

Factors of Georgian Politics influenced Abkhazian-Georgian Relationships in Media Representation. 2002-2010

Khatuna Maisashvili and Medea Despotashvili

Abstract—The article studies and analyzes the factors of the political process in Georgia in relation to the breakaway region of Abkhazia in 2002-2010. One of the specific features of the article is a media-centric view of this process. The methodological basis of the article, due to the complex nature of the issue under study, is split, on one hand, into a quantitative analysis of the empirical data (descriptive statistics of 1752 units of analysis from the Georgian press, their content-analysis and the procedure of factor analysis) and, on the other hand, into a qualitative analysis of the text of the same empirical base through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The second distinctive feature of the article is the wide coverage of events and a long-time continuum, allowing the author to convey as chronologically so logically the complex nature of the "Abkhazian Question" and dynamics of the process through nine years: from the last year of Shevardnadze's rule to the occupation of Abkhazia by Russia during Saakashvili's rule.

Keywords— Georgia, Abkhazia, Media, Conflict, Socio-political order.

I. INTRODUCTION. NEW-BORN PARENT-STATES AND BREAK-AWAY REGIONS. EARLY 90S.

In the final years of the Soviet Union (1989-1991), the trend became evident, that more or less autonomous Political-Administrative units and political institutions, declining in their powers, were no longer able to impose a uniform sense of identity. Breuilly (as quoted in Billig [1995, 133]) noted, the USSR embodied Russian hegemony over the other 14 legally constituted republics, with over hundred "nationalities" also legally recognized. Billig (1995) noted that, "Just as the republics have moved for national independence, so some of the "nationalities" now move against newly independent republics" (ibid). So, the former Soviet republics were 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" (ibid). As a result of these very processes, former Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia

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de-facto broke away from the rest of Georgia. Since 1993, when, on September 27, the fall of Sokhumi (capital city of Abkhazian Autonomous Republic) marked the end of the Georgian-Abkhazian war, Abkhazia, as a political entity, has been referred to by various terms—de-facto, unrecognized, occupied—depending on certain political circumstances from 1992 to 2008.

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, 141) 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". 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, 675). "Nevertheless, the modern world no longer perceives break-away regions as something uncommon or incidental. Kolsto (2006, 726) 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".

II. FOLLOWING "ABKHAZIAN QUESTION" IN POLITICAL AND MEDIA DISCOURSE IN LATE 90S AND EARLY 2000S. EMPIRICAL OBSERVATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

Since 1988, with the appearance of the first sprouts of separatism in Abkhazia, the "Abkhazian question" has become a matter of serious concern for Georgian society, the ruling elite and the intelligentsia. At that time, no sociological research was conducted on this issue, but the media content gives sufficient grounds to conclude that all aspects of this concern were reduced to the realization that the territorial integrity and national unity of the Georgian state were under threat.

As Georgian scholars (e.g. Andronikashvili, Maisuradze,

2007; Maisashvili, 2010) mentioned, the media content of the 90s showed how the political elite and intelligentsia, through public statements and speeches, seek to use the media as a "political resource", as a means of creating and distributing information in order to more effectively mobilize public emotions during the "Abkhazian" and "Ossetian" crises. Representatives of the Georgian intelligentsia were trying to show Abkhazians and Ossetians the advantages of living together within a single independent Georgian state. For example, "Abkhazia is a synonym for the word "Georgia"...To tell a Georgian that Abkhazia can secede from Georgia (I'm talking about the structure of the nation, not about reality) is about the same as saying "Georgia can separate from itself" (Droni, August 19, 1991; interview with Georgian philosopher Merab Mamardashvili), or "there was a Christian Abkhazian ethnic group that played a huge role and took an active part in the formation of Georgian statehood and in Georgian politics. Go and explain all this now to today's Soviet Abkhazian, befuddled by the Soviet system. He's brainwashed just like a Soviet Georgian. Nations can only get out of this situation together, together!" (Mamuli, December 14, 1990).

In 1992-1993, taking into account war situation, "Abkhazian question" received special media coverage. Therefore, this topic is not considered in this study.

Georgian scholars (Gogoladze, Maisashvili, Toklikishvili, 2015) noted, that in 1994 the "Abkhazian question" became an integral part of the election rhetoric. According to their conclusions, the same thing happened in 1998 and 2002. At that time there were four main components in the perception of the "Abkhazian issue": (1) public opinion on this issue; (2) public order for politicians on the issue; (3) the essence and meaning of public order in the understanding of politicians; and (4) political discourse transformed into mass media discourse.

"Unlike public opinion, public order is formed in the process of interaction of society with the political elite. This is an order for political players to act in a certain direction. At its core, a public order is a consensus. The task that society demands from politicians can be achieved to a certain extent and with a certain degree of success, taking into account the political expediency and capabilities of specific political players. Mass media discourse is formed under the influence of public opinion, public order and how public order is understood by politicians. However, its content and forms of expression depend on the socio-cultural and normative-operational patterns of the functioning of the media. If in the study of public opinion the expression "territorial integrity" has absolute value and significance, in the public order it can actually express and imply political aspiration, initiative and practical actions aimed at restoring territorial integrity. At the height of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, the expression "restoration of territorial integrity" in media content was equivalent to "conflict resolution".

