Security and identity in the South Caucasus:

A case study of the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti.

By

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the relation between security and identity in the case of the Armenian populated region of Samtskhe-Javakheti in Georgia. It looks at the characteristics and conditions for the development of the discourses depicting the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a threat to Georgia, as well as the apparent consequences of this phenomenon for inter-ethnic relations. At the intersection of Nationalism studies and International Relations, the study draws on securitization theories of both the Copenhagen School and Thierry Balzacq. This research carries out a discourse analysis of a sample of sources relating events and discourses surrounding Javakheti Armenians, as well as expert/informant interviews with local journalists, activists and experts. As a result, this study shows that the phenomenon of securitization of Javakheti Armenians is the symptom of a divided society in the process of nation-building and in the context of intense regional geopolitical competition. Indeed, securitizing speech acts surrounding Javakheti Armenians use secessionist threat as a compelling point within another argument – whether it is a political, geopolitical or nationalist argument. This rhetorical exercise is enabled by the isolation of the region, political manipulation and identity-related fears. These securitizing discourses are therefore institutionalized, for they do not lead to emergency measures and violence, but enact the ethnic division of the society, thereby potentially contributing in a degradation of inter-ethnic relations in Georgia.

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Key words: Security, identity, Armenians, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Georgia, secessionism, threat, securitization, discourses.

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Introduction

> Two Armenians come to a river. An old man says: "This is a magic river. If you cross it, you become Georgian."
> The two Armenians say: "Yeah! We really want to be Georgian!"
> So they start crossing. It is really hard, the stream is very strong and they struggle a lot.
> One of them somehow just manages to reach the other shore. Now his name is Giorgi.
> The other one shouts at him: "Help me, please help me!"
> And Giorgi answers: "Go to hell, you Armenian!"[1]

Security and identity

The 1990s saw a sudden spike in interest towards the question of minorities in the former Soviet Union. Minority protection became a prominent issue in the West. At the same time in a number of Central and Eastern European states, a desire to play a decisive role in the protection of their ethnic kin beyond their borders materialized into state policy initiatives.[2] However, ethnic and national minorities have increasingly been considered by their states of residence as threats to national cohesion and sovereignty. These questions of nationalism, self-determination and majority-minority relations are at the heart of the academic field of nationalism studies.

One of the main theoretical frameworks which attempts to interpret inter-ethnic relations, Rogers Brubaker's triadic nexus, focuses on Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union area. Brubaker advances that the national question is best understood through an analysis of the dynamics of the relations between 'nationalizing states', 'national minorities' and kin states, which he calls 'external national homelands.'[3] In Brubaker's words, the triangular relationship has proved to be "explosive" in some cases, such as inter-war Europe or the new

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[1]A popular joke in Georgia, Interview 4.
[2]"Report on the Preferential Treatment of National Minorities by their Kin-State" (Report adopted by the Venice Commission at its 48th Plenary Meeting, Venice, October 19-20, 2001).
[3]Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed. Nationalism and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 58.

Europe.[4] Will Kymlicka also stresses the link between security and identity.[5] He highlights the complex relation between minority claims and threat perceptions in Eastern and Central Europe:

> In the ECE, the claims of minorities are primarily assessed in term of *security.* The goal is to ensure that minorities are unable to threaten the existence or territorial integrity of the state, and most ECE states believe that self-government for minorities poses such a threat.[6]

This security-identity connection will be at the core of my research.

This topic is at the cross-roads of the fields of nationalism studies and international relations, and this multidisciplinary aspect reinforces its academic relevance. The issue of conflict in inter-ethnic relations, in the sense that they are assessed in security terms, often has a significant impact on international politics and vice versa. In this context, May, Modood and Squires point out the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to security:

> A successful exchange between disciplines should thus facilitate an analysis of wider theoretical debates, and their consequences for the (re)construction of democratic societies, in conjunction with their practical articulation in particular social and political contexts.[7]

Furthermore, as we can see from Brubaker and Kymlicka's framework of analysis, the topic of security and identity carries a particular regional focus. Indeed, the traditional region of interest for the study of this nexus is what Brubaker calls the "new Europe" and Kymlicka "Eastern and Central Europe." However, a similar situation of conflict in inter-ethnic relations can be found in another region heavily affected by minority issues after the collapse of the Soviet Union: the South Caucasus.

The South Caucasus

This region comprises independent Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, as shown in Figure 1. The debates around the term "South Caucasus" illustrate the geopolitical sensitivity of the region:

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[4]Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 57.
[5]Will Kymlicka, "Justice and security in the accommodation of minority nationalism," in *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Minority Rights*, ed. Stephen May et al. (Cambrige, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[6]Kymlicka, *Justice and security*, 145.
[7]Stephen May et al., introduction to *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Minority Rights*, by ed. May et al. (Cambrige, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

> Following the break-up of the Soviet Union and the decline of Russia's influence in the region, the 'Transcaucasus' was transformed into the 'South Caucasus,' a zone where the geopolitical and geostrategic interests of world and regional powers as well as international organizations collide.[8]

This region has traditionally been ethnically and religiously very diverse, a diversity resulting from historical and geographical processes and particularities. The pro-independence aspirations of the South Caucasus countries have given rise to competing ethnic nationalism based on Brubaker's model, and have severely affected state and nation building, as well as inter-ethnic relations in the region. Indeed, the majority peoples of the South Caucasus – Armenians, Azeris and Georgians – have set about building modern states organized around these dominant groups and already defined borders.

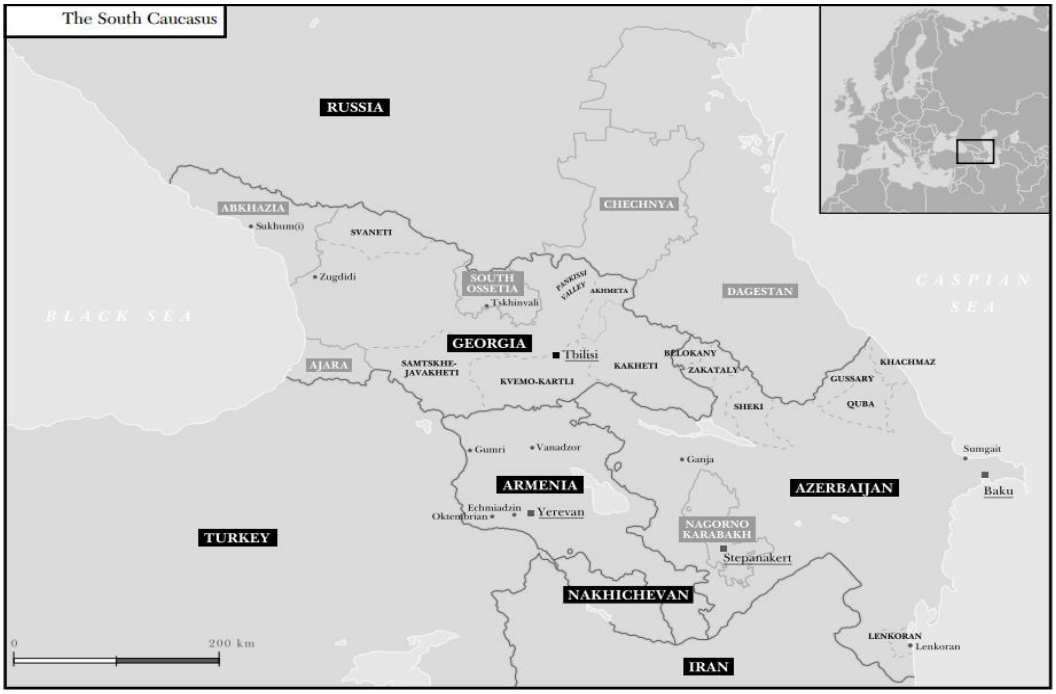

Figure 1: Map of the Caucasus region (Source: MRG International; 2002)

A 2002 report from Minority Rights Group relates that state and nation building in the region have been a source of conflict after the break-up of the Soviet Union. This remark is still valid today: most of these conflicts – Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh – are nowadays called "frozen conflicts," for the active armed conflicts have ended but they have not

[8]Svetlana Akkieva, "The Caucasus: One or Many? A View from the Region," *Nationalities Papers* 36, no. 2 (2008): 254.

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found a peaceful resolution to date.[9] However, violent conflict is not the only pattern of inter-ethnic relations in the South Caucasus. Trends towards emigration and mono-ethnicity have also intensified, as the titular groups built new political structures and ideologies to support them, and many of the minorities feel increasingly alienated from the new states.[10]

The growing interest in the role of Russia in the region is another characteristic of the South Caucasus, illustrated by a concentration of scholarly interest. In its 2002 report, MRG points the tendency to attribute perceived state shortcomings to Russia's continuous interference.[11] Vicken Cheterian further stresses that most of these claims of a "hidden Russian hand" do not only originate from Tbilisi and Baku, but also from Western journalists, diplomats and politicians.[12] In these discourses, some ethnic minorities are regarded as highly receptive to supposed Russian manipulation, "the compatriot game" strategy according to Agnia Grigas:

> In the recent past Russia has demonstrated its ability to annex territories and create puppet states in places as disparate as eastern Ukraine, Crimea, Georgia's South Ossetia and Abkhazia and Moldova's Transnistria, all while using the ambiguous policies of protecting its compatriots.[13]

All these features of a high degree of diversity, conflict in inter-ethnic relations and Russia as a key player can be found in the case of the Republic of Georgia.

Georgia's challenge of ethnic diversity

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[9]Anna Matveeva, *The South Caucasus: Nationalism, Conflict and Minorities.* Minority Rights Group International (2002): 5, http://www.minorityrights.org/download.php@id=123.
[10]Matveeva, "The South Caucasus," 5.
[11] Ibid.
[12]Vicken Cheterian, *Little Wars and a Great Game: Local Conflicts and International Competition in the Caucasus*, Working Paper / Schweizerische Friedensstiftung, Institut Für Konfliktlösung. 32 (2001): 14.
[13]Agnia Grigas, "Compatriot Games: Russian-Speaking Minorities in the Baltic States," *World Politics Review,* October 21, 2014, http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/14240/compatriot-games-russian-speaking-minorities-in-the-baltic-states.

Georgia is indeed involved in two of the "frozen conflicts" of the region, with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and keeps up a tensed relationship with its direct neighbor, Russia. Furthermore, 16% of Georgia's population, according to the last census in 2002, is non-ethnic Georgian, which includes territorially concentrated pockets of ethnic Armenians (5.7%) and Azeris (6.5%).[14]

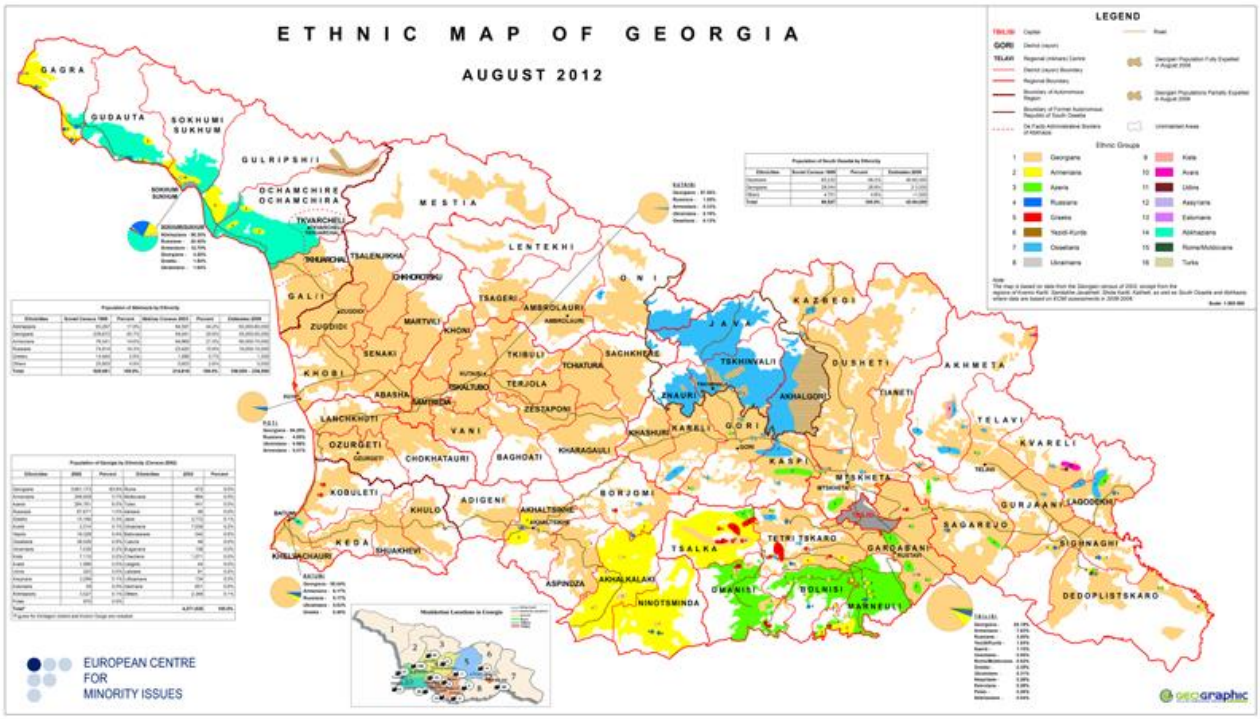

Figure 2: Ethnic map of Georgia (Source: ECMI Caucasus; 2012)

The Azeri minority of Georgia is usually viewed as the "least politically active group in Georgia."[15] As opposed to the Azeri minority, the Armenian minority is a community that has been considered since Georgia's independence as the core of Brubaker's triadic dynamic. As a result, this community has attracted attention in the scholarly literature and the media in the recent years.[16] Mainly living in the Georgian region of Samtskhe-Javakheti, at the border with

[14]"Ethnic Groups of Georgia. Census 2002" (Statistics published by ECMI Caucasus, Tbilisi, n.d.) http://www.ecmicaucasus.org/upload/stats/Census%202002.pdf.
[15]"Georgia's Armenian and Azeri Minorities" (Report published by International Crisis Group, *Europe Report 178*, 2006): 4.
[16]Paul Rimple and Justyna Mielnikiewicz, "Post-Crimea, Phantom of Armenian Separatism Haunts Georgia," *Eurasianet.org,* April 9, 2014, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/68253.

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Armenia and Turkey (see the region in yellow on Figure 2), this minority has often been accused of disloyalty to the Georgian state, especially in the immediate post-independence period characterized by a strong Georgian "nationalizing" nationalism.[17] Moreover, the general atmosphere of distrust between Georgians and Armenians has been reinforced by the traditional view that Armenians are more sympathetic to Russia than to Georgia. The Russian-Armenian constellation of shared interests during the Soviet period – the USSR protecting the Armenians against the Turks while the Armenians served in the Soviet military – and the closure in 2007 of the Russia military base of Akhalkalaki – triggering significant protests and tensions between the ethnic Armenian population and the Georgian authorities in Tbilisi – substantiate these perceptions.[18] These claims of alleged disloyalty of Javakheti Armenians to Georgia in the favor of Russia have recently been heard again in the light of several regional events impacting directly and indirectly Georgia:

> […] Suspicions among Georgians about the country's Armenian minority have risen, fueled by memories of Tbilisi's 2008 conflict with Russia, as well as the Kremlin's recent land-grab in Crimea. Underscoring those suspicions was the appearance of unconfirmed media reports about ethnic Armenians from Samtskhe-Javakheti allegedly applying, *en masse*, to receive Russian passports.[19]

The regional context of tensions in the South Caucasus, and the recent political crisis and violence in Ukraine, highlight the need for greater research of the phenomenon of threat perceptions surrounding the Armenian minority in Samtskhe-Javakheti, as will be demonstrated in the first chapter.

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Armenians of Georgia: Terminology

There is no agreement among scholars on the use of a specific terminology to define a "minority group" in general, and to describe the Armenian community of Georgia in particular. Therefore, I would like to clarify these two aspects.

[17]Matveeva, "The South Caucasus," 9.
[18]Indra Øverland, "The Closure of the Russian Military Base at Akhalkalaki: Challenges for the Local Energy Elite, the Informal Economy and Stability," *The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies,* 10 (2009).
[19]Rimple and Mielnikiewicz, "Post-Crimea."

There are indeed a range of different definitions of a national and ethnic minority. These definitions are not only debated and controversial, but also sometimes politically charged. From this debate, I use the following definitions of ethnic and national minority:

> An ethnic minority is a group in which membership is based on long-lasting associations of kinship, common culture, and on traditional attachment to a particular territory of the state but which has no statehood of its own elsewhere.
> A national minority is a group in which membership is based on nationalism, equaling to 'the sentiment and ideology of attachment to a nation, its interests and its territory existing as a state elsewhere.'[20]

Georgia has not yet decided on a definition of the notion of "minorities."[21] As a matter of clarity, individuals identifying with the Armenian minority of Georgia will be considered as a national/ethnic minority in this research.

These concerns regarding terminology are also reflected in the way this community is referred to. The region itself is designated in a different manner depending on the political stance taken: Samtskhe-Javakheti for the official Georgian denomination of the administrative region, Javakheti for the specific region mainly populated by Armenians, Javakhk for the Armenian form of the Georgian name Javakheti and the use of which is sometimes associated with claims for political and territorial autonomy.[22] The Armenian community living in this region has also been the object of different designations in the existing literature: Armenian minority, Georgian Armenians, Armenian diaspora, Javakheti Armenians etc. When studying the region and this community, one should be aware that these denominations are politically charged. For example, "Georgian Armenians" would imply a great extent of integration, whereas Armenian diaspora would suggest a stronger link to Armenia as a homeland. In the redaction of this thesis, as a matter of maximal neutrality, I will refer to this community interchangeably as the "Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti" (commonly used in official documents from the Georgian government and in publications from Georgian and international

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[20]"Minority Issues Mainstreaming in the South Caucasus. A Practical Guide." (Report published by ECMI Caucasus, Tbilisi, Georgia, February 2011): 9.
[21]Ibid.
[22]Vladimer Ramishvili, "Javakheti or Javakhk? There Is No Armenian-Georgian Consensus," *Central Asia and Caucasus*, n.d., http://www.ca-c.org/c-g/2007/journal_eng/c-g-4/02.shtml.

organizations) and "Javakheti Armenians" (more commonly used as an expression of self-identification by this community to insist on their specificity that results from their territorial concentration). Thus, I aim at not taking a stand on their level of integration into the Georgian society and not bringing preconceived assumptions into my analysis.

Securitization of the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti

The existing literature presents several interesting characteristics and evolutions in the treatment of the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti. First, studies from the post-independence and post-revolution period tend to treat the practical problems and political tensions in Samtskhe-Javakheti as an illustration of general inter-ethnic relations in Georgia.[23] However, more recent academic and media publications look at this minority as a particular one in Georgia.[24] Journalistic and academic investigations seem to progressively picture Javakheti Armenians as a potential threat of separatism under the alleged manipulation of Russia.[25] This appears especially clearly in the light of the recent local and international events such as the 2008 war[26] and the Ukraine and Crimean crises.[27] These particular types of discourses framing the Armenian minority as a national security threat have only been stressed

[23]Jonathan Wheatley, "Managing Ethnic Diversity in Georgia: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," *Central Asian Survey* 28:2 (2009);
Julie A. George, "Minority Political Inclusion in Mikheil Saakashvili's Georgia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 7 (2008).
[24]Fernand De Varennes, "Minority Rights in Georgia: Analysis of the Situation of Armenians," *Europa Ethnica* 66, no. 3/4 (2009); Eka Metreveli, Jonathan Kulick, "Social Relations and Governance in Javakheti, Georgia," *Initiative for Peacebuilding* (2009); Magdalena Frichova, "Participation of Persons Belonging to National Minorities-Cases of Samtshke-Javakheti and Gali," *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights,* 16 (2009).
[25]Elmira Tariverdiyeva, "Armenians in Georgia – Permanent Readiness to Secede," *Trend.az,* April 3, 2014 http://en.trend.az/scaucasus/georgia/2258862.html;
Luke Coffey, "Russia's Next Acquisition," *Al Jazeera*, January 17, 2015 http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/01/russia-caucasus-georgia-armeni-201511411654383153.html.
[26]International Crisis Group, "Georgia's Armenian and Azeri Minorities."
[27]Jeffrey Gedmin, "Beyond Crimea: What Vladimir Putin Really Wants," *World Affairs* (completed for the July/August print edition of the journal and published online on May 1, 2014) http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/beyond-crimea-what-vladimir-putin-really-wants;
Nino Liluashvili, "Georgia: Time to Domesticate Domestic Politics," in Alina Inayeh et al. *Regional Repercussion of the Ukraine Crisis. Challenges for the Six Eastern Partnership Countries* (Europe Policy Paper 3 published by The German Marshall Fund of The United States, 2014): 24.

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in a few either dated or insufficiently theoretically and empirically grounded publications.[28] Pointing out the phenomenon of securitization of the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti is a crucial element of this research. Therefore, a separate chapter (Chapter I) will be devoted to a lengthier and more complete overview of the available literature.

