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978-1-107-06335-8 - Warlords and Coalition Politics in Post-Soviet States

Jesse Driscoll

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Warlords and Coalition Politics in Post-Soviet States

The breakup of the USSR was unexpected and unexpectedly peaceful. Though a third of the new states fell prey to violent civil conflict, anarchy on the post-Soviet periphery, when it occurred, was quickly cauterized. This book argues that this outcome had nothing to do with security guarantees by Russia or the United Nations and everything to do with local innovation by ruthless warlords, who competed and colluded in a high-risk coalition formation game. Drawing on a structured comparison of Georgian and Tajik militia members, the book combines rich comparative data with formal modeling, treating the post-Soviet space as an extraordinary laboratory to observe the limits of great powers' efforts to shape domestic institutions in weak states.

Jesse Driscoll is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies, University of California, San Diego. He was an OCV (Order, Conflict, and Violence) Fellow at Yale University and a GAGE (Governing America in a Global Era) Fellow at the University of Virginia, and most recently a member of the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies from 2009 to 2013. His work has been published in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Research and Politics*, and the *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology*.

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I get it. I know what you want. I understand. You want to make up a list, on your computer, of all our bad men. ‘Terrorists.’ You want to cross names off the list when they were killed or jailed. To see that we Tajiks can take care of our own. But we can. We did. You’ll see.

Yuri, Dushanbe, 2007

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Acknowledgments

None of this would have been conceivable – or be meaningful to me – without the love and support of my wife Emma; my parents, Mary and Wally; my sister, Amanda; and a number of friends that are increasingly indistinguishable from family. (“... *We’re all on one road ... and we’re only passing through ...*”)

This book builds upon an ongoing research program that matured while I pursued graduate studies at Stanford’s Department of Political Science. I owe a great deal to the patient guidance of David Laitin, James Fearon, and Jeremy Weinstein, and I owe far more to the friendly assistance of my exceptional graduate student cohort. But the book also exists because of a full decade of itinerant labor. During this time I gratefully accepted institutional and financial support from diverse sources: The Center for Russian and Eastern European Studies at Stanford University; the Russian Language program at Middlebury College; the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC); the Program on Order, Conflict, and Violence (OCV) at Yale University; the American University of Central Asia in Bishkek; the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX); the Governing America in a Global Age (GAGE) program at the University of Virginia; and probably a few more that I am forgetting. Jorge Dominguez and the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies at Harvard University deserve special thanks, both for connecting me with the Cambridge University Press team and giving me time to share my work with a fantastic network of young interdisciplinary scholars. I am grateful to all of these institutions for help getting my career started.

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For most of the data in this book I relied on the goodwill and honesty of former combatants in Tajikistan and Georgia. The work must be dedicated, in large part, to Yuri, Vasha, Samojon, Sergei, and others who made introductions, vouched for my character, and shared difficult memories. None of their real names appear in this book for human subjects reasons that should be quickly apparent. Key respondents divulged their stories with the expectation that I would write a fair and accurate history. This book represents my best effort to honor their trust. I reserve a different sort of gratitude for the various families that opened their doors to me along the way – people who were not my human subjects, but whose humanity inspired me to try to write a good book about real people. Memories from the field fade unevenly, but I am always going to wonder what happened to Lira and Jamiliya and Siyl, to Anthony and Nino, to Elizabeth and Katherine, to Bahron and Mahmuba and Ikron and Shodmon. Most of my professional colleagues will recognize that the methods employed in this sort of fieldwork are not well-incentivized by the discipline of political science. As such, I am in an unusual sort of debt to David Laitin, whose scholarship and example convinced me that it really was all right, even in security studies, to lean heavily on the kinds of insights that only emerge through years of patient ethnography. That unusual debt extends to Stanford University's Department of Anthropological Sciences, personified by "Down Town" Melissa Brown and Kylea Liese. And to Azriel, who was one of the first to voice her concerns that this book was a thing of evil. (*Mine!*)

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I wouldn't have made it to Stanford at all if I hadn't met Charles King and Michael Brown just exactly when I did as an undergraduate at Georgetown University. If I wind the clock back further, I find that it is important that I use this space to thank Penny Johnston and Mark "Mad Dog" Bowman for

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