To develop their findings one can point out, that in the "frozen" phase of the conflict, these two concepts were pragmatically separated from each other: "restoration of territorial integrity" referred to the goal, and "resolution of the conflict" was the task that had to be accomplished for achieving

this goal. The prolongation, "freezing" of the conflict led to the emergence of buffer concepts between these two constructions, such as, for example, "reintegration". This expression appeared when the actors of the Georgian-Abkhaz relations represented in the media lost the features characteristic of the conflicting parties, or when the perception of a particular process created illusion that the conflict in its literal meaning had already been exhausted. In this case, "reintegration" was sometimes equated in meaning with "conflict resolution", sometimes it became an antonym of this expression, and sometimes it was presented as a means to achieve the goal of "conflict resolution", which in turn served another purpose – "restoration of territorial integrity".

The study of the range of issues and topics covered in the media shows that "conflict resolution" was presented as a more difficult task than "restoration of territorial integrity". Analysis of the media content revealed another specific version of the possible development of events – "the return of Abkhazia". This construction was used most often, although its essence and means of achievement were not always unambiguous.

If, for various reasons, the process of interaction proceeded with complications and difficulties, then politicians were not able to adequately assess the significance of the public order and as a result of distorted "decoding" in political discourse.

The dynamics of the study of public opinion in Georgia shows that for eight years (from 2003 to 2010 inclusive), the problem of territorial integrity constantly appeared (in the first, second or third place) in the top three problems that Georgian society demanded from the authorities (Source: Annual analytical reports of the International Republican Institute of the USA). According to a public opinion poll conducted in May 2003, respondents ranked the problem of territorial integrity as the third most important issue – 16%; 31% of respondents called the inability to preserve territorial integrity the most serious shortcoming of the government (first place); according to 93% of respondents, the solution of the problem of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was of paramount importance; Almost half of the respondents (49%) believed that Abkhazia and South Ossetia should have had the status of an ordinary region within Georgia (without any autonomy) on a par with other regions (43% of respondents agreed that Abkhazia and South Ossetia should receive the status of autonomy within Georgia). In a survey conducted in May-June 2006, after the military actions around Tskhinvali in the summer of 2004 (among the most serious mistakes of the authorities, respondents ranked these events in third place – 7%), 48% of respondents said that determining the status of Abkhazia as part of the Georgian state is a more urgent task than determining the status of South Ossetia. While asked about possible ways to resolve the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, 80% of respondents preferred a peaceful resolution (through negotiations) and only 14% favored the use of force.

Early 2000s is the very period when Shevardnadze's rule was gradually removed by National Movement and Saakashvili's team. This lack of emphasis on conflict resolution was clearly observed in the rhetoric of the leaders of the National Movement in the previous period, until 2002. It could be

assumed that at that time the National Movement simply followed the "rules of the game" established by the ruling political elite at that time and only reacted to the rhetoric of Shevardnadze's entourage and political supporters, not considering society as a full-fledged participant in this process.

Due to the lack of relevant empirical data, we have no way to judge what place in the political hierarchy the future "rose revolutionaries" assigned to the problem of territorial integrity, what policy they intended to pursue in the field of conflict resolution. However, the general communication background and statements of individual leaders suggest that: a) or for certain reasons, the National Movement refrained from emphasizing the problem of Abkhazia; b) either considered it a personal problem of Shevardnadze, one of the usual regional problems, which would be solved by itself after Shevardnadze's departure and that Georgia without Shevardnadze would immediately become so attractive to the Abkhaz people and the political elite of Abkhazia that they would want to reunite as much as they once wanted to separate. One can also only guess what caused such views.

However, an analysis of the content of the Georgian press on the problem of Abkhazia showed that later, after the National Movement came to power and began to independently determine the main political line without feeling the need to "repel" the attacks of hostile ideology, the public order found itself in such a "vacuum", such a "dead zone" of political strategic interaction that it ceased to be a serious factor.

The three distinctive features identified during the analysis of media content, characteristic of that time, allow us to assume that the interaction between society and the main political players was excessively complicated, or proceeded against the background of the accompanying semantic "noise", and political players built their strategy based on their understanding of the public order. The analysis of the coverage of the Abkhazian problem in the Georgian press allowed us to identify three aspects that support this assumption:

- The leading political players did not know what language should be used when discussing the "Abkhazian issue", which caused complete discursive chaos and led to the appearance of a motley conglomerate of statements and comments. Collective Saakashvili monopolized all the discourses that existed before him, each of which had its own author or vocalizer: a national idea, aggressive ethnocentric patriotic rhetoric, vocabulary of international institutions, simultaneous and unbalanced calls for both war and peace. Despite the change in role models, the fear of the possible collapse of the state and the external (Russian) threatened to statehood continued to be manipulated.

