Constructing the "Abkhazian Issue" in the Georgian Press, 2002-2010

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Abstract: *Drawing on the fieldwork among the Georgian newspapers, in the period of 2002-2010, this article shows how the Georgian media has mediated "The Abkhazian Issue" in a relatively "cool" conflict context. In this case, mediation of the sequels and circumstances of the long-lasting ethno-political conflict coincides with mediation of nationhood and national identity in the era of declining and fragmenting a nation-state. The research aims to identify the construct "Abkhazian Issue" in the media of the parent state, Georgia, to highlight its latent variables and to identify the correlation between the components of this construct and vast social and political discourse in Georgia. The article is based on several research techniques: intensive (in-depth) interviews with eight respondents, content analysis (framing analysis approach) of 1,752 units from Georgian media, with further implication by factor analysis and the experimental designed panel discussion with 12 participants. In result, the key factor of mediation has been identified as a weakness, in general, of both of the parties of the conflict, and especially as a weakness of the breakaway region, Abkhazia, in nation-building, and in its insufficient capabilities to maintain even quasi-independent status. The weakness of Georgia is considered as a result of short-sighted policy, as well as of wasted opportunities for the reintegration and reconciliation with Abkhazia.*

Key Words: conflicts, nationalism, media.

Introduction

New Spaces on the Map of Globalized World of Nations—Mediating a Breakaway Region

Since the end of the World War II and the Cold War, the world has continued to watch how secessionist groups try to establish new states after breaking away from the modern states. Experts discuss and argue about whether these postmodernist "New Middle Ages" are the results of globalization or a trend designed to impede globalization. In this context, the term "New Middle Ages" may not be metaphorical at all. Indeed, there are similarities with the maps from the Middle Ages and today, given the claims of so-called breakaway regions regarding borders and dividing lines. Roberts (1985) wrote that the mediaeval maps represented the world unobsessed with the boundaries, that general areas were indicated for kingdoms and empires without the compulsion to represent the precise place where one kingdom ended and another started. As Mann (1988) points out, in Mediaeval Europe no single power controlled a clear-cut territory or the people within it. Today's map of the world of nations is full of such blurring lines between states, parent states and breakaway regions, even in the

case of Abkhazia where it is certainly unclear who is the real policy maker in this breakaway region, and whose authority legally spreads over the territory of Abkhazia.

It is important to touch on two concepts from the very start, those of the breakaway regions proper and their media image. The case of interest here, the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, and its media reflections, is part of the post-Soviet history.

In the final years of the Soviet Union (1991-1992), a trend became evident that the states (republics) and political institutions, declining in their powers, were no longer able to impose a uniform sense of identity. As Breuilly (as cited Billig, 1995, p. 133) noted, the USSR embodied Russian hegemony over the other 14 legally constituted republics, with over hundred "nationalities" also legally recognized. Billig (1995) also noted that, "Just as the republics have moved for national independence, so some of the "nationalities" now move against newly independent republics" (p. 133). So, the former Soviet republics have been threatened by the very sub-national processes which their own birth permitted. Billig (1995) characterized this process through the formula, "Having come into existence through processes of national fragmentation, they are liable to be threatened by the imaging of other identities, claiming their own even smaller homeland space" (p. 133).

As a result of these very processes, Abkhazia *de-facto* broke away from the rest of Georgia. Since September 1993, when, on September 27, the fall of Sokhumi marked the end of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, Abkhazia, as a political entity, has been referred to by various terms—de-facto, unrecognized, occupied—depending on certain political circumstances. The last internationally recognized name of Abkhazia belongs to the Soviet era. It was named Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia within the state borders of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. Norwegian researcher, Pal Kolsto (2006), points out that, "Like the former Soviet republics that today are independent states, most current quasi-states in post-Soviet Eurasia were also formerly federal units of the Soviet Union, but on a lower level" (p. 726). Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the international community enforced certain restrictions to limit the national self-identification of entities with different statuses. According to the Georgian Legislation, the latest applicable status of Abkhazia is "occupied territory."

Zygmunt Bauman (1993) argues that the nations being created in the contemporary postmodern world differ so much from the nations created by nationalism in the edge of modernity, that the term nation should not be properly applied. Specifically, he states that, "Exit the nation-state, enter the tribe" (p. 141). The new so-called nations lack "viability," because national viability has been undermined in the present world; they are too small to be sovereign, and, in any case, state sovereignty is disappearing (Bauman, 1992b, p. 675). "The rhetoric implies that France and the United States, having been established in the heyday of nationhood, were (and perhaps, still are) "real" nations. But Slovenia and Byelorus are *arrivistes*, seeking entrance after all the tickets to genuine nationhood have been sold" (Bauman, 1992b, p. 675).