Security studies provide an adapted theoretical framework to analyze these discourses and to address the flaws of the existing literature on threat perceptions of Javakheti Armenians. The discursive approach to security studies of the Copenhagen School and especially the concept of securitization would allow a solid analysis of the recent discourses depicting the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a security threat for Georgia.[29] This theoretical framework, by focusing on the illocutionary aspects of a securitizing speech acts – the intent – is particularly adequate since it provides ground for a rigorous analysis of the constellation of actors, dynamics and objectives of the securitization process that has not been scientifically identified and analyzed before. However, in the sensitive context of the South Caucasus region described previously, it is important to extend the analysis of the securitization process to its apparent impact on inter-ethnic relations in Georgia. Therefore, Thierry Balzacq's sociological approach to securitization, in particular his focus on perlocutionary speech act – the consequential effect – will be a complementary theoretical framework for this analysis.[30] These theories and their application to this research will be developed in Chapter II.

Research question

In the light of these preliminary considerations and developments, the research question

[28] Niklas Nilsson, "Obstacles to Building a Civic Nation: Georgia's Armenian Minority and Conflicting Threat Perceptions." *Ethnopolitics* 8, no. 2 (2009);
Naira Hayrumyan, "Armenian-Georgian relations: de jure, de facto and in the press," *Armenianow.com,* September 27, 2010, http://www.armenianow.com/commentary/analysis/24941/armenia_georgia_relations_through_mass_media;
Joseph A. Smith, "Media Stokes Fear of Javakheti Separatism," *Georgia Today*, April 10, 2014 http://www.georgiatoday.ge/article_details.php?id=12113.
[29] Barry Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner, 1998).
[30]Thierry Balzacq, ed., *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve* (Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

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that I will seek to answer in this thesis is the following:

What are the characteristics and conditions for the development of the discourses depicting the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a security threat to Georgia, and what are the apparent consequences of such a phenomenon for inter-ethnic relations?

The objective of this thesis is to identify the constellation of actors and the dynamics of the securitization process of Javakheti Armenians through the analysis of the rhetorical structure of securitizing discourses. Then, the conditions under which such a phenomenon can develop and its apparent consequences will be studied by carrying out semi-structured interviews, thereby trying to differentiate the impact that securitizing discourses may have on wider patterns of inter-ethnic relations.

Thesis statement

In this thesis, I argue that the phenomenon of securitization of Javakheti Armenians is the symptom of a divided society in the process of nation-building and in the context of intense regional geopolitical competition. Indeed, despite a variety of actors, mechanisms and objectives, the common pattern of securitizing speech acts surrounding Javakheti Armenians is to use secessionist threat as a compelling point within another argument – whether it is a political, geopolitical or nationalist argument. This is the result of the isolation of the region, political manipulation and identity-related fears. Consequently, the securitization process seem to fail to bring about emergency measures against Javakheti Armenians, but may contribute in a degradation of inter-ethnic relations in Georgia, for it feeds anti-Armenian feelings.

Methodological aspects

I support this statement with an analysis of a sample of English language online sources relating events and discourses surrounding this minority, as well as interviews with local activists and experts.

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I thus combine two complementary methods: First, based on the securitization theory of the Copenhagen school, I carry out a discourse and analysis of pre-selected materials illustrating the securitization process, initially identified through an in depth review of the literature on Javakheti Armenians. Then, I complement and confront these theoretical findings with empirical data from semi-structured interviews gathered during a one-month period of field research taking place in April-May 2015. Since the methodological aspects are crucial for the validity of this research, I will devote a specific chapter to these issues (Chapter III).

Implications of the research

The thesis aims at providing a scientific analysis of the recent discourses depicting the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a security threat for Georgia based on securitization theories. The aim is to understand the construction process of a security threat in the context of the Caucasus region and the recent developments. It gives ground for a more accurate debate on the relations between the Georgian state, the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti and the different segments of the Georgian society, keeping in mind the role of external actors.

As consequence, this research does not only contribute to the Nationalism and International Relations scholarship, but also to the debate on inter-ethnic relations and threat perceptions in Georgia with a scientific piece that links theory, discourse analysis and field research. It is very important to provide such kind of multilevel research, not only for the academia, but also for the public debate on inter-ethnic relations in Georgia. Indeed, politics, media as well as academia in the South Caucasus are highly sensitive to ideological and national bias in the way they approach inter-ethnic relations. Buzan, Waever and de Wilde point out the benefits of carrying such analyses:

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> It is more relevant to grasp the processes and dynamics of securitization, because if one knows who can 'do' security on what issue and under what conditions, it will sometimes be possible to maneuver the interaction among actors and thereby curb the security dilemma.[31]

In this case, this analysis could help gaining a better understanding of the relation between security and identity in the South Caucasus, and thus participate in curbing the security dilemma around the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti

Thesis outline

To deliver this research, my thesis is structured in the following way:

The first chapter identifies the existence of a securitization process through an extensive review of the literature on Javakheti Armenians.

The second chapter sets the theoretical framework of this analysis by reviewing the field of security studies and showing how a combination of philosophical and sociological approaches to securitization is an adequate framework for this analysis.

Building on this, I come up in the third chapter with a specific research methodology, combining discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews.

In the fourth chapter, I carry out a discourse analysis of methodologically selected material illustrative of the securitization process. This chapter aims at pointing out the actors, dynamics and objectives of the securitization of Javakheti Armenians, following the Copenhagen School's philosophical approach to securitization.

These findings are complemented and extended in the fifth chapter with data resulting from field research in Georgia based on the sociological approach to securitization. I especially try to find out what are the favorable conditions for the development of securitizing discourses on Javakheti Armenians

In the sixth chapter, I finally draw conclusions on the relation between identity and security in the case of the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti. Based on Balzacq's

[31]Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 31.

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conceptualization of perlocutionary speech act, I especially look at the impact of the securitizing discourses on inter-ethnic relations in Georgia, thus assessing the success or failure of the securitization process.

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Chapter I

The Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti: A literature review

The Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti has attracted attention since the independence of Georgia in 1991 and there is a great diversity of literature covering minority issues in Georgia. Publications related to this topic range from scholarly research to media articles, different policy analyses and reports. Substantial work was carried out on the Armenian minority, either looking at the general question of minority issues in Georgia, or concentrating on Samtskhe-Javakheti as a specific case. A review of the existing English language literature specifically reflects a diverse set of concerns surrounding the situation of this minority and a growing perception of them as a potential security threat. Evidence that this narrative is also present in Georgian and Russian language online publications is also provided in this chapter, as well as the absence of substantial research on the relation between security and identity in the case of the Armenian minority in Samtskhe-Javakheti.

1.1 Ethnic diversity in the South Caucasus and Georgia

Existing scholarly research has looked at the practical problems faced by ethnic minorities in Georgia, thus incorporating the Javakheti Armenian community within the broader topic of minority issues in Georgia. Jonathan Wheatley and Julie George sought to provide a historical overview and an assessment of the different Georgian development and integration policies since independence, and therefore account for the main contributions in this respect.[32] They explain how the Georgian government simultaneously sought to manage ethnic diversity and state-building, and assess the direct and indirect consequences for ethnic

[32]Wheatley, "Managing Ethnic Diversity in Georgia"; George, "Minority Political Inclusion."

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minorities, including the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti. These publications provide useful background on inter-ethnic relations in Georgia after independence, but remain too general for the present research.

Another part of the literature looks at minority issues in Georgia from the angle of the conflicts which characterize the post-independence South Caucasus. For example, Vicken Cheterian provides a complete overview of the conflicts in the South Caucasus and dedicates a specific part on the potential for conflict in the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti.[33] These publications are however generally dated, and mainly reflect the troublesome times predating the Rose Revolution in terms of inter-ethnic relations. However, a specific set of publications tends to present Javakheti Armenians not only as a community facing different dynamics and challenges, but also as potentially dangerous in the context of inter-ethnic relations in Georgia.

1.2 A specific minority community in Georgia

A broad range of the literature deals with the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a distinct case study, especially looking at its political grievances. First, authors commonly relate the practical problems and the integration policies targeting this group. Inga Popovaite points out the recent developments for the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti in terms of economic difficulties, social and political integration (especially concerning citizenship), as well as language problems.[34] Despite the numerous obstacles, she eventually argues for some positive developments, especially in terms of language and integration of the younger generation. Fernand de Varennes covers the legal aspects of minority rights in the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti, both from an international and domestic perspective.[35] Eka Metreveli and

[33]Cheterian, "Little Wars and a Great Game."
[34]Inga Popovaite,"Weak Ruble and New Immigration Law Impacting Armenians in Georgia's South," *Democracy and Freedom Watch*, January 8, 2015 http://dfwatch.net/weak-ruble-and-new-immigration-law-impacting-armenians-in-georgias-south-56433-32923;
Inga Popovaite, "Armenians in Akhalkalaki Struggle to Learn Georgian." *Democracy and Freedom Watch*, December 26, 2014 http://dfwatch.net/armenians-in-akhalkalaki-struggle-to-learn-georgian-18393-32827.
[35]De Varennes, "Minority Rights in Georgia."

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Jonathan Kulick provide in their report a concrete overview of the formal and informal dimensions of governance in Javakheti and conclude with recommendation about the challenges and opportunities for improved governance in the region.[36] Magdalena Frichova investigates specifically the question of political participation of Javakheti Armenians in the political and social life in Georgia.[37] She points out the connection between the Georgian government's approach to minorities in Georgia and the ongoing conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, without however referring directly to the role of Russia. Natalie Sabanadze accounts for the integration challenges of Javakheti Armenians from a geopolitical perspective, although her article is also dated in the light of the actual development in the Caucasus, Georgia and Samtskhe-Javakheti.[38] These publications generally prioritize the socio-economic aspects of Javakheti Armenians over the issues of political mobilization.

Furthermore, there is an apparent renewal of interest in the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti and its political grievances. The most recent publications refer directly or indirectly to international and domestic events such as the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Ukraine crisis, and several demonstrations in Georgia and Samtskhe-Javakheti. As an example, Jeffrey Gedmin gives his interpretation of Vladimir Putin's strategy in Russia's "near abroad", which directly concerns Georgia. This discourse supports the narrative mentioned in the introduction of Russia's movement vis-à-vis external minorities.[39] In the same vein and focusing on Samtskhe-Javakheti, International Crisis Group gives an assessment of the potential for geopolitical conflict in the region and the role of different external actors including Moscow.[40] ICG's policy brief specifically focuses on the

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[36]Metreveli and Kulick, "Social Relations and Governance in Javakheti."
[37]Frichova, "Participation of Persons Belonging to National Minorities."
[38]Natalie Sabanadze, *Armenian Minority in Georgia: Defusing Interethnic Tension*. European Centre for Minority Issues, ECMI Brief 6 (2001).
[39]Gedmin, "Beyond Crimea."
[40]"Georgia: The Javakheti Region's Integration Challenges." (Report published by International Crisis Group, *Europe Briefing* 63, Tbilisi/Yerevan/Brussels, 2011).

evolution of the fears of secessionism in the wake of the 2008 war. Furthermore, the online newspaper *Armenian Diaspora* accounts for the feeling of Armenians of being second class citizens in Georgia and pledges for improved integration in order to prevent potential external destabilization.[41] As a conclusion of his article, Jonathan Wheatley points out the important role of the relations between Georgia and Russia in understanding the dynamics of minority politics in Georgia, and warns against the "tendency to treat any grassroots movement organized by members of national minorities with suspicion […]"[42] that could prove counterproductive to successful integration of the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti. Overall, this literature indiscriminately accounts for conflict perspectives around minorities in the Post-Soviet region in the light of Russia's near abroad policy. However, there is a growing tendency in recent publications to present the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a national security threat.

1.3 A potential security threat?

Several recent publications indeed take a further step and look specifically at potential conflict in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Many newspaper articles and academic publications consider potential separatism in Samtskhe-Javakheti as a consequence of external manipulations, though never explicitly attributed to a particular source. On the one hand, in the spirit of Brubaker's triadic nexus, some authors consider Armenia as the main potential instigator of tensions. For example, Artyom Tonoyan negatively concludes about the future of the Georgian-Armenian relations in the light of the problems in Samtskhe-Javakheti and foresees a very likely conflict between the two countries.[43] On the other hand and in the light of the general context of Russian

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[41]"Javakheti Residents Do Not Feel Like Full Fledged Georgian Citizen - ICG Expert." *Armeniandiaspora.com,* n.d. http://armeniadiaspora.com/population/2369-javakheti-residents-do-not-feel-like-full-fledged-georgian-citizens-icg-expert.html.

[42]Jonathan Wheatley, "The Integration of National Minorities in the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli Provinces of Georgia," *European Center for Minority Issues*, Working Paper 44 (2009): 56.

[43]Artyom Tononyan, "Rising Armenian-Georgian Tensions and the Possibility of a New Ethnic Conflict in the South Caucasus." *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization,* 18, no. 4 (2010).

activism in South Ossetia, Abkhazia and allegedly in Ukraine, several authors consider Russia as the potential trigger of Javakhk separatism. Nino Liluashvili explicitly mentions the potential for Russian manipulation of national sentiment among the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti in order to further destabilize Georgia and gain control over Russia's "near abroad" in a report on the consequences of the Ukraine crisis for the Eastern Partnership countries.[44] Luke Coffey relates fears of Russian manipulation of problems in Samtskhe-Javakheti in the light of the recent events in Crimea, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and foresees the Armenian populated region of Georgia to be the next potential target of Russia's activism. He explicitly argues that such a strategy would benefit Russian interests in the Caucasus region and pledges for Western activism to counter it.[45] All these publications similarly account for Russian interests in manipulating the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti based on obviously biased assumptions and without supporting them with empirical proofs.

Another set of articles directly focuses on the question of the relations between the Armenian minority in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Russia. On the one hand, some of them account for positive aspects. For example, *Channel 1* relates the request of the Javakhk diaspora in Russia for further economic connections between Samtskhe-Javakheti and Russia and for the potential role of this diaspora community as a medium of economic and political cooperation between Georgia and Russia.[46] In the same vein, Indra Øverland analyzes the impact of the closure of the Russian military base in Akhalkalaki and considers the weakening of the bonds with Russia as an explanation for the relative peace in the region.[47] On the other hand, several articles depict the relation between Russia and Javakheti Armenians in negative terms. For instance, Eka Janashia reports on the distribution of Russian passports to Javakheti residents, a

[44]Liluashvili, "Georgia: Time to Domesticate Domestic Politics."
[45]Coffey, "Russia's Next Acquisition."
[46]"Javakh Diaspora in Russia Demands Declaration of Samtskhe-Javakheti Region as Free Economic Zone," *Channel 1*, February 2, 2013, http://1tv.ge/en/news/view/46595.html.
[47]Øverland "The Closure of the Russian Military Base."

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rumor which later turned out to be unfounded.[48] By the same token, Elmira Tariverdiyeva also relates the unconfirmed news of passport distribution and "warns" Georgia against "separatist future" of Samtskhe-Javakheti.[49] All these publications contribute to the increasing tendency to perceive Javakheti Armenians as a threat for Georgia's sovereignty under Russian manipulation.

This literature review is based on English language online publications because of time, spatial and linguistic constraints. Nonetheless, it is important to mention that the same phenomenon can be observed in Georgian and Russian language media. There is indeed evidence that this narrative is also present in Georgian and Russian language online publications. The following illustrative review of this kind of articles – fully referenced in the appendix 1 – shows that similar topics tackled by these media outlets, presenting Javakheti Armenians as a security threat.

First of all, political grievances linked to socio-economic specificities and difficulties are also the object of these publications. This encompasses language issues[50] (the request to grant the Armenian language the status of regional language in Samtskhe-Javakheti in accordance with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages), citizenship issues,[51] and political orientations[52] (notably the Georgian quest for NATO membership).

[48]Eka Janashia, "Moscow Distributes Passports in Georgia." *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, May 5, 2014, http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/field-reports/item/12966-moscow-distributes-passports-in-georgia.html.
[49]Tariverdiyeva, "Armenians in Georgia – Permanent Readiness to Secede."
[50] "Javakhk requests the awarding of a status to the Armenian language" [personal translation] *GuriaNews.com*, March 25, 2014 http://www.gurianews.com/_/left_wide/18810_66_ka/javaxki_somxuri_enisTvis_statusis_miniWebas_iTxovs.html.
[51]"Vahagn Chakhalyan and United Javakhk party – new danger of separatism?" [personal translation] *kvirispalitra.ge*, January 27, 2013, http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/politic/15403-vaagn-chakhaliani-da-qerthiani-javakhkiq-separatizmis-akhali-safrthkhe.html;
"Armenians project to start unrest in Georgia" [personal translation] *Haqqin.az*, January 13, 2015 http://haqqin.az/news/37295.
[52]"'Russian provocation in Javakheti will not become reality': What does the population of the region answers to the threat of an Armenian deputy." [personal translation] *Ambebi.ge*, March 20, 2014, http://www.ambebi.ge/politika/99542-qjavakhethshi-rusuli-provokacia-ver-gankhorcieldebaq-ras-pasukhobs-regionis-mosakhleoba-somekhi-deputatis-muqaras.html.

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Cultural issues also predominate in the articles presenting the Armenian minority as a threat, especially focusing on Church disputes between the Georgian Orthodox Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church. Several articles relay the rumors of the Armenian Apostolic Church requesting the Georgian Orthodox Church to return 450 churches in front of the UNESCO.[53] These rumors have later been proved unfounded[54], but are nevertheless recurrent and trigger a high level of media coverage.

Furthermore, the idea of the potential for separatism is also a key topic in these articles,[55] recurrently presenting Vahagn Chakhalyan as the leader this alleged Javakhk separatist movement.[56] However, he personally denied these allegations in an interview to local journalists in Javakheti.[57]

Finally, and chronologically speaking, the threat of the transposition of a Crimean scenario in Javakheti,[58] under the influence of Russia[59] is also the object of intense media coverage in

[53]"The Armenian Church requests about 450 churches to UNESCO" [personal translation] *Pirveliradio.ge*, January 13, 2015, http://pirveliradio.ge/?newsid=39998;
"Armenia requests 450 from Georgia" [personal translation] *Newposts.ge*, January 15, 2015, http://www.newposts.ge/?l=G&id=61902.
[54]"Armenian Church denies having requested 450 churches to UNESCO [personal translation], *Resonancedaily.com*, January 25, 2015, http://www.resonancedaily.com/index.php?id_rub=2&id_artc=23359.
[55]"The national hysteria of Armenian separatism" [personal translation] *Liberali.ge,* March 22, 2013, http://www.liberali.ge/ge/liberali/articles/114361/;
"Giorgi Laghidze: in Samtskhe-Javakheti, the danger of separatism increases" [personal translation] *News.ge*, March 25, 2014, http://news.ge/ge/news/story/83951-giorgi-laghidze-samtskhe-javakhetshi-separatizmis-safrtkhe-matulobs.
[56]Vahagn Chakhalyan and United Javakhk – new danger of separatism?" [personal translation] *Kvirispalitra.ge,* January 27, 2013, http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/politic/15403-vaagn-chakhaliani-da-qerthiani-javakhkiq-separatizmis-akhali-safrthkhe.html;
"Chakhalyan has formed a group of 70 armed men and projects to start unrests in Javakheti" [personal translation] *Fmabkhazia.com*, January 12, 2015, http://www.fmabkhazia.com/news/11485-vahagan-chaxalianma-70-kaciani-sheiraghebuli-dagupheba-chamoaqaliba-da-avaxethshi-reulobas.html.
[57]"Vahagn Chakhalyan: 'it is absurd and ridiculous'" [personal translation] *Jnews.ge*, January 14, 2015, http://jnews.ge/?p=1111#.VVMaUfmqqko.
[58]"After the Crimean events, Georgia is haunted by the phantom of Armenian separatism" [personal translation] *Eurasianet.org* April 10, 2014, http://russian.eurasianet.org/node/60553;
"Shirak Torosyan: based on the Crimean example, the Armenian diaspora of Javakheti can request independence" [personal translation] *Reportiori.org,* April 18, 2014, http://www.reportiori.ge/?menuid=2&id=23664.
[59]"After Crimea, the Kremlin will try to bring Javakheti to 'explosion' by using Chakhalyan" [personal translation] *Presa.ge*, March 17, 2014, http://www.presa.ge/new/?m=military&AID=25688;
"Russian attack in Javakheti – why does Armenia's attitude towards Crimea give food for thought" [personal translation] *Pirveliradio.ge*, March 25, 2014, http://pirveliradio.ge/?newsid=22861;
"The plan thanks to which the Kremlin will take Javakheti from us" [personal translation] *For.ge*, April 8, 2014, http://for.ge/view.php?for_id=32102&cat=9.

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Georgia and in the South Caucasus region.

This survey of the literature on Javakheti Armenians thus points out the recent and increasing depiction of the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a national security threat. This is a phenomenon that runs in parallel and sometimes has shared repercussions in English, Georgian and Russian literature, in particular within media outlets. However, I will focus in this study on English language literature, a choice that will be further justified in Chapter III "Securitization of Javakheti Armenians, a research method."

1.4 Securitizing discourses around Javakheti Armenians: A research gap

The absence of substantial research on the relation between security and identity in the case of the Armenian minority in Samtskhe-Javakheti is striking. One can account for only few attempts to analyze the dynamics of such discourses of threat perception and conflict potential in the wake of the renewal of attention around the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti. Two newspaper articles criticize these discourses and account for media bias from the Georgian, Armenian and Russian side in their attempts to draw a parallel between the events in Crimea and potential separatism in Samtskhe-Javakheti.[60] However, their analysis is not substantiated by a solid theoretical framework or empirical data. A fundamental study on this phenomenon has been conducted by Niklas Nilsson and examines threats perceptions on the internal and external political arenas.[61] Even though his article is a solid base for the present thesis, it is based on data from his 2005 research and thus mostly dated.

