



Integration as a Conflict Regulation Mechanism

An Analysis of the OSCE's Integration Program in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Georgia

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Stephanie Kautzman Bjørø

[Abstract] This thesis explores the merits of minority integration as a conflict regulation mechanism. Within the conflict literature, there are diverging views as to the merits of integration. While some hold that integration is a fruitful way of resolving conflict, others maintain that integration is most likely to have a conflict-generating effect.

To illuminate this discussion, an OSCE program that aims to resolve conflict through minority integration in the Republic of Georgia is examined. The OSCE program being implemented in the Georgian province of Samtskhe-Javakheti, targets the large ethnic Armenian community living there. The Armenian community is weakly integrated in Georgian society and the relationship between the minority and the government in Tbilisi is tense.

Fieldwork was carried out in Samtskhe-Javakheti in April 2005. Findings indicate that the OSCE program has had a modest, but positive impact on minority integration. Furthermore, integration does not appear to have increased tensions in the province. However, integration does not appear to have ameliorated conflict either, as tension in the region remains high.

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1 Introduction

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the subsequent emergence of 15 independent states brought about profound changes in the balance between the ethnic groups inhabiting the Eurasian region. In the newly independent Republic of Georgia ethnic Georgians could celebrate their newfound independence in the winter of 1991–92. At the same time, however, many of the other ethnic groups residing within the Georgian territory were growing increasingly concerned. The Georgian government signalled that it conceived of the Georgian state as the property of ethnic Georgians, and that the government would base its concept of the nation on ethnic terms. Minorities across the country felt threatened by these developments, which eventually led to the outbreak of two civil wars and the subsequent emergence of two breakaway republics: Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Problematic relationships between the government and ethnic minorities have not been confined to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, however. The province of Samtskhe-Javakheti in Southern Georgia, home of a large Armenian community, has increasingly attracted the attention of the international community (CIPDD 2000a; FIDH 2005: 4, 14; Øverland 2003: 11). The relationship between the Georgian government and the Armenian minority is one of mutual mistrust, and the list of contentious issues between the parties is extensive. Fearing that the tense relationship might trigger violent conflict, the international community has intervened to assist in finding ways to improve relations between the two parties. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), represented by its High Commissioner on National Minorities, is one of many organizations that have increased their involvement in the area. The OSCE has called for greater integration of the Armenian minority in Georgian society as a necessary step to regulate the relationship between the two parties and has developed a multi-faceted program to facilitate such a development.

Within the conflict regulation literature, however, there are diverging views as to the merits of integrating minorities. While scholars such as Svante Cornell (2002) and David Meyer (forthcoming) believe that integration is necessary in order to avoid conflict, others have argued that the integration of ethnic minorities has largely proved counterproductive, resulting in a backlash of ethnic revivalism and conflict (Connor 1994a). The discussion within academic circles on the merits of minority integration becomes all the more important as international organizations start promoting these policies as conflict regulating mechanisms in areas where relationships between governments and minorities are tense.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the merits of minority integration through an investigation of the OSCE's involvement in Samtskhe-Javakheti. The main question that this thesis addresses may be stated as follows:

Has the OSCE's integration program contributed to reducing the level of conflict in Samtskhe-Javakheti?

Analysis of this question will be conducted on two levels. The first level of analysis will focus on whether the OSCE has contributed to integration in

Samtskhe-Javakheti. The second level of analysis will lift the focus to whether integration has reduced the level of conflict in the province.

Integration is a multi-faceted concept that has different meanings in different contexts. It is therefore important to specify how the concept should be understood in this thesis. According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, the term derives from Latin and means: "to make parts into a whole". In the context of minorities, the concept refers to "ending segregation and bringing into equal membership in society."¹

In this thesis *integration* refers to the process of making members of minority groups equal members of society. Membership will be defined as *citizenship*, and follows Brochmann's understanding of this concept. According to Brochmann, citizenship has two dimensions, one legal and the other social. The legal dimension refers to the formal rights and duties of citizens. The social dimension is more elusive and involves being a part of society, subjectively and objectively. It refers to the *contents* of membership in society. This content can be defined in various ways, but in most contexts it involves dimensions of identity, loyalty, sense of belonging, and participation (Brochmann 2002: 58–59).

In the Republic of Georgia, all permanent residents were granted formal citizenship in 1993 (Pettersen 2004: 44). Thus, the Armenian minority has been granted *formal* membership in the Georgian nation. However, for reasons that will be outlined in chapter 2, the Armenians are weakly integrated along the social dimension. In this thesis, the focus will therefore be on the social aspects of acquiring membership in society.

As has been outlined above, the social dimension of citizenship involves aspects of both identity and participation. Accordingly, the OSCE aims to stimulate a Georgian identity, to reduce barriers to participation as well as to increase actual participation among the minority in Samtskhe-Javakheti. More specifically, the organization's goals are to 1) increase knowledge of the state language, 2) increase knowledge about events in Georgia, 3) increase knowledge about legal rights 4) increase identification with the Georgian state and society 5) increase participation in elections and 6) reduce tensions between ethnic groups. Because the OSCE's goals reflect the same understanding of integration as outlined above, these goals will be used as indicators of whether or not integration is taking place.

Conflict is also a core concept in this thesis. *Conflict* is sometimes reserved for situations involving a degree of violence. Accordingly, the Oxford Dictionary defines conflict as "a prolonged armed struggle."² However, at the same time it also states that the concept of conflict may refer to "a serious disagreement or argument" or "an incompatibility between opinions or principles."³

In academic research a broader understanding of the concept of conflict may be found in the work of Johan Galtung. According to Galtung (1969; 1996), conflict is the sum of three components – contradiction in interests, attitudes and behavior. Conflict is believed to be a dynamic process, devel-

¹ Source: Merriam Webster's online dictionary: (www.m-w.com/dictionary/integrating) (Visited November 23, 2005).

² Oxford Online Dictionary (www.askoxford.com/results/?view=dev_dict&field-12668446=conflict&branch=13842570&textsearchtype=exact&sortorder=score%2Cname) (Visited November 15, 2005).

³ See note 2.

oping through the interaction of these three components. Conflict in this light may be understood as a process, in which only the final end-point involves use of violence.

In the context of this thesis, it is fruitful to apply this broader understanding of conflict. Equating conflict with war would make it impossible to determine whether the OSCE's integration program has generated or reduced conflict unless violent conflict should break out in the province.

The thesis has eight chapters. In the following chapter the situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti will be presented in order to give the reader a better understanding of the circumstances that have lead the OSCE and other organizations to intervene in the province. Chapter three provides an outline of the theoretical framework of this thesis. It starts with a presentation of a general discussion of two polarized views concerning the merits of minority integration. The chapter will then show that the assumptions found in several integrationist theories are reflected in the OSCE integration program for Samtskhe-Javakheti. The chapter then goes on to introduce a detailed critique of the notion that integration contributes to peace. Chapter four provides a presentation of methodological choices and their implications, followed by a short presentation of the OSCE's involvement in Samtskhe-Javakheti in chapter five. Chapters six and seven provide an analysis of the OSCE's integration program in Samtskhe-Javakheti. While chapter six investigates the implementation of three of the OSCE's projects in Samtskhe-Javakheti, chapter seven goes on to examine whether the OSCE's activities have strengthened the Georgian identity of the Armenian minority, increased participation in elections and reduced ethnic tensions in the province. Finally, chapter eight summarizes and integrates the findings before concluding.

2 Background: the Province of Samtskhe-Javakheti

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to Samtskhe-Javakheti. The province is located in Southern Georgia on the border to Turkey and Armenia. The administrative center of the province is the town of Akhaltsikhe. According to the census of 2002, the population of Samtskhe-Javakheti is approximately 210,000. Armenians constitute the majority of the population, although the ethnic Georgian population is also substantial (Minasyan 2005: 20). Other ethnic groups include Greeks, Russian Dukhobors and Jews (FIDH 2005: 13).⁴



Figure 2.1 Main map: Georgia and adjacent countries. Inset map: Samtskhe-Javakheti (Øverland 2003)

The province of Samtskhe-Javakheti was established in 1994 (Cornell 2002: 271; Guretski 1998: 6; Pettersen 2004: 45) and is comprised of three sub-regions: Javakheti, Samtskhe and Borjomi. The majority of the Armenians live compactly in Javakheti, where they constitute more than 90 percent of the population. In Samtskhe and Borjomi the majority of the population is Georgian, although there are also substantial Armenian communities in these parts of the province (CIPDD 2002: 5).

This chapter first gives an historical review of developments in Samtskhe-Javakheti with emphasis on events that are important for understanding the situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti today. The chapter then turns to a more detailed discussion of the present state of affairs.⁵

⁴ More specifically, according to the 2002 census the demographic composition of Samtskhe-Javakheti is as follows: Armenians: 55 percent; Georgians: 43 percent; others: 2 percent (Minasyan 2005: 20).

⁵ Before proceeding, however, it should be noted that although the province of Samtskhe-Javakheti is a relatively recent construct, the term Samtskhe-Javakheti will be applied to all historical periods for reasons of simplicity.

2.1 The Russian Empire

Until 1828 Samtskhe-Javakheti was part of the Ottoman Empire. The territory came under Russian rule as a result of the Ottoman Empire's defeat in the Russo-Turkish war of 1827–28. Located on the border of the empire, the province played an important strategic role. A military base was therefore established in Akhalkalaki in 1830 to secure the newly acquired territories and a substantial number of Armenians were settled in the province (CIPDD 2002: 5; Sumbadze & Tarkhan-Mouravi 2003: 7; Øverland 2003: 6). At the same time, many members of the province's predominantly Muslim population fled the territory (Darchiashvili 1999: 5; Sabanadze 2001: 2).

2.2 The Soviet Era

Samtskhe-Javakheti continued to play an important strategic role into the 20th century and throughout the Soviet Era. In 1923 the Soviet Union established a special border regime (Martin 1998: 830), which included Samtskhe-Javakheti. As a border zone, the province was isolated from the rest of the country, and special permission was required in order to enter and exit the territory. The Javakheti economy was largely based on agriculture. The Soviet government also established several factories in the area providing the local population with job opportunities in basalt-mining, as well as food- and textile production (Rochowanski 2001: 18–24). A substantial portion of the population was also employed at the military base in Akhalkalaki.

The province continued to undergo demographic change during the Soviet years. The most dramatic event in this respect was the deportation of Meskhetian Turks in 1944.⁶ The Meskhetian Turks were one of eight peoples across the Soviet Union who were accused of collaboration with the fascists during World War II and deported to Central-Asia (Laczko & Yunusov 1997: 1; Øverland 2004: 2). Under Khrushchev six of these peoples were rehabilitated and given permission to return to their homelands. However, the Meskhetian Turks did not receive permission to return to their former homes (Darchiashvili 1999: 5; Giragosian 2001: 1; Guretski 1998: 2; Rochowanski 2001: 36–43; Wheatley 2004: 6).

2.3 The Perestroika Years: The Rise of Ethno-nationalism

During perestroika, nationalistic rhetoric in the Georgian Soviet Republic increased. This development unleashed a chain-reaction in the republic's minority communities, a process often referred to as “matryoshka nationalism” (McGarry & O’Leary 2005: 5; Øverland 2004: 13).

The ethnic minorities mobilized against what they perceived as a threat to their position within the state and demanded independence on their own part.

⁶ The Meskhetian Turks are also sometimes referred to as “Meskhetian Muslims”, partly to underline their belonging in Georgia rather than Turkey, and partly to reflect the fact that the deported population included many sub-groups. However, the term “Meskhetian Turks” remains the most commonly used term. Furthermore, it is the term most frequently applied by the members of the group about themselves (Sumbadze & Tarkhan-Mouravi 2003: 17). The term “Meskhetian Turks” will therefore be the preferred term in this thesis.

In Samtskhe-Javakheti the Armenian organization “Javakh” was established in 1988 with the goal of achieving greater autonomy for the province (Guretski 1998). In South Ossetia and Abkhazia similar processes were under way. The Ossetian Popular Front was founded in January 1989. Later that year violent conflict erupted between the authorities in Tbilisi and the local authorities in South Ossetia. In Abkhazia increasing dissatisfaction with the Georgian government led the Abkhaz government to declare sovereignty in August 1990 (Macfarlane 1997: 513).

2.4 Georgian Independence

The relations between the Georgian elite and the minority elites did not improve after the Soviet demise. After gaining independent statehood in 1991, the Georgian government continued to propagate ethno-nationalist policies under the aegis of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia (1991–92).⁷ The Georgian government actively sought to establish a Georgian nation-state based on an ethnic conception of the nation (Darchiashvili 1999: 14). These policies were unpopular with the minorities and served only to exacerbate the already tense relations between the government in Tbilisi and the regions (FIDH 2005; Macfarlane 1997). The overthrow of Gamsakhurdia in winter 1992 had little immediate impact on the situation. Although Gamsakhurdia’s successor, Eduard Shevardnadze, achieved a cease-fire in South Ossetia in 1992, later that year Georgian government forces entered the territory of Abkhazia with the goal of establishing control in the self-declared sovereign republic. This unleashed yet another, and more brutal, civil war on Georgian soil, which lasted until 1994.

2.5 Samtskhe-Javakheti after Georgian Independence

In contrast to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, violent conflict was avoided in Samtskhe-Javakheti, although some hold that violent conflict might easily have erupted in this province too (Guretski 1998: 5). During Gamsakhurdia’s presidency Javakheti remained out of control of the central government in Tbilisi. The organization “Javakh” maintained full control of the town of Akhalkalaki, and armed forces loyal to the organization successfully managed to prevent Georgian military and paramilitary forces from entering the province (Wheatley 2004: 13).

After the overthrow of Gamsakhurdia, President Shevardnadze managed to gain control over the province. The Javakh movement gradually lost influence, as the organization became plagued with internal divisions. The Shevardnadze administration successfully managed to co-opt members of the local elite by offering central figures in the movement positions in the local administration, while other central members of Javakh emigrated to Russia (Wheatley 2004: 14).

⁷ Zviad Gamsakhurdia was elected chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia November 14, 1990. He was elected president May 26, 1991 (Wikipedia 2005).