But the modern world no longer perceives breakaway regions as something uncommon or incidental. Kolsto (2006) emphasizes,

> Since the end of the Cold War, there has clearly been a higher than average incidence of such entities in the former Soviet Union and in former Yugoslavia; that is, in two recently disintegrated multinational communist federations. In the former Soviet republic of Moldova, we find the Dniester Moldovan Republic (DMR); and in Azerbaijan,

the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR). Georgia has the dubious distinction of being the home of two quasi-states—Abkhazia and South Ossetia" (p. 726).

This process continues - two years ago, Crimea joined the ranks of the breakaway regions emerging in the territory of the former Soviet republics. The trend of fragmenting nation states is growing stronger in Europe as well.

As noted above the second key concept is related to media representation of a breakaway region. In our case, the perspective on Abkhazia and the "Abkhazian Issue" is Georgia-centric. The vision is produced *by and for* Georgians. It is broadly accepted that the concept of a nation-state still remains an important analytical unit, even in the times of media globalization (Flew & Waisbord, 2015). As many scholars point out, the mass media is regarded as a crucial instrument by which diverse conflicts within and among nations and nation-states are "mediatized," "performed," "enacted," or "narrated" (Matar & Harb, 2013). Thanks to Benedict Anderson (1983) and Michael Billig (1995), the role of the media in the forging of a given nation's symbolic discourse is defined in the late 20ᵗʰ century as the architect of imaginary unity and the reminder of national identity.

When studying the media presentation of statehood, researchers juxtapose two aspects of the media-nationhood nexus—ontological and epistemological. Roosvall and Salovaara-Moring (2010) point out that [… relevance of nationhood in media…] "ontologically it offers a sense of territorial stability and security while epistemologically it can supply a sense of familiarity and order in the global landscape" (p. 9). Even in that case when one state is split and national community loses its territorial base (as it happened in case of Georgia, when separation of Abkhazia was perceived by the majorities of Georgians as "a loss of Georgian land"), the media help community "to retain its … sentiment and "we feeling" (Oommen, p. 191).

The numerous recent global interdisciplinary research lead to a generalized conclusion that the emergence of any breakaway or *de-facto* entity and its media representation is subject to a general pattern made up of several characteristics. Examination of relevant literature (mainly Georgian sources, including *Pax Georgiana (Khatuna Maisashvili. Tbilisi: 2015*), *"Independence of Abkhazia – Premodern or Postmodern Project of Identity" (Khatuna Maisashvili, Paper for International Scientific Conference "Space and Society", June 2016, Tbilisi))* shows that these characteristics are quite broad, namely:

- Dynamics of relations between parent states and breakaway regions at different stages of a conflict; preconditions and prospects of the breakaway regions building and maintaining statehood.

- Nation-affirming rhetoric in the discourse of political leaders from both sides—when political leaders craft their public rhetoric and communication policies with the aim to create, control, and distribute the mediated messages as a political resource.

- Process of creation of different forms of psychological identifications with a nation, particularly in the international relations.

- Strong and weak points of both parent states and breakaway regions when it comes to creating effective mechanisms to manage conflicts and their consequences.

- Level of engagement of outside actors in conflicts in light of the military component.

- Engagement of supranational, global, and international organizations in the process.

- National components of breakaway regions; the economic development of breakaway regions.

- Attempts to discern the trajectory of the fate of breakaway regions, whether return and reintegration into the parent state or absorption into an outside master.

The Relevance and Objectives of the Study

The conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia, and the mediation of this conflict, has covered several stages. Naturally, the media representations of hot and relatively milder stages differ in many ways, such as different perception of danger, space and identity. Equally different is the effect of perception of each message by the audience who question whether the message is simply new knowledge or a signal to action.

According to the Georgian and international scholars, the initial stage in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict covered the period from July 1988 through August 14, 1992. It was a stage when the desire of Abkhazian political establishment and nationalist organizations to separate from Georgia was proclaimed. The second stage covers the war itself, the hottest period in the conflict, with its effects and consequences, from August 14, 1992 through September 27, 1993. The next stage covers six years from 1993 to 1999 when Georgian authorities instilled a sense of anticipation of "Abkhazia's rapid and honorable" return. From 1999 to 2002, both the relations between the parties to the conflict and the mediation of these relations ended up in stagnation.

The period selected for this study, from 2002 to 2010, is unique in several dimensions:

1) Its dynamics leading from fragmented relations between the parties to full termination as a result of Abkhazia's occupation by Russia.

2) Changing political rhetoric where, in 2003-2004, politicians whose names were tied to the initiation of the war left the political arena, and politicians upholding new visions took over in both Georgia and Abkhazia.