This literature review thus points out the recent and increasing depiction of the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a national security threat. This thesis will thus seek to contribute to this area of research by studying the characteristics, dynamics and

[60]Hayrumyan, "Armenian-Georgian Relations"; Smith, "Media Stokes Fear of Javakheti Separatism."
[61]Nilsson, "Obstacles to Building a Civic Nation."

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consequences of the discourses depicting the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a security threat to Georgia. Literature on threat perception around the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti is scarce, mostly dated, theoretically and empirically not well grounded. In order to address these weaknesses, security theories provide a relevant and adequate framework of analysis for this phenomenon.

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Chapter II

Security studies and securitization: A theoretical framework

The previous chapter has demonstrated the existence of discourses depicting the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a security threat for Georgia. However, the literature review has also shown that publications on the topic of security and identity in this case are scarce, and clearly pointed out the lack of theoretical grounding of the few existing publications on this topic. In order to contribute to the research field, this study uses securitization theories as a relevant and appropriate theoretical framework to connect security and identity. This is the object of the following chapter.

2.1 Security studies: An overview

Security theories constitute a specific branch of International Relations, and seek to analyze the questions of conflicts and security in the international system. The most important debate within this field occurs along the line of "wide" versus "narrow" conceptions of security.[62] The proponents of a narrow definition of security pledge for an objective approach to security studies. According to these scholars, generally of a neo-realist and neo-liberal orientation, security measures the absence of threats to acquired values, and is usually defined in material and military terms, mostly related to the material capabilities of states.[63] However, with the end of the Cold War, this approach encountered growing dissatisfaction and scholars progressively started widening the concept of security. Wideners are commonly divided into two different approaches - subjective and discursive approaches.

[62]Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 2.
[63]Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 32.

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According to the subjective approach to security studies, the emphasis should be put on the importance of history and norms, of the psychologies of fear and (mis)perceptions, and of the relational context. Subjective security theorists, also designated as conventional constructivists, hold that both material and ideational factors impact the actual (military) resources that states have at their disposal.[64]

The discursive approach to security studies is often considered as a more radical branch of constructivism and comprises, among others, the Copenhagen School and critical constructivists. Proponents of the discursive approach argue that security cannot be defined in objective terms, and hence both the objective and the subjective conceptions are misleading. According to them, security threats are constructed through security discourses, and as such, they will not only be influenced by a state's history, its geographical and structural position, but also by the (discursive) reactions it generates from others, internationally and domestically.[65] Some even more radical constructivists like David Campbell do not only discuss the dominant modes of representing danger, but also posit that security threats are only constructed by discourses for interpretation is inevitable as soon as one uses words.[66] These different branches all have in common the centrality of discourses and speech acts in the construction of security threats.

However, there are dissentions among the discursive approach as for the concept of speech act. Many scholars express skepticism towards the Copenhagen school's understanding of securitization and speech act, and therefore speak in favor of a more embedded approach to these concepts, as will be detailed in the next section. Stritzel reviews several alternative suggestions to the understanding of the 'act' of securitization: "to conceptualize it as an illocution (Copenhagen School), perlocution (Balzacq, 2005), bodily performance (Hansen, 2000) or as a

[64]Buzan and Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies*, 33.
[65]Ibid. 33-34.
[66]David Campbell, *Writing Security : United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1992): 4.

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technocratic practice (Bigo, 2000, 2002)."[67] These internal critics and conceptual reconstructions have enriched and consolidated securitization theories.

For the present research, this discursive approach is of particular interest for it aims at looking at the discursive construction of Javakheti Armenians' image as a national security threat. Since this study also aims at providing an assessment of the perceived impact of this securitization process, the perlocutionary aspect of the security speech act is of central importance. Therefore, I will draw heavily on the Copenhagen School's theory of securitization, as well as on its criticism/extension provided by Thierry Balzacq in order to design the theoretical framework of this thesis.

2.2 Speech acts and securitization: Philosophical versus sociological securitization

As mentioned in the previous section, securitization theories based on a discursive approach attempt to explore the structures and processes that construct security problems by focusing on speech act. However, if all securitization theories acknowledge the centrality of speech acts in the process of threat construction, they do not have the same understanding of what actually constitutes a speech act. Balzacq points out these differences.

First, drawing on language theory and on the fundamental piece by Austin (1962), he argues that a speech act is not a uniform unit, and that one should rather consider it as a "total speech act situation"[68] whereby three different types of speech act interplay. These are: (i) locutionary speech act ("the utterance of an expression that contains a given sense and reference"); (ii) illocutionary speech act (the intent of an utterance, "captures the explicit performative class of utterances"); (iii) perlocutionary speech act ("the consequential effects or

[67]Holger Stritzel, "Towards a Theory of Securitization: Copenhagen and Beyond," *European Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 3 (2007): 376.
[68]Balzacq, *Securitization Theory,* 4.

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sequels that are aimed to evoke the feelings, beliefs, thought or actions of the target audience," focusing on the non-discursive aspects of securitization).

Then, Balzacq opposes the so-called philosophical securitization to the sociological securitization. Whereas the Copenhagen school (philosophical securitization) mainly understands security as a speech act of illocutionary form, the sociological securitization approach, of which Balzacq is the representative, reproaches the Copenhagen school and its focus on illocutionary speech act to "reduce security to a conventional procedure."[69] He however argues that despite seemingly strong differences, these two approaches do not differ entirely and are not contradictory since they are conceived as ideal types.[70] Therefore, he pronounces himself in favor of combining the illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects of a security speech act.[71]

Building on this remark from Balzacq, I acknowledge the differences between the two approaches, but argue that they have respective advantages and can therefore prove complementary. As a result, this research examines the development of security threats by combining philosophical and sociological insights, the sociological approach complementing and moderating the philosophical one. This has important repercussions on the research method. Since both approaches focus on different aspects of a speech act, different research methods may be involved. Researchers in the vein of the philosophical approach to securitization traditionally privilege discourse analysis.[72] However, the sociological approach allows the use of other methods of the social sciences.[73] This research will thus combine discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews. Further methodological considerations will be tackled in details in the next chapter on the research method. I will now discuss the two different types of speech

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[69]Balzacq, *Securitization Theory,* 4.
[70]Ibid. 3.
[71]Ibid.
[72]Ibid. 39.
[73]Ibid. 2.

acts and how they can be applied to the case of the securitization of the Armenian minority in Samtskhe-Javakheti.

2.3 The Copenhagen school, illocutionary speech act and discursive securitization

The first part of this research will provide an analysis of the securitization process of the Armenian minority based on philosophical securitization, or the Copenhagen School's theory of securitization. The concept of securitization brought up by the Copenhagen School provides a particularly adequate framework of analysis, for it relies on an analysis of political constellations and discourses.[74] This approach seeks to understand why an "issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure."[75] Security threats are considered as socially constructed through discourses, which are designated as speech acts. This is in line with the understanding of illocutionary speech act as an utterance of specific words with a specific intention. Since the first chapter pointed out that there is to date no formal analysis of the securitization of Javakheti Armenians, one must start with analyzing the discourses surrounding this minority and the dynamics of the process. Analyzing the dynamics of threat construction around Javakheti Armenians based on the Copenhagen School's theory thus requires some preliminary conceptualization. This chapter provides the theoretical framework for this conceptualization that will be applied in Chapter IV.

First of all, the conceptualization efforts required by the Copenhagen school start with the definition and delimitation of the level and sector of analysis. Buzan, Waever and de Wilde define a *level of analysis* as "objects for analysis that are defined by a range of spatial scales, from small to large."[76] The most frequently used levels of analysis in the study of international

[74]Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 27.
[75]Ibid. 24.
[76]Ibid. 5.

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relations are the following: international system, international subsystems, units, subunits and individuals. Defining a specific level of analysis provides a framework within which one can theorize. However, it is not enough for reducing the complexity of the phenomenon to analyze. *Sectors* aim at identifying specific types of interaction in order to facilitate the analysis. They remain inseparable parts of complex wholes, but reduce the complexity of the phenomenon for the sake of the analysis.[77] The different and most common sectors of analysis are the military, political, economic, societal and environmental sectors.

Eventually, defining the level of analysis and the sector of the research will help the analyst proceed with the next steps of the analysis of the securitization process, namely the identification of the actors and the dynamics of the phenomenon.

As for the actors, the analyst needs to distinguish between three types of units involved in the securitization process. First of all, the *referent objects,* meaning the "things that are seen to be existentially threatened and have a legitimate claim to survival," should be defined.[78] Then, the analyst should pinpoint the *securitizing actors*, the actors that "securitize issues by declaring something – a referent object – existentially threatened."[79] Finally, last actors to be identified are the *functional actors*, the ones who "affect the dynamics of a sector" and "significantly influences decisions in the field of security."[80]

As for the dynamics of interaction, the analyst of the securitization process proceeds to the study of discourses and political constellations. In order to grasp these constellations, it is necessary to draw on language theory and detect a specific schema of speech act.

By following all these steps, one aims to find out whether the studied securitization process follows the most common patterns of state securitization of a defined issue, or if it presents specific logics and characteristics. It is also important to remember that the analysis of

[77]Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 8.
[78]Ibid. 36.
[79]Ibid.
[80]Ibid.

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a securitization process relies on the concepts of subjectivity and discourses. The aim of a research on securitization is thus:

> […] not to assess some objective threats that 'really' endanger some object to be defended or secured; rather, it is to understand the processes of constructing a shared understanding of what is to be considered and collectively responded to as a threat.[81]

This applies particularly to this research. I do not aim at assessing the likeliness of Javakheti separatism, but the characteristics of the discourse presenting this minority as a national security threat.

I have pointed out in the introduction and in this chapter the importance of critically assessing the process of securitization of Javakheti Armenians, especially looking at its impact or absence of repercussions. In order to extend the understanding of the securitization process, one should look at the perlocutionary aspect of the speech acts, the next step of this research.

2.4 Sociological securitization, perlocutionary speech act and non-discursive securitization

An analysis of the process of securitization also calls on the analyst to research the apparent consequential effects of this process, here its perceived impact on inter-ethnic relations in Georgia.

As pointed out in section 2.2, the purely procedural analysis of the securitization process stressed by the Copenhagen school prevents from looking at the reactions it provokes or fails to provoke. Another important reserve of solely focusing on the Copenhagen School's understanding of securitization is that not every security threat is presented with the drama of urgency and priority. The sociological approach is here adequate in order to complement an analysis of the intention of a securitizing speech act by an analysis of its perceived consequential effects. Hence it is important to go beyond the purely discursive analysis: If the discursive approach is necessary, it must be put into perspective with the context of the

[81]Buzan et al. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 26.

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discourses and the potentially engendered reactions.

This can be done by focusing on the perlocutionary aspect of a securitizing speech act. Balzacq argues that three different aspects should be considered when analyzing perlocutionary speech acts: (i) the centrality of the audience; (ii) the co-dependency of agency and context; (iii) the dispositive and structuring force of practices. The first point emphasizes that assessing the success of securitization "is highly contingent upon the securitizing actor's ability to identify with the audience's experience", using terms that reflect the audience's experience (speeches, gestures, tonality, order, images, attitude, ideas, inclusive plural pronouns, collective memories etc.).[82] This speaks for the importance of going beyond the actual securitizing discourses. The second point relies on the assumption that the "semantic repertoire of security is […] a combination of textual and cultural meaning"[83] and that the performative effect of securitization depends on this combination. The third point refers to the fact that securitization can also be non-discursive, emphasizing the idea that "securitization is not necessarily the result of a rational design wherein goals are set beforehand […]."[84] Balzacq thus highlights the importance of looking at *practices* ("routinized types of behavior"[85]) and *dispositifs* ("basic elements contributing to the emergence of a security field and in the routinization of practices"[86]).

In addition to Balzacq's approach to the impact of securitization, one might keep in mind other author's approaches to the implications of securitization. In the case of a persistent or recurrent threat, a "metaphorical security reference" may suffice to be framed as a security issue and the sense of urgency become institutionalized.[87] Practices, mentioned by Balzacq, are the core of Adler and Pouliot's work. They define practices as follows:

[82]Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 10.
[83]Ibid. 14.
[84]Ibid. 15.
[85]Ibid.
[86]Ibid. 15-16.
[87]Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 27.

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> Practices are socially meaningful patterns of action which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, act out and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world.[88]

Practices can play an important role in securitization. Indeed, if it is welcomed by a certain degree of social recognition, the repeated performance – both discursive and practiced – of a securitization move can lead to the enactment in and on the world of the security claim, hence to its institutionalization.[89] Culture can also be considered as a type of institutionalization mechanism. Some scholars like Jutta Weldes argue that all social (in)securities are culturally produced. She holds that threat and identity are two sides of the same coin and that they are mutually constituted, especially in politics of identity.[90]

As a whole, Balzacq's three aspects of perlocutionary speech act and the various institutionalization mechanisms presented in this section clearly show the importance of going beyond the discursive aspects of the securitization process in order to grasp the complexity of the process. For the present analysis, including the perlocutionary aspect of speech act to the theoretical framework allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the securitization process of Javakheti Armenians. Since this process is ongoing, it may have political and social consequences for the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti, and inter-ethnic relations in Georgia in general. A successful securitization process might hypothetically also lead to regional geopolitical tensions or conflict between Georgia, Russia and Armenia. Therefore, it is important not only to academically understand the securitization process, but also consider the impact it may have on inter-ethnic relations in Georgia.

In this chapter, I have showed that discursive and non-discursive aspects of securitization are not contradictory but complementary, for all these theoretical aspects come

[88]Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, *International Practices* (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 6.
[89] Ibid. 7-8.
[90]Jutta Weldes, *Cultures of Insecurity : States, Communities, and the Production of Danger* (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1999): 10-11.

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into play in the study of the securitization process of a defined issue. As a result, I base my analysis of the link between security and identity in the case of the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti on both the Copenhagen school and Balzacq's theories of securitization. I consider the latter as a critical extension of the former, taking into account the importance of both illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects of speech act. Such a theoretical framework allows an in-depth analysis and a critical understanding of securitization, both being very important in the sensitive geopolitical context of the South Caucasus.

After having pointed out the existence of the phenomenon of securitization of Javakheti Armenians (Chapter I) and set the theoretical basis of discursive and non-discursive approaches of securitization (Chapter II), I will connect both aspects through the design of an adequate methodology for the present research in the following chapter.

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Chapter III

Securitization of Javakheti Armenians: A research method

This research aims to analyze the phenomenon of securitization of the Armenian minority in Samtskhe-Javakheti by focusing on illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects of speech act, as explained in the precedent section. Therefore I rely on two different methods that allow a rigorous analysis of each aspect of securitizing speech acts: discourse analysis and qualitative expert/informant interviews.

3.1 Discourse analysis

The method

Discourse analysis is a method of document analysis which aims at interpreting language in a specific socio-historic context: "Rather than focus on what is said, discourse analysis explores language as it constitutes and embodies a socio-historic context tied to power and knowledge."[91] The first part of the analysis will be based on the constructivist-oriented theory of securitization of the Copenhagen School, for whom discourses play a central role: "Securitization can be studied directly, it does not need indicators. The way to study securitization is to study discourse and political constellation."[92]

Preliminary concerns

The main concern when designing a research method based on discourse analysis is the definition of the data body. In the present study, several aspects must be taken into account. First, one should be aware of the scarcity of sources on the general topic of the Caucasus region.

[91]Zina O'Leary, *The Essential Guide to Doing Research* (London: SAGE, 2004): 199.
[92]Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 25.

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This is a limit acknowledged by most scholars:

> In writing this book, several problems arose which anyone doing research on the Caucasus may encounter. This is especially the case in the field of data collection: data is often incomplete or absent.[93]

This issue is very acute in the case of the securitization of the Armenian minority in Samtskhe-Javakheti, as pointed out in the first chapter. In addition to its scarcity, scholarship on the South Caucasus is also characterized by its strong ideological and national bias, especially on topics related to sensitive questions such as identity and national feeling:

> Another problem is the true academic value and the trustworthiness of sources. Literature may be biased in an ethnocentric or nationalistic way or simply be a source or propaganda. This is definitely true for Caucasian historiography, which is frequently used as a battlefield by academics.[94]

These are questions that have to be kept in mind, but that support the relevance of the present research based on the discourse analysis method.

The status of the materials is another issue arising in the design of this research method. The academic scholarship on inter-ethnic relations in the Caucasus, as already pointed out is young and emerged in the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union and the renewal of interest in the region. On the one hand, some Western scholars started intensively researching developments in the region. On the other hand, in an attempt to gain in visibility and involve the international community in the conflicting dynamics of the Caucasus, local scholars intensively published their own work in English, sometimes in parallel to Georgian and Russian. This explains the considerable amount of English language publications of the academia and the policy making and analysis field.

As for the specific topic of securitization of the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti, the material analyzed in the research encompasses mainly media articles, since there has been little academic research on the topic, as compared to the important media coverage of the issue. Furthermore, this media coverage encompasses sources from the whole region and sometimes from Europe and the USA. Materials are therefore available in English, Georgian and Russian.

[93]Frederik Coene, *The Caucasus: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2009): 1.
[94]Ibid.

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However, as mentioned in the first chapter, I decided to limit my sample to English language online materials because of time, spatial and linguistic contraints. This decision is based on the convergence of two issues: the language and the representativity issue. This study indeed relies on a non-probability sampling approach. In this research, I do not claim to analyze all discourses about Javakheti Armenians, and I do not seek to generalize the findings of the discourse analysis to the overall media coverage of Samtskhe-Javakheti in Georgia and the South Caucasus region.[95] Since the aim is to target a specific type of discourse, it is appropriate to select a sample based on the purpose of the study, here securitizing discourses around Javakheti Armenians. As pointed out in Chapter I, these discourses are reflected in English language publications originating from the whole region, as well as in Georgian and Russian language articles. Limiting the sample of publications to English language publications based on the purposive sampling principle would not provide a representative analysis of securitizing discourses in Georgian and the South Caucasus, but would suffice for illustrative purposes.[96] This securitizing phenomenon can indeed be reflected in English language publications, since they are sometimes directly translated from or into Russian,[97] or cover local events[98] and discourses[99] around Javakheti Armenians. I am aware of the potential limits of this choice, namely reaching only a non-representative segment of the process of securitization. However,

[95]Bridget Somekh and Cathy Lewin, eds., *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications, 2005): 218-219.
[96]Earl R. Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2001): 179.
[97]Example: Rimple, Paul, and Mielnikiewicz, Justyna. "Post-Crimea, Phantom of Armenian Separatism Haunts Georgia." *Eurasianet.org*, April 9, 2014.
Rimple, Paul, and Mielnikiewicz, Justyna. "После крымских событий Грузию преследует призрак армянского сепаратизма." / "After the Crimean events, Georgia is haunted by the phantom of Armenian separatism." [Personal translation] *Eurasianet.org.* April 10, 2014.
[98]Example: Reportage available on Youtube"ეთნიკურად სომხების განწყობა ჯავახეთში (პანორამა 20:00-იმედი)" / "Attitudes of ethnic Armenians in Javakheti (Panorama 20:00 – Imedi)." [Personal translation] *Imedi TV*, March 23, 2014.
"Joint Statement on Imedi TV Company's Report Concerning Situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti Region." *Media Development Fund; Georgian Democracy Initiative, GDI; Tolerance and Diversity Institute, TDI*. March 24, 2014.
[99]Example: "ვაჰაგან ჩახალიანმა 70-კაციანი შეირაღებული დაჯგუფება ჩამოაყალიბა და ჯავახეთში არეულობას გეგმავს." / "Chakhalyan has formed a group of 70 armed men and projects to start unrests in Javakheti." [Personal translation] *Fmabkhazia.com.* January 12, 2015.
Kalatozishvili, Giorgi. "Is the leader of Djavakheti extremists forming an armed group?" *Vestnikkavkaza.net.* January 23, 2015.

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I argue that these limits do not present a fundamental obstacle for the present analysis, and I take these aspects into consideration when gathering and analyzing the data body.

Design and implementation of the method

In this section, I describe the different steps taken in order to rigorously and efficiently select publications to be analyzed in the light of discourse analysis of illocutionary speech acts. As a matter of clarity, all the steps are illustrated in the Figure 3 on the following page.