2.5.1 *The socio-economic situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti*

The socio-economic situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti deteriorated after the Soviet demise. Most of the industry established in the Soviet era did not survive the economic transition. What used to be factory buildings are now largely abandoned, and former industrial areas lie like ghost towns in the outskirts of Akhalkalaki. Today the province's economy is largely based on subsistence agriculture, trade, smuggling and money remittances from seasonal workers and family permanently living abroad, mostly in Russia (Rochowanski 2001: 18–24; Wheatley 2004: 7–11). The Russian military base in Akhalkalaki, which is part of the Russian/Soviet legacy, is also important to the province's economy. The military base is the only larger employer in the province and employs some 15 percent of the population. Moreover, its existence creates a market for local produce (Wheatley 2004: 29; Øverland 2003: 6).

2.5.2 *Security issues*

The presence of the Russian military base has been a source of dispute between the Georgian government and the Armenian minority in Samtskhe-Javakheti since 1991. While the Georgian government rightly views the presence of Russian military bases in Georgia as a breach of its sovereignty, the Armenian minority perceives it somewhat differently. As has already been discussed, the base provides jobs, which are desperately needed in a province with rampant unemployment. The local population's wish to keep the military base is therefore hardly surprising.

In addition to economic advantages, there are also other interests involved in maintaining the base. Armenians in the province see it as a guarantee to their security against Turkey, their archenemy. The memories of the Armenian genocide play an important role in the ethnic identity of the Armenians and many Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti still fear that Turkey might repeat its actions (CIPDD 2000b: 5; 2002: 11; Guretski 1998: 10; Petersen 2004: 46; Sumbadze & Tarkhan-Mouravi 2003: 10; Wheatley 2004: 29). Arguments that Turkey cannot possibly attack due to its political aspirations to join the European Union is not easily accepted and the population does not believe that Georgia will or can offer proper protection in the event that Turkey should launch an attack (Elbakidze 2001: 26; Rochowanski 2001: 15). Moreover, the fact that the Georgian government has tried to establish friendly relations with Turkey and aspires to membership in NATO fuels mistrust. Furthermore, the fact that Georgia has refused to recognize the Armenian genocide serves as a bone of contention between the minority and government.⁸

2.5.3 *Poor infrastructure*

The province of Javakheti is isolated from the rest of Georgia. One important reason for this is that the province suffers from extremely poor infrastruc-

⁸ Armenian demands that Georgia acknowledge these events, cannot be accepted without putting Georgia on a collision course with Turkey (Socor 2005a; Vartanian 2005).

ture. The road from Tbilisi through the Tsalka province to Ninotsminda is in such a poor state that it is almost impassible. Consequently, the road is almost never used. Instead traffic is directed through the town of Akhaltsikhe. This route represents a major detour and the road is also in very poor condition.

2.5.4 *Language*

The isolation of the Armenians is also due to another reason. Although historically Javakheti was officially part of the Georgian Soviet Republic, the system provided Javakheti Armenians with few incentives to learn Georgian. Because Samtskhe-Javakheti was part of the border regime, there was little interaction between the regional population and the population in the rest of the republic. Georgians and Armenians in Javakheti tended to communicate in Armenian or Russian, as most of the Georgians living there know Armenian as well as Russian. Proficiency in the Georgian language was not required, as the Soviet school system provided national minorities with the opportunity to get an education in their native language or in Russian. Many Armenians invested in learning Russian, the lingua franca of the Soviet Union, rather than learning Georgian.

Georgian independence altered the linguistic environment of the Javakheti Armenians. Georgian is now the official state language, a language in which most Javakheti Armenians are not proficient. While Armenian is an Indo-European language, the Georgian language belongs to the Caucasian language group. The languages are therefore quite different. In addition, like Armenian, Georgian has its own unique, historical alphabet. This makes communication with government institutions difficult, and has contributed to a sense of alienation in the population. In the words of a restaurant owner in Akhalkalaki: “When I travel through Georgia today I can’t even understand road signs. I feel like I am a polar bear in Angola” (Interview 16, April 11, 2005).

2.5.5 *International interest in Samtskhe-Javakheti*

In recent years many international organizations have shown increased interest in Samtskhe-Javakheti. The ethnic composition of the province, the tense relationship between minority and government, the province’s location on the border to Armenia and the history of secessionist conflicts in the Caucasus are factors all contribute to this interest. In addition, organizations have feared that two other expected events might lead to violent conflict in the area (CIPDD 2000a; FIDH 2005: 4, 14; Øverland 2003: 11). First, when Georgia was accepted into the Council of Europe, it committed itself to repatriate the Meskhetian Turks previously mentioned in this chapter (CIPDD 2002: 9–10; Øverland 2004: 3). Their return is neither popular with local Armenians nor with Georgians, and it is feared that it might stir social unrest in the province (CIPDD 2002: 9–10; Øverland 2003: 7–8).

Secondly, many have feared that the expected withdrawal of the Russian troops from the military base in Akhalkalaki might exacerbate relations between the government and minority and potentially lead to violent conflict in the region. After years of negotiation Russia and Georgia seemingly reached

a final agreement in May 2005 and Russian withdrawal from the base started immediately thereafter (BBC 2005; Corso 2005a, 2005b; Inozemtsev 2005; Izvesiya.ru 2005; Socor 2005b). Although two demonstrations took place in Akhalkalaki in March 2005 with protesters demanding that the Russian base remain in the town, no reports of public demonstrations following the Russian-Georgian agreement have been reported (Grigorjan 2005b, 2005a; Socor 2005b, 2005a; Vartanian 2005).

3 Integration Theory and Conflict

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of this thesis. The chapter begins with a presentation of a general discussion of the merits of minority integration. It then goes on to argue that the underlying assumption of several integrationist theories is reflected in the OSCE's involvement in Samtskhe-Javakheti. The chapter then presents a detailed critique of the integrationist perspective, before turning to a discussion of the implications of the integrationist and anti-integrationist positions for the case of Samtskhe-Javakheti.

3.1 Integration of Minorities in Conflict Theory

The theoretical framework for this thesis is related to an important fault line between two basic perspectives on how states should deal with minorities. One perspective holds that minority integration is a good preventive measure against ethnic conflict and separatism. The other perspective holds that attempts at minority integration can in fact promote ethnic conflict and separatism. These two opposing perspectives reappear in many different forms and contexts.

In theoretical discussions of federalism, and in particular asymmetrical federalism, there is a long-standing discussion between proponents and opponents of granting autonomy to minorities. Proponents of federalism believe that maximum autonomy is good because it allows minorities to feel at home and to develop their cultures and economies according to their own wishes. If minorities are not granted autonomy and concessions, they will develop separatist agendas. This perspective is to some extent associated with Canada and Canadian scholars such as John McGarry (2005a; 2005b; 2005), Michael Keating (2001), Margaret Moore (2001) and Ronald Watts (1999) and is exemplified in the wide-ranging concessions made to Quebec.

According to the opposing view, minority autonomy is dangerous because it underlines difference and separateness and provides a base for the further development of minority demands and separatist agendas. This perspective is to some degree associated with American scholars such as David Meyer (forthcoming), Rogers Brubaker (1996), Valerie Bunce (1999), and Philip Roeder (1991), but also others have made this argument (Cornell 2002).

Not only scholars of federalism have provided contributions relevant to the discussion about minority integration, however. The "contact hypothesis", originally developed by social psychologists studying de-segregation in the United States in the 1940s, postulates that unfriendliness between groups is a result of unfamiliarity and separation. The theory holds that peaceful integration is possible under certain given circumstances, such as interaction on equal terms, common goals, and opportunities to establish intimate relationships between members of different groups (Brewer & Gaertner 2001: 452). The basic idea underlying the theory is that if separation and unfamiliarity between groups foster stereotypes, negative attitudes and hostility, then

these effects should be reversible through increased contact and greater familiarity between members of different groups (ibid.: 455).

3.2 Integration as Conflict Prevention

The basic assumption in several of the above-mentioned theories that integration prevents conflict is also manifested in the OSCE's integration program in Samtskhe-Javakheti. The organization asserts that isolation is a root cause of tension between the Armenian minority and the Georgian government. It therefore believes that integration of the minority population is a necessary step in order to avoid violent conflict.

More specifically, the OSCE program aims to make the minority full members of Georgian society. This is to be achieved through measures that enable the minority to participate on an equal basis with other members of Georgian society and through cultivation of a Georgian identity that will supplement the Armenian identity. It is believed that these measures will reduce tensions in the province.

In essence, the organization's thinking about integration reflects the perspective of several integrationist theories (McGarry & O'Leary 1993). In the following section a critique of the integrationist model, represented by one of its staunchest critics, Walker Connor, will be presented.

3.3 Integration as a Source of Conflict

According to Connor, integration is highly unlikely to promote peace. Rather, it is almost certain that any attempt to increase contact between people with different ethnic backgrounds within the boundaries of a given state will give rise to conflict. Only if integration takes place at such a slow rate that it is unnoticeable to the people involved is it likely to proceed peacefully (Connor 1994a: 54). Thus almost any efforts to establish closer contact between ethnic groups and to stimulate a common identity between them will result in a backlash of ethnic revivalism (Connor 1994b: 21).

Connor contends that closer contact between different ethnic groups is likely to increase the groups' awareness of their distinctiveness rather than enhance appreciation of what groups have in common. This is a two-track process in which members of a given ethnic community come to appreciate the similarities between their respective co-ethnics, while at the same time realizing the differences between themselves and non-members of their group (Connor 1994a: 37). This self-awareness process constitutes the establishment of a nation, which Connor (ibid.: 40) defines as a self-conscious ethnic group.

Moreover, integration is also quite likely to result in xenophobia, according to Connor. This is because closer integration between ethnic populations threatens what he refers to as "the lifeways" of the respective groups:

An unintegrated state poses no serious threat to the lifeways of the various ethnic groups. But improvements in the quality and quantity of communication and

transportation media progressively curtail the cultural isolation in which an ethnic group could formerly cloak its cultural chasteness from the perverting influences of other cultures within the same state. The reaction to such curtailment is very apt to be one of xenophobic hostility (Connor 1994a: 36-37).

The xenophobic nation, fearing its extinction, will begin to resent foreign rule, Connor argues, and eventually this resentment will result in demands for independence. The principle of self-determination of nations has served as a norm legitimizing such demands, and has thus served the separatist agendas. However, Connor points out, the principle has not only been a useful tool for separatists. In many cases the existence of this norm has served as a *catalyst* for such aspirations (Connor 1994a: 39). In other words, this principle has served as a source of inspiration for separatists.

Other developments within the global political environment have further supported this trend, according to Connor. First, developments within international politics have made it less likely that small independent political entities will be annexed by more powerful states. Secondly, the growing list of successful precedents has also made ethnic groups more confident of the legitimacy of their case. Finally, increased awareness of these facts as a result of the explosive growth in media and transport communication has contributed substantially to the increase in nationalist movements demanding independence (Connor 1994a: 37).

3.4 Different Perspectives on Integration: Implications for Samtskhe-Javakheti

Connor's theory predicts that integration will stimulate ethnic consciousness and generate alienation. Thus one would expect that the OSCE's integration projects have strengthened ethnic affiliation in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Identification with the Georgian state and society among members of the minority population would be surprising from this point of view.

Integrationists, however, assume that integration will foster identification with society (McGarry & O'Leary 1993: 16–23). The OSCE, reflecting this view, believes that its activities in Samtskhe-Javakheti will cultivate a Georgian identity that will supplement the minority's Armenian identity.

Connor not only asserts that integration will stimulate ethnic identities, he also postulates that integration is likely to be perceived as a *threat*. According to this logic, the population in Samtskhe-Javakheti should greet the OSCE integration projects in Samtskhe-Javakheti with skepticism and fear. More precisely, they should view the integration projects as a threat to their identity and culture. Integrationists, however, believe that integration may resolve conflict (ibid.: 16–23), a perspective shared by the OSCE. From this point of view, negative reactions to the OSCE projects of the kind Connor predicts would be surprising.

Finally, Connor believes that integration will generate calls for self-government. Integrationists, on the other hand, assume that integration will facilitate minority acceptance of the established structures of the state

(McGarry & O'Leary 1993:16–23). The OSCE, reflecting this view, believes that acceptance of the established structures will manifest itself in higher voter turnout in elections.

This chapter has illustrated a general debate within academia regarding whether or not integration is a fruitful way of resolving inter-ethnic conflict. The chapter has showed that the OSCE's plan for Samtskhe-Javakheti reflects an integrationist perspective. It then outlined an anti-integrationist theory that predicts that the OSCE's involvement in Samtskhe-Javakheti will prove counter productive. The latter part of the chapter outlined the implications of the integrationist and anti-integrationist perspectives to the case of Samtskhe-Javakheti. This debate will form the basis for the analysis in chapter 7 and 8. In the next chapter, however, a presentation of the methodological choices made in this thesis will be provided.

4 Methodology

The research design applied in this thesis is the single-case study. A case study is an empirical inquiry that looks into a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin 1994: 13). One rationale for conducting a single-case study is to test theoretical propositions in real-life contexts. As has been outlined in previous chapters, the purpose of this investigation is to examine whether minority integration is a fruitful approach to solving conflict.

The definition presented above implies that fieldwork is a natural approach when conducting a case study. Thus, in addition to extensive reading of literature about the region, fieldwork was conducted in Samtskhe-Javakheti in April 2005. During fieldwork, multiple methods were applied. In the following, a discussion about the rationale behind each of these methods will be provided. First, however, some general considerations will be discussed.

4.1 Ethical Considerations: Anonymity

Minority integration is a sensitive issue in Samtskhe-Javakheti. I have therefore sought to conceal the identities of informants. The community in Samtskhe-Javakheti is relatively small and transparent, and revealing the identities of some of the informants might have unanticipated consequences for them. Furthermore, the distinction between research and socializing was not always clear. Although I consistently presented myself and let people know the purpose of my visit, due to the informal character of our daily conversations, some informants may not have realized that I might use these conversations as material for my research. Bearing in mind recent debates about the work of Åsne Sejerstad and the criticism of how she dealt with informant anonymity (Jakobsen 2003; Landro 2004; Løken 2003), it seemed important to be particularly cautious.

The identities of some informants have nevertheless been retained. In situations where formal interviews were conducted, the interviewee was aware of the purpose of the investigation. Furthermore, it can also be argued that public figures who are used to handling journalists, researchers and members of the international community need less protection (Øverland 1999: 50–51). Therefore, I have not taken equal measures to conceal the identity of figures such as OSCE staff members, the mayor of Akhalkalaki and the leader of the political party Virkh, David Rstakyan.