3) Both the effect and quality of outside interference (for example, the actions of Russia, Abkhazia's "outside master", from soft russification policy to military aggression.

4) The format of relations changed: direct meetings between the parties were interrupted by the occupation.

The research question to be undertaken in this study, therefore is, *What is the substantial meaning of the coverage of the "Abkhazian issue" in the Georgian media? What variables constitute it, and what defines the composition of this issue?*

Methods

The study employs a combined method, a mix of quantitative and qualitative analyses, to answer the following question with maximal precision: What components comprise the structure of the "Abkhazian Issue" in Georgian political, social, and cultural discourse?

1) The main findings of the study, which involve political, social, and cultural (including media) contexts and describe the specifics of the period chosen (2002-2010), are based on intensive interviews with experts, including academicians and policy researchers specializing in the Abkhazian issue, in addition to reporters and editors of media publications. The interviews were

held from July 2011 to March 2012. The intensive interviews involved eight interviewees. Since the interviewees were top quality professionals, our questions were designed to extract from them descriptions of facts or trends, recollections/reconstruction, and assessment. In particular, the questions involved:

a) *Perceptions of the "Abkhazian Issue" in different communications streams: i) results of surveys, ii) political platforms and political rhetoric, and iii) the media.*
b) *Perception of the "Abkhazian issue" at different stages of the conflict.*
c) *Identification of specific timeframes in the period under study and characterization of each stage.*
d) *Deictic centers for decision-making on the "Abkhazian issue."*

2) Content analysis (framing analysis approach) was used to study 1,752 stories of different genres published by the most widely-circulated and trusted publications, *Resonance,* daily, and the *Kviris Palitra* weekly, which are two independent Georgian newspapers, and in the agenda of which the "Abkhazian Issue" is highly ranked in comparison with other Georgian media. The unit of analysis is defined as any article from the total under study that involves:

a) *Relations between representatives of Georgian and Abkhazian elites at any given level or format of negotiations.*
b) *Initiatives by the Georgian Government and the de-facto authorities of Abkhazia, also by civil society organizations, involving the other party.*
c) *Existing or potential conflict resolution resources.*
d) *The image of Abkhazia and the Abkhazians.*
e) *Humanitarian problems triggered by the conflict.*
f) *Correlation between the identities of the Georgians and the Abkhazians (national identity, social identity, cultural/religious identity).*
g) *The state of ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia.*
h) *The roles and functions of outside actors in the dynamics of the conflict.*

The further stage involved processing of the results of frame analysis by using the statistical procedure of factor analysis.

Findings

A. **Effect of Presence. Perception of the "Abkhazian Issue" in Political, Social and Cultural Discourse. The implications of intensive interviews.**

Public Opinion, Political Discourse, and Media Discourse

The results of the intensive interviews reveal that the interviewees remember how the "Abkhazian Issue" was positioned in both public opinion surveys and political and media discourses. In particular, the issue of territorial integrity (formulated in this manner precisely) in the period under discussion was invariably among the top three issues of national importance, according to public opinion surveys conducted in Georgia annually by the U.S. National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI).

According to the experts, however, unlike other high-priority, urgent issues under the survey, the topic of the restoration of territorial integrity was not automatically reflected in the election campaign rhetoric of politicians. For example, the experts believe that, despite its top positions in surveys in 2003, the UNM's (United National Movement, the political party that came to power as a result of the Rose Revolution in 2003) election campaign rhetoric did not prioritize the "Abkhazian issue" at all. Moreover, it was probably viewed by Saakashvili and his team as a problem related directly to Shevardnadze, which would be solved after the toppling of Shevardnadze. From 2003 to 2010, the "Abkhazian issue" in political discourse underwent a tremendous transformation. In parallel with, or in place of, "the restoration of territorial integrity" political rhetoric employed substitute terms, such as reintegration, reclamation of Abkhazia, conflict resolution, and reconciliation with the Abkhazians, and, since 2008, de-occupation.

As for the media, the interviewees believe that, since the 1990s, the Georgian media defines its role as a reminder of national identity, including that of Abkhazia because it is an integral part of the internal national space. According to the interviewees, any given fact or event related to the "Abkhazian Issue" invariably meets value criteria, several at once, of information in every way. The receiving audience required from the press a frequency of presentations of the "Abkhazian issue" (a high frequency of media coverage is a characteristic of the representation of domestic environment), a higher scope covered by information (the higher the scope and dramatism of an event, the better it meets the reader's expectations), also ethnocentricity, that is, identification with the Georgian users of information, and continuity (even when the scope diminished, continuity an frequency compensated for the loss).

