the evolution of the conflict in the North Caucasus (e.g. O'Loughlin & Witmer 2011). There are no comparable data-bases for this specific region to my knowledge. Whilst casualty numbers do not neatly translate into conflict intensity levels, it does help identify trends of worsening or improving conflict dynamics.

The case of Chechnya – a well-known international actor in the North Caucasus (Klyszcz 2022) – is not included because of its unique relationship with the federal centre (see Starodubtsev 2019). In fact, Grozny's relationship with Moscow is unique when compared to any other republic of the North Caucasus and arguably any other federal subject. Notably, it relies on the rapport between Grozny's and Russia's rulers, with little else in terms of institutionalisation, constraints, cadre policies, checks or procedures. This relationship has implications when taking Chechnya as a case in a comparative study. Namely, that republic's paradiplomacy is less constrained by Moscow's policy line when compared with other federal subjects. This is not to say that Grozny has a free hand in foreign affairs or that Moscow has no levers to restrain it (see Klyszcz 2022), but the scope and parameters of its external action are governed too differently from its neighbouring republics.

Table 4. Conflict dynamics in selected North Caucasus republics.

	Dagestan	**Ingushetia**	**Kabardino-Balkaria**	**North Ossetia**
Federal framework	Centralisation	Centralisation	Centralisation	Centralisation
Conflict intensity trend and level, 2010–2013	Peaking (high)	Peaking (high)	Peaking (high)	Low

In parallel to these, I opted for North Ossetia as a 'control' case, where conflict intensity was not high when compared to that of the other three cases. This does not imply an absence of violence, but North Ossetia saw conflict-related casualties be near zero for 2011, 2012 and 2013. As *Figure 2* shows, the years 2010–2011 saw the peak of a wave of violence in several North Caucasus republics, one that was growing since the late 2000s. In the three cases chosen, conflict-related violence peaked in the years 2010–2011 (2009 for Ingushetia) and declined thereafter. The control case still featured violent incidents – particularly in the year 2009. But, in the context of the expanding *Imrat Kavkaz* activities throughout the North Caucasus, this relative lack of conflict-related violence makes North Ossetia a case where violence can be considered mostly absent, at least in relative terms.
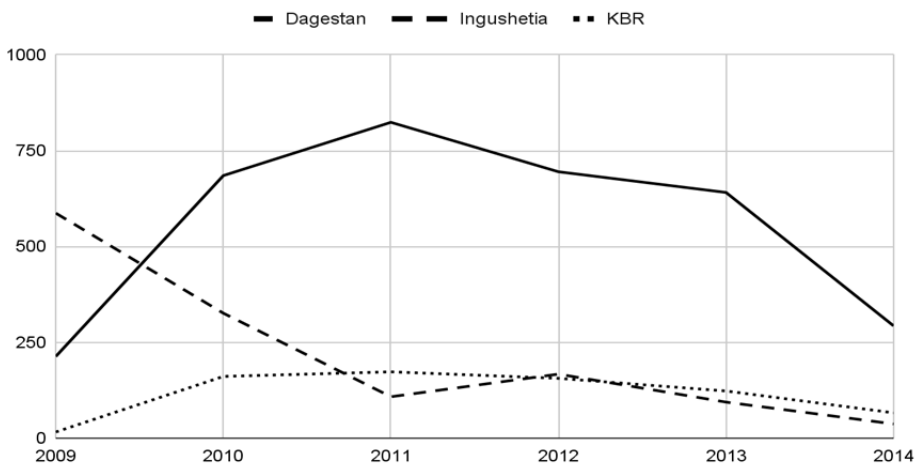
Figure 2. Trends in conflict intensity as measured by conflict-related casualties. Source: Caucasian Knot. The year 2009 accounts for August 2008 to July 2009 and is taken from O'Loughlin et al (2013, 610). Because of this, there is a gap in the commensurability in the numbers before and after 2009.

The methods deployed then are meant to, then, identify change in these regions' external relations during the 2010–2013 (inclusive) period. The assumption is that the changing levels of violence led to changes in external relations. The control case – North Ossetia – will provide a contrast and a way to identify change. However, there are no explanatory or descriptive frameworks to identify short-term change in paradiplomacy, so this thesis will attempt to offer a solution to this methodological issue.

Short-term Change in Paradiplomacy

As mentioned in the framework chapter, the guiding expectation – in lieu of a precise hypothesis – is that violent conflict results in regions changing their paradiplomacy to solve domestic problems. As violence levels change in a matter of months or years, I consider this to be short-term change. Junctural or short-term change in paradiplomacy is not conceptualised in the literature. My guiding notion on short-term change is based on Braudel's (1958) distinction between *longue durée* and junctural change. As I approach a relatively short time period of four years, determined by changes in levels of conflict-related violence, I do not focus on specific events in the main part of the analysis but assume that peaking levels of violence represent themselves a juncture for the case studied.

As discussed in the previous chapter, paradiplomacy has struggled to explain change in a region's paradiplomacy. This struggle is found both at the level of description – what change even looks like – and explanation – i.e. the lack of an explanatory framework. This struggle can be identified on a general and particular level. At the general level, the conceptual frameworks discussed in the previous chapter explain the emergence and permissive causes of paradiplomacy, but do not offer a straightforward explanation of change. At the particular level of this research, the conceptual model I adopted, the systemic perspective based on Duchacek's (1991) model, does not account for change of policy or direction in paradiplomacy. The issue of identifying change in paradiplomacy has implications for the search for a theory of paradiplomacy. To explain change in paradiplomacy first there needs to be a way to understand change on its own, to then proceed to explain how it happens. A goal of this thesis then is not to solve the question for an explanation but to contribute to its resolution by suggesting what indicators researchers dispose of to trace change in paradiplomacy.

Enquiring into change in paradiplomacy presents two challenges from the methodological perspective. First, there are no methodologies to measure short-term change in paradiplomacy. In general, existing paradiplomacy explanatory frameworks do not account for short term change. Kuznetsov's (2015) framework offers an explanation for the *emergence* of paradiplomacy in Alberta that contemplates several decades of Albertan external relations. In this sense, the structural perspective does not offer a consistent reference point to account for

short-term changes in a region's external relations, i.e. it remains closer to the *longue duree*. Approaches such as Stremoukhov (2021) offer a solution by focusing on endogenous factors driving paradiplomacy (i.e. incentives for governors to 'go abroad'). But it is precisely because of the focus on endogenous factors that it cannot be implemented here. Second, there is no consensus as to what indicators to use to trace change in paradiplomacy. As described in the previous chapter, sub-state governments use a wide range of channels for their internationalisation. As Duran mentions (2015), paradiplomacy is typically understood in a wide way, often contemplating the aggregate picture of external relations of a given region. This approach presents challenges and opportunities for research. The primary challenge is that such open definition can leave the researcher with too many internationalisation activities that could plausibly be called 'paradiplomacy'.

To narrow the scope of research, I open the 'black box' of the region as a unit, so I approach paradiplomacy through its top-level institutions, i.e. those that 'produce' international engagements for the sub-state region. This is a recognition that the different forms of sub-state internationalisation are not necessarily commensurate. They stem from different institutions and are subject to altogether different sets of policies and patterns of political bargaining within and outside the region. As mentioned above, the focus is on the regional government and its activities, and not on public-funded institutions (such as public universities and similar). Another example could be that of state-funded culture groups such as dance ensembles or theatre troops being sent abroad. In other contexts, these could be considered akin to states' cultural diplomacy, and indeed paradiplomacy. To trace the evolution of these and other activities in the culture realm could offer an insight into the ways sub-state governments direct their processes of internationalisation, especially concerning identity claims and promotion. However, to attempt to identify the closest to a 'foreign policy' of sub-state governments, I focus here primarily on the international activities of the head of the regional government. This is frequently the government figure that has the task and authority to officially represent the region abroad. In other words, by narrowing my scope to the top authorities of the regional government, I attempt to capture the main policy line of the sub-state external engagements. This way, change in paradiplomacy can be assessed by looking at the trends in the international activities of the head of the sub-state government. In turn, this allows for both quantitative (frequency of meetings) and qualitative (purpose of meeting, country of origin of the foreign counterpart) analysis (see below).

At the same time, the wide definition of paradiplomacy offers an opportunity to add further observations on the international relations of a sub-state government. Namely, to tackle the complexity of the international relations of a given region in their complexity and produce a more precise picture of their scope. So, in addition to focusing on the head of the sub-state government, I also focus on two of the leading ministries involved in international engagements. I chose the number two retroactively and inductively. The cases analysed typically had a clear labour division among the ministries involved in international relations:

one ministry dedicated to political external engagements and another one concerned with economic ones. This division is not unexpected, as indeed political and economic motives cover two of the four main drivers of paradiplomacy as argued by Kuznetsov (2015).[9] By focusing on these ministries, I continued along the top-level of international engagements of the region, adding observations of the region's international engagements. Like the head of a sub-state government, I focus then on the ministers' engagements also through their quantitative and qualitative aspects. This way, I remain within the original conceptualisation of paradiplomacy by Duchacek, by placing my attention on those institutions that produce the 'outputs' of paradiplomacy.

In sum, to account for change in paradiplomacy, I retain a research strategy that contemplates the complexity of the wide definition of paradiplomacy. At the same time, I narrow down the scope of research by focusing on the activities of specific institutions that 'produce' paradiplomacy. These are the grounds to 'reconstruct' the paradiplomacy of a given region in its complexity but with a focused, systematic scope.

Findings Indicators of Change in Paradiplomacy: Three Approaches

This thesis proceeds on the basis of a mixed methods approach. This strategy offers the chance to triangulate the observations and increase their number, namely, as change can be identified in the patterns of intensity in paradiplomacy and in qualitative changes in external engagements (see below). These two approaches do not necessarily amount to a solution to the absence of an analytical framework for change in paradiplomacy. However, when taken together, they can offer a solution to the particular limitation of Duchacek's systemic approach to handle short-term change in paradiplomacy. In addition, following insights from the aforementioned historical approach, I enquire into the *longue duree* of the paradiplomacy of these four cases, with the goal of identifying broader patterns of territorialisation and their 'geopolitical DNA' (Duran 2015). These will provide a deeper understanding of the cases' broader trends and thus offer an in-case comparison with the junctural change closely analysed. The assumption is that, taking these three approaches – quantitative, qualitative and 'historical' – together, the distinct pathways of junctural change in paradiplomacy can be identified.

Quantitative approach

The quantitative approach closely follows that of Stremoukhov (2021), partly to ensure commensurability. Like Stremoukhov, I also proceed to reconstruct the international relations of my cases through the reported instances of inter-

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9   The other two being cultural promotion and cross-border maintenance.

national interactions as recorded on the Integrum database. This was the basis for building my original dataset. I use the empirical findings of Stremoukhov (2021) as a benchmark to identify whether the international relations of my cases were more or less intense than the average of all Russian subjects. In this sense, the precise number of meetings matters only inasmuch is shows whether the trend goes along the general trend of the country (rising or diminishing along the lines of the average region in the country), what partners are privileged the most relative to other (i.e. what countries had more meetings when compared with other countries) and what was the predominant motive behind most meetings.

In building my dataset, I followed Stremoukhov (2021) in utilising the Integrum database of publications from Russia and the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)[10] to search for the meetings of governors and top ministers with foreign parties. Like Stremoukhov, I used the name of the governor and the two ministers as search keywords to receive a record of their activities as documented in the sources of the Integrum database. I also used keywords such as 'delegation' and 'embassy' to narrow search results although sometimes such narrowing down was not necessary. This original dataset consists of 178 entries of meetings between the governors and selected ministers of the four cases analysed with their respective foreign partners. Each entry was briefly described and categorised according to the country of origin of the foreing counterpart and the primary purpose of the meeting, following approximately Kuznetsov's typology of economic, political, cross-border and cultural purposes (2015, REF). One important caveat in referring to Stremoukhov's work is that the findings of his research strongly point to the importance of looking beyond the opportunity structures of paradiplomacy to also incorporate the incentives for governors to 'go abroad'. In other words, to replicate his approach (albeit to a much smaller number of cases) could present a conceptual mismatch given my decision to remain in the structural perspective of paradiplomacy. Namely, his approach may be incommensurable with my conceptual framework. To prevent such mismatch, I take on this quantitative approach as just one element in a broader research strategy, one that, as mentioned above, relies on triangulating quantitative data with qualitative data.

Identifying the main purpose of each meeting relied on what was reported about the meeting's discussions or stated objectives. Occasionally there would be cases where the meeting would involve at least two agenda items that could be categorised in different ways, for instance, one economic another one cross-border maintenance. In such cases, the purpose of the meeting was bracketed to what was discussed the most, e.g. what was the predominant theme across all discussion items. When assessing this was impossible, I relied on what was reported to be the main purpose of the visit.

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[10]   This is a regional integration organisation that assembles many of the successor states of the Soviet Union.

The focus on the general trend and the contrast with the federal average is a recognition that measuring meetings is an imperfect proxy for intensity in paradiplomacy, along the lines of the general critique of quantitative methods in paradiplomacy (Kuznetsov 2015). Fewer meetings may be held in one year because of contingent factors that cannot be accounted for. Because of that, the need to have many observations (i.e. the governors and two ministries across four years) and the comparison with the general trend across the federation are the essential elements for this quantitative approach. In other words, I am not looking to set benchmarks for change with the number of meetings but with the relationship between the country-wide trends in intensity of paradiplomacy and the trends in paradiplomacy in conflict-affected regions.

Qualitative approach

The qualitative approach focuses on those aspects of paradiplomacy whose change can only be measured in qualitative terms. I draw heavily here from Kuznetsov (2015) in identifying which indicators to use to trace change in paradiplomacy. These qualitative indicators can be divided in two broad groups: geographic and institutional. These two draw from previous research but the data collected is part of the original contribution of this research.

The geographic indicators are those that, following Duran (2015), evince the patterns of (re)territorialisation of a given region. There are several indicators I draw from to assess the geographic scope of the paradiplomacy of my cases. These indicators are drawn from the existing literature on the resources and scope of measures that regions usually deploy to engage foreign partners (Tavares 2016). First, the proportion of the total number of meetings with partners from a given country (see below) hints at which partners were more important at the time relative to others. So, the overrepresentation of a given country or geographic region (Europe, Middle East, former Soviet space) would be significant and hint at the priorities of the regional government. Second, agreements between the region studied and a foreign party are also significant. These agreements may or may not bore out results or be followed through at all. As the cases contemplated here show, some of them indeed do not work out. Nevertheless, it is assumed here that the signing of such agreements points to a moment of engagement between the regional government and a foreign party. As the cases show, signing an agreement can be a culminating point of cooperation (see Tavares 2016). It can also be the result of closely monitored or top-down paradiplomacy as the central government involves governors in its foreign policy (Arteev & Kentros Klyszcz 2021). Third, representative offices of the regional government abroad is an important indicator of that region's interest in the country where its representation operates. Typically, regional governments have few resources to deploy such representations, so they open these judiciously. Crucially, sub-state governments do not need foreign representations akin to embassies, so these representation offices typically serve purposes of business and cultural promotion, lobbying among other functions

(Tavares 2016). Finally, trade statistics can be helpful but are treated with care. Crucially, the intensity of trade must not be assumed to be the motive behind a region's engagement with their trade-intensive partners. As with the meetings indicator mentioned above, what is crucial is not the number *per se* (in this case, the volume of trade measured in value or tonnes) but the *proportion* of trade that a given foreign country takes up in the region's trade balance. In other words, what countries make up the biggest partners is what is significant here. As the above suggests, a high volume of economic exchanges (trade, investment) *may* encourage a sub-state government to open more channels of engagement. But, as the cases analysed below show, this *may not* be the case, too.

The institutional qualitative indicators are those that trace changes within the institutional frameworks that limit and enable paradiplomacy. My attention is dedicated to the legal and political frameworks that define and restrict the sub-state authorities' scope for external engagements. Typically, these are laws at the sub-state level that assign the authority to represent the region abroad and to sign agreements with foreign parties. Changes in these laws would then refer to how they open or close the scope of action for sub-state governments to engage in paradiplomacy. All regions have some sort of statute on which the authority of their government is grounded, paradiplomacy included. On this assumption, I proceed to identify the laws governing paradiplomacy in my case studies and what their adoption implied for the scope of paradiplomacy. The political frameworks are similar albeit they refer to the non-binding governmental strategies or plans for regional development. In some regions, the sub-state government can even adopt a document specifically dedicated to describing the goals and means of paradiplomacy (Tavares 2016). This type of 'white book' is not a common feature in many cases that engage in paradiplomacy. Yet, more typical are regional development plans, frequently adopted by governors as they enter government. These documents, typically holistic strategy documents (i.e. not only economic development), may include and specify the role of external engagements in the development of the region. In addition, there may be similar country-wide political frameworks, which also may specify a role for the international dimension of developing sub-state regions. These non-binding documents can help identify change in paradiplomacy as their adoption and gradual fulfilment signals the government's commitment to a certain objective in their paradiplomacy and, maybe, specific means to achieve it.

The sources for these qualitative indicators are multiple. First, I drew extensively from Russian primary sources found through official websites, repositories of Russian laws and the Integrum database. Second, I drew from secondary sources in English and Russian. Third, I carried out semi-structured interviews in English and Russian at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) in March 2020. These interviews were made with several experts on the region and on Russia's international relations and their contribution was especially relevant for understanding the place of the North Caucasus in Russia's international relations. This fieldwork stage was conceived as part of the preparatory and contextual stage of the research, and an eventual gateway to

interviews in the North Caucasus itself. A fourth source – interviews in the North Caucasus – was planned but became impossible to carry out. The interviewees in the region would have been a mixture of practitioners and experts able to discuss the international relations of the North Caucasus. This source would have contributed especially to understanding the specific mechanisms that led conflict to affect the republics' paradiplomacy. In other words, they would have given an insight into what the local governments thought about their external relations and their relation with the violent conflict (along the lines of Marks, Haesly & Mbaye 2002). However, several obstacles made it impossible to draw from this last fourth source of information. Namely, I arrived at this research project without an established network of informers in the North Caucasus, which meant that I had to invest in building it during the first stages of my research. Building this network was a challenge because of distance to the North Caucasus and no direct institutional connections from partners. Nevertheless, the real hindrance came in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic rendered impossible to travel to Russia well into 2021. By the time I received the COVID-19 vaccine (summer 2021), I had made some connections with people in the North Caucasus and a trip to the region was in the making by the autumn of that year. However, the re-invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 rendered what would have been an already high stakes journey into an impossibility. In spite of this hindrance, the other three data sources I obtained helped me produce an original account of the international relations of the cases selected.

In sum, the qualitative indicators I contemplate here are: predominant motive of meetings with foreign partners, geographic distribution of agreements with foreign parties, geographic distribution of the largest foreign partners in terms of trade and official meetings, geographic distribution of representations abroad, changes in the authority of sub-state authorities to conduct paradiplomacy, the adoption and implementation of binding (i.e. legal) and non-binding (i.e. political) frameworks of paradiplomacy,

A historical approach

A final element to further precise any observation of change is the deployment of a historical background to identify longer-term trends that offer contrast with the period analysed. Mirroring the notion derived from Braudel about *longue durée* and junctural change (1958), I also address the long-term trends that shaped the case of external relations today. By following this research strategy, this thesis accounts for the factors addressed by the historical approach in paradiplomacy. Namely, the roles of 'cultures of paradiplomacy' (Cornago 2018) and the 'geopolitical DNA' of regions (Duran 2015). This concept encompasses several structural elements of paradiplomacy, all of which can be considered as constituting the opportunity structures of regions to have external relations. According to Duran, the geopolitical DNA is the combination of opportunity structures along the lines of Lecours, the psychological milieu

where decision-makers operate, and the cultural and historical legacies of the region itself. The 'DNA' metaphor here is meant to communicate that these factors are inscribed in and shape the coming of the political Self of the region (Duran 2015, 71). In this sense, this line of inquiry goes along the lines of Buzan & Little (2001) about the role of international history in International Relations. A comparison of the four cases selected is an original contribution that this thesis makes to our knowledge of the North Caucasus.

There are potential pitfalls in entertaining a historical perspective. First, one runs the risk of adding information that enriches but ultimately does not contribute to any inferences or to the formulation of hypotheses. As a historical background, it may help a reader understand better the cases analysed but not add value to those already knowledgeable. Second, one may risk writing histories that stray away from paradiplomacy and delve into national histories. In the case of paradiplomacy and minority regions one could be especially tempted to portray paradiplomacy as an expression of nationhood. As many of the histories that concern the North Caucasus are dedicated to its peoples and not its constituent political units, there could be a confusion between natio-nalities and the territorial-administrative entities they inhabit (see Ferrari 2007). Indeed, my intention in this reconstruction is not to write national history (e.g. Foltz 2022) but write about broad patterns in the history of the administrative units where these nationalities happen to live.

The first risk, of redundancy, is moot in this case for two reasons. First, this thesis introduces four cases seldom analysed in the paradiplomacy literature, with many references and aspects of their history sparsely studied in the English-language scholarship. A reader would thus benefit from me volun-teering background information. Second, a carefully designed overview of the history of the cases analysed would enable the formulation of hypotheses when projected against a *short-term context* and a *long-term context*. This second point is essential to my argument, as the short-term context may not suffice to retrieve all implications from the changes observed in the timeframe analysed. In Kuznetsov's own argumentation (2015), the case of Alberta is contemplated over what can be called a long-term context as the emergence of paradiplomacy as analysed by his framework is not measured in terms of a few years but decades. More broadly, there has been a recognition in the paradiplomacy literature of the importance of the past in shaping the patterns of paradiplomacy of today. For instance, Duran (2015) investigates the patterns of territoriali-sation of selected Mediterranean sub-state governments by looking into their broader patterns of paradiplomacy across centuries. He does this through the concept of 'geopolitical DNA' defined in the previous chapter. I will deploy this concept on two occasions, once per empirical chapter, where I describe the broad features of the geopolitical DNA of each case, and in a historical chapter where I trace the evolution of the cases across recent history (see below).

I tackle the second risk – of writing national histories – by maintaining the analytical focus on the frameworks that govern the regions (the aforementioned opportunity structures) and by grounding my analysis on a history of the

territorial entities where the nationalities live. This necessitates an approach that does away with the anchoring role that writing about nationalities provides. Writing about nationalities in the North Caucasus facilitates writing about the region's politics in general because of the constant changing of borders and boundaries. But, as my focus is not on nationalism or 'nationalities' but on administrative entities and their external relations, the narrative of the historical background is entirely dedicated to the history of the administrative units concerned. This way, for instance, instead of analysing the attempts and failures of the Ingush to achieve statehood in the 19th century, I trace the evolution of the territorial entities that preceded present-day Ingushetia but occupied roughly the same space as the federal subject does today. This approach is more akin to a 'civic' history instead of a 'national' one.

The two main indicators to trace across a longer, historical time period are external relations and statehood. With external relations, I refer to the different forms the predecessors of the substate regions engaged partners beyond their borders. My focus, as mentioned above, is in the territorial-administrative entities and not in the claims made about peoples living in them. With 'statehood' I refer to what I referred to in the conceptual framework chapter as the formation of regions. This notion of statehood is also meant to overlap with the Russian notion of 'statehood' (*gosudarstvennost*). Statehood and independence are not necessarily connected. For instance, Lluch (2012) shows how the autonomist political movements of Puerto Rico (US), Québec (Canada) and Catalunya (Spain) advocate for territorial autonomy over independence as a status best conductive to preserving nationhood. This notion has guided several scholarly articles and monographs that trace the evolution of the territories of the former Russian Empire, including of the North Caucasus (e.g. Ugurchieva 2006). It usually refers to the emergence of a given region with its accompanying government, administrative boundaries and 'identity'.[11] In sum, the historical approach will add value to the analysis by adding context to the reader and offering a way to contrast recent trends to longer trends in history. Crucially, this historical approach adds to our understanding not only of junctural, short-term change in paradiplomacy but also of long-term trends.

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[11] A relevant concept here is the 'geo-body' (Winichakul 1997, 16–17). This element of nationhood is a way in which nationalist narratives territorialise and give nationhood a spatial dimension. It defines the Self of the nation with a measurable and identifiable portion of the earth's surface. The evolution of 'statehood' in the North Caucasus can be thus seen as the evolution of the geo-body of the nationalities that inhabit the territorial regions under analysis here.

CHAPTER 3

Statehood and (Para)diplomacy in Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia, 1750–2010[12]

To retrieve the 'geopolitical DNA' of Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia, the first step is to examine its emergence, and identify its features and lasting legacies. While many works have addressed the history of the peoples of the region (to name a few Gammer 1994; Richmond 2008; Marshall 2010; Forsyth 2013), this chapter adds value to our knowledge of the North Caucasus by analysing the main junctures of North Caucasus history through the 'geopolitical DNA' grid. However, instead of addressing most elements of the grid (the political, economic, cultural and psychological milieus), I choose to focus on the evolution of statehood and (para)diplomacy. Also, this chapter stands out as one of the few comparative studies of different regions of the North Caucasus. Given the centrality of opportunity structures for paradiplomacy, the analysis of the history of statehood and (para)diplomacy in the region requires an understanding of the context in which the centre-region relations developed at each stage. In turn, this historical analysis will serve as the foundation for interrogating the twenty first century dynamics analysed in the subsequent chapters. In other words, this chapter foreshadows many themes – such as the precarity of statehood of Ingushetia, the diversity of Dagestan or the hegemony of the Kabards – that will appear again in the analytical chapters.

In this chapter, I argue for a periodisation of the evolution of statehood and external autonomy in the North Caucasus. Based on the preceding literature, I argue for five distinct periods that are the most relevant to today: the pre-conquest era, the conquest era, the Tsarist or colonial era, the Bolshevik and Soviet era, and the post-Soviet era. For each one of the North Caucasus republics, transitions from one era to the other happened at different times. Yet, what is lost in precision is gained by clarity of the broader cross-cutting trends in the evolution of statehood and external autonomy of the cases studied here. In general, the *longue durée* of North Caucasus autonomy – internal and external – is bound to the fluctuations of imperial power, which for the last three centuries has been predominantly Russian. Expansion of Russian power has coincided with the rooting and thickening of governance practices over the quasi-colonial North Caucasus. North Caucasus statehood did not disappear but did transform itself several times: from principalities to ethnic districts to ethnic republics. Each stage was defined by the imperial frameworks imposed on the North Caucasus polities, frameworks that defined their opportunities to act abroad. For instance, in the Soviet era, statehood consolidation took its most intense face but

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had its narrowest scope in terms of external action. These legacies will be present in each of the cases analysed in the following chapters. To point to an example, legacies of region formation will be evident – for instance – in Dagestan's post-1991 paradiplomacy and its lack of a vigorous diaspora policy.

Analysing the long-term trends in the development of North Caucasus statehood and external autonomy adds clarity to our understanding the present time because it establishes that: (para)diplomacy and statehood in the North Caucasus are not new; the peripheral situation of the region has been its determinant when it comes to processes of internal and external autonomy (i.e. its frameworks are imposed from 'outside'); and that it helps us de-naturalise specific episodes of recent history that could be otherwise be mistaken as the 'normal' state of affairs. For each specific case, these legacies have different impacts in their contemporary external relations, which I explore more in-depth in their respective chapters.

Statehood and (Para)diplomacy in the North Caucasus: Periods and Trends

Periodisation

In order to trace the process of the emergence of the 'geopolitical DNA' of Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia-Alania, I focus on five key historical periods, from 1750 to 2008. These periods were chosen for their distinct patterns in the overall autonomy of the (para)diplomacy of the cases analysed here, and for their distinct patterns in the consolidation of statehood and state-building. The five periods are: pre-Tsarist, conquest, Tsarist, Socialist and post-Soviet (*Table 5*). With this periodisation, I attempt to follow the crucial transformations of the region in terms of political ordering and statehood.

Table 5. A proposed periodisation of the main stages in the evolution of statehood and (para)diplomacy in the North Caucasus. Based on Richmond (2008) and Marshall (2010).

Timeframe	Description
Pre-conquest	The state of statehood and (para)diplomacy on the eve of Tsarist expansion on the region (roughly until 1750)
Conquest era	Starting from the mid-18th century to the end of the Caucasus War (ca. 1865)
Tsarist/colonial era	From the establishment of the Terek oblast (1865) to the Russian Civil War (1917)
Socialist era	1917–1991
Post-Soviet era	1991-to-day

This periodisation does not innovate and builds on the established notions on the area's history. I roughly follow the periodisation of Tsutsiev (2004), Richmond (2008), Marshall (2010), Kozlov (2011) among other scholars. The first two periods – the pre-Tsarist and the conquest era – came at different times for different North Caucasus polities, so more precise dates are mentioned in each sub-section. Nevertheless, the pre-Tsarist era ends roughly by the middle 18th century when St. Petersburg gains interest in the region anew after the post-Petrine lull. What follows is the near-century period of Russian incorporation of the North Caucasus, which featured the long Caucasus War. That period of conquest closes here with the establishment in 1865 of the territorial-administrative units of the North Caucasus, notably the Terek oblast and the Dagestan oblast. The 1865–1917 period is thus the late imperial era which finishes with the Russian Civil War. The Socialist period begins here from 1917 and lasts until 1991 albeit with important differences in Stalinist and post-Stalinist conditions.[13] Finally, the post-Soviet period is taken as a single bloc from 1991 to the early years of Putin's third term, thus incorporating the period of interest of the thesis (2010–2013). By consolidating the post-Soviet period into a single bloc, the analysis here remains in the *longue durée* perspective.

In assembling these sub-sections, I have sought to avoid the pitfalls of writing national histories that tend to posit the republics' territories are historically given and deserving. As Lanzillotti mentions, Soviet and Russian historiography heavily lean in that direction which obfuscates the elements of imperial imposition and heightens nationalist narratives (2014, 30; see also Ferrari 2010). Indeed, ethno-linguistic categories such as Kabard or Balkar did not exist for most of the period covered in this chapter. 'Balkar' for instance would not emerge as the label for a group of people until the twentieth century (Lanzillotti 2014, 32).[14] In order to avoid this path, I have chosen not to focus on the history of the peoples (Dagestani peoples, Ingush, Kabard and Balkar, and Ossetian). Such an approach based on nationalities has been taken before by scholars of the region. For instance, Kozlov (2011) explores the relationship between Russia and the Vainakh peoples and follows them through the era of their deportations to Central Asia. I do not delve into that episode here as the polities associated with the Vainakh vanished from the North Caucasus at that time.

Consequently, my attention is dedicated to the lineage of the territorial-administrative entities and not to the histories of their associated nationalities. I do this by tracing the evolution of the external and internal autonomy of these entities and their extent of consolidation of statehood. These elements serve as rough indicators that follow some of the aspects of the 'geopolitical DNA' of these regions. Previous works have attempted similar accounts, such as that of Ugurcheva (2006) about the Nazran district and Kazharov (2018) about

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[13] The brief Mountaineer republic of 1918 cannot be explored here due to matters of space. On that topic, Vatchagaev (2018).

[14] Until then they were referred to as 'mountain Tatars' (Tsutsiev 2004).

Kabardino-Balkaria. My goal however is not precise historical reconstruction[15] but to offer just sufficient information for a *broad* binary classification between periods with or without statehood, and with or without (para)diplomacy. The overlaying heritages of these preceding periods contribute to both the para-diplomatic culture and geopolitical DNA of the four cases in the present day, which I will attempt to make clear in the following. As the conclusions point to, this analysis is not meant to suggest that historical trends reduce contingency in the present. It is meant to offer an insight about the range of options for statehood and paradiplomacy to develop.

A historical overview of governance, statehood and international relations in the North Caucasus

The story of statehood and (para)diplomacy in the North Caucasus is inevitably linked to the history of colonialism and imperialism, primarily of Russia, with the Ottoman and Persian empires becoming less relevant in time. If statehood is understood narrowly and connected to independent state-building, then the history of North Caucasus statehood ended in the late 18th to early 19th centuries when North Caucasian polities came under firm Russian control. Yet, since that time, administrative-political borders in the North Caucasus have remained a field of political controversy. Their territories have also remained the object of attachment and identification for many peoples. Moreover, the symbolic element of statehood in the North Caucasus has persisted, most notably in the form of flags, national anthems and titular nationalities. As the following describes, even in the aftermath of the formal abolition of pre-Tsarist forms of statehood in the region in 1865, the sub-districts of the area continued to be associated with the peoples living in them, which Tsarist administrators reflected at the formal, institutional level. Indeed, the peoples in these minority districts received self-governance rights and the possibility to use their traditional laws in parallel to Russian laws. In this sense, independence does not need to be the sole indicator for statehood.

Under these premises, this section – and this chapter overall – will offer a brief look into the evolution of the interaction between Russia and the North Caucasus, even during the period when the North Caucasus was (and remains) Russia. The struggle between Russification and devolution can be solved when understanding Russia as a continental empire (other examples are China, post-independence Mexico) as opposed to an overseas empire (e.g. France, Spain, United Kingdom). Continental empires are qualitatively different from overseas empires as they are contiguous with their conquered lands. This distinction results in different paths for decolonisation, identity-making and post-imperial nation and state-building (Shokowitz 2019). What is critical for the case of the North Caucasus is the role of minority policy in the empire's territorial-

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[15] Kazharov (2018) writes over a hundred pages of historiographical debate for Kabardino-Balkaria only!

administrative apparatus. Just like in other continental empires, minority policy had a much more salient place in the empire's policy than in oversea empires (Reinhard 2019, 10). For the inhabitants of the former Soviet space, territorial autonomy and local self-governance were usually the sole kind of minority protection regime they had access to (Kolstø 2001). These legacies of conquest and minority policy are critical to understand how statehood could have consolidated under circumstances where internal and external autonomy were lacking.

Table 6. The broad trends of autonomy and statehood, and (para)diplomacy in the North Caucasus according to each period proposed above.

	Trend description
Pre-conquest era	Full scope for internal and external autonomy, qualified only when suzerainty is present
Conquest era	Diminishing scope of autonomy leading to full loss
Tsarist/colonial era	Full loss of external autonomy, with residual statehood and marginal internal autonomy
Socialist era	No external autonomy and little scope for internal autonomy but intense state-building
Post-Soviet era	Large but then diminishing internal autonomy and diminishing external autonomy

As *Table 6* suggests, the five periods analysed witnessed changing degrees of autonomy in external (international) and internal (domestic) affairs, as well as changing degrees of statehood consolidation. These trends serve as generalisations for all North Caucasus polities. In turn, these generalisations point to trends in opportunity structures for paradiplomacy, including pathways for change, such as increased monitoring by the central government (centralisation), increased international attention (periods of contestation). For the remainder of this section, I offer a summary of these trends and periods, to then move on to the analysis of each individual region regarded here (namely Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia).

The pre-Tsarist era

The pre-conquest period (up to 1750) saw the most external and internal autonomy among the North Caucasian polities. In this time, the region hosted a variety of polities of diverse kind in terms of size, organisation and degree of politico-administrative cohesion. In Dagestan – the most extreme case – there were hundreds of small political communities that were autonomous from one another (Ware & Kisriev 2010, 20). None featured the kind of centralised and

organised government that could be compared to a modern nation-state. Instead, nearly all polities of the area resembled federations of feudal lords, prone to infighting and competing with one another within each state(let). Moreover, none of them was mono-ethnic and their self-understanding was not that of nation-states (Kazharov 2018, 148). In spite of the lack of the trappings of modern statehood, these polities were capable of engaging in international relations, and did so quite frequently to ensure their autonomy in a hotly contested neighbourhood. Around 1750, three of the four cases analysed here were under suzerainty of another power (the Dagestani polities under Persian suzerainty; Ingushetia, the Ossetian princes and the Balkar 'tribes' under Kabardan suzerainty), only Kabarda, the predecessor to Kabardino-Balkaria, was fully independent. Yet, even under suzerainty, all four polities engaged in 'official' relations in as much they involved interaction and agreements between the rulers of the North Caucasian polities and other partners. All polities discussed here except Ossetia and those of south Dagestan were predominantly Sunni Muslim, and as such they were politically oriented towards the Ottoman empire, regardless of how this operationalised in terms of actual connections (Gammer 1994, 21). At the same time, Russia's growing presence and penetration in the region through trade, Cossack emigration and diplomacy made it an influential power already by the mid 1750s (Kozlov et al 2011, 27; Gutnov 2019, 467).

The conquest era

As the name suggests, the conquest era was the period when Russia went from an influential but external actor to fully incorporating the North Caucasus. It did so by gaining the formal claim to the region and later by defeating the opposition to Tsarist rule, most crucially against Shamil's Caucasus Emirate and the rebelling Circassians by the 1860s (Gammer 1994; Richmond 2008). The conquest era, thus roughly from 1750 to 1865, can be understood – in hindsight – as a period in flux, where pre-Tsarist forms of statehood persisted and coexisted with Russian laws, administrative practices and power. Frequently, this meant that local elites could remain in power with their governing structures more or less unchanged as long as they remained loyal to the Tsar (Tsutsiev 2004, 17). Moreover, Russian rule was tenuous. Up until the 1810s, most people on the highlands would consider themselves free from Russian rule (Albogacheva 2011, 52). Later on, insurrections, rebellions and violent conflict persisted in the region in what is called the long 'Caucasus War' fought between 1818 to 1865 (Kozlov 2011, 32). The war would wreck many parts of the North Caucasus and bring total destruction to Kabarda. Nevertheless, the formal claim was clear for St. Petersburg; the Ottoman defeat of 1774 officially handed the region to Russia and the appointment of a governor-general in 1785 formalised Russian possession of the North Caucasus, regardless of the effectiveness of his rule (Tsutsiev 2004, 14; Kozlov 2011, 29; Forsyth 2013, 286). Furthermore, where it managed to impose itself, Russian rule was

despotic. Russia's authority over the region was fully delegated to the Russian military, and it would remain in military hands up until 1917. For most of the conquest era, before the creation of the Terek and Dagestan oblast in 1865, most peoples of the North Caucasus inhabited what was called the 'Caucasus Line' (*Kavkazskaya Liniya*). Established in the 18th century as a line of defensive fortresses, throughout the pre-colonial and colonial periods it represented the limits of direct Russian control over the region. As Russian power moved south, the line changed and expanded. It also gained depth as it acquired new administrative functions over its subjects. By 1832, the military staff of the Caucasus line administered a large portion of territory, including most of today's Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and a large portion of Dagestan. It was an early highpoint in Russia's penetration in the North Caucasus. Vladikavkaz was assigned its own district – covering most of today's North Ossetia – albeit also under military administration (Tsutsiev 2004, 18). Most of the pre-Tsarist polities persisted during this period as constituents of the Caucasus Line, albeit with no external autonomy and a limited form of internal autonomy, fully embedded into military rule. The pre-Tsarist territorial entities of the North Caucasus were preserved and formalised into the imperial system during this era.

The late Tsarist or colonial era

The end of the Caucasus War in 1865 was accompanied by the creation of the Terek and Dagestan oblasts, which abolished the Caucasus Line and all the remaining pre-Tsarist polities of the region. These two oblasts did not bring civilian rule to the region. The colonial-era North Caucasus military administration was unique and differed from the rest of imperial institutions (Ugurcheva 2006, 26–27). Throughout the conquest era, Russian power was enforced mostly through indirect control, the co-optation of local rulers, Cossack settlements, and enacted through a mixture of religious, local and Russian laws. By the middle of the 19th century, however, Tsarist forces succeeded in bringing the entire North Caucasus under direct Russian control, which brought about the transformation of the region. Land reform, the liberation of the peasantry, the introduction of citizenship (*grazhdanstvennost*), legal reform, education reform, and other reforms in the governance apparatus were carried out in the 1850–1917 period. These reforms were more than formalistic and they affected all North Caucasus peoples under their rule (Jersild 1997; Richmond 2008, 87–101). The colonial era would bring great transformations to the region.

Autonomy during the Tsarist era would diminish but not disappear, nor did North Caucasian statehood disappear altogether. The creation of the Terek oblast and Dagestan oblast was accompanied by the abolition of all the pre-Tsarist political entities and replaced with the military's 'dictatorial' monopoly of power (Kozlov 2011, 48). The local military administrators had a lot of room to govern, unencumbered by imperial politics. Several attempts at reform – and even the introduction of a Vice-Royalty in 1899 – failed or were scaled back at

the (informal) discretion of the North Caucasus military rulers (Tsutsiev 2004, 24; Ugurcheva 2006, 26–30). At the same time, a vestigial form of the pre-colonial laws persisted in the form of some protected traditional laws and local self-government for the mountaineer communities but these were embedded in the broader system of military administration (Ugurcheva 2006, 27). Indeed, from 1865 to 1888, the region was governed by the local North Caucasus branch of the Russian army under a 'military-civil system (*voennaya-narodnaya sistema*).[16] The system was operationalised poorly and haphazardly but it did result in a system of ethno-territorial administration which is at the roots of today's North Caucasus statehood.