Although I have found it necessary to conceal the identities of some of the respondents, I have also taken measures to increase transparency. During fieldwork I consistently kept a log describing events every day of research. A complete list of interviews is provided in the appendix with basic information about interviewees, location and dates of when the interviews were carried out.

4.2 Language

For historical and socio-economic reasons most Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti speak Russian. As a consequence, almost all fieldwork was carried out in Russian. The exceptions were interviews with the OSCE staff and conversations with a Turkish researcher in Samtskhe-Javakheti, conducted in English. Moreover, informal conversations with the Danish staff of the European Center on Minority Issues in Akhalkalaki were carried out in Danish/Norwegian in addition to Russian.

4.3 Affiliation with the OSCE

This research project is the result of an initial agreement with the OSCE that I would look into a topic of interest to its High Commissioner on National Minorities. As part of this agreement the OSCE provided assistance with practicalities concerning fieldwork and provided access to its implementing partners in the province. However, the organization has not interfered with the research project. The formulation of the research question and choice of research strategy are my own.

4.3.1 *Triangulation*

A characteristic feature of the case studies is that they rely on data triangulation (Yin 1994). Triangulation usually refers to a technique that aims to increase validity through the application of multiple research strategies (Jackson 1995: 173). According to Denzin, however, there are four types of triangulation: 1) data triangulation; 2) investigator triangulation; 3) theory triangulation and 4) methodological triangulation (Denzin 1978: 295). In this thesis both data triangulation and methodological triangulation will be used. This means that in addition to exploring several sources of information, such as literature and informants (data triangulation), several different methodological approaches have also been applied (methodological triangulation). These latter strategies were interviewing, survey, and participant observation in addition to review of literature.

4.3.2 *Interviewing*

The rationale for choosing the qualitative interview as a research strategy is that it allows the interviewer to access the perspective of the interviewee. As such it permits access to information that cannot be observed directly. Thus, the interview has some advantages that mere participant observation does not (Patton 1980: 196). At the same time, the qualitative interview also has some advantages not provided by the survey. The qualitative interview catches the complexity of people's beliefs in their own words (Jackson 1995: 138). The qualitative interview is a more flexible research strategy than the survey, as it allows the investigator to adjust to new information. The qualitative interview has the capacity to minimize the researcher's preconceived ideas.

Between April 2 and 24, 2005 I conducted a total of 36 qualitative interviews with various people in Georgia. Interviews were conducted with staff members working within the OSCE program, including the OSCE staff in Tbilisi and the OSCE's implementing partners in Samtskhe-Javakheti. The aim was to gain insight into the program by speaking to those involved on a daily basis.

In order to gain additional information from another organizational perspective, an interview was carried out with the United Nations' Development Program staff in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Informal conversations with the staff of the European Center on Minority Issues provided additional information.

Interviews were also conducted with important figures from the local authorities and community, including the mayor of Akhalkalaki and the previously mentioned politician David Rstakyan. Finally, interviews with several members of the local community were carried out in order to gain insight into people's perceptions at the grass-root level.

4.3.2.1 Tape recorder or notes?

A central question when conducting interviews is whether to take notes or to apply a tape recorder. Each procedure has particular advantages and disadvantages. Due to the sensitivity of the topic of this thesis, however, the overriding concern was to avoid situations in which interviewees might feel intimidated. The presence of a tape recorder might frighten people and lead them to censor important information. Therefore, notes from all interviews were taken by hand and no technical equipment was used during interviews. Interview notes were transcribed shortly after each interview while the interviews were still fresh in mind.

4.3.3 *Survey*

The purpose of conducting a survey was to produce quantitative data that would serve as a supplement to interviewing and participant observation. Conducting a survey has some clear advantages not provided through observation and interviewing. First, it enabled querying a larger number of people than would otherwise have been possible. Secondly, using a questionnaire with standardized question and answer alternatives allows for more objective data. A final argument in favor of using a survey is that it makes quantification possible.

During fieldwork, questionnaires from 70 respondents were collected. The questionnaire was established in part based on reading of documents about the OSCE involvement in Samtskhe-Javakheti, in part based on previous empirical research on integration in post-Soviet countries (Kolstø 1999, 2002). Almost all questions offered closed answer-alternatives. Section 3, however, included three questions about the respondents' attitudes towards the OSCE projects that were open-ended. For a more detailed description of the questionnaire, see the appendix.

Respondents were selected among both participants and non-participants in the OSCE projects in order to allow for comparison between the two groups. Participants in the projects were selected through visits to several language classes and two legal centers. Respondents not directly involved in

the projects were selected with the principle of gaining a variety of people in mind. Care was taken to collect material at different locations, from respondents with different levels of education, from different age groups and including both men and women.

The purpose of using a quantitative research strategy was not to provide the basis for statistical generalization. As a consequence, measures have not been taken to reach a statistically significant number of respondents. Instead, this data will be used to corroborate qualitative data.

4.3.4 *Participant observation*

The rationale for conducting participant observation was that it allows observing behavior in its natural setting (Jackson 1995: 149). The aim is to understand people's behavior through participation in their everyday lives. Participant observation is a flexible strategy that has the capacity to minimize the researcher's preconceived ideas. In this respect, participant observation resembles the qualitative interview. However, in contrast to the qualitative interview and the survey, the focus of attention is people's behavior. Thus, participant observation has assets that neither the interview nor the survey has.

While doing field research in Akhalkalaki I lived in Samtskhe-Javakheti for three weeks. Thus, in addition to conducting a survey and interviews, I also had the opportunity to experience life and observe the situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti with my own eyes. The diversity of situations in which I found myself may be demonstrated through the following examples: I attended a debate at the European Center on Minority Issues where political actors in the province were present; I participated in a Georgian class for university students and was invited into community members' homes. I also attended the 90th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, which was commemorated on April 24, 2005.

A key concern when conducting observational research is the impact the researcher may have on the observed. While it cannot be completely ruled out that my presence had an impact on people's behavior, I believe that this effect was minimal. I have already indicated that I gradually became part of the community. Moreover, there is little reason to believe that events such as the commemoration of the Armenian genocide would have proceeded differently had I not been present.

4.3.5 *Literature review*

In addition to the above-mentioned research strategies, this thesis also relies on analysis of different sources of literature. Extensive reading of articles and documents about the province has been carried out. In addition to documents provided by the OSCE, reports conducted by organizations such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the European Centre on Minority Issues (ECMI), and the Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD) have been reviewed. Articles from the Caucasus Reporting Service, Eurasia Insight and the Eurasia Daily Monitor have also served as a source of information. Also, information from the Georgian Central Election Committee has been included in the analysis.

4.4 Data Analysis

After fieldwork was completed, a database based on the program SPSS was established in order to simplify analysis of the quantitative survey data. In similar fashion, the open-ended answers of the questionnaire were recorded in an excel file.

The transcribed interviews served as a point of departure for the analysis of the interviews. Topics from the different interviews were sorted out and categorized. The same procedure was carried out with data collected through participation and observation. Finally, data collected through document analysis, interviewing, survey, observation and participant observation were integrated into a single framework.

5 The OSCE's Involvement in Samtskhe-Javakheti

This chapter provides an overview of the OSCE's involvement in Samtskhe-Javakheti. It relies on a number of different sources including interviews with OSCE staff in The Hague and Tbilisi as well as with the OSCE's implementing partners in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Unfortunately, many official documents describing the program are classified and consequently cannot be cited. Therefore, in this chapter I will refer to the contents of these documents without specific references.⁹

In 2002 the OSCE proposed an extensive program in Samtskhe-Javakheti that seeks to promote integration of the minority population in this province and prevent conflict from turning violent. The program identifies several goals that form the basis of the OSCE's activities. First, the OSCE aims to strengthen knowledge of the state language in the province. Second, the aim is to improve the information flow from the center to the province and vice-versa. Third, the OSCE aims to improve the legal framework relating to minority issues and provide better access to legal information. The OSCE believes that these goals, when implemented, will contribute to three more general goals: increased sense of citizenship, increased participation in public affairs and reduced tensions.

In order to realize these goals, the OSCE has developed several projects within four different priority areas. The priority areas are as follows:

1. Language education
2. Information flow and media development
3. Legal assistance and legal information
4. Management of inter-ethnic relations

In the following, a presentation of the first three priority areas will be given. The fourth priority area was launched as late as winter 2005 and cannot be expected to have contributed to integration in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Thus, this priority area has not been included in this presentation.¹⁰

5.1 Priority Area 1: Language Education

Establishment of the first priority area, language education, derives from the view that poor knowledge of Georgian among the Armenian population in Samtskhe-Javakheti contributes to tension between the minority population and the Georgian government. Poor knowledge of Georgian is an important reason for the isolation of the Armenian population, as it makes communication with government institutions difficult, constitutes a major impediment to information sharing and generally complicates participation in Georgian public life.

⁹ For additional information, please contact the High Commissioner on National Minorities in The Hague

¹⁰ The fourth priority area, Management of inter-ethnic relations, aims to provide government officials with a better understanding of how to manage inter-ethnic relations.

Thus, the OSCE believes that raising the language skills of the minority population in Samtskhe-Javakheti is necessary. Several concrete projects have been developed in order to facilitate linguistic integration. The projects focus on specific groups within the Armenian society, for whom knowledge of Georgian is considered to be particularly important.

One project aims to raise the Georgian skills of public officials, working within different sectors of government. A second project targets high-school graduates at the local university who do not have Georgian as their first language. A third plan, has involved the establishment of a so-called language house has recently been established in Akhalkalaki. This project allows school children to sign up for free after-school tutoring in Georgian.

The OSCE not only finances language classes for different groups, however. The organization is also involved in activities that aim to enhance the overall standards of Georgian instruction. A new methodology and new textbooks have been developed specifically for the purpose of teaching Georgian to those for whom it is not a first language. Furthermore, the OSCE cooperates with the Ministry of Education in order to improve teaching of Georgian as a second language within the public schools.

5.2 Priority Area 2: Information Flow and Media Development

The second priority area “information flow and media development” aims to improve the flow of information between the province of Samtskhe-Javakheti and the rest of Georgia. As has already been mentioned above, linguistic differences serve as a major impediment to access of information in this province. Until recently, poor knowledge of Georgian has meant that Georgian television was inaccessible as a source of information for a large part of Samtskhe-Javakheti’s population. Many Armenians in this province have therefore had to rely on news from Armenia and Russia as their primary source of information about developments in their country. These news broadcasts often provide little information about developments in Georgia, and, when they do, the information often reflects the interests of Armenia and Russia.

Thus the OSCE believes that improved communication between Samtskhe-Javakheti and the rest of Georgia is necessary. Better communication promotes understanding, which in turn leads to improvement of relations, it is believed.

The first project within this priority area aims to alleviate the information vacuum in Samtskhe-Javakheti through translation and re-broadcasting of news from the two Georgian television channels Rustavi 2 and Channel 1. Every night, news broadcasts on these two channels are simultaneously translated from Georgian into Armenian and re-broadcasted in Samtskhe-Javakheti, thus providing the inhabitants of the province with more information about developments in the rest of Georgia.

The OSCE does not only seek to promote the flow of information from the center to the province, however, it also seeks to increase the availability of information from Samtskhe-Javakheti in Tbilisi and the rest of Georgia. A second project within this priority area therefore seeks to develop local television in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Two local television channels in Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki have received substantial financial support that has allowed

the companies to invest in new equipment. For instance, the television channels now have cars, thus allowing them to move around in the province. The television channel in Akhalkalaki, ATV12, has recently attained internet access, however, the television channel Parvana in Ninotsminda is still waiting for an internet connection. When I visited Javakheti, the television channels were in the process of constructing new television studios. Furthermore, the staff was undergoing management training, which aims to make the television stations self-funded.

The OSCE not only seeks to increase the information flow between periphery and center. It also aims to improve the quality of news broadcasts. Journalists from different parts of the country are therefore invited to attend classes aiming to make them more sensitive to ethnic questions and to improve their understanding of the importance of balanced news coverage. Joint classes are also expected to provide journalists with contacts in other parts of the country, which should further help to improve the quality of news coverage.

5.3 Priority Area 3: Legal Assistance and Legal Information

The third priority area, “legal assistance and legal information,” is based on the notion that administrative and legal reforms in Georgia may increase inter-ethnic tension. Because administrative and legal reforms often affect minorities, such reforms must be handled with care in order not to create or exacerbate conflict. This priority area therefore aims to assist the Georgian government in the process of government reform, through efforts at improving the legal framework protecting minority rights. At the same time the project also aims to provide information to the minority about international human rights standards and Georgian legislation.

The first project within this priority area was a legal survey conducted in 2003. The purpose of the survey was to gain a better understanding of the existing and proposed legislation related to national minorities in Georgia. The project also involved monitoring the implementation of existing laws. The work conducted within this project presently serves as the basis for the OSCE’s recommendations to Georgian authorities on legislation related to national minorities.

The second project within this priority area aims to encourage the Georgian authorities to develop policy and/or legislation regarding national minority issues in line with Georgia’s international commitments. The project includes a series of seminars, training courses and consultations on legal standards related to minority issues. At present the OSCE is supporting the development of a strategy for civil integration, which is being developed by the Georgian Parliament and the State Ministry on Integration.

A third project within this field targets the minority population of Samtskhe-Javakheti. Legal centers in three locations in Samtskhe-Javakheti have been established since winter 2003. These legal centers have access to continuously updated Georgian legislation in Georgian as well as Russian.¹¹

¹¹ In Javakheti, these legal centers are the *only* institutions that have updated Georgian legislation, according to the legal consultant at the Legal center in Akhalkalaki. A civil servant with whom I spoke also agreed on this point.

The centers offer free legal counseling to all members of the population of Samtskhe-Javakheti irrespective of ethnic affiliation. According to the legal consultant in Akhaltsikhe, counseling is conducted in Georgian, Russian or Armenian, depending on the preference of the client (Interview 34, April 19, 2005).

The legal centers also function as an after-school activity center for children in grades 8–11. The aim is to teach children about human rights and the Georgian legal system through activities such as art, journalism and role-play. When I visited the legal centers in Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe, the centers had just recently established a joint regional newspaper with articles written by children in Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe. They were also in the process of planning a role-play for children at the courthouse in Akhaltsikhe (Interview 24, April 14 and Interview 35, April 19, 2005).