- Leading political players operated in the "stopwatch" mode, when planned or expected events were prepared in advance and held at a certain time, that is, an illusory time and reality are created. Mikheil Saakashvili promised the society to return – or return to - Abkhazia already in the first term of his presidency. The rhetoric of the authorities regularly mentioned such hypothetical situations that would necessarily occur in the future and all political discussion focused on the significance of this "pre-announced" event, which in the existing context could

only distract attention or cause an inadequate reaction from any specific or potential "consumer" of this information.

- The political agenda created a socially demanded picture of the dynamics of the political and public life of Abkhazia. This was "The independence of Abkhazia is a pre-modern or fictitious project of self-determination." In the media content devoted to the project of independence of Abkhazia, emphasis was placed on the characteristic features of pre-modernism: a "closed" ethnocentric quasi-community with a mentality and values inherent in the tribal system, which broke and destroyed the foundations of their national identity and self-identification, established and rooted thanks to social practice and traditions (with the Georgian ethnos), the blood loyalty with which the North Caucasian peoples remembered only during the war, but refrain from partnership in peacetime; a quasi-state entity whose attributes of independence Russia supported only in an anti-Georgian context; in which the legitimacy of the de-facto president was determined only by the degree of loyalty and support from ethnic Abkhazians; a region with severe socio-economic problems where human rights and norms of international, including humanitarian, law are systematically violated.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

The research question for the study is: what factors to what extent determined the nature of attitudes to the "Abkhazian question" of the Georgian media we studied. The author used two methods to examine this issue: content analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis. The factors are determined in a result of quantitative content analysis and introduced in form of descriptive statistics in tables, with further implication of factor analysis. Political discourse in the media and media discourse itself were studied by the method of critical discourse analysis in three dimensions (Fairclough, 1992). As it is known, Fairclough (1992) posed and explain three stages for the analysis of a discourse: personal experience and knowledge, affection of context on discourse and realization by communicator reality and identity. The empirical base (media content) allows us to focus on the discursive analysis of the context.

For quantitative method

In order to analyze the thematic framework and approaches in the coverage of the "Abkhazian issue" in the Georgian media in 2002-2010, the content of the daily newspaper Resonance and the weekly newspaper Kviris Palitra were studied – a total 1752 units of analysis. The choice of newspapers was determined by their availability nationwide, the degree of public trust (according to the IRI survey, about 70% of respondents said they trusted media content) and the discursive diversity of their content.

The construct of the "Abkhazian question" combined media units on the topics as follows:

- relations between the Georgian and Abkhaz political elites during negotiations at all levels and in any format;
- initiatives of the Georgian and (de-facto) Abkhaz authorities and public organizations in relation to each other;
- existing and potential conflict resolution resources;

interests of direct participants in the conflict and other parties involved in the conflict;

- historical past, current situation and future prospects of Abkhazia and the Abkhaz people (in accordance with the time and place of the events described in the media);
- approaches and views of Georgian and Abkhaz societies grouped into appropriate categories on the problems of identity and self-determination;
- processes taking place in other regions of Georgia, but capable of influencing the development of events in Abkhazia;
- conditions of life and civil rights of ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia.

The analysis of the content of the studied media content allowed us to identify the following formative factors of the "Abkhazian question":

- non-military, political factors (disintegrative, at the level of participants and involved parties);
- non-military, political factors (integrative, at the level of participants and involved parties);
- non-military, political factors (potentially integrative, at the level of political parties and public associations);
- military-political factors (between participants and involved parties with different direction of vectors and different amplitude);
- identity factors (association of people on the basis of common citizenship, nationality, religion, territory of residence);
- socio-criminal factors on ethnic grounds in Abkhazia;
- socio-economic factors.

In exhibitions below (1[1.1- 1.7]) we can introduce results of descriptive statistics.

Ex.1 Factors classified (cumulative content 2002-2010)

A. 2002

Name of factor	(N)
non-military, political factors (disintegrative, at the level of participants and involved parties)	67
non-military, political factors (integrative, at the level of participants and involved parties)	0
non-military, political factors (potentially integrative, at the level of political parties and public associations)	0
military-political factors (between participants and involved parties with different direction of vectors and different amplitude)	53
identity factors (association of people on the basis of common citizenship, nationality, religion, territory of residence)	75
socio-criminal factors on ethnic grounds in Abkhazia	39
socio-economic factors	11

B. 2003

Name of factor	(N)
non-military, political factors (disintegrative, at the level of participants and involved parties)	92
non-military, political factors (integrative, at the level of participants and involved parties)	2
non-military, political factors (potentially integrative, at the level of political parties and public associations)	13
military-political factors (between participants and involved parties with different direction of vectors and different amplitude)	35
identity factors (association of people on the basis of common citizenship, nationality, religion, territory of residence)	35
socio-criminal factors on ethnic grounds in Abkhazia	47
socio-economic factors	4

C. 2004

Name of factor	(N)
non-military, political factors (disintegrative, at the level of participants and involved parties)	105
non-military, political factors (integrative, at the level of participants and involved parties)	45
non-military, political factors (potentially integrative, at the level of political parties and public associations)	7
military-political factors (between participants and involved parties with different direction of vectors and different amplitude)	60
identity factors (association of people on the basis of common citizenship, nationality, religion, territory of residence)	34
socio-criminal factors on ethnic grounds in Abkhazia	30
socio-economic factors	7