While the Terek oblast and the Dagestan oblast abolished the feudal polities of before, several districts (*okrug* and *otdel*) reflected the ethnic (*plemennyi*) distribution of the local population. From 1868 on – with reforms in 1871 and 1888 – there was a Kabard district, an Ossetian district and an Ingush district. A distancing from the 'ethnic' principle in the 1870s did not dismantle the established order, although did prompt many administrative changes (Tsutsiev 1998, 35). Yet, by 1880 the preference for the ethnic principle was clear among decision-makers and progressively rooted in the local societies (Tsutsiev 1998, 36–37). So, by 1912 there was continuity in territorial administration of an Ingush district (Nazran), a Kabard and Balkar district (Nalchik), and an Ossetian district (Vladikavkaz). It can be said that these entities were the predecessors of Soviet-era autonomous republics, and their creation contributed to a progressive ethno-national connotation to the names of 'Kabarda' and 'Ossetia' (Tsutsiev 2004, 24, 45; Ugurcheva 2006, 28; Kazharov 2018, 148). In Dagestan the situation was more complex yet the presence of nine different districts in the region already spoke of an awareness of the cultural diversity of the region.

These territorial entities inside their respective oblasts enjoyed a measure of self-governance and internal autonomy yet they were embedded in the military-popular system under the army's direction. In this sense, there was no guarantee at any point that the military lost the right to intervene in the politics of the minority districts. Likewise, paradiplomacy and external autonomy were non-existent, at least not in any definition approximate to the contemporary sense or the definition adopted in this thesis.[17] While the governors of either region or of the municipalities within them seldom engaged in paradiplomacy, the region itself was part of the larger Hajj routes that ran through the Russian Empire. As Kane argues (2015, 3–10), Russian officials promoted and facilitated the Hajj to increase their influence over the empire's Muslim subjects, to increase the legitimacy of imperial-sanctioned Muslim institutions and to sustain the imperial project in the Middle East. The Hajj was thus the sole international vector of the

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[16] This system is little understood. Much research is missing to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the balance between military imposition and co-optation of local elites.

[17] I qualify this statement by speculating that the governors could still have entertained foreign guests or lead delegations abroad. The challenge is that there was no legal framework for these activities nor is there a go-to reference about such activities. In this sense, this could be a productive area of historical research.

North Caucasus polities of the time. The Hajj, as the following shows, would remain a vector of internationalisation for the North Caucasus into the XXIst century.

The Socialist era

The Socialist era featured a mixture of consolidating statehood for the North Caucasus regions and continuation in the lack of external autonomy. This combination is revealing of the nature of Soviet power in the North Caucasus. Throughout the 1920s, Moscow's control over the region was tenuous (Kozlov 2011, 449). After a brief 1918 interlude of *de facto* independence under the Mountaineer Republic (Vatchagayev 2018), the rising Bolshevik power installed the short-lived Mountaineer Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, incorporating most of the former Terek oblast into Bolshevik Russia. This entity lasted from 1921 to 1924 and was immediately beset by demands of separation from its constituent mountaineer districts. By 1924, all constituent regions seceded, bringing about the immediate predecessors of the current-day North Caucasus polities (Çelikpala 2002, 117–8; Marshall 2010, 179). This narrative challenges some of the pre-conceptions about Soviet power in the region, namely, about the ability of Moscow to impose its policies uncontested (Marshall 2010, 180). Further complicating the narrative of overwhelming Soviet power is the challenge to the thesis that there was a Soviet 'nationalities' policy'. As Smith argues (2019), this label is frequently used as a shorthand for a disparate series of policies and politics that, in truth, did not form a coherent 'policy'. Instead, Smith proposes to analyse Soviet-era centre-region relations as the result of bargaining between local and central elites. It is from this perspective that the analysis of the Soviet era proceeds.

In 1937, with the adoption of the new Soviet constitution, all North Caucasus republics took on new constitutions of their own. Behind this there were local power plays. The Soviets favoured the mountaineer societies as their opposition to the structures of Tsarist rule was the key for gaining the North Caucasus. So, the Soviets disempowered local Slavonic populations in favour of the mountaineer communities, expanding the territories of the North Caucasus polities of the time at the expense of Russian-inhabited ones. The flip side was the systematic dismantlement of religious institutions, decided from the late 1920s on. The Hajj and the teaching of the Arabic language, two of the links that connected the North Caucasus to the broader world in Tsarist times, were forbidden (Richmond 2008, 109–111). The North Caucasus also struggled to participate in paradiplomacy. Like Moytl showed (1982), Ukraine and Belarus – before the period of Stalinist consolidation – as Union republics enjoyed a modicum of external autonomy, as these entities had external representations run independently from Moscow. Yet, this dimension of external autonomy did not apply to the North Caucasus regions, and ultimately to the rest of the Union

as Stalin consolidated power.[18] Moreover, the early Socialist era saw a continuous change in internal borders on the Caucasus as the project of unified mountaineer statehood collapsed. What followed was a continuous drawing and redrawing of the region's administrative borders according to the larger political junctures in the Union. Notably, the post-Second World War deportations of the Balkars, Chechens, Ingush and Karachays to Central Asia, together with the abolition of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR and the Balkar side of Kabardino-Balkaria left important legacies in the politics of the region. The Stalinist-era administrative entities in the North Caucasus were ultimately unsuccessful and revisited shortly after his death (Marshall 2010, 286), settling the region's borders to this day (except for Ingushetia).

By the middle of the twentieth century, the peoples of the North Caucasus had been at least a hundred years under direct Russian/Soviet rule, yet they remained in many ways disconnected from the rest of their federative polities. The post-Stalin period saw more concerted efforts into integrating the North Caucasus into the rest of the Union, notably through Russian language teaching. The purpose was to foster bilingualism and not to replace the local languages, however, which would have undermined Soviet reliance on local cadres for legitimating Soviet rule (Richmond 2008, 125). The stability of the period would be accompanied by new latent conflicts. The changing of borders and the return of deportees would create long-lasting land-tenure conflicts well into the post-Soviet era (Marshall 2010, 285). At the same time, a modicum of economic development and the rooting of Soviet power in the region led to a brief period of stability and a lull in the opposition to Soviet rule. The period of relative stability would come to an end with the attempts to reform the Soviet Union. For the North Caucasus, there was continuous ethnic/national mobilisation between Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* to the early 1990s. There was a top-down element to this; the 1990 Yeltsin speech of 'take as much sovereignty as you can swallow' resulted in the process of consolidating their autonomy vis-à-vis the then-Soviet centre and later in regards to the post-Soviet authorities.

The post-Soviet era: from decentralisation to recentralisation

The Soviet collapse was not a *tabula rasa* for the North Caucasus (Lanzillotti 2014, 532), where state disintegration was experienced differently than at the successor states. The collapse only accelerated the trend of ethnic mobilisation; *perestroika*-era ethno-politics would take the lead in the building of new political institutions that had to be built from near zero (Kort 2019, 419–420). At the time, the broader federal order facilitated this arrangement. From 1991 to 1999, the balance of power between the regions and the centre was firmly in favour of the regions. It was them who held the resources and political power to assist or hinder Yeltsin's reforms. For maximising concessions from the federal

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[18]   Interview with Sergey Arteev, March 2020.

centre, Moscow and the regions engaged in bilateral treaties with one another meant to regulate the regions' continued participation in the federal constitutional order. At the same time, the centre's lack of influence gave governors all throughout the federation large room to issue laws and create institutions at their own initiative, frequently against federal laws (Logvinova 2018). Functionally, it was a two-level system of sovereignty.[19] Tatarstan, notably, managed to gain a large scope for internal and external autonomy, in fact becoming a model for other federal subjects at the time (Sharafutdinova 2003). The same applied to the North Caucasus republics, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent due to their lack of a comparable resource endowment like that of Tatarstan. In fact, throughout the post-Soviet period, the North Caucasus republican budgets depended to a great extent on federal transfers, frequently constituting about half or more of their total income. Yet, the decentralisation of the Yeltsin period and the need to build institutions from scratch offered the opportunity to consolidate post-Soviet forms of statehood. Namely, each one of the cases here passed their own constitutions in the 1990s; Dagestan, Ingushetia and North Ossetia in 1994 and Kabardino-Balkaria in 1997. Each one of these documents gave a wide scope for internal determination. For instance, North Ossetia and Kabardino-Balkaria declared themselves sovereign states within the framework of the Russian Federation (Khanaliev 2015, 97). These and other laws implemented in the 1990s contradicted federal law and the 1993 Constitution, a reality that would not change until the mid 2000s and the renewed drive to centralisation (for instance, see Ware & Kisriev 2010). Ultimately, their constitutions would be amended several times since 1991, with Dagestan adopting a new constitution altogether in 2003.

Regarding paradiplomacy, the Soviet collapse did not immediately bring about a reshuffling of external relations for the North Caucasus republics. While the Soviet system did not allow the North Caucasus polities to engage partners abroad, it did allow some scope for them to interact with partners within the Union. These connections were activated following the Soviet collapse, consolidating the first cross-border or properly paradiplomatic engagements of the republics post-1991 (for instance, see Orttung, Lussier & Paretskaya 2000, 377). At the same time, the North Caucasus republics began to engage in a variety of official relations with foreign partners in previously impossible ways (see individual sections). Just as other autonomous republics in the federation, kinship was a factor in choosing their partners abroad, especially religious affinity.[20] One large, cross-cutting trend since 1991 is the gradual overlap of North Caucasus and Middle Eastern geopolitics.[21] The most visible example are the reactions and responses from Muslim-majority states on Russia's Chechen wars (Poliakov 2001; Avioutskii 2005). This trend would play out for each of the cases contemplated here in different ways. While trade and investment

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[19]   Interview with Sergey Arteev, March 2020.
[20]   Interview with Sergei Arteev, March 2020.
[21]   Interview with Igor Okunev, March 2020.

promotion would keep the North Caucasus republics engaged with rich Western European states, the Middle East would remain a fixture in their external action. Notwithstanding, the identity of these North Caucasus regions would not automatically become 'Middle Eastern'.

Upon Putin becoming Prime Minister in 1999 and President in 2000, the federal government changed its approach to federal relations in general and to the North Caucasus in specific. Putin conceived of Russia's problems as the result of a deficit in governance and administrative, top-down control. Moreover, Putin's outlook has been one of centralised statism, not of the kind of pluralism that sustains a diverse democratic federation (Young 2013, 44–45, 52). In particular, the bilateral approach to managing federal relations was seen as part of the conditions that enabled the 'chaos' that Russia experienced in the 1990s. Consequently, Putin proceeded to implement reforms to 'restore' the 'vertical' of power throughout the federation. The relevant crucial reforms for centre-region relations throughout Russia were: the reorganisation of tax allocation, defining regional budgets on Moscow's directions; the creation of the federal districts, reducing the importance of compliance from governors; the end of the bilateral-treaty federal system and the start of the homogenisation of laws in the federation; the cessation of elected governors following the Beslan attacks of 2004;[22] and the consolidation of United Russia as the party of power (Young 2013, 46–7). The 1998 financial crisis bankrupted the regions and thus further tilted the balance of power in favour of the federal centre. By the end of Putin's second term in 2008, this process of decreasing autonomy was still ongoing.

The North Caucasus occupied a special place in this strategy of federal consolidation as nowhere was the need of the 'vertical' of power clearer than there. Critically, the Kremlin proceeded under the perspective that the region is part of Russia – ethnic differences notwithstanding – and should be thus governed like the rest of Russia.[23] The application of the vertical in that area centred on top-down policies and little space exclusive to local governors. A strategically important border region beset by crime and separatism, the North Caucasus stayed central in the Kremlin's agenda throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, with a clear international dimension at each step. The 1992 Ossetian-Ingush clashes and the disastrous 1994 Chechen war early on underscored the impossibility of a Russian withdrawal from the region. Moreover, the North Caucasus had a constant impact in Moscow's foreign policy as it was the inevitable contact with Azerbaijan and Georgia.[24] Furthermore, the violence and

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[22] Paradoxically, the result of this policy has been a weakening of governors vis-à-vis their own regions; not being elected officials and often 'parachuted' in from outside means that they are not embedded into the local elite networks that would otherwise facilitate governance (Young 2013, 48).

[23] Interview with Igor Kosikov, March 2020.

[24] Armenia, because of the lack of a shared border, does not figure as much. Yet, the Armenian diaspora is an important vector for contacts between the North Caucasus republics and Yerevan. Interview with Vadim Mukhanov, March 2020.

the Russian campaign had attracted criticisms from abroad, turning the North Caucasus into a spoiler for Russia's Western-orientation of the time.[25] As the 1990s moved on, the fear of secessionism or a Yugoslavia-style NATO (or Arab) intervention in the region became more and more prevalent in public discourse and in the circles of power (Poliakov 2001; Young 2013, 45–46; Wilhelmsen 2017), only receding by the 2000s. More relevant to this thesis was the continuous insurgency and low-intensity war in the North Caucasus outside of Chechnya from 2009 on (Holland, Witmer & O'Loughlin, 2017).

To meet these challenges, the federal centre from 1999 on deployed four policies: a policy of force, a policy of economic development, a policy of political participation and co-option, and a policy of identity promotion (Wilhelmsen 2019). Regarding force, the 1999 second Chechen war and the transformation of the North Caucasus 'insurgency' from a Chechen to a North Caucasus-wide phenomenon (Holland, Witmer & O'Loughlin, 2017) were met by Moscow through coercive policies. Namely, from 1999, there has been a heavy presence of federal forces, the persistent threat of violence against would-be terrorists and a high rate of 'liquidations' with arrests being rarer (Wilhelmsen 2019, 38–42). The other guiding policy was the policy of economic development. For Moscow, the source of extremism and conflict-related violence in the North Caucasus was unemployment (Black 2019, 44).[26] To address the roots of the violence, then, the federal government made public investment a cornerstone of its global strategy against terrorism. The 2010 'Strategy for the Socioeconomic Development of the North Caucasus Federal District Until 2025' makes this connection between combating terrorism and activating economic development clear (Wilhelmsen 2019, 42–44). Regarding political participation, the co-option of local elites, most notably in Chechnya, has been credited with the relative success of the counter-insurgency campaign (Wilhelmsen 2019, 44–46). Finally, regarding identity formation, Moscow has constantly asserted that the counter-terrorism operation is not a campaign against the peoples of the North Caucasus. Yet, these rhetorical manoeuvres have not resulted in North Caucasians feeling less targeted by the heavy hand of the Russian state (Wilhelmsen 2019, 46–49). None of these four policies hinge on expanding the internal or external autonomy of the North Caucasus republics. While the policy of participation can be said to involve local governors in decision-making, none of these policies expand the space of exclusive decision-making of the autonomous republics.

The post-1999 federal approach to the North Caucasus has been remarkably consistent. These four above-mentioned policies remained more or less constant through the change in power from Putin to Medvedev and back to Putin. Regarding Medvedev, because of the successes of Putin's first two terms in

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[25] Interview with Julia Nikitina, March 2020.

[26] Recent research suggests that the origins of North Caucasus extremism are more complex and include a lack of political participation, exclusion from institutions and lack of rule of law (see Tarín-Sanz & Ter-Ferrer 2018).

office – as was regarded by elites and the public alike[27] – Medvedev's presidency was seen, thus, primarily as a vehicle for continuity from Putin's first and second terms, including in federal matters (Young 2013, 48; Black 2015, 12). Decentralisation was not rolled back, so regions did not regain their ample external autonomy of before.[28] Yet, Medvedev did present his own agenda under the label of 'modernisation' in the economic, social and political spheres (Black 2015, 18–19) with tangible impact in the Caucasus.[29] In 2010 to 2012, there was a policy of dialogue and reparation that did not survive the return of Putin to the presidency (Wilhelmsen 2019, 39). The first years of Putin's third term – the last years contemplated in this thesis – did not see a significant change in these trends; the consolidation of the central government at the expense of regional governments continued apace. The 'White revolution' of 2011–2 scared Putin and the *siloviki* into suspending Medvedev's political modernisation agenda and staging a 'preventive counter-revolution' (Horvath 2013) sealing the fate of political pluralism for the remainder of his following six-year term (Black 2019, 1). A few reforms can still be mentioned. First, the partial re-introduction of gubernatorial elections in July 2012 meant that there were regions using the system of federal appointees in parallel to regions with the reformed, semi-elective system. This must not be interpreted as a change in the balance of power between regions and the centre but as a concession to protestors and local elites (Black 2019, 33–4). Then, for the North Caucasus, the above-mentioned policy of identity was undermined by the progressive emphasis on the Russian (*russkyi*) identity of the Russian state during Putin's third term (Wilhelmsen 2019, 49). In sum, the process of re-centralisation did severely diminish the scope of internal and external autonomy of the North Caucasus republics. At the same time, it did not result in a return to the Soviet-era closure of international relations for the region. By 2010, the North Caucasus constituents were still able to engage abroad, albeit with close federal monitoring.

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[27]   Russia was not a consolidated authoritarian state at the time, rather it was seen as a 'hybrid' regime, between democracy and authoritarianism. Its overall Freedom House freedom score was consistently 6,5 ('not free') between 2004 and 2008 from a low of 4,5 in 1999.

[28]   Interview with Sergei Arteev, March 2020.

[29]   As time went on, differences within the Tandem began to become even clearer. Notably, by late 2009 Medvedev was more inclined to openly criticise the record of the Putin presidency, going as far as decrying the lack of political and social freedoms of his time in office. Crucially, the persistent economic shortcomings in the country were attributed to the shortcomings in democratic governance.

Dagestan: Mountain of Peoples, Mountain of States?

Table 7. Paradiplomacy and Statehood in Dagestan across periods.

	(Para)diplomacy	Statehood
Pre-conquest	Yes	Yes but under suzerainty
Conquest era	Yes but diminishing	Yes but under increased external control
Tsarist era	No	Yes but shared
Communist era	No	Yes but shared
Post-Soviet	Yes but diminishing	Yes but shared and diminishing

Dagestan is one of the most complex regions in the world in terms of ethno-linguistic diversity, with 14 'titular' ethnic groups and many more not enjoying this form of official recognition. In spite of the apparent hegemony of Sunni Islam, there is also a large Shia community at the south, as well as Orthodox Christians in the north and a small population of Mountain Jews. Moreover, there is also diversity in the ways Islam is practiced, with different influential Sufi orders, and the presence of Salafi and 'traditional' Sunni Islam. This diversity is frequently acknowledged as reflected in Dagestan's contemporary political system, one of the most unique and elaborate systems of ethnic consociationalism (Ware & Kisirev 2010). As chapter four describes, this diversity could play a role in facilitating rich relations with diasporas abroad, both inviting their influence and acting in concert with them. But, in spite of some of Makhachkala's efforts, the consociationalist system and some features of Dagestan's politics actually hinder diaspora engagements.

Dagestan as a distinct territorial-political unit did not exist until relatively recently. For most of the period covered in this chapter, the territory of today's Dagestan was inhabited by a collection of statelets, feudal lords and princi-palities, all under *de jure* Persian suzerainty. Only in the Tsarist era did a distinct 'Dagestan' region emerge, at the expense of previous forms of sove-reignty and territorial organisation. As shown in *Table 7*, two periods stand out as Dagestan's most autonomous eras: the pre-colonial period and the post-Soviet era, albeit the latter one is of decreasing autonomy across time. The same applied to the conquest era. As mentioned above, the Soviet era was the period of minimal external or internal autonomy but of consolidating statehood, this time around the modern geographic notion of Dagestan. This consolidation was underscored by the introduction of Dagestan's consociational system of governance.

The high points of Dagestani internal and external autonomy are the pre-Tsarist and the post-Soviet periods. On the eve of Tsarist incorporation of Dagestan, there was no single Dagestani polity. Instead, there was a great diversity of political entities, each of them enjoying a high degree of internal and external autonomy. From north to south, the most notable ones were the Elisu Sultanate, the Gazikumukh Khanate or Shamkhalate, the small Mekhtulin Khanate, the Avar Khanate, the Kaitag Utsmisstvo, the Elisu Sultanate and the Tabasaran Principality. These entities traded, sent embassies abroad and engaged in alliances with one another and other polities. For instance, in the 16 to 18th century period, the Kumyk polities (the Gazikumukh and Tarkin Shamk-haltes), established relations with its neighbours including Georgia, but also Egypt, the Ottoman empire, Poland, Ukraine, among others (Adzhamatov 2020, 291). All these polities were under nominal Persian suzerainty, with most influence in the south than up north, but even in Derbent and Quba (in today's Azerbaijan), Persian rule depended on loyalty and indirect, rather than direct rule. Consequently, the Persian vassals would switch allegiances frequently, between Safavid Persia, the Ottoman empire and Russia in the 18th century (Imranli-Lowe 2020, 15). By the start of the 18th century, Persia lost the means to enforce the loyalty of the Dagestani polities, offering these entities the opportunity to exert the full scope of autonomous action in internal and external matters. As the Caucasus region was hotly contested between the Ottoman, Persian and Russian empires, the polities of Dagestan engaged in tactical alliances, coalition warfare and other forms of state diplomacy. Many Khanates swore loyalty to the Tsars during this period, frequently with a temporary and tactical scope. For instance, in 1799 the heads of the Tarki, Kaitag, Derbent, Avar and Tabasaran polities agreed to enter Russian protection, an allegiance that lasted shortly and was re-established by the end of the Russo-Iranian war of 1804–1813 (Forsyth 2013, 277–278). In spite of the nominal Persian suzerainty and the continuous threat posed by the aspirations from the three regional powers, the pre-colonial period was a high point in independent statehood and autonomous external action for these polities.

The conquest era saw the gradual diminution of autonomy of the Dagestan-based polities. As Russian power began to impose itself more directly over the peoples of today's Dagestan, it would break with the existing institutions of the region. In time, growing Russian rule would provoke rebellions and eventually the rise of a rebel polity by the 1830s (Ware & Kisriev 2010, 12). By that time, Dagestan was roughly divided between an administrative centre in the south – which would in effect become the Dagestan oblast post-1865 – , an administrative division in the north and a restless, mountainous middle. This latter one was the last region to be fully incorporated into Tsarist power, where the last fully independent North Caucasian polity stood, namely, the Shamil state or Caucasus Emirate. The Caucasus Emirate was born out of rebellion against Tsarist rule, and as such it existed in a state of near-constant war and frequently faced internal revolts. Yet, this state also had a centralised, hierarchical government capable of raising armies and engaging in international

relations. The foreign policy of the Caucasus Emirate was oriented towards aiding the long-term war effort against Russian rule, thus it sought to rally support among its neighbours and among the larger powers such as Persia, the Ottoman Empire and Egypt (Gammer 1994, 248–263; Richmond 2008, 69). While short lived, the Caucasus Emirate left important legacies in Dagestan as a symbol of independence and rebellion (Chenciner 1997). Outside of the Caucasus Emirate, the rest of what is today's Dagestan was governed by institutions in continuous flux, with no one established centre of power. In 1840, most of today's south Dagestan was inside the Caspian oblast, administrative centre Shemakha in today's Azerbaijan. Then, from 1846 to 1860, the Derbent oblast – centred on that city – was created, covering most of what would become the Dagestan oblast. It would be until 1865 with the creation of the Dagestan oblast – covering most of today's south Dagestan – that there would be a measure of stability in the administrative structures of the area. The northern half of today's Dagestan was under the rule of the Caucasus line.

The other period of increased internal and external autonomy was the post-Soviet era, which saw a dramatic increase in internal and external autonomy that would decline only somewhat into the Putin era. From 1991 on, the Dagestani republic and its constituent municipalities, together with its religious and educational institutions, intensely engaged in international relations. Just as elsewhere in the former USSR, Dagestan witnessed a significant growth in ethnic-based political mobilisation that frequently articulated aspirations of statehood for either Dagestan (increased devolution from the federation) or for their ethnic groups (increased devolution to municipalities to demands for the creation of new federal subjects). Similarly, this mobilisation came with demands for diaspora engagement, inside and outside of Russia (see Dagestan chapter). Furthermore, the Islamic revival in the republic carried with it an increase of contacts with foreign institutions of Islamic scholarship, resulting in the reinsertion of Dagestan into Islamic international networks (Richmond 2008, 148). Like elsewhere, the consolidation of federal authority under Putin saw a decrease in internal and external autonomy. Nevertheless, the Kremlin still had to rely on the local elites and was still constrained by the consociational system in its appointments. The true break on this system was the appointment of Ramazan Abdulatipov, who was tasked by the Kremlin to impose the 'power vertical' by breaking the power of the local 'clans' (see chapter four).

The colonial and Soviet periods were a low point in both internal and external autonomy. The establishment of the Dagestan oblast and the Terek oblast came with the abolishment of all the pre-imperial Khanates and other mountaineer feudal societies found in Dagestan. After 1860, Dagestan would be administered by direct military rule, meaning that civil laws from the empire would not apply in the region. In other words, the previous forms of statehood were dismantled and the new territorial-administrative configuration was intended to deny non-imperial statehood. Military rule was meant to be temporary, yet it lasted throughout the late Tsarist period (Bruce Ware & Kisriev 2010, 21–23). The Soviet period, moreover, saw the creation of a new

Dagestani entity, one that would remain a closed region for foreigners (Chenciner 1997, 2), tightly controlled by the Communist party. Nevertheless, even during these two low points in Dagestani autonomy, there were processes of internationalisation and consolidation of statehood that qualify the region's lack of autonomy. First, Russian rule was not homogenous. Just as in the Terek oblast, Dagestan's military administrators were prone to overrule St. Petersburg's instructions. Then, empire-wide policies would reach Dagestan slowly. For instance, there was no Dagestani law on the abolition of serfdom until 1913 (Sunderland 2019, 449). Further, just as it happened in the Terek oblast, Russian rule post-1860 accommodated some forms of customary law that functioned in parallel with military rule (Bruce Ware & Kisriev 2010, 21–23). Then, as mentioned above, the Hajj remained an important vector of contact with the outside world, one that in Dagestan's case played an important role in connecting cities such as Derbent into larger, international Hajj networks (Kane 2015, xii). Soviet rule mirrored this distribution of autonomy, with no external or internal autonomy, but with an intense process of national consolidation. Unlike the other North Caucasian polities studied here, unified Dagestani statehood – emancipated from military rule – was created in the Soviet period. The unique kind of consociational institution of ethnic balancing that governs Dagestan was created in this period and effectively sustained the unity and relative stability of this new polity. Between 1937 and 1957, the territories of today's Dagestan were divided between a northern region – then inside the Grozny oblast – and a southern, self-standing Dagestani ASSR. Aside from minor changes in the 21st century, Dagestan received its present borders in 1957. The institution of ethnic balancing through rigged elections would persist from the Soviet era as it is seen as the source of relative stability in the region, a perception that is highlighted by the contrast with next-door Chechnya (Marshall 2010, 290–291).

Ingushetia: Struggles Towards Autonomy

Ingushetia is today, like neighbouring Chechnya, nearly mono-ethnic. The titular Ingush – a Vainakh people together with Chechens and Kists – make up nine-five per cent of the republic's population. Ingushetia had a complex path to statehood, and a complex relation with Russian power. From the conquest era to 1917, the Ingush have stood between assimilation and estrangement from Russia, and to an extent between the Ossetians and the Chechens (Tsutsiev 1998, 31). Ingushetia's statehood was built from the dismantlement of Kabarda's influence and the break-up of the joint Ossetian-Ingush administrative units in the middle of the 19th century. Then, during most of the Soviet era, the Ingush would be tied to their Vainakh relatives of Chechnya and be governed from Grozny. Only after the collapse of the Soviet Union would there be a durable, self-standing Ingushetia. Because of this, it is hard to talk about *Ingushetia-n* paradiplomacy during most of the historic background

contemplated here. In fact, only the post-Soviet era were there both favourable conditions for paradiplomacy and a persistent form of Ingush statehood present. Yet, like in North Ossetia's case, the pre-statehood Ingush clans did engage in what can be called agreements and 'diplomacy' with external powers. As chapter five shows, Ingushetia's laboured path to emerging as a distinct region has resulted in a precarious statehood, expressed in a dogged executive authority that operates between powerful external forces. These factors became visible with the rise of conflict-driven violence in the late 2000s and early 2010s.

Table 8. Paradiplomacy and statehood in Ingushetia across periods.

	(Para)diplomacy	Statehood
Pre-conquest	Yes but clan-based	No*
Conquest era	No	No
Tsarist era	No	Yes but with frequent changes
Communist era	No	Yes but shared and with frequent changes
Post-Soviet	Yes but diminishing	Yes

*: They were fragmented and under suzerainty, but not under direct control.

During the pre-conquest and conquest eras, Ingushetia as a distinct territorial entity did not exist (Tsutsiev 1998, 34–5; Tsutsiev 2004, 16, 18, 21; Albo-gacheva 2011, 53, 69). Before the Caucasus Line, the Ingush-speaking peoples were divided among feudal lords which were all among Kabarda's vassals. Like the Ossetians, the Ingush were divided among clans (*tayp* in Ingush), so no central 'Ingush' authority existed. These clans inhabited primarily a section of the northern slopes of the Caucasus mountain range, unlike today where they also live on the piedmont by the river Sunzha. During the conquest era, the Ingush would gradually enter the Tsarist realm together with Kabarda and its vassals, all coming under the administration of the Caucasus Line. Under the Caucasus Line, each clan would decide their position towards Russia, between cooperation and resistance. In fact, only gradually would Tsarist power grow to the immediate east of Vladikavkaz, to incorporate most of the territory of today's Ingushetia by the early 1830s. As Tsarist power saturated the region, the application of the ethnic principle for territorial administration was slowly applied. From 1803–1836, the area around Vladikavkaz was governed under the Vladikavkaz Command (*komendant*). At the start of the 1800s, this administrative entity barely covered what is today's western Ingushetia and mostly consisted of former Kabard and Ossetian lands. In 1836, when the territory

under Tsarist rule around Vladikavkaz grew further, the Command was replaced by the Vladikavkaz district. This entity already covered most of Ingushetia and nearly all of North Ossetia. The collapse of Lesser Kabarda led to the repopulation of the area with Ingush around the 1830–1840s, which later on would enable the inclusion of that territory into Ingushetia. By then, the clan division of Ingush society continued and culminated with the division between those fighting with the Russians against the Caucasus Emirate and those fighting for the Emirate. Finally, in 1862, now under the framework of the Terek oblast, a self-standing Ingush district was created. It was the first time the Ingush lands were clearly separated from those of Ossetia. From then on, Ingush statehood would remain a feature – in one shape or another – in the region up until its disappearance with the creation of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR.

During the Soviet era, Ingushetia enjoyed a brief period of existence as a separate administrative unit. At the start, the Bolsheviks favoured Ingushetia for the Ingush fought against Tsarist power (and the Ossetians), and were seen as dependable allies in the region (Tsutsiev 1998, 51). Ingushetia was among the first entities to secede from the Mountaineer ASSR to become an autonomous region in 1921. At the time, Vladikavkaz was its administrative centre and a policy of 'parity' existed between the local Ingush and Ossetias. In the early 1930s the territorial arrangement changed again. Notably, Ingushetia would no longer be formally associated with Vladikavkaz as that city was given to the new North Ossetia. The Ingush lobby would lose to the influence of the Ossetian lobby in Moscow, leading to the latter gaining Vladikavkaz. This also represented the abandonment of the ethnic parity policy. Then, Ingushetia and Chechnya were joined together ending Ingushetia's self-standing status for the rest of the Soviet era; Grozny became the administrative centre of the new Chechen-Ingush ASSR. This ASSR was abolished in 1944 as part of operation 'Lentil' and restored in 1957. Restoration brought the 1944 borders without Ingushetia's Prigorodny district, which remained in North Ossetia (Tsutsiev 1998, 59–60). After restoration, investments from Moscow during the Khrushchev era and later the general 'stagnation' of the Brezhnev era kept a degree of stability in the ASSR, specially after the convulsions from the deportations and the return of the deportees in the mid to late-1950s. These conditions failed to solve the underlying conflict between Chechnya and Moscow about statehood, and between Ossetia and Ingushetia over the Prigorodny district, both of which would play out by the end of the century (Tsutsiev 1998, 80; Kozlov 2011, 861–2). Notwithstanding, the Soviet era was a period of consolidating statehood for Ingushetia, even in the framework of a republic of two titular nationalities.

The post-Soviet period has been to Ingushetia the high point in its autonomy as a self-standing entity. The formation of the contemporary Republic of Ingushetia stands out because of it being the sole North Caucasus federal subject formed since 1991, in spite of several nationalist movements aspiring for autonomy. Ingushetia became separate because, unlike Chechnya, Ingush authorities did agree to join the Russian Federation in 1991. In turn, the federal

government favoured the Ingush at the time because they were seen as a cudgel against the rebelling Chechen. Thus, Ingushetia entered the post-Soviet period with a high degree of autonomy. In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse, Ingushetia was among the Russian federal subjects whose laws differed the most from federal legal frameworks (Logvinova 2018). The post-Soviet autonomy of Ingushetia is, however, qualified by its lack of resources and high degree of violent conflict inside it. The population of the republic is the smallest of any Russian federal subject. Then, unlike Chechnya, Ingushetia's natural resources are negligible. Further, in the post-Soviet period, Ingushetia stood out as a focus of instability and conflict. In October 1992, roughly ten months after the dissolution of the USSR, the Prigorodny district became a point of violent contention. That area witnessed a week-long clash between Ingush militias and Ossetian republican guards and associated militias. The brief conflict ended with the intervention of the Russian armed forces (Tsutiev 1998). The conflict remains unresolved as of writing. Then, throughout the post-Soviet period, Ingushetia acted as a hub for illegal flows of drugs, arms and other criminal activities, all of these benefitting from its border and mountainous location. Finally, during the 2000s, as religious extremism became the driving ideological factor in the North Caucasus insurgency, Ingushetia became a focal point of low-intensity war (see Ingushetia chapter). These factors have kept Ingushetia on Moscow's sight, albeit it would be from the 2000s that the Kremlin sought greater control over the region.

Kabardino-Balkaria: from Hegemony to Incorporation

Table 9. Paradiplomacy and statehood in Kabardino-Balkaria across periods.

	(Para)diplomacy	Statehood
Pre-conquest	Yes	Yes
Conquest era	Yes	Yes
Tsarist era	No	Yes
Soviet era	No	Yes but shared
Post-Soviet	Yes but diminishing	Yes but shared

Kabardino-Balkaria is one of the two autonomous republics with two titular nationalities (the other being its neighbour Karachay-Cherkessia). These are the Kabards – a sub-group of the Circassians – and the Balkars, although there is also a substantial Russian population in the republic, too. Unlike mono-ethnic

Ingushetia and North Ossetia, and multi-ethnic and consociational Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria has an *ad hoc* distribution of power, with the executive held by a representative of the more numerous Kabards and the head of the legislative power by that of the Balkars. In spite of their tangible power differentials and their frequent conflicts, Kabards and Balkars have coexisted in relatively harmonious terms in recent history (Lanzillotti 2014), which is reflected to an extent in the republic's paradiplomacy. Nevertheless, as chapter six points to, Kabard elites have established their hegemony over the formal structures of the republic. In turn, this rendered Circassian engagements a more prominent albeit not exclusive form of diaspora paradiplomacy.

The trajectory of Kabardino-Balkaria is different from the other four cases in that it involves a stronger heritage of statehood, played out in a longer timeframe (*Table 9*). Like the other regions contemplated here, the pre-Tsarist and post-Soviet periods are those featuring the highest degree of autonomy vis-à-vis other authorities. Between these two periods, Kabard statehood did not vanish, with a continuity that is unlike any other in the North Caucasus, perhaps except Chechnya. In the pre-Tsarist era, Kabarda was an independent kingdom; in the conquest era, Kabarda persisted as a distinct constituent of the Caucasus Line; during the colonial era, Lesser Kabarda was dismantled definitively, but Greater Kabarda persisted in the form of the Nalchik district; finally, Kabarda was the first constituent of the Mountaineer ASSR to claim for separation and become its own autonomous region. This continuity should not be read as the persistence of a Circassian polity. In fact, all these entities were multi-ethnic, primarily Kabard (Circassian), Balkar and later also Russian.

The high points of internal and external autonomy for Kabarda – like elsewhere in the region – were the pre-Tsarist and post-Soviet periods. In the pre-Tsarist era, Kabarda was the hegemonic power of the North Central Caucasus. Moreover, it came the closest to a centralised state. Nevertheless, Kabarda did not have an effective central authority, and was itself divided into Greater and Lesser Kabarda (corresponding to the territories of contemporary Kabardino-Balkaria and Ingushetia, respectively). The Kabardan Chief Prince – the highest Kabardan authority – had the neighbouring North Caucasian peoples (Ossetians, Ingush, Balkars and Karachays) as vassals, with the even more fragmented west Circassians tribes in their debt (Richmond 2008, 42; Forsyth 2013, 220; Lanzilloti 2014, 47). Kabarda's main concern outside of its borders during the pre-Tsarist era was to remain independent from the Crimean Khanate, which at the time was an influential power in the broader region and suzerain of Kabarda. As a result, of all the North Caucasus subjects, the mediaeval kingdom of Kabarda (Greater and Lesser) stands out as being of the older allies of Muscovy in the area.[30] Indeed, from the 16 century until the conquest period, there was an overlap between the Russian and Kabard interest

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[30] This, in turn, has had a greater influence in the 'geopolitical code' of today's Kabardino-Balkaria, which, in spite of Circassian nationalism, remains Russia-oriented. Interview with Igor Okunev, March 2020.

in checking the influence of the Crimean Khanate, which was the basis of the Russo-Circassian accord at the time (Richmond 2008, 40; Kozlov 2011, 29). Kabarda's ability to fight off invasion, send out expeditions and enter treaties with other states were constant features of Kabard diplomacy at the time.

The post-Soviet period has witnessed – like in the other cases – the rise and decline of Kabardino-Balkaria's internal and external autonomy. Statehood in particular began this period under question. Indeed, it began with tensions about the status of the Balkars, who advocated either a distinct district within Kabardino-Balkaria or separation altogether. Yet, by 1996, this conflict would go into latency, only sometimes sparking open debates and never reaching higher conflict intensity. One of the reasons is that the Kabards emerged as the overwhelming political force in the republic, in part due to their demographic weight and Moscow's preference for Valery Kokov, the Kabard president of Kabardino-Balkaria (1992–2005). All heads of the republic have been Circassian. Co-optation also prevented escalation, with parts of the Balkar nationalist leadership integrated into the emerging political system of Kokov's Kabardino-Balkaria. The Russian minority is also accommodated and represented in the system (Lanzillotti 2014, 545, 548). Ultimately, the restoration of Moscow's power since 2000 brought to an end the viability of a Balkar separation project (Kazenin 2009, 68–78). In paradiplomacy, Kabardino-Balkaria began the post-Soviet period with a broad scope for external action. Early on this was exemplified by Nalchik's reactions to the 1992 war in Georgia. The Kokov government – although officially against volunteer formations – allowed volunteer detachments to join the Abkhaz side of the war. Nalchik officially sent medical aid to that side of the conflict. The 2008 Russo-Georgian war illustrated the extent to which the North Caucasus governments had come under Moscow's control; while offers to send new volunteer forces were made, this time Moscow did not allow for them (Kazenin 2009, 9). It would only develop from there. During the 1990s, Kabardino-Balkaria would seek out contacts with external actors for commercial purposes, in the Middle East and in the West (Orttung, Lussier & Paretskaya 2000, 163–164).

The low points of Kabard autonomy were the conquest, colonial and Soviet eras. The conquest era must be seen as a period of decline and gradual saturation of Russian power. The Tsarist and Soviet eras were periods of persistent statehood yet qualified internal autonomy. As Richmond describes (2008, 82–83), Tsarist authorities attempted to 'govern' Kabarda from 1769 with the creation of the 'oversight commission' (*pristavstvo*) for Kabarda. At the time, this was an innovation meant to facilitate the patronage of the formerly independent entities under the Caucasus Line. Under the Caucasus Line, Kabarda remained autonomous and self-governed, yet the Chief Prince was required to consult the Tsarist-appointed 'overseer' to govern. From the late 18 century on, Russian laws, courts and other institutional frameworks would be gradually implanted in Kabarda. There was, however, a degree of ambiguity. While the area was under *de jure* Crimean suzerainty, de facto Russian control was total. Officially, this ambiguous situation ended with the close of the 1828–

1829 Russo-Turkish war with the Treaty of Adrianople, recognising Russian control over Kabarda and the north Black Sea coast in general (Richmond 2008, 59–60). From the mid-1840s on, the entirety of Kabarda and its Balkar, Karachay, Ossetian and Ingush vassals became part of the Caucasus Line, under military administration from Vladikavkaz (Tsutsiev 2004, Map 5). Thirty more years of low-intensity war with the Circassians would follow and, prompted by the possibility of foreign intervention due to the Crimean war, end with the mass-scale deportations of Circassians to the Ottoman empire in 1860. Thus, the application of Tsarist power involved the use of force. Indeed, for Kabarda, the conquest era played out in a violent fashion throughout the 19 century, culminating in the 1860s deportations of mountaineers to the Ottoman Empire.[31] By then, the Caucasus War, plague and deportations diminished the Kabard population to a fraction of what it was before. Further, the integration of Kabarda into the imperial system was advanced; the administrative centre of the Caucasus Line was moved to Nalchik as a result of the 1830s reforms (Richmond 2008, 83).