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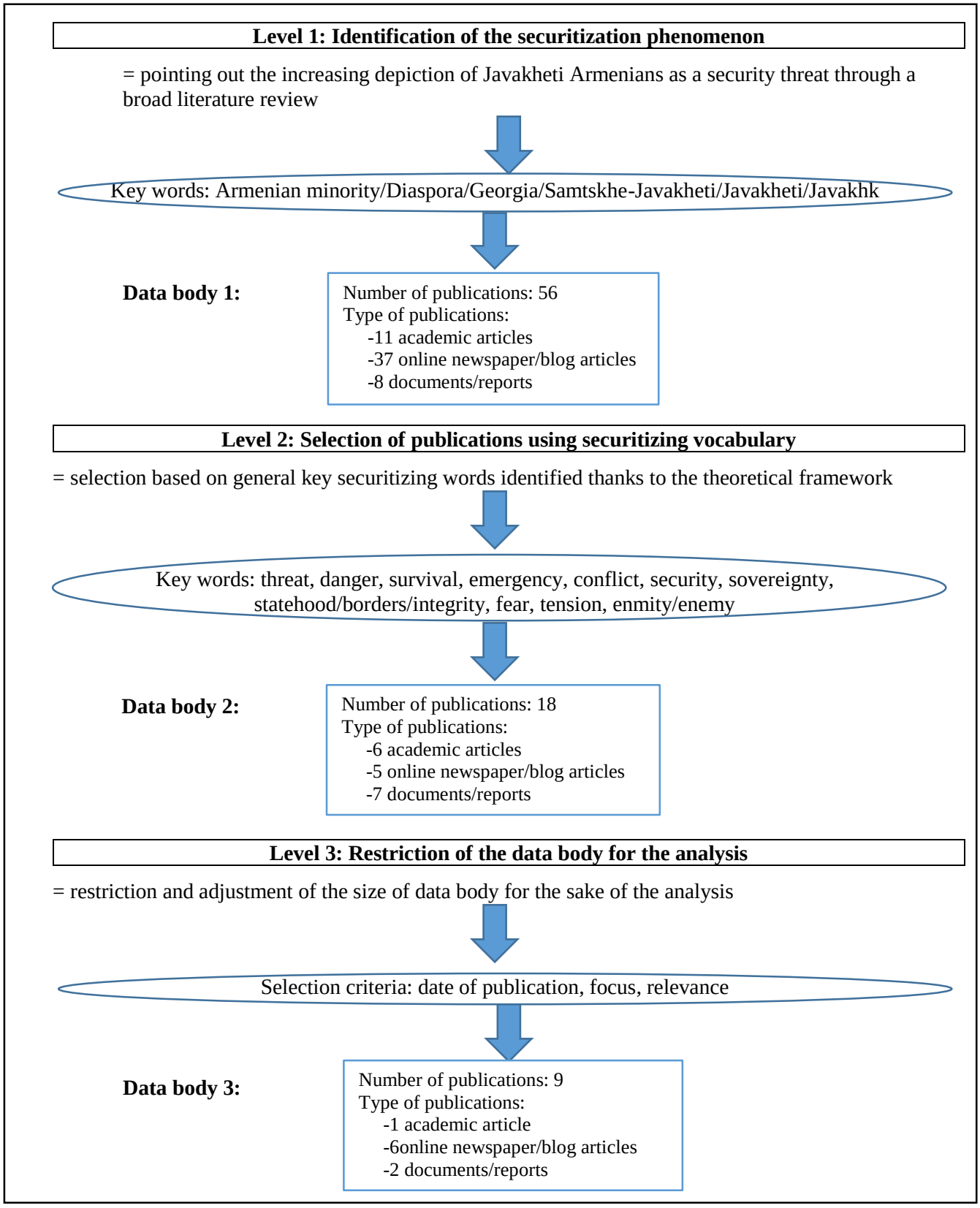
Figure 3: Selection of the data body for the discourse/content analysis



Firstly, I identified the process of securitization of Javakheti Armenians through an extensive review of the literature on this community. I determined a first data body (Appendix 1, **data body 1**) out of a combination of the publications used for the literature review in the first chapter, and an additional research on CompSearch and Google, using general geographical keywords describing Javakheti Armenians. Thereby, I gathered a data body of **56 publications** on Javakheti Armenians.

Secondly, I identified general key words thanks to the theoretical framework on securitization, the repeated utterance of which is theoretically expected to participate in the securitization of an issue. These words are: threat, danger, survival, emergency, conflict, security, sovereignty, fear, tension, and enemy. Then, I looked up these key words in all publications of data body 1, in order to gather only publications in which the authors extensively use theoretically securitizing vocabulary to report on the Armenian minority in Samtskhe-Javakheti (Appendix 2A, **data body 2**). These key words remain very general on purpose: it is important not to use too specific selection key words in order to avoid introducing bias, mainly from the researcher, into the selection of the data body. These general keywords must help the researcher reduce the scope of analysis, not illustrate a preconceived argument. I only selected the publications in which the utterance of at least 5 categories of securitizing keywords has been identified. Data body 2 thus comprises **18 publications** (Appendix 2B).

Eventually, I used other selection criteria in order to refine the data body for practicability and feasibility reasons (Appendix 3A, **data body 3**). These criteria comprise the date of publication (after the 2008 war) and a focus on the Armenian minority (as opposed to publications dealing with all minorities in Georgia and the South Caucasus). Since this study is based on a non-probability and purposive sampling approach, I decided to exclude 14 publications. In these materials, the utterance of securitizing keywords can be identified, but the author(s) do/does not consider the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a security

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threat; they are rather objective analytical publications reflecting on the topic without taking a securitizing stance. Moreover, I included 5 publications in which the specific keywords of the research did not come up, but implicitly or explicitly refer to the Armenian minority as a security threat, for these discourses are the object of this study and should be constitutive of the purposive sample. Each inclusion and exclusion is individually justified in the appendix 3A. This final data body comprises **9 publications** (Appendix 3B).

Such a selection provides this research not only with feasibility, but also with methodological systematicity and robustness. It also contributes to process transparency and makes the study replicable. However, the addition of some publications by the researcher in the end of the selection process shows that a completely mechanic selection process would also present the disadvantage of neglecting some very relevant publications. As a result, both the rigorous selection method and the researcher's critical assessment of the readings must be complementary approaches in order to counter-balance their potential weaknesses. This supports the choice to combine the illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects of speech acts in this analysis.

As a result, this method allowed me to gather a final data body of 9 publications presenting the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a security threat, selected on neutral criteria. This sets the ground for the analysis of the illocutionary speech acts through a discourse analysis of the materials.

Evaluation of the method

The robustness and the systematic character of the above method are its strengths and provide the ground for a methodologically sound analysis of the securitization of the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti. As mentioned in the previous section "preliminary concerns," limitations do exist, but do not delegitimize the research. The sensitive question of being a foreign researcher, which brings several limits especially in terms of language access, can also

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be seen as a considerable advantage in this case. Since I have mentioned the strong ideological and national bias in local publications – even in the English speaking ones – growing up and being educated in a different context gives considerable distance to critically assess the available literature. Moreover, as already mentioned, the sample is not representative of the general discourses in the Georgian media, but illustrative of a certain kind of rhetoric that I am interested in analyzing in depth. It is nonetheless worth highlighting that this rhetoric is also present in the Georgian media as already pointed out in the first chapter. Therefore, these publications are relevant for the analysis of the securitization of Javakheti Armenians, and being a foreigner could be an asset for a distanced and critical analysis of these discourses.

The second part of the analysis aims at analyzing the conditions for the development of these securitizing discourses surrounding Javakheti Armenians as well as their impact by focusing on the perlocutionary speech act, meaning the non-discursive means and consequential effects of such discourses. Therefore, I will answer these questions by carrying out qualitative informant/expert interviews to gather data for this part of the analysis.

3.2 Qualitative expert/informant interviews

The method

Qualitative interview is a term that captures different types of interviews, and is an appropriate method for my research for several reasons. First, qualitative interviews are traditionally considered as a useful tool to compensate for the problem of scare sources, for each interview generates a considerable amount of empirical data. Moreover, qualitative research allows to capture an aspect of the securitization process that is very difficult to assess through discourse analysis alone – namely an in-depth understanding of the conditions and perceived impact of this process. We can make conjunctures based on the theoretical framework, but empirical research is necessary to connect it to the social world. Both methods thus complement each other.

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In this section, I focus on informant/expert interviews. On the one hand, because of the technicality of the topic of the securitization process of Javakheti Armenians, *expert* interviews are very relevant. Indeed, these persons are expected to have a deeper knowledge of the topic because of their activity. They are supposed to have a better understanding of this kind of processes than a simple respondent that might not be aware of the phenomenon. Therefore, experts are a more fruitful source of information. On the other hand, the topic relates to an interaction between information and its reception by different segments of the Georgian society. The close connection to these groups is therefore very important. As a result, *informant interviewees* are also considered as a valuable source of information, because they have access to information both about their own social world and about the social world of a certain group that is the object of the study:

> Whereas social researchers speak of respondents as people who provide information about themselves, allowing the researcher to construct a composite picture of the group those respondents represent, an informant is a member of the group who can talk directly about the group.[100]

For this research, I consider potential interviewees as falling into both categories. Experts are not only specialists in the field of minority issues in Georgia, but they are themselves members of the majority or minority group, and therefore can be considered as informants.

Preliminary concerns

The aim of qualitative research is to capture variation. This can however turn into an important challenge for the research if there is too much variation, especially when it comes to processing and analyzing the data set. As a matter of practicability and feasibility, as well as given the scope of the research and the time constraint, this research is based on illustrative data.

Moreover, I rely a lot on local experts who are part of my personal contacts gained during my work in the field of minority rights in Georgia in 2013. However, I do not intent to

[100]Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, 181.

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interview these personal contacts. Thus, I aim at avoiding as much as possible personal bias in my interview sampling. Nonetheless, I expect to benefit from these persons' network and help in order to enter into the field. These personal contacts are indeed important for several reasons. The first is that personal contacts are more likely to respond to my solicitations. Furthermore, I expect them to add some symbolic legitimacy to my research when contacting people for interviews, thus having a higher rate of answers. Finally, their expertise in the topic, in addition to their network, is a great addition and asset for my research. Interviews are conducted in English, or with an interpreter from Russian/Armenian into English in case the person does not feel comfortable expressing herself in English.

Design and implementation of the method

Here again, the most important point is to justify the selection of interviewees. As a matter of clarity, the selection process is reflected in the Figure 4 on the following page.

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Figure 4: Sample selection

Actors of the securitization process	Target of the securitization process	Object of the securitization process
• Media -International (cf. external actors) -Georgian -Javakheti Armenian • External actors • Armenian and Georgian Churches • Political parties • Scholars	• Georgian government • International community • Georgian society	• Armenian population *(represented, supported and in contact with:)* -International NGO and organizations in Georgia -Armenian NGOs in SJ -Georgian NGOs dealing with SJ

Several constraints (time, number of actors involved, feasibility…)
⇨ ***Illustrative data, homogeneous sampling strategy, principle of intensity***

Selection of 2 target groups: 1 type of actor and 1 type of object of the securitization process

Interviews with Georgian (A) and (Tbilisi/Javakheti) Armenian media (B)	**Interviews with Armenian (C) and Georgian NGOs dealing with the Armenian minority of SJ (D)**

Interview N°	***Targeted informant group***	***Description of the interviewee***
1	(A) Georgian media representative	International freelance journalist regularly publishing in English language Georgian online media (Tbilisi)
2	(D) Georgian expert, activist	Council for National Minorities, an organization working under the auspices of the Public Defender Office (Tbilisi)
3	(B) Armenian media representative	Armenian freelance journalist regularly publishing in independent Russian online media and international media (Tbilisi)
4	(A) Georgian media representative	International journalist employed by an English language Georgian online media, specialist in minority-related topics (Tbilisi)
5	(D) Georgian expert, activist	Georgian representative of NGO focused on promoting liberal values into the Georgian media (Tbilisi)
6	(C) Armenian activist	Armenian representative of civil movement based on the promotion of tolerance and diversity as democratic values (Tbilisi)
7	(C) Armenian media representative	Armenian radio journalists (Ninotsminda)
8	(C) Armenian media representative	Armenian journalists for local online Javakheti media (Akhalkalaki)
9	(D) Georgian expert, activist	Public Defender Office (Akhalkalaki)
10	(C) Armenian activist	Armenian representative of a local umbrella NGO (Akhalkalaki)
11	(D) Georgian expert, activist	Georgian teacher and correspondent of an NGO from Tbilisi (Akhalkalaki)
12	/	Georgian professor at Samtskhe-Javakheti state university (Akhaltsikhe)
13	(D) Georgian expert, activist	Georgian representative of local NGO focused on minority issues (Akhaltsikhe)
14	(A) Georgian media representative	Georgian TV journalist (Tbilisi)

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First of all, interviews were planned with the help of ECMI Caucasus staff. In total, 14 interviews were conducted, a number in line with an illustrative data approach. This small number of interviews also corresponds to the strategy of homogenous sampling. As opposed to maximum variation sampling, the purpose of such a strategy is to "[investigate] a group or sub-group in considerable details."[101] Since the actors involved in the securitization of Javakheti Armenians are numerous and varied, focusing on a specific group allows the researcher to process information more easily.

Based on Niklas Nilsson's research, on an extensive mapping of the actors involved in the field of minority issues, and on my knowledge of the securitization process, several groups of experts/informants can be identified:

- Social scientists and other experts not affiliated with the government
- Government officials connected to government-minority relations
- Representatives of Armenian NGOs in Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe and Tbilisi
- NGOs focusing on minority integration and human rights, along with a representative of the public defender office.
- Representatives of the Georgian and Armenian Churches
- Media representatives
- Some political parties
- Etc.

Building on the strategy of homogenous sampling, I chose to limit the targeted interviewees. On the one hand, I interviewed a restricted group of potential actors of the securitization process: since an important part of the discourses seems to stem from the media, I specifically target Georgian (A) and Armenian media (B) representatives. On the other hand, I decided to interview a limited group considered as a potential object of securitization or potentially affected by it. This group encompasses representatives of Armenian NGOs in Ninotsminda, Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe (C), alongside with Georgian experts and NGO

[101]Nick Emmel, *Sampling and Choosing Cases in Qualitative Research: A Realist Approach* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2013): 39.

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activists focusing on minority rights and integration (D). Therefore, members of the government, representatives of the Churches, and political parties, external observers and foreign media are left out of the analysis for several reasons. Some actors are difficult to access (especially foreign media), some are expected to residually participate in the process or on a very specific topic (Churches and political parties). The decision of focusing on the media on the one hand and NGO activists in the field of minority rights on the other hand is in line with the principle of intensity. Media representatives, considered to be the main actors of the securitization process, are expected to possess a vast knowledge of the issue at hand. The same goes for Georgian and Armenian NGO representatives. Since these activists have regular interaction with the Armenian community of Samtskhe-Javakheti and some actors involved in the securitization process, they are expected to inform me on this topic. On top of being considered as experts because of their professional activity, their personal identity as a Georgian or Armenian is relevant for the informant interviews. Thus, the interviewees are not only a bridge, but they are also themselves members of these communities. I decided not to name my interviewees considering the sensitivity of the topic. I tried to give sufficient information on the interviewees' professional and personal background in the light of my selection choices (see Figure 4). It is however important to remember that self-identification is complex and fluctuating, and not the core object of this thesis. Therefore, the categorization of Figure 4 is approximate and non-representative.

With such a strategic limitation of my interview sample, the amount of data to process can be limited, still keeping the possibility of comparing different views of Georgian and Armenian actors and objects of the process of securitization. This research strategy and method helped to gain a broad overview of the securitization process and its perceived impact, taking into account time constraint and the limited scope of generalization.

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Evaluation of the method

Qualitative interview in this context presents several advantages and limits.

First of all, it is important to consider the so-called interviewer effect – meaning that the interviewer impacts the result of the interview – and instrumentality principle – meaning that statements given during an interview are shaped by specific objectives on part of the interviewee. These type of limits are inherent to qualitative research and interviewing, and being well prepared and aware of it is the key to diminish this impact on the research as far as possible.

Another specific limitation of this research is the bias of the interpreter. It is possible that the interpreter does not translate everything because of fatigue or any kind of bias. This is a risk that cannot be prevented when one requires the services of an interpreter. The researcher should be attentive during the interview despite the language barrier. This happened during the interview number 7 and rendered it practicably unusable.

Eventually, another limitation concerns the fact that the interviews are conducted in a foreign language (English). Interviewees might feel uncomfortable explaining complex ideas in a foreign language that they may not know perfectly. However, the level of English of Georgian NGO experts on minority issues is usually quite good and they are expected to be familiar with the topic. Moreover, it is important to stress that the present research is not a linguistic analysis, but an analysis of the securitization process. Therefore, one should not read too much in the detail of the word choice and attach more importance to the global meaning in a certain socio-political context. The citations from the interviews are be transcribed verbatim.

As a conclusion, this research provides an in-depth analysis of the securitization process pointed out in the first chapter based on securitization theories highlighted in the second chapter. In order to look at the constellation, dynamics and illocutionary aspects of securitizing speech acts, the next chapter will carry out a discourse analysis of securitizing publications

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selected as described in the first section of this chapter. The two last chapters will provide an extension of this analysis based on semi-structures interviews with expert/informants as explained in the second section of this chapter. The fifth chapter will focus on the conditions for the development of these discourses. The sixth chapter will specifically look at the non-discursive and perlocutionary aspects of the previously identified securitizing speech acts.

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Chapter IV

An analysis of securitizing discourses surrounding Javakheti Armenians

Although there have been no recent and objective signs of tension or violence in the region, the past months have seen a renewal of attention around Samtskhe-Javakheti region. The title of this photo reportage is very evocative in this respect: "Post-Crimea, Phantom of Armenian Separatism Haunts Georgia."[102] Whereas some publications present a real reflection on the situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti, some others depict the region and its inhabitants as the next secessionist conflict of the South Caucasus. The aim of this thesis is to highlight the dynamics of this securitization process and to point out the conditions for the development of these discourses and their apparent consequences on inter-ethnic relations in Georgia.

This chapter aims at specifically analyzing these dynamics through discourse analysis. I will provide a rigorous analysis of the securitizing discourses identified in Chapter I based on the securitization theory of the Copenhagen School explored in Chapter II. I will therefore analyze an illustrative sample of securitizing publications selected according to the method described in Chapter III (see Figure 3 p. 37). These publications are summarized in the following table, and **all citations of this chapter will follow from this template:**

This is important because Russia maintains a sizeable military presence in Armenia. *(Article 2)*

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[102]Rimple and Mielnikiewicz, "Post-Crimea."

Figure 5: Numbered list of the final publication sample

N°	Author	Title	Origin/Date
1	Artyom Tononyan	"Rising Armenian-Georgian tensions and the possibility of a new ethnic conflict in the South Caucasus"	Demokratizatsiya 2010
2	Luke Coffey	"Russia's next acquisition"	Al Jazeera January 2015
3	Robin Forestier-Walker	"Georgia wary of Russia 'expansion plans'"	Al Jazeera April 2014
4	Eka Janashia	"Moscow distributes passports in Georgia"	CACI Analyst May 2014
5	Mushvig Mehdiyev	"Armenia: Problem child of South Caucasus- Oped"	Eurasia Review February 2015
6	Elmira Tariverdiyeva	"Armenians in Georgia – Permanent readiness to secede"	Trend.az April 2014
7	Guram Rogava // MDF, GDI and TDI	• "Attitudes of ethnic Armenians in Javakheti (Panorama 20:00 – Imedi" (personal translation) • "Joint Statement on Imedi TV Company's Report Concerning Situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti Region." *Media Development Fund, MDF; Georgian Democracy Initiative, GDI; Tolerance and Diversity Institute, TDI*. March 24, 2014.	Imedi March 2014
8	Giorgi Kalatozishvili	"Is the leader of Djavakheti extremists forming an armed group?"	Vestnik Kavkaza January 2015
9	Nino Liluashvili	"Georgia: Time to domesticate domestic politics" In *Regional repercussions of the Ukraine crisis*	German Marshall Fund of the USA 2014

This chapter points out a flow of "information" within the selected publications indicative of securitizing discourses. This phenomenon involves a great number of actors and occurs at numerous and inter-connected levels of analysis, thereby setting the perfect ground for securitizing moves. Securitization discourses are structured around the military and the societal sectors, which means that not only the territory and the concept of sovereignty are securitized, but also identity; in this case, it is implied that the Georgian identity is under threat. These specific securitizing speech acts rely on the wide use of speculation, distortion of history and appeal to emotions and nationalism, and reveal attempts at destabilization of the region and stigmatization of the Armenian community of Georgia, and especially of Samtskhe-Javakheti.

4.1 Levels and actors: Securitizing constellation around Javakheti Armenians

Based on the securitization theory of the Copenhagen school, I first need to identify the actors of the securitization process present in these publications. The levels of analysis of this

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study are: units – cohesive and independent organizations and communities, such as states and nations; subunits – organized groups of individuals within units that are able, or that try, to affect the behavior of the unit; and to a certain extent individuals. Indeed, the securitizing actors and functional actors that can be identified in the sample of publications belong to these categories. They are: the media, external powers, some scholars/experts, some political parties, segments of the Georgian society; the Georgian Orthodox Church can be considered as functional actor. It is important to keep in mind that this study does not aim at quantitatively and representatively surveying the media coverage of separatism. On the contrary, this chapter strives to carry out a qualitative analysis based on an illustrative sample as explained in Chapter III. On this basis, only some actors of the process can be identified.

Subunits

First, the media can be considered as a subunit, an actor in itself, directly participating in the securitization process by spreading in articles primarily the views of their author(s). Within media as a subunit, the following national affiliations can be identified. The part of the Georgian media is involved in the securitization process, as shown by the *reportage 7*; Part of the Russian media is also involved in the process (*article 8*), as well as part of the Azeri media (*article 6*). The same goes for elements of the international media, here represented by the articles from Al Jazeera (*articles 2* and *3*), a key player of the process. Elements of the Armenian media are also participating in the process, although no example has been selected in the sample of analysis. Armenian securitizing publications were however present in the literature review.