D. 2005

Name of factor	(N)
non-military, political factors (disintegrative, at the level of participants and involved parties)	107
non-military, political factors (integrative, at the level of participants and involved parties)	13
non-military, political factors (potentially integrative, at the level of political parties and public associations)	7
military-political factors (between participants and involved parties with different direction of vectors and different amplitude)	59
identity factors (association of people on the basis of common citizenship, nationality, religion, territory of residence)	35
socio-criminal factors on ethnic grounds in Abkhazia	51
socio-economic factors	9

E. 2006-2007

Name of factor	(N)
non-military, political factors (disintegrative, at the level of participants and involved parties)	114
non-military, political factors (integrative, at the level of participants and involved parties)	28
non-military, political factors (potentially integrative, at the level of political parties and public associations)	0
military-political factors (between participants and involved parties with different direction of vectors and different amplitude)	45
identity factors (association of people on the basis of common citizenship, nationality, religion, territory of residence)	37
socio-criminal factors on ethnic grounds in Abkhazia	81
socio-economic factors	9

F. 2008

Name of factor	(N)
non-military, political factors (disintegrative, at the level of participants and involved parties)	108
non-military, political factors (integrative, at the level of participants and involved parties)	16
non-military, political factors (potentially integrative, at the level of political parties and public associations)	0
military-political factors (between participants and involved parties with different direction of vectors and different amplitude)	87

identity factors (association of people on the basis of common citizenship, nationality, religion, territory of residence)	23
socio-criminal factors on ethnic grounds in Abkhazia	28
socio-economic factors	8

G. 2009-2010

Name of factor	(N)
non-military, political factors (disintegrative, at the level of participants and involved parties)	138
non-military, political factors (integrative, at the level of participants and involved parties)	18
non-military, political factors (potentially integrative, at the level of political parties and public associations)	2
military-political factors (between participants and involved parties with different direction of vectors and different amplitude)	71
identity factors (association of people on the basis of common citizenship, nationality, religion, territory of residence)	92
socio-criminal factors on ethnic grounds in Abkhazia	41
socio-economic factors	0

Factors were elaborated with statistical procedure of factor analysis.

Factor Analysis

At the first stage of data analysis was analyzed research instrument to be sure in what extent the statements match the dimensions they belong to. All the statements are in high correlation with the statements used in research (Ex.2)

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
A1	1.000	.947
A2	1.000	.774
A3	1.000	.979
A4	1.000	.942
A5	1.000	.881
A6	1.000	.964
A7	1.000	.972

Ex.2. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

First, factor analysis posed forward four factors, according to which highlighted in research statements were grouped as follows:

Factor 1

1. non-military, political factors (disintegrative, at the level of participants and involved parties);

2. socio-economic factors

Factor 2

1. non-military, political factors (potentially integrative, at the level of political parties and public associations)

Factor 3

1. military-political factors (between participants and involved parties with different direction of vectors and different amplitude);

2. socio-criminal factors on ethnic grounds in Abkhazia

Factor 4

1. non-military, political factors (integrative, at the level of participants and involved parties);

2. identity factors (association of people on the basis of common citizenship, nationality, religion, territory of residence)

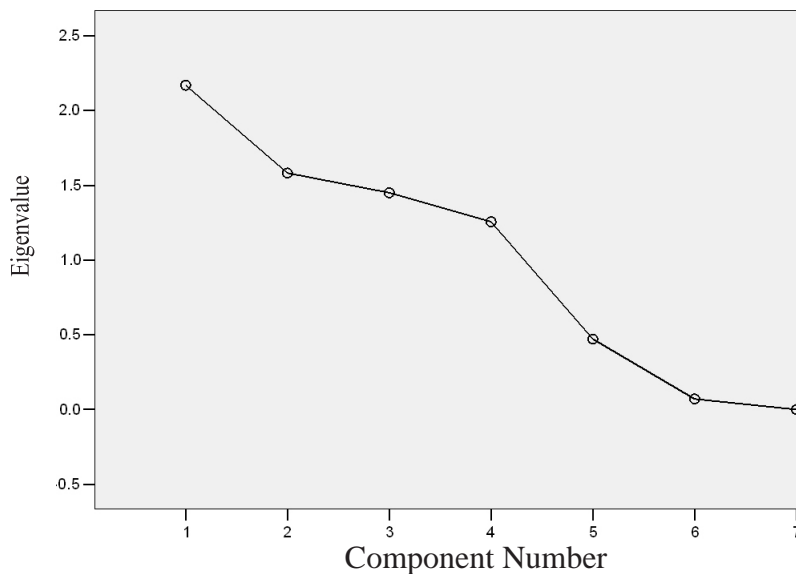
Rotated Component Matrix(a)

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
A1	.814	.192	.033	.496
A2	.168	.132	.010	.853
A3	.104	-.983	.019	-.028
A4	.164	.532	-.745	.279
A5	.517	.428	.023	-.656
A6	-.004	.113	.967	.125
A7	-.942	.242	.130	.094

Ex.3. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. a Rotation converged in 12 iterations.