The Tsarist era, from the end of the Caucasus War to the end of the Tsarist empire itself, saw major transformations of the Kabardian polity. The colonial period saw the disappearance of Greater and Lesser Kabarda, and their replacement by the Nalchik district within the military system of the Terek oblast. The borders of this district were drawn to incorporate the Circassian ethnic group, but remained uncertain undergoing several changes throughout the Tsarist era. Illustrative of this uncertainty in the application of the ethno-territorial principle was the case of Lesser Kabarda. Lesser Kabarda presented a problem for the administration of the North Central Caucasus. The Kabards could make a claim that Lesser Kabarda belonged to the Nalchik (Kabard) district. Further, the population living inside the region was primarily Ingush, with important Cossack and Kabard settlements. So, in 1888 Lesser Kabarda was assigned to the Sunzhenski district, a Cossack-majority region. By 1905, the internal problems and disputes within the region compelled the Viceroyalty to create a temporary Ingush district around Nazran, with a court system meant to address local grievances. Eventually, a 1909 decision by the Duma divided Lesser Kabarda between the Nalchik and Sunzhenski districts, and created a permanent, Ingush-majority Nazran district (Ugurcheva 2006, 53; Albogacheva 2011, 65; Kazharov 2018, 149–153). The colonial and Soviet periods saw a more stable situation when compared to the catastrophic Caucasus War, but not less conditioned by external domination. During the colonial era, there was a

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[31] There has been a debate to what extent the deportations can be considered 'genocide'. The human cost and brutality of the operation undoubtedly make the destruction of Kabarda and the broader, systematic destruction of the Circassian peoples one among the dark episodes of European colonialism. Yet, the historiography has been divided as to what to call this event. Before the 2000s, the deportations were considered more of an exile, by which devout Muslims left a land now under non-Muslim rule. As the 21st century began, the interpretation of 'genocide' began to take form, notably with the comprehensive case made by Richmond (2013).

Kabardan district inside Terek oblast, yet it was not designated a mountaineer (minority) district until 1888, centred on Nalchik (Tsutsiev 2004, Map 7; Ugurcheva 2006, 28). External relations were non-existent.

Like the other entities of the North Caucasus, the Soviet period had the paradoxical feature of consolidating regional statehood and nationalism without offering much in terms of autonomy. In 1922, Kabardino-Balkaria was created as an autonomous oblast and in 1936 it was 'upgraded' into an ASSR. With the Stalinist deportations came a change in the ASSR as it erased the reference to the Balkars and became the Karbadian ASSR. With the return of the Balkars in 1957, the region went back to being Kabardino-Balkaria. In spite of these changes, the current borders of Kabardino-Balkaria were settled in the Soviet era unlike the Chechen and Ingush ones. During the early years of Bolshevik – later Soviet – rule, the issue of the legacy of Kabarda was at the centre of the constituting processes of the North Caucasus. The main issue was the lack of land and the persistence of food shortages. The issue of Lesser Kabarda persisted, with the Ossetians making a claim to its territory (Richmond 2008, 107–108). Karachais and Balkars, benefitting from their isolation, only changed their allegiance to Russia. This rendered these peoples subjects to the Tsar and was quickly followed by the imposition of colonial institutions. It was also followed by war, as the Karachais and Balkars. The low-intensity war that followed did not end until the entire Karachay-Balkaria zone was occupied by Tsarist forces by the middle of the 19th century (Richmond 2008, 83). The fate of these peoples was uncertain. Between 1860 and 1880, the territories where they lived were changed from one administrative entity to another several times (Kazharov 2018, 147–8).

North Ossetia–Alania: the Impossible Unity

Table 10. Paradiplomacy and statehood in North Ossetia across periods.

	(Para)diplomacy	**Statehood**
Pre-conquest	Yes	No*
Conquest era	Yes but diminishing	No
Tsarist era	No	Yes
Communist era	No	Yes
Post-Soviet	Yes but diminishing	Yes

*: They were fragmented and under suzerainty, but not under direct control.

North Ossetia–Alania stands out in the North Caucasus for being the sole Christian-majority autonomous republic in the area. It is also mostly mono-cultural, with the titular Ossetians being the majority of the population. Like the other North Caucasus republics, its international politics feature *irredenta* prominently, with the added complication of the claims being outside of the Russian Federation, in Georgia. The 'South Ossetia' conflict has been active since at least the start of the twentieth century, as Ossetians from both sides of the Caucasus range have advocated for administrative unification of the two Ossetias. Even more relevant to today, was that two wars were fought recently, once in 1992 and again in 2008, seen by the Ossetian side as genocidal wars (Toal 2017, 129–132). These events have shaped the international relations of Vladikavkaz today, making the republic a participant in international negotia-tions early on in its post-Soviet life (Orttung, Lussier & Paretskaya 2000, 377). As described in chapter seven, these factors have an impact on North Ossetia's post-1991 paradiplomacy, well into the twenty-first century. Funnelled there by the central government, the *de facto* state of South Ossetia continued to overwhelmingly take over the attention of Vladikavkaz's paradiplomacy.

The trajectory of North Ossetia resembles that of the other cases addressed here, albeit with important exceptions. Like others in the North Caucasus, the highpoint of consolidation of Ossetian statehood began in the late Tsarist era and rose further in the post-Stalin Soviet Union. Before these junctures however, the path of early Ossetian statehood was not as straightforward as their Kabard neighbours. Before the Tsarist era and the creation of an Ossetian-majority district inside the Terek oblast, there was no single Ossetian kingdom or state. Ossetian society was organised around different feudal affiliations as no centralised authority comparable to the Kabard king existed. On the eve of the inclusion of the Ossetians into Tsarist rule, there were five distinct loosely-organised Ossetian societies in the territory of today's North Ossetia. These societies varied, with more hierarchical societies to the west and more horizontal ones to the east. These were, from west to east, the Digor, Alagir, Kurtatin and Tagaur, with the Tual south of the other four (Gutnov 2019, 375–376). Inasmuch these polities were independent they were independent from one another. Moreover, these societies were not entirely sovereign. In pre-Tsarist times, the Ossetians were among the tributaries to the Kabard kingdom, existing in a symbiotic, interdependent relation similar to that of the Karachay and the Balkars with the Kabards (Richmond 2008, 26; Lanzilotti 2014). During this period, Foltz mentions (2022, 82), the Ossetians were mostly isolated from the outside world. However, there was a measure of external autonomy among these pre-colonial Ossetian societies, as they demonstrated a capacity to engage in diplomacy, establish alliances and join war-time coalitions (Gutnov 2019, 479–480). After the 1774 Russo-Turkish treaty, the Ossetian societies became a Russian protectorate – by invitation according to historians – and Ossetian external autonomy quickly diminished to become monopolised by their Russian alliance (Gutnov 2019, 486; Foltz 2022, 83).

The external autonomy of North Ossetia's feudal lords slowed to a halt as the conquest period came to an end. As elsewhere in the region, the feudal kingdoms were not abolished upon their inclusion into the Caucasus Line. North Ossetia's incorporation into the Tsarist empire was gradual and involved a mixture of direct and indirect Russian rule. Before the 19th century, three transformations stood out: the founding of Mozdok, the founding of Vladi-kavkaz and the construction of the Georgian military road. Mozdok fortress, as mentioned above, was built to channel north-south trade to Russia. In the process, it served as a vehicle for Russian influence on Ossetian societies as it quickly became a critical site for economic exchanges for the Ossetians themselves (Gutnov 2019b, 467). Then, Vladikavkaz was planned from 1784 – the year Georgia became a Russian protectorate – to become the administrative centre of Tsarist North Central Caucasus rule. It was the first fortress built well within Ossetian territory and the first built in the mountainous North Caucasus proper (Ugurcheva 2006, 28; Gutnov 2019a 2019, 488). Finally, the Georgian military road involved Ossetian labour not only in its construction in 1799, but in its upkeep and protection. Particularly the Tagaur society benefited from it as the road goes through their territory and fought to keep the rights to profit from rights of passage from users of the road (Gutnov 2019, 385–388). These three major constructions, along with the multiple treaties signed between the individual Ossetian *aldar* and the Tsars, shaped Russian influence on Ossetia during the second half of the 18 century. Like the other North Caucasus polities in the Caucasus Line, the five different *aldar* reigns would persist unencumbered by direct rule until 1801, and continue in general until the creation of the Terek oblast in 1865.

The conquest and Tsarist periods can be seen as the slow consolidation of North Ossetia's statehood. The central location of the Ossetian territory and the infrastructure built there, underscored the importance of the region for Russia. The effect of this privileged location resulted in Ossetians being well integrated into the imperial order. As Marshall argues (2010, 15–16), the Ossetians were the only North Caucasus ethnicity that had widespread Russian-language proficiency and literacy levels in the double digits. The Ossetians were also the only North Caucasian group not excepted from military service. In 1830, the entire Ossetian territory was *de facto* integrated into the Russian empire through military conquest. In spite of its privileged standing with Tsarist authorities, Ossetia suffered Russian raids throughout the war. By the end of the Caucasus War, the Ossetia district (okrug) inherited the territory that was once Lesser Kabarda in the 1840s. The application of the ethnic principle for territorial administration is ultimately what led to the dismantlement of Lesser Kabarda. After the war, plague and deportations, the population of Lesser Kabarda primarily consisted of Ossetians, so, at the start, it was given to the Ossetian district (Kazharov 2018, 146–149). What followed was a persistent confrontation between the Ossetians settlers and the local peoples – Kabards foremost – on land ownership (Richmond 2008, 85). As described in the Ingushetia section, there was no unified Ossetian region during most of the pre-colonial and

conquest eras. It would be with the separation of the Vladikavkaz district in 1862 that a self-standing Ossetian district was created (Tsutsiev 1998, 34–5), also leaving most of Lesser Kabarda to the Ingush. With the 1888 reforms of the Terek oblast, Vladikavkaz became its own mountaineer district (Ugurcheva 2006, 28). Thus, by the end of the 19th century, there would be an Ossetia district centred on Vladikavkaz, laying the roots of North Ossetia's statehood. The Soviet era saw a continuation of North Ossetia's statehood. In 1924, it seceded from the Mountaineer ASSR to become an autonomous district. At the same time, the possibility of joining South Ossetia – at the time a distinct constituent within Georgia – was discussed (Arkhipova 2007, 198–199), but ultimately officials at Moscow decided against it. North Ossetia became an ASSR in 1936. In this sense, its statehood had continuity, border changes notwithstanding.

In the aftermath of the first South Ossetia-Georgia conflagration in the early 1990s, North Ossetia became a party to the post-conflict agreement that solidified the status of South Ossetia as a de facto state. In June 1992, the ceasefire agreement created a Joint Control Commission to monitor the ceasefire composed of Russian, South Ossetian, Georgian and North Ossetian representatives (Sagramoso 2020, 113). The Baden deal established 'special' links between North and South Ossetia (Sagramoso 2020, 228, note 2). The first head of North Ossetia projected a large role for himself beyond the borders of Russia, aspiring even to be recognised as the 'leader' of the region during the 1990s (Orttung, Lussier & Paretskaya 2000, 377). These aspirations speak at least to an extent about the scope of action that North Ossetia enjoyed at the time. Vladikavkaz's leadership has not aspired to such a role again ever since.

The Layering of Legacies in the North Caucasus

The past has left many different legacies for today's internal and external autonomy of the North Caucasus autonomous republics. The key driver of these legacies have been the different conflicts that shaped the region's politics. Namely, the conflicts for self-determination and preservation of statehood of the North Caucasian peoples vis-à-vis external powers and Russia in particular. Imperial strategies of governance, between co-optation and coercion, shaped much of the long-term development of the region. The conflict on which this thesis focuses on – the rise of the Caucasus Emirate organisation in the early 2010s – does not draw or stem from these past eras. Yet, several structural factors that shape and determine the paradiplomacy of the North Caucasus autonomous republics of today can be traced back to earlier times. It is in the confines of these structures – referred to here with the label of 'geopolitical DNA' – that Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia-Alania carry out their international relations. These will be addressed in-depth in the following chapters.

The most salient feature of the *longue durée* is the tendency of imperial power to fluctuate, creating periods of flux where statehood and external relations are re-negotiated. The end of the Caucasus War led to the abolition of the old Caucasus Line system that preserved some features of previous statehood. The end of the Tsarist era brought to an end the ambiguity between ethnic and non-ethnic territorial administration in the region. The end of the Soviet period brought to an end the purely formal nature of external and internal autonomy of the republics while retaining their Soviet forms of ethnic-based statehood. For external relations, the closure of the Soviet system meant that the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse was followed with the old connections being recycled, this time across state borders. Only with time would new patterns of territoriality emerge, driving the North Caucasus republics to different orientations.

Regarding the internal dimension, the historical consolidation of statehood – an uncertain and in no way guaranteed process – left several legacies that inform the 'geopolitical DNA' of the contemporary North Caucasian republics. Crucially, the trajectory of the North Caucasus reveals its peripheral situation vis-à-vis imperial powers as the main determinant of its opportunity structures to engage partners abroad. Then, the consolidation of statehood also leaves legacies that complicate today's paradiplomacy. This is visible most clearly in the case of diaspora engagement. This potentially fruitful vector of external action is complicated by the internal politics of each one of the republics, where engaging one diaspora may be seen as upsetting the balance between the ethnic groups inside the homeland. This is especially difficult in Dagestan where 14 'titular' nationalities share a single top-level polity since the late-Tsarist and Soviet eras. As the chapter on Dagestan will show, the legacy of pre-conquest and conquest-era multiplicity of polities in the region complicates today's external projection and prevents Dagestan from drawing from its diaspora connections. Regarding external autonomy more broadly, the legacies of the past are best understood by looking at the structural factors that frame the international relations of these polities. The Soviet breakup and the rise of globalisation in the former Soviet space are the junctures that gave the rise to the contemporary North Caucasian paradiplomacy. In the cases of Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Ingushetia and North Ossetia, experiences of statehood and previous (para)diplomacy have left an imprint in their contemporary political processes. Crucially, the rise of Russia in the region, from the mid-18th century on, is the most enduring legacy for the North Caucasus in terms of its internationalisation. From the conquest period on, the international relations of the local polities was marked by a centre-periphery relationship with the Russian capital, either as vassals or 'allies' in the long conquest period, or as today's federal subjects. Throughout this era, the ambiguity between forms of national self-determination and self-governance, and imperial belonging have shaped the local administrative institutions and the trends in centre-region relations.

In the following chapters – each one meant to be a self-standing analysis of the Medvedev-era paradiplomacy of these entities – I narrow the focus on each North Caucasus republic contemplated here. Their institutional evolution will be contemplated in what relates to paradiplomacy, specifically during the period of analysis, the four years of 2010–2013.

CHAPTER 4
Conflict and Dagestan's International Relations
2010–2013

Dagestan is known for its ethno-linguistic and religious diversity. As chapter three showed, this diversity is accompanied by diversity in legacies of independent or semi-independent statehood and (para)diplomacy. These legacies remained, to some extent or other, tangible since the incorporation of Dagestan into the Russian system in the 18th century until today. Notably, Dagestan stands as the only autonomous republic in the Russian Federation that has no 'titular' nationalities (in the sense that they give the name to the region), albeit it officially has 14 such core groups. Then, the persistence of Islam as a connector between Dagestan and the broader world remains tangible in modern Dagestani paradiplomacy. Yet, as argued below, this wealth in historical and (para)diplomatic legacies has not resulted in an increased scope for Dagestan's international relations. As the background chapter showed, the trend from the 1990s and the 2000s of Makhachkala consolidating its authority through paradiplomacy persisted into the 2010s. Moreover, from 2000 on, the consolidation of federal oversight in the republic has resulted in a decreased scope for non-economic or capacity building activities; identity as a driver for external relations thus declined. Thus, in the period between January 2010 and December 2013, Makhachkala's international agenda was harmonious with Russia's overall foreign policy of the time, namely, by focusing on capacity-building paradiplomacy (notably with religious interlocutors) and investment attraction. At the same time, the decline of ethnic identity as a resource for paradiplomacy meant a drop in the importance of the Dagestani diasporas as an external relations vector. Only religious identity – a unifying factor – was present in Dagestan's paradiplomacy. In short, Dagestan's vast ethnic diversity was not turned into an asset by Makhachkala when implementing an external action.

Dagestan's paradiplomacy changed between 2010 and 2013 in several ways. These changes point to the short-term shifts in federal policy to manage the rise in conflict intensity in the region, short-term changes in leadership and long-term changing patterns in territorialisation. The rise of conflict intensity is not evident in neither of these three on a first glance, but its weight is evinced when considering the arc of changes between 2010 and 2013. First, rising conflict intensity meant the relegation of conflict prevention through economic development and investment attraction to the background. While the Medvedev administration stressed job creation as a strategy to prevent radicalisation, Putin in his third term placed coercion as the privileged approach albeit without abandoning development altogether. Second, escalating conflict intensity and its mismanagement led to change in the Dagestani executive in 2013, with several accompanying changes in external relations policy. The 2013 reforms render even more evident the influence of federal conflict management policy in Dagestan's paradiplomacy. Finally, the two prior points went along with the

broader trend of Dagestan's reorientation from Europe and the CIS to Azerbaijan and the Middle East. These trends were driven not by the rise in conflict intensity, but facilitated by the policies meant to address the violence in the early 2010s.

The rise in conflict intensity, and the federal and local responses to it – I argue – drove the changes in Dagestan's paradiplomacy made evident by late 2013. This chapter will briefly outline the Dagestani insurgency and the trajectory of the Dagestani branch of *Imrat Kavkaz* in the early 2010s. Then, I proceed to describe the legal, political and institutional frameworks of Dagestan's external relations. These frames are the 'internal' part of the opportunity structures and capacities that determine the shape of Dagestan's external action. Then, I briefly look into the other circumstances that make up the operational environment in which Dagestan is embedded. This environment consists of the 'external' opportunity structures that facilitate or constrain Dagestan's outwards projection. There I place special attention to the factors that distinguish Dagestan from the other North Caucasus republics. Further along I focus on the 2010 to 2013 (inclusive) period by tracing the development of Dagestan's external engagements and the qualitative changes in Dagestan's paradiplomacy apparatus. Finally, I close by drawing attention to the ways the rise in conflict intensity impacted the republic's foreign relations, understood both in the short and long terms.

The Conflict in Dagestan 2010–2013

Dagestan was the most conflict-affected region in post-Soviet Russia, and after 2009, together with Ingushetia, the focal point of *Imrat Kavkaz*-related violence. As Chart 1 shows, conflict-related violence in the 2010–2013 (inclusive) period had a spike, to then slowly decline.
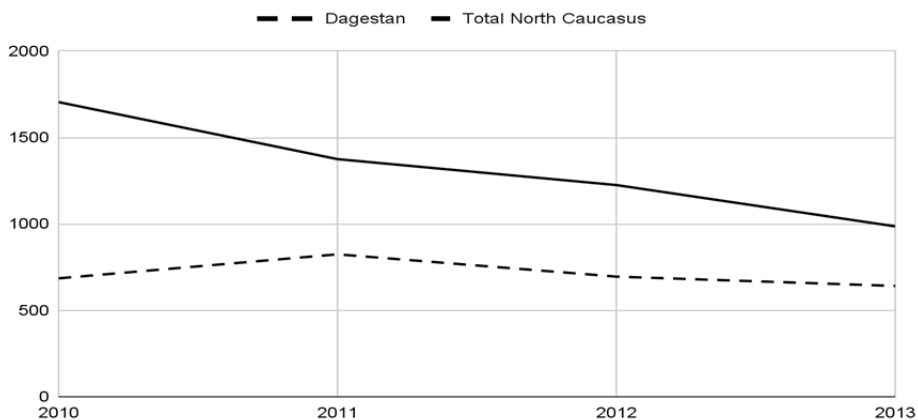

Figure 3. Conflict-related deaths in Dagestan and the North Caucasus total (North Caucasus: Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, North Ossetia-Alania and Stavropol). Source: Caucasian Knot.

Casualty numbers are revealing but must be treated with caution. In Dagestan, the fight against *Imrat Kavkaz* involved extrajudicial killings by security forces, as well as unilateral repression from the government side (Sokirianskaya 2019, 62). For instance, while casualties decreased from 2013 on, the number of mass detentions in mosques jumped in 2014 (Youngman 2019a, 156). More generally, the turn to a policy of force (see below) to govern the region was clear even after the data would start to suggest the beginning of the downturn in insurgency-related violence. In March 2012, 20 000 MVD troops were deployed to Dagestan (Black 2019, 42).

After 2009, Dagestan and Ingushetia became the frontline of the war with the *Imrat Kavkaz* group. The main divider in the Dagestan conflict is about the role of religion in society. Exploring in-depth the dynamics of religious politics in Dagestan is beyond the scope of this thesis. But it is sufficient to affirm that, as elsewhere in the North Caucasus, a feature of local politics has been the impact of the post-Soviet revival of Islam and the arrival of 'new' branches and interpretations of Islam. Indeed, as Ware & Kisriev argue (2010, 10–11), the 1990s saw a juncture in Dagestan's history regarding its form of political organisation. The delegitimation of secular values following the Soviet collapse, the failure of Western liberalism and the social collapse of the 1990s meant that there was an ideological vacuum, especially among young people. This circumstance invited the popularity of rigourist interpretations of Islam, namely, those collectively – and imprecisely – referred to as 'Salafism' in the North Caucasus context. Salafism was more attractive to some because it was a comprehensive moral alternative to both established forms of 'traditional' Islam and secular society. This way, two potential paths of social organisation would compete in the following years: an 'Islamic', religion-based one and the inherited secular, Westernising Russian/Soviet one (Crisis Group 2008; Sagramoso and Yarlykapov 2013, 55–56; see also Ware & Kisriev 2000, 247). The conflict between these two visions of society would remain low intensity throughout the 1990s, becoming more pressing since 1999. Crucially, the Salafi communities that were growing in number since 1991 were the target of repression. These were banned following the 1999 Chechen incursion and the authorities progressively associated them with terrorism outright. The heavy-handed state repression would blow back eventually, in the 2000s. According to Sagramoso and Yarlykapov (2013), the repressed Salafi communities were especially receptive to the insurgency's appeals. Thus, the religious divide is what distinguishes the insurgency in Dagestan. As a consequence, and unlike Ingushetia or Kabardino-Balkaria, outright nationalism was absent in the ideological formation of the Dagestani insurgency.

The drivers of the Dagestani insurgency are harder to define with precision. The dominant theory in Moscow up until the Medvedev presidency was the intrusion of foreign extremists and extremist ideologies in the North Caucasus was the main driver of the conflict. During the last years of Putin's second term – especially from 2005 – and during the Medvedev presidency, the diagnosis changed, placing more emphasis on the economy. Namely, the lack of economic

growth meant that few jobs could be created, creating a large unemployed population, making them receptive to extremist messages. Indeed, Dagestan's economy was in trouble by the mid-2000s. The relative stability it enjoyed during the 1990s did not translate into economic growth. Part of the governance strategy involved allowing the boom of the non taxable black market and grey economy, meaning that public investment and services would be over-whelmingly funded by federal transfers (Chenciner 1997, 272; Ware & Kisriev 2010, 192). Adding additional pressure has been the consistent drop in the yearly rate of new job vacancies opened; from 6 000 in 1996 to just over 600 in 2012 (Gadzhieva 2017, 99). Thus, unemployment has remained stubbornly high; in 1995, unofficial unemployment (i.e. not registered with the authorities) was estimated to be 24 per cent, in 1998, 22 per cent (Kosikov & Kosikova 1999, 79).[32] Thus, the only escape valve has been emigration, and for some, the discontent drives them into extremism, so the economic explanation goes. Scholars draw from the economic interpretation, too, albeit they also point to repression as a driver (for instance Kuchins, Malarkey & Markedonov 2011, 3–4). International NGOs and organisations have coincided with this combination. For instance, a 2008 report by the International Crisis Group identified economic exclusion and repression as the causes of the Dagestani insurgency (Crisis Group 2008, 12). Against this interpretation, Ware & Kisriev (2010, 208–214) point to the political system as the main driver of instability. Namely, instability was caused by the mid-2000 reforms imposed by the federal centre, and the corruption and deficiencies of the Dagestani political system itself.

For this thesis, what is more relevant is the hegemonic role in federal and local authorities of the economic theory of North Caucasus instability. Indeed, economic development was promoted by Medvedev throughout the North Caucasus, becoming the guiding principle of federal and local policy (Black 2015, 46). In turn, as described below, this policy would be implemented in Dagestani paradiplomacy, too. There would be a shift in federal policy starting from 2012, with Putin's return to the presidency. The shift would consolidate in 2013 and was a policy of force, relying more on repression and mass arrests for governance of Dagestan and across the region (Wilhelmsen 2018, 39). Yet, Dagestan's paradiplomacy would continue to implement the development policy. Aware of the conflict situation in the region, the head of Dagestan's trade and investment agency likened their task to investment promotion in Israel, a country where violence erupts but where investments can also take place (Chernovik 2012).

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[32]   Other estimates put the 1998 number at 30 per cent (Gadzhieva 2017, 99).

Dagestan's International Relations Institutions

Legal frameworks

Republican and Federal frameworks facilitate Dagestan's external relations. As mentioned in a previous chapter, all federal subjects have a constitutional right to engage in external relations. In Dagestan, its Constitution also frames the republic's external engagements. The constitutional history of Dagestan since 1991 reflects that of other Russian federal subjects, especially the autonomous republics. Namely, the process of de-centralisation under Yeltsin leading to de-harmonisation between federal and republican laws. In this context, the first post-Soviet constitution of Dagestan was adopted in 1994. Then, from 2000 on, legal frameworks would be progressively harmonised throughout the federation. An example of the early efforts in harmonisation – and thus centralisation – was the abolition of Dagestan internal ethnic districts. Under pressure that the Russian Constitutional Court would impose the abolition of the districts, republican authorities amended Dagestan's electoral laws. A similar process took place with other articles in Dagestan's constitution, with many constitutional amendments taking place on 22 June, 2000 (Ware & Kisriev 2010, 158–164). The current constitution was adopted in 2003 introducing several reforms in Dagestan's electoral politics and government.

The Dagestani constitutions established the republic's right to engage in international relations in several articles. The 1994 constitution established a broad right for Dagestan to engage partners abroad. Article 66 stated that Dagestan is an 'independent' participant in international relations, free to engage foreign partners without any federal involvement. The June 2000 reforms amended this article, removing the reference to independent action, and instead stressing Dagestan's right to act abroad within the laws and agreements of the Russian Federation. In the 2003 constitution, Article 56 establishes the right for having international connections with international partners within the framework of federal laws. Then, Article 88 paragraph 5 assigns to the government of Dagestan the right to establish (*osushhestvlyat*) international economic relations. Further, Article 89 paragraph 5 assigns to the head of the republic the right to coordinate joint actions in international economic relations with other federal institutions and subjects, as well as with local (municipal) authorities (Ware & Kisriev 2010, 162). Finally, a 2013 amendment by decree (discussed below) clarifies and assigns explicitly the international relations competencies of the head of the republic.

Political frameworks for international relations

Dagestani politics – as described below – are determined by the uneasy relations between the different 'clans' of the republic, and the centre's attempt at managing them. Thus, external policy is conceived, designed and implemented exclusively by the republican government, with the intention for it not to become 'ethnic'. As described further below, for Makhachkala, the general

trend since the 2003 reforms has been one of growing detachment from the population and greater reliance on Moscow to govern. As a result, the substance of external policy is as much a matter of internal (Dagestani) political discussion as any other policy area, that is, not at all. In the 2000s and 2010s, the Head of the Republic was – like elsewhere in the federation – appointed by the federal centre, so no substantive public debates about external policy could have happened in electoral processes. Compounding on the technocratic nature of governance is the lack of transparency. Dagestan's relatively closed system of governance impedes the access to its deliberations and internal debates about policy options. In short, the kind of bottom-up demands and pressures that may shape paradiplomacy as described by Duchacek (1990) is not taking place in Dagestan, at least not through political means.

A consequence of the de-politicisation of paradiplomacy and the lack of transparency is that there is no 'white book' of Dagestani external policy or foreign relations, either in the early 2010s or beyond. The closest thing to a Dagestani external relations 'white book' was in international economic relations, namely the 'Strategy of Social-Economic Development for the Republic of Dagestan to 2025'[33] (KRSKFO n.d.). Passed as a law on 15 July 2011 and promoted by Head of the Republic Magomedsalam Magomedov, the Strategy was a guiding document for state policy during the early 2010s. The Strategy presents a comprehensive understanding of economic development in Dagestan, and sets out a plan that incorporates several industries and institutions. It is also revealing of the way local and federal authorities conceived the international relations of Dagestan in light of the region's 'insecurity'.

The security and international dimensions feature in the general objectives and the specific conditions for economic development. The Strategy does not discuss the topic in-depth, but does consider public safety and 'stability' as essential conditions for its success. Indeed, the improvement of the security situation in the republic is seen as the very first step to the realisation of the development plan. Among other industries, tourism is singled out as an area of growth that necessitates an improved security situation in the republic. Security is also conceived of as an end goal of the Strategy, as the document departs from the premise that insecurity feeds into underdevelopment and vice versa; insecurity renders economic development difficult and lack of economic development (notably jobs) drives insecurity. This reflects the reasoning of the federal centre as described above. Deficiencies in state institutions and religious extremism are also discussed as hindrances for development and security. Regarding international connections, the Strategy recasts Dagestan's strategic location as an asset for its insertion in international markets. Makhachkala in particular is conceived of as a potential industry hub and a crossroads for north-

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[33] To prevent ambiguity in the translation of the names of these documents, I add here in the footnotes the transliterated names of each one as they are mentioned. *Strategii socialno-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya Respubliki Dagestan do 2025 goda*.

south and east-west transport corridors. These themes will become evident as Dagestan recasts its geographic orientation by the mid-2010s.

In sum, the developmental Strategy reflects an understanding in the Dagestani government of the interconnected character of security, economic development and international relations of Dagestan. As the following analysis shows, Dagestan's paradiplomacy actively pursued trade, investment and economic cooperation with its foreign partners. What the Strategy renders visible is that these engagements were conceived by republican and federal authorities as part of a broader 'stabilisation' strategy, along the lines of what Wilhelmsen (2019) calls the 'policy of development'.

Dagestani paradiplomacy institutions

Whilst Dagestan's institutions are rightly considered unique in a comparative perspective – notably in its consociationalist form of government (Ware & Kisriev 2010) –, its paradiplomacy institutions are similar to those elsewhere in the Russian Federation. During the 2010–2013 period (inclusive), the top-level executive bodies with a mandate to carry out external relations had a degree of thematic specialisation: the concrete institutions that were involved the most in carrying out Dagestan's international relations were the President of the Republic (called Head of the Republic since 2010), the Ministry of Nationalities and the Agency for Investment. Other state-affiliated institutions, such as Dagestan State University and the Muftiate of Dagestan were involved in Dagestan's international relations, too. Yet, as the methodology section describes, my attention here is focused on the upper, regional-level state institutions that best capture Makhachkala's policies; institutions such as universities and state companies are only tangentially relevant and for matters of space not analysed here at all. My focus is thus on the three entities that directed and operationalised Dagestan's international relations the most frequently: the executive of the republic, the Ministry of Nationalities and the Agency for Investment.

The Presidency/Head of the Republic. Like elsewhere in the North Caucasus, the external policy of Dagestan was strongly shaped and mostly implemented by the President/Head of the Republic.[34] The Dagestani chief executive would also often implement the republic's international relations himself by way of acting as representative of the republic in front of foreign delegations of hosts as allowed for by the constitution's Article 89. Yet, this role was formalised only in December 2013 under the Abdulatipov administration with the presidential decree number 333. This decree assigns to the head of the republic the role of representative of Dagestan to federal institutions, federal subjects and other countries. The decree also assigns the right to sign agreements on behalf of the republic.

The evolution of the chief executive of Dagestan follows the broader trajectory in federal politics of de-centralisation under Yeltsin and re-centralisa-

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[34]   The name changed from 'President' to 'Head' in 2012.

tion under Putin. Dagestan's unique system of government is reflected in the way its executive branch is organised. The guiding principle was (and is) proportionality among the titular nationalities. In Yeltsin's time, proportionality applied to the legislative branch, ministerial staffing and municipal governments. Unlike the other North Caucasus republics, Dagestan was not a presidential regime for the entire 1990s till 2003. The head of the executive was the Chairman (*predsedatel*) of the State Council, made up of representatives from each of the 14 titular nationalities (Sokirianskaya et al, 2019, 51–52). This entire arrangement was based on laws in conflict with federal laws yet pressure to reform began in earnest only in 2000. The 2003 constitution abolished both the Chairman position and the State Council, replacing the former with the position of President. Yet, this change would only be implemented in 2006 at the end of the term of the National Assembly and the State Council Chairman. In formal institutions, proportionality would be preserved through proportional representation and staffing (Ware & Kisriev 2010, 184–185). The first head of the republic was Magomedali Magomedov (1992–2006) followed by Mukhu Aliyev (2006–2010), Magomedsalam Magomedov (2010–2013), son of Magomedali Magomedov, and Ramazan Abdulatipov (2013–2017).

Regarding internal policy, the primary task of the Head of the Republic is to manage the multiple internal conflicts in the republic. It is this task that shapes the policies of the Dagestani government, including – I argue – their agenda abroad. In the post-Soviet period, the governance of Dagestan rested on the management of conflicting interests of the *de facto* powers in the republic, the loosely ethnicity-based patronage networks called 'clans'. While different Dagestani presidents took different approaches for this task, up until 2013 they all coincided in co-opting the leadership of the clans. Magomedali Magomedov focused on concessions. These took several shapes but ultimately amounted to a system of corruption in government staffing and resource flows from republican sources. It also involved the informal recognition of territorial control that the different clans had over the republic. Magomedali Magomedov was able to count on the Avar clan for support, such as during the attempted coup of 1998. This model of co-optation would change primarily by exogenous causes. The war in Chechnya brought new federal attention to Dagestan, with federal authorities seeking to harmonise Dagestan's laws with federal frameworks (see above). Then, as Russia became wealthier in the early 2000s, the system of co-optation shifted from political appointments to *federal* budgetary flows, thus turning connections with Moscow into the key feature of Dagestani politics. Finally, the 2003 Constitution placed the centre of power away from Dagestan's own electoral processes and placed it in Moscow, from where Dagestani leaders would have to draw their legitimacy and power. In this new framework, Mukhu Aliyev sought to be equidistant from the clans not to entangle the presidency in their conflicts. Thus, he had no clan backing and relied overwhelmingly on federal power. Yet, he failed to break the territorial control of the clans and impose the federal order as Moscow sought him to do. Magomedsalam Magomedov managed the clans primarily through economic incentives and a broad

promise for social peace in the republic. Indeed, by 2010, violence was steadily on the rise, reaching its peak in 2010–2011. The attempt to build a peace settlement was carried out on the basis of the Ingush model: economic growth, and negotiations and reconciliation with the previously shunned Salafist societies. Finally, Abdulatipov's presidency represented a shift in clan policy for it changed from management and co-optation to repression. Indeed, the Kremlin hoped that Abdulatipov would implement reforms to dismantle the clans and build the 'power vertical' in the republic (Ware & Kisiriev 2010, 184–185; Sokirianskaya, et al 2019, 54–66).

The external relations of Dagestan under each executive reflected these management strategies and the different levels of federal pressure. In the 2010–2013 period (inclusive), the three executives operating, Mukhu Aliyev, Magomedsalam Magomedov and Ramazan Abdulatipov, approached external relations in ways to assist their conflict management strategies and Moscow's own security priorities. This is described further below, but as an example is the dual focus on religious and economic paradiplomacy under Magomedsalam which reflects his attention to religious policy and poor economic performance as drivers of conflict.

The Ministry of Nationality Policy and Religious Affairs (Minnats for short). The origins of Minnats are in the 1990 Committee for Nationalities' Affairs. At the time, it was tasked with handling the conflicts around the return of the repressed nations and the ethno-territorial conflicts in the republic. In its founding document it is explicitly stated that Minnats is meant to handle the international (*mezhdunarodnye*) relations of Dagetsan (Minnacrd website, n.d.). The Committee would acquire an explicit, top-level mandate to handle external relations in 1992, thus renaming itself as the Committee for Nationalities' Affairs and External Relations. It would become a Ministry in 1994. Then, in 1996 a law was passed inside the republic assigning to Minnats the 'coordinating' role in Dagestan's international relations. This law, called 'About the coordinating role of the Ministry of Nationalities' Affairs and External Connections of the Republic of Dagestan in the management of a unified line of external relations'[35] was passed with an expiry date that was reached in 2015. In 1998, the Ministry acquired the mandate to handle the Republic's public relations and communications, also managing the propaganda war during the 1999 incursion by Chechen forces. From 1990 to 2003, this body was headed by Magomedsalikh Gusayev. Under his initiative, Dagestan opened dozens of representations within the Russian Federation and six outside of Russian borders (see below). From 2003 to 2010, Minnats changed its Minister four times. In March 2010, as part of a broader state reform programme, Minnats lost the information mandate and was given the mission to handle religious affairs, previously the task of a state committee specialised on the matter. So, from 2010, its name became the Ministry for National Policy, Religious Affairs and

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[35] *O koordinirujushhey roli Ministerstva po delam nacionalnostey i vneshnim svyazyam Respubliki Dagestan v provedenii edinoy vneshnepoliticheskoy linii Respubliki Dagestan.*

External Relations. The role of minister was given to former (2005–2006) Minnats minister Bekmurza Bekmurzayev who held the office until Abdulatipov's 2013 reforms (Minnacrd website, n.d.). In the 2010–2013 period (inclusive), Minnats was the one institution tasked with handling external relations beyond only economic relations (see below).

Agency for Investment and International Economic Relations (InvestDag[36] for short). An autonomous agency within the Ministry of Economic Development, InvestDag was specially tasked with attracting and facilitating foreign investment. It was created by a 3 March 2010 decree issued by Magomedov, where InvestDag would take over the functions of the Ministry of Investment and Economic Relations (DagPravda 2010). The functions of InvestDag had an overtly supporting role in policy formulation and implementation, usually involving monitoring and coordination of investment initiatives. In spite of this secondary position, InvestDag did have some scope to propose new policies in the external relations sphere. Namely, it could initiate and prepare agreements and other documents (as mentioned in Article 4.23), albeit the signature or closing (*zaklyuchenie*) of said documents was reserved to other authorities. It did not have a function or authority (*polnomochie*) to represent Dagestan abroad (Postanovlenie 2010). One routine activity of InvestDag would be to assist the Dagestani presence in the Russian business international fora, where the Head of the Republic and the head of the Agency would frequently participate.[37] During its existence, InvestDag was headed by Ali Nurmagomedov.

These paradiplomacy institutions remained key in the international activities of Dagestan in the early 2010s. Yet, by the end of 2013, the Dagestani institutions concerning paradiplomacy saw numerous changes. The reforms of March 2010 – as mentioned above – do not compare with the scope of those under the leadership of Abdulatipov. In April 2013, Abdulatipov announced seven[38] 'priority presidential projects' (known at the time as PPP) that would guide republican policy under his leadership. These impacted the paradiplomacy institutions of Dagestan, albeit some of their changes happened before the announcement and some other ones would be implemented only later in the year. The most immediate one, however, concerned the foreign representations of Dagestan (see below). By then, already other changes had taken place in the institutional setting of Dagestan's paradiplomacy, which would prompt new orientations in the region's external action. Furthermore, there was the closing of InvestDag. It ceased operations by a 7 February 2013 decree and its functions were transferred to the Ministry of Trade and External Economic Relations, or MinTorg for short (Ukaz 2013b). The head of the Ministry was Yusup Umavov, and under his leadership the MinTorg would continue with the international

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[36]   Although sometimes called DagInvest, it is not to be confused with 'DagInvest', the private company.
[37]   Because of their haphazard nature, meetings with foreign partners on these events are not tallied as part of the 'meetings' of Chart 1 or other tallies.
[38]   Later on they changed to ten priority areas.

activities of InvestDag. More changes continued to take place. On 30 March of that year, a meeting took place between Abdulatipov and all representatives of Dagestan outside of the republic (i.e. the rest of the Russian Federation and the six representations abroad). The main messages from Abdulatipov to the (para)diplomatic staff were the need to improve the image of Dagestan outside the Republic, the continued importance of the diaspora and that the system of representations would have to be 'optimised' (DagPravda 2013). A few days later, the closure of nearly all foreign representations was decreed (see below). Under these new institutional circumstances, on 20 September 2013, Minnats and MinTorg held a 'college' on the topic of the state and development of Dagestan's international connections (Minnats 2013a; Chernovik 2014). With the Abdulatipov reform agenda, the period of late 2013 can be seen as a time of recalibration in Dagestan's external relations at the institutional level.

Long-term Dagestani operations outside of Dagestan

Dagestan has had a continuous presence abroad since the 1990s, one that stands out in the North Caucasus by its scope. Of the cases analysed in this thesis, Dagestan is the case with the most representations abroad in the time covered. These offices are directed from the Minnats albeit it is the government who assigns and dismisses the representatives, and the federal government has the right to close down these representations. The foreign representations have several functions, according to a 2004 decree (Ukaz 2004), these are: 1) to represent the interests of Dagestan; 2) to connect the Dagestani government with the host countries and their governments; 3) organise exhibits and other events to showcase Dagestan's production; 4) expand the cultural and scientific connections between the host countries and organisations within those countries, and Dagestan; and 5) assist the reception of Dagestani delegations. Thus, crucially, they act as communication channels between Dagestan and their host countries, facilitating public (para)diplomacy, business contacts and other (para)diplomatic activities.