Characterization of Timeframes

During the interviews, interviewees were asked to recall, identify, and characterize, based on their professional experience, timeframes with clear, reasonable, and specific features. In other words, they were asked to compose different types of timeframes.

The generalization of this part of the interviewees revealed the following:

1) *2002-2003*: In the final two years of Eduard Shevardnadze's rule, the center of conflict management in public politics clearly relocated from Tbilisi and Sokhumi. Both Tbilisi and Sokhumi delegated different policy aspects to various domestic or foreign actors. In particular, the process of negotiations was entrusted in its entirety to international organizations. The inert format of peacemaking forces no longer guaranteed the conflict's maintenance at level zero. Finding "the key" to Abkhazia was a task assigned to Aslan Abashidze, the leader of the Adjara region. In 2002-2003, Tamaz Nadareishvili (the head of the legitimate Abkhazian Government) and the leaders of Georgian guerilla fighters seemed to make up the only motivated force able to reclaim Abkhazia. Russia as a political actor replaced Abkhazian authorities. In 2002, a threat of Russian aggression became evident, replaced in 2003 with the so-called Loshchinin Russification doctrine. Russians took over the Abkhazian property. The chaotic political processes in Abkhazia proceeded against the background of extremely difficult social and economic conditions and crime on the rise.

2) *2003-August 2004* marked the beginning of Saakashvili's rule, the resonating political victory of this new political leader in Adjara, and Aslan Abashidze, a leader of regional importance, fleeing Adjara. Saakashvili's government promoted a belief in the successful import of a scenario, similar to the Adjara scenario, in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, also implementing "humanitarian intervention" in so-called South Ossetia. The anticipated return of the breakaway regions proved a total failure.

3) *August 2004-May 2006* saw quite an intensive peacemaking process, with integration initiatives raised by the Georgian and Abkhazian sides. It was a field of miscommunication, with messages failing to match because these initiatives had no feedback. Saakashvili's government constantly reminded the Abkhazians, as well as Georgia's citizens, that there was an alternative scenario involving use of force.

4) *May 2006-August 2008*: the parties rejected, or neglected, initiatives regarding each other. Authorities pursued an active PR campaign promoting Kodori as Georgia's outpost. Open military rhetoric abounded, followed by the August 2008 war and the subsequent occupation of Abkhazia by Russia. From 2005 to 2008, the Georgian media disseminated information about Sergey Baghapshi's (Abkhazia's *de-facto* president) attempts to settle in Abkhazia ethnic Abkhazians, descendants of the mujahedeen fighters, from Turkey, and the families of volunteers from the North Caucasus, who enjoyed general ethnic solidarity with the Abkhazians.

5) *August 2008-2010* marked the beginning of a "dead era" when direct communication between the Abkhazians and the Georgians died. The efforts of the Georgian Government focused directly on the diplomatic front in order to prevent Abkhazia's international recognition as an independent state.

6) *Deictic centers:* The interviewed experts value the locations of media stories and the locations from which they were reported, because they believe that it had an impact on the nature of mediatization and the perception of messages. There are several deictic centers: Tbilisi (the center of Georgian politics); Sokhumi (the center of Abkhazian politics); Abkhazian territories, except Gali (mediatized, for the most part, according to Abkhazian and Russian sources; Gali (conveyed based directly on narratives of eyewitnesses, that is, first sources. Information and news broadcasts from Gali portray local Georgians as hostages of location, as persons abused and stripped of their rights on ethnic grounds, venues of negotiations, Georgia's regions with different statuses, and ongoing processes in which may have an impact on Abkhazia.

B. The mediatized components of the "Abkhazian issue. Outcomes of framing analysis, factor analysis and experimental designed focus-group.

A content analysis was conducted at the initial stage of the study. Media content compression of 1,752 samples reflecting the "Abkhazian issue" was split into thematic frameworks/schemata used by the Georgian media for the media representation of the Abkhazian issue, namely:

1) Tense and/or uncontrollable criminal situation in Abkhazia.
2) Hard economic conditions in Abkhazia.
3) Hazelnut harvest season resembles hunting season.