But, following the graphical analysis, it is reasonable to analyze only those factors, the value of which in the figure below (ex.4) does not exceed 1. According to these criteria, the items are reduced to 3 factors.

Scree Plot



Factor 1

1. non-military, political factors (disintegrative, at the level of participants and involved parties);

2. socio-economic factors

Factor 2

1. non-military, political factors (potentially integrative, at the level of political parties and public associations)

2. military-political factors (between participants and involved parties with different direction of vectors and different amplitude);

Factor 3

1. non-military, political factors (integrative, at the level of participants and involved parties);

2. identity factors (association of people on the basis of common citizenship, nationality, religion, territory of residence)

Rotated Component Matrix (a)

	Component		
	1	2	3
A1	.948	.151	.092
A2	.528	.270	.640
A3	.087	-.779	-.063
A4	.269	.895	-.127
A5	.171	.109	-.740
A6	.049	-.461	.486
A7	-.805	.230	.513

Ex.5. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. a Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

As we can see, the sixth postulate "socio-criminal factors on ethnic grounds in Abkhazia" did not fall into any of them. In order to determine how accurately constructed judgments reflect culturalist dimensions, we calculated the Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items(a)	N of Items
.002	-1.513	7

a The value is negative due to a negative average covariance among items. This violates reliability model assumptions

After this procedure, the correlation between statements (items) was analyzed. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient meaning shows that the postulates used in the study do not shape a single scale and they should be considered independently of each other.

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
A1	179.43	810.619	.609	.	-1.103(a)
A2	266.57	1533.286	.191	.	-.183(a)
A3	279.71	2245.905	-.517	.	.133
A4	225.29	1734.571	.001	.	.002
A5	236.57	1640.619	-.131	.	.202
A6	238.57	1981.286	-.172	.	.168
A7	277.00	2201.000	-.544	.	.105

a The value is negative due to a negative average covariance among items. This violates reliability model assumptions. You may want to check item codings.

This configuration of factors in media content is due to:

- a) the characteristic features of the dominant political discourse;
- b) the peculiarities of the transformation of political discourse into media discourse;
- c) the stability of identification approaches in media content.

A qualitative analysis of the content of media content shows that disintegrating non-military political factors and military-political factors are acting factors, while potentially integration, socio-economic and identification factors are determining for these actions, background factors, in a positive or negative sense.

IV. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS. REFLECTIONS OF CHANGING POLITICAL CONTEXT

Since the 90s, the Georgian media has seen its function in not letting society forget its national identity. Any fact or phenomenon concerning the "Abkhazian issue" always meets the criteria (usually several at the same time) of the news values. Public order from the point of view of the media (the way it is understood by the media representatives themselves; Maisashvili, 2010) demanded that the press provide frequent coverage of the "Abkhazian issue" (frequent coverage is considered an indicator of the internal space of values), a high amplitude of information (the more large-scale and dramatic the event described, the better), ethnocentrism and, based on this, accessibility and compliance of information with the expectations and hopes of Georgian readers (even when the amplitude range decreased, this was compensated by the duration and frequency of lighting).

The analysis of media content for a specific period of time – from 2002 to 2010 - revealed those "white spots" and "traps" that the protracted conflict creates for journalists and showed how communication effects with different dimensions change their character and functions when describing the "hot" and "cold" phases of the conflict. In particular:

Space – if, when covering the hot phase of a war or conflict, the consumer of information worries whether this conflict will directly affect him, or how far or close the war is going on, how far or close the danger caused by the war is, in the cold phase this spatial dimension loses its meaning and it is enough for the reader to simply "know what is happening", that is, to receive news from the conflict zone.

Power – in the hot phase of war or conflict, any message is perceived by the reader as addressed to him personally, as a bearer of power, a message requiring him to take certain actions. In the cold phase, this aspect also weakens and the reader finds himself in the field of the effects of consciousness, not behavior.

Identity - unlike the hot phase of the conflict, in the cold phase, the self-identification of the consumer of information can move away from – or vice versa approach - the identification bases of the conflict. The most striking example of this is the changes taking place in the "we are them"

paradigm in the event of a protracted conflict. The meaning of the word "we" changes to a lesser extent than "they". The term "we" always refers to the Georgian side, the Georgian people and the Georgian state, while the term "they" changes its meaning with each new phase of the conflict. "They" are always hostile towards "us", but at the same time the confrontation is of a different nature and has different motivations. Sometimes "they" are a part of "us" that has separated (under the influence of an "external", for example, a Russian factor), sometimes "they" are "enemies" and "strangers", and sometimes "not like us" with other goals and interests.