Where these representations have been opened and what logic their opening has followed has changed in time. The presence of diaspora communities is an explanation sometimes offered by government officials (for instance, Gusayev 2001) for the opening of these representations. Thus, the representations were also seen as conduits for contact with diaspora communities abroad. The relevance of diaspora engagement was clear from the start, as in the early 1990s it was estimated that about a quarter of all Dagestanis lived outside of Dagestan, though mostly in the Russian Federation (Chenciner 1997, 272). Yet, future transformations would hint at a changing relevance of the diaspora for Makhachkala. By 2013, there were six Dagestani representations abroad, namely, in Astana, Baku, Kyiv, Ashgabat, Bishkek, Minsk, which were opened, respectively, in 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1999 for Ashgabat, Bishkek and Minsk. There were also talks in the early 2000s about opening a representation in Iran, which took place only later (Gusayev 2001; Ukaz 2004). Between 2010 and

2013, the system of foreign representations was transformed. Two more representations were opened, albeit of a different nature: first, a representation at the Russian trade mission in Ankara, Turkey, decreed on 24 January 2012 (Ukaz 2012); second, a representation at the Russian trade mission in Tehran, Iran, decreed on 2 August 2013 (Postanovlenie 2013). These were Dagestan-run offices within the Russian trade mission in those countries. The representation in Turkey focused its activities exclusively on meeting Turkish business people and assisting the preparation of Dagestani business events in Turkey (RIA Dagestan 2012). Between the opening of the Ankara and the Tehran representations, the system changed dramatically. As mentioned above, on 3 April 2013, a decree was issued closing down all representations abroad except for the Baku one and dismissing all their representatives (Ukaz 2013; Ukaz 2013a). These changes hint at the broader trends in the geographic scope of Dagestan's paradiplomacy in the 2010–2013 period and the shifting place occupied by the diaspora in Makhachkala's external action (see below).

Two representations are particularly important for Dagestan's external action: Baku and Moscow. The Baku representation was the first one opened for good reason: it played an important role in managing the conflict around the transnational Lezgin minority that is split between the territories of Dagestan and Azerbaijan (Kosikov & Kosikova 1999, 291). Even though this problem became less acute by the 2010s, the intense economic and political exchanges between Azerbaijan and Dagestan probably justified keeping this representation open after 2013.[39] Then, the Plenipotentiary Representative to the Russian President (Moscow) plays an unique role in Makhachkala's external relations for the extent to which it is exposed to foreign delegations. As foreign embassies, companies and organisations are based in Moscow, this Dagestani representation serves as an outreach branch to these institutions. So, it has repeatedly served the purpose of establishing official contact with foreign partners. In the 2010–2013 period, the Moscow representation of Dagestan had several official meetings with Moscow embassies. Some of the countries engaged this way were Nepal and Saudi Arabia. Because of space, this channel of Dagestan's international relations is not explored here.

Finally, Dagestan has signed several long-term international agreements with foreign partners. At the time of writing these were, namely, 31, 14 of which were with foreign governments, six of which were signed before 2010. The agreements before 2010 were all with CIS countries and Iran, and covered several thematic areas. Two agreements with Azerbaijan in 1993 and 1996 were about, respectively, transport and 'friendship', with the former signed with the government (*pravitelstvo*) of Azerbaijan and the latter with the Republic of Azerbaijan in general. The two agreements with Kazakhstan in 1996 and 1997 were about trade, technology and culture, with the former being with the government and the second with the northern coastal Atyrau Region. The 2002

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[39] The change of border demarcation between the two countries also happened during this period.

agreement with Belarus in 2002 was signed with its government and was about trade, technology and culture. Finally, the 1997 agreement with Iran was a memorandum of understanding, signed with the Ministry of Development. It covered trade, technology and culture. Between 2010 and December 2013, Makhachkala entered two new agreements, one with Iran in 2010 and one with Azerbaijan in 2011. The former was signed with the government of the Gilian province and the latter with the government of Azerbaijan. Both agreements were in economic, cultural and social spheres (MID n. d.).

Dagestan's International Relations 2010–2013: Trends and Themes

Qualitative and quantitative analysis

The preceding discussion on the conflict and of Dagestan's paradiplomacy institutions already informs the assessment of its operational environment (*Table 11*). The main feature of the operational environment of Dagestan is its peripheric situation within the federal framework and its central location in the Caspian basin. The latter distinguishes Dagestan from other North Caucasus republics, none of which enjoy such prominent geographic location. In turn, location also bolstered Dagestan's place in broader plans for Eurasian connectivity, primarily through its portuary infrastructure as well as motorways and train lines. Indeed, Dagestani policy makers saw their region's location as an asset for its centrality in Eurasia (Chernovik 2012). As the discussion below shows, the prominent location of Dagestan played an important role, albeit was not the ultimate determinant of the geographic scope of Makhachkala's paradiplomacy. Additional distinctive features are Dagestan's multi-national character, and the prominence of religious identity and Islamic connections. These are elements that distinguish Dagestan's operational environment from its North Caucasus neighbours and play a role in shaping the policy choices that Makhachkala made in 2010–2013 (inclusive). Diaspora may also be considered as unique, because the diversity of diasporas reflects the diversity within Dagestan itself, with consequences for Makhachkala's action abroad (see below).

Table 11. The 'geopolitical DNA' of Dagestan. Italics: features that distinguish Dagestan from Kabardino-Balkaria, Ingushetia and North Ossetia. Table based on Duran (2015, 132).

	Regional	**National**	**International**
Economy & Politics	*Moscow-oriented elites, conflict management*	Federal framework, North Caucasus Federal District	Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), *Eurasian connectivity*
Geography	Mountainous, *coastal*, border	Periphery	Periphery *but central to the Caspian region*
Culture & History	*Several nationalities*	Incorporation through conquest	*Diaspora, old Islamic connections*

Generally, the intensity in paradiplomacy remained similar for 2013 when compared with 2010 (*Figure 4*). This is significant in itself. This constant in the total number of encounters by the Head of the Republic goes against the general trend identified by Stremoukhov (2021) of diminishing intensity of paradiplomacy throughout the Russian Federation. The heads of Dagestan during this period met with foreign partners (either in visits abroad or in receptions in Dagestan) more often than the average Russian governor did. The average in 2010 was about three and the average in 2013 was two and a half (Stremoukhov 2021, 9); in my dataset, the numbers for Dagestan were six and six, respectively. (To put these numbers under perspective, the yearly average number of meetings in 2005 was three and a half.) Also against the broader trends in the federation was the rise in activities abroad in 2011, when the average number of visits stagnated for other Russian governors. In other words, Moscow's increased role in Dagestani politics – a sign of centralisation – did not translate into a diminution in the intensity of paradiplomacy.
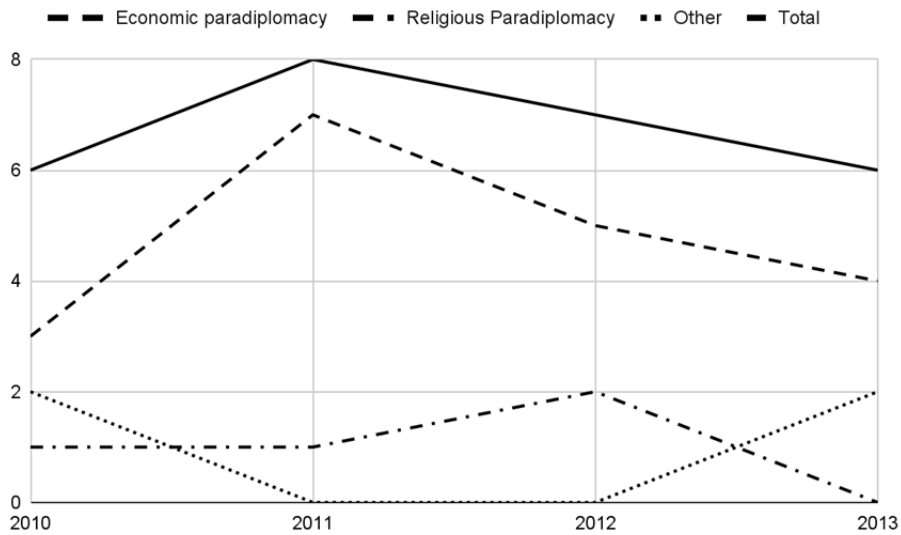
Figure 4. Visits and meetings with foreign partners by the Head of Dagestan, 2010–2013. Source: dataset.

This constant pace in international engagements was not sustained by an increase in collaborative paradiplomacy (i.e. initiated or led by the federal centre). While it is assumed that all international engagements of Dagestan – and the other North Caucasus republics – proceed under the explicit approval from federal authorities, federal organs were seldom present in Dagestan's external engagements. Several of the visits and meetings recorded on *Figure 4* did take place with overt cooperation from the local Russian Embassy. For instance, the 9 October 2012 meeting with the representative of the Palestinian Authority Presidency took place with the presence of the Russian Ambassador to Jordan (Official Website Dagestani Presidency 2012). Other forms of collaborative paradiplomacy would take place, such as when Magomedov joined a delegation headed by then-President Medvedev to Azerbaijan, which focused on the topic of Karabakh.

The thematic scope of the meetings of the Head of the Republic remained primarily focused on economic goals. Even when the stated purpose of the meeting would not be economic, investment was also discussed on many occasions. Illustrative of this was the visit to the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Moscow by Magomedov on 15 October 2010; the discussion involved both the Hajj and an investment agenda (RIA Dagestan 2010). Other frequent items categorised here as 'economic' were investments, infrastructure projects (North-South corridor, Makhachkala port), investment exhibits and meetings with business communities. Second to economic meetings were those with religious authorities or that had a religion-oriented agenda. The best example was the 26

November 2012 hosting by Magomedov of the International Union of Muslim Scholars conference and the meeting of Magomedov and the head of that organisation. Their discussion – and that of the conference more broadly – was about inter-religious conflict. Ambiguous cases where religion and economic cooperation were discussed in the same meeting happened also under the Abdulatipov administration.[40]

The trend of sustained external action throughout 2010 to 2013 repeats itself with Minnats, InvestDag and later MinTorg. Minnats would play two broad roles in Dagestan's international relations: representing the government with foreign partners and assisting the executive in its foreign relations. Regarding this latter function, of the 15 official meetings with foreign partners, eight were together with the Head of the Republic. The representational function of Minnats abroad had a broad scope in its foreign partners, namely, religious organisations and other sub-national governments. The themes of the seven 'autonomous' engagements of the head of Minnats were varied; three visits abroad to join national festivities (twice in Azerbaijan and once in 'South Ossetia'), two engagements relating to conflict management (one with Georgian partners and the other with Indonesian partners), one follow-up visit to Gilian province, Iran (see below), and the official participation at a major Islam in Eurasia conference in Istanbul. This thematic scope confirms that Minnats is not a driver of Dagestan's external policy but a body assisting its implementation.

There are similarities between the functioning of Minnats and InvestDag regarding paradiplomacy. Just as Minnats, InvestDag would frequently interact with foreign partners on its own or in assistance of the Head of the Republic. Of the 18 meetings recorded, InvestDag met ten times with foreign partners as part of a delegation headed by the Head of the Republic. On its own, InvestDag primarily hosted foreign delegations of business people. These were seldom a private sector affair as these meetings were usually hosted by foreign embassies or other state authorities. For instance, the 19 April 2012 meeting with French business people happened in coordination with the French Embassy (Novosti Pravitelstvo 2012). MinTorg continued the activities of InvestDag, albeit with a higher profile. In spite of this transition, the intensity of engagements with foreign partners continued at a similar pace. The number of international meetings between February and December of 2010, 2011 and 2012 were four, five and eight respectively, and five for 2013 under MinTorg. The one distinction was that the MinTorg would play an assisting role in meetings only once in the February to December 2013 period. Given its Ministry level,

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[40] This is not the entire scope of the international dimension of Dagestani foreign investment attraction. All three of the republic heads contemplated here (Aliyev, Mago-medov and Abdulatipov) participated in foreign investment-related events, evidencing the enduring importance of the executive in this area of Dagestani paradiplomacy. So, for instance, Magomedsalam and Abdulatipov headed the Dagestani delegation to the Sochi business forum each occasion in the 2010–2013 period. Because these events did not take place abroad or with a pre-planned encounter of foreign counterparts, they are not contemplated here.

MinTorg had more authority and capacities to formulate and carry out an 'autonomous' (i.e. without direct monitoring of the Head of the Republic) external action.

Between 2010 and 2013, the paradiplomacy of Dagestan changed its geographic scope. This is evinced by the origin of the counterparts in the meetings mentioned above. In total, between 2010 and 2013 the executive, Minnats and MinTorg had 47 different meetings with foreign partners all combined, and their counterparts came from a combined total of 15 different countries. More than half of all counterparts were from Muslim-majority states (eight vs. seven). These states also made up the majority of meetings (13 out of 47). This proportion fluctuated although it reached a low point by 2013. In 2010, 2011 and 2012, the executive, Minnats and InvestDag all met at least once with an European (EU) counterpart per year. In 2013 only MinTorg did, once. Then, the rise of Turkey in Dagestan's paradiplomacy is visible: in 2010 and 2011, no meetings took place with Turkish counterparts, in 2012 and 2013 all three bodies counted here met their Turkish counterparts. The shift is striking for InvestDag/MinTorg; from no meetings in 2010–2011 and two in 2012, it went to four in 2013. One constant is the presence of Azerbaijan, which remained a critical interlocutor for the three administrations of the 2010–2013 (inclusive) period (see below). Iran was also a fixture in Dagestani paradiplomacy, albeit not as frequent and high-level as Azerbaijan.

The change in the distribution of international meetings does not suggest a dramatic break in the paradiplomacy of Dagestan between 2010 and 2014, the drop in importance of the EU and the rise of Turkey notwithstanding. However, the change in geographic scope is especially visible when looking at the distribution of Makhachkala's long-term relations with foreign states. The external relations of Dagestan during the 1990s were broadly focused on the Caspian region, Belarus and Ukraine. At the time, these were identified as strategic regions for Dagestan's external relations. Notably, as mentioned above, the presence of a Dagestani diaspora was indicated as a key motive for opening the representations. For instance, Turkmenistan had a small Dagestani diaspora widely employed in the extractive sector (Gusayev 2001). As *Figure 5* illustrates, the international agreements and representations abroad point to the Caspian sea as the main horizon for Makhachkala's foreign action by 2010. This outlook did not depend on CIS membership as the Iranian agreements (1997, 2010) suggest. Further reinforcing this geographic scope are the specific agreements with other sub-state regions, namely the Caspian littoral regions of Gilian (Iran) and Atyrau (Kazakhstan). Looking at the same type of long-term Dagestani operations abroad, it is possible to see a shift in geographic scope by the end of 2013. As *Figure 6* illustrates, the long-term Dagestani operations abroad shifted entirely from the CIS to Dagestan's southern flank, to Turkey and Iran. The analysis of the change in geographic scope can be seen in the short-term and long-term contexts.

Short term context: conflict management and development strategy. The connection between international relations – namely trade and investment –,

economic performance and security can be assumed to be the driving force behind the changing geographic pattern of Dagestan's international relations. Namely, the connection between development and security – as described, for instance, in the aforementioned development Strategy – drove Makhachkala to focus its paradiplomacy on those partners considered most promising for investment. While European partners were courted throughout the period under analysis, by 2013 Iran and Turkey emerged as the key players for trade and investment attraction, with Azerbaijan also a constant throughout. Trade (imports and exports) with Iran stood at 170 000 000 USD and with Turkey at 29 000 000 USD. Thus, in spite of the proximity and common membership in the CIS, trade with former Soviet states was small, except for Azerbaijan. Ukraine, the second largest trade partner in the CIS, barely reached 11 000 000 USD in 2010 (Magomedov R., Ramazanova A., Aliev O. 2011, 132; Bezformata 2013). The growth in trade between Dagestan and its Turkish and Iranian partners is even more significant considering that between 2010 and 2015 total trade in Dagestan actually diminished, from 541 000 000 USD to 344 000 000 USD (DagStat, n.d.). Trade in the 2010–2014 period would fluctuate, but by the start of 2014, the head of MinTorg declared that Turkey was the priority trade partner for Dagestan (KavPolit 2014). In this sense, the drive to the broader Middle East is independent from any of the administrations under consideration. In spite of the Abdulatipov reform agenda (described above), his administration continued the trend operating under Magomedov of increasing contacts with Turkey and Iran.

Long term context: new patterns of territorialisation. The change in the geographic scope of Dagestan's international relations that peaked in 2013 with Abdulatipov's reforms must be seen as happening in the context of broader trends of re-territorialisation for the south of Russia and the broader Middle East. New patterns of territorialisation happen where new centres of power emerge and the old ones decline. These patterns are evinced by the flows of people, money and resources, new attachments and territorial communities, and emerging identities (Duran 2015, 44–47, 78–82). At the start, these factors kept Dagestan engaged primarily with the post-Soviet power centres dispersed in the CIS for most of the 1990s and early 2000. In other words, the former Soviet space was Dagestan's primary territorial community up until the 2000s. At that point, new centres of power emerged in the rising Turkish and Iranian economies. Contact with these centres was facilitated for Dagestan by the long-term improvement of relations between Russia and these two states.[41] This shift to the broader Middle East was a feature of Dagestan's external relations in the early 2010s, as Makhachkala sought to place more attention on Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkey, and less on the CIS and the north end of the Caspian basin. As the above suggests, the conflict dynamics of 2010–2013 did not fundamentally alter

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[41] It is certain that Dagestan's growing Islamic identity – especially inasmuch it has been embraced by the authorities – has been a facilitator in this reorientation to the Middle East. However, I do not explore the role of identity in-depth here.

this long-term trajectory albeit they did speed it along by stressing the need for economic development as the Strategy described.

The opening of the representation in Turkey in 2012 reflects the broader trends in Russo-Turkish relations by the middle of the 2010s. The early 1990s saw a low-intensity rivalry between Moscow and Ankara for hegemony in the newly independent South Caucasus and Central Asia. Also sensitive was Turkey's toleration of pro-separatist movements in the North Caucasus, especially Chechnya. While trade and other exchanges took place during that decade, relations would remain frosty until the early 2000s. By then, the long-term trend of growing economic interdependence – in the shape of intense trade, investment and energy transit (pipelines) – would facilitate a settlement of the two countries' rivalry by the start of the new millennium (Kelkitli 2017). The long-term trend of interdependence was reflected in Dagestan, too (Kurbanaliev 2009). By the end of the 2000s, Turkey was the number one investor in Dagestan, with 29 joint Dagestani-Turkish companies. Trade also more than trebled between the start and the end of the decade.

This is not to suggest that Turkey was marginal in Dagestan's international relations prior to 2000. Indeed, Turkish goods, investments and cultural influence was present in the region even during the early 1990s. Yet, what was missing during the 1990s and 2000s was the official, bilateral and *governmental* level of interactions. Ankara indeed wanted a greater presence in the North Caucasus throughout the 1990s and 2000s, but only gradually would Moscow acquiesce to allow for more intensive exchanges between Turkey and the North Caucasus. In the case of Dagestan, Turkey wanted to capitalise on its already expansive presence in the region (Orttung, Lussier & Paretskaya, 2000; 114–115). If exchanges between Turkey and Dagestan were already intense, then why did Makhachkala take this long to establish its representation office in Ankara? It is possible to speculate that the centrality of Moscow in Dagestan's stability – as described above – pushes Makhachkala to pursue external relations that ultimately strengthen Moscow's influence.[42] Thus, only when relations between Ankara and Moscow improved enough there was the opportunity – from Ankara, Moscow and Makhachkala's perspective – to open the long-term Turkey representation.

Relations between Iran and Russia did not experience a similar arch as those between Turkey and Russia. Namely, their regional rivalry did not last for long after 1991 nor did it reach the acrimony like the one that there was between Ankara and Moscow in the 1990s. This only consolidated after the 1997 rapprochement between the two countries. That Iran did not support Chechen separatism to the extent Turkey did is illustrative of the coexistence Moscow and Tehran managed to build in the area (Avioutskii 2005, 258–259). Then, Tehran's policy of limiting US presence in the Caspian region drove Iran closer to Russia, Dagestan included. This is illustrated by Iran's interest in the 'North-South' corridor connecting Dagestan to Azerbaijan and Iran, and in increasing

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[42]   Interview with Igor Okunev, March 2020.

trade through the Makhachkala port. Indeed, the amount of Iranian merchandise handled by the Makhachkala port grew from 68 tonnes in 1998 to 950 tonnes in 2006 (Gusenkhanov 2008, 95–96). The positive trend in Dagestani-Iranian relations would continue into the early 2010s and beyond (Isaev & Magomedova 2020). By 2010, trade between Dagestan and Iran reached 84 000 000 USD (RIA Dagestan 2010), only to grow further as the decade went on. The opening of the Dagestani representation points to the importance of these economic connections because, like the representation in Turkey, it is an office inside the Russian trade mission to those countries.

Finally, the third country that stands out in the 2010–2013 period is Azerbaijan. During those years, Azerbaijan-Dagestan relations were complex and progressively diversified even further. These relations were also a top concern for both the Head of Dagestan and the Azerbaijan President. The two Dagestani heads of the republic that began their term in office during the 2010–2013 period met with the President of Azerbaijan at least once, and there was an official visit at the executive level at once a year. Mutual interest is understandable from the point of view of economic exchanges. As mentioned above, Azerbaijan is the most important trade partner of Dagestan. Dagestan is also important for Azerbaijan; in 2011, about 80 per cent of Azerbaijan's imports from Russia came from Stavropol and Dagestan. However, unlike Turkey and Iran, official Azerbaijan-Dagestani relations were focused on many topics beyond only trade and investment. The top-level meetings would involve topics of security, infrastructure and the border change issue. Investments were also on the agenda but were not featured as prominently as during the exchanges with Turkey and Iran. Religion was also not a feature of the discussions, albeit exchanges with Azerbaijani religious authorities would happen. Security was a specially important topic for the Magomedov visit to Baku in May 2010, shortly after beginning his term. In the December 2013 visit of Abdulatipov, security was not reported to have been a topic of discussion between the two leaders. Finally, there is a relatively large number of ethnic Azerbaijani diaspora living in Dagestan. According to the 2010 federal census, there were 600 000 Azeris living in Russia,[43] with over 130 000 living in Dagestan alone, mostly in the Derbent and Tabasaran areas. This diaspora is frequently the topic of discussion between Baku and Makhachkala. In fact, it is the only diaspora that plays a repeated role in Dagestan's top-level external relations. In short, trade with Azerbaijan was critical for Makhachkala but not a pull for Dagestan to increase its contacts with that country. Proximity, mutual diasporas and an already intense pace of trade made promoting an economic agenda less pressing.

Proximity and familiarity have not helped Dagestan-Azerbaijan relations to remain within the realm of apolitical technocratic management that characterises the rest of Dagestan's external relations. They are the only vector of Makhachkala's international relations that induced controversy among the population. In June 2013, Dagestan's police took action to prevent a protest

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[43] Some estimates place the number at about 3 000 000.

from happening in Derbent. The protests was triggered by the renaming of a street to the name of Heydar Alijev, and would have been directed against the perceived assimilationist policies of Baku regarding the 'Dagestani' (Avar, Lezgin, among other groups) minorities living that country (RFERL 2013). The incident did not seem to spoil relations between Baku and Makhachakala nevertheless, since relations between them remained stable for the rest of the year. For instance, Abdulatipov still visited Azerbaijan in December 2013.
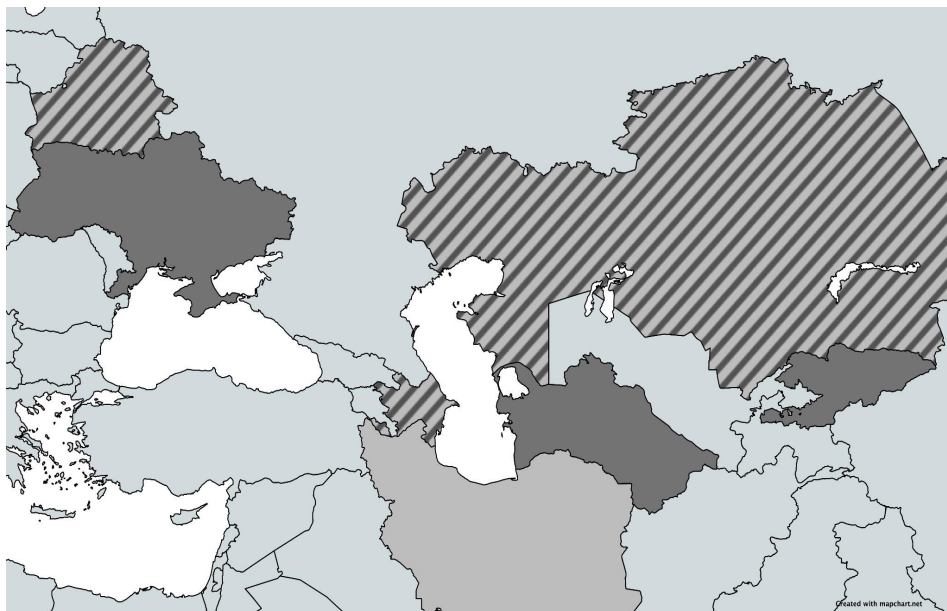

Figure 5. Countries with which Dagestan signed agreements (light grey), countries in which it had representations (dark grey) and both (stripes) by the start of 2010. Made with Mapchart dot net.
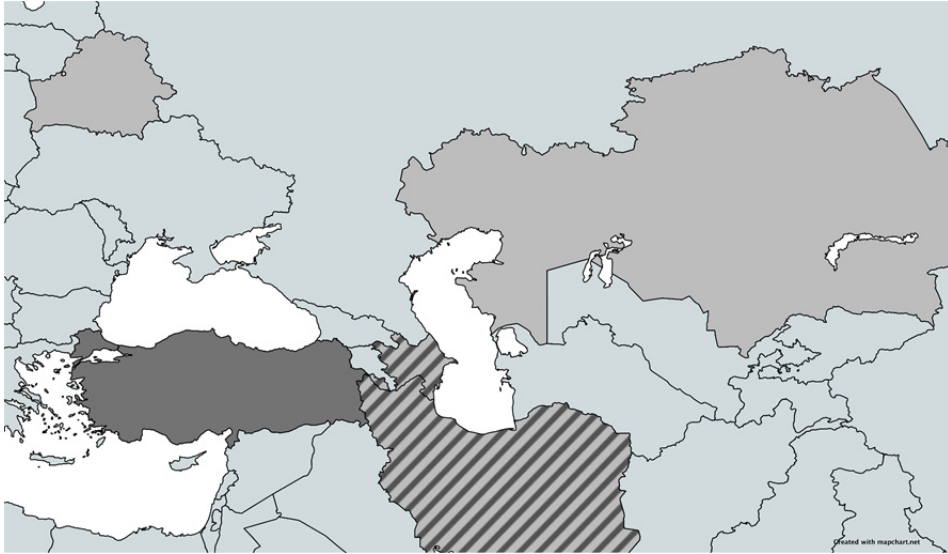
Figure 6. Countries with which Dagestan signed agreements (light grey), countries in which it had representations (dark grey) and both (stripes) by the end of 2013. Made with Mapchart dot net.

Violence as a Driver for New Partnerships?

Dagestan's international relations institutions and activities did not differ significantly from those of its North Caucasus peers. Indeed, trade promotion, kin or religious engagements and some capacity building engagements were all features of Russian paradiplomacy since 2000. In spite of Dagestan's unique system of governance, its paradiplomacy institutions are similar to those of other Russian regions, with a large role for the executive and support roles for other top-level government bodies. Moreover, like other republics, the external relations of Dagestan in the 2010s were far from the politicised character they had in the 1990s. The technocratic approach to paradiplomacy meant that none of the external engagements of Makhachkala were an object of political contestation or debate among the Dagestani population. The authorities could thus implement the developmental-security policy of the federal centre and of the development Strategy unimpeded by bottom-up pressures or demands. The similarities end, however, when we consider Dagestan's relatively large and highly diverse population, complex legacies of statehood, emphasis on religious identity and uniquely strategic location. For each metropole that held suzerainty over the territory of today's Dagestan, its location was prized for its centrality in the Caspian basin. This centrality helps Dagestan overcome an unexpected barrier for its foreign relations; Makhachkala cannot and does not actively court its foreign diasporas because that could upset the clan management strategies of the republican authorities. The same parameters meant to prevent the internal

politics of the republic to become 'ethnic' keep its external politics from becoming 'ethnic' as well.

The rise in violence in the early 2010s did not fundamentally change the long-term trends of Dagestan changing its geographic scope to its south. However, the top-down (i.e. from Moscow) demand for Makhachkala to increase economic development through investment attraction accelerated the drive to the south (*Figure 7*). Abdulatipov's message of 'optimisation' in the external relations apparatus of Dagestan can be understood also in this way; the rationale of trade and investment, not of diaspora relations, would be the driving force behind Dagestan's external relations. The change in geographic scope and the haphazard meetings with diaspora representatives points to a distinctive feature of Dagestani paradiplomacy: the limited role of diaspora engagement.
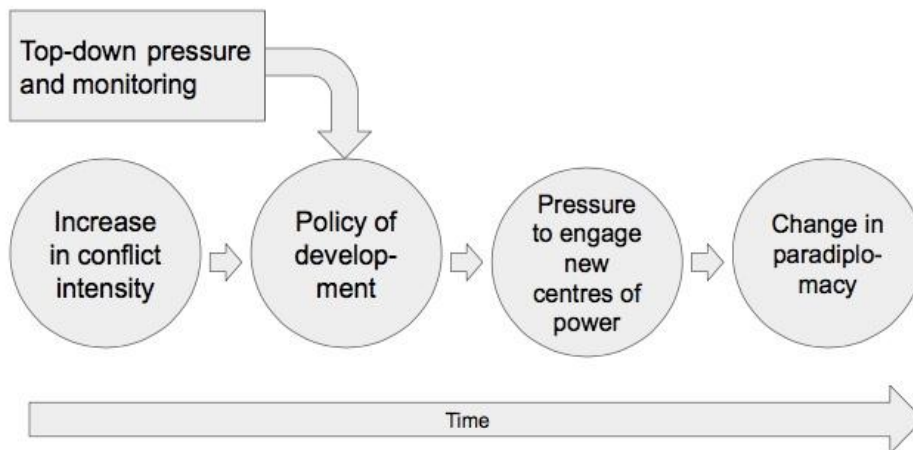
Figure 7. How the increase of conflict-related violence and conflict intensity in 2010 to 2013 connects to Dagestan's external relations.

This is unlike other North Caucasus republics, where diaspora meetings, visits and initiatives are routinary. In the case of Dagestan, diaspora engagement not only does not feature as prominently but in fact lost value in the 2010–2013 period. Evidence of this was the closing of the Dagestani representations in Central Asia and Ukraine in 2013, all opened statedly for diaspora engagement. Even more telling was the degradation of diaspora relations in Abdulatipov's reform agenda. In April 2013, Abdulatipov announced seven 'priority presidential projects' (known at the time as PPP), which included programmes on the development of diaspora relations. Namely, a programme titled 'Diaspora – the strength of Dagestan,' later turned into a sub-project of a larger PPP called 'Invest in Dagestan' (Chernovik 2014). As Orttung, Lussier & Paretskaya wrote ten years before the 2010s, Dagestan is a fragmented republic pursuing

fragmented goals (2000, 114–115). Instead of being an asset, Dagestan's ethno-linguistic diversity meant that Makhachkala's foreign relations could only appeal to Islamic identity when constructing arguments of kinship in its external action.

In sum, the increase of conflict intensity that took place in the 2010–2013 period, induced changes in Dagestan's external relations. These were, namely, a greater emphasis on trade and investment, and the geographic reorientation that this imperative necessitated. The argument is as follows: the drop in conflict intensity during the 2000s prompted Moscow to shift from a policy of force to a policy of development in its governance of the North Caucasus. The policy of development, however, was still connected to the conflict dynamics as it was meant to undermine the presumed economic roots of radicalisation (Wilhelmsen 2019). Yet, as violence increased anew in the 2010s, Makhachkala had to 'optimise' its external relations to focus even more closely on trade and investment, leaving behind the CIS and diaspora policies of the 1990s. By that time, new centres of power emerged to Dagestan's south, notably in Turkey and Iran, with whom Dagestan would increase the intensity of its exchanges.

CHAPTER 5
Conflict and Ingushetia's International Relations
2010–2013

With about 450 000 inhabitants, Ingushetia is Russia's smallest, least populous and most recently-created federal subject,[44] as well as its poorest territorial entity (Heaney 2013, 168). Only the federally-administered cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg are smaller in surface size, while no other federal subject has a Gross Regional Product per capita as low as Ingushetia's. Compounding these conditions, two of Ingushetia's neighbours have latent conflicts with the republic. Chechnya has a disagreement about the status of the border of the two republics. Between Ingushetia and North Ossetia, moreover, there has been a conflict over the control of the Vladikavkaz eastern suburbs and adjoining villages, the Prigorodny district. All these challenges exemplify Ingushetia's enduring challenge, that of its precarious statehood in face of changing Russian, Chechen and Ossetian politics. As described in chapter three, Ingushetia's statehood emerged from the contentious politics around the territory of the former Lesser Kabarda. The enduring conflicts over that territory also resulted in a weakened Ingush authority, with consequences for today's Ingush para-diplomacy. In spite of these multiple challenges, Ingushetia has been active abroad since 1991, carrying out an external policy with accompanying political frameworks and political imperatives. Landlocked and bordering only Georgia, Ingushetia's external relations have been a way for the region to assuage its precarious position in geographic and economic terms.

Among the North Caucasus republics, the politics of Ingushetia are particularly understudied. The impact and activities of the insurgency in Ingushetia have been well documented, in part because of their intensity when compared to other North Caucasus republics other than Chechnya and Dagestan. Unlike North Ossetia, *Imrat Kavkaz* managed to implant itself in Ingushetia, and inflict a large number of casualties, above those of other republics where the group operated. Regarding paradiplomacy, the data collected and the sources consulted sufficed to reconstruct Ingushetia's international relations between the start of 2010 and the end of 2013, and place them in broader context. Under Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, Ingushetia engaged partners from Azerbaijan, Belarus and Ukraine, to Belgium and China. Among the main counterparts there were states, international organisations and diaspora representatives. During the period analysed, there were several changes in Ingushetia's paradiplomacy, pointing to a growing reliance on the Ingush diaspora, implemented through political programmes, top and ministry-level engagement with diaspora representatives, mostly in Central Asia and Europe.

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[44] The Autonomous Republic of Crimea is *de facto* the most recent territorial possession of Russia due to the unrecognised 2014 annexation.

The following chapter will begin by describing the evolution of the conflict trends in Ingushetia between the start of 2010 and the end of 2013. The origin, dividers and drivers of the insurgency are shortly described. Crucially, the trends of violent conflict are traced, pointing, namely, to an overall decreasing trend in violence from a peak in 2010. Then, the chapter describes the political, legal and institutional frameworks that acted as the republic's internal opportunity structures and external action mechanisms. Furthermore, the external opportunity structures are briefly addressed and described along Duran's operative environment framework. Finally, Ingushetia's paradiplomacy in the early 2010s is described, both on their own and in the short-term and long-term contexts.

The Conflict in Ingushetia (2010–2013)

Unlike Chechnya, Ingushetia was never *de facto* independent nor did it feature the kind of large-scale battles witnessed in Grozny and Vedeno during the 1990s. Yet, due to its proximity to Chechnya and its deep cultural links to the Chechens, Ingushetia and the Ingush have repeatedly found themselves at the centre of the North Caucasus conflict, including the Chechen wars, the 2004 Beslan hostage crisis and the *Imrat Kavkaz* insurgency. Whilst Ingushetia became a focal point of violence in the North Caucasus by the late 2000s, there is limited evidence that the local insurgency was at the time a self-standing insurgency branch and not just the expansion of the Chechen branch of *Imrat Kavkaz* (Youngman 2019, 213).
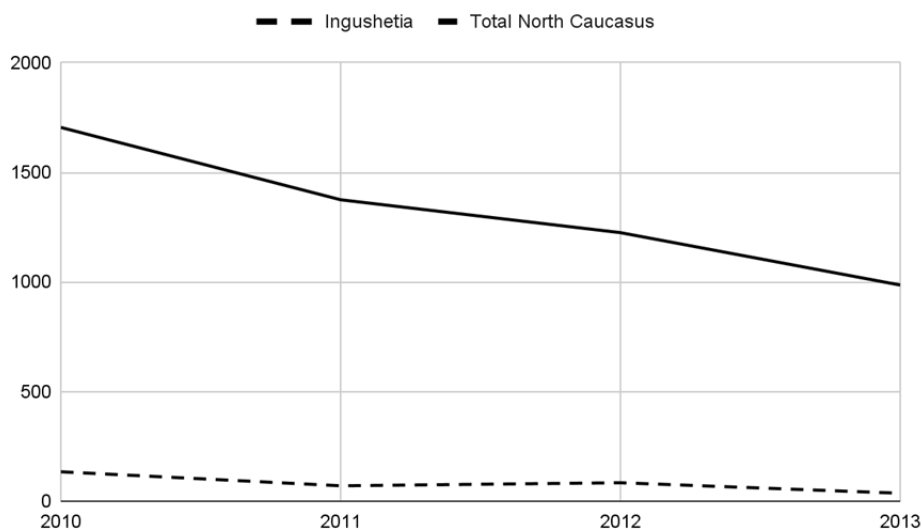

Figure 8. Conflict-related deaths in Ingushetia and the North Caucasus total (North Caucasus: Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, North Ossetia-Alania and Stavropol). Source: Caucasian Knot.

As *Figure 8* shows, conflict-related deaths in Ingushetia reached their peak together with the North Caucasus total in 2010, whilst they plateaued at a lower level in 2011 and 2012 before diminishing substantially in 2013. These numbers are relatively lower than those of the end of the 2000s, so the context of the first years of the 2010s is one of gradually decreasing violence with a second spike of violence in 2012. Other measurements reinforce this picture. According to Memorial figures of casualties among the *siloviki*, violence in Ingushetia in the 2006–2015 peaked in 2009 and entered a sharp diminution thereafter except for a brief rise in 2012 (Memorial 2016, 7). Nevertheless, the post 2009 security situation could only be seen as 'fragile' (Campana & Ratelle 2014, 116) and as improving only in hindsight. Moreover, the 2012–2013 return of a heavy-handed federal security policy maintained conflict intensity on high levels before their diminution by the middle of the decade.

The role of Islam in society is the critical divider in the conflict propelling the local insurgency in Ingushetia. This is a divider shared with other cases in the North Caucasus (see Dagestan chapter). The drivers of the specific Ingush branch of the *Imrat Kavkaz* insurgency are multiple. As Youngman recounts (2019, 209–210), there are many plausible and overlapping explanations for the insurgency (see also Markedonov 2009, 58). First, the highly-controversial election of Murat Zyazikov in 2002 can be seen as the point when corruption and coercion became more prominent in the governance of the republic, in turn driving people to the insurgency. By 2007, the Russian army was deployed to Ingushetia (IISS 2008, 2). Second, the Ingush insurgency was driven in part by Chechen insurgents seeking to evade the growing pressure they were under as Ramzan Kadyrov consolidated his rule. In particular, the Chechen rebels were using a strategy of diffusion, intentionally deploying assets and carrying out attacks outside of Chechnya to increase pressure on Russia (Campana & Ratelle 2014, 121). In addition, like in Dagestan, the Salafi community had been marginalised for years, a trend that continued through the 2000s before improving later on under the leadership of Yunus-Bek Yevkurov (see below). Then, the local *Imrat Kavkaz* branch was active in attempting to recruit people from neglected camps of internally displaced people (IDP) in Ingush territory (Moore 2015, 402). Furthermore, Moscow's overbearing attitude towards Ingush politics has had the consequence of undermining the legitimacy of civilian authorities. As explained further below, Moscow deposed popular leader Ruslan Aushev, galvanising opposition to his successor (Markedonov 2009, 57). In turn, the implicit closure of the political system results in parts of the opposition turning underground (Fogarty 2010, 8–9). Finally, unemployment and lack of economic prospects are also generally perceived as a driver for people to join North Caucasus extremist movements (Ratelle 2014, 179). This particular interpretation prevailed also among the ministries of Ingushetia. For instance, a seminar at the Ingush Ministry of Nationalities held in 2012 pointed to the need to invest more on youth policies as a prevention strategy (Serdalo 2012).

By the end of Zyazikov's presidency in 2008, Ingushetia was faced by the highest levels of conflict intensity in the Russian Federation. Given the important resource and power constraints to the Ingush executive (see below), the new Ingush president, Yevkurov, was presented with a choice regarding security policy. He had to contend with the choice between a risky consolidation of power and preserving the quasi-independence of the various non-state actors in the name of stability. His policy attempted to respond to the conflict by taking on a conciliatory approach to the Salafi community and to civil society more broadly while maintaining the security services engaged in combating extremism (Markedonov 2009, 60, 62). His engagements with the PACE and the Council of Europe can be seen in this light (Youngman 2019, 243). This 'softer' approach by civilian authorities was well regarded and considered as Yevkurov's 'model' for the North Caucasus (Markedonov 2009, 64; Memorial 2016, 60). Yet, at the same time, the security services continued to rely on coercion, which signalled elite division, and ultimately undermined Yevkurov's policies (Youngman 2019, 243).