There are other sub-unit level actors participating in the securitization of Javakheti Armenians, such as some political parties. In the sample of publications of this research, the Javakhk diaspora can be identified for example (*article 1* and *6*). However, political parties do not seem to be the main object of attention in the selected sample since they are barely referred to in the sample, even implicitly.

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Units

I mentioned the media as an actor, a subunit. These affiliations can sometimes be the sign of the involvement of the state apparatus as a unit. Indeed, it is frequent in the South Caucasus region that Public service broadcasters serve government, political forces, commercial or other interests.[103] This means that the media can be the instrument of the unit, the state, by conveying the securitizing discourses of politicians and political events occurring at the state level. As a consequence, these discourses can be those of external powers involved in the securitizing process of the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti: in this case, this encompasses discourses stemming from Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia mainly, and some international powers to a certain extent. In the sample, Al Jazeera (*article 2* and *3*) and the German Marshall Fund of the United States (*article 9*) are illustrations of non-regional involvement.

Individuals

At the individual level, some scholars can be considered as securitizing actors. Indeed, several authors of the publications of the sample present themselves as scholars, analysts or experts. This is the case of the *articles 1*, *4*, *5* and *9*. These individuals and their claims increase their legitimacy through the analytical reputation of their publishing platform: analytical websites (CACI Analyst for *article 4*), academic review (Demokratizatsiya for *article 1*), international organizations (GMFUS for *article 9*) etc. This is a current practice in the South Caucasus. This does not only make the tracing of information very difficult, but also amplifies securitizing claims and supports the securitizing efforts of some actors.

Finally, segments of the Georgian society should be considered as actors of the securitization process, because they are both receptors and perpetuators of this kind of information. However,

[103]"Public Service Broadcasting in the Digital Age," (Recommendations of the 11th South Caucasus Media Conference, 10-11 November 2014, Tbilisi, Georgia) http://www.osce.org/fom/126986?download=true.

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these types of actors are difficult to identify through discourse analysis. Therefore, I will leave it out of this chapter.

Functional actors

As for the functional actors, the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) can be considered as the main actor that significantly influences decisions in the field of security, without directly making securitizing statements. The GOC is mentioned in several articles (*articles 1* and *3*), mainly in relation with Church disputes between the Armenian and Georgian Churches. However, no trace of active participation in the securitization process can be found in these articles. As such, the GOC is a side actor with high legitimacy, thus a functional actor of the securitization of Javakheti Armenians.

Fluidity of categories and mobility of information

To conclude on the identification of the securitizing actors, one must insist on the fact that levels and categories are fluid concepts. In this specific case, information crosses the national borders, and the national character of these publications is relative. For example, the author of the *article 5*, Medhiyev, is here presented as a regional analyst. However, he wrote the same kind of article in the mainstream Azeri media.[104] Medhiyev is also copy-pasting large sections of a very controversial piece from a Georgian NGO representative.[105] He is using these Georgian nationalist arguments by inserting it into his discourse conveying Azeri nationalism. Furthermore, the publication used as his "source" was written in 2006, and Medhiyev uses it without quoting it properly and putting it into context. Misquoting the 2006 article, he states in his 2015 article (*article 5*): "The investigative institutes claim that today Javakheti is another delayed bomb in the South Caucasus region." The situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti has changed a lot in 10 years, and not mentioning the date of publication of his source is consciously

[104]Mushvig Mehdiyev, "Armenia Stands Confused amidst Geopolitical Shifts." *Azernews.az,* February 26, 2015, http://www.azernews.az/aggression/78327.html.
[105]Ramishvili, "Javakheti or Javakhk."

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misleading. Another proof of the circulation of information beyond the above defined categories is the fact that in her article (*article 4*), Janashia takes her information – alleged *en masse* distribution of Russian passport to Javakheti Armenians – from the mainstream Georgian media without double checking it and adding to it the value of her status of analyst.

This general remark on the mobility of information across borders is particularly important since the media landscape in Georgia is characterized by the following weaknesses:

> […] a lack of investigative reporting and news stories from the regions underrepresented, passed over for journalism bent on offending no one. Together with a polarized media climate, this has turned Georgians into active media consumers trying to piece stories together on their own.[106]

Considering this fact in conjunction with the reliance of the Armenian minority on foreign language sources of information,[107] both Armenian and Russian, the spread of biased information across the borders without paying enough attention to the provenance and the content/bias of this information sets the perfect ground for securitization attempts. For this analysis, it sometimes blurs the lines between the actors of the process.

The identification of the securitizing actors is limited not only by the sample, but also by the very methodology of discourse analysis. For example, some other actors might be identifiable only by conducting interviews. Therefore, the following chapter and its different methodology – semi-structured interviews – will attempt to complement this analysis and overcome these limitations.

4.2 Sectors and objects of securitization: Existential issues under threat

The next step of this study of the securitization process of the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti based on the Copenhagen School's securitization theory is to identify the securitized sectors. Thanks to an analysis of the discourses present in the sample, two sectors can be identified as being securitized: the military and the societal sector.

[106]Tobias Akerlund, "National minorities and the media situation in Georgia" (Working paper #42 published by ECMI, January 2012): 27.
[107]Akerlund, "National minorities and the media situation," 3.

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Military sector: Javakheti Armenians as a threat to the Georgian territory

As for the military sector, it seems that the securitizing discourses of the analyzed sample present the threat posed by the Armenian minority in Samtskhe-Javakheti as a threat to Georgia's territorial integrity. This is revealed by the strong focus on military conflict and secessionism as illustrated by the following citations:

> Apart from an actual confrontation, nothing works better than the possibility of confrontation hanging over the region as a Damoclean sword. (*Article 1*, p. 290)

> Causing instability in Samtskhe-Javakheti would achieve two goals for Moscow. First, it would further dismember the territorial integrity of Georgia. […] Secondly, and more importantly for Russia, [it] would make a land corridor between Russia and Armenia, via South Ossetia, one step closer. This is important because Russia maintains a sizeable military presence in Armenia. (*Article 2*)

This shows that the main focus of the securitizing actors is about presenting Javakheti Armenians as actively trying to secede from Georgia through military means and confrontation. Secessionism will thus be an important key word of the securitizing discourse surrounding this group.

Societal sector: Javakheti Armenians as a threat to the Georgian identity

The sample of publications shows that the societal sector is securitized in parallel and in association with the military sector. The fact that "relationships of collective identity"[108], here inter-ethnic relations in Georgia and the Georgian identity, are presented as being threatened by Javakheti Armenians, is an indicator of a securitization of the societal sector. This is exemplified by the following citations:

> Mindful of their country's inter-ethnic makeup, some believe Samtskhe-Javakheti could be the next hotspot, because of notions that ethnic Armenians there cannot be trusted. (*Article 3*)

> Saakashvili personally stated about a noble gesture by a 'true citizen of Georgia'. (*Article 8*)

These citations show that not only the Georgian territory is perceived as being threatened, but also collective identities, here especially the Georgian identity. This quotation is particularly enlightening:

> The last thing the South Caucasus needs is another sectarian conflict. (*Article 2*)

[108]Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 8.

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The perceived threat of a conflict over Samtskhe-Javakheti is thus not only territorial, based on military and geo-strategic interests, but also identity-related.

Referent objects

This leads us to define the referent objects – the perceived objects of the threat posed by the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti – as follows: regional stability and the Georgian territory/sovereignty on the one hand, the Georgian identity and relations of collective identity in the region on the other hand. These referent objects are supposed to be "dramatized and presented as an issue of supreme priority" in securitizing discourses.[109] In all articles of the sample, the notions of threat is present, and the sense of emergency can be felt, however without it being explicitly stated.

After having identified the constellation of actors, sectors and referent objects of the securitization process of Javakheti Armenians as illustrated by the sample of publications, I move to the analysis of the dynamics and mechanisms used in these discourses to convey securitizing messages.

4.3 Dynamics and specific rhetorical structures of securitizing speech acts

In order to understand the securitization of Javakheti Armenians, it is necessary to look at the speech acts constructed by the securitizing actors about territorial and societal threats allegedly posed by the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti. What are the mechanisms that facilitate the process of "constructing a shared understanding of what is considered and collectively responded to as a threat"?[110]

Interpretation and speculation

[109]Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis,* 26.
[110]Ibid.

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In the first place, an analysis of the rhetorical structure of securitizing speech acts present in the sample shows that these discourses are based on interpretation and speculation, instead of being based on reliable news and facts. This is illustrated by the example of the *article 4*. The first paragraph briefly mentions the fact that the information about the passportization of Javakheti Armenians has been dismissed by the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, the author does not take it into account further in the analysis of the article, categorically entitled: "Moscow distributes passports in Georgia." Presented as a political analysis, she relates unfounded facts without taking any precaution: "The rising demand for obtaining Russian citizenship was triggered by…" (*article 4*). This is all the more striking that there has never been any proof of such passport distribution, and this rumor has been proved unfounded in several reports, press conferences and articles, as mentioned in the introduction and first chapter.

Another illustrative example is the combination of several interpreted facts, resulting in the speculation that the underlying reason for alleged secessionism in Samtskhe-Javakheti lies in the Georgian quest for NATO membership:

> The member of Armenian parliament Shirak Torosian threatens with revolt in the event of Georgia's NATO membership. Indeed, Georgian citizens of ethnic descent do not have a uniform attitude towards the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway. Here the reason is NATO and Turkey too. (*Reportage 7*)

This citation of a Georgian reportage on Javakheti clearly shows how several different issues are put together and misinterpreted.

Generalization

A second speech act mechanism participating in the construction of the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a security threat is the use of generalizing statements. One striking example is the normative comment made by the Azeri journalist Tariverdiyeva, relating the unfounded information of Russian passportization of Javakheti Armenians: "Familiar situation, isn't it?" (*article 6*) In the Georgian context, she is clearly referring to the 2008

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conflict between Russia and Georgia, where Russia partly legitimized its intervention based on precedent passportization. By doing so, she does not only generalize a statement, but she generalizes a false information since this fact was proved unfounded. The same mechanism can be found in *article 8*, where the author categorically relates another unfounded information: "Vaagan Chakhalyan plans riots in Southern Georgia, where the Armenian population dominates." (*article 8*) Again, in the Georgian context, Chakhalyan is very much associated with the idea of a Javakhk separatist movement. Thus, these types of announcements tend to present the Javakheti population as a homogeneous entity, represented by Chakhalyan, or by any other person making individual sensational statement, like a member of the Armenian parliament:

> There have been too many signals in recent years that Samtskhe-Javakheti will present many unpleasant surprises. In late march, a member of the RA National Assembly Shirak Torosian stated that if Georgia will become a NATO member and Turkish troops will be placed in its territory, a revolt would be inevitable in Samtskhe-Javakheti. […] It seems the Georgian Armenians have a tendency to lean towards a separatist future. (*Article 6*)

The above instances illustrate the means of presenting one person's comment as the perspective of all Georgian Armenians, especially those from Samtskhe-Javakheti. This is one of the examples of generalization commonly used in securitizing speech acts. This practice is widely used in the Imedi TV *reportage 7* and in *article 6*; the author is speaking about the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti, "[…] the residents of which dream of seeing themselves anywhere, but only not in Georgia" (*article 6*). This misuse of unfounded facts, interpretations, speculations and generalizations is solidified and supported by the extensive appeal to emotions.

Emotional appeal

This is the final recurrent mechanism used in order to construct securitizing speech acts about the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti. As it has been already mentioned, several references made in the context of the South Caucasus in general and Georgia in particular, refer to inter-ethnic conflicts and national feelings. This is explicitly to be seen in this introduction of *article 3*:

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> As Georgians drive along their central east-west highway at night, they can see the lights of a Russian military base within South Ossetia's de facto line of control. This is a constant reminder of a clear and present threat, and their military defeat in 2008 by Russia. (*Article 3*)

Overall, the publications of the selected sample play largely on the memories of conflicts in the South Caucasus. The previous citation plays on Georgians' emotions related to the secessionist conflicts with the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the 1990s and the 2008 conflict with Russia. This is also illustrated by the video accompanying *article 3* (see Figure 6):

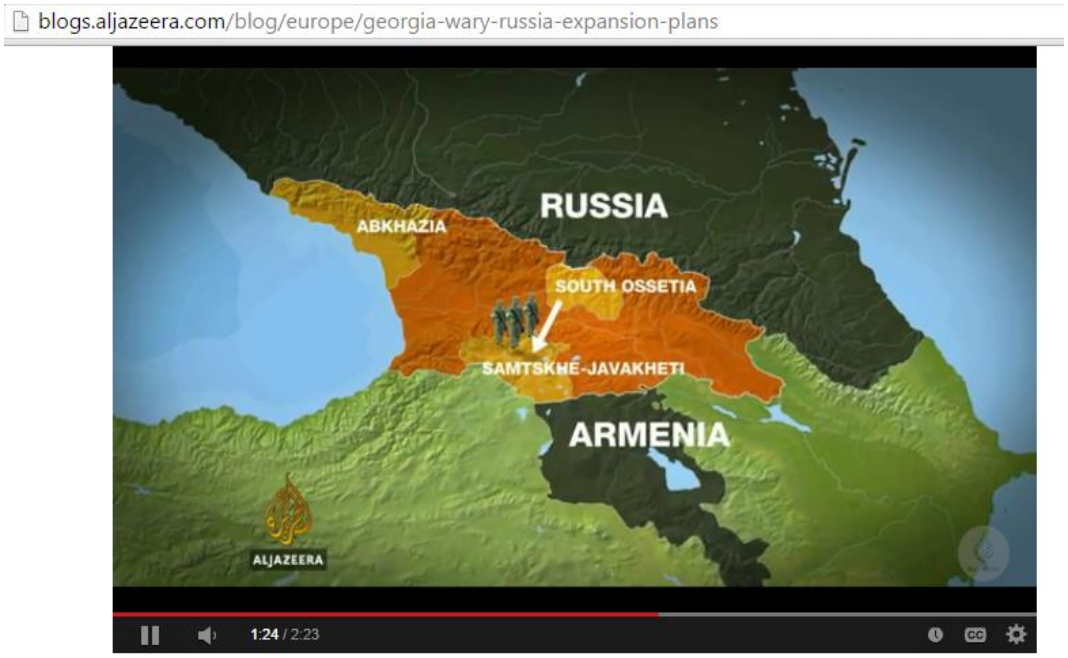

Figure 6: Screenshot of the video reportage by Robin Forestier-Walker.

By representing the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti in the same color as South Ossetia and Abkhazia, this image strongly suggests secessionist risks in the region. This gives another dimension to the article, a strong securitizing orientation. This example clearly highlights the emotional appeal of the image compared to the neutrality of the words used in the article. Indeed, the article is generally quite balanced in the information given and the words chosen.

Fear is the main emotion that is targeted by this kind of rhetoric. What kind of fear is not yet clear: fear of minorities, secession, Russian hand…? The purely securitizing publications do not present clear-cut patterns, rather an indiscriminate use of all of them. However, in a balanced statement on these fears, Robin Forestier-Walker (*article 3*) states that

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"domestic fears may do more to antagonize inter-ethnic relations than any cynical ploy from the Kremlin."

In general, the message conveyed by this kind of speech act is that Georgia "[…] runs the risk of facing another geographic 'amputation'" as stated in the *article 6*. Here again, the word choice strongly conveys feelings of fear, but also of pain. This is made explicit by the parallels made to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, as exemplified by the *article 6*:

> As a citizen of the country affected by the Armenian aggression, I would like to warn Georgia […]. Alas, there is the example of Nagorno-Karabakh. (*Article 6*)

Referring to territorial and inter-ethnic conflicts of the region directly appeals to the emotions of people affected by these conflicts, and Georgians are among them.

Territory and identity related emotions: the nationalist trigger

Underlying the pure question of emotions, one can guess the appeal to national feelings, especially in Georgia. This appears in the above citations, but also more precisely and explicitly in the following citation of *article 8* relating the denunciation of alleged plans of violent riots in Javakheti (also later proved unfounded and dismissed by Chakhalyan himself):

> Former President Saakashvili […] decided to mark the patriotic deed by a citizen who 'rose above ethnic nationalism', he said when he awarded Karina Grigoryan with the highest decoration. (*Article 8*)

The question of territorial integrity here clearly crystalizes national, patriotic feeling. After a closer look, the topic of identity and societal security shows through:

> They are like a guest who brings their hosts too much trouble and try to settle permanently in the host's bedroom. (*Article 6*)

It appears that the question of integration and tolerance is only around the corner of these securitizing discourses.

This section has shown that interpretation/speculation, generalization and appeal to emotions – mainly fears – and national feelings are the main rhetorical mechanisms on which the securitizing speech acts of the publication sample rely on. The final step of this part of the analysis is to bring out the potential intent of these securitizing speech acts.

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4.4 Illocutionary speech act: Intent of the securitization of Javakheti Armenians

As we have seen in the first section of this chapter, the actors of the securitization process are numerous and cannot count as homogeneous entities. As a consequence of this, it is difficult to draw clear-cut and general conclusions about the intentions of the identified securitizing actors. However, parts of their discourses in the specific context of the South Caucasus, as well as the targeted audience of these publications, can highlight and hint at the potential aims of securitizing the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti.

Destabilization

The first objective of these securitizing speech acts lies in the depiction of Javakheti Armenians as a national and regional security threat itself. Thus, securitizing actors aim at participating in the destabilization of the region by introducing fear and emotions into already tensed regional power dynamics. This goal is the more obvious, and is mentioned in several of the publications themselves (articles 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9). For example, the *article 6* states that:

> Not only the Armenian diaspora, but also some foreign players will try in this regard, whom the destabilization of the situation in the country is beneficial. (*Article 6*)

It is a well-known fact that Georgia's geopolitical position "has always been precarious" and nowadays "faces several cross border concerns."[111] The manipulation of local grievances by external actors is not only an objective possibility, but also a very important fear among the Georgian political elites, whether directed to Armenia or Russia.[112] This historical and geopolitical background is an important factor influencing the intentions of securitizing actors.

Attempt to attract attention

The second goal of speech acts securitizing Javakheti Armenians could be to attract the attention of different players. The current sample offers several possibilities. One possibility would be to try to keep the international community focused on Georgia and the South

[111]Metreveli and Kulick, "Social Relations and Governance in Javakheti," 10.
[112]International crisis group, "Georgia: The Javakheti region's integration challenges," 13.

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Caucasus. At the time when international attention is focused on the Ukrainian and Syrian conflicts, some securitizing actors might have an interest in reminding the international community of the strategic importance of the South Caucasus region. In this case, the way chosen to achieve this goal is to highlight and amplify the risks of another inter-ethnic conflict in the South Caucasus region by securitizing Javakheti Armenians. This phenomenon can be observed through this citation of the *article 2*:

> As the possibility of more Central Asian oil and gas finding its way to Europe becomes likely, these pipelines bypassing Russia will become a vital part of Europe's energy security. […] The West can make clear to Russia that further meddling in Georgia's domestic affairs could lead to additional sanctions. (*Article 2*)

Thus, it becomes clear through some of the analyzed publications that one of the targeted audience is the international community.

The above citation especially targets the West, which is indicative of another important objective of some securitizing speech acts: creating a narrative of Russian intervention in the near abroad. The narrative of Russian expansionism is widely spread in Georgia and in Western media, as shown by this recent interview by the Georgian President to the US media.[113] This research however presents the peculiarity of integrating Samtskhe-Javakheti into this narrative and presenting it as the next foreseeable step of Russian expansionism in the post-Soviet space. The following citations show the structure of this narrative, constructed by the use of references to the previous conflicts of the South Caucasus and the Post-Soviet region in general, involving Russia. It starts in 2008 with the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Russia, then building on the Ukrainian and Crimean crisis, and projecting Samtskhe-Javakheti as the next hotspot in the region.

> It [Georgia's fear of insecurity] is a sign that what happened in Ukraine is having wide-reaching and unexpected consequences. (*Article 3*)

[113]Lynn Berry, "AP Interview: Georgian president: Russian military poised to expand into former Soviet states," Associated Press, published on USnews.com, May 19th, 2015. http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2015/05/19/ap-interview-georgias-leader-warns-of-russian-expansion.

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> The Ukrainian case demonstrates that the Kremlin can use its proclaimed right to protect its citizens as a reason to invade any post-Soviet country. (*Article 4*)

> There is an increased fear that the Crimea referendum and new Russian legislation […] have opened the door for political manipulations and possible annexation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. […] Russia might also instigate separatist sentiments in Georgia's region of Samtskhe-Javakheti, populated by ethnic Armenians and crossed by the Baku-Tbilisi Ceyhan oil pipeline that carries Azeri oil through Georgia to Turkey. (*Article 9*)

Considering the growing antagonism between the West and Russia, especially over the Ukrainian crisis, presenting the Armenian populated region of Samtskhe-Javakheti as the next move of Russia is a way to call on reinforced involvement of the West in Georgia. This question is particularly critical and sensitive since political support from the Europeans and the USA is perceived as tending to decrease over the past years.[114]

Stigmatization

The final objective of securitizing speech acts is the stigmatization of the Armenian community of Samtskhe-Javakheti, of Georgia, and Armenians in general. This is the phenomenon that is the most difficult to detect through discourse analysis because it is indirect, sometimes even unconscious, and is connected to national feelings and the history of inter-ethnic relations in Georgia and the South Caucasus. For example, this very strong and biased citation from an Azeri author not only imply that Armenians are the responsible nation for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, but that it is in their nature, as an "aggressor nation":

> Armenia is the problem child of the South Caucasus. […] No one can ignore the simple fact that Armenia is an aggressor nation. […] Georgia, another country in the South Caucasus, faces severe problems caused by Armenia. In the historical Georgian province of Samtskhe-Javakheti Armenians triggered ethnic tensions when they claimed that the regions and provinces belonged to Armenia. (*Article 5*)

It appears here clearly that this kind of discourse does not only stigmatize the Armenian "nature" and identity, but also hints at the inherence of conflicts in the Armenian identity. This rhetoric thus gives a clear justification for the risks of conflict in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of Georgia: simply because conflict and secession are a component of the Armenian identity.