This overview demonstrates that the OSCE's involvement in Samtskhe-Javakheti is multifaceted and complex. It follows that it has not been possible to explore all of the above-mentioned projects within the framework of this thesis. Rather, I have chosen to focus on four projects, 1) the language education project for civil servants, 2) the language education project for university students, 3) the news translation project and 4) the legal advice project. These projects have been singled out because they all target the minority population directly. Moreover, projects were chosen from different priority areas in order to gain insight into a wide spectre of the OSCE's activities. Finally, two language projects were included in order to gain a better understanding of whether linguistic integration is taking place, as well as to reach a larger number of respondents.¹² In the next two chapters an analysis of how these projects have been received in Samtskhe-Javakheti will be presented.

¹² For reasons of simplicity, the language project for civil servants and university students in the following will be referred to as "the language project". The news translation project will be referred to as "the media project". Finally, "the legal advice project" will be used to refer to the project that aims to give legal advice to the population in Samtskhe-Javakheti.

6 Policies of Integration: the Armenian Response

In the next two chapters the implementation of the integration program in Samtskhe-Javakheti will be examined. The discussion will focus on the extent to which the OSCE's goals for minority integration in Samtskhe-Javakheti have been achieved. The aim is to determine whether integration is taking place, and whether integration has contributed to reducing tensions in the province.

In chapter six the implementation of three specific projects will be examined, including the language project, the media project and the legal advice project. It will discuss whether these projects are contributing to integration. Moreover, the chapter will provide a discussion about the community members' reactions to each of these projects. Chapter seven will focus on the higher-level questions of whether a shared identity has been stimulated in Samtskhe-Javakheti, whether participation in elections has increased and whether ethnic tensions have decreased. These questions have been singled out because they correspond to the OSCE's program goals for Samtskhe-Javakheti.

6.1 The Language Project

According to Birch (1989: 56), it may be taken for granted that minorities need to learn the language of commerce and government in order to participate fully in the economic and political spheres of their country. The OSCE shares this assumption and consequently believes that the Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti who do not have a command of Georgian need to improve their knowledge of the state language. The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities stated in a speech in 2004 that this is a necessary step to avoid violent conflict (Fonblanque 2004). The OSCE's language project is thus based primarily on a utilitarian perception of the role of language. Connor's theory, however, stresses the symbolic value of language to ethnic identity:

In situations where language is a principal issue, for example, the "aggrieved" group will typically perceive the preservation of the native language as indispensable to the survival of the national "soul"; liquidate the language and you liquidate the nation, it is charged. Campaigns to have the native language made (or continued as) the language of the communications media, of literature, of instruction in the schools, and even of shop and street signs, become emotional crusades, often leading to bloodshed (Connor 1994e: 153).

Thus, according to the logic of his theory, it is legitimate to ask whether the OSCE project sufficiently takes into account the role language plays as an

identity marker.¹³ According to Connor, integration stimulates increased awareness of linguistic differences, which in turn kindles an ethnic identity, resentment and threat perceptions (Connor 1994a: 37).

The following section therefore discusses how the minorities in Samtskhe-Javakheti receive the OSCE language project. Two questions will be central in this discussion. First, is linguistic integration taking place in Samtskhe-Javakheti? And secondly, how do people react to the process of linguistic integration?

6.1.1 *Linguistic integration?*

When the language project for civil servants was launched in 2003, 154 students started attending classes. According to Tata Khuntsaria and Beatrice Schulter at the OSCE office in Tbilisi, they had not expected that so many civil servants would be interested in the project at the time (Interview 1, April 4, 2005). Subsequently the project has expanded in order to accommodate the high level of interest of the civil servants. At the time of writing, 868 civil servants in Samtskhe-Javakheti have been involved in the project.

The project is still fairly new. Thus, the extent to which these civil servants have completed the three levels of classes is not yet known. At the time of writing, only one cohort of students has completed the third level. Nevertheless, the rate at which the students continue from the first to the second and third level still gives an indication of the rate to which students drop out of the project. Of the 154 students that enrolled in the project in 2003, 73 percent completed the third level. Of the 114 students who started the project in 2004, 85 percent finished the second level. These figures are quite high and may be taken as an indication that most of those who participate find it meaningful to complete the course. This is important, because participation in the project is a necessary precondition for discussing whether the OSCE has contributed to linguistic integration.

However, the fact that many students complete the courses does not necessarily mean that they are proficient in Georgian when they finish. Upon completion of the three levels of courses, students were tested and divided into three levels of proficiency in Georgian – very good, good and not satisfactory. The final exams for the first cohort of students showed that of 113 students, 31 percent completed the project with very good results, indicating an ability to communicate freely in Georgian both orally and in writing. At the other end of the scale 20 percent of the students were merely able to read and write simple texts. The majority of the students, however, completed the course with good results: they were able to understand, read and write, but had difficulties speaking (Schulter 2005, [E-mail]).

There seems to be some discrepancy between test results and the actual skills of the students, however. Schulter and Khunstarina at the OSCE office in Tbilisi said that they were not entirely satisfied with the project. Accord-

¹³ The OSCE recognizes that language is important as an identity marker. In an OSCE document, Fonblanque (2004) stresses the importance of a balanced approach and acknowledges minorities' need to preserve their language. This is also reflected in the OSCE's work in Samtskhe-Javakheti through the news translation project. The argument is therefore *not* that the OSCE does not recognize the importance of language as an identity marker. Rather, the argument is that according to Connor's line of thinking, the OSCE language project does not take this link *sufficiently* into account.

ing to Schuler, the test results showed that the students largely did well on the tests, but nevertheless had problems practicing Georgian in a real-life context (Interview 1, April 4, 2005). Interviewees in Samtskhe-Javakheti largely shared this view. When asked to what degree civil servants have a command of Georgian after finishing the courses, a Georgian teacher involved in the project said: “Well, people are better off than they were before. They can read a letter from the government and understand what it is about. They can also fill in official forms, but most are far from fluent” (Interview 16, April 11, 2005).

Civil servants constitute only one layer of society, however. The language project includes not only classes for civil servants; it also includes classes for students attending the local universities in the province. During fieldwork I visited one of the Georgian classes. The students were very active and maintained a continuous dialogue with the teacher in Georgian. After class I asked the teacher how well the students spoke Georgian after completing the courses. The teacher replied that the students are able to communicate freely when they complete the two years of course work (Interview 6, April 7, 2005). However, a young woman who had attended classes said: “I participated, but I didn’t feel that I learnt very much. There’s no one to practice with here.” Her friend and colleague agreed: “The classes are okay, but you don’t learn enough” (Interview 10, April 7, 2005). Nevertheless, most of the students wrote in the questionnaires that they like the project.

The discussion so far does not indicate that large-scale linguistic integration is taking place in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Nevertheless, a certain degree of linguistic integration is taking place. Perhaps the vice-governor of Samtskhe-Javakheti, an ethnic Armenian, describes the impact of the project most accurately: “It is a small, but nevertheless positive step towards learning the state language” (Respondent 53).

From the perspective of Connor’s theory it might seem surprising that linguistic integration is taking place in Samtskhe-Javakheti. However, this finding far from invalidates his theory. Although the discussion above shows that a certain degree of linguistic integration is taking place, it says little about how people perceive this process. As may be recalled, Connor’s theory predicts that integration is likely to foster resentment and bitterness. An examination of people’s perceptions about linguistic integration is therefore necessary.

6.1.2 *Perceptions about linguistic integration*

Many people in Samtskhe-Javakheti believe that it is important for residents of Georgia to learn Georgian. The survey data, which include respondents from different layers of society, show that as many as 76 percent of the respondents agree that all members of the population in Georgia, irrespective of their ethnic identity, should be proficient in the Georgian language.¹⁴

¹⁴ Participants in the language project tend to agree more strongly with the statement than those who are not involved. The results of participants were: “fully agree”: 70 percent; “somewhat agree”: 18 percent; “somewhat disagree”: 6 percent; “fully disagree”: 6 percent (N=33). The results of non-participants were: “fully agree”: 29 percent; “somewhat agree”: 32 percent; “somewhat disagree”: 29 percent; “fully disagree”: 11 percent (N=28).

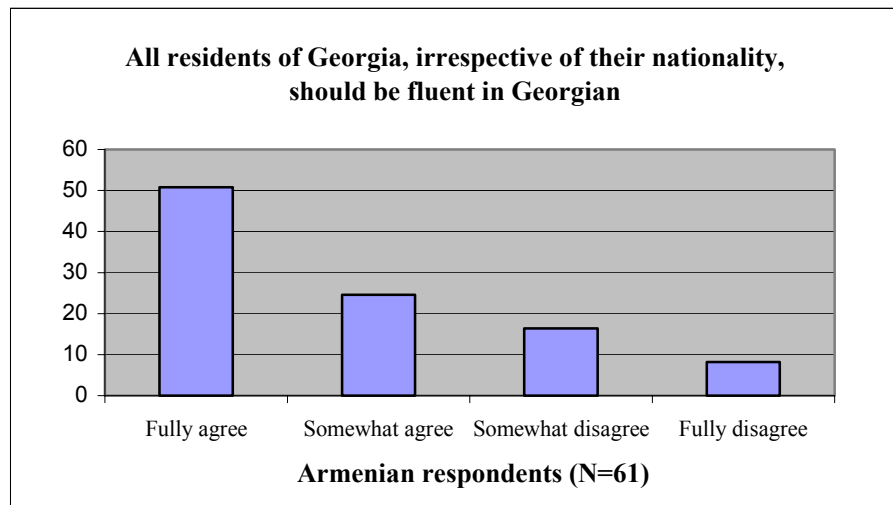


Figure 6.1: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “All residents of Georgia, irrespective of their nationality, should be fluent in Georgian”?

Many interviewees expressed a primarily pragmatic point of view towards language. When asked why they were studying Georgian, police officers at the police station in Akhalkalaki replied: “Language is power!” (Interview 9, April 7, 2005). Schoolteachers in Ninotsminda gave a similar response: “The more languages one knows, the better!” (Interview 13, April 8, 2005). A young girl at the language house looked at me with surprise when I asked her what her motivation was for learning Georgian and said: “Well, I live in Georgia. So I want to learn Georgian!” (Interview 8, April 8, 2005).

Not only language-class participants expressed such views, however. A 30-year old man said that he would very much like to learn Georgian:

Recently I watched the news on the channel Imedi. The news was in Georgian, so I could not understand. Sakashvili was on, and he was talking about our province. I think he was saying that children in Javakheti do not know the national anthem of Georgia, but I don’t know for sure. I would have liked to understand what he was saying about us. It is my personal weakness that I do not understand Georgian (Interview 31, April 16, 2005).

The impression that many people have a pragmatic attitude towards language was further underlined when I discovered that although Turkey for historical reasons is perceived as the archenemy in this province, this does not reduce people’s willingness to learn Turkish. Many people in fact speak Turkish quite well, according to a Turkish researcher, Burcu Gultekin. Gultekin, the center’s staff and I were present at the European Center on Minority Issues in Akhalkalaki when an Armenian woman came in. Gultekin and the Armenian woman were very pleased when they realized that they could communicate in Turkish. The woman subsequently invited Gultekin to

her house, and it turned out that not only did the woman speak Turkish, so did most of her neighbors.

Pragmatic is not the same as positive, however. Although both the police staff and teachers said that they were learning Georgian for pragmatic reasons, it seemed like the police officers resented learning Georgian to a greater extent than did the teachers. Many of the police officers declined to answer the first three language-related questions and the atmosphere in the room grew tense as they were filling out the questionnaires. The school-teachers in Ninotsminda, on the other hand, seemed to genuinely enjoy learning Georgian. The teachers seemed interested in learning languages in general and were eager to practice their foreign language skills.

Most of those with whom I spoke appeared to be genuinely positive about learning Georgian. In addition to the teachers and university students mentioned above, several non-participants expressed that they would like to participate if given the chance. One middle-aged woman, for instance, said that she had never heard about the language classes, but if the classes were open to her, she would gladly join (Respondent 52).

Not everyone was equally positive about the prospects of linguistic integration, however. The leader of the political party “Virkh”, David Rstakyan, during an interview touched upon the dual nature of language as a means of communication as well as a symbolic expression of power:

Learning Georgian can be perceived as both a means to an end as well as an end. For us, learning Georgian is primarily a means to an end. We learn Georgian for practical purposes, in order to be able to communicate. To the Georgian government on the other hand, it is both a means of communication and an end (Interview 30, April 16, 2005).

This comment illustrates that there are political actors in Samtskhe-Javakheti who believe that learning Georgian represents a threat to the Armenian culture. Furthermore, 20 percent of survey respondents said that they agreed that learning Georgian represented a threat to the Armenian language. Thus, the survey data show that Rstakyan’s views enjoy some support in the population.

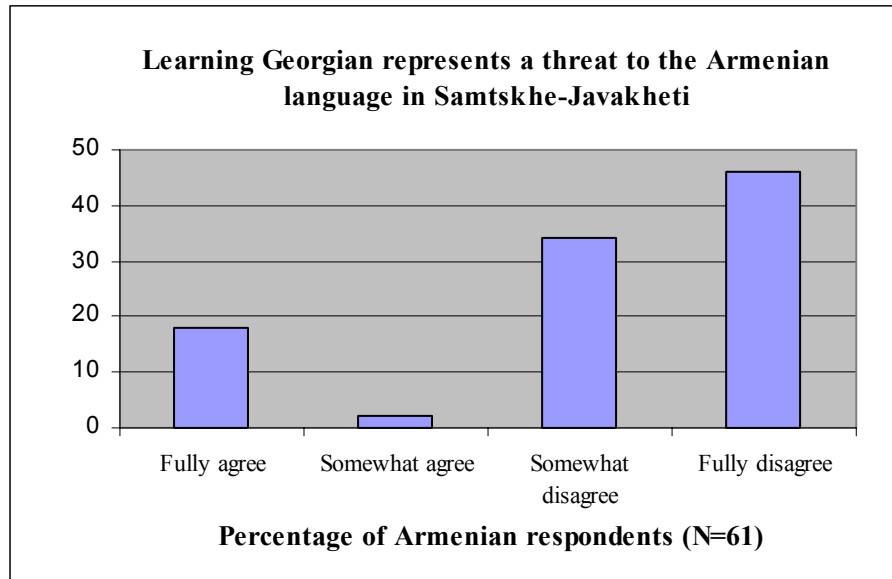


Figure 6.2: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Learning Georgian represents a threat to the Armenian language in Samtskhe-Javakheti”?