In a protracted conflict, there is a natural weakening or disappearance of some communication effects. However, the "neutralization of the conflict" contradicts both the interests of the dominant political discourse and the value criteria of the media. Therefore, in order to preserve the effects, media strategies are created that constantly return the reader to the origins of the conflict. Such strategies include "reveal the truth", "eternal Russian and eternal special services" and "exemplification". Every time there are no new events in the "Abkhazian issue", someone appears in the media who "tells the truth" about Abkhazia, about the Abkhazians and the Georgian-Abkhaz war. It is unclear for whom this truth is being told: the government already knows the truth, and most ordinary citizens have heard or read more than one "truth" in various media. The creation of the truth is based on "exemplification", that is, on the description of terrible facts and examples from the history of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict: "at the Gagra stadium, Abkhazians played football with the severed heads of Georgians," "North Caucasian militants put burned tires on pregnant Georgian women," etc. The use of the "Russian factor" as a key element in the Abkhaz issue not only threatens to further prolong the conflict, but also cancels the motivation and will of the best part of Georgian and Abkhaz societies to seek a final settlement of the conflict (this "tradition" originates at a time when in the Georgian political discourse "Aidgilara" (separatist political group in Abkhazia) and "Adamon Nykhas" (separatist political group in so-called of South Ossetia) were declared not legitimate representatives of the will of the Abkhaz and Ossetian peoples, but a project of the Russian special services [Maisuradze, 2011]).

As soon as signs of conflict are lost in current events, it immediately becomes necessary to maintain a "conflict situation" in media content as "desirable/preferable reading".

The main problem identified during the analysis of media content is the lack of real facts and information components in the description of events. Since Georgian newspapers do not have their own or special correspondents in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone, they are forced to use indirect – mediated to varying degrees - sources of information. When information is obtained from second or even third-hand sources, when transmitted from one source to another, its reliability and exact meaning can be lost with a high degree of probability. However, despite the low informational value, such a text contains stable linguistic indexes that have developed in the media during the coverage of the Abkhazian topic. There are

two time periods in which these discursive indexes differ from each other: ordinary days and two historical dates: August 14 - the beginning of the war in Abkhazia, and September 27 - the day of the fall of Sukhumi. During these two days, time in the Georgian media "stops". Every year on August 14 and September 27, articles and appeals of the same content appear in the studied Georgian newspapers, in which linguistic content and approaches typical of the Georgian media of the 90s are repeated almost unchanged, that Abkhazia is a Georgian land, about the Abkhazian people, about Russians, about North Caucasians (Maisashvili, 2010).

These linguistic content and approaches are an exception that appears only on these days, and are practically not found in the daily chronicle of events in Abkhazia. At one time, those expressions and terms that were used in the 90s instead of the word "abkhaz" ("apsua") and to describe the Abkhaz political establishment ("separatist", "pack") were essentially a signal that required the reader to react accordingly. For the ruling elite, they served as a tool to mobilize broad public support for a "just struggle against separatism." They are an example of how official history can be replaced by unofficial, "true" (in the Georgian sense) history.

Although against the background of the general "Abkhazian" theme in the media of 2002-2010, in the prevailing tone of the content at that time, these signals may not have been perceived by readers with the initial acuteness, they still retained their purpose to a certain extent. This type of content, with their stable and focused system of symbols, can be described as "ritual information support of confessional nationalism." However, there is one significant difference between the media content published on these two days. In particular, while August 14 – as the date of the outbreak of war, bloodshed and alienation - is presented as an event of equal importance for both Georgians and Abkhazians, September 27 – as a significant date – receives a double burden: Georgians should understand that on September 27, Abkhazians celebrate not only the victory of Abkhazia, but also the defeat, shame and mourning of the Georgian people, the death of Georgian soldiers. And the feeling of shame and mourning by themselves, unconsciously grow into anger and a desire for revenge.

In 1990 in South Ossetia, in 1992 in Abkhazia and in 2008 again in South Ossetia, the cause of the war was Georgia's desire to restore-to ensure constitutional order on its territory. While Eduard Shevardnadze in his public speeches never precisely outlined the vector of his actions and almost did not use vocabulary capable of having a mobilization effect, the main tool of Mikhail Saakashvili's policy towards conflict regions was the popularization – using any possible tactics – of the successes and democratic values of the Georgian state, which became an integral part of his Pax Georgiana strategy.

In 2003, the volume and quantity of Georgian media content on the "Abkhazian issue" noticeably decreased (by about 1.3 times), which was caused by the new political reality. The election campaign (on the eve of the November 2003 elections) more or less contributes to the continuation of coverage of the "Abkhazian issue" in the media – during the preparation for the elections, political players formally put the topic of Abkhazia

on the agenda, although considering it only in the context of the effectiveness of the use of international leverage (for example, the effectiveness of the "Rome Statute" against the background of limited local initiatives). In the rhetoric of the activists of the National Movement "the Abkhazian question" is periodically mentioned as one of the ordinary regional problems, as a personal problem of the Shevardnadze. According to them, the problem of Abkhazia would be solved as soon as the policy of pandering to "recalcitrant regions", encouraged by the center, stops. (Resonance, August 12, 2002, the results of the survey "How can Abkhazia be returned").

The periodic accentuation of various specific aspects of the "Abkhazian question", based on political discourse, suggests that political discourse is the dominant factor that determines the signs and characteristics of media discourse, that media discourse is just a calcified matrix of political discourse that receives either unconditional approval in the media or is criticized, although even criticizing the media cannot free themselves from the influence of dominant discourse.