In sum, the insurgency dominated Ingushetia's politics by the early 2010s. At that time, federal and republican approaches were in disharmony regarding the use of force to prevent and contain the insurgency. Nevertheless, they coincided in their understanding of the economy as the primary driver of conflict-related violence and extremism. Along the lines of broader federal frameworks, unemployment was singled out as the source of extremism in the republic, setting the stage for Magas – Ingushetia's administrative capital – to engage in economic paradiplomacy in the early 2010 years.

Ingushetia's International Relations Institutions

Legal frameworks

There are a few specific laws that concern the international relations of Ingushetia. These are found in the Ingush Constitution. Whilst there were predecessors to Ingushetia's statehood, in 1992 the region's authorities had to create the entire governmental structure from near-zero (Markedonov 2009, 54). The Ingush Constitution followed the 1993 Ingush declaration of sovereignty, and was adopted through a referendum in 1994 and it was the very first constitution concerned exclusively with the Ingush people. Whilst several official documents and declarations stress the plurinational nature of Ingushetia,[45] the Ingush constitution is overtly framed as concerning the Ingush nation and its development (Gulieva 2015, 209). Like for other federal subjects, the Ingush Constitution changed in the early 2000s. According to Gulieva (2015, 209), the first substantial changes to the document happened in late 2002, a few months after a change of government in the republic (see below). Subsequent changes

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[45] This is in spite of the fact that about 95 per cent of the population is of Ingush background.

happened in 2004 and 2010. Concerning paradiplomacy, the Ingush Constitution refers to the international relations of the republic specifically in articles 63 and 70 (see below), where the authority of the Head of the Republic to represent Ingushetia abroad and direct the republic's international activities is established (Konstitutsia 2021). Other than the Ingush Constitution, no other republican-level legal frameworks operated in the region in the early 2010s. Only a May 2011 decree specified the procedures for Ingushetia to receive foreign delegations (Ukaz 2011). This decree reaffirmed the authority of the Head of the Republic in Ingushetia's foreign relations, as well as the coordinating role of the Ingush Minnacri (see below). It also specified the need of Ingush authorities to report their foreign meetings with federal authorities, thus codifying federal monitoring of Ingushetia's paradiplomacy.

Political frameworks

A 2009 decree laid out the operating social and economic plan that would guide government policy until 2020 and 'to the period of 2030' (Postanovlenie 2009). The 'Strategy for the socio-economic development of the Republic of Ingushetia for 2009 – 2020 and for the period up to 2030'[46] is a government-wide plan for the development of the economy and living standards of the region. The Ingush 2030 Strategy contemplated the importance of security conditions and international connections. Regarding security, the Ingush 2030 Strategy states that improving security conditions in the republic is one of the top priority areas of development for the republic, together with improvement in education and healthcare among other priorities. Regarding international connections, two roles were assigned to the international dimension: the entry of Ingush products into foreign markets and the strengthening of connections with the diaspora. Different ministries were tasked with carrying out different parts of the Ingush 2030 Strategy; the Ministry of Nationalities (also called for a few years the Ministry of Foreign Relations, see below) in particular received several tasks, including measures to ensure inter-ethnic peace, measures to prevent terrorism and measures for diaspora engagement. No major changes were made to the strategy between the start of 2010 and the end of 2013.

Between 2009 and 2015 operated the 'On the support of compatriots living abroad for 2009–2015' programme,[47] which, as described below, drove much of Ingushetia's paradiplomacy at the time. The programme identified substantial Ingush diasporas in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Norway, Belgium, France and Belarus, each of which was approached as part of this programme. Magas approached the official diaspora organisations of each of these countries for the duration of the programme. Several outcomes are reported by the Ingush government: several official visits to Belarus, Belgium, Kazakhstan and

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[46] *Strategiya socialno-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya Respubliki Ingushetia na 2009–2020 gody i na period do 2030 goda*

[47] *O podderzhke sootechestvennikov, prozhivayushhih za rubezhom na 2009–2015 gg*

Kyrgyzstan took place, where Ingush officials met with diaspora organisations. There were plans to assist the creation of one official Ingush community, namely, in Norway, albeit the lack of such organisation was not addressed in the case of France (Minnacri 2014). As described below, many of the international engagements of Ingushetia in 2010 to 2013 involved the Ingush diaspora communities in each of these countries. No one ministry was assigned to oversee this programme and many of the visits mentioned were headed by the Head of the Republic.

Ingushetia's paradiplomacy institutions

The Presidency/Head of the Republic. Like other cases from the North Caucasus, the Ingush executive features prominently in the implementation of the republic's external relations. Article 65.2 of the Ingush Constitution states that the Head of the Republic has the authority to sign agreements with third parties representing Ingushetia. Article 70.3 specifies that the Head of the Republic has the authority to direct the international (*mezhdunarodnye*) relations and external economic engagements (*vneshneyekonomicheskie svyazi*) of Ingushetia. These articles have not been modified since 1994. Similarly, the executive authority has changed little. Federal legislation eventually required all 'presidents' of the Russian ethnic republics to change their title to 'Head (*Glava*) of the Republic'.[48] For Ingushetia, the change happened and was codified into the Ingush constitution in 2010 (Konstitutsia 2021). One executive term lasts for five years and there are no limits to reelection as two of the four heads of the republic were reelected thrice. The first head of the republic was Ruslan Aushev from 1992 to 2002, followed by Murat Zyazikov until 2008, Yevkurov until 2019 and Kalimatov since then.[49]

In internal politics, the head of Ingushetia is tasked with managing the diverse conflicts inside the republic and around it. As Klyachkina argues (2021, 355), Ingushetia's governance is shaped by the coexistence and *ad hoc* cooperation between official authorities and non-state actors involved in service provision. Due to its small size, proximity to conflict zones, mostly unsettled boundaries and large Ingush population outside its boundaries, Ingushetia's security is intimately linked to what happens outside of its boundaries. In inside and outside matters, Ingushetia's civilian authorities have to contend with the security services and federal authorities to ensure a measure of security for the republic. Aushev occasionally clashed with Moscow, demanding enhanced security for Ingushetia and nearly established a fully republican security service. Yevkurov frequently clashed with the republic's security services and their hard-line policy on extremism. His attempts at settling Ingushetia's conflicted boundaries with its neighbours also resulted in protests inside the republic in

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[48] The exception was Tatarstan.
[49] Illustrating the weight of the Ingush diaspora, all Ingush presidents up to Yevkurov were born outside of Ingushetia proper.

2010 and 2018, eventually prompting his resignation in 2019. Yevkurov also had to contend with an increasingly assertive Chechnya. The relationship to the federal centre in particular would change along with the broader trends in federal relations. The broad trend of this change is from distance to dependence. Whilst relations between Moscow and Magas had moments of tension in the 1990s, republican authorities were passive in their opposition to the wars in Chechnya and generally cooperated with federal policy. With Moscow's turn to federal consolidation under Putin, Moscow has had a more overbearing presence in the republic. Aushev is believed to have been forced into resignation in 2001 by Moscow's pressure (Evangelista 2005, 2). Zyazikov was then appointed because of his FSB background, believed to make him more effective in combating extremism and following federal policy. Indeed, a few months after taking power, Zyazikov passed constitutional amendments in the republic to harmonise Ingush law with federal law (Gulieva 2015, 209). In turn, the basis of power of Ingushetia's civilian authorities became the support they received from the Kremlin (IISS 2008, 2), widening the perceived gap between the population and the government (Matveeva & Savin 2010, 10). Under Zyazikov, Ingushetia became a terrorism hotspot. In spite of federal support, Zyazikov and the parliament would claim to have the situation under control partly to keep from alerting Moscow about the deterioration of the security situation. Following a surprise visit by then-President Medvedev, Moscow deposed Zyazikov and appointed Yevkurov, another person close to the security services (Black 2014, 54). Dependence on federal funds, combined with the close federal monitoring of its internal politics pressure the Ingush executive to find ways to protect his[50] autonomy and exclusive scope of action.

The pressure from the security services, federal authorities and non-state actors has effectively limited the autonomy of the Ingush executive in external matters. This was not always the case, at least not to the same extent. For example, in the 1990s, Magas had intensive economic relations with Turkey. These even included loans negotiated directly with that country without Moscow's oversight (Tsechoyev 2007, 52). Since then autonomy in international matters decreased and federal oversight increased, culminating with the aforementioned 2011 paradiplomacy regulations. However, within the framework of Ingush republican institutions, the scope of action of the executive in international relations is wide. It includes the allocation of budget and the initiation and oversight of paradiplomacy initiatives. For instance, on 19 November 2011, Yevkurov created a grant for theatre groups to participate at international events. As shown below, Yevkurov used this scope to carry out a complex external action of which he was frequently the leading figure.

Minnats and Minnacri. The Ministry of Connections with Civil Society and Inter-National Relations[51] (Minnats for short) was founded in 2005 and existed until 2011. Minnats was given the tasks of managing inter-ethnic relations (e.g.

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[50] So far, it has been only 'his'.

[51] *Ministerstva po Svyazyam s Obshhestvennostyu i Mezhnacionalnym Otnosheniyam.*

Ingushetia 2010) and coordinating the external engagements of Ingushetia, including with the Ingush diaspora. Its regulations also specified the need for Minnats to coordinate with federal authorities in regards to Ingushetia's external relations (Polozhenie 2005). Some of Minnats international engagements combined its functions within Ingushetia and its paradiplomacy functions. For instance, Minnats participated in the agreements signed between Yevkurov, the UN and the Danish Refugee Council in 2010 (Danish Refugee Council 2010, 3). The head of Minnats called for a reorganisation of the ministry in June 2011, arguing that Minnats is involved in virtually all official events of the republic (Serdalo 2011). In 2011, the 5 November decree 363 dismantled Minnats in the form it had at the time and gave its functions to the new Ministry of Foreign Relations, National Policy, Press and Information (Minnacri for short). Minnacri was given the task of implementing republican and federal policy in external relations and inter-ethnic relations (Polozhenie 2011), specifically by reporting Ingushetia's foreign encounters to the federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ukaz 2011). Frequently, and like Minnats, these issues were connected, at least inasmuch they are both addressed by one single department inside that ministry. Here security concerns would also be involved, as Minnats and Minnacri were also involved in strategic discussions on terrorism prevention, and every year held events – seminars and roundtables – on the topic (e.g. Serdalo 2010; Serdalo 2012). In January 2010, the head of Minnats was Kazbek Tsultygov. Yakub Patiyev took over in April 2011 and Ruslan Khautiev took over in September 2013. For simplicity's sake, and because of the continuity in their external relations mandate, I will refer to both the Minnacri and the Minnats as 'Minnats' unless the distinction is needed.

In external relations, Minnats had several functions, mostly to support the executive in its foreign engagements. Minnats would also be involved in the preparation of the Hajj pilgrimage, which would usually consist of briefing the pilgrims, and helping them obtain their passports to travel and their required vaccines (e.g. Serdalo 2011a). As mentioned above, Minnats participated in the Ingush 2030 Strategy in measures concerning terrorism and extremism prevention, inter-ethnic peace and diaspora relations. Its activities abroad, diaspora relations are indeed a feature of Minnats. What the assignment of these security and diaspora relations tasks say about Minnats' utility for the government is the activation and management of social relations in the republic.

Ministry of Economic Development. External economic relations have been a constant feature in Ingushetia's state organs. In 1993, a State Committee on External Economic Connections was established (Polozhenie 1993). Its main objective was to develop and coordinate the economic external relations of Ingushetia in the context of economic reform. Whilst acknowledging the federal constitution as part of its background, the State Committee did not have a rule in place to have federal authorities to monitor its activities. The State Committee was abolished in 2004 but successive institutions would continue to carry out the external economic relations of Ingushetia. Has an economic external

relations department. It used to be called the Ministry of Economy and Production and was renamed Ministry of Economic Development.

The Ministry of Economic Development did not have many meetings during the early 2010s, at least when compared with the Head of the Republic or the Minnats. This is not to say that the Ministry played no role in shaping policy. According to the Ministry of Economy, they were involved in the creation of the 2025 North Caucasus development plan (PravitelstvoRI 2010). Yet, the authority of the Ministry of Economic Development was undermined by the frequent replacement of its minister. Visit Aushev was charged with corruption charges in September 2011 (Magas 2011). His successor, Magomet Yandiyev was himself subsequently replaced by Pavel Pushin in December 2012. This was reflected in the generally supporting character of its paradiplomacy activities; in external relations, the activities of the Ingush Ministry of Economy were many times limited to a supporting role to the Head of the Republic (see below).

Long-term Ingush operations outside of Ingushetia

Whilst during the 2010–2013 period, Ingushetia had no representations abroad, plans were being made at that time for opening the republic's first. Ingushetia opened a representation abroad in 2015, in Beijing, China. The decision to open the office was made in 2010 following the visit of Yevkurov to the Shanghai Expo in that year. It was also during that visit that it was decided that Ingushetia's capital, Magas, would be twinned with Zhangjiagang, China (Babayan 2016a, 340). No other Ingush representations abroad exist. Nevertheless, the Ingush representations inside the Russian Federation sometimes facilitate Ingushetia's engagements with foreign partners. Typically, the Ingush representation to the President of the Russian Federation acts as a meeting point between foreign parties and Ingush authorities. The same applies to other representations. Official delegations of Ingushetia have departed from Ingushetia's Rostov delegation, like they did to join Ukraine's national celebration in 2011. These representations have also sometimes aided Ingush pilgrims on their way to the Hajj, such as the Rostov representation did for three pilgrims in 2011. Finally, the Ingush representation in Moscow would assist in negotiations with foreign embassies based in the capital, such as with the United Arab Emirates (Pravitesltvo 2013). All these would be organised and coordinated by Minnats and later Minnacri (Ukaz 2011).

Whilst Ingushetia only had one representation abroad, it also signed several agreements with foreign parties inside and outside the CIS. In the CIS, Ingushetia had by 2014 six agreements signed with CIS partners. Of the CIS these agreements, four were signed in the name of the Ingush government while two were signed in the name of Ingushetia itself. The agreements where the government of Ingushetia was the signatory were with Georgia, in 1996 (in the area of sport), with Belarus, twice in 2003 (in the area of trade and culture, one agreement being the cooperation framework itself and the second a protocol of

events towards that agreement), with Azerbaijan, in 2011 (trade and culture), with a further agreement in 2019 (CIS n.d.). The agreements in the name of Ingushetia were with Adjaria, Georgia, in 1993, and with the Akmola region, Kazakhstan, in 1999, with one additional agreement in 2015 (CIS n.d.a). One agreement with the self-proclaimed republic of Abkhazia was signed in 2009 in the area of healthcare.

Ingushetia's International Relations 2010–2013: Trends and Themes

Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

The central features of Ingushetia's operational environment is its small size and population, high dependence on the federal centre and landlocked location (*Table 12*). As no strategic roads pass through it, Ingushetia remains a rather isolated region, whose strategic value has mostly depended on its proximity to Chechnya and the Chechen conflict. However, this location has proven more of a liability than an asset, as the republic was at times a buffer between secessionist Chechnya and Russia's assets in North Ossetia. The proximity would also render Ingushetia the site of IDP movements and an easy target for Chechnya-based insurgents. The humanitarian situation of Ingushetia did result in more international attention, including foreign visits. As the discussion below points to, as shown in its strategic documents, international meetings and other paradiplomacy initiatives, Ingushetia has sought to capitalise on the Central Asian and European Ingush diaspora. Finally, the absence of cross-border engagements with Tbilisi does not imply that the southern border of Ingushetia was not of concern. In fact, during the first years of the 2000s it attracted the interest of federal authorities for security purposes, as extremist groups used that border frequently. Therefore, from those years on, there has been an expanded federal security presence in the area (Tsechoyev 2007, 51).

Ingushetia's paradiplomacy was more active than the Russian average, albeit in a downward trend like the rest of the federation. Between January 2010 and December 2013, Yevkurov met with foreign partners a total of 40 times. The downward trend is notable from a peak in the number of meetings in 2010, making Ingushetia join the same downward trend as the rest of the federation, albeit from a much higher base with an average meeting number per year of ten compared with the federal average of two and three quarters. Collaborative paradiplomacy seldom occurred between the start of 2010 and the end of 2013. Of the 40 meetings recorded, only two happened in the framework of larger federal initiatives, both to Azerbaijan in 2010 and 2011. Embassy support was reported in a couple of meetings, too.

Table 12. The 'geopolitical DNA' of Ingushetia. Italics: features that distinguish Ingushetia from Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia. Table based on Duran (2015, 132).

	Regional	**National**	**International**
Economy & Politics	*Weak executive, strong competing informal authorities*	Federal framework, North Caucasus Federal District	Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)
Geography	Mountainous, border	Periphery	Periphery
Culture & History	*Mono-national*	Incorporation through conquest	Diaspora

Collaborative paradiplomacy did not feature greatly in the dataset. Between the start of 2010 and the end of 2013, Yevkurov was part of a federal delegation only once, to Baku. Yet, there is some evidence of collaboration, even when not overt. For instance, the aforementioned 2011 decree regulating the republic's paradiplomacy implies constant communication between the Ingush government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other initiatives were led by Magas but received assistance from federal authorities, such as the Russian Embassy support in Yevkurov's 2012 Belgium visit (Vatchagaev 2012). There have been opportunities to further enhance collaborative paradiplomacy. During a 2010 meeting, the ambassador of Kuwait suggested to Yevkurov that economic exchanges with the Gulf monarchy could grow through the Russian-Arab Business Council (IslamRF 2010).

The thematic scope of these 40 meetings was diverse as it included diaspora, religious among other themes. The two largest single topics, economic paradiplomacy and humanitarian paradiplomacy[52] – having 14 and eight of the 40 meetings, respectively – were the only two ones occurring in each one of the four years analysed. The trends shown above point to a reduction of humanitarian paradiplomacy and a consistent albeit diminishing pace in economic paradiplomacy. Economic paradiplomacy would frequently involve the promotion of Ingush businesses abroad, such as in business fairs and presentations to investors abroad. Humanitarian paradiplomacy was mostly engaged with organisations such as the Council of Europe and delegations from specific countries (Sweden, Denmark). The counterparts were frequently on fact-finding missions or otherwise engaged in exploring ways to develop cooperation with Magas. Other frequent topics were religious paradiplomacy – four out of 40 meetings – and diaspora relations – five meetings. Religious paradiplomacy often had extremism in its agenda as well as economic objectives (e.g. IslamRF

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[52] That is, engagements with international organisations or partners dedicated to humanitarian causes.

2010), while diaspora relations frequently had a business alongside its cultural components.
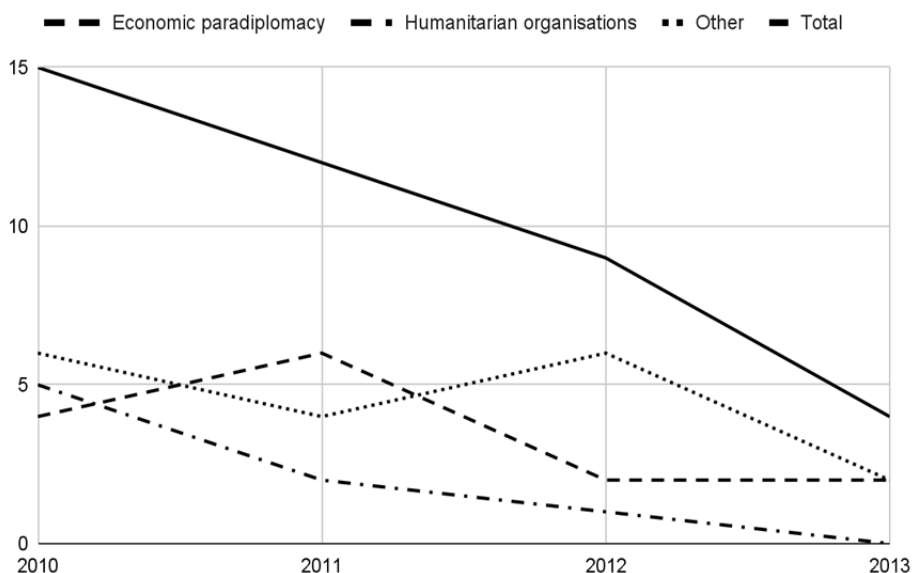
Figure 9. Frequency of meetings between the Head of Ingushetia and foreign partners, 2010–2013. Source: dataset.

The sustained intense pace of external engagements by the Head of the Republic was not quite matched by the Minnats or the Ministry of Economy. In the January 2010 to December 2013 period, Minnats met foreign partners eight times, with one visit in 2010, one in 2011, three in 2012 and 2013. The partners for this ministry were either international organisations or diaspora representatives. Among international organisations were the UN, the Council of Europe and *Medecins Sans Frontières*. Each one of these visits were concerned with the humanitarian – IDPs, human rights and medical assistance – situation in Ingushetia. The diaspora engagements concerned several countries and often involved discussions on opening Ingush cultural centres abroad. Of the eight meetings, four were with diaspora representatives, two happening in 2012 and two in 2013. The Ministry of Economy had six meetings in total, with one in 2010, three in 2011 and two in 2013. Three of those meetings had the ministry play a supporting role in a meeting where the Ingush side was headed by Yevkurov. These six meetings were with China, Italy, Azerbaijan (thrice) and South Korea, and all counterparts consisted of either business people and investors, or government officials. The exchanges with Azerbaijan in particular were meetings that gave continuity to the agreements signed with that country in 2011.

The aggregate picture that emerges by comparing January 2010 and December 2013 is a sharp reduction in paradiplomacy intensity and a growing reliance of Magas' on the Ingush diaspora, primarily in Europe and Central Asia. Notable is also a diminishing prevalence of humanitarian counterparts among the republic's meetings. In these two zones, Belgium and Kazakhstan have stood out although Germany and Uzbekistan were also present among the counterparts of Minnats specifically. Adding the meetings of Minnats and Yevkurov, meetings with diaspora representatives took place every year and accelerated towards the end of the period. In the context of diminishing engagements abroad (Figure 2), diaspora engagements became more prominent towards the end of the period. In 2010, Yevkurov met with the diaspora only once, being only one meeting out of a combined total of 16. In 2011 there were no meetings with the diaspora. In 2012 and 2013 however, meetings with the diaspora made up a combined total of five out of eleven, and two out of seven, respectively. Regarding the humanitarian counterparts, their engagement diminished precipitously. Yevkurov and the Minnats met humanitarian and international organisations interested in the conflict situation six times out of 16 in 2010, three out of 13 in 2011, two out of 12 in 2012 and zero out of seven in 2013.

Short-term context: Magas' struggles abroad. Ingushetia's international relations during the early 2010s points to the republic's attempts at affirming its agency against external threats (extremism) and the centralising trends of the Russian Federation. The late 2000s and early 2010s were a period of elevated conflict intensity in Ingushetia, which prompted the republican authorities to develop several approaches to manage the growing conflict in the republic. Ingushetia's international activities sometimes had an overt security edge (extremism prevention) or made an indirect contribution to the republic's security strategy (job creation through foreign investment). These measures were conducted on Magas' own initiative and seldom in overt collaboration with federal authorities. The increase in economic and diaspora engagements went along the lines of the Ingush 2030 Strategy, adopted in 2009. Economic engagements were sought out for investment and job creation in the republic, with joblessness seen as a key factor for the Ingush insurgency (see above). This dimension also explains the growing relations with China, relations with which began in earnest in 2010. In that year, Yevkurov sought to attract investment during his visit to the Shanghai Expo and the decision to open a representation in Beijing was made at that time (Babayan 2016a, 339–340). The same can be said of diaspora engagements, framed in the 2009–2015 programme mentioned above, inasmuch these often featured an economic agenda. Finally, the few instances of paradiplomacy with foreign religious authorities were mostly sought out in the context of extremism prevention. At the same time, the overall diminishing number of yearly engagements suggests that Ingushetia, in spite of its proactive attitude towards international relations, was not capable of overcoming the broader trend across the federation of diminishing intensity in paradiplomacy. Notably, the May 2011 decree effectively codified federal

oversight over Magas' international relations. In this context of diminishing scope and enduring challenges, the Ingush diaspora may have appeared to Magas to be a reliable asset to lean on. However, the impact of this engagement in economic terms was often negligible. The Kazakh and Belgian investors courted in late 2012 did not show any interest in the republic. The violent situation in the republic has been signalled as the source of their hesitation (Vatchagaev 2012).

Long-term context: Ingushetia's precarious statehood. Echoing the inconsistent legacy of statehood of Ingushetia discussed in chapter three, Ingushetia's statehood has remained fragile in the post-1991 Russian Federation. In spite of having its statehood enshrined in the Russian constitution since the early 1990s, the Ingush government has had to assert its autonomy vis-a-vis *de facto* powers, the federal authorities and the security threats from third parties. On top of that, latent conflicts with North Ossetia and Chechnya over territory have been a constant feature of the republic's post-Soviet history. Regarding its international relations specifically, Ingushetia's small economy, peripheral location and lack of strategic assets, have left Magas with few channels to engage partners beyond Russia's borders. Magas' paradiplomacy in the early 2010s reflects these trends by the republic's engagement strategies and choice of partners.

Ingushetia's international engagement strategies have attempted to bolster the republic's economy. However, these have run against long-term trends that render capacity building through paradiplomacy difficult. Three long-standing trends stand out as especially relevant for the strategies in use during the early 2010s. First, Magas has sought to keep international partners engaged. The international attention given to Ingushetia due to its high conflict levels led Magas to establish in 2002 a specific state body to engage with international organisations operating in Ingushetia[53] (Postanovlenie 2002). Even though this and other similar bodies were closed down by the late 2000s, post-conflict and capacity-building initiatives continued ever since. Britain's 'Conflict, Stability and Security Fund', cooperated with the British Embassy, Ingushetia's Ministry of Education and a human rights body of the Ingush government. This programme operated from 2010 to 2013. Second, unlike the other cases in this thesis, and similar to Chechnya, Ingushetia has a long-standing oil industry, producing crude oil since 1915.[54] Since 1991, the biggest single export item of Ingushetia has been oil and products derived from oil; one of the earliest large-scale foreign investment projects was a joint-venture (itself the first in the republic) with a US firm in oil refining (Kosikov & Kosikova 2000, 111; Orttung, Lussier, Paretskaya 2000, 134). However, because of the lack of large reserves, oil production – or any other extractive industry for that matter – never

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[53] *Koordinatsionnogo soveta pri Pravitelstve Respubliki Ingushetia po okazaniju pomoshhi mezhdunarodnym gumanitarnym organizatsiyam i ikh predstavitelstvam, deystvuyushhim na territorii Respubliki Ingushetiya.*

[54] Ingushetia, together with Chechnya, are some of the oldest oil-producing regions of the world.

became a strong vector of internationalisation. Along the lines of the rest of the North Caucasus, tourism was the preferred development strategy (Dzutsati 2021). Finally, diaspora relations have been a constant feature of Ingushetia's paradiplomacy strategies. The mono-national character of Ingush statehood enabled the choice of engaging the Ingush diaspora without contestation from other 'titular' nationalities. For example, the 1999 agreement with the Akmola district of Kazakhstan can be explained by the presence of an estimated 4 000 Ingush living there around the year 2010. Yevkurov's government embraced diaspora engagement as an opportunity albeit in a way reflective of the development and management objectives laid out in the Ingush 2030 Strategy. Namely, Magas set out to engage the diaspora to find investment or trade opportunities. Similarly, the twinning of Brest and Malgobek and the 2014 opening of an Antwerp Ingush cultural centre (Minnacri 2014) were framed as part of this diaspora engagement programme.

Ingushetia's choice of international partners changed by mid-2010, reflecting the challenges that Ingushetia's reputation of violence had imposed on the republic's paradiplomacy. Indeed, Ingushetia's leading partners have shifted in the two decades following the Soviet collapse. Trade with the CIS indicates changing trends in Ingushetia's external relations. In 1998, 87,7 per cent of Ingush exports were directed to the CIS member states, by 2010 that figure dropped to 42,1 per cent (Kosikov & Kosikova 1999, 111; Heaney 2013, 169). In 1998, most exports not directed to the CIS went to European states and Turkey. Turkey in particular had a large economic presence through building companies and loans to the Ingush government (Tsechoyev 2007, 52). However, trade with Europe would lag and diminish. By 2011, the largest non-CIS trade partner was China, taking about a third of Ingush exports. From each year on, China would increase its trade share rapidly, becoming Ingushetia's largest trade partner overall and taking three quarters of all Ingush trade by 2013 (Kosikov & Kosikova 1999, 111; Babayan 2016, 5). Similarly, Azerbaijan emerged as a key partner for Ingushetia. Unlike Dagestan however, Azerbaijan did not feature as much in Ingushetia's external relations prior to Russia's turn to that country under Dmitry Medvedev's presidency. For Ingushetia, this partnership involved several symbolic gestures, such as naming a street in Malgobek after the Azerbaijani president Aliyev in 2011, the same year the agreement between the governments of the two countries was signed. The character of relations with Azerbaijan was essentially economic, as Yevkurov mentioned in a 2016 interview (Vestnik Kavkaza 2016). Trade has never occupied an important place in the Ingush economy in general. But the shift towards Azerbaijan and especially China away from Europe hint at Magas' choice for partners willing to entertain Ingushetia's economic offer and overlook its security situation.

In sum, the 2010–2013 period featured many of the long-term trends in Ingushetia's external relations and statehood consolidation. Namely, these were the instrumentalisation of the former and the precarity of the latter. The peaking levels of violence had an impact on which foreign partners could Magas engage,

breaking the running trend of European engagement. This was further compounded by Moscow pressing Magas to attract foreign investment, which Ingushetia sought from Azerbaijan and China.

Does Violence Impact the Operational Environment of Regions?

Ingushetia's external relations resembled those of the other North Caucasus republics. Namely, that of a peripheral administrative entity attempting to overcome their internal challenges and location through paradiplomacy. In particular, an economic purpose predominated in Ingushetia's foreign involvements, especially as humanitarian paradiplomacy and other engagements declined in number by the end of 2013. None of the instances of paradiplomacy addressed here resulted in direct contestation from the population or overt dissatisfaction from the country's central authorities. Indeed, there were a few instances of collaborative paradiplomacy but overall Magas operated outside of federal programmes just as Yevkurov seldom travelled abroad in federal delegations. The main distinctive feature was the focus on the Ingush diaspora, engaged in a proactive manner in Europe and Central Asia. This approach was not feasible in Dagestan because of the multi-ethnic character of the republic. In Kabardino-Balkaria, in spite of the hegemony of the Circassian leadership, engagement with the Balkar diaspora was still taking place. Ingushetia's diaspora engagement gained particular traction in 2011 and 2012 as violence levels stagnated before diminishing by late 2013.
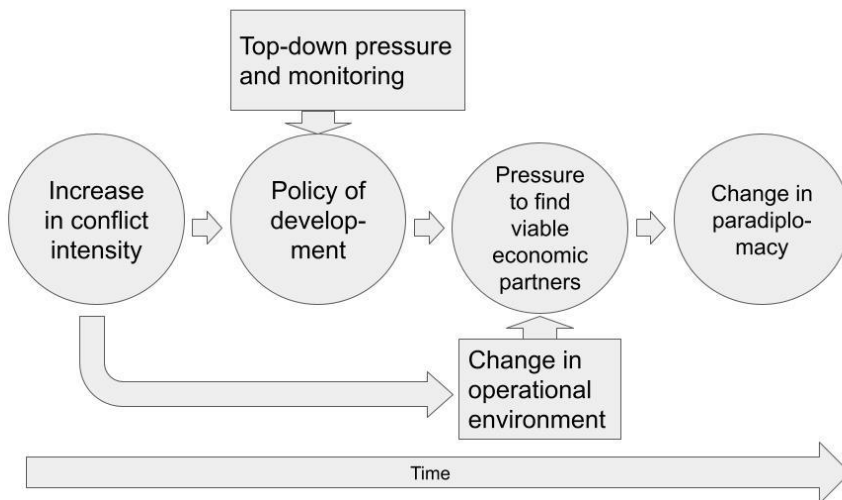

Figure 10. How the increase of conflict-related violence and conflict intensity in 2010 to 2013 connects to Ingushetia's external relations.

In addition to engaging the Ingush diaspora more intensely, the other visible change is the focus on Azerbaijan and China as sources of investment and trade. These engagements would prove durable beyond 2014 during Yevkurov's term. For example, Magas and Dongying, China, became twin cities in 2015. This shift was even more visible as engagements with Europe diminished and by 2013 were limited to meetings with the Europe diaspora. Arguably, the environment in which Magas formulated its external relations changed in the early 2010s due to the enduring conflict-related violence. As *Figure 10* summarises, violent conflict impacted Ingushetia's external relations in two ways: it affected the operational environment of the republic by making it harder to find European partners for investment and it prompted Moscow's top-down development policy. This latter one in turn led to Magas' focus on economic paradiplomacy and approaching the diaspora as a feasible source of investment and trade.

These features of Ingushetia's external relations point to some of the legacies of Ingushetia's state formation as described in chapter three. Notably, up until the creation of the republic in the 1990s, Ingushetia seldom enjoyed periods of autonomous statehood, bound either to top-level military authorities (as during the tsarist era) or to a binational republic with Chechnya. Moreover, the territory of Ingushetia itself was cast from Lesser Kabarda, itself a contested historical legacy from the Russian conquest of the North Caucasus. The outcome – as argued above – is Ingushetia's precarious statehood and authority. Paradiplomacy thus becomes a tool for the republic to assert its autonomy, combining functional and normative elements in the process.

In sum, Ingushetia's external relations in the early 2010s shifted towards deepening engagements with the Ingush diaspora. The evidence presented here points to Magas choosing to focus more on the diaspora as a feasible option for developing the region's economic engagements. This change roughly followed the stable trend in conflict-related violence in 2010 to 2012. The change can be explained by two consequences brought about by the conflict conditions: the loss of interest of European partners in investing in Ingushetia and the extremism prevention strategy that hinged on economic development.

CHAPTER 6
Conflict and KBR's International Relations
2010–2013[55]

The Republic of Kabardino Balkaria (KBR in Russian) borders Georgia to the south and has a population of about 860 000, in 2010 consisting of ethnic Russians (22 per cent), Kabards (57 per cent) and Balkars (twelve per cent). In 2010 it was Russia's seventieth poorest region, albeit one of the wealthier federal subjects of the North Caucasus area. In the 2010–2013 period, KBR actively carried out complex external relations in matters of culture, commerce, with few overtly political declarations or actions. As chapter three showed, KBR has a legacy of sovereignty under the Kabardian princes prior to the Russian conquest. This legacy echoes in the hegemony that Kabard (Circassian) politicians and constituents have in KBR's politics, with Russians and especially Balkars being marginalised from the centre of power in the republic. The hegemonic position of the Kabards has rendered the large Circassian diaspora – over 2 000 000 people in Turkey and the Middle East – a constant feature in Nalchik's paradiplomacy. It also fueled a conflict with the Balkars, who find themselves in a disadvantaged position in the republic and mostly unable to check the institutions under Kabard hegemony.

KBR's paradiplomacy changed between January 2010 and December 2013 in two crucial ways. First, in 2012 new regulations were introduced governing Nalchik's paradiplomacy. Namely, Moscow gained increased authority to oversee the republic's external relations. Second, diaspora engagement was displaced from top-level engagements to a ministerial-level agenda. These changes were prompted – as I show below – by a moment of disharmonious paradiplomacy, prompted by Moscow's increased security concerns over the project of 'repatriating' the Syrian Circassian diaspora. It can be deduced that the rise in conflict intensity during the late 2000s and early 2010s prompted Moscow to regard any new connection between the North Caucasus and the Middle East as a security threat.

This chapter will briefly outline the evolution of the KBR insurgency in the early 2010s. Then, I proceed to describe the internal opportunity frames of the republic, namely, the legal, political and institutional frameworks of KBR's external relations. I analyse the 'external' frames for the republic's paradiplomacy, briefly summarised as KBR's geopolitical DNA. Further along I focus on the 2010 to 2013 (inclusive) period by tracing the development of KBR's engagements abroad, on their own and against short and long-term contexts.

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[55] Parts of this chapter were presented at the 2021 Fifth Annual Tartu Conference on Russian and East European Studies (online).

The Conflict in KBR 2010–2013

When compared to other North Caucasus regions in the post-Soviet period, KBR does not stand out as a particularly violent region. Yet, by the end of the 2000s, violence had mounted up shattering that republic's relative safety. Violence – measured in conflict-related deaths – reached its peak in 2011 and would fall precipitously by 2013. So, KBR's case is one where there was a clear peak in violence in 2011 and a clear decline by the end of the period under analysis (*Figure 11*).
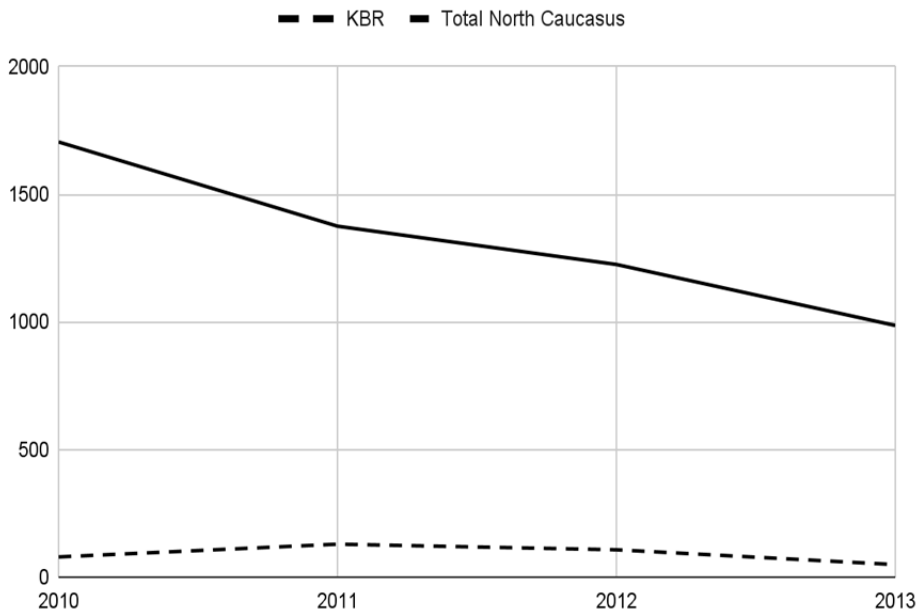
Figure 11. Conflict-related deaths in KBR and the North Caucasus total (North Caucasus: Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, North Ossetia-Alania and Stavropol). Source: Caucasian Knot.

In the 1990s, KBR was regarded as an island of tranquillity in a violent neighbourhood, with Nalchik frequently seen as the North Caucasus' safest city (Richmond 2007, 90; Youngman 2019, 161). This image has been broken several times since the year 2000. By 2003 there were reports that Chechen rebel leader Anton Basayev was active in KBR (Sagramoso & Yarlykapov 2013, 63), culminating with the 2005 siege of Nalchik. The 2005 Basayev-orchestrated Nalchik attack by about 100 militants resulted in over 130 deaths and up to an additional 250 injured (Richmond 2007, 86; Memorial 2016, 70, 72). Since then, violence in KBR mounted steadily upwards until becoming among the most affected regions in the North Caucasus by the end of the 2000s. The Memorial data on *siloviki* casualties (Memorial 2016) points to an increase

in violence from 2008, peaking in 2010 and slowly decreasing thereafter. The rise of violence in the KBR in the 2000s and 2010s is understudied and has been often framed in Chechnya-centric terms (Youngman 2019, 162). Because of this, the following account of the drivers, dividers and evolution of the KBR conflict is tentative, relying on the existing literature. Here I attempt to understand the KBR conflict-related violence on its own, focusing on the rise of violence of the late 2000s. There was no certainty about this decrease in violence; the possibility of a rebel comeback was ever-present even after successful operations took place in early 2012 (Vatchagaev 2012).

Like elsewhere in the region, the role and place of religion and religious organisations in the broader society was the key divider in the conflict. The KBR insurgents stated their goals in the insurgency as establishing 'Sharia law' as the model of governance for the region (Youngman 2019, 168–169). On the side of the government, the 1999 rebel invasion of Dagestan drove other North Caucasus republics to repress the autonomous Muslim communities called *jamaats*. In KBR, the republican government enacted a heavy-handed approach in the early years of the 2000s, closing religious schools (*madrasa*) and mosques. This would eventually drive the *jamaats* into underground resistance (Koehler, Gunya, Shogenov & Tumov 2020, 99). Republican authorities would revise their security policies after the 2005 attack, opting for a less heavy-handed approach. Yet, these security policies were locked-in by the federal authorities, evincing the lack of autonomy of the republic in security matters (Sagramoso & Yarlykapov 2013, 63–64). The planning of the 2014 Sochi Olympics, ongoing since 2007, only reinforced this trend (Gorecki 2011).

The violence drivers were complex albeit they stemmed from issues prevalent throughout the region. Yet, according to the KBR and federal authorities, economic underperformance has been the key factor in the violence in the region by the late 2000s. Low investment and low income levels have undermined the republic's development (Shadova, Malkanduev, Tokmakova, Salim 2019, 78), fueling persistent unemployment. Compounded by a rise in criminality, economic factors have been regarded as driving people to join the insurgency. The 2005 federal appointment of Arsen Kanokov as President of KBR is indicative of that, as the Kremlin hoped that his business background would help spur the republic's economic development (Koehler, Gunya, Shogenov & Tumov 2020, 98, 101). Indeed, for the KBR authorities, the predominant theory of why people joined the local insurgency tended to be economic factors. It would only be towards 2012 that the economic explanation would be replaced. The understanding that emerged in that year was that the ideological factors – the beliefs of the would-be rebels – were the driving force of the rebellion (Vatchagaev 2012a).