4) Level of crime in Abkhazia peaks during tourist season.
5) Georgian authorities do not know how, or simply cannot, carry out effective policy in relation to Abkhazia.
6) Georgia's government policy and actions in relation to Russian peacekeepers are inconsistent.
7) International organization are ineffective in Georgia-Abkhazia conflict resolution.
8) Guerilla fighters are the only force motivated enough to reclaim Abkhazia.
9) The stance of Abkhazia's legitimate authorities is that enforcement (war) is the only way to reclaim Abkhazia.
10) North Caucasian solidarity has an immense and dangerous impact on Abkhazia-Georgia relations.
11) Abkhazia is yet another "regional" issue facing Georgia's authorities, similar to the problem of Aslan Abashidze's Adjarian separatism.
12) Political parties and experts view offering the Abkhazians appealing investment opportunities as a way to establish a dialogue with Abkhazia and Abkhazians.
13) International trade and infrastructural projects offer a real opportunity to integrate Abkhazia into Georgia.
14) The Abkhazian issue becomes relevant in Georgian politics only during electoral campaigns
15) Abkhazia's *de facto* government is Russia's proxy.
16) Russia's Abkhazian policy seeks to conquer Abkhazia, not to promote its independence.
17) Russian investments are not investments as such, but an outright robbery, appropriation of public assets.
18) Georgia-Abkhazia conflict stems from an ethnic identity conflict.
19) Status is the key issue in Georgia-Abkhazia relations.
20) Abkhazians would rather opt for a confederation, not a federation.
21) Abkhazian authorities are concerned about Abkhazia's ethnic diversity.
22) Abkhazian authorities are seeking another "external partner."
23) Members of the Abkhazian community do not enjoy equal civil rights.
24) Sergey Bagapsh, "President of Gali Georgians and Gagra Armenians."
25) The Rose Revolution may be exported to Abkhazia.
26) The Rose Revolution cannot be exported to Abkhazia.
27) The Kodori Gorge, as a PR promotion strategy for Upped Abkhazia, is a hoax, not a constructive political decision.
28) Granting the status of Upper Abkhazia to the Kodori Gorge is a step toward reclaiming Abkhazia.
29) Georgia's authorities are taking imprudent steps and blocking informal Georgia-Abkhazia dialogue.
30) Abkhazia is just one big Russian military base.
31) Gali is alienated by both Georgians and Abkhazians.
32) Diplomacy is the only domain where the Georgian side can fight to prevent recognition of Abkhazia as an independent state.
33) The end of the August 2008 war is a dead-end in Georgia-Abkhazia relations.
34) Abkhazia's legitimate government plans a campaign to recruit ethnic Abkhazians.
35) Occupation changes the situation drastically.

The schemata show that these 35 frameworks describe the forms of relations between Georgia and Abkhazia, as well as their determinant variations.

Next, 12 political experts were selected and employed as participants of panel discussionwhere they were asked to use the frameworks above to answer the following question: *How dependent on Georgia's political developments are the facts/events reflected in the schemata?* Answers were expected to be given on a scale 1 to 5 standing for:

(1) Not dependent at all
(2) Dependent insignificantly
(3) Somewhat dependent
(4) Dependent significantly
(5) Totally dependent

In addition, factor analysis was used to identify whether or not it was possible logically to link the frameworks/schemata to the factors that would explain the typology of Georgia-Abkhazia relations. The average scale was calculated by mode.
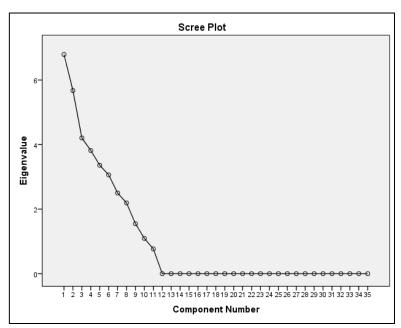
1) Tense and/or uncontrollable criminal situation in Abkhazia -1
2) Hard economic conditions in Abkhazia – 1
3) Hazelnut harvest season resembles hunting season – 2
4) Level of crime in Abkhazia peaks during tourist season – 1
5) Georgian authorities do not know how, or cannot, carry out effective policy in relation to Abkhazia – 5
6) Georgia's government policy and actions in relation to Russian peacekeepers are inconsistent – 4
7) International organization are ineffective in Georgia-Abkhazia conflict resolution – 3
8) Guerilla fighters are the only force motivated enough to reclaim Abkhazia – 4
9) The stance of Abkhazia's legitimate authorities is that enforcement (war) is the only way to reclaim Abkhazia – 5
10) North Caucasian solidarity has an immense and dangerous impact on Abkhazia-Georgia relations – 1
11) Abkhazia is yet another "regional" issue facing Georgia's authorities, similar to the problem of Aslan Abashidze's Adjarian separatism – 5
12) Political parties and experts view offering the Abkhazians appealing investment opportunities as a way to establish dialogue with Abkhazia and Abkhazians – 5
13) International trade and infrastructural projects offer a real opportunity to integrate Abkhazia into Georgia – 4
14) The Abkhazian issue becomes relevant in Georgian politics only during electoral campaigns – 5
15) Abkhazia's *de facto* government is Russia's proxy – 1
16) Russia's Abkhazian policy seeks to conquer Abkhazia, no to promote its independence – 2
17) Russian investments are not investments as such, but an outright robbery, appropriation of public assets – 1
18) Georgia-Abkhazia conflict stems from an ethnic identity conflict – 4
19) Status is the key issue in Georgia-Abkhazia relations – 4
20) Abkhazians would rather opt for a confederation, not a federation – 4
21) Abkhazian authorities are concerned about Abkhazia's ethnic diversity – 2
22) Abkhazian authorities are seeking another "external partner" – 1
23) Members of Abkhazian community do not enjoy equal civil rights – 1
24) Sergey Bagapsh, "President of Gali Georgians and Gagra Armenians" – 1