At the beginning of 2004, or rather in its first half, a new policy of the government, in particular President Mikheil Saakashvili, in relation to the conflict regions begins to emerge. It takes the form of a PR campaign offering society clear and precise guidelines: for example, the exact date of completion of the construction of a new highway from Tbilisi to Sukhumi, socio-infrastructure models designed to arouse the desire of Abkhazians and Ossetians to integrate into Georgia, strengthening of the armed forces and "camouflaged" patriotism. But the main message is political in nature: the liberation of Adjara from the regime of Aslan Abashidze, decisively and without the use of force. This model requires not an active reader, but a viewer. Such viewers include all parties involved in the conflict and, most importantly, independent Georgian media also agree to the role of a spectator. At the initial stage, the media act only as interested agents of this policy, but the advertising nature of this PR model and its focus only on short-term results very soon causes alarm and concern in the media. Media content on this issue say that such a model is counterproductive, that the time spent on such an "illustrative" policy is lost for the development of alternative models, and the absence of such messages of the "past" and the calculation of a beautiful advertising effect cause the opposite result to what was conceived. An example of this is the critical comments in the media about the "humanitarian intervention" as an ill-considered adventure of the government (Kviris Palitra, August 25, 2004, Resonance, August 21-25, 2004). The events that unfolded in August 2004 in Tskhinvali were the last straw, after which the media stopped positive coverage of the government's PR policy. In 2006-2007, the authorities again turned to using a PR model in the field of public relations: publicity of the Patriot youth camp in Ganmukhuri, declaring Russian General Chaban persona non grata in Georgia directly on television and not with a diplomatic note, attempts to present Kodori as an alternative and administratively full-fledged Abkhazia and to attract to their side "pro-Georgian minded and hostile to the Abkhaz separatist regime" figures. This time, however, independent print media no longer accept this policy

without criticism.

On the contrary, there is a media scheme designed for a long-term effect, which can be formulated as follows: such a government policy, although attractive in form and tactics, serves only to hide the true meaning of facts and events, to hide the real state of things from society. The media regarded such government steps as the "Sanakoev project" and the publicity of Kodori as a new administrative unit under the name of Upper Abkhazia and the headquarters of the legitimate government as a "game with fire", that is, the threat of a new war. At the same time, the media relied not only on the opinions of Georgian experts, but also on Abkhaz sources. During this period, Georgian media – both print and electronic – devote a lot of space to Bagapsh's interview with the Russian newspaper Kommersant (despite the fact that various Georgian media reprinted this interview in different volumes, its key points are given in all publications: "The status of Abkhazia is fundamentally different from South Ossetia"; "[In Abkhazia] it is impossible to find a person like Sanakoev"; "Sanakoev is a traitor and this scheme can only lead to war in South Ossetia"; "Sukhumi will agree to resume dialogue with Tbilisi only after the Georgian armed formations are withdrawn from the Kodori Gorge...", "Sukhumi will not stumble and will insist on fulfilling this necessary precondition for the start of negotiations", Kommersant, July, 2007).

If in the first half of 2004 the "Abkhazian question" was presented approximately equally in the political and media discourse, from August 2004 to May 2006 every media report on this topic had a multivariate (polysemic) character. The media are becoming not conduits, but consumers of political messages. Not in all cases, however, such a multivariate has the same effect. The analysis of media content showed that from the point of view of the effectiveness of the communication process, three main directions can be distinguished:

- a) the creation of a really meaningful discourse;
- b) creation of a pseudo-meaningful discourse as "desirable to read" material;
- c) free flow of information.

Creating a really meaningful discourse. The most striking and successful example is the abundance of publications on the following topics: a) negotiation process, both formal and informal dialogue between the parties to the conflict; b) description of the parties involved in the conflict, their functions, competence, experience and ability to influence events; c) the issue of refugee return.

One of the most frequently expressed ideas during this period is the proposal to exclude Russia from the negotiation process and involve the European Union and the United States as mediators. As a result, a wide field is being created in the media to discuss this issue. In particular, this is discussed not only in those publications where such an opinion is expressed by experts loyal to the government. However, in the media publications following each other in time, they try to break this proposal into its components and identify similarities and contradictions between them. In particular, the following components have been identified:

- a) the possibility of creating a political mechanism capable of providing initiative;
- b) under what balance of forces in international and regional politics these changes can be implemented;
- c) what will change in Georgian-Abkhaz relations as a result of these changes and whether they can become the basis for creating some rational (feasible in practice) formula for uniting Abkhazians and Georgians.

A large number of publications on the topic of the return – spontaneous or politically coordinated – of refugees to Abkhazia can be represented as:

- a) a set of topics arranged in a horizontal plane, the main focus of which is aimed at describing the situation and status of refugees for both the Georgian government and the de facto authorities of Abkhazia, for example: "Famine in Tbilisi", "Slavery in Gali", "Election resource", etc.;
- b) a set of topics arranged in a vertical plane, showing what place is given to the refugee issue in political processes and negotiation format, for example, the priority location of issues in political processes – "A new policy towards Abkhazia should begin with the return of refugees", in the negotiation format - "How appropriate is it to link socio-humanitarian issues with other political issues depending on the agreement of the parties, and manipulation of them?", etc.