The majority of the respondents said that they did not interpret linguistic integration as a threat, however. Still, it is clear that the language issue is a sensitive one. As illustrated in the figure below, quite a high percentage of the respondents (71 percent) think language issues are likely to trigger inter-ethnic clashes in Samtskhe-Javakheti.

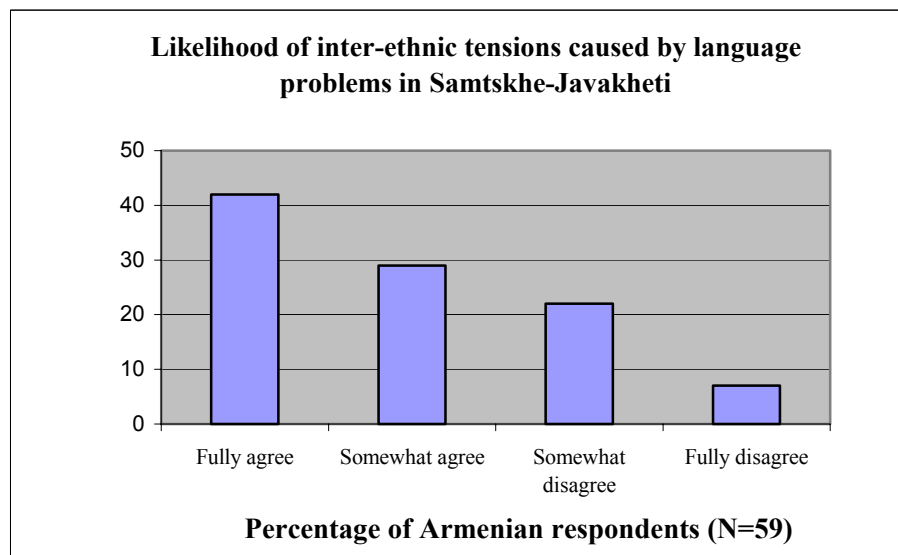


Figure 6.3: In your opinion, how likely do you think it is that the following scenario will take place in Samtskhe-Javakheti: Inter-ethnic tensions caused by language problems?

Furthermore, it has already been mentioned that some respondents declined to answer the first page of the questionnaire that dealt with language issues. Many said that they were simply not going to answer this kind of question. One 60-year old man, who was not a participant in the project, got so furious when he started reading the questions that he even refused to fill out the questionnaire altogether.

People in Samtskhe-Javakheti are generally quite concerned about the language situation. Just before field research was carried out, a discussion forum was organized in Samtskhe-Javakheti in which language issues were on the agenda (Interview 14, April 8, 2005). Many people raised concerns about the linguistic situation during field research. For instance, a young teacher said that she was very much concerned about a law that would require teaching in Georgian:

I teach Georgian history here in Akhalkalaki. If they pass this language law, I am afraid that in two years time I will be unemployed. I speak Georgian, but I do not speak it so well that I would feel comfortable teaching history in Georgian. I would like to improve my Georgian, but look at me [she was in her ninth month of pregnancy]: I am not in a position right now to improve my Georgian to such an extent that I can teach in it. So that means in two years time, I will be unemployed (Interview 32, April 17, 2005).

Other interviewees mentioned that they disliked that the government's increasing requirements of proficiency in Georgian when recruiting new staff. For instance, the mayor of Akhalkalaki said that the police no longer hire officers that are not proficient in Georgian:

When people are interviewed for positions in the police, they are asked whether they have a command of Georgian. Those who do not have a command of Georgian are not hired. It is not that I don't think knowledge of Georgian is important, but one has to take local conditions into account. In an area where 95 percent speak Armenian, knowledge of Georgian shouldn't be considered an absolute requirement (Interview 7, April 7, 2005).

This demonstrates that language issues are an important part of the conflict in Samtskhe-Javakheti. The findings indicate that the project has not ameliorated the linguistic tensions. On the other hand, however, the findings do not indicate that the project has contributed significantly to increasing linguistic tensions in the province.

The language project is only one of several projects, however. In the next section, the media project will be examined.

6.2 The Media Project

The OSCE believes that it is important to improve the flow of information into Samtskhe-Javakheti. The minority population is largely isolated from the rest of Georgia and previously relied on information from Armenia and Russia. In an OSCE perspective, information is important because it is a prerequisite for understanding the Georgian point of view. In turn, it is believed that greater understanding reduces conflict (Interview 1, April 4, 2005).

Increased information, however, may also stimulate conflict. Connor points out that increased contact and information may generate feelings of separateness and resentment (Connor 1994d: 170–171; 1994a: 37; 1994c: 128). This section, therefore, first briefly discusses to what degree information access has improved in the province, before turning to an examination of how the media project has been received.

Samtskhe-Javakheti is an underdeveloped province, and many towns are physically cut off from the outside world up to nine months per year. It would therefore be highly surprising if television were accessible to all. According to a report from the European Center for Minority Issues (ECMI), about 40 percent of the population does not have access to television (Herftoft 2005: 5). A journalist at the Akhalkalaki television center said that only 10–15 of 64 villages in the Akhalkalaki district are able to receive television signals (Interview 5, April 6, 2005).

Overall, however, it seems that in Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda and Akhaltsikhe, where most of the interviews were conducted, people are generally able to access television. All homes that I visited had television, and although signals weren't always the best, most of the respondents said that they watch the television programs on a regular basis.

The interviewees in Samtskhe-Javakheti seemed generally positive towards the news translation programs. As many as 92 percent of the respondents said that they thought of the project as a positive contribution. According to several sources, however, the translation is not always of high quality. The OSCE was the first to point this out. As Schulter said:

Many people point out that the quality of the translations is not the best. Many like to watch the programs just to check for mistakes. However, we simply have not been able to find a professional interpreter that has a high command of both languages (Interview 1, April 4, 2005).

During field research many people expressed concerns about the quality of translations. Some respondents wrote: “The quality of translation is very low” and “A more professional translation would be desirable” (Respondent 62 and 64). The mayor of Akhalkalaki even said that he thought it would have been better if the Georgian television companies produced news in Armenian (Interview 7, April 7, 2005).

Schulter also mentioned that the Georgian news is not always of high quality. News is often slanted to the point where it might even generate ethnic tensions. As an example she mentioned a news clip she had seen on television from Samtskhe-Javakheti. The story was about road signs, and according to the reporter, the signs are only written in Russian and Armenian. “It is simply not true”, Schulter said, “I have been there, and I have seen the

road signs. The signs are also in Georgian, but the television reporter chose not show this in order to make a juicy story” (Interview 1, April 4, 2005).

Given that slanted news is broadcasted in the province, a negative reaction may be anticipated. However, few raised concerns about the contents of the news programs. This indicates that television has not had a negative impact on how the minority in Samtskhe-Javakheti perceive of the Tbilisi authorities. Nevertheless, it is important to note that even if few pointed to the substantial contents of the news broadcasts as a source of tension, it cannot be ruled out that television also has contributed to tensions and mistrust of the government.

It is possible, however, that the concern for linguistic mistakes should be interpreted as an indication that the news translations are stimulating an Armenian ethnic identity. As has already been discussed, language often serves as an important identity marker as well as a symbol of the nation. From this perspective, it is not surprising that the Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti find low language standards provoking.

At the same time, however, the linguistic concerns do not appear to outweigh the minority’s interest in receiving news in Armenian. According to Schulter at the OSCE office, most prefer low quality translations to no translation at all (Interview 1, April 4, 2004).

Findings from field research in Samtskhe-Javakheti largely confirm this point of view. The vast majority of respondents expressed that they found the news project a positive contribution to the province. One respondent for instance said: “It provides information from the center and helps understand what is going on within the government” (Respondent 4). Another respondent said: “This is very important for our region” (Respondent 9). Even among those who complained about the quality of translation, there were some who recognized the existence of the project: “In principle, it is a good idea to translate news from Georgian into Armenian, but there are problems with the quality of the synchronic translations” (Respondent 53). Another respondent said: “[The project is] really cool, but sometimes it’s difficult to understand the translation” (Respondent 52).

If anyone was critical of the project, it was not the Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Rather, it was ethnic Georgians who voiced the toughest criticism of this project. In Akhaltsikhe one of the Georgian respondents, a young man aged 26, complained quite fervently about the existence of such a project. He believed that the ethnic minority in Javakheti should learn Georgian, and that the existence of translated news removed an important incentive for the Armenian population to learn Georgian. “The Armenians should either learn Georgian or leave!” he said (Interview 33, April 18, 2005). Other ethnic Georgians in Tbilisi and the coastal town of Batumi voiced opinions of a similar kind. In Akhaltsikhe, however, he was the only person who spoke in such terms. His friends all said that they did not mind such a project (Interview 33, April 18, 2005). A young Georgian woman said that a civilized state should provide news for minorities in their native language (Interview 34, April 20, 2005).

Thus, the media project over-all does not appear to have produced negative reactions. Two projects have so far been explored. In the next section a discussion about the third and final project will be presented, namely the legal advice project.

6.3 The Legal Advice Project

The third goal of the OSCE is to improve knowledge of legal rights in Samtskhe-Javakheti. The OSCE believes that this is necessary in order to reduce the minority populations' feelings of being second-class citizens.

Connor, on the other hand, believes that integration will cause resentment. This section first discusses whether the legal knowledge of the minorities has improved, and then turns to a discussion of whether this project has generated resentment within the minority population of Samtskhe-Javakheti.

Most people in Akhalkalaki know about this project, although not everyone. For example, I interviewed an elderly man who revealed that he did not know that there was a legal center in Akhalkalaki (Interview 3, April 7, 2005). Moreover, 18 percent of the survey respondents also had not heard of the legal centers. Overall, however, the vast majority of people knew about the project: as many as 82 percent of the survey respondents answered that they knew there were legal centers in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Although the percentage of respondents who knew about this project was comparatively lower than for the former two projects (93 percent and 96 percent, respectively), 82 percent is still a high figure.¹⁵

The clients who were interviewed at the legal centers in Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe were generally pleased with the project. A public official interviewed at the Legal Center in Akhalkalaki, for instance, said that he finds the center quite useful. He comes into the center regularly because he needs translated documents for work (Interview 26, April 15, 2005). At the Legal Center in Akhaltsikhe a young Armenian woman was very pleased with the counseling she had received. Because she thought I was a representative of the OSCE, she wanted to express her gratitude to the OSCE for financing the project (Interview 36, April 19, 2005).¹⁶

Not only clients were positive towards the project, however. The overall majority of respondents (95 percent) expressed positive views about it. One respondent for instance wrote: "I think this is a very good project, because people need to know their rights" (Respondent 58). Similarly, another respondent wrote: "It protects those who do not know the Georgian constitution, because as far as I know, it has not been translated into Armenian and other languages" (Respondent 20).¹⁷ Even those who raised critical concerns about the other two projects, including the mayor, said that they thought this project was useful. The mayor furthermore added that the administration has regular contact with the center (Interview 7, April 7, 2005).

Only two respondents wrote critical remarks about the project. One respondent wrote: "Good legal specialists are needed" (Respondent 62). When

¹⁵ The reason why the project is relatively less known might be that it is fairly new; it had only been running for a year at the time of writing. Another reason why the survey results show that this project is relatively less known to the respondents might be that many of them are quite young, the median age being 28 years. The University students are only 17–19 years old, and it is reasonable to assume that these respondents have little experience as independent legal subjects. Of the respondents who answer that they were not aware that this project existed 91 percent were younger than 30. Furthermore, the age group 11–20 constituted 73 percent of the respondents who did not know about this project, whereas the age group 21–30 constituted 18 percent. A lawyer in Ninotsminda said that most of their clients are aged 40 or more (Interview 11, April 8 2005).

¹⁶ Before I met the client, the legal consultant had informed the client about who I was. This meant that I was mistakenly presented as an OSCE official.

¹⁷ The constitution has been translated into Russian.

asked to elaborate, he said that he thought the quality of the lawyers working there was not high enough (Interview 27, April 15, 2005).¹⁸ The other respondent wrote that he thought the project should have a less formal character (Respondent 64).¹⁹

These findings clearly indicate that the centers are considered to be useful institutions by the vast majority of respondents and that the vast majority of respondents are positive towards the centers. The discussion therefore offers little support for the notion that this project has caused resentment in Samtskhe-Javakheti.

This chapter has explored whether three of the OSCE's projects are contributing to integration. Moreover, it also discussed the Armenians reactions to these projects. The OSCE's goals go beyond raising language skills and increasing information, however. In the next chapter, focus will therefore be lifted to whether these projects have contributed to three of the OSCE's general goals: cultivation of a Georgian identity to supplement the Armenian ethnic identity, increased participation in elections and reduction of ethnic tensions.

¹⁸ Whether this criticism is justified is hard to evaluate. Nevertheless, it seems that most of the lawyers are very young. One of the lawyers said that he had not expected to get the job, precisely because he was young and inexperienced. And he added, in his own words, that: "As a lawyer, experience is everything" (Interview 33, April 19 2005).

¹⁹ Unfortunately, there was no opportunity to ask the respondent to elaborate on this. Thus, it is difficult to say exactly what the statement means.

7 An Integrated, Peaceful Society?

The preceding chapter discussed how the population in Samtskhe-Javakheti has reacted to the OSCE's projects (language, media and legal projects). This chapter goes on to provide a closer examination of whether the OSCE has achieved its more general goals in the province. The chapter begins with a discussion about feelings of identity among minority members in Samtskhe-Javakheti. It will then go on to investigate whether participation in elections has increased. Finally, the last section provides a discussion about whether ethnic tensions have been reduced in Samtskhe-Javakheti.

7.1 Georgian Citizens?

As a starting point of discussion, it is interesting to examine which country Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti regard as their homeland. In a UNDP report based on field research in 2001, Rochowanski (2001) argues that many people in Samtskhe-Javakheti are so isolated that they do not even know which country they live in. Four years later I did not meet anyone who was not aware that he or she was a resident of Georgia. Of course, many of those with whom I spoke lived in larger towns. It is therefore possible that people in more isolated areas are still unaware of which country they live in. Nevertheless, it is still interesting to note that the Armenians living in Samtskhe-Javakheti are generally aware that they are residents of Georgia.

However, knowledge about one's state of residence is not the same as recognition of belonging to this state. A central question therefore is not only whether the Armenians are aware that they reside in Georgia, but also whether they regard the Georgian state as their *rodina* [homeland].

The findings presented in the figure below indicate that quite a substantial number of survey respondents consider Armenia their homeland.²⁰ This is quite in line with Connor's expectations outlined above. Interestingly, however, the majority does not consider Armenia their homeland. The majority of respondents in fact consider Georgia their homeland.