The economic explanation drove most of the policy-making in the Kremlin and KBR, but there are other explanations to consider. Like in Dagestan, the repression of religious communities contributed to local groups embracing violence (Youngman 2019, 165). Even after the republican government opted for a softer approach to the *jamaats* in 2005, the repressive security policies of

the federal government were locked-in (see below), so this would continue to drive people to violence into the 2010s. There are drives that are specific to KBR, notably, the power dynamics between the main ethnic groups of the republic. Balkars were overrepresented among local extremists around 2010, albeit the majority of militants of the 2005 attacks were Kabard (Richmond 2007, 86). Thus, the marginalisation of the Balkars is not sufficient to explain the insurgency, but necessary to be included as a driver of the conflict. Whilst the head of the KBR government is typically of Balkar background (Kazenin 2009, 56), their authority is limited when compared to the more extensive powers of the Head of the Republic (see below), who has been from Kabard origin since 1991. Whilst from 2010 to the end of 2013 the Head of the Republic changed once, the head of government changed four times in the same period. In addition, underpinning their unfavourable balance, Balkars constitute only about ten per cent of KBR's population. Balkar lands were frequently exploited for the benefit of Kabards and Russians, a trend that only worsened under Kanokov's Presidency (Richmond 2007; Koehler, Gunya, Shogenov & Tumov 2020, 101).

For this thesis, the essential point here was the imposition from federal authorities of a security agenda based on coercion, with an extremism-prevention approach centred on economic explanations of the insurgency. This developmental approach was reflected in Nalchik's politics under Kanokov and in its paradiplomacy, as most external relations of the republic had an economic component (see below). The aforementioned change to an ideological explanation of the violence would not be immediately reflected in KBR's external action.

KBR's International Relations Institutions

Legal frameworks

The KBR constitution was adopted relatively late when compared to other federal subjects, namely, in 1997. Its last major amendment was carried out in 2006. Articles 78 and 83 explicitly refer to the international relations of KBR, giving the Head of the Republic the authority to engage with foreign partners. In addition to the Constitution, the international relations of KBR are regulated by a series of laws passed since 1997, a few of them passed during the 2010–2013 period. On 15 January 2000, a law was passed precising the procedures for the republic to enter into international agreements, with other regions or in economic relations (*vneshneyekonomicheskie svyazi*). Article 4 of the law specifies that the republic, the parliament, the government (*pravitelstvo*) and other governmental bodies may enter into international agreements. The law precises that the agreements that KBR enters into are not *strictus sensu* international agreements like those involving independent states (Zakon 2000). On 3 November 2010, the President of the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria issued a decree on the regulations of the international connections of the KBR. These

regulations give us an insight into the ways KBR's international relations are planned on a technical level. Article 2 describes a timeframe for the yearly planning and reporting of all international meetings, visits and receptions involving all branches of the KBR government. Stated otherwise, all meetings must be planned and reported to republican authorities up to a year ahead. In turn, all these meetings and the visits of the Head of the Republic are reported to the federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, both in planning and in results (Ukaz 2010a). On 2 September 2013 the KBR executive issued a decree modifying the 2010 decree. This amendment clarified that all international visits and receptions involving any level of the KBR government had to be previously consulted with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Similarly, no direct exchanges were allowed without consultations or approval from federal authorities (Ukaz 2013c).

In spite of their thoroughness, the aforementioned laws do not cover all elements of KBR paradiplomacy. A branch of KBR's international relations is that of diaspora engagement. Diaspora relations have featured prominently in KBR's external relations, with several laws passed to regulate the different republican programmes on the topic. On 16 May 2012 'On the state policy of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic in relation to compatriots abroad' was signed into law by the Head of the Republic (Postanovlenie 2012). The law established the grounds for KBR to provide assistance to the diaspora in economic, education, culture, language and human rights issues. Article 13 of the law also established the background for the creation of a fund for cooperation with compatriots abroad. This law was adopted in the framework of the federal laws on diaspora issues ('compatriots abroad') and stipulates the need for agreement with the federal centre for carrying out initiatives abroad.

Political frameworks for international relations

Similar to other North Caucasus cases, there are no official strategy documents concerning KBR's external engagements on their own. However, external relations do appear in several instances in development plans, indicating the objectives of KBR paradiplomacy. In 2007, a new comprehensive economic development plan was adopted by the KBR government. The 'Development strategy of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic until 2030'[56] ('2007 Strategy' for short) set out a series of economic sectors for targeted republican investment and support, namely, tourism, healthcare and extractive industries. As mentioned by Kanokov in 2013, the 2007 Strategy guided republican policy (Wek 2013). The goal of positioning KBR abroad featured in many elements of the 2007 Strategy. Indeed, the Strategy stressed the need for KBR products and services to enter foreign markets, and the need to increase business contacts abroad. It was also recommended to open KBR representations in foreign countries and invest in public relations campaigns targeting foreign audiences.

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[56] *Strategiya razvitiya Kabardino-Balkarskoy Respubliki do 2030 goda.*

Security was mentioned in relation to the safety of tourists and the polling made in 2005 indicating insecurity as a prevalent perception of the KBR among people (Strategiya n.d., 33–34, 44, 50). In spite of the seeming comprehensive nature of the 2007 Strategy, by early 2013 Kanokov sought consultations to modify the document (Wek 2013). Indeed, the 2007 Strategy has been regarded as ineffective and proceeding from faulty premises (Midov 2017) and ultimately undermined by weak investment and other economic factors (Shadova, Malkanduev, Tokmakova, Salim 2019, 78).

In parallel to the 2007 Strategy, there was the 2011 National Policy Concept (2011 Concept for short), published in August of that year (KBR Pravda 2011b). This document established that the internal and external politics of KBR are closely related to the 'national questions' of the republic. The expected outcomes of this initiative concerned the peaceful relations between the main ethnic groups of the republic, and their cultural development. Similarly, the 2011 Concept states as its task the response to extremism and radicalism in the republic. An improved business environment was also conceived as an outcome of these measures. To increase the international presence of KBR is mentioned as a general task in the document, with increased engagement with the Balkar and Kabard diasporas, and repatriates as a particular objective of the document. These two documents, the 2007 Strategy and the 2011 Concept, are imprecise about the geographic orientation of KBR's engagements. According to the federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the priorities of KBR's international relations are the CIS first, Europe and Asia second (MID 2011).

Finally, there were two republican programmes on diaspora engagement. The first one was titled 'On measures to preserve and develop ties with compatriots living abroad for 2009–2011'[57] (Postanovlenie 2009c). Its successor was titled 'A comprehensive plan of measures to preserve and develop ties with compatriots living abroad'[58] and it ran between 2012 and 2015. The focus of these initiatives primarily concerned the repatriated members of Circassian and Balkar diasporas inside KBR (the so-called 'repatriants'), but some of their activities can be called paradiplomacy as they involve foreign partners. An example was the training of Kabard language teachers meant to teach the language to Turkish members of the diaspora inside Turkey. The context of the 2012 law was the Civil War in Syria and the demands of the diaspora for KBR to assist them (KBR Pravda 2012c). Indeed, in February 2012, the KBR government had a meeting to discuss the ways to assist the Circassian diaspora in Syria. The concrete issues were the growing number of Syrians requesting Russian citizenship and the difficulties Syrian students faced with receiving money from Syria to support their studies in KBR (KBR Pravda 2012).

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[57] *O merakh po sokhraneniyu i razvitiyu svyazey s sootechestvennikami, prozhivayushhimi za rubezhom, na 2009-2011 gody.*
[58] *Kompleksnogo plana meropriyaty po sohraneniju i razvitiyu svyazey s sootechestven-nikami, prozhivajushhimi za rubezhom.*

KBR paradiplomacy institutions

The President/Head of the Republic. The KBR constitution gives to the Head of the Republic the authority to carry out the republic's international relations. Articles 78.3, 78.4 and 83.b state the authority of the Head of the Republic to direct KBR's external relations, and to represent KBR abroad. Article 83.a reiterates the authority of the executive in international matters but also states that the Head of the Republic must coordinate these international actions with federal authorities. In addition, the laws regulating the international connections of KBR do not mention any republican authority as relevant other than the Head of the Republic (Ukaz 2010a; Ukaz 2013c). In other words, the essential functioning of planning, executing and reporting international meetings is not delegated to any ministry of the KBR, and remains solely in the hands of the Head of the Republic. The first president was Valerii Kokov in power 1992–2005, followed by Arsen Kanokov until December 2013, followed by Yury Kokov until 2019 and Kazbek Kokov at the time of writing.[59]

The key issue KBR internal policy issue for the executive is maintaining the unity of KBR. The centrifugal forces pulling the republic are connected to the waves of Kabard (Circassian) and Balkar nationalism. Indeed, the nationalist conflicts that dominated in the republic in the first half of the 1990s (Kazenin 2009, 69) can be seen as the main cause for the relatively late adoption of the KBR constitution. Because of the aforementioned lopsided nature of the distribution of power between Balkars and Kabards, Balkar movements have attempted to separate from KBR at various points in the past, most notably in 1996 (Kazenin 2009). Kabard movements have also pushed demands that threatened the KBR or at least the status quo, such as the recognition of the Circassian genocide, the formation of a Circassian republic with the Adyge and Cherkess, the boundaries of the present Circassian republics, the causes of the Abkhaz people and of the Circassians in the Middle East (Orttung, Lussier, & Paretskaya 2000, 161–163; Heany 2009, 150–151; Khaliyev 2017, 78–79). These initiatives gained a new impetus because of the 2007 declaration of the Sochi Olympics and would continue to shape KBR politics into the mid-2010s.[60] Because the main constituency of the KBR executive are the Kabards, these demands have had to be met, managed or defeated by the republican government. The main strategy of the republican head has been the federally-sanctioned consolidation of power in the republic, a visible trend among all KBR republican heads. Kanokov's approach to consolidation in particular relied on gaining levers across KBR's economic sectors, extra-judicial coercion, systematic nepotism and overt Circassian nationalism (Heany 2009, 150; Zhemukhov 2012, 512; Koehler, Gunya, Shogenov & Tumov 2020, 101, 105; Yemelianova & Akkieva 2020, 223).

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[59] Valerii Kokov was Kazbek Kokov's father. Yury Kokov has no relation to them.

[60] The fact that 2014 was the 150 anniversary of the culmination of the genocide was seen by some as a symbol of Russia's continued domination over the Circassians (see Catic 2015, 1692).

Since the introduction of appointed governors in 2004, the Kremlin is the other key constituency of the KBR leadership. Indeed, Moscow appoints the heads of the KBR according to its own perception of the needs of the region and the capacities of the leader. In appointing Kanokov, Moscow wanted a leader disconnected from the local clan politics and able to spur economic growth. This, in turn, rendered Kanokov highly dependent on Moscow for political authority and resources. When the central government considered that Kanokov failed to bring stability to the region, he was replaced by someone else, namely someone with a security background (Koehler, Gunya, Shogenov & Tumov 2020, 101, 104–105; Yemelianova & Akkieva 2020, 223). Finally, federal appointees face challenges due to their lack of popularity and legitimacy (see Stremoukhov 2021). Kanokov in particular was undermined by the enduring influence of the 'Kokov clan' (Sagramoso & Yarlykapov 2020, 279). In this sense, federal support is not unconditional nor does it involve empowering the KBR regardless of its leadership. For instance, even though the republican leadership changed their perspective on the republic's Muslim communities after 2005, their authority was insufficient to contain the heavy-handed federal approach (Sagramoso & Yarlykapov 2013, 64). Regarding paradiplomacy, since 2000, Moscow has sought greater veto on Nalchik's international relations. As Moscow began to see the cause of genocide recognition around 2000 as a geopolitical liability, the federal government constrained the republics from embracing this cause internationally (Catic 2015, 1692, 1705). This impulse would continue through the 2010–2014 period, as the laws regulating KBR's paradiplomacy codified Moscow's monitoring of all stages of the republic's external relations (see below).

The consolidated power of the KBR executive did not translate into an ambitious external policy at first (Orttung, Lussier, & Paretskaya 2000, 164). The consolidation of power, however, did result in a concentration of the authority to carry out external relations. In the early 2010s, KBR had its external relations mostly concentrated in the Head of the Republic, with no single ministry handling the republic's external relations. Under Kanokov's overtly nationalistic agenda, engagement of the Circassian diaspora was of paramount importance, particularly in the second half of this administration. The goal of diaspora engagement was overtly stated: to create a pro-Russian lobby at the international diaspora associations (Official Website KBR 2013a; see Yemelianova & Akkieva 2020, 223). Whilst several ministries implemented the policy of diaspora engagement, this policy was executive-driven. This concentration on the executive was not always the case. There was a Ministry of External Relations in KBR that operated between 2000 and 2002, evincing that the republic had a background in institutionalising its paradiplomacy. The head of KBR's external relations ministry, Vladimir Zhamborov, became the head of the KBR Presidency's office in 2009, a position he would hold for the remainder of the Kanokov presidency. This illustrates the concentration of external relations authority under Kanokov. Moreover, the concentration took on a personalistic element as Kanokov, a millionaire and businessman, would

reportedly spend his own personal resources in initiatives concerning the diaspora, such as scholarships for Circassians from Syria to study in KBR (KBR Pravda 2012c). The Head of the KBR has had a large role in articulating the republic's policies towards the diaspora, making this a rather executive-driven area of KBR's paradiplomacy (Yemelianova & Akkieva 2020, 223). For instance, senators would sometimes act with the accord of Kanokov, such as in April 2012, when a KBR senator went to Syria on a fact-finding mission to the Circassian communities of Syria (KBR Pravda 2012a). Only by the end of his tenure would signs of deconcentration emerge (see below) and further federal monitoring be introduced. Shortly before Kanokov left power, by the end of 2013, several executive bodies held a meeting about KBR's external relations. The result was a renewed commitment to engage other partners *within* the Russian Federation, so no goals to expand the republic's paradiplomacy took place at that encounter. Kanokov was not present at the meeting (Official Website KBR 2013a).

Ministry of Economic Development and Trade[61]. This ministry was created in 2004 and has remained an influential element in the republic's governance, as illustrated by its participation in the formulation and modification of the 2030 Strategy (Wek 2013). The Ministry has consistently had a section dedicated to what can be called paradiplomacy. Even during the period of Kanokov's external relations consolidation, the Ministry had a Department of External Relations and Interaction with Mass Media which illustrates its authority to engage partners abroad. Thanks to this, the Ministry is active in both *ad hoc* engagements with foreign partners (see below) and long-term cooperation agreements, such as with India's ITEC since 2003 (Official Website KBR 2013). From 2004 to 2014, the ministry was headed by Aliy Musukov.

The Ministry of Economic Development stands out for having an economic mission whilst also engaging foreign partners beyond economic matters. In 2009, by the Ruling N-97 (Postanovlenie 2009b) the Ministry received the regulations that would govern it during most of the 2010–2013 period. These regulations belie the exclusive economic focus of the Ministry. Article 4 of its regulations (*polozhenie*) grants the Ministry the authority to coordinate the international (*mezhdunarodnye*) relations and external economic relations (*vneshneyekonomicheskie otnosheniya*) of the KBR. Article 5 precises that the Ministry is tasked with providing funding for the organisation of international meetings and seminars, as well as drafting the agreements and treaties for the KBR government to sign. Said agreements and treaties go beyond the presumed economic focus of this ministry as they include trade, economic, scientific, technical, socio-cultural and other fields. For instance, the Ministry carried out the 2012–2015 programme 'Personnel training program for the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic'[62], an initiative to finance KBR student's education abroad in business (Postanovlenie 2011a). As evidence of the aforementioned

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[61] The Ministry changed names in 2012 to remove the allusion to trade in its title.
[62] *Programma podgotovki kadrov dlya Kabardino-Balkarskoy Respubliki.*

deconcentration of external relations in the later Kanokov years, this pro-
gramme was a continuation of a similar programme called 'Programme of the
President of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic for training personnel for the
economy of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic for 2007– 2011'[63], organised
and financed directly under the authority of the Head of the Republic. Within
the Ministry, there was an Agency of Investment[64] created in 2007, explicitly
tasked with cooperating with domestic and foreign investors. This agency
would handle the republic's participation in international business fairs, namely,
during the 'Green Week' in Germany and MIPIM in France, and Russian
business fairs such as Sochi and St Petersburg (KBR Pravda 2013).

Ministry of Mass Media, Public and Religious Organisations of KBR. This
ministry was created in December 2012 but it followed a succession of
executive bodies with paradiplomacy functions, notably in diaspora matters.
The reason for including these bodies into this analysis is that they dedicated
themselves to diaspora matters, too. Within the 2010–2014 period, diaspora
relations were handled first by the Ministry of Information Communications,
Work with Public Associations and Youth Affairs[65], then by the State Com-
mittee for Public and Religious Organisations[66] to later settle with the Ministry
of Mass Media. The Ministry of Information existed from 2009 to 2011, and its
main mission concerned mass media and its regulation, together with issues of
ethnic peace. In line with the latter, it had the authority to organise and facilitate
the republic's engagements with the diaspora abroad. It also had the authority to
facilitate the repatriation of diaspora members to KBR and to develop the
international relations of KBR in the sphere of youth policies (Postanovlenie
2009a). The State Committee inherited these functions concerning diaspora
relations, becoming KBR's main state organ focused on that topic (Postanov-
lenie 2011). This continuity is further evinced as these two were headed by the
same person, Boris Pashtov. In December 2012, the State Committee was
replaced by the Ministry of Mass Media. It also inherited the functions of
organising engagements with the diaspora abroad (Postanovlenie 2012).
Another member of the State Committee became the head of this new ministry,
Mukhadin Kumakhov.

Whilst diaspora issues often concerned all organs of the KBR government,
in the 2010–2014 period, these three institutions were the ones the most active
in engaging the diaspora. For instance, in early 2010, Pashtov headed a
discussion with the KBR State University on the topic of the President's
scholarship for diaspora students and the creation of a fund to assist repatriants
in KBR (KBR Pravda 2010). In March 2011, Pashtov mentioned that his

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[63] *Programma Prezidenta Kabardino-Balkarskoj Respubliki po podgotovke kadrov dlya
ekonomiki Kabardino-Balkarskoy Respubliki na 2007–2011 gody.*
[64] *Agentstvo investitsiy i razvitiya Respubliki Kabardino-Balkariya.*
[65] *Ministerstvo po informacionnym kommunikaciyam, rabote s obshhestvennymi
obedineniyami i delam molodezhi Kabardino-Balkarskoy Respubliki.*
[66] *Gosudarstvennom komitete Kabardino-Balkarskoy Respubliki po delam obshhestvennyh
i religioznyh organizatsiy.*

ministry helped establish cultural and economic links with the diaspora, including with students (KBR Pravda 2011). These bodies also coordinated cooperation with federal authorities on diaspora matters. For instance, in October 2011, Pashtov and the federal minister of CIS affairs signed a cooperation agreement on diaspora matters, concerning culture and economic links with the compatriots abroad (KBR Prava 2011c).

Long-term KBR operations outside of Russia

As mentioned above, KBR had in the 2010–2013 period several open-ended paradiplomacy initiatives that proceeded without an expiry date, such as the Ministry of Economic Development and its cooperation with ITEC. There were also initiatives that were renovated regularly, such as the two scholarship programmes and the initiatives to cooperate with the diaspora abroad. However, the two main indicators of long-term paradiplomatic presence – representations and agreements – were absent from Nalchik's international relations. KBR had no official representations outside of the borders of the Russian Federation. Like in other cases, it had a St Petersburg and a Moscow representation, the latter of which occasionally served as a contact point with foreign partners. Moreover, KBR has only one agreement at the government level, signed with Azerbaijan in 2009 in the areas of trade and commerce, and culture (CIS n.d.). There are no similar agreements with authorities of other countries, but one agreement with a regional government stands out. Since 1993, Nalchik and the Turkish city of Kayseri have been twin cities, and mutual exchanges and visits have been taking place actively since then and during the 2010 to 2014 period. Kanokov visited Kayseri in 2008 and 2009, both visits had symbolic and business components (Interciscass 2012). By the end of 2013 there were reports that agreements with Abkhazia and South Ossetia were being prepared for their signature (Bezformata 2013a).

KBR's International Relations 2010–2013: Trends and Themes

Qualitative and quantitative analysis

The operational environment of KBR's paradiplomacy is defined by its large diasporas abroad and peripheral situation inside the Russian Federation. The presence of large Circassian diasporas abroad is a defining feature of KBR's geopolitics. There is an estimated 2 500 000 diaspora in Turkey, with 80 000 in Syria and 60 000 more in Jordan. Since 1991, members of these diasporas have sought to establish links with the North Caucasus Circassians (Kaya 2014, 51). To put these numbers in perspective, KBR's total population is 800 000 and there are a total of 700 000 Circassians living in Russia. In addition, there is a Balkar diaspora, too, but it numbers to a few thousand in total. The presence of

these diasporas expands the scope of KBR's international presence; otherwise KBR is in a peripheral situation. Of the states of the South Caucasus only Azerbaijan was a substantive partner, with *de facto* states Abkhazia and South Ossetia also featuring as partners (*Table 13*). The paradiplomacy efforts carried out by Nalchik can be seen as a way to overcome the peripheral situation of the republic, both through the diaspora and through economic relations.

Table 13. The 'geopolitical DNA' of KBR. Italics: features that distinguish KBR from Dagestan, Ingushetia and North Ossetia. Table based on Duran (2015, 132).

	Regional	National	International
Economy & Politics	*Consolidation of power*	Federal framework, North Caucasus Federal District	Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)
Geography	Mountainous, border	Periphery	Periphery
Culture & History	*Two titular nationalities*	Incorporation through conquest, *Circassian genocide and Balkar deportations*	Diasporas

In the 2010–2013 period, Kanokov had 21 meetings with foreign parties, either hosting them in KBR or meeting them abroad (*Figure 12*). The overall trend is slightly downwards, with the period starting with six meetings, finishing with five, and the average number of meetings per year being less than six. This downwards shift is slight, so it is difficult to make a hypothesis about its significance vis-a-vis broader trends, but it does reflect the oscillating but decreasing number of meetings that Russian federal subjects carried out in the same period. Nevertheless, KBR's paradiplomacy intensity was higher than the Russian average, which in 2010 was three meetings and in 2013 was two and a half (Stremoukhov 2021).
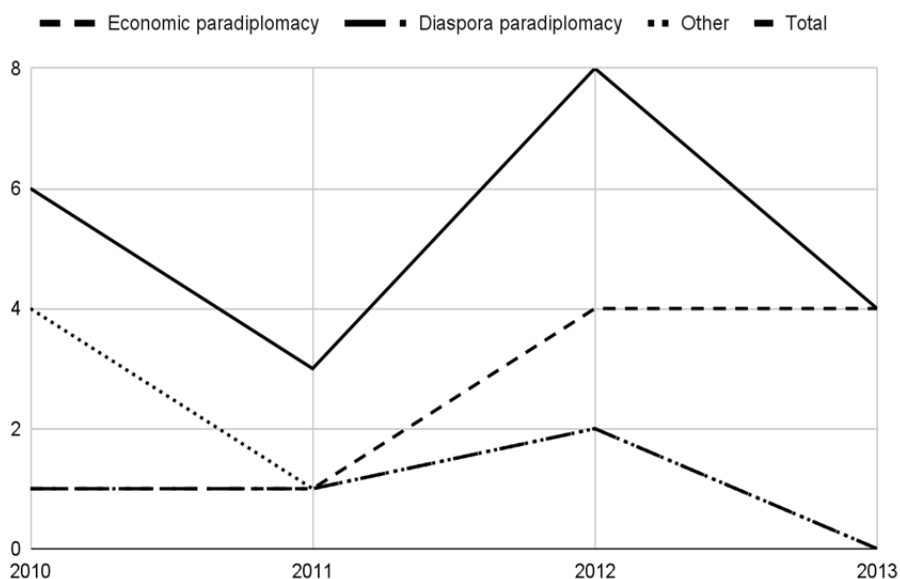
Figure 12. Visits and meetings with foreign partners by the Head of Kabardino-Balkaria, 2010–2013. Source: dataset.

Collaborative paradiplomacy was not frequent but it did feature in the dataset. Several federal institutions are either initiators or supporters of the meetings captured in *Figure 12*. These include two meetings led by the President of the Russian Federation (in Syria and Turkey in 2010) and one meeting led by the head of the NCFD along with other governors from the region (in Azerbaijan in 2011). In addition, one 2012 meeting with the Syrian, Jordanian and Turkish Circassian diaspora was organised by the federal agency of CIS affairs and Russia's foreign aid agency, Russotrudnichestvo. Whilst the reports consulted do not make it explicit, it is likely that some of the meetings held outside of the Russian Federation happened in coordination with the local Russian embassy. The patterns of collaborative paradiplomacy involving federal authorities had a particular geographic bias as federal authorities were particularly active in facilitating KBR's diaspora and Middle East connections. There have also been sparse reports of disharmonious paradiplomacy. There have been reports that the 2012 KBR outreach to the Middle Eastern Circassian diaspora touched upon some topics that went against Moscow's wishes. Specifically, Moscow did not want to send any signals that it was ready to accept refugees from Syria, Circassians included. Because of this, pressure may have begun to be exerted over Kanokov from Moscow (Dzutsati 2013). Other than this supposed incident, no conflict over international relations was fought overtly between Nalchik and Moscow.

The thematic scope of KBR's paradiplomacy is wide although some features are more prominent than others. As *Figure 12* shows, the evolution between the start of 2010 and the end of 2013 points to the growth in economic relations over other types of agendas pursued abroad. Although many meetings are coded as economic, many of these also featured some other agenda items, even though the economic driver predominated. For instance, the 23 May 2012 visit of an Abkhaz delegation had a primarily economic agenda although it also included items regarding culture. Second to economic engagements were diaspora meetings, which increased in 2012 but dropped to zero meetings in 2013. Many of the 2012 meetings were the result of Nalchik's collaboration with Russo-trudnichestvo on diaspora matters, and they were driven in part by the conflict in Syria. Finally, some of the agendas categorised under 'Other' include symbolic visits and religious paradiplomacy, none of which repeated as many times in the dataset as either economic or diaspora relations.

The ministries analysed here, the Ministry of Economic Development and the Ministry of Mass Media (and their respective successors) had different levels of intensity in top-level meetings with foreign counterparts. The Ministry of Economic Development had five meetings in 2012 and one in 2013, while the Ministry of Mass Media under Pashtov had two in 2010, two in 2011 and one in 2012, and under Kumakov had seven. Few of these meetings happened with Kanokov as head of the KBR side. Most of the meetings of Pashtov and Kumakov were with diaspora counterparts and of Musukov were always meetings with an economic agenda, and with business people and government officials as counterparts. For Pashtov and Kumakov, the meetings recorded were primarily with those countries with KBR diasporas, such as Kazakhstan, Turkey and Jordan, although engagements with Abkhazia also grew in number under Kumakov. Musukov had counterparts from Abkhazia, Canada, India, Italy and the United Kingdom, with the diaspora element not playing a role in any of these meetings.

The two main 'tracks' of KBR's paradiplomacy in the early 2010s were thus diaspora engagement and economic relations. These two featured constantly in the dataset, with at least one meeting of Kanokov with a diaspora representative every year except for 2013. In that year however, the Ministry of Mass Media met with the diaspora three times. Just as these two tracks continued throughout the dataset, so did the geographic scope of KBR's external action; Europe was a privileged partner in economic affairs whilst the Middle East – particularly Jordan, Syria, and Turkey – was the focus of diaspora engagements.

Short-term context: diaspora engagement and its limits. The increase in conflict intensity in the late 2000s and early 2010s affected all areas of KBR's policy-making. It galvanised federal support for heavy-handed security policies and eventually prompted the federal authorities to seek the resignation of Kanokov. External relations followed these processes quite closely. The aforementioned economic 'track' of KBR's paradiplomacy followed the business orientation of the 2007 Strategy and the 2011 Concept, both of which stressed the need to promote KBR internationally to improve its investment

attraction. Engagements with Europe and the 2009 agreement with Azerbaijan can be seen as belonging to Nalchik's economic paradiplomacy. In turn, these economic engagements can be seen as proceeding within the view – endorsed by the Kremlin – that economic development is an instrument of extremism prevention. The relevance of conflict-related violence in KBR for the republic's diaspora paradiplomacy was rendered evident over Moscow's concerns about Syria and refugee attraction. Indeed, diaspora paradiplomacy featured the most active collaborative paradiplomacy; to increase the intensity of exchanges with the diaspora, by the end of 2011 the KBR government sought greater coopera-tion with Russotrudnichestvo, establishing mechanisms of cooperation with them (Official website KBR 2011). For the federal authorities, Nalchik's diaspora engagements were valuable for Nalchik sought to create a pro-Russian lobby at the Circassian international organisations as mentioned above. In addition, diaspora relations also assisted KBR's economic goals by improving the republic's image abroad, as the Minister of Economic Development acknowledged (KBR Pravda 2012d). Certain changes in circumstances also facilitated diaspora exchanges, such as the 2011 removal of visa requirements for Russian citizens to visit Turkey as the KBR Ministry of Economic Develop-ment acknowledged (KBR Pravda 2011a). As mentioned above, the civil war in Syria prompted a renewed interest in Nalchik for diaspora engagement but was curtailed by Moscow over concerns of attracting refugees to Russia. It can be assumed that in Moscow's perspective, exchanges with Syria and the Circassian diaspora in the Middle East exposed the North Caucasus to further contacts with emerging terrorist networks. The emergence of this discontent appeared in late 2012 and correlated with the aforementioned changes in regulations for KBR's external relations that codified Moscow's oversight over them. It also correlates with the drop in diaspora engagements by Kanokov, the late 2013 declaration that Nalchik would focus more on the KBR diaspora inside Russia and that Syria no longer featured in the dataset after 2012.

Long-term context: diaspora and internationalisation. The break in diaspora engagements in late 2012 points to two long-term conflicting trends in KBR's paradiplomacy, between internationalisation and security junctures. On the one hand, Nalchik has few robust vectors of international engagement, so the numerous Circassian diaspora in Turkey and beyond has been a recurrent feature in the republic's paradiplomacy. On the other hand, Moscow has regarded refugees from Syria as a risk, i.e. of extremism promotion inside Russia (e.g. Shamiev 2018). As discussed above, federal authorities have changed their view on KBR from a stable point in the North Caucasus to another vulnerable republic in the region, so returnees would exacerbate the risks there.

As described in chapter three, the creation of KBR involved a long process of declining Kabard hegemony over the central Caucasus. As Russia asserted its authority over the region and the long Caucasus war destroyed Kabarda, the legacies of a one-time autonomous kingdom remained in the imagination of the local population. With the rise of modern nation-states and nationalism,

Circassian nationalism proved a powerful mobilising force in the North Caucasus and in the diaspora. The post-Soviet trajectory of KBR's politics has been one of containing the centrifugal forces of secessionism (with separatism playing no role) and of continuous Kabard (Circassian) hegemony over KBR's politics. In this context, the republic's leadership has leaned on diaspora communities – primarily Circassian ones but occasionally also Balkar – to gain an international presence. As mentioned above, Circassian nationalism plays a critical role in informing and pressuring Nalchik's policies and diaspora engagement. The diaspora was a crucial bottom-up issue for the perestroika-era national movements and remains a crucial issue for the KBR government today. During the 1990s, Jordanian, Turkish and US citizens of Circassian background reconnected with the 'homeland' in the North Caucasus, with a few relocating to Adygea, KBR and Karachay-Cherkessia. During those years, these 'repatriates' were a key facilitator for the region's internationalisation as they opened transnational enterprises and import-export companies (Shami 1998). With time, however, nationalism was co-opted – as described above – to cement the hegemony of the KBR executive. Nowhere is the taming of nationalist forces more visible than in Nalchik's engagements with Abkhazia. Solidarity with Abkhazia has been a repeated feature of KBR's external action since 1991. In fact, Nalchik has stood out for the degree of overt moves around in the 1992 conflict. In that year, Kokov dispatched medical aid allowing Kabard volunteers to join the fight, albeit he also prohibited the use of KBR's territory for the formation of detachments (Orttung, Lussier, & Paretskaya 2000, 163–164). Since then, engagements with Abkhazia continued, albeit within the trend of a depoliticisation of North Caucasus paradiplomacy. For instance, in May 2010 the KBR parliament signed the republic's first inter-parliamentary agreement, namely, with Abkhazia's 'parliament'. In comparison, South Ossetia would also receive declarations of friendship from Nalchik, albeit not with the same frequency as Abkhazia (Official website KBR 2010a). Federal authorities have supported diaspora engagement – such as through Russotrudnichestvo as described above – and engagement with the *de facto* states but limits were also clear.

Whilst diaspora engagement anchors KBR's paradiplomacy to the Middle East and Turkey, new patterns of territorialisation evince themselves through trade statistics. Extractive industries were an early post-Soviet vector of internationalisation, as Swedish and US companies expressed their interests in the republic's minerals (Kosikov & Kosikova 1999, 129). In 1998, the main trade partners of KBR were, in order of trade share, Ukraine, Turkey, the Netherlands and Germany, with Western countries taking all together about half of KBR's trade at the time (Kosikov & Kosikova 1999, 129; Orttung, Lussier, & Paretskaya 2000, 164). This trend persisted into the 2010s, further diminishing the weight of the CIS in KBR's trade. In 2012, the largest CIS trade partner of KBR was Ukraine with only four per cent of imports coming from that country (KBR Pravda 2012d). Kanokov pursued policies for economic development whilst decreasing the dependency on federal transfers from over

60 per cent to less than 50 (RFERL 2010; Wilhelmsen 2019, 43). Part of this strategy involved the active promotion of trade through paradiplomacy. Unlike all the other North Caucasus federal subjects, it was two EU member states that consistently were KBR's largest trade partners, namely, Germany and Italy (Babayan 2016, 11). This trade was not passively built but actively fostered by Nalchik; in 2012, the French and Italian ambassadors visited the republic and every year there would be a KBR stand at the Berlin 'Green Week' agro-fair and at Cannes (Official website KBR 2010). Engagements with China have primarily taken place at the level of trade and investment, albeit inconsistently throughout the 2010–2013 years (Babayan 2016, 7, 11).

Does Violence Lead Central Governments to Impose Red Lines in Paradiplomacy?

In the late 2000s, violent conflict in the KBR transformed the republic in the eyes of Moscow from a peaceful safezone to the forefront of the fight against *Imrat Kavkaz*. Whilst never attaining similar levels of conflict-related casualties as Dagestan or Ingushetia, in KBR *Imrat Kavkaz* found support and managed to establish itself durably. The response of the authorities mirrored that of other republics, namely, a combination of development and repression. Development in particular propelled Nalchik's engagements abroad, with the clear dominance of an economic agenda abroad. To maximise its external projection, to assist the development strategy and to cement Kanokov's grip on power, Nalchik chose to engage the Circassian diaspora, usually with a cultural and economic agenda at hand. These engagements were encouraged and supported by Moscow, especially through Russotrudnichestvo. However, evidence points to Moscow taking back its support and placing Nalchik's diaspora paradiplomacy under closer monitoring since late 2012. Moscow's ultimate opposition to Nalchik's diaspora policy points to the enduring tensions between KBR's strategy of leaning on the numerous Circassian diaspora to have an international presence and Moscow's perception that refugees from Syria are dangerous. The result was a change in paradiplomacy (*Figure 13*): Kanokov diminished its engagements with the diaspora in 2013, with these continuing only at the ministerial level. It is possible to speculate that were North Caucasus conflict intensity levels not as high, Moscow would be more lenient about Nalchik's repatriation policy.
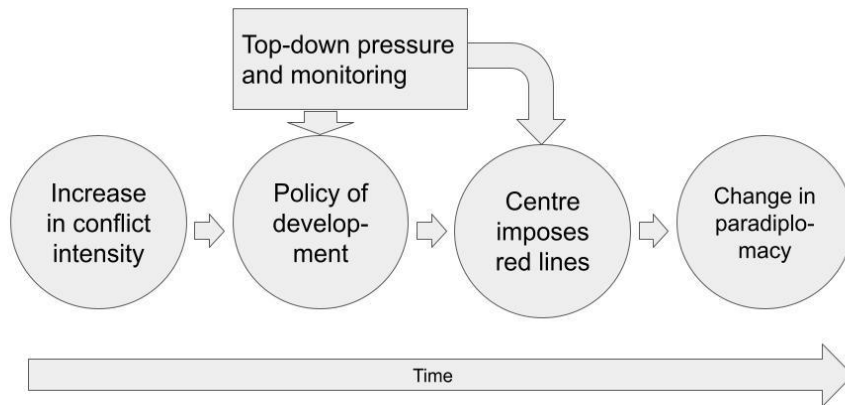
Figure 13. How the increase of conflict-related violence and conflict intensity in 2010 to 2013 connects to KBR's external relations.

This change in paradiplomacy reflects short-term and long-term trends in KBR's paradiplomacy. First, Moscow's change of attitude in late 2012 evinced the enduring concerns about extremism proliferating in KBR and throughout the North Caucasus. As Kanokov sought to 'repatriate' Circassians from Syria, Moscow found this policy unacceptable on security grounds, so Moscow demanded change in Nalchik's paradiplomacy. In addition, Moscow also placed the republic's paradiplomacy under closer scrutiny as the 2013 legal changes evinced. Second, the change in paradiplomacy hinted at a deconcentration of paradiplomacy activities from the Head of the Republic to the ministries, with the latter acquiring a larger involvement in meeting foreign parties than before. Third, all KBR leaders have consolidated their regimes by marshalling Circassian nationalism to their favour. Engaging the Circassian diaspora was a way to further that agenda. This strategy was approved and even fostered by Moscow. However, engaging the Syrian Circassian diaspora for 'repatriation' crossed a line for Moscow as it perceived those efforts as undermining its security policy in the North Caucasus. Finally, projecting these changes in a longer context, the role of KBR's geopolitical situation becomes more tangible. As described in chapter three, Kabard and Balkars coexisted before and after Russia's colonial rule but Kabard hegemony was prevalent throughout. Coexistence prevented acrimony from becoming violent but did not reduce the lack of a Balkar authority capable of checking the Kabard-dominated executive. This dynamic was especially tangible during Kanokov's tenure with con-sequences for the republic's external relations.

CHAPTER 7
Conflict and North Ossetia's International Relations 2010–2013

As described in chapter three, North Ossetia's international relations have been closely connected to the evolution of the larger polities to which it has belonged. Like the other cases in this thesis, the different supra-national polities offered different opportunities for North Ossetian polities to engage foreign partners. However, specific to North Ossetia's case has been its relationship with the separatist entity of South Ossetia, a feature of Caucasus politics that acquired a clear international dimension in 1991 for the first time in centuries. During the 1990s, this engagement settled on the basis of the Sochi agreements that followed the 1990–1992 war in Georgia. The 2000s featured the deterioration of relations between Tskhinvali and Tbilisi, and Russia and Georgia, culminating in the 2008 war. While the rest of the North Caucasus was gripped by the wave of conflict-related violence of the late 2000 and early 2010 years, North Ossetia did not witness similar levels of conflict intensity in its territory. In fact, other than the deadly 2010 Vladikavkaz bombing, North Ossetia had seldom any conflict-related casualties during the 2010–2013 period. As mentioned in the methodology, this renders North Ossetia into a potentially revealing control case of a region in many ways similar to Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria but with a lower level of conflict intensity in the period analysed. Thus, the transformations of its paradiplomacy (or lack thereof) will be useful to better understand the impact of violent conflict in a region's international relations.

This chapter will briefly outline the difficulties that the *Imrat Kavkaz* insurgency found in North Ossetia. I follow this with the analysis of the internal frameworks of North Ossetia's external relations, namely, the legal, political and institutional settings that shape its paradiplomacy. Next, I briefly sketch North Ossetia's geopolitical DNA, of which the most notable feature is its relationship with South Ossetia. The larger portion of that section will describe the performance of North Ossetia's external relations in the early 2010s as measured by meetings by top-level officials with foreign partners. Finally, I place these developments in the broader contexts – short and long term – where these foreign engagements take place. As a conclusion, I point to the relative anaemic character of Vladikavkaz's external relations in the 2010s, and how it coincided with a low level of conflict intensity.