25) The Rose Revolution may be exported to Abkhazia – 2
26) The Rose Revolution cannot be exported to Abkhazia – 3
27) The Kodori Gorge, as a PR promotion strategy for Upped Abkhazia, is a hoax, not a constructive political decision – 5
28) Granting the status of Upper Abkhazia to the Kodori Gorge is step toward reclaiming Abkhazia – 5
29) Georgia's authorities are taking imprudent steps and blocking informal Georgia-Abkhazia dialogue – 5
30) Abkhazia is just one big Russian military base – 2
31) Gali is alienated by both Georgians and Abkhazians – 4
32) Diplomacy is the only domain where the Georgian side can fight to prevent Abkhazia's recognition – 5
33) The end of the August 2008 war is a dead-end in Georgia-Abkhazia relations – 2
34) Abkhazia's legitimate government plans a campaign to recruit ethnic Abkhazians – 5
35) Occupation changes the situation drastically – 2

Discussion

As is clear, the results of the research were represented by the scaled data. The respondents used a summated rating approach, or Likert scale, to agree or disagree with the framed statements. That permitted conducting the factor analysis. Framed data were grouped as the certain factors for identifying the dimensions of evaluation. The process of factor analysis included three stages: extraction, rotation, and interpretation.

Stage 1: Extraction, or identification of the Number of Factors

For identifying the number of factors, a decision was made to use a scree plot. This approach implies usage of two criteria. In one case, factors were extracted with an eigenvalue more than 1 on the scree plot, and in another case, the number of factors was counted down above the point where the scree plot creates the angle. Thus, in this case, both approaches point out 10 factors extracted. Figure 1 depicts extraction 1, the reduction of factors.

Stage 2: Rotation

After establishing the number of factors, based on the theoretical background of the study, it was necessary to identify whether the factors should be in correlation and what should be the degree of correlation. While in case of the data, factors may not correlate with each other, thus, orthogonal resolution Varimax was chosen.

Prior to detailed analysis of the table of correlation, it became obvious that the correlation was almost equal—the table does not reveal a particularly high correlation among the certain judgements, so we have no need to remove some of the statements. In analysis of variances, the data of the first three factors were used, since it covered most of the variations; namely, in this case, it explained 92% of the variances.

The rotation matrix (Table 1) shows the distribution of the statements into 10 groups of factors, namely:

1. Factor 1 includes statements N11, N12, N13 and N15. The degree of correlation among the factors is high.
2. Factor 2 includes statements N9, N14, N23 and N34. Inside the factor, statement N 34 has the lowest correlation rate.
3. Factor 3 includes statements N5, N10, N14, N28. Statement N 10 has the lowest correlation rate inside the factor.
4. Factor 4 includes statements N2, N3, N26, N27 and N35. Inside the factor, statement N35 has the lowest rate of correlation.
5. Factor 5 includes statements N7, N19, N31 and N33, inside which statement N31 has the lowest correlation rate.
6. Factor 6 includes statements N25, N26, N29 and N32, where statement N32 has the weakest correlation.
7. Factor 7includes statements N17, 18 and N21, where statement N18 has the weakest correlation.
8. Factor 8 includes statements N1, N4, N6, N8, inside which statements 4 and 6 have weaker correlation.
9. Factor 9 includes statements N20 and N22.
10. Factor 10 includes statement N30.

Table 1
Rotated Component Matrix[*]

	Factor									
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
A12	-.908	-.185	-.117			-.259		-.168		-.118
A15	.908	.185	.117			.259		.168		.118
A13	.908	.185	.117			.259		.168		.118
A11	-.887	.272		.169	-.105		.112		.121	.226