[114]Metreveli and Kulick, "Social Relations and Governance in Javakheti," 30.

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This stigmatization of the Armenian identity and feelings is also found in other publications. In the reportage 7 for example, the journalist asks:

> What are the attitudes in Javakheti after the annexation of Crimea? (*Article 9*)

It is implied here that Javakheti Armenians expectedly have a different reaction to the Crimean annexation than the rest of Georgia. These discourses thus further stigmatize (Javakheti) Armenians as being "[permanently ready] to secede" as the title of the *article 6* puts forward, and pose them as a clear threat to the Georgian territory and the Georgian identity.

Securitizing speech act or speech acts?

As a result of this analysis of discourses presenting the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a security threat, it becomes clear that distinguishing one single pattern of securitization is difficult, if not impossible. Actors are various and categorization is a slippery exercise. There is not a single issue being securitized, rather a combination of military/territorial and societal/identity components. Also, the arguments and mechanisms used to build a securitizing speech act are numerous and play on speculation, distortion of history and emotions/nationalism. As a result, the intentions of the securitizing actors are diverse and sometimes overlapping, going from destabilization to stigmatization.

However, one pattern seems to stand out of this analysis if one takes a step above the specific word and expression analysis: no securitizing actor seems to be specifically interested in the risk of secession *per se*. Rather, playing on fears and emotions to securitize the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti appears to be a compelling rhetorical argument supporting another point made by the author of the securitizing speech act, whether it is a political, geopolitical or nationalist argument.

In this chapter, a deep knowledge of the dynamics of the securitizing process surrounding Javakheti Armenians was gained. However, several limits were pointed out along this analysis. For example, the authors of the sample publications are both observers and

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participants in the securitization process, thus making it difficult to answer the question of the extent of the authors' consciousness about conveying securitizing speech acts. Furthermore, discourse analysis based on an illustrative sample does not allow to make comments on the reception and impact of securitizing discourses. We touch here to the limits of discourse analysis.

Therefore, I will now turn to the bigger picture of the question of security and identity in the case of Samtskhe-Javakheti. By taking a step back from discourse analysis, this research aims at providing an analysis of the conditions for the development of these securitizing discourses (Chapter V). An assessment of the impact of securitizing discourses in the light of these conditions will connect both parts of the research (Chapter VI).

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Chapter V

The conditions for the development of securitizing discourses

In the previous chapter, I have focused on the dynamics of the securitization process of the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti, and on the illocutionary aspect of the securitizing speech acts. Chapter IV highlighted the constellation and the dynamics of the securitization process based on the analysis of texts and utterances within a publication sample. In this chapter, an empirical analysis of the conditions for the development of such discourses will be carried out, based on 14 semi-structured interviews with informant/experts (see Chapter III, p. 43). The objective is to complement the information on the securitization process in order to critically assess its impact in Georgia in the next chapter.

As mentioned in Chapter II, Balzacq reproaches the Copenhagen School's approach to securitization to "reduce security to a conventional procedure."[115] Indeed, simply looking at the mechanisms of securitizing speech acts prevents the researcher from grasping the conditions for such discourses to develop, and from having the adequate distance to look at the degree of penetration of this discourse into the Georgian society. Because of the strength of the images and emotions used in securitizing discourses, it is easy to lose sight of the difference between the subjectivity and the objectivity of these discourses. Most interviews clearly pointed in this direction, insisting on the subjective aspect of securitizing discourses around Javakheti Armenians:

> The possibility of Samtskhe-Javakheti territory seceding from Georgia is ridiculous. […] There are serious problems in Samtskhe-Javakheti, but people just sometimes repeat these things as part of other discourses. (Interview 1)

[115]Balzacq, *Securitization Theory,* 4.

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During the field research, I consciously did not present my research as a work on the security aspects of Samtskhe-Javakheti. I generally introduced my topic as a study of the perceptions in Georgia about Samtskhe-Javakheti, not mentioning the question of risk, threat, or secessionism. When I asked my interviewees about the situation in the region, they very quickly came to talk about the security aspect, though mostly denying the objective existence of political tensions:

> It is impossible to speak about the situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti in 45 min. But I would say it is very calm and quite. (Interview 9)

Beyond the interviewees' discourses, consciousness and fear related to separatist issues seem to be present, though openly dismissed. This chapter aims at disentangling the wider patters of this paradoxical interaction.

5.1 Isolation of the region: The ideal ground for securitizing discourses

Physical and mental isolation

One very specific characteristic of this region is its isolation. This is the first recurrent and acknowledged fact when considering the very general question of perception of Samtskhe-Javakheti. This isolation is not only physical, but also mental:

> Compared to Kvemo-Kartli [another region mainly populated by ethnic minorities], Samtskhe-Javakheti is geographically and mentally much further away from Tbilisi. (Interview 1)

Interviews highlighted the fact that a large part of the Armenian population of Samtskhe-Javakheti, mainly because of this geographical isolation, do not speak the Georgian language. As a matter of fact, Armenian and Russian is their native and second language respectively, a practice encouraged until the closure of the Russian military base of Akhalkalaki in 2007, the main employer of the population until then.

> Few years ago, it was a closed region, they had no communication with Tbilisi and the central government, because of the Soviet Army base. (Interview 2)

After the closure, temporary work migration to Russia was the only way for the population to face high rates of unemployment. These socio-economic characteristics reinforced the isolation of the region and its population from the rest of Georgia:

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> They live in really different worlds, they don't speak the language, read other media etc. (Interview 4)

Therefore, this peculiar setting participates in the fact that Samtskhe-Javakheti population is not always aware of the debates going on in the rest of Georgia. Interviewees all pointed to the non-politicization of this population. This was considered as one of the main reason why rumors of potential separatism are unfounded according to them:

> The average person, they don't really know about it. […] They do not think that they have made something bad to get a Russian passport to work there. (Interview 3)

However, it would be simplifying the situation to state that, contrary to Javakheti Armenians, all Georgians are conscious about securitizing discourses surrounding this population. Indeed, Georgians are often not aware of the reality of the situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti, described as being "far from Georgian consciousness" (Interview 1). This single fact feeds the lack of knowledge and interest in the region. This creates the adequate ground for the securitizing discourses depicted in the previous chapter to develop.

Lack of information

This physical and mental isolation is due to and reinforced by a lack of information on the region. Information barely circulates from Tbilisi to Samtskhe-Javakheti, but also from Samtskhe-Javakheti to Tbilisi. This issue was a recurrent object of concern related to the perceptions and misperceptions of the region. Several interviewees mentioned the lack of media coverage on the region in the rest of Georgia, leading to the misperception and sometimes ignorance about Samtskhe-Javakheti:

> The journalists from Tbilisi, if they don't go to Samtskhe-Javakheti, they know nothing about it. (Interview 3)

> Georgian media is not good as covering Javakheti. They don't report on it, or they report very poorly. (Interview 4)

The same issue is valid in the case of the problematic access of the local Armenian population to Georgian information. This problem is mainly attributed to language issues, since the main Georgian information sources are rarely available in a language spoken by Javakheti Armenians

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– Armenian or Russian. One of the Armenian activists that I met in Akhalkalaki emphasized this linguistic limitation in relation to the degree of interest of a person:

> Imagine if a person like me is limited to only one website in the news, then the others just have no idea what's going on in the rest of Georgia. (Interview 8)

As a very proactive and politicized person, she was very limited in her access to information sources, thus suggesting an even bigger disconnect of the average Armenian population of Samtskhe-Javakheti from the rest of Georgia. Therefore, this lack of information circulation between Samtskhe-Javakheti and the rest of Georgia reinforces the divide and isolation between the two communities.

Weak and flawed media coverage

Isolation and lack of information are supplemented by unprofessional and problematic media coverage. Indeed, when there is information circulating about Samtskhe-Javakheti, it is most of the time about negative facts, reported in a biased and unprofessional way. The negativity expressed in Georgian journalism was mentioned several times:

> Whenever there is something, the yellow press, tabloid and website media in Georgia would pick up and disseminate the story without checking the sources, it's something that people would read and repost. (Interview 1)

In the same vein, the lack of professionalism and the strong bias in the coverage of the region by the Georgian media was a recurrent trait:

> Journalists are not sensitive to minority issues. In most cases non-professionalism is added to this non-sensitivity. They portray the situation according to their personal beliefs. (Interview 5)

> The way of picking up on that local news story, without looking at the sources, is something I find a bit, you know… (Interview1)

This is an especially problematic issue in the case of the very sensitive topic of separatist threat in Samtskhe-Javakheti:

> Sometimes I say to journalists in Tbilisi "please go to the region! People work, go for shopping etc." They [journalists] think that the only thing people are doing there is sitting the whole day in the street, thinking and thinking about how to take the territory from Georgia. (Interview 13)

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This discrepancy in perception is especially dangerous in the media. It has been explicitly acknowledged by a journalist who published a critical piece on the topic after reading several securitizing articles on the region:

> That's why I decided to write this piece, because I felt like people would be biting at it without reflecting. (Interview1)

Therefore, all of these negative, biased and unprofessional reports on the region create the adequate ground for the propagation of securitizing discourses around the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti.

Information vacuum

As a result, this particular context creates an information vacuum, which is an adequate ground for the circulation of securitizing discourses. If it is difficult to quantitatively assess the degree of circulation and the impact of the specific publications analyzed in the previous chapter, the interviewees stated other examples of the circulation of such information. A professor in Akhaltsikhe mentioned that some people in other parts of Georgia express worries when they learn that she is from Samtskhe-Javakheti:

> Sometimes, when I go somewhere, people are asking me: "what's happening, is everything ok there?" even in Georgia. (Interview 12)

Paradoxically, the interviewees did not only report these examples as experts and observers, but also themselves displayed examples of the circulation of misinformation on the region; For instance, the interviewee number 3 reported rumors about former President Saakashvili being Armenian and considered them as obviously wrong, as a nationalist myth. However, the interviewee number 4 related the very same fact, this time considering it as a potential truth and a reason for Saakashvili's interest and activism in the region during his terms:

> Samtskhe-Javakheti was kind of Saakashvili's project. Apparently he has some relatives that are Armenians, and he put lots of efforts in Samtskhe-Javakheti. (Interview 4)

What seems to be an innocent piece of information can carry important consequences. The 2008 war proved the accuracy of this problem, for the population was not aware of the Georgian

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government's perspective on the conflict.[116] As a result, the information vacuum in which the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti finds itself is one important condition for the propagation of securitizing discourses.

The ground for spreading securitizing discourses

Overall, all interviewees agreed on the distance between the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti and the rest of Georgia, and insisted on the huge difference between what is written about the region and what is actually happening there:

> That's one thing to write from far away, and another thing when you go there. (Interview 4)

Combined with the information vacuum stressed earlier, the interviews clearly pointed out the potential for circulation of securitizing discourses on the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti. On the one hand, journalists would tend to minimize the circulation of these discourses:

> Crimea was happening at that time; he was capturing the moment. This is the character of news, trying to think about what happens next. The nature of the media lends itself to this kind of exaggeration. (Interview 1)

> The only people that speak of potential separatism there are foreign media kind of analysts from Washington and Western Europe. (Interview 4),

On the other hand, some Georgian and Armenian activists showed more concerns, considering that securitizing discourses can circulate outside the publications analyzed in the previous chapter, in local sources:

> There are some very nationalist publications. Sometimes, the wording is the same in some cases in Georgia. All repeat these attitudes with the same words, the same narrative. There is a lot of imitation. (Interview 5)

> These ideas are marginal in content, but the circulation… there is no transparency in terms of media. (Interview 5)

These citations show the concerns surrounding the physical and mental isolation of Samtskhe-Javakheti from the rest of Georgia, both in terms of socio-economic issues and information/communication vacuum. This does not only lay the perfect ground for wrong

[116]Metreveli and Kulick, "Social Relations and Governance in Javakheti," 24.

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information to develop, but also for political and geopolitical manipulation, very present in the securitization of the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as we have seen in the previous chapter. This will be the focus of the next section.

5.2 Politics and geopolitics: The ground for chronic manipulations

Georgia and the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti constitute a geographical and geopolitical strategic point as explained in the introduction. The isolation of the region is a favorable condition that broadens the possibilities of manipulation based on political and geopolitical grounds. Through the interviews with local experts/activists and journalists, I sought to assess the findings of the previous chapter related to the constellation of actors and dynamics of the securitization of Javakheti Armenians, and to put them in a more global perspective. The entanglement of individual ambitions, national and international political stakes is found to be another favorable condition to the spread of securitizing discourses.

Individual ambitions

First, most interviewees were reluctant to generalize the securitization phenomenon, insisting on the importance of individual ambitions in this process. Individuals is a level of analysis that could not be clearly identified in Chapter IV.

> Most of the time, this kind of huge announcements is made, for example, by this lady in Samtskhe-Javakheti. She is hysterical. She is judging the situation through personal relations with the local authorities. She feels discriminated and calls to the ombudsman office. When she is rejected, she keeps saying 'Chakhalyan will come with an army!' (Interview 2)

> Of course some Georgians tell the story that Armenians of Samtskhe-Javakheti are a threat. But the overall image is not that the Armenians are a threat in Georgia. (Interview 2)

> There are just two or three persons in Samtskhe-Javakheti that are trying to satisfy other countries' interest in the region. (Interview 2)

This could either be a characteristic of the securitization process of Javakheti Armenians, or a way for the interviewees to minimize the phenomenon. On the one hand, during this fieldwork, a high degree of reluctance to talk about the issue could be clearly felt on the side of local activists, even when I explicitly mentioned that I was mainly interested in discourses.

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Furthermore, journalists were also very prompt to insist on the subjectivity of the reports on this topic, perhaps reluctant to acknowledge the responsibility of the media – their profession – in this process. On the other hand, I could not identify, neither through discourse analysis nor through the empirical analysis, a structured and organized project of securitization the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti. It is true that Samtskhe-Javakheti attracts a lot of attention when it comes to the idea of potential separatism:

> The same is true for Batumi, why is Batumi not touched like that? (Interview 1)
>
> It could be applied also to Adjara. (Interview 2)

However, if the securitization process does exist, it seems to be pushed by some individuals on a non-systematic and non-structured basis. This supports the general conclusion of the previous chapter, namely that securitizing actors are not interested in separatism *per see*, but use these securitizing speech acts as part of another political, geopolitical or nationalist argument. However, it would be simplistic to be satisfied with a temporary and marginal view of the securitization of Javakheti Armenians, as the rest of the analysis will show.

National politics

Beyond individual inspirations, it appears very clearly that one of these other arguments is national politics: "People are trying to give it a political angle." (Interview1) In several interviews, the opposition between the former and the new government showed through the discussion on the situation in Javakheti. Chakhalyan – Javakheti political figure imprisoned under Saakashvili and released when the opposition party Georgian Dream came to power – is the example of a figure depicted in securitizing discourses as the leader of Javakheti separatism, but that actually seems to be the instrument and target of political disputes.

> Saakashvili made public relations [communication] about him, he made a big separatist out of him, but he is just a criminal. (Interview 3)

Indeed, whether one considers him as a separatist threat or not is not based on facts, but actually translates the expression of political convictions, an ideological alignment with the former or

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the current government. The following citation about the announcement made in *article 8* [117] is enlightening in this regard:

> There are lots of announcements, especially about Chakhalyan. We know the situation here, we can't understand where she got her information from. Chakhalyan is in Yerevan. We met the woman and asked her why she said that, on which basis, but she made no comments. With her help and the help of people like her, the whole Georgia and the whole world think that Chakhalyan is Javakhk himself, but he's just one person who is from here and it doesn't mean that all people think the same. He's not such an important figure as he is depicted in the media. (Interview 8)

Reading this excerpt of an interview with Javakheti journalists in parallel with the securitizing article 8 on the same topic (footnote 117), it becomes clear that the underlying reason for making such an announcement is to present Saakashvili's terms in a positive way and Georgian Dream's current ruling negatively. The contrary can also be found in other interviews. The following citation is another example of the internal politics at stake behind the general question of hate speech towards Armenians, the denigration of the Georgian Dream's politics:

> There have been some statements from Ivanishvili as a Prime Minister that this [fascist] newspaper is the one representing the most national… protecting the most national interest and representative of the new ruling party. This is a problem with this government, it is a source of hatred. (Interview 5)

Not only matters of national politics, but also international politics stand out as a favorable condition for the development of securitizing discourses around the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti.

Involvement of external powers

The question of the involvement of external powers in the securitization process is an idea that has been widely acknowledged by all interviewees. What came out through the analysis of actor constellations of the securitization process in the previous chapter was confirmed by the interviews. For instance, the question of the porosity of borders in terms of information was stressed by a journalist:

[117] "Karina Grigoryan, a former police officer, an Honor Decoration holder, has made a sensational statement. She told the mass media about the plans of the well-known figure Vaagan Chakhalyan to form in Djavakheti (a region in southern Georgia where the Armenian population dominates) an armed group for committing terrorist attacks. […] She is a significant figure, as well as Chakhalyan. One of the last orders of former president Saakashvili was to award Karina Grigoryan with the highest decoration of Georgia – the Honor Decoration." (Article 8)

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> This is an English language article on Trend.az, the Azerbaijani news agency. But it was also picked up, I believe, by Russian news agencies. (Interview 1)

This thus confirms that even though English language publications might not reach the average citizen of Georgia, the particular media landscape of the region and of Georgia (the information vacuum pointed out in the previous section) makes this kind of discourses cross the national and linguistic divides. The securitizing discourses analyzed in the previous chapter therefore sporadically appear in the Georgian media, as *reportage 7* shows. These external discourses seem to have an echo in Georgia despite the attempts at negating this fact by some activists:

> I have the feeling it's only international media, mostly of those countries who have an interest in those particular issue, but not really in the Georgian media. (Interview 2)

This can again be interpreted as an attempt to minimize the extent of the securitization of Javakheti Armenians in Georgia by some activists, especially those working in close cooperation with the Georgian government. Furthermore, the fact that Georgia and Samtskhe-Javakheti are at the center of a strategic region and tensed geopolitical and diplomatic dynamics reinforces the interest from external actors and the fears of external manipulations. Therefore, not only the involvement of external powers in the securitization process is an important characteristic, but specifically the role of Russia, or at least of its image is crucial in the process, especially for journalists, as explained by this interviewee:

> For somebody who is working as a freelance journalist here, Russia is the big story if you want to get into the international news media. (Interview 1)

The question of the involvement of external powers, especially Russia, again illustrates the difference between objective and subjective threat, facts on the one hand and perceptions and fears on the other hand.

Politicization and securitization? Key moments and cyclic phenomenon

In this chapter, individual ambitions, national and international politics are found to be favorable conditions for the development of securitizing discourses. This analysis looks at the subjective aspect of a security threat, and in particular the discourses that construct the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a political problem and a security threat. Trying

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to understand this process, it appears that the concepts of politicization and securitization are brought out through the research.

Buzan, Waever and de Wilde argue that both terms can be considered as part of a spectrum – going from "non-politicized" to "securitized" via "politicized" – of which securitization would be a further intensification of politicization.[118] As the interviews revealed, it seems that the topic of secessionist threat in Samtskhe-Javakheti is not always present in the media coverage and in political discussions:

> Overall the whole situation is that, sometimes, maybe Georgians are more aware of Armenians from Samtskhe-Javakheti as a threat, but now they do not consider that threat. (Interview 2)

Although the topic seems to have been the object of a renewal of attention in the past months, especially following the Crimean crisis, it actually appears that these discourses are not new and come up in the media coverage at key moments that are favorable to the spreading of these kinds of securitizing discourses:

> I don't think it's an especially new thing. It came about when things in Crimea happened, there was a shock. But also when Abkhazia and South Ossetia signed treaties and agreements. (Interview 1)

This phenomenon of politicization is recurrent and obvious in the South Caucasus, considering the very sensitive referent objects of the securitization process (territory and identity) and in the light of the general context of state and nation building processes, leading to the ethnic and strategic conflicts in the South Caucasus region since 1991. This appears clearly in the politicization of the question of citizenship in Samtskhe-Javakheti:

> It is social, not political. It's not because they don't want to be representatives of Georgia, but for their well-being. (Interview 2)

> They have no political reasons to go to Russia, it is just for practical reasons such as money and work. The same is true for passports, it is because of visa regulations. (Interview 3)

> If there was work in Mozambique, they would go there, work there and become the citizen of Mozambique. (Interview 8)

This politicization is sometimes pushed further on the spectrum to securitization:

[118]Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 29.