²⁰ Even an ethnic Georgian said that he considers Armenia his homeland. One explanation for this might be that he has mixed ethnic heritage.

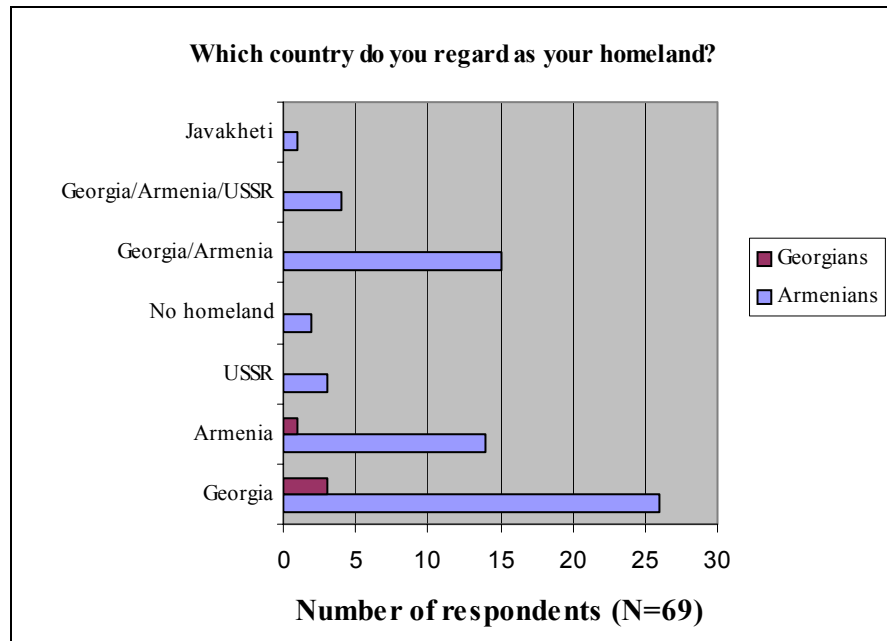


Figure 7.1: Which country do you regard as your homeland?²¹

Thus, it is clear that most people feel a certain allegiance to Georgia. It is also clear, however, that quite a few respondents identify not only with Georgia, but also with Armenia. These results apparently reflect a complex, multi-layered understanding of identity.

In order to investigate whether this holds true for other aspects of identification, it is interesting to explore whether members of the community in Samtskhe-Javakheti also identify with Georgian culture.

Not surprisingly, the vast majority of respondents said that they feel that they belong to Armenian culture. Furthermore, none of the Armenians said that he or she felt a sense of belonging solely to Georgian culture. Thus, it is clear that the identification for most respondents is limited to considering Georgia their homeland.

Interestingly, however, although the majority of respondents said that they consider themselves part of Armenian culture, quite a number of respondents also said that they feel attached to *both* Armenian *and* Georgian culture. This is illustrated in the figure below:

²¹ The questionnaire included five categories. Several respondents checked more than one alternative, however. Seven different answer alternatives are therefore displayed in the figure.

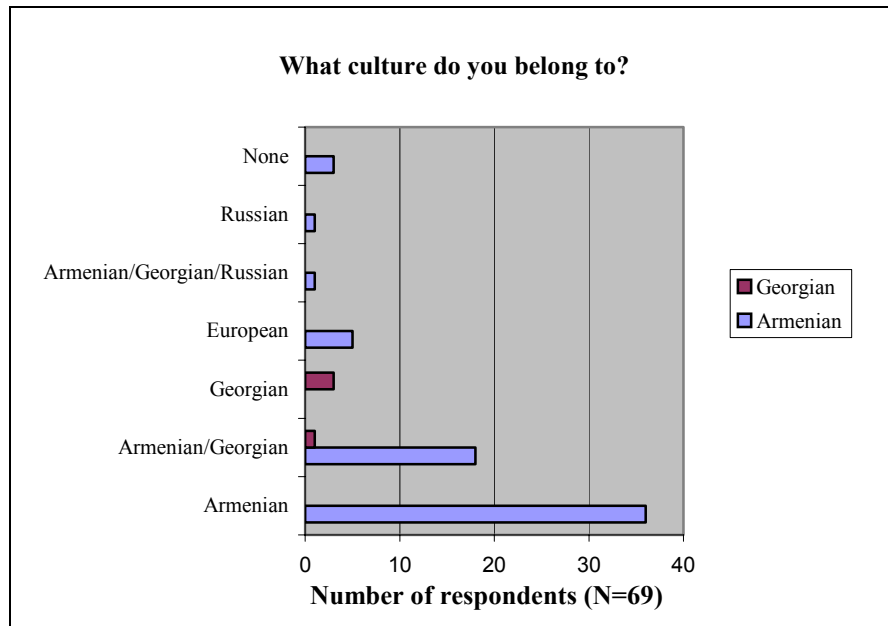


Figure 7.2: Which culture do you belong to?

The fact that so many Armenians say that they identify with *both* Armenian *and* Georgian culture is surprising from Connor's perspective. It indicates that quite a few respondents are rather highly integrated in terms of identification. This finding clearly does not fit very well with his expectations and should rather be interpreted as support for an integrationist perspective.

However, one thing is that several respondents say that they identify with both Georgian and Armenian culture, another is whether this may be attributed to the OSCE's involvement. During field research the respondents who watch the news translations were asked whether they felt a stronger or weaker attachment to Georgian society after they started watching these broadcasts.

When seeking to answer a question about changes over time, time-series data are usually desirable (Vedung 1998). However, within the time frame of this master thesis it has not been possible to collect data at more than one point of time. Thus, the respondents were instead asked to evaluate whether they felt differently now than in the past.

The findings show that the majority of respondents (70 percent) said that watching television had *not* changed their sense of belonging to Georgian society, whereas only 30 percent said watching television had an impact.

Interestingly, among those who said that television had not changed their sense of belonging to Georgian society, most responded that they had *always* belonged to Georgian society. This is surprising, given the common assumption that the Samtskhe-Javakheti Armenians are highly alienated. This indicates that the OSCE's initial assumptions about the Armenian minority may not be valid.

It is also worth noting that the majority of respondents who said television had affected their identity, said that they feel more attached to Georgian society after they started to watch television. The figure below summarizes the answers to this question.

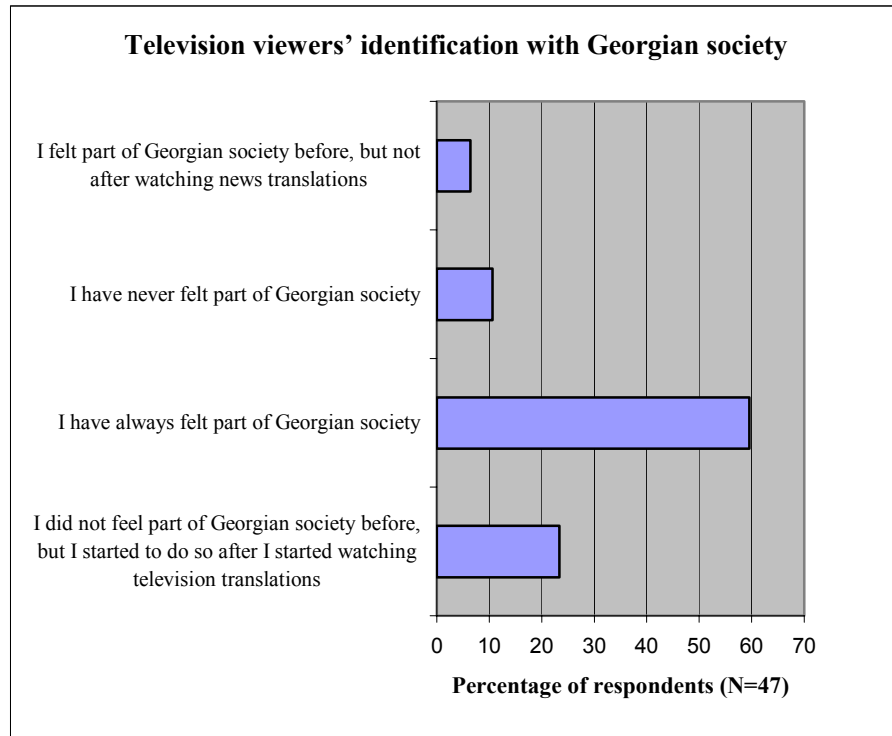


Figure 7.3: Television viewers' identification with Georgian society

The findings indicate that watching television has had a small, but nevertheless positive impact on many of those who did not formerly feel part of Georgian society. Conversely, only very few of those who say they felt part of Georgian society before have had a change of heart.

It is important to note, however, that the formulation of the question only catches categorical changes. One respondent said that he had always felt that he was part of Georgian society, but nevertheless felt a stronger sense of belonging after he had started to watch television (Interview 26, April 15, 2005). Thus, it cannot be ruled out that television broadcasts might have contributed to strengthening the feeling of belonging to Georgian society among those who say that they have always felt part of Georgian society. Conversely, the broadcasts may have increased feelings of estrangement among those who do not feel attached to Georgia.

Nevertheless, the findings are illuminating when it comes to the central discussion of this thesis. As may be recalled, Connor's theory predicts that increased contact through media broadcasts should increase feelings of separateness, whereas integrationists believe it will stimulate a shared identity (McGarry & O'Leary 1993). Although the findings show that a certain percentage of the respondents say that they feel estranged after they started watching television translations, the majority of those who said television has had an impact on their identity say it has made them feel more attached to Georgian society.

7.2 Participation in Georgian Elections

The OSCE views participation in elections as an important indicator of an integrated/peaceful state. It is therefore an important aim for the OSCE to stimulate participation in Georgian elections.

Connor assumes that integration of minorities is likely to result in demands for self-government (Connor 1994a: 36-39). This goal obviously means rejection of the established structures of the state. While some might argue that high participation in elections indicates accept of the traditional structures, there is reason to question the validity of this proposition.

Nevertheless, an examination of whether participation in elections has increased is necessary in order to answer whether the OSCE has accomplished its program goals in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Furthermore, even if increased participation does not necessarily invalidate Connor's theory, it is still interesting to examine whether the OSCE may have stimulated participation in elections.

The results of the parliamentary elections in Akhalkalaki district in 1995 and 2004 show that about 77 percent voted in 1995 and 86 percent in 2004. In Ninotsminda district, voter turnout was 71 percent in 1995 and 80 percent in 2004 (CECG 1995, 2004). Thus, if these figures are reliable, it seems that voter turnout is relatively high in the districts where the majority of Armenians live.

The figures are surprising, because it is sometimes assumed that the Samtskhe-Javakheti Armenians do not participate to the same extent as other groups within Georgian society. In particular, it is interesting to note that the figures from the 1995 elections are relatively high; given the emphasis the OSCE has laid on increasing election participation. The figures indicate that the population in Samtskhe-Javakheti was relatively integrated in political life as early as the mid-nineties, whereas the OSCE program was launched as late as 2003.

However, it is important to bear in mind that elections in the Republic of Georgia have not always proceeded in a democratic fashion (Dieset 2004). Thus, these figures could be artificially high.

Taking this into account, a comparison of voter turnout in 1995 and 2004 might still give an indication of whether participation has increased in Samtskhe-Javakheti after the OSCE launched its involvement in the province. The figures presented above suggest that there has been an increase in voter turnout between 1995 and 2004.

This increased voter turnout may, however, be explained by other factors than the OSCE's initiatives. One likely explanation is that the elections in 2004 represented the first parliamentary elections after Sakaashvili came to power in November 2003. This might have contributed to increased interest in participation. However, this explanation does not rule out the possibility that the OSCE media project might have contributed to increased participation. Findings from field research in Akhalkalaki indicate that the translated news broadcasts might also have had an impact on voter turnout. Most of the respondents who watch television answered that they believed the probability that they would participate in elections had increased after they started watching the translated news programs (61 percent). At the same time, only very few television viewers said that the probability that they would vote had decreased after they started to watch the news (4 percent). A substantial

number of television viewers, however, also said that watching television had not had any particular impact on the likelihood that they would vote (32 percent).

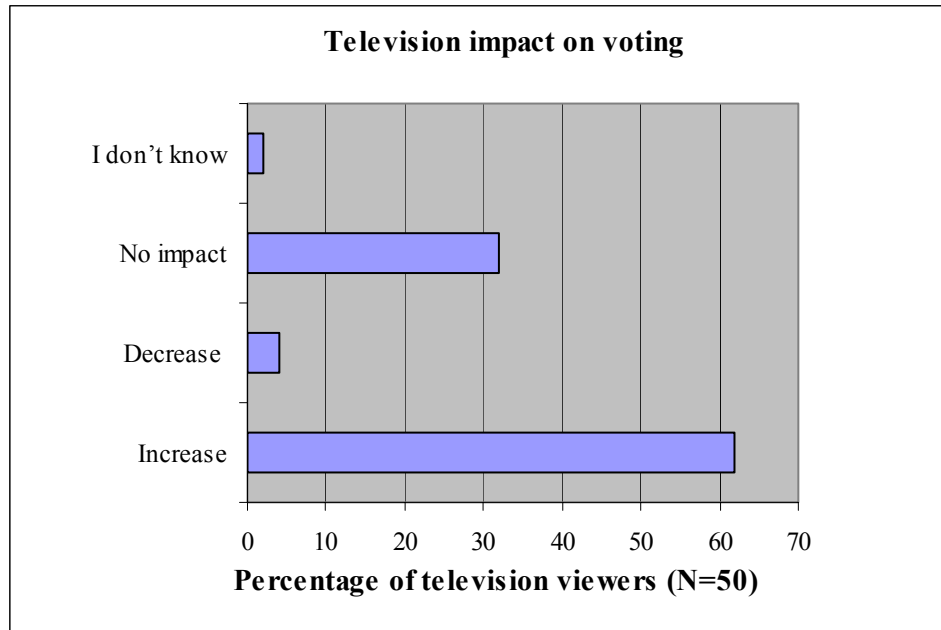


Figure 7.4: Would you say that watching translated news broadcasts has a) increased, b) decreased or c) not had an impact on the likelihood that you will vote in the next elections?²²

These findings show that a clear majority answered that they believe watching television has stimulated their interest in voting. Thus, this finding indicates that increased information has stimulated the population's interest in participating in elections.