Creating a pseudo-meaningful discourse. As an example, we can cite the Georgian media chronicle dedicated to the first presidential election of Sergei Bagapsh. Describing the increase in tension during the elections, provoked by Russia and Khajimba's supporters, next to the statements of Sergei Bagapsh himself (cited mainly with reference to Russian and Abkhaz sources), publications appear about the allegedly "reliably confirmed pro-Georgian orientation" of Bagapsh and Ankvab, about their ties with the Georgian political elite (for example, "Alexander Ankvab: I am proud to have worked in Tbilisi", "Resonance", November 24, 2004; "Avtandil Ioseliani: 'We are with Ankvab – friends. Alexander Ankvab saved many Georgian families living in Abkhazia from robbery and violence', "Resonance", December 1, 2004, etc.). The authority of the sources of these publications and their emotionally convincing and familiar tone create completely illusory prospects in Georgian-Abkhaz relations. Moreover, they distort the true meaning of Bagapsh and Ankvab's official statements about the relations between Abkhazia and Georgia.

Free flow of information. The free flow of information means an abundance of such publications that:

- a) they contain only "reliable information", that is, a simple statement of current facts;
- b) they are not intentional and appear arbitrarily, becoming independent of the media as they arise;
- c) from the point of view of "protecting the gates" of editorial policy, they are less subject to the principle of selective selection of opinions. Such a flow of information can be considered one of the varieties of the mosaic model of the communication process, in which the real significance is not specific facts, but peculiar connections and/ or a gap-a connection between facts.

V. CONCLUSION

Factors, highlighted in result of analysis are completely in accordance with political agenda.

- in political and negotiation processes, the objects of political initiatives and negotiation conditions replace each other in the following sequence: we talk with the Abkhazians - we talk simultaneously with the Abkhazians and Russia - we talk with Russia about Abkhazia – we talk simultaneously with the Abkhazians and the West – we talk with the West about Abkhazia – we don't talk with anyone, since the issues for discussion at the negotiating table are exhausted. The Georgian Government is gradually withdrawing its high-ranking and influential representatives from the negotiation process, and the whole process is turning into an empty formality.

- The Georgian government is transferring the "Abkhazian issue" from the sphere of action of those who create politics to the area of those who form public opinion. However, due to the lack of support for their initiatives and concepts, and the blocking of informal dialogue by the authorities, the public nature of Pax Georgiana turns into a fiction.

- The negotiation process looks like a "zero-sum game". The initiatives put forward by the Georgian side and which are acceptable to Georgia are completely unacceptable to Abkhazia and its political establishment, and vice versa - any Abkhaz initiative is unacceptable to Georgia. The last such initiative was the visit to Tbilisi of the de facto Minister of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia Sergey Shamba and the political project of Abkhazia "The Key to the Future". In 2006, Georgia considered that the "Key to the Future" project was equivalent to the declaration of independence of Abkhazia and rejected it as inappropriate for discussion.

The coverage of the "Abkhazian issue" in the media from May 2006 to August 2008 can be characterized as risk communication, that is, the disclosure of political discourse in media discourse as a risk. The risks described in the media are actually a warning about the danger of a new war: the departure of the "doves of peace" from the Georgian government is a sign of an approaching war, the crisis of the Georgian government in the "Abkhazian issue" can only end in war, the projection of the Kosovo precedent carries a risk to the "Georgian peace" in Abkhazia, the prospect of launching a military operation by the Georgian government is quite real, the danger of provocations from Russia and Abkhazia is no less real, the Abkhazians do not want integration with Georgia, Abkhazia – the second front, the process is moving in the direction of the Georgian-Russian war, etc. The same publications show, however, that the risks that the media saw in the arguments of journalists, expert assessments or opinion polls are presented in the statements of Georgian officials as manifestations of the "new Abkhazian policy". What the media consider a "war" is described in the government's rhetoric as a "police operation". The media are confident that the Russian factor will play a serious role in the event of military action, according to the authorities, compared with the 90s, Russia perceives reality differently. In this communication process, there is a clear contradiction between the content of key topics and ideas and the form of their presentation.

The risk communication phase ended in August 2008 with a five-day war between Russia and Georgia. It was replaced by a phase of "dead prospects in Georgian-Abkhaz relations." Tbilisi, as a political center, is represented in a very limited range of thematic frameworks. The only stressed issue is Georgia's struggle on the diplomatic front. Sukhumi, as a policy-making center, is already presented as part of the external space.

This dynamic of Georgian-Abkhaz relations is due to disintegrating political factors, as well as negatively developing socio-economic factors. They overshadowed all more or less, or potentially, integration factors and, as a result, caused the activation of military factors.

The reasons for the dominance of political discourse in the media discourse should be sought in the fear that the Georgian media experienced about the coverage of topics and issues that could destroy the doctrine of Georgian-Abkhaz relations, which is deeply rooted in the public consciousness, mainly vertical hierarchy, established stereotypes and ideas about the negotiation process as a phenomenon and practice with negative past experience.

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