The Conflict in North Ossetia 2010–2013

The 2004 Beslan massacre shocked Russia and the world for its high casualties and cruelty. The attack's impact was further amplified by the contrast with the relative calm of North Ossetia in previous years. While Dagestan, Ingushetia

and Kabardino-Balkaria had worsening conflict dynamics through the 2010s, North Ossetia saw diminishing casualties from conflict-related violence. A deadly car bombing in 2010 was the last terrorist attack carried out in North Ossetia as of writing (Foltz 2022, ix). Reflecting the relative calm was the low level of conflict-related casualties recorded for the 2010–2013 period (*Figure 14*).
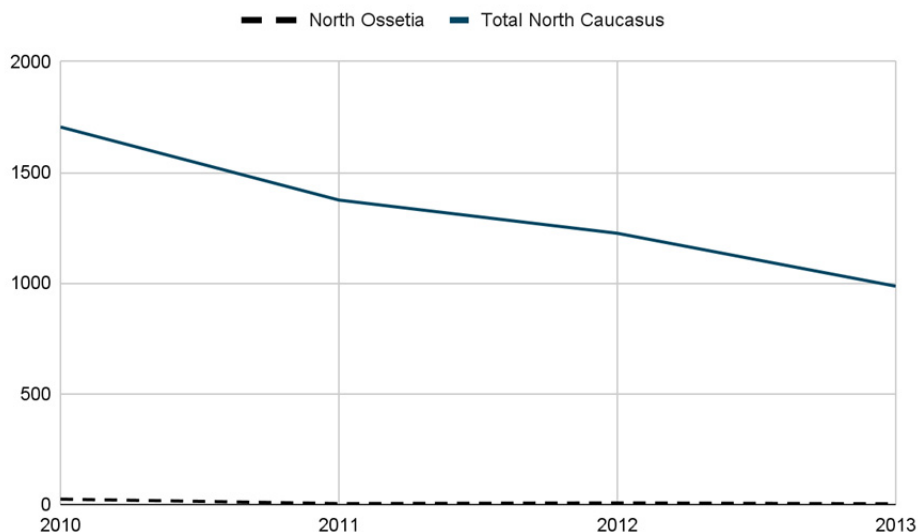
Figure 14. Conflict-related deaths in North Ossetia and the North Caucasus total (North Caucasus: Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, North Ossetia-Alania and Stavropol). Source: Caucasian Knot.

By 2013, tensions remained high in North Ossetia, with counter-terrorism operations taking place throughout that year but with no conflict-related casualties reported (IWPR 2013). Because of this relative stability, North Ossetia has been seldom contemplated in comparative analyses of the region's insurgency (e.g. Sagramoso 2007). Part of the reason is that there is insufficient scope in the data to clearly delineate branches of *Imrat Kavkaz* outside of Chechnya in general and North Ossetia in particular. There, the insurgency was at its most active in the 2000s, although the number of attacks and local support never reached the scale of neighbouring Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria. This is not to say that North Ossetia was not targeted by the *Imrat Kavkaz* group. In fact, several attacks took place in the republic between 2008 and late 2010, prompting protests demanding improved security in the region (RFE/RL 2010). Indeed, in spite of the republic's Christian majority, *Imrat Kavkaz* contemplated North Ossetia as part of their 'caliphate' (Youngman 2019, 80). However, by late 2008, the activities of the affiliated militants in North Ossetia

did not achieve the goals sought by Doku Umarov. In May 2009 he dismantled the North Ossetia 'province' of the 'Caucasus Emirate' and 'incorporated' its territory to that of Ingushetia (Souleimanov 2011; Heaney 2013, 183). It could be said, then, that the North Ossetian insurgency disappeared by 2010, when conflict-related deaths were 24, with no subsequent year having death numbers reach the two digits. In sum, in spite of the Vladikavkaz bombing, the 2010s would begin with a steep decline in the local insurgency.

The decline notwithstanding, it is worthwhile to explore what were the dividers and drivers in the 2000s, for their understanding to an extent informed Vladikavkaz in its policy choices in the 2010s. From the standpoint of the insurgency, the dividing issue remained – like in other North Caucasus regions – the role of Islam in society. This is a dividing issue that overlaps with religious (Christians and Muslims) and ethnic divides (Ossetians and Ingush). What is particular to North Ossetia are the drivers, all located in the republic's political and social dynamics. Local grievances fueled the attacks that took place in the 2000s. The long-standing Ingush-Ossetian conflict over Prigorodny (see Ingushetia chapter) has been regarded by some as a driver for ethnic Ingush to carry out attacks as part of the *Imrat Kavkaz* group (Koybayev, Bagayeva, Zoloyeva 2019, 75; Foltz 2022, 49). Indeed, for North Ossetia, the outcome of the 1990 Georgian civil war and the 1992 Ossetia-Ingushetia clashes was the movement of tens of thousands of refugees and internally displaced people. This, in turn, stressed the republic's resources and housing stock, with the Prigorodny Ingush caught between Ingushetia and North Ossetia, and marginalised in the latter (Matveeva & Savin 2012, 26). The masterminds of the 2010 attack aimed at stoking inter-ethnic conflict in North Ossetia, and indeed incidents of violent retribution did happen between Ossetians and Ingush (Dzutsev 2011, 44; on the 2004 attack and the relative lack of violent retribution in its aftermath, see Javeline & Baird 2011). This complex ethnopolitical situation contributed greatly to the violence of the late 2000s. Other scholars have highlighted other factors as well. Some Russia-based analysts have pointed to the complex origins of militant activity in North Ossetia. For instance, Koybayev, Bagayeva and Zoloyeva (2019, 65–7), point to a variety of causes, including the adverse ethnopolitical circumstances described above, religious division and unemployment. Even though they incorporate several explanations, they still point to economic factors as the key drivers of extremism in North Ossetia (i.e. poverty and unemployment lead individuals to extremism). Finally, by 2012, popular perceptions on terrorism changed, from North Ossetians blaming the Ingush to blaming 'Muslims' (Matveeva & Savin 2012, 23).

The legacies of state formation of North Ossetia have been at play in shaping the Ossetian-Ingush conflict. Notably, the demarcation of the Vladikavkaz area and the possession of Vladikavkaz itself have been dividing issues for both populations. The tsarist and later Soviet administrations changed the boundaries of the region, shuffling the distribution of land and authority in each step. Yet, these legacies were not directly contemplated by the Vladikavkaz authorities in the early twenty first century. Even though economic explanations were

predominant among state authorities, in the North Ossetian case there was an understanding of the centrality of the Ingush-Ossetian conflict as a source of instability, exploited by extremists. So, in the early 2010s, federal authorities focused not on political solutions but on economic and peacebuilding measures. One of these federal programmes – in place since 2012 – targets job creation in Prigorodny and is implemented by both Magas and Vladikavkaz. An additional peacebuilding programme – implemented in 2011 – targets interethnic relations specifically (Matveeva & Savin 2012, 35). In this sense, economic development was as much a priority for North Ossetia's stability as was the resolution of the Ingush-Ossetian conflict. This policy line can be seen reflected in Vladikavkaz's external relations.

North Ossetia's International Institutions

Legal frameworks

The constitution of North Ossetia was adopted in 1994 and had major amendments made in 2000, twice in 2002, 2004 and 2005, and only a handful of smaller changes since then (Constitutsia 2021). The 1994 Constitution, like other such documents in the North Caucasus, established a large scope for self-rule and government, both on the premise of North Ossetia being a sovereign state (*gosudarstvo*) voluntarily joining the Russian Federation while remaining a participant in international relations as Article 61 stated (Constitutsia 1994). However, in line with the centralising trends in the Russian Federation since 2000, the North Ossetian constitution would define its international relations differently. By 2010, articles 61 and 80 would change the allusion to international relations (*otnosheniya*) to international connections (*svyazi*), and the reference to sovereignty in the former was omitted (Constitutsia 2021).

Additional laws have further elaborated the normative grounds of North Ossetia's participation in international affairs. A May 2007 decree established that the exclusive responsibility for the republic's external relations is the Head of the Republic. Then, the law sets out the procedures for North Ossetia's official international relations, such as the yearly recounts of activities, planning of visits abroad, among others. An important element of the 2007 decree is that it establishes the mechanisms for the federal government to monitor North Ossetia's international engagements. Namely, Vladikavkaz must notify the FSB and the federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of any meeting between the Head of the Republic with foreign delegations or any visits abroad, or any other official visits or receptions involving foreign parties. The same applies to the republican organs of North Ossetia (Ukaz 2007). An April 2012 law further specified the authority of the Head of the Republic, the Parliament and government for carrying out international engagements (Zakon 2012). Neither document mentions specific ministries as essential or instrumental for North Ossetia's international relations, although the 2012 law does specify a supporting role for

the government in relation to the republic's external relations. Both the 2007 decree and the 2012 law are mentioned as part of the legal basis for strategic documents such as the 2012 economic development strategy (see further below). Finally, the 2000 law 'Investment activity in the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania'[67] established the grounds for foreign companies to invest in North Ossetia (Zakon 2000), which in turn served as the basis for the future investment-attraction initiatives and strategies described below. In sum, the 2010–2013 period did not witness major changes in the republic's legal frameworks as no external relations authority was distributed or restricted.

Political frameworks

In September 2006, Mamsurov set out an Order to commission a new development strategy for North Ossetia (Order 2006). The new strategy was adopted in 2008 but would be quickly reworked, as in 2010 Mamsurov won re-election and Medvedev set out a new programme for the development of the North Caucasus. This latter one would become the framework for a re-worked development strategy adopted in December 2012 (Zakon 2008; Order 2010; Strategy 2012). The 2008 version and the 2012 version of the Strategy informed many of the policy choices that made up North Ossetia's paradiplomacy in the early 2010s.

Both versions had the same name, 'Strategy of socio-economic development of the Republic of North Ossetia – Alania' although each had different timeframes[68]. The 2008 Strategy points to North Ossetia's geopolitical location, its access to the South Caucasus and its relative stability as potential facilitators for the republic's development. The 2008 Strategy does not make improving public safety an urgent element for security. The 2012 Strategy does single out insecurity as a weakness in the strategic tourism sector, and the general insecurity in the North Caucasus as a negative factor for North Ossetia's reputation. In both cases, the lack of means to co-finance investment in the republic was seen as the more important reason for the lack of competitiveness of North Ossetia in attracting domestic and foreign investment. The key difference regarding paradiplomacy, however, is the comprehensive analysis that the 2012 Strategy offers of North Ossetia's international relations, described below. Trade and investment are the two main priorities abroad for North Ossetia, the 2012 Strategy argues. The document singles out several countries as relatively more important for North Ossetia in general, namely, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, 'South Ossetia' and Ukraine. (These countries, together with Belarus and Kazakhstan, are also emphasised as priority in the 2011 Concept, see below.) South Ossetia in particular is mentioned as being a strategic partner, with an acknowledgement of the common cultural roots as a

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[67]   *Ob investitsionnoy deyatelnosti v Respublike Severnaja Osetiya-Alaniya.*
[68]   2008: *Strategiya sotsialno-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya Respubliki Severnaya Osetija - Alaniya do 2030 goda*; 2012: *Strategiya sotsialno-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya Respubliki Severnaya Osetiya – Alaniya do 2025 goda.*

driving factor of the relationship. However, according to the text, the South Ossetia connection is strategic also because of the essential transport corridors that run through Tskhinvali that unite North Ossetia with the South Caucasus. Regarding means, the 2012 Strategy mentions the need for Vladikavkaz to collaborate more closely with federal institutions concerned with implementing foreign policy. City twinning agreements are also mentioned as a potential instrument for North Ossetia's foreign engagements, notably with Ukrainian cities. The document mentions that, in spite of several high-level meetings with non-CIS countries, North Ossetia has close relations with none of them. Finally, obstacles include North Ossetia's high dependence on Russia's overall federal budget and the budget's dependence on energy prices. Security and violence do not feature as especially threatening for the region's development. It is thus through foreign investment and trade that the international dimension plays a role in the 2012 Strategy.

In spite of the extensive attention dedicated to external relations in the 2012 Strategy, North Ossetia did not have a strategy document specifically dedicated to paradiplomacy. It did have however an external relations 'concept', decreed by Mamsurov on 21 October 2011. The concept, titled 'Concept of foreign economic activity of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania',[69] was established in the framework of the 2008 Strategy. The 2011 Concept was framed as the policy line in external economic relations for the entire republic, and it was given to the Ministry of Economic Development to handle. Its main priorities were the attraction of foreign capital and technology, as well as improving the republic's image for investors. The 2011 Concept mentions several positive and negative factors for North Ossetia's external economic relations. Among the positives, there is the location of the republic, and among the negative, the instability of the broader region and the small size of the republic's external action are mentioned. Other than selected CIS countries (see above), Western Europe and Turkey were placed as priorities, too. Finally, South Ossetia receives an entire sub-section of the Concept. This portion of the text mentions the development of trade, joint investment and facilitation of migration procedures as their objectives. The objectives described are the signature of agreements between Vladikavkaz and Tskhinvali to facilitate cooperation and exchanges (Concept 2011).

North Ossetian paradiplomacy institutions

The Head of the Republic. The 1994 version of the Constitution rendered the international representation part of the authority of the President of the Republic in Article 80 (Constitutsia 1994). In spite of the centralising trends that began in the year 2000, the authority of the head of the executive – since 2005 renamed 'Head of the Republic' – in international engagements remained the same

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[69] *Konceptsiyu vneshnejekonomicheskoy deyatelnosti Respubliki Severnaya Osetiya-Alaniya.*

(Constitutsia 2021). As no other republican organ is assigned the constitutional authority to represent North Ossetia abroad, the Head of the Republic remains the essential paradiplomacy institution in the republic. Unlike other North Caucasus constitutions, North Ossetia's does not specify what are the precise functions of the Head of the Republic concerning paradiplomacy, only emphasising the representational authority in international connections and external economic relations (Constitutsia 2021). The first President of North Ossetia was Akhsarbek Galazov (1994–1998), followed by Alexander Dzasokhov (1998–2005). His successor, Taymuraz Mamsurov (2005–2015), would be the first governor to have the 'Head of the Republic' title. He was followed by Tamerlan Aguzarov (2015–2016), Vyacheslav Bitarov (2016–2021) and Sergey Menyaylo (2021-to date).

The key issue for the North Ossetian executive during the 1990s and 2000s was the management of the conflict with Ingushetia over the Prigorodny district. Well after the 1992 clashes, North Ossetian politics would be shaped by the challenge of managing large numbers of displaced people, the attempts by displaced Ingush to return to Prigorodny and negotiating with the federal centre for a solution that settles the conflict with the disputed district remaining in North Ossetia's territory. In practice, this has meant managing claims by Ingush authorities and activists, unfavourable proposals (from Vladikavkaz's perspective) by the federal centre and local constituencies that demand Prigorodny to remain North Ossetian (Orttung, Lussier & Paretskaya, 2000, 375; Heaney 2013, 183). The response to these challenges in the 2000s and early 2010s by the North Ossetian leadershid involved putting pressure on the republic's minority Muslim population. Although the measure did not result in a crackdown comparable with that in other republics, it did produce instances where practicing Muslims – especially those of 'non-traditional' forms of Islam – have been identified as extremists (IWPR 2005; Souleimanov 2011). Crucial, however, was for North Ossetian leadership to emphasise their loyalty to Moscow in hopes to gain the favour of federal authorities in their dispute with Ingushetia (Dzutsati 2017). This approach, together with the change to a system of appointed governors, increased Vladikavkaz's dependence on federal authorities to govern. In turn, this dependence has resulted in – among other things – weak institutional accountability as voters have had little say in the appointment system. For instance, no governmental official renounced or was dismissed following any one of the terrorist attacks that took place in the republic since 1991, including the 2004 and 2010 incidents (Dzutsev 2011, 44). Moscow has regarded North Ossetia as a reliable region for anchoring some of its North Caucasus policies, so Moscow supports those governors it sees as most fit to ensure the stability of the region.

As mentioned above, the Head of the Republic has a leading position in managing the republic's international relations. As demonstrated by the experience of the subsequent North Ossetian governors, this position includes setting goals, means and coordinating the republican government to carry out external relations. For instance, the second President of North Ossetia was an

active player in external relations, particularly regarding the South Ossetia conflict (see below). This would continue under Mamsurov. For instance, it was his initiative to create in 2012 an inter-ministerial team (*shtab*) for handling relations with the Ossetian diaspora in Syria (RFE/RL 2012). The coordinating and initiating roles of Mamsurov illustrate the centrality of the Head of the Republic in shaping North Ossetia's paradiplomacy, and the authority of the office to mobilise resources towards external relations objectives. Furthermore, the Head of the Republic gained additional scope to carry out international relations by being appointed as special Russian representative in South Ossetia, which in turn increased the intensity of exchanges with South Ossetia as shown below. Finally, during the period analysed, the Head of the Republic was the most stable paradiplomacy institution as the ministries concerned with foreign engagements were restructured several times and had many changes in leadership.[70]

Ministry of Social and External Relations and Minnats. During the 1990s and the 2000s, the Ministry of Nationalities of North Ossetia played a crucial role in the republic's paradiplomacy. For a few years back then, its title even included 'external relations' and had the task of carrying out (*osushhestvlyaet*) the external relations of North Ossetia with foreign partners and the diaspora (Postanovlenie 1995). This ministry was headed by Taymuraz Kazayev from 2004 until 2010. In that year, shortly after Mamsurov's April 2010 election for a third term, a June 2010 decree reshuffled North Ossetia's ministries, including those concerned with paradiplomacy. The decree created the Ministry of Social and External Relations of North Ossetia, meant to succeed the Ministry of Nationalities (Ukaz 2010). In December 2010, Murat Tkhostov was appointed as Minister of Social and External Relations (Postanovlenie 2010a). This ministry was then abolished by a May 2012 decree, with its functions transferred to a new Ministry of Issues of Nationalities[71], or Minnats for short (Ukaz 2012a). The new North Ossetian Minnats had a reduced focus for external relations, contemplating only diaspora relations and relations with South Ossetia (Polozhenie 2012). The new Minnats was headed by Soslan Frayev (Severnaya Osetia 2012a).

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[70] According to the aforementioned 2012 Strategy, North Ossetia's paradiplomacy is produced by several institutions of the republic, many of which are not addressed in this chapter. These are, namely: 'Ministry of Economic Development of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, Ministry of Public and External Relations of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, Department of the Federal Tax Service of the Russian Federation for the Republic North Ossetia – Alania, North Ossetian customs, Trade and economic representation at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of North Ossetia – Alania to the President of the Russian Federation, Representation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in Vladikavkaz, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of North Ossetia – Alania, Office of the Federal Migration Service in the Republic of North Ossetia – Alania'.

[71] *Ministerstvo Respubliki Severnaya Osetiya-Alaniya po voprosam natsionalnykh otnosheniy.*

Ministry of Economic Development. Originally titled the Ministry of Economy, it changed in 2011 to the Ministry of Economic Development. The Ministry of Economic Development was created by decree in August 2010 and it had among its tasks and functions matters relating to external economic relations (Postanovlenie 2010b). In spite of these changes, the authority of the ministry in external economic matters was confirmed by a 2010 decree that confirmed the authority of the ministry in the topic (Ukaz 2010). Zaur Kuchiyev was the Minister of Economic Development at the start of 2010 and in May 2012 was replaced by Madina Ikayeva. As mentioned above, this ministry has been singled out as the essential channel for North Ossetia's external economic relations, and sometimes even has been referred to as the foremost institution managing North Ossetia's external engagements (Severnaya Osetia 2012). Due to its scope, the ministry's external action is primarily concerned with investment attraction. This ministry has had a department dedicated to external economic relations, even to this day (Ministerstvo n.d.).

Long-term North Ossetian operations abroad

The two main instruments for regular contact between Russian regions and foreign partners – agreements and representations – are almost entirely absent in North Ossetia's case. North Ossetia has a representation in South Ossetia (see below) but no formal agreements with Tskhinvali. In general, Vladikavkaz had no agreements signed with foreign partners by the end of 2012 (Strategy 2012). The 2011 Concept does call for the government to sign such agreements to facilitate trade and investment (Concept 2011, 16). Like other federal subjects, North Ossetia's representation in Moscow has assisted the republic's contacts with foreign partners. In fact, that representation played a role in facilitating the visit to North Ossetia of a Hungarian delegation in 2009 and a French delegation in 2010. Nevertheless, North Ossetia stands out for its lack of long-term commitments to external relations, other than South Ossetia. Indeed, Vladikavkaz was involved in an international treaty from 1992 on, namely, the post-conflict Dagomys agreements (later called the Sochi agreements) that made Vladikavkaz an active participant in managing and seeking a resolution of the South Ossetia conflict (Toal 2017, 135). Instead of being a bystander, constrained by its status as a sub-state government, North Ossetia's close links to South Ossetia were acknowledged as Vladikavkaz was made a party of these agreements. In this context, Vladikavkaz has an active presence in South Ossetia. According to the 2006 decree opening the North Ossetia Tskhinvali representation, the opening was framed as taking place in the framework of a 2000 agreement between Russia and Georgia on the recovery of the economy of the region. The representation answered to the North Ossetian Minnats. The representative of North Ossetia was Gerasim Khugayev (Postanovlenie 2006).

North Ossetia's International Relations 2010–2013: Trends and Themes

Quantitative and qualitative analysis

North Ossetia's geopolitical DNA in the post-Soviet period is intimately connected to the conflict just south of the Russian border and to the conflict over the Prigorodny district. Moveover, since the rise of religious extremism in the North Caucasus, North Ossetia has indeed been connected to broader, international dynamics of global terrorism (O'Loughlin, Tuathail & Kolossov, 2008).[72] In spite of this, the loyalty and stability of the region have made North Ossetia a favoured government for Moscow in the North Caucasus, enough to locate strategic military assets in its territory, such as those deployed in the wars with Chechnya. In addition, North Ossetia's otherwise isolated location has benefited from the routes that cross its territory and connect the Russian Federation with the South Caucasus, a trend visible since the building of the transcaucasus roads in the Tsarist era. Finally, North Ossetia and its authorities have fostered a narrative of being Russia's 'outpost' in the Caucasus region in an attempt to retain Moscow's commitment to North Ossetia's security and development (Matveeva & Savin 2012, 32).

Table 14. The 'geopolitical DNA' of North Ossetia. Italics: features that distinguish North Ossetia from Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria and Ingushetia. Table based on Duran (2015, 132).

	Regional	**National**	**International**
Economy & Politics	Moscow-oriented elites, *relative stability*	Federal framework, North Caucasus Federal District, *Prigorodny conflict, 'Russia's outpost'*	Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), *South Ossetia conflict*
Geography	Mountainous, border	Periphery, *strategic federal assets*	Periphery *but connected to South Caucasus*
Culture & History	*One core nationality and minorities*	*Incorporation through diplomacy*	Diaspora

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[72] Yet, it is important to point out that many actors and observers of the South Ossetia conflict have insisted on this dimension having a 'global' scale, namely, to be part of a broader confrontation between Russia and NATO, democracy and autocracy, and similar dramatisations (Toal 2017).

The intensity of North Ossetia's paradiplomacy resembles that of the federation overall, with declining intensity and an overall downwards trend. There were 16 meetings between January 2010 and December 2013. As *Figure 15* shows, its intensity had a peak in 2011 before returning to previous levels the next year, with two meetings in 2010, two in 2013 and four meetings per year on average. These numbers are close to those of the federation, with three meetings in average for 2010 and two and a half for 2013 (Stremoukhov 2021). Only the overall average of four meetings per year between January 2010 and December 2013 skews North Ossetia's meeting number above the yearly average for the same period of, namely, two and three quarters.
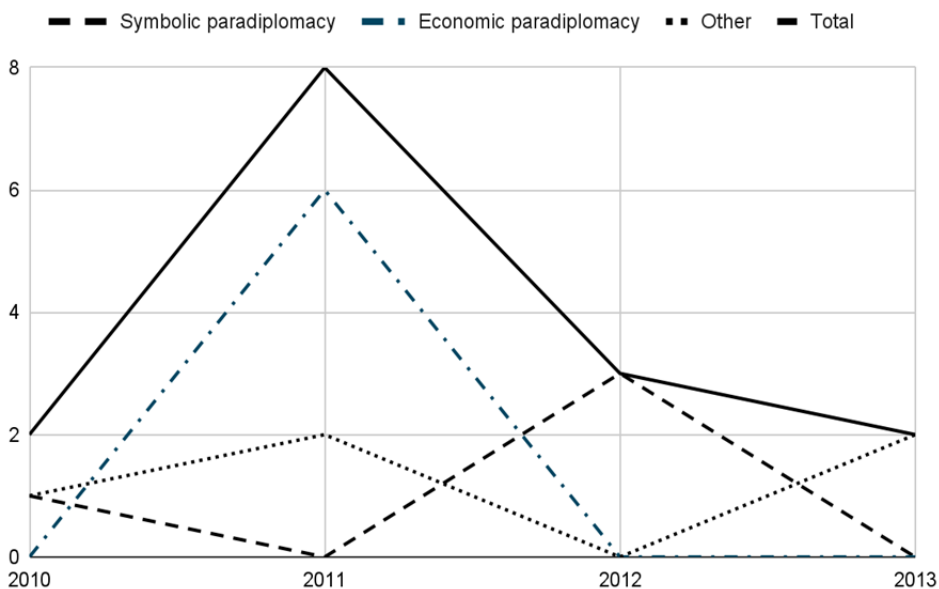
Figure 15. Visits and meetings with foreign partners by the Head of North Ossetia, 2010–2013. Source: dataset.

Collaborative paradiplomacy has been a central feature of North Ossetia's paradiplomacy. Three of the five meetings recorded with South Ossetia, namely in 2011, 2012 and 2013, had Mamsurov visit the region as part of a larger federal delegation. An additional three meetings took place in 2011 – all with Azerbaijan – and can be seen as belonging to the broader effort by the federal authorities to connect certain North Caucasus republics to Azerbaijan. Of these three visits, one was the time Mamsurov joined a delegation to Baku headed by Medvedev, and an additional one was a follow-up to the Baku visit. Finally, one meeting in Armenia took place in a broader Russo-Armenian business forum organised by the top authorities of both countries. In total, seven of the 16 meetings recorded in the dataset had a collaborative component with the

Russian central authorities. In other words, the pace of North Ossetia's external exchanges increased from the Russian average thanks to collaborative para-diplomacy.

No predominant objective can be observed from these 16 meetings. The two topics highlighted on *Figure 15* were chosen because they are the single two largest ones: symbolic paradiplomacy and economic relations. Symbolic paradiplomacy refers here to those meetings where any agenda was discussed in the sidelines and not as the substance of the visit itself. Of the 16 meetings, four involved Mamsurov meeting counterparts during events such as the opening of the new Russian 'embassy' in Tskhinvali or the reception of a medal from Armenia. Then, economic relations were the predominant issue in six of the 16 meetings. For instance, the aforementioned 2011 meetings with Azerbaijan had a variety of items but the economic agenda was the most prevalent. The Medvedev delegation and the follow-up meeting had business people join in each occasion. Other objectives included cross-border management, discussion on humanitarian cooperation among other agendas.

The pattern from the two selected ministries is that of playing a primarily supporting role. The Ministry of Social and External Relations and its successor, the North Ossetian Minnats, held a total of four meetings between January 2010 and December 2013. These were one meeting in 2011 and 2013, and two in 2012. Two of those meetings, those in 2012, were in collaboration with Mamsurov. The other two were, chronollogically, with the Council of Europe to discuss humanitarian cooperation and with a minister from Kuwait, to discuss Islam and extremism (Severnaya Osetia 2013a). The Ministry of Economic Development had a similar trajectory, with four meetings in the same period, two in 2011 and two in 2012. The two first ones were in collaboration with Mamsurov and the two other ones were with French and Turkish business people (the French delegation was headed by the French ambassador). Since half of the total meetings from the two selected ministries was in collaboration with the Head of the Republic, it can be said that their agenda was limited beyond the activities of Mamsurov.

Between the start of 2010 and the end of 2013, the paradiplomacy of North Ossetia demonstrated stability, with a focus on relations with the immediate Caucasus neighbourhood since the middle of 2011. Indeed, since that year, all meetings were held either with South Ossetia, Azerbaijan or Armenia. Of the 16 meetings held in total, ten were with these four counterparts. Only 2010 and the first half of 2011 feature meetings with other countries, where European countries appear the most (five out of six, the remaining one being Egypt). These engagements reflect the priority assigned to the Caucasus countries by the strategic documents mentioned above, including the 2011 Concept.

Short-term context: an anaemic Caucasus perspective. The meetings recorded and the strategy documents mentioned above all reveal that Vladi-kavkaz made the broader Caucasus region its priority in the early 2010s. However, these engagements were anaemic. By the 2010s, the conditions were in place for North Ossetian paradiplomacy to resurface from the lull produced

by the 2008 war. Yet, the data above points to a continued decline along the lines of the rest of the regions of the Russian Federation. That the mandate of the North Ossetian Minnats in external relations was confined in 2012 to relations with the diaspora and South Ossetia hints at the declining scope of North Ossetia's paradiplomacy during the 2010–2013 period. Similarly, the geographic scope of North Ossestia's international relations seldom changed in the early 2010s. Crucially, North Ossetia's connections with South Ossetia remained the focal point of its international involvement, featuring the largest share of its meetings, the location of its only foreign representation and its only recurrent dialogue partner. The broader Caucasus region features in Vladi-kavkaz's relations in rather unsubstantial ways. The prevalence of collaborative paradiplomacy points to Vladikavkaz as a facilitator and a participant in Moscow's policies, but not as an initiator. In fact, only once did North Ossetia have a meeting with a South Caucasus counterpart outside of the framework of Moscow's initiatives.[73] Tellingly, no meetings were held with Azerbaijani counterparts after the 2011 federal initiative. Collaborative paradiplomacy has a critical role. Even on a technical level, the North Ossetia branch of the federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs would help to prepare North Ossetian delegations going abroad (Severnaya Osetia 2013). There may have been an opportunity cost in sustaining this focus on the Caucasus. Whilst Turkey was North Ossetia's foremost trade partner during the early 2010s (Babayan 2016, 11), direct relations with that country were close to non-existing. Only the minister of economic development met with a Turkish delegation, once, in 2012 (Severnaya Osetia 2012b). Nevertheless, in mid 2013 the Ministry of Economic Development organised a delegation to Trabzon that resulted in the signature of an agreement between the business communities of the two regions (Severnaya Osetia 2013b). Since this visit did not include the minister of economic development, it was not included in the dataset. Other countries whose activities flourished elsewhere in the North Caucasus during this period did not fare as well in North Ossetia. China, whose activities were flourishing at the time in the North Caucasus (Babayan 2016), had no meetings during this period. A 2009 agreement for building light manufacturing in North Ossetia with Chinese capital fell through with no follow-up. Finally, diaspora relations – a frequent vector in North Caucasus paradiplomacy – were not given a high priority. High-level engagement in diaspora relations were sparse, and, as mentioned above, there have been only a few non-*ad hoc* initiatives. The 2012 Syria inter-ministerial team and the inclusion of the diaspora in the 2013–2017 Ossetic language plan were the two main institutional engagements with the diaspora during the 2010–2013 period. Among the frequent but *ad hoc* contacts there was the Higher Ossetian Council, an NGO based in North Ossetia that occa-sionally consults with the government on diaspora matters. The counterpart for these engagements was often the Ministry of Social and External Relations, but

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[73] As mentioned above, the three meetings held with Azerbaijani counterparts in 2011 were all either preparation, follow-up or the implementation of a federal agenda.

often at the level of the vice-minister (e.g. Osetinskoye Radio 2011), thus recording no meetings according to the methodology used.

Long-term context: North Ossetia in a geopolitical bind. North Ossetia's anaemic paradiplomacy in the early 2010s can be understood in the context of the broader security and geopolitical contexts this region is bound in. Economic paradiplomacy – frequently the predominant goal in paradiplomacy in the North Caucasus – has not been a crucial driver of the republic's external relations. North Ossetia's trade has been for many years oriented to non-CIS states. In 2006, CIS countries made up over 50 per cent of North Ossetia's exports and about 40 per cent of imports (Zakon 2008). In the early 2010s, Turkey was North Ossetia's first trade partner (Babayan 2016, 11) and non-CIS partners made up the majority of the republic's trade. Among the CIS partners, Armenia stood out as the largest one by trade volume (Babayan 2016, 11). As mentioned above, relations with Turkey were primarily economic and lacked a drive by Ossetian officials. Diaspora relations – another frequent internationalisation vector – were essentially absent before and during the early 2010s. Other than South Ossetia, the 50 000-strong Turkish Ossetian diaspora was seldom engaged by the Ossetian authorities. Indeed, in spite of being one of the safest regions of the North Caucasus, North Ossetia's international relations during the 1990s were driven by the violent conflicts happening around it (see above). As described in chapter three, North Ossetia was formed in a highly contested area, between potential claims of the Kabards and Ingush, and a broader Russian push into the region. These rivalries and imperial projects bound North Ossetia to several conflictive relationships and to Russia's imperial assertion over the region. In the post-1991 period, these conflicts continue to animate some international contacts. Notably, the conflict in Prigorodny has contributed to North Ossetia's contacts with international organisations and actors. Several international organisations had offices in Vladikavkaz and have implemented programmes since the 1990 and into the late 2000s (Matveeva & Savin 2012, 51). Similarly, federal authorities have invested in North Ossetia as a safe anchor for their North Caucasus policy, and as a springboard to engage South Ossetia. At the same time, trends in conflict have directly impacted North Ossetia's channels of contact with foreign partners. The 2004 Beslan attack was followed by Russia closing North Ossetia's southern border with accusations that Georgia harboured terrorists implicated in the massacre (Toal 2017, 150). The 2008 war had a similar effect (see above). Indeed, North Ossetia's drivers of external relations stagnated by the end of the 2000s, if not earlier. By the 2010s, the international humanitarian programmes based in Vladikavkaz began to close. The overall decline in external activities prompted changes in the institutional set-up of the North Ossetian government, not only those in 2012 described above.

More critically, the role of North Ossetia in South Ossetia has diminished since 2008. Prior to the Russian recognition of South Ossetia, North Ossetian authorities had intensive exchanges with Tshinvali, featuring frequent 'inter-governmental' and 'inter-parliamentary' visits in the years prior to the 2008 war

(Severnaya Osetia 2012). The number of visits between the start of 2010 and the end of 2013 were five, with three of them having Mamsurov be a member of a federal delegation. Indeed, in a January 2010 interview, Mamsurov mentioned that his government has no intentions to engage the South Ossetian government. Other than a 2009 meeting with the Tskhinvali authorities, Mamsurov stated that he did not intend to meet with them again. The reason Mamsurov gave was that Russia's recognition of South Ossetia's independence meant that Tskhinvali should engage Moscow directly, not Vladikavkaz (Vedomosti 2010; see also Severnaya Osetia 2012). The evidence shows, however, that engagement with South Ossetia continued since 2008; Russia's recognition transformed but did not close down Vladikavkaz's relationship with Tskhinvali. In fact, engagement with South Ossetia was an essential element of collaboration in paradiplomacy between Moscow and Vladikavkaz. A complete exploration is beyond the scope of this chapter, but some features of the Moscow-Vladikavkaz-Tskhinvali triangle are the aforementioned Sochi agreements and the fact that all Russian loans and aid sent to South Ossetia go through North Ossetia's budget (Vedomosti 2010). South Ossetia, in spite of the large weight it plays in North Ossetia's geopolitical situation (see above) does not play an overwhelming role in Vladikavkaz's external relations; five of the 16 meetings took place with South Ossetian counterparts.

Does Violence Transform a Region's Paradiplomacy?

None of the republics of the North Caucasus was untouched by the violence that followed the lifting of the counter-terrorism operation in Chechnya in 2008. However, North Ossetia did not witness the same levels of conflict intensity seen in other parts of the area. Whilst the late 2000s pointed in the direction of an increase of violence, the difficulties that *Imrat Kavkaz* found in implanting itself in North Ossetia coincided with low levels of conflict-related deaths becoming prevalent since 2010. In the 2010–2013 period, no rise in conflict-related violence was registered, and with the exception of the 2010 Vladikavkaz bombing, violence levels remained relatively low. Parallel to this, North Ossetia's international relations did not witness a transformation in the early 2010 decade. The number of meetings with partners abroad did not diminish between 2010 and the end of 2013, but no new partners were added; Armenia, Azerbaijan and South Ossetia remained consistently throughout the main countries engaged. Similarly, the pace of meetings recorded and the institutional transformations both pointed to a gradual decrease in importance for external relations, with the abolition of the Ministry of Social and External Relations being the most clear example of it. Unlike other cases analysed in this thesis, North Ossetia's declining paradiplomacy intensity reflects broader federal trends.

North Ossetia's paradiplomacy in the early 2010s reflects the geopolitical bind that the region has been under since Russia's colonial assertion over the

region. One of the key legacies of tsarist and later Soviet policies is that Vladikavkaz rules over a territory that is both strategically critical for Moscow and highly contested in the local context. For Vladikavkaz today, this results in being hindered either by local conflict or by Moscow's strict line. This bind has consequences for the region's international relations. As the aforementioned 2010 interview of Mamsurov hinted at, there is a tension in North Ossetia's kinship with independent (from Russia's point of view since 2008) South Ossetia. On one hand, there is the necessary loyalty to the sovereign state to which Vladikavkaz belongs and that, in theory, takes leadership in foreign relations. On the other hand, North Ossetia's contacts with South Ossetia are too many for the Vladikavkaz-Tskhinvali relationship to be trivialised by delegating it to Moscow, much less by North Ossetia itself. The upshot was that in the period analysed here, North Ossetia's engagements with Tskhinvali frequently happened in the context of federal initiatives. In sum, North Ossetia's external relations did not diverge from federal trends of diminishing external engagements, which coincided with stagnating levels of conflict-related violence.

CHAPTER 8
Analysis and Discussion

To answer the question 'how does conflict affect paradiplomacy?' I proceeded with exploratory research. There were three cases and a control case were analysed to understand the effects of violent conflict in the paradiplomacy of the regions affected by conflict. I selected four similar cases where three of them experienced spikes in conflict intensity and one was without similar levels of violence. These cases were similar in several ways, namely, they belong to the same country and feature similar geopolitical circumstances (periphery), and they share being minority regions with a constitutionally-protected autonomous status. They – all cases except for the control case – experienced peaking levels of conflict intensity around the years 2010–2013 before experiencing a sharp decrease in violence. That time period was chosen for tracing the evolution of their international engagements – from the start of 2010 to the end of 2013. As an exploratory research using exploratory process tracing as its methodology, the ultimate goal is to identify potential paths for future confirmatory research. Instead of a conclusion, the thesis will propose different trajectories that a region's paradiplomacy may take once faced with violent conflict.

The international relations of the cases chosen, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Ingushetia and North Ossetia, were analysed under the assumption that peaking levels of conflict intensity would lead to junctural changes in their international relations – with North Ossetia functioning as the control case. To trace this change, I drew from the various different approaches to analyse paradiplomacy found in the literature. I used three sets of indicators: quantitative, qualitative and 'historical'. The first one relied on analysing the trends in the number of meetings between the top authorities of the cases and foreign partners between January 2010 and December 2013. Then, qualitative change was traced by looking into the changes that political, legal and institutional frameworks experienced during the same time period. Finally, the 'historical' dimension was brought in to contextualise the other two: a short-term context and a long-term (i.e. post-1991). These facilitated an interpretation of the changes identified by way of a contrast with broader trends in the regions' paradiplomacy. In the following, I will compare the findings between the four cases – with particular attention in the contrast with the control case – to formulate ways in which violent conflict affects paradiplomacy.

Analysis of Results

Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria exhibited high and rising levels of conflict intensity as measured by the trends in their conflict-related deaths in the 2010–2013 period whilst North Ossetia had low and diminishing conflict-related deaths in the same period. While conflict-related violence in the three

cases was driven by the fight between the authorities and *Imrat Kavkaz*, conflict dynamics had differences and similarities. In all four cases, the authorities opted for a strategy of economic development for extremism prevention and for a heavy-handed, security-focused approach for the local 'non-traditional' schools of Islam – seen by the authorities as prone to 'extremism'. This strategy was driven by the federal authorities and proceeded under the assumption that unemployment was a key factor driving the violence. The differences between the cases in conflict dynamics are several. In Dagestan, *Imrat Kavaz* found a region ripe for violence given the layers of social resentment and exclusion, and the ongoing conflicts within the various nationalities of the republic. In Ingushetia, the local *Imrat Kavkaz* branch was unable to operate independently from the one in Chechnya – to the point that it is difficult to distinguish them at all. There, differences in the approach by the authorities in dealing with 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' Islam propelled the violence. In Kabardino-Balkaria, the exclusion of the Balkars and the general exclusive nature of KBR's political and economic institutions drove many into the insurgency. Differences and similarities notwithstanding, conflict-related violence – specifically related to *Imrat Kavkaz* – reached its peak in the 2010–2013 period, diminishing substantially from late 2013 on. North Ossetia, for its part, did not experience similar levels of conflict intensity. After a brief increase in the late 2000s, conflict-related deaths diminished from low two digits to barely one digit in 2011. No distinct *Imrat Kavkaz* branch was able to open and operate there at all.

Table 15. Indicators of change in the three cases and control case (*italics*).

	Dagestan	**Ingushetia**	**KBR**	**North Ossetia**
Trend in violence	Peaking	Peaking	Peaking	*Low and diminishing*
Intensity of paradiplomacy	Higher than federal levels and stable	Higher than federal levels and diminishing	Higher than federal levels and stable	*At federal levels and diminishing*
Legal frameworks	Change	Change	Change	*No change*
Institutional frameworks	Change	Change	Change	*No change*
Political frameworks	Change	Change*	Change	*Change*

* In 2009.

Just as the three cases analysed featured similar trends in conflict dynamics, they featured similar trends in their intensity of paradiplomacy. All three cases featured a higher average number of meetings with foreign partners than the federal average or that of the control case. Then, two cases in particular – Dagestan and KBR – exhibited a stable number of meetings with foreign partners. This goes against the general Russia-wide trend of sub-state governments diminishing the number of engagements in the same period. Ingushetia did feature a sharp decline in foreign meetings, but even at its lowest point it still had almost double the number of meetings than the federal average. The control case, for its part, moved along the federal trend of diminution, with the number of top-level meetings being close to that of the federal average.