As noted at the beginning of this section, it is not entirely clear whether Connor's theory predicts a higher or lower degree of participation in elections. Therefore, this finding should not automatically be interpreted as contradicting Connor's theory.

This section should therefore not be completed without further discussing political activities in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Political organizations in the province have repeatedly called for autonomy arrangements for Javakheti. As late as in September 2005, local organizations organized a forum in which they demanded that Javakheti be granted the status of autonomous region (Lenta.ru 2005). Thus, there is also evidence that local actors seek greater freedom from Tbilisi.

Although these demands are more modest than what Connor's theory would suggest, there is nevertheless evidence that political movements within Samtskhe-Javakheti seek greater independence from the rest of Georgia. While it is difficult to attribute this to the OSCE involvement in the province, it is clear that the organization has not been able to prevent de-

²² The category "I don't know" was not included in the questionnaire. The reason why the figure includes four categories is that some respondents wrote: "I don't know" as a response to this question.

mands from local actors for greater regional autonomy. However, there is of course also a possibility that there would have been a stronger drive for independence if the OSCE had not been involved in the region, but this would be hard to demonstrate.

7.3 Ethnic Tensions

Most informants in Samtskhe-Javakheti are concerned with the problem of inter-ethnic relations. The figure below illustrates the number of respondents who said they were worried about inter-ethnic relations versus those who said they were not.

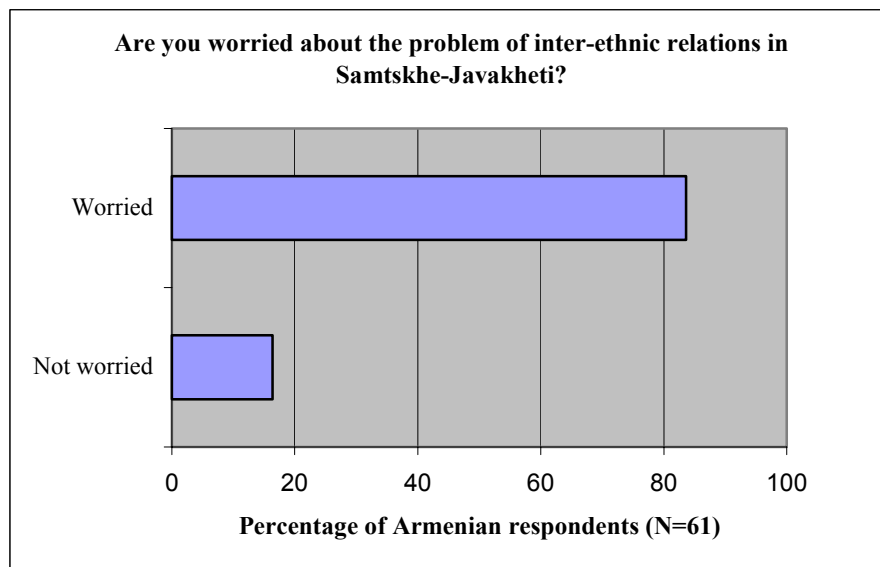


Figure 7.5: Are you worried about the problem of inter-ethnic relations in Samtskhe-Javakheti? #1

The figure clearly illustrates that the vast majority of respondents – 84 percent – are concerned with inter-ethnic relations, and only 16 percent are not. These results indicate that there is a high degree of concern about this potential source of conflict among the respondents.

In order to answer whether ethnic tensions have decreased, however, it is necessary not only to discuss whether the respondents are worried or not, but also whether they are more concerned today than they used to be.

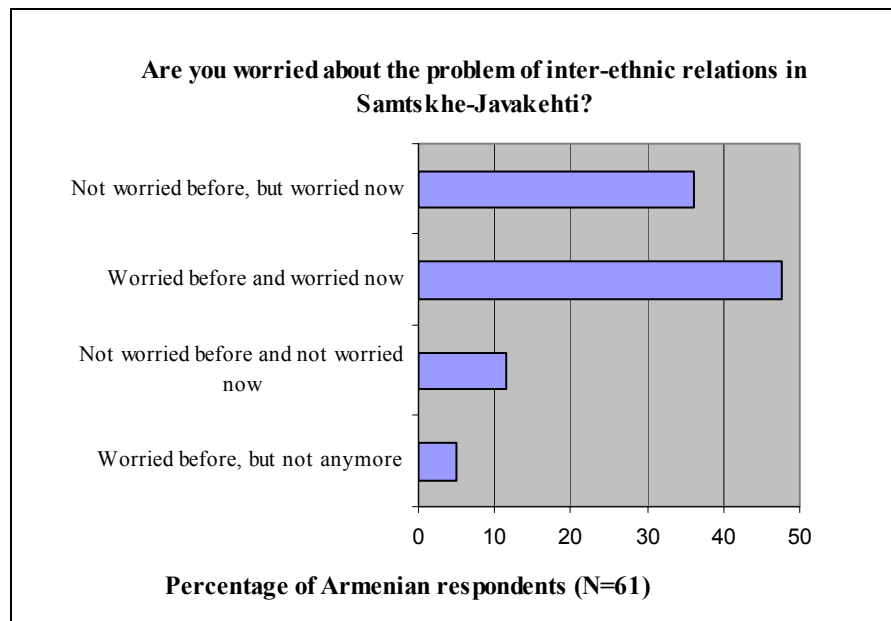


Figure 7.6: Are you worried about the problem of inter-ethnic relations in Samtskhe-Javakheti? #2

The figure above illustrates that not only is fear of inter-ethnic problems widespread, many respondents also say that they are more worried now than they used to be. Only very few said that they are less worried now than before. This finding therefore provides little support for the idea that fear of inter-ethnic tensions has been reduced among the respondents.

In other words, it seems unlikely that the OSCE's involvement in the province has contributed to reducing fears. Perhaps then the opposite is the case? Could it be that the OSCE involvement has increased rather than reduced levels of fear in the province?

As has been discussed in the preceding chapter, it is not unlikely that watching Georgian television might contribute to increased fear of inter-ethnic relations. Because the respondents were asked how often they watch television, it is possible to cross tabulate this information with the respondents' answers about inter-ethnic concerns.

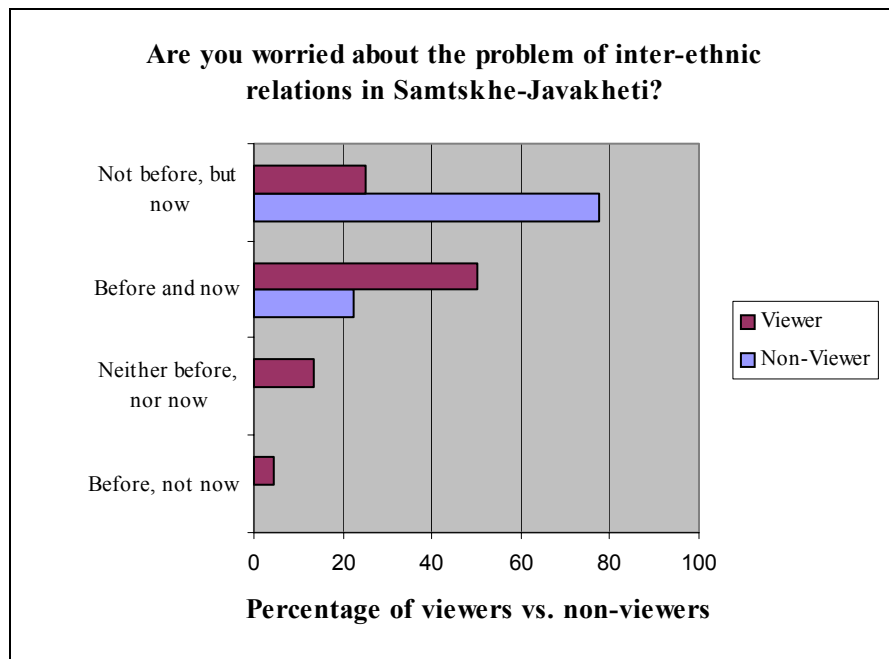


Figure 7.7: Are you worried about inter-ethnic relations in Samtskhe-Javakheti? Answers of television viewers (N=44) vs. non-viewers (N=9)

The figure presented above illustrates concerns among viewers and non-viewers about inter-ethnic relations. It is clear that both those who watch television and those who do not are concerned about inter-ethnic relations. Most interestingly, *all* non-viewers say that they are worried about inter-ethnic relations. Furthermore, the vast majority of non-viewers say that they are more worried now than they were before. This finding indicates that fear does not stem from watching television.

This discovery is further supported by the answers of those who *do* watch television. Only a relatively small percentage of viewers said that they are *more worried* now than before. Most, however, said that they have *always* been worried. Thus, it is hard to conclude that television is the source of concern. However, even if television might not be the source of anxiety, this does not necessarily mean that television has not contributed to keeping fear at a high level among those who watch it.

The results presented in this section clearly indicate that there is a considerable degree of concern regarding inter-ethnic relations in the province. Moreover, the degree of anxiety appears to have increased over time. These results fit well with the expectations of Connor's theory.

However, Connor argues that increased contact and information should contribute to anxiety (Connor 1994a). The discovery that those who do *not* watch television are more worried than those who do is surprising from this perspective. Moreover, the theory leads one to expect that television viewers should be more worried now than before. The results, however, show that only a relatively small percentage of the viewers answered that they had grown increasingly concerned. Most of the viewers have been worried for a long time.

This chapter has investigated whether the OSCE has realized three of its more general goals in Samtskhe-Javakheti: increasing the minority's sense of being Georgian citizens, increasing participation in elections and reducing inter-ethnic tensions in the province. In the next chapter, the aim is to integrate the fieldwork findings presented in chapter 6 and 7.

8 Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis is to explore whether the OSCE's integration program has ameliorated tensions in Samtskhe-Javakheti. The research question posed at the outset of this thesis was whether the OSCE's integration program in Samtskhe-Javakheti has contributed to decreased levels of conflict in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Analysis of this question was conducted on two levels. The first level of analysis focused on whether the OSCE has contributed to integration in Samtskhe-Javakheti. The second level of analysis lifted the focus to whether integration has reduced the level of conflict in the province. The aim of this chapter is to integrate and summarize the findings in the previous chapters before concluding.

8.1 Integration in Samtskhe-Javakheti?

The analysis has indicated that integration in terms of improved Georgian language skills is taking place in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Armenians are slowly learning the state language, although many language-class participants still do not speak Georgian fluently. Moreover, language classes are only available to a relatively small percentage of the population. Thus, linguistic integration is taking place, but at a relatively modest rate.

Informational integration is also taking place in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Georgian news translated into Armenian is broadcasted in the province and most of those who have access to it watch the news broadcasts frequently. As the analysis has shown, however, this project also has its limitations. Television is not accessible to all and only about 60 percent of the province has access to these broadcasts.

The analysis has also indicated that informational integration is taking place in the legal sphere. Legal advice is available to the Armenians and other residents of Samtskhe-Javakheti and most interviewees and respondents were well aware that this project existed.

Integration in terms of participation in elections is high and also appears to have increased over time. Many respondents said that they thought watching television had stimulated their interest in voting. However, polls are polls, and elections are elections. Therefore it remains to be seen whether there will be an increase in participation in future elections.

The most interesting finding when it comes to integration is nevertheless the level of identification with the Georgian state and society. The analysis has indicated that many people in Samtskhe-Javakheti are relatively highly integrated when it comes to identification with Georgia. Although several respondents said that they considered Armenia their homeland, the majority of respondents recognized Georgia as their homeland. Many also considered *both* Georgia *and* Armenia their homeland. Furthermore, although the majority said that they belonged to Armenian culture only, a relatively large percentage said that they belonged to both Georgian *and* Armenian culture. Moreover, when those who watch television, (i.e. the majority of the Arme-

nian respondents), were asked whether they felt part of Georgian society, as many as 82 percent responded positively.

However, the findings of this thesis also indicate that watching the television broadcasts has only had a moderate influence on respondents' identity. Most respondents say they have not experienced a change in identification with Georgian society. At the same time, it cannot be ruled out that television has intensified these respondents' sense of belonging – or not belonging – to Georgian society. Of those who say that they have had a change of heart, however, it seems that television has generally had a modest, but positive impact.

Thus, to summarize, it appears that integration along the parameters of language and information is gradually taking place in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Participation in elections is surprisingly high and there appears to have been an increase in voter-turnout between 1995 and 2004. While this might be related to the Rose revolution, there is also some indication that the OSCE media project might have inspired the population to vote in the future. Finally, it seems that integration in terms of identification with Georgia and Georgian society is slightly greater than expected. Although identification appears not to be a new phenomenon, the findings indicate that the OSCE media project has had a modest, but nonetheless positive influence on the respondents' feelings of belonging to Georgian society.

8.2 Has Integration in Samtskhe-Javakheti Proved Conflict Generating?

The former section concluded that integration is slowly taking place in Samtskhe-Javakheti. However, the discussion is not complete without an examination of whether integration has generated increased antagonism.

The previous chapters have indicated that language is a sensitive issue in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Although many expressed pragmatic interest in learning the Georgian language, this was sometimes accompanied by negative attitudes towards learning Georgian. Not only did many respondents dislike having to learn Georgian, as many as 20 percent of the respondents also said they believed that learning Georgian represents a *threat* to the Armenian language.

The majority of respondents disagreed with the notion that learning Georgian represents a threat, however, and many also expressed positive attitudes towards learning Georgian. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the question of linguistic integration is a sensitive one.

The previous chapters have also showed that informational integration has not had the dramatically negative impact on the conflict situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti that might be expected from the perspective of Connor's theory. Most people in Samtskhe-Javakheti spoke positively about both the media project and the legal advice project. However, many respondents commented on the relatively low standards of the media translation. The analysis drew attention to the fact that this reaction might be an expression of ethnic identity, a finding that supports Connor's theory.

Due to the slanted news coverage in Georgia, which often portrays the minorities in a negative light, it is surprising that so few mentioned the sub-

stantive content of the television broadcasts during interviews. However, it cannot be ruled out that the concerns voiced by many respondents about the Georgian government at least partly reflect negative imagery and attitudes presented on Georgian news broadcasts.

Still, it is reasonable to assume that negative presentations would have an alienating effect on the population. It is therefore interesting to note that the findings provide little support for the view that television has generated psychological estrangement from Georgian society among the respondents. The majority of those who said they have not changed their minds about feeling part of Georgian society say that they have always felt part of Georgian society. Furthermore, of those who say that they have changed their minds, the vast majority answered that they now feel part of Georgian society. Thus, as much as 82 percent of the respondents said that they feel part of Georgian society.