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> When we are speaking about minorities, we have two things in mind. Rights and integration, as well as security question. The security question is on top, and that's very understandable because of Russia. (Interview 6)

> When people are talking about their rights, some journalists and some citizens think that they want more power and they think of separatism. (Interview 3)

> The issue of passports, dual citizenship, it's a social problem mainly. But it has been portrayed as an attempt for Russia to invade the country. (Interview 5)

The national and international political context and the importance of security issues in the South Caucasus region lay the ground to permanent politicization of socio-economic issues surrounding the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti, sometimes being presented as an imminent security threat in connection with key favorable moments, such as church disputes, citizenship issues or international conflicts involving Russia.

This section has shown that the securitization of Javakheti Armenians reflects a strong combination of individual ambitions, national politics and external power involvement. These manipulations are mainly related to the military sector of the securitization process with sovereignty, politics and geopolitics being at stake. However, the societal sector also comes through as a securitized sector, revealing a structural dimension to the securitization process of Javakheti Armenians.

5.3 Identity and prejudices: The structural background for securitization

Territorial sovereignty and fear factor

First, the interviews supported the findings of the discourse analysis part of this thesis, namely that existing fears are a key background element on which securitizing discourses are playing:

> The story about Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti and passports is odd, because it plays on Georgian fears about passportization. The Georgian media as a whole kind of fell for this story. (Interview 1)

The fears mobilized by these securitizing speech acts are mainly related to territorial integrity as mentioned earlier, linked to the securitization of the military sector. However, it appeared in several interviews that this fear of losing Georgia's territorial integrity is strongly connected to

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fears related to identity issues, revealed by the mention of feelings of otherness and rejection or hatred:

> Georgia has a fear of losing its territory as they already lost Abkhazia and South Ossetia, they are just afraid, that's why the attitudes towards each other are very tensed. […] The difference between Nagorno-Karabakh and here. There, there was a problem of religion, between Muslims and Christians, here it's very different, and there are no big issues among Christians. I hope Georgians will understand the difference. (Interview 8)

> Because of the refugees, and the IDPs… when you spread this kind of information, you can feel… maybe not hate, but they don't like it. (Interview 3)

> They think Javakheti Armenians like Russians. (Interview 3)

The recurrent use of the personal pronoun "they" is indicative of a feeling of otherness and appeared clearly in the interview of a Georgian Armenian journalist in Tbilisi:

> By making such Public Relations [communication], the people in Samtskhe-Javakheti, they do not feel safe, that's the big problem. They feel like people are telling them: 'you are the worst, you want to take our territory. You want to be separatist. […] People start having complex, when they are told they are not good citizens. They start feeling that they are second class citizens. (Interview 3)

In the case of Georgia, considering the historical background of the country and the region in terms of conflicts, mobilization of fears results in the expression of strong discursive reactions to the evocation of secession risks in Samtskhe-Javakheti:

> I can understand, we have two separatist regions, for Georgians living here, it's very painful. If you start telling things like this, they start to hate you, you want to take our territory etc. (Interview 3)

> We are very emotional here, when it's about emotions, we say big things but it's not all true. (Interview 3)

The existence of territorial precedents and the strong emotions associated to this among the Georgian society are key elements for securitizing discourses to find an echo and spread. This is in line with Balzacq's view that non-discursive aspects of securitizing speech acts are also important, in the sense that they "aim to evoke feelings, beliefs, thoughts or actions of the target audience."[119] This therefore enables attempts at securitizing the territory of Samtskhe-Javakheti, in connection with the Georgian identity presented as being under threat.

Security and identity related fears

[119]Balzacq, *Securitization Theory,* 5.

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Although most interviewees denied the existence of tensions between Georgians and Armenians, it became clear that the identity factor is playing an important part in the development of securitizing discourses. The following citations illustrate this phenomenon:

> One day I was in Tbilisi, I took a taxi here, the driver asked me where I was from, I said Akhaltsikhe. He said "Oh, how are things there? They say that Armenians have bought everything and oppress the Georgians!" I said, no, who has a head and a mind can achieve anything, it doesn't matter who you are. (Interview 12)

> It's nothing new. I've read these things since 2010, when I moved here. I remember this friend, when I mentioned a touristic trip to Southern Georgia when I first arrived, telling me: 'no, they are all not Georgian there, they don't speak Georgian, they don't like Georgians, don't go there! (Interview 4)

Although the interviewees were trying to shed a very positive light on inter-ethnic relations in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Georgia, it clearly appears that anti-Armenian prejudices present a favorable ground for securitizing discourses to spread.

Furthermore, religion is often combined to ethnicity in the securitization of identity. Religion indeed represents a very important part of identity in the South Caucasus region and in the multi-ethnic country of Georgia in particular, where the different ethnic minorities are often religious minorities. This is illustrated by the fact that the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) is playing an important role as a functional actor of the securitization process, as shown in the previous chapter.

> Certain elements of the Church participate in these discourses. This is called ethno-phyletism, your ethnicity becomes the driver of your faith. […] There is the constant idea of the enemy, that ethnic minorities on the Georgian territory are a threat to Georgia, according to these segments. (Interview 1)

> Church is playing a role as well, because Armenians are not Georgian orthodox. (Interview 4)

This mainly shows through the discourses surrounding church disputes between the GOC and the Armenian apostolic Church:

> Any mention of Armenian requests to be returned churches triggers armenophobic statements. Armenians are trying to take everything from Georgia, this is a major trend in the Georgian media. (Interview 5)

Underlying the securitization of the Georgian identity, strong anti-Armenian feelings are appearing as the favorable ground for the spreading of securitizing discourses. Several examples have been mentioned during the interviews. The following citation is the most enlightening of a Georgian Armenian journalist:

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> I can tell you my story for example. I am sitting in a taxi and I speak in Georgian, with a Russian accent because I went to Russian school. They see I am Georgian, but they feel that something is different. So this taxi driver asks me: "are you from Georgia?" and I say "Yes, but I am Armenian." "What?" Taxi stops car. "You are Armenian, really? I have never seen such an Armenian." "What do you mean, do Armenians have two heads, five foot etc.?" "You do not look like typical Armenians." They think that Armenians should have darker skin than Georgians, or big nose etc. They also think Armenians are not educated. (Interview 3)

This illustrates the underlying divisions of the Georgian society, and the gap between majority and minorities, in this case between ethnic Georgians and Armenians. Even though most interviewees tried to convey a positive picture of inter-ethnic relations in Georgia, the division between ethnicities showed through in several of the interviews, and was explicitly stated in interview 3:

> Individuals get along together, but in general, the two societies don't like each other. (Interview 3)

It is important to keep in mind that prejudices are relational. The study of securitizing discourses points to the prejudices of Georgians towards Armenians. However, Armenians also have prejudices against Georgians, and Armenians also have prejudices, commonly making differences between Tbilisi Armenians, Javakheti Armenians and Akhaltsikhe Armenians. The following citations illustrate the existence of prejudices about Armenians, Turkey and Javakheti (Akhalkalaki) Armenians:

> The problem is the mentality of the Armenian population. They have a soviet, old mentality. They also have pro-Russian position. That's a problem, we must think about it, it's not a small number. (Interview 13)

> Armenians also have stereotypes and a mentality that is very aggressive towards Turkey. (Interview 5)

> Samtskhe-Javakheti is a region of Christians, Armenians. And now they are integrating Muslim people. After 2008, Russia became the political enemy. Georgia, as a small country, needed a protector. They found this protection in Turkey. Everything becomes clear. Turkey is the protector of Georgia, and Armenians are the enemy of Turkey." (Interview 10)

> I don't think they are young ones [people] giving these discourses. Are they young ones? In Akhalkalaki yes? (Interview 12)

As a result, the identity dimension of the securitization process is clearly visible and used in strong connection with the military dimension of secessionism, and therefore is a favorable condition for the development of securitizing discourses around Javakheti Armenians.

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Structural dimension of securitization: prejudices and integration policies

In addition to prejudice, the field research highlighted another structural dimension of securitizing discourses, namely the question of tolerance and integration versus nationalism and exclusion. If the securitization process seemed to be a cyclic and temporary phenomenon, it is based on ancient and structurally present anti-Armenian feelings:

> In general, this all bitching between Georgians and Armenians goes back to Ancient times, there are lots of jokes about it for example. These publications do not divide the society, because it is already divided. (Interview 4)

> Through the centuries, we were friends with Georgians, we were brother countries. They say that your neighbor is not like your wife that you can choose; your neighbor is your fate. Georgians also think that we are brother nations. But some think that Armenians are separatists, and also allies of Russia. From this arises some negative feelings towards Armenians. (Interview 10)

This structural opposition between Georgians and Armenians is solidified by governmental integration policies, which sometimes prove to be counter-productive to the factual integration of minorities:

> The government also doesn't understand what minority issues are. (Interview 5)

> This is why our government has to work more with the representatives of the regions, set some programs, so that the population feels they are citizens of Georgia, it's their motherland and that they are equal. (Interview 2)

Failure to do so (until now) laid the ground for political grievances as well as antagonism. In the same vein, the interviews pointed out the tension between the notions of inclusion and exclusion, tolerance and nationalism. What results is a paradoxical picture of inter-ethnic relations in Georgia. Although most interviewees tried to depict the securitizing discourses as completely unfounded fantasies in a tolerant country, it appears quickly that the notion of tolerance is here biased, based on the respect of "ethnic Georgian" criteria. The question of the gratitude for being welcome to Georgia is recurrent:

> It is a tolerant country, but people don't understand what this tolerance is. Some people say that we should be grateful for living here. […] It is nothing of pride, and it is nothing of shame, it is just your ethnicity. (Interview 3)

> I have never experienced anything bad in Georgia. Georgia is the country that is opening its door to everybody, Armenians, Greeks, Russians… and to everyone. (Interview 12)

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> I was discussing it [church disputes] with my neighbor who is Armenian, he asked what was happening. He said: "I don't understand, it's a Georgian church, Georgia opened its doors and let us come in, and live here and gave everything." People look at these questions very practically. (Interview 12)

In all excerpts, the gratitude expected from the Armenian minority living on the Georgian territory often for generations is striking, and could feed resentments from Armenians for not being fully accepted in Georgia.[120] The question of the Georgian language is also of particular importance:

> The point of view is that if Armenians are citizens of Georgia, why don't they know the Georgian language? And why is the Georgian government obliged to protect they and to defend their rights if they don't know the Georgian language? (Interview 8)

> We understand that we are citizens of Georgia and that we have to know the language. We think that the majority doesn't understand it, or doesn't want to understand it. (Interview 8)

This also induces fears of assimilation among the Armenian population as reported in the interview 7, and therefore sets the ground for misunderstandings from both sides. Overall, tolerance seems to be understood in a conditional and limited way, and nationalism shows through even in the statements of interviewees presenting themselves as open-minded and prejudice-free:

> I appreciate people that appreciate the country they are living in. You know, there are people living in Georgia that say bad things about Georgia. If you don't like it, then you may go somewhere you like to live! (Interview 12)

> If you don't hurt me, there are no problems. But if you say that Georgians are bad and doing bad things when they are not, then they will do something against you. (Interview 12)

In echo to what has been said earlier about the relativity of prejudices, Armenians also display this kind of paradoxical attitude about integration:

> There is not so much tolerance as they are speaking about. It's not only a Georgian feeling, it's also an Armenian feeling: "they don't want to accept us, why should we accept them?" (Interview 3)

> I would like to give my personal view [the translator], because I am a representative of Armenians who has lived in Georgia all her life. I have never had problems with Georgians […] because I know their language, even better than they do, and that's my power. […] I think that when you want to announce [claim] something, […] in that way you must be prepared for this, you must be educated well, you must be a little more better than they are. In order to be the winner. (Interview 8)

[120] "Javakheti Residents Do Not Feel Like Full Fledged Georgian Citizen - ICG Expert." *Armeniandiaspora.com*, n.d. http://armeniadiaspora.com/population/2369-javakheti-residents-do-not-feel-like-full-fledged-georgian-citizens-icg-expert.html.

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When questioned specifically on this paradoxical attitude on integration and competition, the translator answered as follows:

> I think there is concurrence, in any case. For example, not coming in time for school, it can happen. But I try not to, and not to give them the way to speak. There can be prejudices. (Interview 8)

It thus appears very clearly that beyond the question of secessionist threat, it is the question of identity and inter-ethnic relations in a newly independent multi-ethnic country that is at stake. This goes back to the nation-building process at work since the fall of the Soviet Union:

> This might be a problem of the Caucasus I think, our arrogance, nationalistic, patriotic feeling, I don't know how to call it. We should survive but if a nation wants to survive, you should marry only people from your nationality, to make this nationality stronger. Nationalism becomes xenophobic, we don't have a border between this. Maybe because we are emotional people. (Interview 3)

The emotional appeal of identity issues is heightened by the historical context of the South Caucasus, and used as parts of the securitizing discourses trying to present the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a secessionist threat to Georgia.

This chapter pointed out the favorable conditions for the securitizing discourses identified in the previous chapter to find an echo within the target audience and to spread. These temporary and marginal, as well as structural conditions are the isolation of the region, political and geopolitical manipulations as well as identity related fears and anti-Armenian prejudices. The next chapter aims at analyzing the actual impact of securitization discourses on inter-ethnic relations in Georgia.

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Chapter VI

The impact of securitizing discourses on inter-ethnic relations in Georgia

This research showed that the securitizing discourses identified in Chapter IV can find adequate ground for developing in Georgia because of the specificity of Samtskhe-Javakheti. The isolation of the region, its key strategic position in the Caucasus as well as structural anti-Armenian feelings in Georgia and the South Caucasus are the favorable conditions for the spread of (mis)information about potential separatist threat in the region.

I have also showed that the securitization of Javakheti Armenians is an ongoing process. Considering the sensitive context and environment in which this process is taking place, it might have social and political consequences for the Armenian minority of Georgia, and on inter-ethnic relations in the country and the South Caucasus as a whole. Therefore, I now need to turn to the assessment of the impact of such discourses on inter-ethnic relations in Georgia, in other words to the assessment of whether the securitization of Javakheti Armenians can be considered as successful or a failed securitizing move.

6.1 Absence of tensions and violence: An indicator of failed securitization?

Marginal and illegitimate claims

First of all, and in line with what has been said in the previous chapter, a very characteristic trait of most interviews was the attempt to minimize the effects of securitizing discourses surrounding the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti. Indeed, if they acknowledged the existence of these discourses, interviewees tended to discredit them by presenting them as marginal and illegitimate:

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> I am not very much interested in this kind of statements, and I do not respect the people that are trying to make problems between people. I call them political hooligans, and I don't pay attention to them at all. (Interview 9)

Furthermore, interviewees pointed out the failure of securitizing actors to essentialize the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti. In particular, the alleged pro-Russian orientation of Armenians was proved to be wrongly extrapolated from socio-economic facts:

> What does it mean for an Armenian of Samtskhe-Javakheti to be pro-Russian? Look at what happened in Gyumri, a 'Russian speaking', 'Russian integrated town'… These things don't happen like that, you don't just press a code and you get separatism. (Interview 1)

This would point to the fact that there is a difference between the securitizing discourses analyzed in Chapter IV and the "reality" of inter-ethnic relations in Georgia as perceived and reported by the interviewees. If there is no link between both of them, then it would mean that the securitization move studied in this research failed.

International securitization versus national politicization

Then, this research points to a dichotomy between national politicization and regional/international securitization. It indeed seems that the more radical discourses presenting the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as a security threat come from regional and international actors – Russian, Azeri, Armenian, Western actors.

> They are provocateurs these announcers, they just work on it to make some false information, to make the attention of the world focus on something that is not reasonable, while they are doing something different, in order not to be seen." (Interview 8)

This does not mean that securitizing discourses do not appear in the Georgian media. Several interviewees mentioned that marginal groups in Georgia are pushing or influencing the securitization of Javakheti Armenians. This is the case for example of far-right newspapers like *Alia* or *Asaval Dasavali* and the political party Alliance of Patriots (Interviews 3 and 5), and of some elements of the Georgian Orthodox Church as shown in the previous chapter. The argument of minimal securitization on the Georgian side is supported for example by the number of residence permits given to Samtskhe-Javakheti after the changes of the Migration law in Georgia, an event that crystallized Armenian socio-economic grievances and securitizing discourses (See

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Chapter I). According to the official data on the web-page of the Georgian ministry of Justice, a majority of residence permits and citizenship status has been granted to Javakheti Armenians affected by the change in the law.[121] It thus seems that the Georgian government does not take extraordinary measures against Javakheti Armenians, which would be a sign of successful securitization according to the Copenhagen School.[122] This confirms the interviewees' attempts to minimize the impact of securitizing discourses in Georgia compared to discourses from regional actors. As a result, one can say that even though securitization move exists, they mainly originate from regional/international actors; discourses around the Armenian minority in Georgia appear to be limited to the politicization of socio-economic issues.

Absence of tension and violence: Failed securitization?

Finally, this study highlights the failure to transform securitizing discourses into negative actions targeting the Armenian minority in Georgia. The government does not take an active part in the securitization process as showed above. The Georgian civil society also seems to be very attentive and proactive on this topic:

> In the case of the Imedi reportage [*article 7*], I recall that the broadcaster had to apologize for this. It was the Georgian civil society that reacted and complained first after the reportage. (Interview 2)

Another striking point is the absence of ethnic tensions and violence in the country despite the repeated occurrence of securitizing waves. Paradoxically, this was pointed out by the interviewee that showed the most concerns about these discourses:

> In comparison, I have also lived in Russia. Nationalism is very violent there, like they have skin head groups. We don't have that here, we are discriminated, people say things that can hurt you, but I cannot think about violence about the nationality. (Interview 3)

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[121]Residence Permits:

Akhalkalaki - 919 Applications, 584 approved, 326 under review, 2 have been rejected and 7 applications were not accepted due to lack of documentation.

Ninotsminda - 553 application, 421 approved, 127 under review, 3 rejected, 2 insufficient documentation.

· Citizenships (since September 2014):

Akhalkalaki - 22 applications, 8 awarded, 8 rejected, 6 under review.

Ninotsminda - 50 application, 48 awarded, 2 rejected.

Data from the Ministry of Justice, Georgia (Feb. 19th, 2015) http://www.justice.gov.ge/News/Detail?newsId=4750.

[122]Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 25.

However, should the absence of open governmental action, tension and violence against Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Georgia be considered as an indicator of the failure of securitizing moves? The situation depicted by interviewees denying problems in inter-ethnic relations in Georgia was slightly different than the one I experienced myself as a foreigner, as well as talking about this topic outside the timeframe for interviews. I indeed could distinguish a strong sense of denial in several interviews:

> This is why I don't read these online publications. I don't want to talk about it. (Interview 2)

Minimizing, ignoring and denying issues does not mean that this issue does not exists. In this sense, the interviewees' discourse pointing to the failure of the securitization of Javakheti Armenians could prove to be a wrong indicator. Based on Balzacq's theorization of perlocutionary speech act, one can in fact point out the institutionalization of securitization through prejudice and anti-Armenian feelings.

6.2 Prejudice and anti-Armenian feelings: The sign of institutionalized securitization

An argument used to minimize the impact of the securitization of Javakheti Armenians by the interviewees is that it is difficult to assess the impact of the specific securitizing publications analyzed in Chapter IV. Nonetheless, the literature review, as well as certain interviews clearly pointed the fact that ethnic Georgians are aware of these discourses, the content of which can be found in Georgian language press or media:

> The local media is ready to disseminate this kind of information, because the level of education is very low, because information is not coming from the region, and because it's very disconnected. This nationalism which many Georgian media has, gives hate speech towards minorities. The level of hate in Georgia is quite high, that's what the society wants to hear. (Interview 6)

This can be explained by the perlocutionary aspect of the securitizing speech acts surrounding the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti as conceptualized by Balzacq.

Centrality of the audience: Samtskhe-Javakheti through the Georgian experience

Balzacq's conceptualization of perlocutionary speech act relies on three aspects, one of which is the centrality of the audience. This first point emphasizes that assessing the success of

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securitization "is highly contingent upon the securitizing actor's ability to identify with the audience's experience," using terms that reflect the audience's experience (speeches, gestures, tonality, order, images, attitude, ideas, inclusive plural pronouns, collective memories etc.).[123] In this case, the use of terms that reflect the audience's experience was stressed in Chapter IV (the use of territory and identity-related fears, memories, emotions and nationalism for example) and comes up in the above and the following citation:

> I wouldn't say it's at the hysteria level, but this passportization story, because of the fear it stoked to the Georgians, I would say that's why it got to the Aljazeera level. (Interview 1)

This puts the Georgian audience as the principal target of these discourses. If the reception aspect is obvious, the audience's reaction is less clear. When asked about the potential reaction of Georgians to such discourses, the interviewees pointed out an adherence to discourses, without however being followed by actions:

> What opinion can a Georgian think of Samtskhe-Javakheti when the only thing he hears is about the negative aspects of Samtskhe-Javakheti? (Interview 9)

> It's not like: everybody reads about Javakheti, and they go on demonstrations. It's like always, hating people. When you ask an average person who reads this every day, they will say: "yes of course, there is separatist danger." (Interview 3)

The situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti is here understood through the prism of the Georgian experience and is a sign of successful securitization.