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A23		-.954								.179
A9		.877	.223		.221		.248		.183	
A14	-.108	.689	.440	-.156	-.114		.145	.384	.272	
A34	.229	-.559	.107			.491	.529		.177	-.161
A5		.247	.946							.109
A24		-.405	-.733		.259		-.283		-.326	
A28		-.161	.677	.472		.476		.229		
A10	-.332		-.577		-.540		-.164			.442
A3	.185			-.933	-.130	.107		.130	.210	
A2	.470			.651	.182	.290	.135		-.209	.351
A27		-.130	.266	.650	-.110	.269		.134	.610	
A16	.184	.149	.160	.604	-.123	.159	.596			
A35	.294	-.280		.507	-.399		.276		-.319	-.444
A31			.368	.100	.873			-.133		.174
A33			.302	.107	-.812	.142	.147			.220
A19	-.159	.259	-.407	.318	.727	.273		-.127		.128
A7	-.277	.318	-.405	-.113	.499		.163	.434	.393	.151
A26	-.223					-.908		.139	.245	
A25	-.255		-.331	-.142		-.778		.377	.128	.157
A29						.659	.418	.510	.180	.224
A32		.135	-.105	-.441	-.333	.635		.124	.167	.445
A21	-.187	.116	.142				.954			
A17	-.162	.276	-.170	-.204	-.390	.236	.664			-.403
A18	.532	-.210	-.137	-.250		.126	-.564	-.140	.434	-.175
A1	.284	-.129		-.246			-.113	.769	.168	.429
A8		-.289	-.193	-.162	.227	.167	-.435	-.758		
A4	-.167	.294	-.555	-.215	.251	-.126	-.249	.575	-.144	.181

A6	-.282	.474		-.447	-.172	.324	.204	-.501	.113	-.193
A20		.127		-.222	.165	-.175			.928	
A22	.465	-.284		.252	.238	.226	.308	-.165	-.620	
A30	.134	-.112		.126				.263		.922

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
*Rotation converged in 25 iterations.

Stage 3: Interpretation

The analysis makes it evident what kinds of latent variables relate with the identified factors and how they are determined by political will and actions by the side of the Georgian authorities, how much they depend on the strength or weakness of Georgia as a parent-state. However, the results of analysis demand the further implication and interpretation as far as each factor seeks for the certain political formulation and signification, determined by the political conjuncture. The order of signification is organized owing more or less subjective to the judgement of the researcher, despite the factors are identified with quantitative logics and procedure.

As is evident, the statements forming Factor 1, are connected with the paradigm strength-weakness (the parent-state and the break-away region). The statements construct the thread as follows: (1) Georgia is strong, and Abkhazia is weak; (2) Georgia possesses all the opportunities to convince the Abkhazians that to be part of Georgia is economically and politically attractive for them; (3) Georgia has been becoming attractive owing to the potential of regional infrastructure projects; (4) the regional projects are considered as a chance of development for Abkhazia, because Abkhazia has no resources for economic development, for promotion of its own initiatives for development at least the quasi-state. Factor 1 is thus named, "The potential possibilities of Georgia for returning Abkhazia".

Factor 2, based on the values of its constituent propositions, can be named as "Dispersed strategy in relations to Abkhazia within the political spectrum of Georgia." Under a dispersed strategy it combines as well the position of legitimate government of Abkhazia (displaced) that is adjusted for ultimate results, so the position of the Saakashvili government, configured for PR and propaganda, as the eventual, inconsistent approach of the Georgian political parties to find a resolution for the "Abkhazian problem," which is actualized only in the pre-electoral context. This factor indicates the unawareness by the Georgian authorities about owning those levers of influence on Abkhazia, which was represented in the Factor 1. Conceptually, creation of such a strategy depends entirely on the policy of the government of Georgia, although its execution depends only partially.

Factor 3 combines the judgments that can be called "Disregarding collateral risks by the parent-state." These judgments relate to the risks, the total management of which goes beyond the competences and capacities of the Georgian authorities, but, nevertheless, their incorporation into strategy would have prevented certain complications of the Abkhaz-Georgian relations. This primarily concerns the factor of North Caucasian, Adyghe solidarity. Factor 3 represents the continuation of the Factor 2, since in this case we observe the process in which the Georgian side seeking for maximum results does not take into account the "complexity" and "package nature" of relations with Abkhazians. The order of political priorites devoids a political and rational logics.

Factor 4 represents the unity of judgments, in which Abkhazia is represented as a "disaster area," as a place of chaos and crime. Such a representation creates for the recipient the expectation that "poor, weary from the excesses" Abkhazia will be back to Georgia. This factor can be called "The weaker Abkhazia, the more chances for reintegration with Georgia." Included in Factor 4, judgments portray a picture, for which the Georgian government is not responsible, but it is the result of the war, it is the choice of the Abkhazian people for which they are paying. It is not surprising that journalists, portraying an image of the "disaster area" often use symbolic codes, creating a contrast between the "old, prosperous, Georgian Abkhazia" and the present Abkhazia, which remained without Georgia and became mired in poverty and chaos.