Qualitative change – legal, institutional and political – was not measured according to numeric criteria but according to in-case comparisons. For the most part, the selected qualitative indicators showed change taking place in all three cases with seldom any taking place in the control case.

Legal frameworks changed in the three cases analysed, with new legislation introduced in the control case only confirming the status quo. In Dagestan, the 2013 amendment clarified the paradiplomacy functions of the Head of the Republic. In KBR and Ingushetia, top-down pressure included the codification of Moscow's oversight over the republic's international relations, in 2010 and 2011 respectively. In Ingushetia specifically, the legal framework changed by the May 2011 decree specifying the procedures for the republic to receive foreign delegations. A similar case happened in KBR with the November 2010 decree on the matter. An additional 2013 decree expanded federal oversight even further. The control case did not feature any similar changes. In North Ossetia, a 2012 law defined the authority of the Head of the Republic in international relations but this did not introduce new elements to the authority of the republic's external engagements.

Institutional frameworks changed in the three cases but barely in the control case. In Dagestan, the frequent change of leadership meant that new leaders would bring new perspectives for the republic's paradiplomacy. Several changes took place among the republic's ministries and agencies, culminating in comprehensive changes across the government by 2013 under Abdulatipov's reform agenda. Along the way, Dagestan's international relations institutions were 'optimised' being redirected to economic objectives. In Ingushetia, the May 2011 decree only confirmed the Head of the Republic as the foremost authority in the republic in paradiplomacy matters, and the supporting role of the Ingush Minnats. In KBR, signs of deconcentration of authority in paradiplomacy matters are visible by the end of the period under analysis, as Kanokov began to delegate more authority on the matter to the republic's ministries. In North Ossetia, other than the creation of a coordinating body for Ossetian diaspora policy in Syria, no changes took place at the institutional level.

Political frameworks changed in all three cases and the control case. In Dagestan, the 2011 Dagestan Strategy identified the importance of international trade and relations for the republic's development. It also pointed to insecurity

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as a hindrance for the republic's internationalisation. In Ingushetia, no new political frameworks were introduced between 2010 and the end of 2013 and the existing frameworks were not formally changed. However, during the time period analysed, there was a change in priorities – as mentioned above – regarding the role of the Ingush diaspora abroad. The diaspora was indeed subject to a formal framework – the 'On the support of compatriots living abroad for 2009–2015' programme – and the topic of diaspora engagement became more important for Magas throughout the early 2010s, culminating in intensive engagements in 2012. In KBR, the 2011 Concept connects the security situation of the republic with its economic situation, with foreign investment and diaspora engagement introducing an international dimension to the document. An additional 2012 plan for diaspora engagement was motivated by the Syrian Civil War and targeted the diaspora communities affected by it. In North Ossetia, the renewal in 2012 of the 2008 developmental strategy and the 2011 Concept of foreign economic dimensions specified many elements of the republic's external relations, particularly regarding its target countries and its priority areas (i.e. investment).

The picture that emerges is that of the early 2010s being one of change in international relations among the three cases analysed and one of only marginal change in the control case. This picture is reinforced further by contextualising the findings of the quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Indeed, all three cases shared similar features in their short-term context, namely, of being a period of flux in their international relations. For Dagestan, the years analysed featured a reorientation in international engagements from the CIS to the broader Middle East in terms of trade and especially in terms of external, long-term operations. The growing economies of Iran and Turkey were particularly targeted as potential sources of trade and investment, which in turn would assist Makhachkala's developmental strategy. In Ingushetia, the period featured a new emphasis on diaspora relations, one that had been building up since at least 2009. The Ingush 'compatriots abroad' were seen as a potential source of investment or trade to support the republic's developmental strategy, one ultimately directed to job creation as extremism prevention. In KBR, the rise of conflict intensity and the republic's connections with new potential sources of extremist elements in Syria drove Moscow to increase its monitoring of the republic's external relations. The control case, North Ossetia, did not experience any similar transformations. In fact, the republic remained in the trajectory of anaemic external relations focused on South Ossetia and driven by collaborative or centre-initiated paradiplomacy.

The early 2010 years indeed appear as a moment of change when compared to the broader trends in the three cases analysed, and less so in the control case. Some trends were shared by all four cases, but with caveats regarding the control case. First, they all featured a progressive diversification of trade away from the CIS. As an indicator of trends in external engagement, this particular development hints at new patterns of territorialisation, albeit unevenly distributed among all four cases. For instance, trade with Turkey – growing

steadily from the 1990s to the 2010s – was intensively promoted by Dagestan and barely at all by North Ossetia. Second, all four republics connected international engagements with their domestic political priorities, especially in economic matters. However, in this topic, North Ossetia – the control case – hardly featured an active strategy and remained focused on South Ossetia as its main interlocutor. On this matter, the three cases analysed diverge from the control case. In the early 2010s, Dagestan changed its focus of attention from the CIS to the Middle East, Ingushetia changed its focus from Europe to China and Central Asia, and KBR actively fostered its relations with Europe. By comparison, North Ossetia was the only case focused on the Caucasus region with federal-driven engagements with South Ossetia being its main vector of international relations.

Violence and paradiplomacy: five trajectories

I propose five different – although not contradictory – answers, each of which can be seen as a distinct trajectory that paradiplomacy may take once faced with violent conflict. As explained in each one, regions experiencing conflict can go through any of these trajectories as they can all overlap. Many of the cases explored in this thesis exhibit features of many of these trajectories simultaneously.

1. *Centrally-imposed restrictions*. Increases in conflict intensity leads to the central government imposing limits on the interactions the affected regions may carry out abroad. These are not blanket limitations, but they target specifically those areas of international relations that the central government sees as most risky for the regions to engage in. This intervention can imply greater monitoring – along the lines of the point above – but increased monitoring is not necessary for red lines to be imposed. The case of KBR illustrates a red line formulated and implemented in the context of increased security concerns. Indeed, Nalchik's Middle East diaspora engagement was not seen as dangerous were it not because of the possibility of it exacerbating domestic security issues.

2. *Centrally-imposed engagements*. Under a functional understanding of paradiplomacy, regions will try to supplement their capacity to manage conflict by engaging in paradiplomacy. The three cases featured stable trends of external engagement when compared to the control case and the general trend of the Russian Federation. This stimulus could be explained principally by the role of top-down pressure on the regional governments to engage in paradiplomacy. All three cases exhibit this top-down pressure: Moscow's developmental strategy for conflict management drove the three cases to associate conflict-related violence and extremism with unemployment. The governors, in turn, sought to attract foreign investment and stimulate trade to create jobs. Sometimes, this involved even a

restructuring or proactive engagement on the part of the governors, such as KBR's European paradiplomacy or Ingushetia's turn to China. The control case – for its part – did not feature any similar impulse to expand its trade or investment relations, even with Turkey, a country with whom the cases expanded their relations during the early 2010s.

3. *Centrally-imposed monitoring*. As violence levels peak, the central government may gain a greater interest in maintaining closer control over the regions' external relations. This monitoring does not imply more instances of collaborative paradiplomacy – as Ingushetia's case illustrates – nor does it imply a diminution in paradiplomacy intensity. It does however mean that tacit or explicit approval from the central authorities is needed at the operational or even everyday levels of external relations of the region in conflict. In all three cases, monitoring even included reports of all meetings with foreign partners. The control case featured no similar change and no similar monitoring system as of December 2013.

4. *Violence as a game changer: pushing old partners away*. Violent conflict can be seen as affecting the operational environment where the region operates. Specifically, conflict changes the perception that foreign partners may have of the region. As mentioned above, the cases analysed themselves made a connection between insecurity and impediments for investment – Dagestan outright stating it in its 2011 Strategy as did all other ones. Then, the aforementioned geographic shifts in external relations also hint at certain partners becoming unviable due to their security concerns, such as Europe for Ingushetia.

5. *Violence as a game changer: pulling in new partners*. All three cases and the control case featured interactions between the regional authorities and international organisations concerned with the humanitarian situation in the region. Organisations that Russia belonged to, such as the Council of Europe, or independent organisations such as *Medecins sans Frontieres*, had an active presence in many of the cases analysed. In the control case, similar organisations were present but some of their activities came to an end during the period analysed, hinting at the diminishing attention due to diminishing violence in that region.

Implications and Novelties

That increases in conflict intensity bring junctural change in a region's external relations has two implications for the field of paradiplomacy. The first one regards the specific relationship between conflict and paradiplomacy, and the second one concerns the general issue of short-term change in paradiplomacy.

Conflict and paradiplomacy

The chief novelty of this thesis is that it finds several ways in which increases in conflict intensity lead to junctural change in a region's paradiplomacy. These are several and diverse ways, some of which overlap and some of which do not. Previous studies on paradiplomacy and security issues have pointed to paradiplomacy as an instrumental mechanism by which states solve problems (Joenniemi & Sergunin, 2014) or build their security strategies and conflict management mechanisms (Cornago 1999), or participate in broader security regimes (Morin & Poliquin 2016). These previous studies offered rich empirical evidence with which they established the relevance of paradiplomacy to statecraft, security and conflict. This thesis remains on the same trajectory but adds further insight into the mechanisms at play between centre and region. Indeed, the findings suggest that violent conflict may cause states to increase their monitoring of their afflicted regions, demand or effect change in the region's paradiplomacy – directly through red lines or indirectly through changes in policy and legal frameworks.

In addition, conflict affects the international environment in which regions operate, namely, by worsening their image and by attracting international attention to the humanitarian situation in them. Previous literature discussed how regional governments cultivate their image abroad for multiple purposes, such as promotion of trade, values and identity, and 'branding' (among others, Duran 2015, 225; Zamorano & Rodríguez Morató 2015; Tavares 2016). These efforts can be seen, then, as counteracted by violence experienced in a region, indeed spoiling the region's image abroad. From a perspective of opportunity structures, violent conflict may be seen as a factor that narrows the scope of opportunities that regions have to engage with partners abroad. Regarding international attention, regions suffering through increased levels of conflict intensity can be expected to be 'on the spotlight' for many international actors that would not have engaged with them otherwise. This adds a new dimension to paradiplomacy, namely, how regions manage the newly gained attention from international organisations and foreign countries on humanitarian grounds. Previous analyses have delved into the dimension where regions engage in peace-promotion and humanitarian tasks (e.g. Duran 2016) but the paradiplomacy field has yet to systematically engage with this vector of sub-state internationalisation.

Short-term change in paradiplomacy

This thesis has found the need to conceptualise short-term change in paradiplomacy. Indeed, existing frameworks do not offer a methodology adequate for assessing junctural change in paradiplomacy. As mentioned above, influential explanatory frameworks can be seen as more suited for long-term processes of the emergence of paradiplomacy (e.g. Lecours 2002; Kuznetsov 2015). Junctural, short-term change is not explained by them. Drawing from two

different approaches to paradiplomacy, this thesis has proposed three approaches to identify change in paradiplomacy. Namely, by looking at quantitative and qualitative indicators, and by implementing in-case comparisons taking historically-grounded, long-term trends into account for perspective.

The aforementioned hypotheses do not concern specifically short-term change in general but specifically in conditions of violent conflict. Yet, it is possible to gain from these hypotheses notions of what short-term change can look like. Based on the work of Soldatos (1991), centre-region relations appear as an essential driver for short-term change, as indeed policy priorities and red lines can be imposed on regions from above. Indeed, the perception that the central authorities have of a region's paradiplomacy can change, from regarding that specific case of paradiplomacy as harmonious to disharmonious and vice versa. Policies, legal and political frameworks that diminish or increase monitoring suggest that change in paradiplomacy in other dimensions is forthcoming. Then, regions themselves have initiative in adapting to their conditions. Their choice of partners may change in a short timeframe to respond to changing circumstances. Some partners may also become disinterested or demotivated to engage with them. Violent conflict is but one possible cause for foreign partners to disengage a region. In turn, the regional government may look for new partners, according to the new operational environment.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations to this thesis and its findings. Here I highlight three. First, access to primary sources and to decision-makers was limited. In several methodologies in paradiplomacy research (e.g. Kuznetsov 2015), interviews with practitioners helped complete the empirical analysis of a region's paradiplomacy. In particular, interviews with practitioners would hint at the rationale behind policy choices. Then, primary sources were limited to those published online. Thanks to the publication and promulgation of laws and policies in regional newspapers, and websites, it was possible to have a fairly complete picture of the relevant institutional frameworks. However, additional archival materials could have added precision to the observations made particularly, again, about motivations.

Second, no fieldwork was conducted for this thesis. Fieldwork in paradiplomacy research does not have a clear-cut role. Most of the literature in that field relies on primary and secondary sources, and access to policy-makers. These have been usually considered sufficient to reconstruct and trace the evolution of a region's external relations. However, some scholars have pointed to the importance of first-hand observation as a source of insight in qualitative paradiplomacy research. Jackson in particular (2018) makes the case of the relevance of fieldwork-dependent methodologies for those interested in deploying Critical Geopolitics as their framework of analysis of paradiplomacy. Following Duran (2015), this thesis proceeded under the assumption that

geopolitical location matters for paradiplomacy. Deploying a rigorous field-work-based methodology would have increased the reliability of the assessment of the role of geopolitics in shaping the opportunity structures of the cases chosen.

Third, and partly as a consequence of the two previous limitations, the connection between changing levels of conflict intensity and changes in paradiplomacy cannot be determined in a simple linear argument. In all four cases – but with the exception of violence-as-a-spoiler – conflict drives para-diplomacy through an intermediary step, usually through the pressure enacted by a component of the paradiplomacy system (Duchacek 1991). In other words, conflict affects paradiplomacy as an exogenous factor enacted on the regional government. Interviews with decision-makers could have given an insight into how conflict conditions were processed by the regional government and from where violence became a pressure to act upon. It would add precision and reliability to the observations of pressure coming from the centre and from the environment.

Fourth, in approaching the cases, I did not distinguish between different levels of conflict intensity. Dagestan's high casualty count does not compare to KBR's, which was still higher than North Ossetia's. Research could identify 'thresholds' of conflict intensity for the different driving effects of violent conflict on paradiplomacy. So, it would be possible to speculate that the variation observed among the three high conflict intensity cases is partly due to the difference in magnitude in their respective conflict intensity. However, a different research design would be needed to approach such a task, and remains an untested assumption in this thesis.

Fifth, and most critically, this thesis has proceeded within the confines of the paradiplomacy literature and – along the way – attempted to describe and conceptualise short-term change. As discussed in the conceptual framework chapter, the field of paradiplomacy has struggled to find an explanatory framework to account for change. In turn, the opportunity structures framework appears best suited to trace change across longer periods of time or to offer a snapshot of a region's external relations without accounting for change. In addition, this research was designed to be an exploratory one. The findings of this thesis are meant to contribute to theory-building by identifying the trajectories that paradiplomacy can take under conditions of high intensity conflict. They are not meant, however, to make inferences on the relationship between violent conflict and paradiplomacy. In this sense, both the design and the exploratory process tracing methodology were not meant to be conclusive but a set in the direction of testing hypotheses (Rohlfing 2012, 14). Some of the trajectories identified can be found to be false positives in need of refinement or refutation.

These limitations and the exploratory nature of this research point to paths for future research. Researchers interested in replicating this study with different cases or a different research strategy might want to explore other regions where access to archives and practitioners is easier. As discussed in the

methodology chapter, there are important reasons for choosing to focus on a country with a non-democratic regime. These reasons can be challenged in future research. Then, fieldwork-based methodologies can add much to the research of paradiplomacy – inside and outside of conflict zones. Fieldwork methodologies in particular can add in particular to the research agenda on the endogenous sources and features of paradiplomacy, but not only. Then, mixed methods research in paradiplomacy remains an under-exploited avenue of research in general, and, in particular, concerning conflict zones. Since many conflict zones also feature opaque governments, remote, quantitative methodologies (such as Baturo & Elkink 2021) can work together with qualitative fieldwork to produce a deeper understanding of the effects of conflict on paradiplomacy. This thesis can only be seen as an early attempt at deploying such methodology in the topic. Finally, historians can contribute much to the research of violence and paradiplomacy. This thesis drew extensively from the work of historians to contextualise its analysis and interrogate the roots of the violence in the North Caucasus. Insights from historians also drew my attention to the broader and overlaying legacies shaping the region and its international relations.

CONCLUSION

To answer 'how does conflict affect paradiplomacy?', this thesis has sought to understand both conflict and paradiplomacy in their complexity. Using a small-n case sample enabled an empirically-rich analysis that brought in the impact of geopolitical location and historical legacies on the cases chosen. Quantitative analysis gave an insight into how the paradiplomacy of the cases analysed compared to that of regions unaffected by conflict. Qualitative analysis gave an insight into the various ways in which paradiplomacy can change. Finally, the historical approach facilitated in-case comparisons that further added to the implications of junctural change in the cases selected. This approach also enabled a differentiated understanding of conflict dynamics in each case, adding to the depth of understanding of violence beyond casualty numbers. Ultimately, I was able to identify short-term change in paradiplomacy prompted by changes in conflict intensity, understood in terms of changes in intensity (more or fewer meetings), purpose (economic, religious, among other predominant agenda), geographic scope, patterns of institutionalisation and role in centre-region relations (harmonious, disharmonious, monitoring, among other relations). These can be summarised as a few trajectories that paradiplomacy goes through once violent conflict takes place. The data collected and presented here, the comparative approach to the region and the trajectories found are the original contribution of this thesis.

The cases of Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia point to several ways in which paradiplomacy changes across different time scales. The long, historical scale demonstrated change in external relations happened for these regions according to the evolution of the larger polities they belonged to. This is illustrated by the two periods of most external autonomy, the period of weak suzerainty of Kabarda, the Khanate of Crimea and Persia, and the period of the globalised Russian Federation. In turn, the periods of Tsarist and Soviet rule were low points in external autonomy, with the North Caucasus polities having essentially no external relations during that time. From this perspective, the international relations of the North Caucasus republics changed along with the transformations of the Russian Federation produced by the federal response to the violence in the North Caucasus. The short-term scale showed more clearly the impact of violent conflict on the external relations of the three cases: previous partners became less prevalent, new partners able to cope with the violence were sought out and the central government changed its views on North Caucasus paradiplomacy. Future events would bring new transformations, such as the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the 2022 re-invasion of Ukraine. Whilst neither of these happened on North Caucasus territory, they brought about transformations in Russia's internal and external politics, and the international operational environment that these republics navigated.

For paradiplomacy, the central role of opportunity structures is reaffirmed. The role of violent conflict can be hypothesised to change the shape and scope of opportunity structures. But what shapes paradiplomacy in conflict is the state of these opportunity structures at the time violent conflict arose. In the case of the North Caucasus, globalisation and other processes of internationalisation facilitated the international engagements of the cases analysed. The same applies to internal opportunity structures inside Russia. The federal system – whilst on the course to centralisation – gives its 'subjects' certain rights to engage in international relations. For the North Caucasus cases in particular, their double role as federal constituents and territorial autonomies assures not only a degree of internal autonomy but even the claim to being self-standing authorities and not derivatives or delegates from Russian power. In practice, autonomy and rights were part of constant centre-region negotiation during the 1990s and top-down coercion during the 2000s. As violent conflict levels climbed up during the 2000s, these opportunity structures changed. Globalisation facilitated changes in foreign partners when it was necessary and other internationalisation channels such as diaspora networks became more valuable. At each step, the regions affected by high levels of conflict intensity had to rearrange their internal institutions, further stressing the transformative impact of violence on their international relations.

The thesis cannot end with a conclusive statement on the relationship between conflict intensity and paradiplomacy. Many pieces are missing for the puzzle to be complete. First, the literature on paradiplomacy and conflict is rich but neglected *violent* or armed conflict in particular. This meant that this thesis had to proceed on the basis of rudimentary conceptual additions to established frameworks on paradiplomacy. The reliance on additions prevented the thesis from proceeding on a parsimonious framework. That said, the topic itself is – put simply – complex by its own nature (involving centre-region relations, geopolitics, local and federal politics and trends in globalisation). Second, interviews with local officials in office in 2010–2013 or earlier could have added insights on the decision-making processes. These may have shed a light on the extent to which decision-makers considered international engagements with the violent context of their republics in mind. Third, MSSD research is suitable for this research, but additional parallel research projects would be necessary to fully interrogate the connections between violent conflict and paradiplomacy. For instance, in-depth case studies along the lines of Kuznetsov (2016) and comparative studies among dissimilar cases would have brought additional insights that when taken all together could reach more conclusive statements.

On the basis of the preceding, to conclude, I address five pathways of short-term or junctural change in paradiplomacy. These are derivative from the hypotheses above, with the difference that the element of violent conflict is not taken into consideration. In other words, these are more notions rather than hypotheses. *Pathway one: changes in central monitoring*. As circumstances and policies change, the central government will change its external and internal

policies, in turn impacting what external policies of its sub-state regions will be deemed as 'harmonious' or 'disharmonious', with the accompanying responses. Violent conflict can render some forms of paradiplomacy more desirable from the point of view of the central government, and thus it may seek out to encourage them. *Pathway two: red lines*. This is a specific kind of response to the shift mentioned before. It stands out because it is a direct way to intervene in a region's paradiplomacy. Namely, the central government uses its status as the sole legitimate authority in international relations to shape what policies are allowed to sub-state regions. Violent conflict may prompt the central government to enforce such red lines with urgency but other topics may also prompt red lines, such as international sanctions or diplomatic disputes. *Pathway three: international attention*. Some events will bring international attention to a given region. Violent conflict is but one of many possible events that will draw the attention of international organisations and foreign governments, interested in the humanitarian situation unfolding in the region. This attention may eventually result in the sub-state government having to directly engage with foreign partners it has not addressed before. *Pathway four: spoilers*. Some changes in international or domestic circumstances may result in some relations with foreign partners becoming impossible. These can be seen as spoilers and they can be conceptualised as events that narrow the scope of external actions enabled by the opportunity structures. A rise in violent conflict can be one among other ways in which foreign partners may become uninterested in engaging in a particular region. *Pathway five: new pressures to find new partners*. Just as violence can spoil relations with a region's established partners it can compel the regional government to find suitable partners elsewhere. Namely, those that will be willing to cooperate in spite of the new change in circumstances. This is a diversification strategy that is promoted by the regional and central governments to cope with new circumstances.

These five pathways point to the contribution that doctoral thesis makes to the paradiplomacy literature and the International Relations sub-discipline in general. Namely, the thesis shows – within its limitations – that paradiplomacy responds to circumstances beyond the realm of 'low politics'. That states may seek to involve the international dimension when responding to domestic crises is unsurprising. But a novelty this thesis brings is that sub-state governments also take part in the international dimension of the *state* response to high conflict intensity. They do this partly mobilised *directly* by the central government, partly on their own sense of urgency, and always subject to their own local conditions. This latter element necessitates to open the scope of analysis beyond many of the indicators the literature has come to rely on when interrogating a region's external relations. Here, the analysis of the legacies of state formation provides insights not only into the structural constraints of paradiplomacy but also the roots of conflict. In this sense, many elements involved in the emergence of paradiplomacy also overlap with those of the emergence of violent conflict. Pointing to the connection between violent

conflict and paradiplomacy, and evincing the nexus of state formation-conflict-paradiplomacy are the contributions of this thesis.

The transformations in international relations of the past few decades have drawn attention to the rise of non-state actors and intra-state conflict. These transformations have shown the state, sovereignty and security to have become progressively disassociated, raising questions about whose agency dominates in international affairs. Paradiplomacy in particular represents an implicit challenge to the centrality of traditional diplomacy and of the state-centric international order. Moreover, the traditional understanding of the state is inadequate to address the realities imposed by high intensity, intra-state conflict, where no enemy army is to be found. However, what this thesis finds is that the state has means to cope with these transformations and assert its agency even *through* them. In the cases analysed here, violent conflict resulted in trans-formations for regional security, including for the paradiplomacy of the cases chosen. Violent conflict also placed the paradiplomacy of the regions analysed in trajectories that asserted the primacy of the central government. The central government monitored, restricted and pressured the paradiplomacy of the cases chosen—ways in which the agency of the state asserted itself. However, this assertion did not aim to shut down the channels of paradiplomacy nor did it render the regional governments into mere policy-implementing bodies. So, the transformations in international relations are not resulting in the power of the state vanishing or even diminishing, but transforming itself as well.

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SUMMARY

The world-wide trend of internationalising civil wars has brought new attention to the international dimension of otherwise domestic conflicts. The role of governors in these processes has been under-scrutinised. What are the effects of violent conflict for the international engagements of sub-state governors? By adopting the paradiplomacy framework, this thesis proposes to look at governors as proactive participants in international relations with a disposition to engage foreign partners in response to violent conflict in their territories. In this sense, this is an inductive exploratory research proceeding on the basis of a theory-informed research problem trying to fill a gap in our knowledge.

Paradiplomacy concerns itself with the various forms, effects and implications of sub-state governments (or 'regions') engaging with partners outside of the borders of their country. The international relations of governors are usually referred to by the literature as 'paradiplomacy', i.e. diplomacy happening in parallel to that of the central government. Lecours (2002), drawing from institutional theory, conceptualised paradiplomacy as framed by opportunity structures that are exogenous to the sub-state region. These structures may be international (e.g. globalisation) or domestic (e.g. central government policy), and are deeply rooted in the history and geopolitical circumstances of the region (Duran 2015). I proceed then with the understanding that violent conflict impacts both the opportunity structures of sub-state regions to engage in paradiplomacy and the agenda pursued abroad by the governors of said regions. It is on these grounds that I set out to explore the effects of violent conflict on paradiplomacy.

This exploration implies a systematic analysis of short-term change in paradiplomacy, in this case, when violent conflict arises. To answer the research question under the assumptions mentioned above, I chose as a research strategy to make a historically-grounded, small-n comparative study of similar cases and a control case. Whilst countries have an expected set of international institutions (e.g. embassies, UN seats, foreign ministries), sub-state regions are not legitimate participants in the state-dominated international system (Bartmann 2006), so their approach to international relations varies from country to country (Criekemans 2010). This variation is the product of both junctural change and long-term trends, both of which must be understood to trace change in paradiplomacy (Duran 2015). By choosing cases from a single country and the same time period, I can assume similar constitutional and political conditions for governors acting abroad.

The cases I chose are all in the Russian Federation. These are Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia, with this latter one functioning as the control case. These are all neighbouring regions with similar histories of forceful integration into Russia. They are also all regions where non-Russian minorities make up the majority of the population. And, they all share being in a peripheral location, away from Russia's power centres and those of other countries, as well as having small regional economies. Crucially,

they all experienced increases in violent conflict as the North Caucasus insurgency under Imrat Kavkaz took hold in the 2000 and early 2010 decades. For these regions, conflict-related casualties peaked in the early 2010 decade, so my timeframe for close analysis is the four years between 2010 to 2013. North Ossetia acts as the control case as it experienced no similar increase in violence during the same period.

To identify changes in the paradiplomacy of these four cases, I focused on short- and long-term trends. First, I traced the long-term evolution of the regions' statehood and international engagements, with the goal of understanding their enduring geopolitical circumstances. Second, I traced the short-term trends with a dataset of all instances where the governors and two relevant ministries of these four regions interacted with foreign partners in an official and overt capacity between January 2010 and December 2013. The dataset identified a total of 178 meetings held inside Russian territory and abroad. Each one of these was coded for the country of the foreign counterpart and the primary goal of the meeting. Change was registered against the background of historical long-term trends, the broader trends in paradiplomacy in the Russian Federation as documented by Stremoukhov (2021), the short-term trends identified in the dataset. In addition, the small-n research design allowed also for an empirically rich description of the legal, institutional and political changes in each one of these cases during the period of analysis.

Indeed, change was observed in both quantitative and qualitative terms. First, the intensity of meetings remained the same in those regions with high conflict intensity and diminished in the control region. Second, all regions with high levels of conflict intensity experienced institutional change of one kind or another, such as new ministries formed and new political programmes introduced. No similar changes were observed in the control region. Three, the three conflict-affected regions saw their paradiplomacy redirect in its implementation exhibiting new patterns of territorialisation (Dagestan), new strategies for internationalisation (Ingushetia) and increased central government scrutiny (Kabardino-Balkaria). The control case (North Ossetia) exhibited no redirection of its paradiplomacy approach. Four, international attention on humanitarian grounds was visible in all cases, albeit with a diminishing intensity in the control case. Finally, in all cases except the control one saw instances where violent conflict spoiled their international engagements, deterring would-be foreign partners from engaging with them.

The thesis concludes by proposing an answer to the research question, an answer meant for future confirmatory research. The answer is that violent conflict sets the paradiplomacy of sub-state regions on five different – although sometimes overlapping – trajectories. These are, namely, centrally-imposed engagements, centrally-imposed monitoring, centrally-imposed restrictions, and violence as a factor pushing partners away and as a factor pulling them in. Implicit in these answers is the emerging understanding that the state, even in conditions of globalisation, conflict and parallel diplomacy, is capable to manoeuvre, retain its agency and act through these conditions.

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Kuidas on vägivaldne konflikt mõjutab paradiplomaatiat? Uurimisuuring koos Põhja-Kaukaasia juhtumitega

Ülemaailmne suundumus kodusõdade rahvusvahelistumise suunas on toonud uut tähelepanu sisekonfliktide rahvusvahelisele mõõtmele. Kuberneride rolli nendes protsessides ei ole piisavalt uuritud. Millised on vägivaldsete konfliktide tagajärjed osariikide kuberneride rahvusvahelistele kohustustele? Võttes kasutusele paradiplomaatia raamistiku, tehakse selles lõputöös ettepanek vaadelda kubernere kui aktiivseid osalejaid rahvusvahelistes suhetes, kes on valmis kaasama välispartnereid vastuseks vägivaldsele konfliktile nende territooriumil. Selles mõttes on tegemist induktiivse uurimistööga, mis põhineb teoreetiliselt põhjendatud uurimisprobleemil ja püüab täita lünka meie teadmistes.

Paradiplomaatia käsitleb üksikute osariikide (või "piirkondade") valitsuste erinevaid vorme, mõjusid ja tagajärgi, mis suhtlevad partneritega väljaspool oma riigi piire. Kuberneride rahvusvahelisi suhteid nimetatakse kirjanduses tavaliselt "paradiplomaatiaks", st diplomaatiaks, mis toimub paralleelselt keskvalitsuse diplomaatiaga. Lecours (2002), tuginedes institutsionaalsele teooriale, käsitas paradiplomaatiat, mis on raamitud võimaluste struktuuridega, mis on osariigi piirkonnale eksogeensed. Need struktuurid võivad olla rahvusvahelised (nt globaliseerumine) või siseriiklikud (nt keskvalitsuse poliitika) ning on sügavalt juurdunud piirkonna ajaloos ja geopoliitilistes oludes (Duran 2015). Jätkan siis arusaamisega, et vägivaldne konflikt mõjutab nii osariigi alamregioonide võimalusi osaleda paradiplomaatias kui ka nende regioonide kuberneride tegevuskavasid välismaal. Just neil põhjustel asusin uurima vägivaldse konflikti mõju paradiplomaatiale.

See uuring hõlmab paradiplomaatia lühiajaliste muutuste süstemaatilist analüüsi, antud juhul vägivaldse konflikti ilmnemisel. Uurimisküsimusele vastamiseks ülalmainitud eelduste alusel olen valinud oma uurimisstrateegiaks sarnaste juhtumite ja kontrolljuhtumite ajalooliselt põhjendatud väikese ja võrdleva uuringu. Kuigi riikidel on oodatav hulk rahvusvahelisi institutsioone (nt saatkonnad, ÜRO asukohad, välisministeeriumid), ei ole osariikidest madalamad piirkonnad riigi domineeritud rahvusvahelises süsteemis seaduslikud osalejad (Bartmann 2006), seega on nende lähenemine rahvusvahelistele suhetele riigiti erinev (Criekemans 2010). See varieeruvus on nii üleminekumuutuste kui ka pikaajaliste suundumuste tulemus, mida tuleks mõista paradiplomaatia muutuste jälgimiseks (Duran 2015). Valides juhtumid ühest riigist ja samast ajavahemikust, võin eeldada sarnaseid põhiseaduslikke ja poliitilisi tingimusi välismaal tegutsevatele kuberneridele.

Minu valitud juhtumid on kõik Vene Föderatsioonis. Need on Dagestan, Inguššia, Kabardi-Balkaria ja Põhja-Osseetia, kusjuures viimane toimib kontrolljuhtumina. Need kõik on naaberpiirkonnad, millel on sarnased Venemaaga jõulise integratsiooni ajalood. Need on ka kõik piirkonnad, kus mittevene vähemused moodustavad suurema osa elanikkonnast. Ja nad kõik jagavad seda, et nad asuvad perifeerses kohas, eemal Venemaa ja teiste riikide jõukeskustest ning neil on

väike piirkondlik majandus. Ülioluline on see, et vägivaldsed konfliktid suurenesid neil kõigil, kuna Imrat Kavkazi juhitud Põhja-Kaukaasia mässud 2000. aastal ja 2010. aasta alguses võimutsesid. Nendes piirkondades saavutasid konfliktidega seotud ohvrid haripunkti 2010. aasta alguses, seega kasutan nelja aastat 2010–2013 hoolika analüüsi ajaraamina. Põhja-Osseetia toimib kontrolljuhtumina, kuna seal ei esinenud samal perioodil sarnast vägivalla kasvu.

Nende nelja juhtumi paradiplomaatia muutuste tuvastamiseks keskendusin lühi- ja pikaajalistele suundumustele. Esiteks jälgisin piirkondade omariikluse ja rahvusvaheliste kohustuste pikaajalist arengut, eesmärgiga mõista nende püsivaid geopoliitilisi olusid. Teiseks jälgisin lühiajalisi suundumusi kõigi juhtude andmekogumiga, kus nende nelja piirkonna kubernerid ja kaks asjaomast ministeeriumi suhtlesid ametlikult ja avalikult välispartneritega ajavahemikus jaanuarist 2010 kuni detsembrini 2013. Andmekogum tuvastas kokku 178 Venemaa territooriumil ja välismaal peetud kohtumist. Igaüks neist oli kodeeritud välispartneri riigi ja kohtumise peamise eesmärgi järgi. Muutus registreeriti ajalooliste pikaajaliste suundumuste taustal, Vene Föderatsiooni paradiplomaatia laiemate suundumuste taustal, nagu on dokumenteerinud Stremoukhov (2021), andmestikus tuvastatud lühiajaliste suundumuste taustal. Lisaks võimaldas väikesemahuline uurimistöö ka empiiriliselt rikkalikult kirjeldada analüüsiperioodi jooksul toimunud juriidilisi, institutsionaalseid ja poliitilisi muutusi kõigil neil juhtudel.

Tõepoolest, muutusi täheldati nii kvantitatiivses kui ka kvalitatiivses mõttes. Esiteks jäi koosolekute intensiivsus suure konfliktiga piirkondades samaks ja vähenes kontrollpiirkonnas. Teiseks toimusid kõikides kõrge konfliktiintensiivsusega piirkondades üht- või teist laadi institutsionaalsed muutused, näiteks moodustati uued ministeeriumid ja võeti kasutusele uued poliitilised programmid. Sarnaseid muutusi kontrollpiirkonnas ei täheldatud. Kolmandaks, kolm konfliktist mõjutatud piirkonda nägid oma paradiplomaatia ümbersuunamist selle rakendamisel, demonstreerides uusi territorialiseerumise mustreid (Dagestan), uusi rahvusvahelistumise strateegiaid (Inguššia) ja keskvalitsuse suuremat kontrolli (Kabardi-Balkaria). Kontrolljuhtum (Põhja-Osseetia) ei näidanud paradiplomaatia lähenemisviisi ümbersuunamist. Neljandaks oli rahvusvahelise üldsuse tähelepanu humanitaarkaalutlustel nähtav kõigil juhtudel, kuigi kontrolljuhtumi puhul vähem intensiivsusega. Lõpuks, kõigil juhtudel, välja arvatud kontrolljuhtum, oesines juhtumeid, kus vägivaldne konflikt segas nende rahvusvahelisi kohustusi, hoides potentsiaalseid välispartnereid nendega suhtlemast.

Lõputöö lõpetuseks pakkudes välja vastus uurimisküsimusele, mis on mõeldud tulevasteks kinnitusuuringuteks. Vastus on, et vägivaldne konflikt asetab osariikide piirkondade paradiplomaatia viiele erinevale, kuigi mõnikord kattule trajektoorile. Need on nimelt tsentraalselt kehtestatud kohustused, tsentraalselt kehtestatud järelevalve, tsentraalselt kehtestatud piirangud ja vägivald kui partnereid eemale tõukav ja sisse tõmbav tegur. Need vastused viitavad tärkavale arusaamisele, et riik on isegi globaliseerumise, konfliktide ja paralleeldiplomaatia kontekstis võimeline manööverdama, säilitama oma tegevusvabaduse ja tegutsema neis tingimustes.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal information
Ivan Ulises KENTROS KLYSZCZ
1 December 1992
u.kentros@gmail.com

IntM Russian, Central and Eastern European Studies (2018), University of
        Glasgow
MA Baltic Sea Region Studies (2018), University of Tartu
BA in Philosophy (2016) National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)

Research and development work
International Relations, Area Studies (Central and Eastern European Studies)
Klyszcz, I. 'Chechnya's Paradiplomacy 2000–2020', *Nationalities Papers*.
Arteev, S. & **Kentros, I.**, 'The Evolution of Russian Paradiplomacy (1991–
        2021)', *Problems of Post-Communism*.
Klyszcz, I. (2021), 'Russia and the Taliban Takeover', *Recherches et Docu-
        ments* 17, Fondation de la Recherche Stratégique.
Klyszcz, I. (2019), 'Russia's Central America Engagements', *Russian Foreign
        Policy Papers*, Foreign Policy Research Institute.
Kentros, I. (2019), 'Islam in Central Asia and the Caucasus Since the Fall of the
        Soviet Union', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 71:9, 1612–1613. (Book review.)
Kentros, I. (2019), 'Normative dependency and use of force: the declarative
        dimension of Russia's military operations', *St. Anthony's Review of
        International Affairs (STAIR)*, 14:2, Feb. 2019.

2022:   Archimedes Foundation: Dora Plus Scholarship for participating at the
        British Association of Eastern European Studies (BASEES) (900 EUR,
        accepted),
2021:   Åland Peace Fellowship, Åland Peace Institute, with stipend (2600EUR
        and travel expenses, September-October),
2021:   Affiliate Researcher at the Virtual Open Research Laboratory, Russian,
        East European and Eurasian Center, University of Illinois (full calendar
        year),
2020:   BEAR Network mobility grant for short fieldwork visit, hosted by the
        Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) University
        (1300EUR),
2019:   Archimedes Foundation: Dora Plus Scholarship for short-term mobility
        to the University of Basque Country, Bilbao (1900EUR),
2018:   Prize for the best dissertation at the International Master in Russian,
        Central and East European Studies, 2017/2018 cohort,
2016:   Erasmus Mundus Plus Scholarship for the IMRCEES programme
2014:   Harp-Calderoni Foundation: Scholarship for a semester abroad at Uni-
        versity of Washington (10 000USD).

ELULOOKIRJELDUS

Isiklik informatsioon
Ivan Ulises KENTROS KLYSZCZ
1. detsember 1992
u.kentros@gmail.com

IntM vene, Kesk- ja Ida-Euroopa uuringud (2018), Glasgow Ülikool
MA Baltic Sea Region Studies (2018), Tartu Ülikool
BA filosofias (2016) Mehhiko riiklik autonoomne ülikool (UNAM)

Teadus- ja arendustöö
Rahvusvahelised suhted, valdkonna uuringud (Kesk- ja Ida-Euroopa uuringud)
Klyszcz, I. 'Chechnya's Paradiplomacy 2000–2020', *Nationalities Papers*.
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Kentros, I. (2019), 'Normative dependency and use of force: the declarative dimension of Russia's military operations', *St. Anthony's Review of International Affairs (STAIR)*, 14:2, veeb. 2019.

2022: Sihtasutus Archimedes: Dora Plus stipendium Briti Ida-Euroopa Uuringute Assotsiatsiooni (BASEES) osalemiseks (900 eurot, vastu võetud),
2021: Ahvenamaa Rahuinstituudi stipendium koos stipendiumiga (2600EUR ja reisikulud, september-oktoober),
2021: Affiliate Researcher at the Virtual Open Research Laboratory, Russian, East European and Eurasian Center, University of Illinois (terve kalendriaasta),
2020: BEAR võrgustiku liikuvusstipendium lühiajaliseks välitöö külastuseks, vastuvõtjaks Moskva Riiklik Rahvusvaheliste Suhete Instituut (MGIMO) Ülikool (1300EUR),
2019: Sihtasutus Archimedes: Dora Plus'i stipendium lühiajaliseks õpirändeks Baskimaa Ülikoolile Bilbaos (1900EUR),
2018: Auhind parima doktoritöö eest rahvusvahelises magistriõppes Venemaa, Kesk- ja Ida-Euroopa uuringutes, 2017/2018 kohort,
2016: Erasmus Mundus Plus stipendium IMRCEES programmi jaoks.
2014: Harp-Calderoni Fond: Stipendium välissemestriks Washingtoni Ülikoolis (10 000USD).

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