Moreover, although the findings indicate that fear is widespread in the province, the results also show that television does not appear to be a source of fear. However, this does not mean that television has not contributed to keeping fear at a high level among those who watch it.

Thus, to summarize, the findings show that informational integration does not appear to be particularly conflict generating. Linguistic integration, however, appears to be a more controversial issue. In this respect it is interesting that the primary subject of critique concerning television broadcasts is also of a linguistic nature.

8.3 Connor and the OSCE in Samtskhe-Javakheti

Connor's theory may explain why some members of the Armenian community react negatively to the language project, why they perceive of having to learn Georgian as a threat and why many find poor language translations provocative. The theory may also explain why fear of inter-ethnic relations is widespread and why political organizations demand autonomy for the region. At the same time, Connor's theory fails to explain why so many Armenians are pragmatic concerning language, why so many respondents appreciate the media project and why identification with Georgian society is relatively widespread among respondents. These are all findings that lend support to the integrationist perspective.

The findings indicate that the OSCE's integration projects have more often than not contributed to identification with Georgia. The most serious finding from the integrationist perspective is that fear is widespread and that it has increased over time. Thus, there is little indication that the OSCE has successfully ameliorated inter-ethnic tensions in the province. One plausible explanation for this might be that the project was launched only a few years ago. Reducing tensions between groups is an ambitious goal, which is likely to take time, and future investigation may therefore be necessary.

9 Literature

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10 Appendix

10.1 List of interviews

	Interviewee(s)	Location	Date
1	OSCE officials Beatrice Schulter and Tata Khuntsaria	The OSCE office in Tbilisi	April 4, 2005
2	OSCE driver	Tbilisi-Akhalkalaki	April 6, 2005
3	Elderly man	Akhalkalaki	April 6, 2005
4	Journalist Armen Grigorjan	The Center for Democratic Development, Akhalkalaki	April 6, 2005
5	Journalist	Television station in Akhalkalaki	April 6, 2005
6	Teacher	The Georgian State University in Akhalkalaki	April 7, 2005
7	Mayor of Akhalkalaki	Mayor's office	April 7, 2005
8	Director, students	The Language House in Akhalkalaki	April 7, 2005
9	Police officers	Police Station in Akhalkalaki	April 7, 2005
10	Girls	Akhalkalaki	April 7, 2005
11	Lawyer, Armen Darbinyan	Ninotsminda Legal Center	April 8, 2005
12	Armen Darbinyan	Restaurant, Ninotsminda	April 8, 2005
13	School teachers	School in Ninotsminda	April 8, 2005
14	Director	Television channel Parvana, Ninotsminda	April 8, 2005
15	Two women	Akhalkalaki	April 10, 2005
16	Georgian teacher and restaurant owner	Akhalkalaki	April 11, 2005
17	UNDP staff	UNDP office in Akhalkalaki	April 11, 2005
18	Several men and women	The ECMI office in Akhalkalaki	April 12, 2005
19	Young man	Akhalkalaki	April 13, 2005
20	Young couple	Akhalkalaki	April 13, 2005
21	Middle-aged man 1	Akhalkalaki	April 13, 2005
22	Middle-aged man 2	Akhalkalaki	April 13, 2005
23	Young woman	Akhalkalaki	April 14, 2005
24	Lawyer	Akhalkalaki Legal Center	April 14, 2005
25	Client 1 Elderly man	Akhalkalaki Legal Center	April 15, 2005
26	Client 2 Middle-aged man	Akhalkalaki Legal Center	April 15, 2005
27	Young man	Akhalkalaki	April 15, 2005
28	Young woman	Akhalkalaki	April 15, 2005
29	Two young men	Akhalkalaki	April 15, 2005
30	Politician David Rstakyan	Akhalkalaki	April 16, 2005
31	Young man	Akhalkalaki	April 16, 2005
32	Young teacher	Akhalkalaki	April 17, 2005
33	Young men	Akhalkalaki	April 18, 2005
34	Lawyer	Akhaltsikhe Legal Center	April 19, 2005
35	Staff member	Akhaltsikhe Legal Center	April 19, 2005
36	Client	Akhaltsikhe Legal Center	April 19, 2005

10.2 Interview guide: OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

1. How long have you been involved in this program?
2. Could you tell me about the program:
 - a. Language education
 - i. Language classes for civil servants
 - ii. Language classes for university students
 - b. Media development
 - i. How is translation carried out?
 - ii. Does synchronic translation create dilemma situations?
 - iii. Training for journalists
 - iv. Training program
 - v. Contacts between region and national media
3. What kind of procedures do you use in order to evaluate the program?
4. Do you have any documents that you think it would be useful for me to look into?
5. What part of the implementation of this program has been most successful in your opinion? Why?
6. What part of the implementation of this program has proven challenging? Why?

10.3 Questionnaire, Russian version

- 1) Ваш возраст:
- 2) Пол:
 - a) М
 - b) Ж
- 3) Национальная принадлежность:
 - a) Армянин/армянка
 - b) Грузин/грузинка
 - c) Другое (пожалуйста, укажите):
- 4) Образование:
- 5) Род деятельности:
- 6) Насколько важно, по Вашему мнению, в Вашем регионе владение грузинским языком (отметьте на шкале от 1 до 5, где 1 означает «это не обязательно» и 5 – «это очень важно»)

- 7) Насколько важно, по Вашему мнению, в Вашем регионе владение армянским языком (отметьте на шкале от 1 до 5, где 1 означает «это не обязательно» и 5 – «это очень важно»)
- 8) Насколько важно, по Вашему мнению, в Вашем регионе будет владение грузинским языком (отметьте на шкале от 1 до 5, где 1 означает «это не обязательно» и 5 – «это очень важно»)
- 9) Пожалуйста, укажите, согласны ли Вы со следующими утверждениями:
- a) все лица, постоянно проживающие в Грузии, вне зависимости от их национальности должны свободно владеть грузинским языком
- i) полностью согласен
 - ii) скорее согласен
 - iii) скорее не согласен
 - iv) полностью не согласен
- b) изучение грузинского языка представляет собой угрозу армянскому языку в Самцхе-Джавахети
- i) полностью согласен
 - ii) скорее согласен
 - iii) скорее не согласен
 - iv) полностью не согласен
- c) низкий уровень владения грузинским языком среди представителей негрузинского населения угрожает Грузии как государству
- i) полностью согласен
 - ii) скорее согласен
 - iii) скорее не согласен
 - iv) полностью не согласен
- 10) Представителем какой культуры Вы себя считаете:
- a) армянской
- i) полностью согласен
 - ii) скорее согласен
 - iii) скорее не согласен
 - iv) полностью не согласен
- b) грузинской
- i) полностью согласен
 - ii) скорее согласен

- iii) скорее не согласен
- iv) полностью не согласен
- c) другое (пожалуйста, укажите)

11) Какую страну Вы считаете своей родиной:

- a) Грузию
- b) Армению
- c) СССР
- d) другую страну
- e) у меня нет родины

12) Беспокоит ли Вас проблема межэтнических отношений в Самцхе-Джавахети:

- a) раньше эта проблема меня беспокоила, а сейчас уже нет
- b) раньше эта проблема меня не беспокоила, а сейчас беспокоит
- c) меня никогда не беспокоила проблема межэтнических отношений, не беспокоит и сейчас
- d) меня беспокоила эта проблема, беспокоит и сейчас

13) Какова, по Вашему мнению, вероятность того, что Ц столкнется со следующими проблемами?

- a) с межэтнической напряженностью, вызванной языковыми проблемами
 - i) очень высока
 - ii) скорее высока
 - iii) скорее низка
 - iv) очень низка
- b) с межэтнической напряженностью, вызванной неравенством прав/дискриминацией
 - i) очень высока
 - ii) скорее высока
 - iii) скорее низка
 - iv) очень низка

- c) с вооруженным конфликтом
- i) очень высока
 - ii) скорее высока
 - iii) скорее низка
 - iv) очень низка
- 14) Как часто Вы смотрите новостные передачи на *армянском* на телевизионных каналах ТБИЛИСИ 1 или РУСТАВИ 2?
- 15) Если Вы смотрите новостные передачи на армянском на каналах ТБИЛИСИ 1 или Рустави 2, какой из предложенных вариантов наиболее точно соответствует Вашим взглядам?
- a) я всегда ощущал себя частью грузинского общества и продолжаю ощущать себя его частью после того, как я начал смотреть новости на Рустави 2 и Тбилиси 1
 - b) раньше я ощущал себя частью грузинского общества, но после того, как я начал смотреть новости на Рустави 2 и Тбилиси 1, я больше не ощущаю себя его частью
 - c) раньше я *не* ощущал себя частью грузинского общества, но после того, как я начал смотреть новости на Рустави 2 и Тбилиси 1, я начал ощущать себя его частью
 - d) я никогда *не* ощущал себя частью грузинского общества и не начал ощущать себя его частью после того, как начал смотреть новости на Рустави 2 и Тбилиси 1
- 16) Можете ли Вы сказать, что новостные передачи на армянском языке из Тбилиси
- a) увеличили вероятность того, что Вы придете на избирательные участки на следующих выборах
 - b) снизили вероятность того, что Вы придете на избирательные участки на следующих выборах
 - c) новостные передачи на перечисленных выше каналах никак не повлияли на вероятность того, что Вы придете на избирательные участки на следующих выборах
- 17) В последние годы в Самцхе-Джавахеги были организованы курсы по изучению грузинского языка для государственных служащих и студентов, для которых грузинский не является родным

a) знаете ли Вы об этом?

- i) Да
- ii) Нет

b) каково Ваше мнение об этих проектах?

18) В последние годы грузинские телекомпании Рустави 2 и Тбилиси 1 начали переводить новости на армянский

a) знаете ли Вы об этом?

- i) да
- ii) нет

b) каково Ваше мнение об этих проектах?

19) В последнее время в некоторых частях Самцхе-Джавахети были открыты юридические консультации, которые оказывают помощь по юридическим вопросам негрузинскому населению региона

a) знаете ли Вы об этом?

- i) да
- ii) нет

b) каково Ваше мнение об этих проектах?

10.4 Questionnaire, English version

1) Age:

2) Sex:

- a) M
- b) F

3) Nationality:

- a) Armenian
- b) Georgian
- c) Other (please specify):

4) Highest completed level of education:

5) Occupation:

- 6) On a scale from one to five where one means not important and five means very important, how important do you think it is to master Georgian in your region?
- 7) On a scale from one to five where one means not important and five means very important, how important do you think it is to master Armenian in your region?
- 8) On a scale from one to five where one means not important and five means very important, how important do you think it will be to master Georgian in your region in ten years?
- 9) Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
 - a) All permanent residents of Georgia, no matter what nationality, ought to be fluent in Georgian
 - i) Fully agree
 - ii) Somewhat agree
 - iii) Somewhat disagree
 - iv) Fully disagree
 - b) Learning Georgian represents a threat to the Armenian language in Samtskhe-Javakheti
 - i) Fully agree
 - ii) Somewhat agree
 - iii) Somewhat disagree
 - iv) Fully disagree
 - c) Low levels of knowledge of the Georgian language among minority populations in Georgia pose a threat to the Georgian state
 - i) Fully agree
 - ii) Somewhat agree
 - iii) Somewhat disagree
 - iv) Fully disagree
- 10) Which culture do you consider yourself a representative of?
 - a) Armenian
 - i) Fully agree
 - ii) Somewhat agree
 - iii) Somewhat disagree
 - iv) Fully disagree
 - b) Georgian
 - i) Fully agree
 - ii) Somewhat agree
 - iii) Somewhat disagree
 - iv) Fully disagree

c) Other (please specify)

11) Which country do you regard as your homeland:

- a) Georgia
- b) Armenia
- c) USSR
- d) Another country
- e) I have no motherland

12) Are you worried about the problem of interethnic relations in Samtskhe-Javakheti:

- a) I used to be worried about inter-ethnic relations, but now I am not
- b) I used to be worried about inter-ethnic relations, but now I am
- c) I never used to be worried about inter-ethnic relations and I'm still not worried
- d) I used to be worried about inter-ethnic relations and I still am

13) In your opinion, what is the likelihood that Samtskhe-Javakheti will experience the following scenarios:

- a) Inter-ethnic tensions caused by language issues
 - i) Very likely
 - ii) Somewhat likely
 - iii) Somewhat unlikely
 - iv) Very unlikely
- b) Inter-ethnic tensions caused by unequal rights/discrimination
 - i) Very likely
 - ii) Somewhat likely
 - iii) Somewhat unlikely
 - iv) Very unlikely
- c) Armed conflict
 - i) Very likely
 - ii) Somewhat likely
 - iii) Somewhat unlikely
 - iv) Very unlikely

14) How often do you watch news broadcasts from Tbilisi translated into Armenian?

- 15) If you watch the television broadcasts translated from Georgian into Armenian, then please specify which of the alternatives below most adequately describes your views?
- a) I have always felt that I am a part of Georgian society and still do after I started watching news on Rustavi 2 and Tbilisi 1
 - b) I used to feel that I was part of Georgian society, but after I started watching news from Tbilisi translated into Armenian, I no longer feel part of Georgian society
 - c) I used to feel that I was not part of Georgian society, but after I started watching news on Rustavi 2 and Tbilisi 1 I have started to feel that I am part of Georgian society
 - d) I have never felt that I was part of Georgian society and I still do not feel part of Georgian society after I started watching news from Tbilisi, translated into Armenian
- 16) Would you say that watching news broadcasts has
- a) Increased the likelihood that you will vote in the next national election?
 - b) Reduced the likelihood that you will vote in the next national election?
 - c) Watching news the above mentioned news broadcasts has not had any impact on the likelihood that I will vote in the next national election
- 17) In recent years Georgian language classes for civil servants and students who do not have Georgian as their first language have been organized in Samtskhe-Javakheti
- a) Did you know about this project?
 - i) Yes
 - ii) No
 - b) What do you think of this project?
- 18) In recent years the Georgian television stations Rustavi 2 and Tbilisi 1 started translating news into Armenian
- a) Did you know about this project?
 - i) Yes
 - ii) No

b) What do you think of this project?

19) In recent years legal offices have been established in several locations in Samtskhe-Javakheti providing legal counselling to minorities

a) Did you know about this project?

i) Yes

ii) No

b) What do you think of this project?

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