Factor 5 and Factor 6 can be combined under one signification unit "Formative problem in the relations between Abkhazia and Georgia." Problems related to the format, do not mean only the formalities in the process of negotiations, as judgments, included in the Factors 5 and 6 affect the meaningful dimensions of relations, such as actors of the negotiation process, subject of the talks, context of negotiations, etc. These factors indirectly relate to the role of international and supranational organizations that, along with the authorities of Georgia, were unable to find the adequate formats to the real issues.

Judgments forming Factor 7 relate to the national identity contradictions between, on the one hand, Georgia and Abkhazia, and, on the other hand, between Russia and Abkhazia. These specifically include the nature of Russian expansion in Abkhazia, predatory patronage over Abkhazia, which causes protest among the Abkhaz; ethnic and value conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia; and the Abkhaz authorities' concern the ethnic diversity of the region. How much this factor depends on the policy of the Georgian government is not clear; the answer is ambiguous as the Georgian-Abkhazian relations are based on other categories of identity. The factor can be named "Challenging Identity".

Factor 8 coincides in some dimensions with the Factor 4 and may be called "Weak Abkhazia" (but without perspective to return to Georgia).

Factor 9 has a clear meaning and can be called "Quest for status outside of Georgia" or "Status with a minimal dependence on Georgia."

Factor 10, including only one statement "Abkhazia is a big Russian Military Base," refers to the occupied status of Abkhazia, or "Dead end of relations."

Conclusion

The findings of the analysis conducted should answer the following question: Are the strong or weak points of Georgia and Abkhazia one-dimensional phenomena, or do they turn into weak or strong points in particular contexts?

A combination of factors show that both sides, in their media representation of the "Abkhazian Issue," materialize in particular combinations. For example, Georgia appears as a party with supranational organizations as a facilitator strengthening Georgia's positions, while Abkhazia appears as a party with Russia, with its different functions, as a peacemaker, promoting and recognizing the independence of Abkhazia's statehood, and ultimately as an occupant.

Georgia's weak points lie in missed opportunities and a fragmented vision of regulating the Abkhazian problem. From a formal point of view, no fragmentation may be detected, and only one goal may be discerned on the surface; that of Abkhazia's incorporation into Georgia—Georgia must reclaim Abkhazia! However, the problem is in the diversity of meaning of this very "reclamation" and "living together," depending on how these terms are perceived. Is it about going into war and conquering Abkhazia by force? Restoration of territorial integrity? Reintegration? Confidence building among Abkhazians toward Georgians? To share with Abkhazians, who choose Georgian citizenship, the benefits accessible to Georgians? This very immaturity of a conceptual vision has turned into Georgia's weak point because it goes without saying that each of the processes listed above drastically differ methodologically, in terms of mechanisms of operation. This fragmented vision has intensified format-related problems for the parties to the conflict (read facilitators as well).

The Georgian media of 2002-2010 blindly followed political discourse, which is preconditioned and nourished by the media fearing that they perhaps involuntarily break the stereotypes imbedded in Georgia's collective consciousness. Some of these stereotypes include the hierarchy "Georgia as a dominant, and Abkhazia as a subject," perceptions about negotiations as a negative, futile practice, perceptions about Abkhazia as a "weak" and "isolated" tribal unity, and others.

The weaknesses of the sides, especially the Abkhazian party, as the key factor pertaining to the "Abkhazian issue", may be examined in two dimensions, political and psychological. Politically, the media offer a fragmented picture of the situation in Abkhazia, which may be easily generalized; Abkhazia, separated from Georgia, has been unable to enjoy its (albeit unrecognized) sovereignty because declared state independence and an obligation of unity (as a nation) alone have proved insufficient to shape a modern state. The history of such quasi-independence, which spans almost 20 years, has confirmed that neither Abkhazia nor South Ossetia has been able to forge its population into "a nation" (in modern political sense) because it cannot guarantee the population's political or economic rights, territorial mobility, freedom of movement, and equal rights. Further, Abkhazia is boxed in by tribal nationalism, unable to break through the vicious cycle of clan loyalty. Georgia's weakness in the same dimension points to the decay of political visions and institutions in Georgia that have been traditionally used to view the relations between Georgia and Abkhazia. Psychologically, the Georgian media gleefully emphasize the weakness of the Abkhazians, their total ineffectiveness without outside protection; the weaknesses of the Georgian side, as portrayed by the media, instill shame in the audience at first and then wrath triggered by the unaccomplished national mission.

The vision of the "Abkhazian issue" is Georgian-centric. In other words, it relies on the media content created by Georgian reporters for Georgian audiences, which means that this study is limited, and that a study employing the same method, but assessing different media engaged in the issue, is most likely to deliver different results.

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