Co-dependency of agency and context: Ethnic conflicts in the South Caucasus as a background

The second aspect of perlocutionary speech acts conceptualized by Balzacq is called "co-dependency of agency and context." According to him, the "semantic repertoire of security is [...] a combination of textual and cultural meaning" and the performative effect of securitization depends on this combination.[124] In this case, the Georgian experience mentioned earlier is dependent on the context of ethnic conflict in Georgia and the South Caucasus, as well

[123]Balzacq, *Securitization Theory,* 14.
[124]Ibid.

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as geopolitical rivalry with Russia. The lens of secessionist ethnic conflict is the most present according to interviewees:

> They [Javakheti Armenians] also don't like this situation, they don't want to separate, and they never did. But nobody wants to hear this. (Interview 3)

> People don't think about Russia. The average people who have a conservative ethno-centric discourse, won't think about the issue as the result of Russian intervention. The level of interpretation is very basic, they are not engaging with the issue in a meaningful way, they say stuff and they get a reaction. (Interview 1)

However, the geopolitical as well as the psychological dimension of securitizing discourses can also be felt, and impact people's interpretation of news related to Samtskhe-Javakheti:

> People believe in myths and conspiracy. […] They believe that some people manipulate our life; that we are a special nation, that everyone should care about our prosperity and we should do nothing. (Interview 5)

> Maybe they need this information. It's sensational. I remember a psychological experience: One good and one bad story, population believes only the bad news! (Interview 13)

The Georgian experience in this very specific context participates in the successful propagation of securitizing discourses around Javakheti Armenians. However, the limits mentioned in the previous section do exist. This means that the securitization process occurs under another form: the institutionalization of prejudices and anti-Armenian feelings.

Dispositive and structuring force of practices: Prejudices and anti-Armenian feelings

The last aspect of perlocutionary speech act theorized by Balzacq is called "dispositive and structuring force of practices." It refers to the fact that securitization can also be non-discursive, emphasizing the idea that "securitization is not necessarily the result of a rational design wherein goals are set beforehand [...]."[125] This corresponds to the findings of Chapter V, whereby a structured and organized project of securitization the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti could not be identified.

Furthermore, it is important to note that, despite the deliberate attempt to present relations between Georgians and Armenians in Georgia as peaceful, fear about the future of

[125]Balzacq, *Securitization Theory,* 15.

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inter-ethnic relations in Georgia was a recurrent object of concerns throughout the target groups:

> Still I feel comfortable here. As long as we are protected, only waves of bad trends, it's fine. But as it was 20 years ago with Gamsakhurdia, at that time it was not really good. In one day, we were not welcome in our country anymore. Now, being powerful and xenophobic is not in trend. If they [Georgians] feel that powerful again, if another of this kind of president come, you don't know. Now they don't speak about that in public. (Interview 3)

> It's a tolerant country, security issues are not at stake. […] But if some politicians or politic waves want to involve some groups, we cannot say what will be tomorrow and after tomorrow." (Interview 2)

The conclusion of these apparently contradictory tendencies is that prejudice can here be considered as dispositive and structuring force of practice that participates in the securitization of Javakheti Armenians. Indeed, practices can play an important role in securitization. If it is welcomed by a certain degree of social recognition, the repeated performance – both discursive and practiced – of a securitization move can lead to the enactment in and on the world of the security claim, hence to its institutionalization.[126] In this case, the repeated performance of securitizing discourses and prejudices expressed about Javakheti Armenians can lead to the enactment of the claim that separatism is fomenting in Javakheti. Securitization is thereby institutionalized: a metaphorical security reference may suffice for an issue to be framed as a security issue, and the sense of urgency to become institutionalized:

> If Armenians will demand tomorrow any right which Georgians enjoy in the Constitution, then they will be the main target of this radical approach. If you are a representative of minorities, you are marginalized or attacked. (Interview 5)

The above citation shows that there is no need to hold the threat of separatism to obtain securitizing reactions because anything related to the territory of Samtskhe-Javakheti and the Armenian identity (as opposed to the Georgian identity) has been securitized, institutionalized and crystalized around anti-Armenian feelings and prejudices: "These discourses are here just to spread the hate between nations" (Interview 3).

The importance of the non-discursive aspects of securitizing speech acts pointed out in this chapter is complementing the strength of explicitly securitizing discourses. This extension

[126]Cf. Adler and Pouillot, *International Practices*, 7-8.

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of securitization to non-discursive aspects may explain why several obviously securitizing publications did not come up through the selection method for the publications sample and had to be added separately, thereby legitimizing the combination of the two methods of research.

6.3 Paradoxical attitudes towards security and identity: Limits of the research

This chapter and this research in general pointed out several paradoxes and limits. One of them is the fact that several interviewees minimized and marginalized the existence of securitizing discourses and their impact, although consciousness and fear related to separatist issues were present. These remarks were mainly attempts to shed light on the actual situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti as a peaceful region, as opposed to the circulating rumors. This translates a misunderstanding of the difference between objective and subjective security, a fact that seemed to occur a lot during the interviews. As a researcher, I would agree with the statements that securitizing discourses do not reflect the reality of the situation in the region. However, I doubt that these elaborated and balanced reflections, as well as the degree of relativism presented by the interviewees is widespread among the population of Georgia. This stresses the need to have a differenciated understanding of the perceived impact of the securitization process, on the elite and on the population. This can be considered as one limit of the research.

Overall, most interviewees showed a certain reluctance to openly talk about the issue of securitizing discourses. Misunderstanding of the difference between objective and subjective threat might be an explanation for these paradoxical attitudes, but other possibilities came to my mind during and after the field research.

First, it is possible that the interviewees were reluctant to display their problems to a foreigner, especially to a young woman. These culture, gender and age related limits have been pointed out by one of my local friend as I was reporting this issue to her.

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Then, it is also highly possible that my research and its expected findings did not correspond to the agenda of my interviewees. As for the journalists, they might have felt uncomfortable acknowledging the lack of professionalism of their colleagues and themselves, as well as the responsibility of their profession in the securitization of Javakheti Armenians. As for the activists, some of them might have an interest in presenting an overly positive picture of the situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti, preferring to insist on socio-economic issues than on political ones. However, I have showed in my analysis that problems in inter-ethnic relations showed often through their discourses, for prejudices and divisions appeared even in the most positive and problem-denying interviews.

The last possibility is that some interviewees were conscious of the securitization attempts surrounding Javakheti Armenians and considered that my research would feed this process to the detriment of the development of the region and the relatively peaceful relations between Georgians and Armenians.

Although they could account for limitations of my research, I incorporated all of these remarks into my research, using them as critical tools in my analysis.

This chapter specifically looked at the perceived impact of securitizing discourses on inter-ethnic relations in Georgia. It found that, even though the absence of tension and violence between Armenians and Georgians could be considered as an indicator for the failure of the securitization of Javakheti Armenians, as sometimes explicitly put forward by interviewees, it appears that securitizing discourses have an echo within the Georgian society. This is based on three aspects of perlocutionary speech act as defined by Balzacq – the centrality of the Georgian experience, in the context of ethnic conflicts in Georgia and the South Caucasus, as well as the long lasting practice of ethnic prejudice, in this case anti-Armenian feelings. This results in the

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institutionalization of the securitization discourses around Javakheti Armenians, thereby not leading to emergency measures and violence, but enacting the ethnic division of the society.

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Conclusion

Based on an analysis of methodologically selected sources relating events and discourses surrounding the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti, as well as on interviews with local journalists, activists and experts, this thesis shows that the phenomenon of securitization of Javakheti Armenians is the symptom of a divided society in the process of nation-building and in the context of intense regional geopolitical competition and conflicts.

On the one hand, drawing on the Copenhagen School's philosophical approach to securitization, this thesis demonstrated that the common pattern of securitizing speech acts surrounding Javakheti Armenians is to use secessionist threat – crystalizing territorial and identity related fears – as a compelling point within another argument – whether it is a political, geopolitical or nationalist argument as explained in Chapter IV. These discourses indeed originate from a variety of actors, rely on several specific mechanisms and aim at different objectives detailed in the analysis. On the other hand, based on Balzacq's sociological approach to securitization, this study pointed out that the favorable conditions for these securitizing discourses to find an echo within the target audience and to spread, are both circumstantial and structural – isolation of the region, political and geopolitical manipulations as well as identity related fears and anti-Armenian prejudices. This research finally showed that that even though the absence of tension and violence between Armenians and Georgians could be considered as an indicator for the failure of the securitization process, the result is the institutionalization of the securitization discourses around Javakheti Armenians. As a consequence, when looking at the apparent impact of the securitizing discourses on inter-ethnic relations in Georgia, I conclude that securitizing discourses do not lead to emergency measures and violence, but enact the ethnic division of the society, and thereby may contribute to a degradation of inter-ethnic relations in Georgia.

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This research contributes to the Nationalism and International Relations scholarship with a case study of the relation between security and identity in Samtskhe-Javakheti by linking theory, discourse analysis and field research. Most importantly, this research must be replaced in the context in which its redaction took place. In the wider context of the post-independence inter-ethnic conflicts of the South Caucasus, and in the wake of two important regional conflicts – the August 2008 war and the most recent and ongoing "Ukraine crisis," understanding the process of constructing the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti and its inhabitants as security threat not only gives ground for a more accurate debate on the relations in Georgia, but could also participate in curbing the security dilemma around the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti. By specifically pointing out an information vacuum, misuse of history and stigmatization of the Armenian minority in Georgia, the research highlighted the role of the media, education system and integration policies in favoring or impeding harmonious and peaceful living together. The findings therefore call for more awareness and attention to be paid to these issues by the Georgian government, the civil society and the society as a whole, in order to meaningfully desecuritize inter-ethnic relations in Georgia. Thus, this thesis contributes to the debate on inter-ethnic relations and threat perceptions in Georgia and the South Caucasus region.

The results of this research, as well as its possible limitations, stress the need for further research on this topic. As mentioned in Chapter III, I have limited my analysis to English language online local and regional publications. Although the research is based on qualitative and non-probability sampling approaches, and although I have showed that the same kind of information is circulating in Georgian and Russian language media, it would be interesting to complement this research by a quantitative analysis of the extent to which the discourses studied in this research are present in non-English language media. A first hand analysis of the degree of penetration of these discourses into the local population based on interviews with local

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inhabitants is another possibility to expand this research. The dialectic between prejudice and integration has also been shown in this thesis as an object of fear. As mentioned by one of my interviewees, there is no survey on prejudices directed towards other nationalities in Georgia. The general topic of prejudices in Georgia would be a fruitful avenue of research for someone interested in further curbing the security dilemma around inter-ethnic relations in Georgia. In general, many avenues have been opened by this research, and the interest in this topic is very present. The important spread of securitizing "information" in the media highlighted in this thesis is one striking proof of this. The enthusiasm and the numerous interesting questions asked during the presentation of my research at *Works In Progress*[127] – an academic discussion series based in Tbilisi – is another proof.

Despite the simplicity of the arguments used in securitizing discourses, this research highlighted the complex rhetorical, (geo)political and societal dynamics in which the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti finds itself. The recent renewal of attention around the region can be dangerous, as shown in this thesis, but can also present an important chance. It is indeed a chance to foster interdisciplinary approaches and to attract both political and academic attention on the region in order to work together to the desecuritization the existing issues faced by the Armenian minority of Samtskhe-Javakheti.

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[127]"Works In Progress," *Caucasus Research Resource Centers*, http://www.crrccenters.org/20143/Works-in-Progress-WiP.

Appendices

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Appendix 1

Data Body 1: Identification of the securitization phenomenon

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Appendix 2(A) **Level 2: Selection of publications using securitizing vocabulary**

Selection based on general key securitizing words tested on Data body 1

Type of soucres	Author(s)	Publication/Organization	Title	Date	Threat	Danger	Survival	Emer-gency	Conflict	Secu-rity	Sovereignty/statehood/borders/integrity	Fear	Tension	Enemy/Enmity	Total of each category of keywords
Academic Sources	Chkheidze, Metreveli	Bulletin of the Georgian National Academy of Science	Role of transporation infrastrure	2010	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	De Varennes	Europa Ethnica	Minority rights	2009											
	Frichova	International Journal on Minority and Group Rights	Participation	2009	4	0	0	0	41	10	0	2	0	0	4
	Minasian	Central Asia and the Caucasus	Armenia and Georgia	2012	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Nilsson	Ethnopolitics	Obstacles to building	2009	65	1	0	0	38	12	0	4	3	0	6
	Overland	The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies	The closure of	2009	1	0	1	0	11	8	0	4	2	0	6
	Sabanadze	European Center for Minority Issues	Defusing inter-ethnic tensions	2001	0	1	2	0	12	0	0	6	6	0	5
	Tonoyan	Demokratizatsiya	Rising Georgian-Armenian tensions	2010	4	3	0	0	24	6	2	7	26	0	7
	Wheatley	Central Asian Survey	Managing ethnic diversity	2009a	2	0	0	1	16	6	5	6	5	0	7
	Wheatley	European Center for Minority Issues	The integration of	2009b	6	0	0	0	13	10	0	16	5	0	5
	Zollinder, Bochsler	Democratization	Minority representation	2012	0	2	0	0	6	0	0	1	1	0	4
Online newspaper articles/Blogs		Armenian Diaspora	Javakheti residents	/	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	2
		Armenian Diaspora	Arm-Geo relations	28/10/2010	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3
	Avaliani	Tabula	The fight	13/05/2013	5	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	4
	Bukia	Global Voices Caucasus	Armenians seek	22/03/2013	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
		Channel1	Javakh Diaspora	2/2/2013	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Chernov	Fort Russ	South Ossetia option	26/03/2015	3	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	1	0	3
	Coffey	Al Jazeera	Russia's next acquisition	17/01/2015	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
	Forestier-Walker	Al Jazeera	Georgia Wary	6/4/2014	3	1	0	0	1	1	0	4	0	0	5
	Freese	Eurasia.net	Revolution in the regions	/	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	1	1	1	4
	Hayrumyan	Armenian Now	New strategy or provocation	Nov. 2014	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Hayrumyan	Lragir	Russia will reach	8/11/2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1
	Janashia	Central Asia Caucasus Analyst	Moscow distributes	7/5/2014	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
		Javakhk Media	Georgia's new government	24/10/2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	2
	Jgharkava	Georgia Today	Passport dilemma	12/2/2015	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3
	Kalatozishvili	Vestnik Kavkaza	Is the leader of Djavakheti extremists	23/01/2015	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Kipshidze	Grass - Fact check	Population of Javakheti region	9/3/2015	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	1
	Kirtzkhalia	Trend.az	Mass issuance	22/04/2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Krikorian	Frontline club London	Nationalists agitate	23/09/2009	1	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
	Mehdiyev	AzerNews	Armenian stands	26/02/2015	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	5
	Mehdiyev	Eurasia Review	Armenian Problem child	3/2/2015	6	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	2	1	6
	Menabde	Eurasia Daily Monitor	Georgia and Armenia try	17/12/2014	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	4
		News.az	Georgian Armenians prepare	10/2/2015	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Popovaite	DFWatch	Weak Ruble	8/1/2015	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	1
	Popovaite	DFWatch	Armenians in Akhalkalaki	26/12/2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Ramishvili	Central Asia and Caucasus	Javakheti or Javakhk	/	7	0	1	0	5	1	2	1	2	3	8
	Rimple, Mielnikiewicz	Eurasia.net	Post-Crimea	9/4/2014	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	2	1	0	5
	Smith	Georgia Today	Media Strokes	10/4/2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	3
	Socor	Eurasia Daily Monitor	Lavrov hints at	9/7/2010	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	1
	Tariverdiyeva	Trend.az	Permanent readiness to secede	3/4/2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0		1
	Tariverdiyeva	Trend.az	Rapprochement between	26/10/2009	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
		Armenian Weekly	Georgia Prime Minister	28/2/2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Azeri Daily	Roll call	/	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
		PanArmenian	Georgian expert	10/2/2011	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		News.am	Special forces	18/03/2015	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		MediaMax.am	Police special mission	17/3/2015	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
		MediaVector.am	What may cause	2/6/2014	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	3
		Georgian Democracy Initiative	Joint statement	25/3/2014	3	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	4
Documents/Reports	De Los Fayons	Directorate General for External Policies	Minorities in the South Caucasus	2014	5	0	0	0	9	7	16	3	0	0	5
	Gogsadze, Kachkachishvili	The Levan Mikeladze Foundation	Minority integration	2014	5	0	0	2	3	2	2	1	3	0	7
	Inayeh, Schwarzer, Forbig	German Marshall Fund of the United States	Regional repercussions (chapter 6)	2014	7	0	0	0	1	7	5	2	0	0	5
		International Crisis Group	Integration challenge	2011	10	0	0	0	11	18	12	5	18	0	6
	Metreveli, Kulick	Initiative for Peace-Building	Social relations	2009	9	0	0	1	39	49	20	0	9	0	6
		Armenian Cause Foundation	Resolving the grievances	2011	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	1	0	6
		Yerkir Union	The ethnic Armenian minority	2007	0	3	0	1	5	2	4	1	1	1	8
		Ardarutyun	Memorandum	2004	5	2	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	3

Appendix 2(B)

Data Body 2: Publications using securitizing vocabulary

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Appendix 3 (A)

Level 3: Refining the data body for the analysis

Type of soucres	Author(s)	Publication/Organization	Title	Date	Threat	Danger	Survival	Emergency	Conflict	Security	Sovereignty/statehood/ borders/integrity	Fear	Tension	Enemy/Enmity	Total KW	Included/Excluded	Why?
Academic Sources	~~Nilsson~~	~~Ethnopolities~~	~~Obstacles to building~~	2009	65	1	0	0	38	12	0	4	3		6	Excluded	Already an analysis of discourses
	~~Overland~~	~~The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies~~	~~The closure of~~	2009	1	0	1	0	11	8	0	4	2		6	Excluded	Analytical publication, reports on security issues but does not take a securitizing stance
	~~Sabanadze~~	~~European Center for Minority Issues~~	~~Defusing inter-ethnic tensions~~	2001	0	1	2	0	12	0	0	6	6		5	Excluded	Dated, only considering after 2008 war
	Tonoyan	Demokratizatsiya	Rising Georgian-Armenian tensions	2010	4	3	0	0	24	6	2	7	26		7	/	
	~~Wheatley~~	~~Central Asian Survey~~	~~Managing ethnic diversity~~	2009a	2	0	0	1	16	6	5	6	5		7	Excluded	Too general
	~~Wheatley~~	~~European Center for Minority Issues~~	~~The integration of~~	2009b	6	0	0	0	13	10	0	16	5		5	Excluded	Too general
Online newspaper articles/Blogs	Coffey	Al Jazeera	Russia's next acquisition	17/01/2015	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	4	Included	
	Forestier-Walker	Al Jazeera	Georgia Wary	6/4/2014	3	1	0	0	1	1	0	4	0	0	5	/	
	Janashia	Central Asia Caucasus Analyst	Moscow distributes	7/7/2014	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	Included	
	Kalatozishvili	Vestnik Kavkaza	Is the leader of Djavakheti extremists	23/01/2015	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	Included	
	~~Mehdiyev~~	~~AzerNews~~	~~Armenia stands~~	26/02/2015	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	5	Excluded	Discourse similar to the other article from the same author
	Mehdiyev	Eurasia Review	Armenia Problem child	3/2/2015	6	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	2	1	6	/	
	~~Ramishvili~~	~~Central Asia and Caucasus~~	~~Javakheti or Javakhk~~	/	7	0	1	0	5	1	2	1	2	3	8	Excluded	No date, but seem to have been published before the 2008 war, around 2006-2007
	~~Rimple, Mielnikiewicz~~	~~Eurasia.net~~	~~Post-Crimea~~	9/4/2014	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	2	1	0	5	Excluded	Already an analysis of discourses
	Tariverdiyeva	Trend.az	Permanent readiness to secede	3/4/2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	Included	
		Georgian Democracy Initiative	Joint statement	25/3/2014	3	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	4	Included	in parallel with the video reportage it refers to
Documents/Reports	~~De Los Fayons~~	~~Directorate General for External Policies~~	~~Minorities in the South Caucasus~~	2014	5	0	0	0	9	7	16	3	0	0	5	Excluded	Too general
	~~Gogsadze, Kachkachishvili~~	~~The Levan Mikeladze Foundation~~	~~Minority integration~~	2014	5	0	0	2	3	2	2	1	3	0	7	Excluded	Too general
	Inayeh, Schwarzer, Forbig	German Marshall Fund of the United States	Regional repercussions (chapter 6 only)	2014	7	0	0	0	1	7	5	2	0	0	5	/	
		~~International Crisis Group~~	~~Integration challenge~~	2011	10	0	0	0	11	18	12	5	18	0	6	Excluded	Analytical publication, reports on security issues but does not take a securitizing stance
	~~Metreveli, Kulick~~	~~Initiative for Peace-Building~~	~~Social relations~~	2009	9	0	0	1	39	49	20	0	9	0	6	Excluded	Too general
		~~Armenian Cause Foundation~~	~~Resolving the grievances~~	2011	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	1	0	6	Excluded	Too long
		~~Yerkir Union~~	~~The ethnic Armenian minority~~	2007	0	3	0	1	5	2	4	1	1	1	8	Excluded	Too long

Appendix 3(B)

Data body 3: Securitizing publications

Level 3: Restriction of securitizing publications

Data body 2: selection based on general key securitizing words tested on Data body 1

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